

The Amazing Adventures of the Monogamous Duck

Written by

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EXT. VACANT LOT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

GRADY HERMAN (30/40) stands 60 feet away from a graffiti-covered wall. He fires a ball at the expanse of artwork in front of him, then fields it with the flash and flair of a seasoned shortstop.

GRADY (V.O.)

The single most abused, misused...I would go so far as to say perverted word in the English language -- not that I can claim to be any sort of authority on it -- but the single most abused word in the English language is the word "beautiful."

Grady produces a "bullet." Takes a hit of cocaine, resumes play.

GRADY (V.O.)

It's a precious word, and we should reserve it for precious people: Your mother; your daughter; a girlfriend. And I do obviously realize that in the grand scheme of things, it's pretty much useless to have this at or near the top of your list of pet peeves, but still. Just break down the actual word: Beautiful. Beauty-full... Full of beauty.

INT. NYC PARK (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Grady inhales coke, exhales pain. Plays chess with his DEALER.

GRADY (V.O.)

It may be trivial, but I hesitate at describing some random girl as being beautiful, full of beauty, when I find most girls to be full of something else. Most people.

Undercover COPS approach. Wrangler jeans, beige Timberlands. They arrest Grady and Dealer without any pushback.

GRADY (V.O.)

The only other word that approaches "beautiful" in terms of its overuse is the word "genius." Every other conversation I have, someone's like, "You need to meet my friend Steven. He's a genius." I mean, not for nothing, but "beautiful" and "genius" are not words you just float around.

INT. PHOENIX HOUSE TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

RESIDENTS sing, as per their ritual. An ALTO flies solo.

ALTO

Hark the herald angels sing, glory
to the newborn king! Pleased as
man, with men to dwell, Jesus our
Emmanuel!

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Grady has been sitting across from DR. ROSEN (60). Jacket on and bag in hand, he's checking out. Alto SINGS off-screen.

GRADY

There's a difference between
being brilliant and being a genius.
Brilliant/Smart people know that
the capital of Burkina Faso is
Ouagadougou, they know the literacy
rate is 34%, the chief natural
resource is manganese, and the
percentage of arable land is whatever
the fuck the percentage of arable
land happens to be. Genius is deeper
than that. Dorothy Parker and
Rosalind Franklin were geniuses.
Alexander McQueen was a genius.
Fucking Greg Maddux was a genius.
Some guy named Steven who tapes a
banana to wall and sells it at
Sotheby's? That's money laundering.

EXT. PHOENIX HOUSE - DAY

Grady and Dr. Rosen weave their way through a garden.

GRADY

You know how the little things in
life are what's important?

DR. ROSEN

Children making rainbows with
garden hoses...their fascination
with bubble-wrap... Sure.

GRADY

Well the last time I remember having
an identity outside of drugs, I was
this dynamic, swashbuckling romantic.
I had all the little things totally
covered.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

Now I feel like I've awoken from this long slumber, but I don't have anything basic to offer beyond the eternal affection sunshine shit.

DR. ROSEN

It's the icing on the cake.

GRADY

But I'm missing the batter.

DR. ROSEN

You wrote a book. That's something.

GRADY

A book no one bought or read doesn't mean much. I got like 7 dollars in the bank and a girlfriend that died four years ago... I still can't get over it, and don't know if I want to.

DR. ROSEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

GRADY

Well... The thing that sucks is that it's 7 dollars, and the minimum you can take out of an ATM is 10... They did the same thing to the book that they did to my girlfriend.

Dr. Rosen gestures.

GRADY

They buried it. The book was sad, and readers don't like sad stories.

DR. ROSEN

You'll stay with your family, then?

GRADY

I'm actually gonna stay with my editor. It's hard to say "my editor" without being insufferable, but yeah. We met in a mentoring program for at-risk teens when I was a teen-at-risk.

DR. ROSEN

And she's agreeable with you staying.

GRADY

She got divorced last year and moved to California for the job.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

Before I came in, we figured it might be good for the kids and all if I were there.

DR. ROSEN

And for you.

GRADY

And for me.

Grady picks up a garden hose. He alternates between the hard stream and gentle spray. The mist creates a rainbow.

DR. ROSEN

So she's excited you're coming.

GRADY

I don't know if "excited" is how I would couch it. I owe money on the second book; it was a two-book deal. If I don't show a second manuscript, the bonus is due back to house.

DR. ROSEN

How much?

GRADY

I spent it. Like a hundred thousand?

DR. ROSEN

What did you spend it on?

GRADY

Like a hundred fifty thousand?

DR. ROSEN

What did you spend it on?

GRADY

I dunno, drugs. College basketball. The book never got off the floor; that's my fault. But it's their own fault for assuming sales would catch up with the reviews on this next one. Or that there would be a next one.

Grady fires water straight up, steps aside upon its re-entry.

DR. ROSEN

So, California.

GRADY

California. Manifest Destiny. "Go West, young man."

DR. ROSEN

Do you know the actual quote?

GRADY

That's not it?

DR. ROSEN

The full quote...was "Go West, young man...and grow up with the country."

INT. LAX - DAY

On an escalator, Grady looks down. Sees an errant shoelace.

He looks back up. After a beat, he bends down, tucks it in.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

DARLA NATHANSON (50s) walks. Radiating competence and warmth, she carries herself with little effort, but high regard.

GRADY

Darla.

She sees Grady, leaning against a pillar. They face off.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady's elbow, awkwardly perched on two inches of raised glass.

He looks at a salt-and-pepper notebook. Hits the window button.

GRADY

Hey, uh... Grandma. You wanna cut me a little slack with the child safety thing here?

Instead of lowering the window, Darla raises it.

GRADY

How's Ed? Still dating that nurse?

DARLA

It takes ambition to be a nurse.
Try "Trixxi," spelled with two Xs.
(beat)

Ed is Ed. I appreciate you asking.

GRADY

That's what I'm here for.

DARLA

And where were you when it counted?
What was I supposed to tell Meghan?

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)
Mommy and Daddy are splitting up,
but Grady can't get in a car cuz
he's too busy self-destructing?

GRADY
The truth never hurts, Darla.

DARLA
... Are you wearing your seatbelt?

As Grady reaches for his belt, Darla SLAMS the brakes. Grady flies into the dash. On the recoil, he's flung back into his seat. Darla then grabs his earl as if he's an insolent child.

DARLA
The truth never hurts? The truth
never hurts? The truth always hurts.
Understand that, you shit.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Darla pushes a cart. Grady drops in items. Darla, in turn, casually removes them. Grady doesn't notice, and Darla doesn't care about re-shelving items in the wrong sections.

DARLA
Grady, you have a drug problem. As
such, you will attend meetings. In
addition, you will address any and
all mental issues, gambling issues --

GRADY
A'right. First of all, I wouldn't
have had any gambling issues if this
guy on the Indians, Russell Branyan?
If Russell knew how to make contact
with any incarnation of an off-speed
pitch, gambling would've never been
a problem. Or -- or...if way back in
2001, Jeremy Giambi figured out that
it might be a good idea to slide at
some point in his career. Fucking
Victor Conte forgot to put that one
in the BALCO instruction manual.

Darla shelves soda among nuggets, pasta among milk.

DARLA
You are here to shape up and write.
By invoking something so pedestrian
as baseball --

GRADY
Baseball is not pedestrian.

DARLA

Hemingway said the only true sports were bull fighting, auto racing, and mountaineering.

GRADY

Yeah, well, what has Hemingway ever done for you?

DARLA

He's never let me down. That's what.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla and Grady drive home.

GRADY

How's your love life going...? Have you been dating at all...? Have you been dating at all?

DARLA

Dating leads to love. And love is an illusion created by lawyers to perpetuate another illusion called marriage that creates the reality of divorce and the illusionary need for divorce lawyers.

GRADY

People get divorced every day, Darla.

DARLA

I don't get divorced every day. Have you considered that? The fact that I don't get divorced every day?

She sees his shoes on the dashboard.

DARLA

Get your feet off the car.

Grady complies. After a moment, he puts on his seatbelt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Darla's middle child, still growing into his mind and body, is ANDREW NATHANSON (15). Enter Grady, timidly.

GRADY

Hey. How have you been?

ANDREW

Good. What about you?

GRADY

I'm okay. How's the new school?

ANDREW

Jury's still out.

GRADY

Are you hungry?

(off a nod)

What are you in the mood for?

ANDREW

Anything... Actually, can you make
mac and cheese?

Andrew opens a cabinet. They ease into their familiar ways.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady sits on the porch. A car stops out front. Out steps Darla's youngest, MEGHAN NATHANSON (9). A CLASSMATE waves as the car leaves. A subdued Meghan approaches.

MEGHAN

What are you drinking?

GRADY

I think you know exactly what I'm
drinking.

MEGHAN

Cherry 7-Up... Can I get a sip?

GRADY

Maybe I'll save some at the end...
So are the rumors true? Mommy said
you got a boyfriend.

MEGHAN

Mommy doesn't know what she's talking
about.

GRADY

Is he cute?

MEGHAN

... He's cute.

GRADY

What's his name?

MEGHAN

Cary Volkman.

GRADY

Now, when people refer to you guys,
do they say "Meghan and Cary," or
"Cary and Meghan"?

MEGHAN

"Meghan and Cary."

GRADY

Nice. That's key. I've never been
first myself, but whatever.

MEGHAN

You haven't dated that many girls.

GRADY

Quality over quantity.

MEGHAN

Don't drink it all. You said you were
gonna save me some.

GRADY

I said "maybe" I would save you some.

MEGHAN

And?

GRADY

And, did you ever think that "maybe"
is just a nice way of saying "no"?

MEGHAN

You're trying to push my buttons.

GRADY

I am... So are you just gonna stand
there, or am I gonna get a hug?

She closes the gap. They embrace.

GRADY

I'm really sorry.

MEGHAN

It's okay.

GRADY

I'm sorry.

MEGHAN

It's gonna be fine.

GRADY
... A'right, get off.

She kisses his cheek. He gives her his Cherry 7-Up.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady opens a box, finds candlesticks. Places one aside. He gets another, takes a pen from the box. Hollows out the core from the stick's base. He then grabs the candle he set aside. Digs out its base as well. Two small vials of cocaine emerge.

Grady places one vial in the dug-out space from the second stick. He takes the first stick, melts it with a lighter's flame. Next, he drips wax onto the other stick. It forms a seal over the vial. That one back in hiding, he places the other one in his pocket.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - MORNING

Darla's eldest, VANESSA NATHANSON (16), stands at the door. She watches Grady sleep. His covers don't cover; they reach for the floor. Vanessa enters, fix his sheets, tucks him in.

VANESSA
I fucking hate you.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Andrew works on a portrait of an unaware LYNDIA CARR (15). Meathead ROB HILDRETH (15) pokes the back of Andrew's neck with a compass. Andrew jams up the nearly finished drawing. He rips it from his pad, balls it up, sticks it in his bag.

Teacher CAITLIN FOUNTAIN (30s) is at the head of the class.

GIRL 1
We just don't understand. How do you not have a boyfriend?

CAITLIN
Okay. Personal time is over.

BOY 1
I know the deal. You're a man hater.

CAITLIN
No, I love men. It's children I hate.
So how are your essays coming along?

ANDREW
How long do they have to be?

BOY 1

Same question every time. As long as it takes to get the job done.

(off Caitlin)

He slows us down. Andrew, you're not cut out for AP classes. Get with the dumb kids in General Pop.

CAITLIN

Write whatever you feel is enough.

Caitlin approaches Boy 1. Casually balls a sheet of paper.

CAITLIN

You guys shouldn't be able to sum yourselves up that quickly anyway.

GIRL 1

I have a huge Bio test. I don't know if I can write more than a page.

CAITLIN

Look, I sympathize with the fact that your other teachers can't pass muster with the Board of Ed based on a charm offensive alone. Greg -- behind you.

Boy 1/Greg turns. Caitlin hits him with the balled up paper. Kids laugh. Caitlin speaks into Boy 1's ear.

CAITLIN

I don't care how much Daddy pays in tuition, or if he can have me fired.
(retreats)

Do you have something to say?

GREG

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

Louder.

GREG

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

He has a name.

GREG

I'm sorry. Andrew.

CAITLIN

The assignment: By asking you to write a mock college essay, I'm allowing you to go off the reservation and have fun. Since you're presenting it in front of the class, you might as well embrace the horror of it all. Plus, it's the one creative assignment I get to grade every year, so it's important to me on a personal level.

BOY 2

No wonder you don't have a boyfriend.

Kids laugh.

LYNDA

Ms. Fountain, do you really not have a boyfriend? You are so beautiful.

CAITLIN

I'm trying as hard as I can; believe me. I don't wake up like this. As for men? Slim. Pickings.

LYNDA

But aren't older guys so much more mature? College guys are so mature.

Girls murmur approval. Caitlin stares. She then turns around, writes in large, chalk letters: It Only Gets Worse.

LYNDA

What are you looking for in a guy?

CAITLIN

(beat)

Someone to go to garage sales with.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - DAY

As he sleeps, Meghan's eyes are right up against Grady's. After a moment, his eyelids flutter open.

MEGHAN

Are you awake?

GRADY

Shouldn't you be in school?

MEGHAN

I might have the flu.

Grady moves away. After a moment, Meghan moves closer.

MEGHAN

We have to pick up Vanessa.

A beat. Meghan blows air at Grady's forehead. His eyes open. Then close. Meghan blows again, and Grady palms her face.

GRADY

You were adopted.

MEGHAN

So were you.

GRADY

I wasn't. But more or less, yeah.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The first real look at the indomitable Vanessa Nathanson.

Also, JOCELYN FELDMAN (16), WILL HERZOG (16), KICKER, and COACH. They lounge, close to where Kicker boots field goals.

Will & Coach have a bag of balls between them. Set up kicks.

JOCELYN

You going to the Art Show?

VANESSA

My brother's gonna present.

Kicker pulls up lame. They're testing an injury.

COACH

That's it. We're done here.

Kicker and Coach head off. Will joins the girls on the grass.

WILL

I thought you were a vegan. Why are you eating McDonald's?

VANESSA

Because I love McDonald's. It's delicious and tastes like America.

She and Jocelyn exchange high fives. Jocelyn, to Will:

JOCELYN

Didn't they fire you?

WILL

I was stealing too many hamburgers.

VANESSA

What's "too many"? Don't they have thousands in the back?

WILL

Do you know Ronald McDonald?

VANESSA

Obviously. He's terrifying.

WILL

Especially the newer version they introduced last year. So, Ron has a rival who cosplays as a prisoner.

VANESSA

The Hamburglar. We know.

WILL

Well, McDonald's HQ in Illinois? They take hamburger theft seriously.

VANESSA

This will be a stupid story. A story as convenient as it is precious. And kinda sad. A million senior citizens, parents, and high school school kids who actually do need the money can't get a job at McDonald's. But for you, it's just a funny story to tell on a field trip when you're trying to act cool in front of some senior bros on the lacrosse team.

WILL

"A story as convenient as it is precious"? Who are you trying to impress? You sound like the blonde chick we're reading in English.

VANESSA

"The blonde chick we're reading in English"? Jane Austen?

WILL

Relax.

VANESSA

One, don't tell me to relax. Two, Jane Austen had brown hair.

WILL

How would you know? She lived 1000 years ago. Was Shakespeare a man?

VANESSA

Jane Austen died at 42 in the 1800s.
My mom's an editor; Shakespeare was
definitely a man. We know these
things, because we have paintings.

(beat)

Don't fuck with me, William. You're
out of your league.

WILL

It's cool that your mom's an editor.
My dad's a greeter at Walmart. And
he said Shakespeare is a conspiracy.
That it was probably three women
who did the heavy lifting: His cook,
a seamstress, and a chambermaid.

VANESSA

That's funny. Are you finished?

WILL

There's a reason your parents pay 60
grand a year, while scholar-athletes
pay nothing.

Vanessa gathers her books, heads off.

WILL

Vanessa: No one calls me "William."
It's just "Will."

Regarding Kicker/Coach testing a leg, Will turns to Jocelyn.

WILL

I think she can kick.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady and Meghan pull up to Andrew and Vanessa's school.

GRADY

What do you wanna listen to?

MEGHAN

Metallica. "Seek and Destroy."

GRADY

There are other bands out there.

MEGHAN

What's wrong with Metallica?

GRADY

They're gods, but there are better ways you can be spending your time.

MEGHAN

You're a music snob.

GRADY

Did you read the book I sent?

MEGHAN

What book?

GRADY

The Color Purple.

MEGHAN

I started then I stopped.

GRADY

Why?

MEGHAN

Cuz it's not about the color purple.

GRADY

It's not.

MEGHAN

It's about slavery.

GRADY

I'm glad that came across in the read.

MEGHAN

Also... Mommy said I'm not old enough.

GRADY

Mommy said you're not old enough?
You're old enough to know all the moves from the booty-shakin' videos, but you're not old enough to read *The Color Purple*?

Grady steps out, rests his arms on the car.

GRADY

Look at me. Don't go anywhere.

MEGHAN

I won't.

GRADY

The roads are different out here.

MEGHAN

I don't know how to drive.

GRADY

That's what I'm afraid of. Neither
did Vanessa when she was your age.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Ms. Caitlin Fountain (Andrew's teacher) puts up flyers.
They advertise her tutoring services. At the bottom of the
flyers are sliced strips with her phone number on them.

At the end of the hall, Grady sits across an office. GIRL
(16) and BOY (16) wait, sitting in chairs across from him.

Caitlin heads towards the office, and them. As she passes:

GIRL

I love your shoes. Who made them?

CAITLIN

I'm not sure.

BOY

They look expensive.

CAITLIN

They weren't that expensive.

GRADY

They were very expensive, and they're
Proenza Schouler... Do you have a job
interview at a better school?

CAITLIN

No, and they were a gift.

GRADY

Good for you. I bet you wrote one
heck of a thank you note.

CAITLIN

I did. A student's mom was
appreciative of my help, so...

GRADY

Oh, nice. It's that kind of school.
Sure. I can respect that.

Boy and Girl laugh.

CAITLIN

It's not "that kind of school." And how would you know the designer?

GRADY

My boss has me organize hers, so...

CAITLIN

Your boss.

GRADY

She carries herself like she's my boss, that's for sure. Technically, we're colleagues, but...

CAITLIN

She's your boss.

GRADY

Right. She has 500 shoes and 50 bags. And she always makes me...index them.

CAITLIN

That sounds great.

GRADY

It's funny you say that, cuz it's not great. It's actually pretty terrible.

Girl and Boy, completely engaged and fully invested.

GRADY

She takes off her shoes and just throws them anywhere she pleases. It's inconsiderate, and makes it that much harder for me. She also throws her tissues all around the garbage, and not actually in the garbage, but that's a whole other can of worms.

CAITLIN

I appreciate the peacocking and showing off the fact that you're the only guy in a ten-mile radius who knows who Proenza Schouler is.

GRADY

Uh, I'm new around here, but we are in Los Angeles. I can't be the only guy who's more curious about a girl's shoes than --

CAITLIN

Yeah. That's not okay.

GRADY
That came out wrong.

CAITLIN
It sure as hell did.

INT. CAR - DAY

Motionless, Meghan listens to ear-splitting death metal.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Back with Grady/Caitlin. Boy/Girl, loving every moment.

CAITLIN
If you want to walk around, you
have to get proper authorization.

GRADY
That's alright. I'm just gonna
freelance it and check out the
trophy cases or whatever.

CAITLIN
Are you here to pick someone up? We
worry about threats to the children.

GRADY
Do I look a threat to children?

CAITLIN
Textbook. White male, 30 to 40...
Five-foot-eleven.

GRADY
... Six foot? Six feet tall?

CAITLIN
It's always the clean-cut ones who
have a little girl tied up in the
basement with duct tape and jumper
cables. Maybe a red plastic bucket.

GRADY
That's a little too specific.

CAITLIN
I asked if you were here for someone.

GRADY
I'm a threat to children? Back to you
and your red plastic bucket, creeper.
And yes, I'm here to pick someone up.

CAITLIN

I meant a child.

GRADY

... She's not answering her phone.

CAITLIN

I'm sure you get that a lot. Describe her.

GRADY

Well she's very bright, very pretty. A little standoff-ish, but that's a function of her intelligence and like, The Invisible Hand of the Patriarchy or whatever.

CAITLIN

Ohhhh... You're one of those.

Caitlin heads to the office doorway.

CAITLIN

Mrs. Witter, can you be a dear and help this person find his child?

Caitlin heads off, never looks back. Grady watches. A moment, until he rips off a flyer strip that advertises her services.

INT. GYM - DAY

Previously, Vanessa was sitting in on Kicker's practice. Now, with her soccer TEAMMATES kicking in the background, she sees Grady. He approaches, they converge.

GRADY

Andrew said you're pretty mad at me.

VANESSA

I'm not mad at you.

GRADY

No?

VANESSA

I was. At one point I was. But now I realize I should accept you for who and what you are.

Anticipating this for a year, Vanessa lays into him.

VANESSA

I was watching the 30 for 30 about Darryl Strawberry and Dwight Gooden.

(MORE)

VANESSA (cont'd)

They both had New York in the palm of their hands at a young age. Just like you. And both they had their demons, just like you... And you know what they did with the city in the palm of their hands? You know what they said?

She extends her palm.

VANESSA

Here. Take this. I don't want it... You know what the problem with having heroes is? They have a nasty habit of disappointing you in the end.

GRADY

Vanessa, stop. I fucked up, I know I fucked up, and no one knows I fucked up more than I know I fucked up. But I'm in a bad spot right now --

VANESSA

Well boo-hoo, Buster. You put the rest of us in a bad spot.

GRADY

That's not the point.

VANESSA

The point is that people cared about you. I had shit invested in you.

GRADY

There's --

VANESSA

I'm speaking... I had shit invested in you. I'm an extension of you. Not by blood maybe, but something more important than that.

GRADY

What's more important than blood?

VANESSA

Love.

GRADY

Vanessa, for however long I'm here, I'm not gonna let you beat me down. I'm not your father; I'm your friend, and you're not gonna take me granted.

VANESSA

I take you for granted? Wow. Wow.

Soccer balls fly across the gym.

GRADY

I gotta admit. I was hoping for a more enthusiastic reception.

VANESSA

Yeah? And I was hoping for a little more humility.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Darla enters, sees Grady at a desk. A staring contest.

GRADY

I've been brainstorming book titles.

(beat)

Have You Ever Been Bullied by a Female Colleague in a Professional Workplace Environment? (The "M" in "Monday" Stands for "Revenge")

DARLA

Did you get any work done today?

GRADY

I did.

DARLA

Yeah? What did you do?

GRADY

I actually read the love letters... that Napoleon... Sent to Josephine.

DARLA

And?

GRADY

(crinkling his nose)

They weren't very good.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Andrew looks at the stars through a telescope. Grady joins him, salt-and-pepper notebook in hand.

ANDREW

What are you up to?

GRADY

Just wondering how I got here.

ANDREW

You and me both.

GRADY

What's your girl situation like?

ANDREW

My stuff doesn't translate. Fine, it's California, but compared to your average New York girl, anything else is a step down.

GRADY

Well, it's New York. Even the ugly girls are hot.

ANDREW

There is one girl. Lynda. I've never talked to her, but we're in the same English class. We have this mock college essay due, and we have to read them in front of the class. I want to impress her, but I don't know what to write.

GRADY

Let's see if I can help.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

They look at Andrew's portraits: Darla, Vanessa, and Meghan.

ANDREW

What was it like in rehab?

GRADY

It's all cleaning. You clean toilets, and they make you clean them again to test your patience. The idea is, the world's gonna test you, so you can't turn to drugs when you're frustrated.

ANDREW

What happens if you don't hand in a manuscript?

GRADY

I can't be the first writer who took the money, and didn't turn a book in.

ANDREW

You would be. From the conversations I've overheard, that's what makes your situation so unique, and so terrifying for everyone involved.

GRADY

The draft is due in two weeks. Then it's a breach of contract type-deal. I have to check.

ANDREW

Mom says you've probably been working on the same 50 pages for the past two years. I was hoping you had the final draft in a safe somewhere.

GRADY

Eh. Somewhere in-between.

ANDREW

Everything in life is somewhere in-between. You're the king of saying everything, without saying anything.

They see a painting of Diane, Grady's late girlfriend.

ANDREW

We had fun that day.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Grady and Meghan wear green facial masks, stare in the mirror.

MEGHAN

You lost weight.

GRADY

I had to go on a hunger strike.
(off her look)
It's when you stop eating.

MEGHAN

Why would you do that?

GRADY

To prove a point. Couple of points, really.

MEGHAN

Knowing how you are, I'm sure you showed them a thing or two.

GRADY

Yeah, it didn't work out like that.

MEGHAN

Why not?

He takes a towel off her head, brushes out the knots.

GRADY

They had a lot of Kryptonite there, you know what I mean? A lot of smart people worked there. I think most of my little schemes would've benefited from...I dunno, a little more effort during the planning stages, maybe?

MEGHAN

My skin is burning.

GRADY

That means it's working.

MEGHAN

... So how come you use drugs?

GRADY

People who get in too deep, they often don't like something about themselves. Their past...present...

MEGHAN

You don't like yourself?

GRADY

I love myself. I just don't always ...like myself.

MEGHAN

I understand.

GRADY

Good. At least one of us does.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Vanessa, Will, Jocelyn, HEATHER CHURCH (16). All at a table. Heather leans on Will's arm, indicating that they're dating.

WILL

Okay, favorite Monopoly property.

JOCELYN

Indiana Avenue.

HEATHER

Boardwalk.

VANESSA

... I'm gonna say Baltic Avenue.

HEATHER

Why? Boardwalk's better.

WILL

But it's not fun. She's being
ironic. Boardwalk's too obvious.

JOCELYN

What's yours?

WILL

I've always liked Marvin Gardens.
It'd be a good name for band. You
could see them playing on Saturday
Night Live. "Ladies and gentleman,
once again... Marvin Gardens."

HEATHER

I don't get it.

WILL

Anyway. I hate group work, so let's
get this out of the way. Vanessa,
you're gonna hafta pull your weight.

VANESSA

It's Jocelyn we have to worry about.
Watch: She'll ask to go nurse a lot.

Will smiles. He and Vanessa hold eye contact.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Darla holds court. Grady and Meghan sit in front of her.

DARLA

I'm getting déjà vu. Feels like our
Doubleday revision meetings.

GRADY

Doesn't it?

DARLA

No, it doesn't, come to think of it.
You've lost your innocence, and I'm
getting old... Or maybe I've lost my
innocence, and you're getting old...
Do you have pages for me?

GRADY

I don't have those, but do have this.

He hands her the strip from Caitlin's flyer.

GRADY

It's a tutor for Meghan. Flu or no flu, she's missing a lot of school. You don't want her to fall behind.

DARLA

Agreed. Now, NA meeting. Let's go.

GRADY

Can you not ruin this by --

DARLA

Ruin what? You failed me personally and professionally.

GRADY

A tree fell in the woods, and no one was there to hear it: Good book, great editing, rave reviews. You can't take it personally when people don't wanna spend 26.95 on a sob story.

DARLA

You do.

GRADY

What, take it personally?

DARLA

Yeah.

GRADY

... How else should I take it?

(beat)

What about you? I don't think it's a big deal that you're not dating, cuz I know the kids come first. But I do think it's a big deal that I can't even ask you about it. To me, that's troubling. That's a concern.

DARLA

This isn't about me.

GRADY

I know; it's about me. It's always about me. That's half the problem.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Andrew crosses paths with Lynda.

LYNDA

Hey. Don't let Greg get to you.
He's like that with everyone.

She continues on her way. Andrew smiles.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady. Pulls up in front of a building.

INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - DAY

Grady walks down a hall. Takes note of an EXIT sign. As he nears the door to freedom, he looks into the NA room. Sees a face that's been ravaged by drugs. Grady enters.

He sits by an ADDICT near a window. Addict whistles/leaves. Grady knows Addict is about to make a drug deal. He follows.

INT. DARLA'S CAR - DAY

Darla waits, wanting to be sure that Grady stays put.

INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - DAY

Grady, through the door. Sees a sketchy DEALER in a car.

INT. DARLA'S CAR - DAY

Satisfied, Darla drives out of the lot. Before she can grab pole position, Grady and Dealer pull out from around the building. An unsuspecting Darla pulls up behind them.

INT. DEALER'S CAR (INTERCUT) - DAY

Grady puts a rock in a stem, prepares to smoke. He and Dealer reach a light. Darla's about to pull up in the adjacent lane.

Grady hits the pipe. Darla pulls up, windows align. When she looks, Grady's nowhere in sight. He lays low under the window-line. Darla, oblivious. Dealer looks at her with haunted eyes.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Vanessa and Jocelyn cross paths with football PLAYERS.

KID 1

I'm Jeff; I'm Will's friend. I got
you some cookies from First Street.

(MORE)

KID 1 (cont'd)
 (off Vanessa)
 Don't be shy.

Vanessa accepts.

KID 1
 Let me know if you like them.

They head off. Vanessa looks at Jocelyn. "What was that?"

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grady, sans Dealer, burns time and drugs until Darla arrives.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Grady in a tub with lots of bubbles. Andrew sits on the edge.

ANDREW
 Lynda stopped me in the hall and
talked to me. I don't believe it.

Andrew produces paper, hands it to Grady, who hands it back.

He first dries his hands on Andrew's pants, then takes it.

GRADY
 What is this?

ANDREW
 That assignment my teacher gave us.
 That mock college essay I told you
 about? She's all amped up about it.

GRADY
 These are like the writing exercises
 your mom gives me. Juvenile busywork.
 You should introduce them.

ANDREW
 Yeah, right. Over my dead body.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa searches through Grady's belongings for anything fun.

Finds fruit, takes it. Finds his cocaine candles, takes them.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Darla sits before two SUPERIORS. High on the org chart.

SUPERIOR 1
 I noticed that Grady came by.

DARLA

He did. You should've popped in.

(beat)

I told him that if we show an outline,
maybe we can buy some time.

SUPERIOR 1

How is he doing?

DARLA

He's doing well.

SUPERIOR 1

... How is he doing?

Darla, fearing for her job.

DARLA

I don't know.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

After school. Soccer practice, outdoors this time. Vanessa plays defense. The action is upfield. As such, she stands near the sideline and negotiates with Will.

WILL

Play football with us. I know you.
You're bored.

VANESSA

You don't know anything about me.

WILL

You're intense; you want a challenge.

VANESSA

I appreciate your friend and his
candy, but I'm not interested.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin grades papers. Andrew's perched on a desk.

ANDREW

We have a family friend staying with
us. I showed him the assignment, and
he said to give you this.

He hands her a sealed envelope. Caitlin tries to open it.

CAITLIN

Is this a wax seal?

ANDREW
He's different.

CAITLIN
What is he, the Duke of Windsor?

ANDREW
No.

CAITLIN
Is he an Earl?

ANDREW
No.

CAITLIN
Is he a Count?

ANDREW
No, he's just...creative.

CAITLIN
(reading)
Oh, okay... Really...? I understand.

She puts it back in the envelope, drops it in the garbage.

CAITLIN
Time for you to run along and play
Dungeons and Dragons or...Weeknite.
Whatever it is boys do.

ANDREW
Dungeons and Dragons? I play Magic
the Gathering.

CAITLIN
Like there's a difference. I gotta go.

ANDREW
Anything fun?

CAITLIN
Nope. Tutoring session. Tutoring,
tutoring, tutoring. Tu. Tor. Ing.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grady and Andrew arrive home, only to find an unknown car
(Caitlin's) in the driveway. It's near Andrew's hockey net.
Andrew sees that a tire has ruined the base.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ms. Fountain tutors Meghan. Grady appears.

CAITLIN

What are you doing here?

GRADY

What are you doing here?

MEGHAN

You know each other?

GRADY

We met at school yesterday.

CAITLIN

This is awkward.

GRADY

Right? Especially for you... So what do you teach?

MEGHAN

English.

CAITLIN

Uh, that's Honors English, mind you. I've made the leap. *Gatsby*, *Catcher*, *A Tale of Two Cities*... CliffsNotes.

(beat)

It is "CliffsNotes," by the way, not "Cliff" Notes. Most people say, "Cliff Notes." But it's "Cliffs."

GRADY

Now we know.

Andrew enters and immediately plops face-down on a couch. As a result, he mistakes Caitlin's female form for his sister's.

ANDREW

Vanessa, your friend's piece of shit car is blocking the net.

He flips over. Eyes lock on Caitlin's. Neither of them move.

ANDREW

See, what happened was...

Caitlin looks at Grady, then back at Andrew. The wax seal.

CAITLIN

How do we move on from this?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Darla, Grady, and the children hash things out.

DARLA

Andrew, I'm concerned about boundaries. She never connected you and Meghan having the same last name?

GRADY

When you made the appointment, you didn't know she was Andrew's teacher from like, parents' night and parent-teacher conferences?

DARLA

Oh, no one goes to those things.

ANDREW

There's also the separation of Church and State factor. I saw Mrs. Bell with her family at Costco a few months ago, and it's been weird ever since. She's embarrassed, and I'm embarrassed for her. Plus, she was also wearing jeans.

VANESSA

You adore Ms. Fountain.

ANDREW

I do. Mom, can you cover your ears and go to the living room?

Darla leaves. Andrew turns to Vanessa.

ANDREW

I need to be able to count on your vote on this one. I don't wanna be streaming AI porn while my teacher's here, much less have her pissing and shitting in the downstairs bathroom. Cuz you know that's the next step: Denial, Anger, Bargaining... What's next? Oh, that's right: Pissing and shitting in the downstairs bathroom.

Darla enters.

DARLA

You watch AI porn...? You stream it?

ANDREW

You were listening.

GRADY

She should stay for pizza.

VANESSA

Are you trying to fuck Ms. Fountain?

DARLA

Vanessa, go to your room!

Vanessa leaves. Andrew leaves. Comes back, takes Meghan, too.

DARLA

Well?

GRADY

Well what?

DARLA

Are you trying to fuck Ms. Fountain?

GRADY

Do you think as a writer, I'd ever like an English teacher? What would our pillow talk be about? Dangling prepositions? That can't be fun.

DARLA

She's stunning.

GRADY

I suppose. In a conventional way. If you're into that sort of thing.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Caitlin's flawless face. Darla and pizza arrive mid-scene.

CAITLIN

Vanessa, you're a junior, right? Have you been looking at colleges?

VANESSA

I'm applying to Smith. Early decision.

GRADY

What about Harvard-Princeton-Yale, or schools like Wesleyan? Or even Berkeley if you wanna stay out here?

VANESSA

I'm applying to Smith.

GRADY

Smith. Hitching your wagon to Smith.

CAITLIN

Do you have a problem with her attending an all-women's college?

GRADY

No, I just wish she would check out Wellesley or fucking Mount Holyoke.

VANESSA

He's not like that. He's like other things, but he's not like that.

GRADY

I want Vanessa to go to Harvard, cuz not everyone gets to go to college, much less the top school in the world.

VANESSA

Ms. Fountain, my mom went to Harvard and my dad went to Harvard. Then they met at the Harvard Club in Manhattan.

CAITLIN

Wow. That's wonderful.

VANESSA

It's tragic.

GRADY

I wish you could hear yourself talk. Harvard is racist to all those Asian kids and all those Indian kids. And if anyone's gonna benefit from that gross miscarriage of justice, my Asian friends would want it to be you.

VANESSA

I'm not going to Harvard. You can't learn anything from smart people.

CAITLIN

Ultimately it's up to you, and I'm sure you'll get in. But what about safety schools? Do you have one?

VANESSA

... Stanford. Soccer scholarship.

CAITLIN

And you, Sir? What do you do?

GRADY

Uh, I like to play basketball and baseball. I go to the beach a lot.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

I like to dance. I collect stamps.

CAITLIN

I was asking what you do-do.

DARLA

He's been minimizing shareholder value since 1987.

CAITLIN

No, seriously.

DARLA

No. Seriously.

VANESSA

Grady likes to play baseball in Central Park. He freebases cocaine in the locker room between innings. He claims there's a body/mind energy that informs his writing, but really, he just likes freebasing cocaine.

ANDREW

He's terrible. He's always in a good mood.

GRADY

(to Caitlin)

I have a question for you...and I'm so curious to hear your perspective. As a teacher... What've you noticed about Andrew that makes him special?

(beat)

I'll start.

Caitlin, not expecting an earnest, kind-hearted question.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Andrew takes pizza from the oven. Drops it, cheese side up.

He stares at it. Decides to put it back on the serving tray.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vanessa looks at Grady.

VANESSA

I can't eat pizza. Cook something.

GRADY

What is this, Charles in Charge?
Fuck a cook.

CAITLIN

There's a small child in the room.

GRADY

... I'm sorry, who are you again?

Darla enters, fills glasses. Andrew enters with the pizza, serves. Caitlin stands up to help.

DARLA

Sit, sit. You don't lift a finger in my house. I'm embarrassed it's pizza.

CAITLIN

Don't be silly. I wasn't expecting lobster bisque.

GRADY

Eating lobster goes against Meghan's personal ethics. She lives by a code. Listens to a lot of dude-bro podcasts.

CAITLIN

Why don't you like lobster?

MEGHAN

You tell her.

GRADY

She doesn't defend her views. Basically, lobsters mate for life. Did you know that?

VANESSA

Everyone knows that.

GRADY

I didn't know; neither did she. Sue us.

DARLA

Please do not. It's a sore spot lately.

GRADY

Anyway, when Meghan found out, it put a stop to lobster for all of us.

CAITLIN

Just lobster?

GRADY

A rabbit or a calf, they're cute, but they're not monogamous. They don't form a pair bond.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

But every time you eat a lobster,
you're robbing another lobster of its
life partner.

MEGHAN

And forever person... Isn't that sad?

GRADY

Mountain lions are monogamous. Foxes
...wolves...ducks. You don't eat ducks,
either, do you Meghan?

MEGHAN

No. They're also more greasy than
chicken... They are cuter, though.

CAITLIN

That factors in?

MEGHAN

I think so.

ANDREW

Prairie voles are monogamous.

VANESSA

Marmosets.

MEGHAN

I like your outfit, Ms. Fountain.

CAITLIN

Do you?

MEGHAN

Oh, yeah. It's totally boss.

Feeling at home, Caitlin smiles.

INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Vanessa is in the stacks. Will approaches.

VANESSA

Are you stalking me, William?

WILL

It's "Will." And no, I'm with my mom.
We just came from practice.

VANESSA

You're here with your mom?

WILL

Yeah, everyone's waiting for me...
Listen, you gotta help us out. We're
0-8, but we've lost three games by
less than a field goal. It's about
kicking under pressure, and no one on
the boys' soccer team has the goods.
Your coach thinks you can do it, our
coach thinks you can do it, and as far
as the guys go, everyone knows you
have the best legs on the team.

VANESSA

I have the best "legs" on the team?

WILL

I meant what I said. You have the
best legs on the team. Your kicking
leg and your plant leg.

VANESSA

I'm not gonna be that girl.

WILL

No, you're not. And it's too bad.

(beat)

My mom's tired. Everyone's waiting.

Will leaves. Vanessa eyes books, then looks for Will at the door. He reaches MRS. HERZOG, FOOTBALLERS. They're smiling and carrying on. They lack the angst that her family is steeped in.

Will turns, waves. Vanessa waves back sarcastically, so as to counteract the almost off-putting kindness. Will's mom thinks Vanessa is waving to her, as do Footballers. So they all wave. Vanessa can't help but be charmed.

LATER Darla eyes a HANDSOME MAN. His PARTNER is obscured.

HANDSOME MAN

When I used to see a woman with a ring
on her finger, I had to superimpose
myself onto her to figure out if she
was married or not. I had to imagine
my body rotated 180 degrees to sit in
the same position she was in. Then I
could match up my left hand with her
hand left to see if she was single.

Darla smiles, until his Partner appears. Darla recedes.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

As he did earlier, Andrew works on a portrait of Lynda.

INT. CAR/EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Grady sits in the front seat, covered in grease. Engine work.

He takes out a vial. Grady dips a key, sniffs coke. Soon, Andrew appears. He settles into the back seat.

GRADY

You working on the Art Show?

ANDREW

I need your help with the mock college essay for Ms. Fountain.

(beat)

What do you think about her?

GRADY

She's a thoughtful person.

ANDREW

She's ridiculously pretty.

GRADY

I'm not moved by a girl's appearance.

ANDREW

Oh, God. That's something chads say when they date the prettiest girls in the world. I think she likes you.

GRADY

... "Like" is a strong word.

Grady exits to work on the engine. Andrew follows him.

ANDREW

If Diane were still alive, she'd want you to move on with your life.

GRADY

Maybe. She'd also appreciate that I can't just move on from her so easily.

ANDREW

... Why did you get into cocaine?

GRADY

It helped focus the writing.

ANDREW

When did you get into cocaine?

Concerned, Grady wipes his dirty hands with a rag.

ANDREW

In New York, I saw your boy Frankie.

GRADY

... What did he say?

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Meghan, in uniform, blends a shake for her softball game.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The family sits in the bleachers. A foul ball is hit.

TEAMMATES

Holy cow / the ball went foul /
Mooooove it over / Hey-hey, whaddaya
say / Hit that ball the other way /
Hit it high, hit it low / Hit it down
to Mexico!

In the dugout, Meghan and her TEAMMATES sing more cheers.

TEAMMATES

We don't play with Barbie dolls /
We just put the bat to the ball /
We don't wear no miniskirts / We just
wear our pants and shirts / We don't
drink no lemonade / We stick to our
Gatorade.

Andrew sees Lynda across the way. She sees him, too.

TEAMMATES

Strawberry shortcake / Banana split /
We make your team / Look like / Shift it
to left / Shift it to the right / Stand
up / Sit down / Fight! Fight! Fight!

EXT. STAND - DAY

Andrew's in line to buy a snack. Lynda saddles up to him.

LYNDA

Hey. Why didn't you come over to me?

ANDREW

What?

LYNDA

I saw you during the game. We know
each other now; don't be shy.

ANDREW

I didn't say hello cuz Rob Hildreth was right there. I don't wanna deal with that... I would be embarrassed to admit that I'm being bullied, but he's probably hurting inside... Also, if he messes with me and I ignore it, he won't get bored and move on to the kids who can't handle it.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

After Meghan's game, Lynda underhands softballs to Andrew.

LYNDA

Why don't you just stand up to him?

ANDREW

There's a lotta after school special, propaganda bullshit about how all bullies are cowards. And if you just stand up to 'em, they'll respect you.

LYNDA

Yeah. Just walk into school, first period, and punch him in the mouth.

ANDREW

This isn't prison, this is high school. This is real life.

LYNDA

Girls want men, Andrew. Not boys.

ANDREW

I'm fifteen.

LYNDA

It's more the principle behind it.

She underhands a softball. He hits it, but meekly.

ANDREW

Jail has like...order.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady reads from a marble notebook. Enter Darla.

DARLA

We need to have a conversation.

GRADY

I'm editing.

DARLA

You need to write, cuz they will sue you. St. Martin's has hungry, in-house counsel. Their lawyers like desk duty cops who haven't seen action in years.

GRADY

They're sharks?

DARLA

Yes. And you're chum in the water. They can't wait to sue a piece of shit like you.

GRADY

... I always wanted to be a lawyer.

DARLA

You'll be blackballed. Even if you write the Great American Novel.

GRADY

What if I already did?

INT. FOYER - DAY

DOORBELL. Grady answers. It's Caitlin.

GRADY

Hi, can I help you?

Caitlin offers a megawatt smile.

CAITLIN

You know what your problem is? You have a lot of unearned confidence.

GRADY

Is that my problem?

CAITLIN

It's one of them.

GRADY

Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit. And with me and Darla, if you want to play ball, I was made Deputy long ago, the kids are on board, and a system is in place.

Caitlin brushes past him.

CAITLIN
Sorry, slugger. There's a new
Sheriff in town.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Grady and Andrew play "Asses Up" against the garage door.

ANDREW
"Girls want men, Andrew. Not boys."

GRADY
That's what she said?

ANDREW
That is what. She fucking said.

GRADY
But you're fifteen.

ANDREW
I know. I'm too old for this shit.

GRADY
When I got arrested, you know what
the cop who took my prints said?
(off Andrew)
"This too, shall pass."

ANDREW
I'm sure that was comforting.

GRADY
It wasn't. But in retrospect, it
was kind of profound.

ANDREW
Everything's kind of profound in
retrospect... It sucks, cuz I
have Lynda whispering advice in
one ear, Mom in the other --

GRADY
You told your mom about this?

ANDREW
I'm a Mama's boy; you know that.
(beat)
Besides. I have nothing to hide.

Andrew throws the ball against the wall. Grady fields it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Grady works on a crossword puzzle. Darla prunes a plant.
Enter Caitlin and Meghan.

GRADY

Ms. Fountain. You're Irish, right?
I'm Irish.

MEGHAN

You're not Irish; you're Jewish.

GRADY

Woah. Ease up there, Fraulein; I'm
half-Jewish. And don't say it like
it's a bad thing.

CAITLIN

She didn't mean it like that.

GRADY

Maybe not, but the little brown-
shirt's tone was concerning, no?
(beat)
Anyway. I was just telling Darla
about my best friend from rehab,
this kid Lashaun Scantlebury.
Lashaun was obsessed with blonde-
haired girls; that's all he ever
talked about. Thing is, he was only
interested in blondes who are Irish,
cuz he says there's a sociocultural
hierarchy of blondes. With Nordic
girls at the top, German girls in
the middle, and Irish girls at the
bottom. Now, this is Lashaun
speaking, not me. But his whole
attraction was based on his theory
that that blonde Irish girls are
like the n-words of blondes.

At the sink, Darla closes her eyes.

ANDREW

You're an asshole.

DARLA

You're the asshole. Go to your room.

ANDREW

I'm the asshole? I'm the asshole?

He gets up, then places his hand on Vanessa's shoulder as a
means of dramatically addressing her.

ANDREW

He just called my English teacher
the n-word, and I'm the asshole.

He leaves. Darla, to Grady:

DARLA

What was the point of that? To
make her uncomfortable?

GRADY

I'm sorry.

DARLA

You're not. And why is someone's
pain fodder for your punchline?

Grady taps his pencil against the newspaper.

GRADY

The reason I asked if I she's Irish
was because of the crossword puzzle.
(to Caitlin)
What's an eight-letter word for
"bagpipes"?

CAITLIN

(beat)

Warpipes. And bagpipes are Scottish.

GRADY

They're originally Irish.

CAITLIN

They're originally Persian... And I
am Irish, by the way.

GRADY

I thought so. I'm from Long Island,
which is -- you know -- everything
you've imagined and more, so, I do
know a few things when it comes to
Irish girls... Irish girls...are
always right.

Caitlin calls back to Lashaun.

CAITLIN

You went to rehab?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Grady and Grady exit the house, stand on the porch. Grady
slaps his salt-and-pepper notebook against his hands.

CAITLIN

Do you want to maybe...do something tomorrow night?

GRADY

You don't mean like a date, right?
Cuz I'm not in a place where I --

CAITLIN

Not a date, no... God no... I just don't get to spend time with people my own age. You're in the same boat, and to be honest, I'm bored. Also... You seem like a good person for me to complain about things to.

GRADY

I'll ask Darla.

CAITLIN

It was her idea. She gave me the skinny on you when you were in the basement. Let me give you my number.

GRADY

I have it... I mean, I don't have it, I just don't need it. Darla's got it.

CAITLIN

Cool. Call or text when you're free.

GRADY

I'll call you... I'll call at three.

Caitlin sees he doesn't play games. Heads to her car. Turns.

CAITLIN

One more thing... Date or no date?

(beat)

I'm a flowers and candy kinda girl.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family eats dinner.

DARLA

This is nice. When was the last time we all ate together?

VANESSA

... There's a football game the same night as the Art Show. Does anyone wanna walk over after Andrew's done?

DARLA
 I'll probably be tired.
 (to Grady)
 Do you wanna talk about the meeting?

ANDREW
 You have to go to another meeting
 tomorrow. It's a daily thing.

DARLA
 He's going... I read that 80% of
 addicts relapse within 72 hours of
 leaving a treatment center.

GRADY
 It's less than that. I'm sure you
 read that somewhere reputable, but
 it's less than that.

His thinly veiled confession goes unnoticed.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Grady wanders the stacks. Arrives at Doris Lessing's
Canopus in Argos: Archives. He pulls it from the shelf.

LATER Grady copies a passage. He soon produces a vial, heads
 to the bathroom, and enters a stall. He slides the slab lock.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Andrew and Vanessa play ping-pong with Jocelyn.

ANDREW
 17-5, yours.

VANESSA
 17-4.

ANDREW
 Fine, 17-4.

VANESSA
 No, not "fine." I want you to
understand that it's 17-4.

They volley.

JOCELYN
 What's going with you and Will?

VANESSA
 William? He's not on my radar.

JOCELYN

He's so cute.

VANESSA

He's not my type.

ANDREW

He's really down-to-earth, Vanessa.

VANESSA

I don't like down-to-earth. I want
a boy with their head in the clouds.
With dreams... Come out with us.

ANDREW

What are you doing?

VANESSA

We're going to the pool hall. Your
girl Lynda usually shows up.

ANDREW

Does she?

VANESSA

Come. We never hang out anymore.

Under Grady's influence, the siblings are growing closer.

EXT. NATURE PRESERVE - DAY

Sunset. Grady picks flowers.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - DAY

Grady gets dressed for Caitlin. Meghan walks in, sits down.

MEGHAN

Why don't you wear your sneakers?

GRADY

I would, but you can't wear
sneakers for something like this.

Vanessa enters, sits with Meghan.

VANESSA

I don't like that shirt on you.

GRADY

You wouldn't like anything on me.
Besides, you guys lack the male
perspective of this sort of thing.

Andrew at the door. Takes in the scene.

ANDREW

Is that what you're gonna wear?

Vanessa/Meghan laugh. Grady shuts the door on Andrew.

INT. DARLA'S ROOM - DAY

Darla's in bed. A hand towel on her face. Grady enters.

GRADY

Are you feeling okay?

DARLA

Grady... I'm fat.

GRADY

Jesus Christ; you're not fat, Darla. You weigh like a hundred thirty-six pounds. Besides: Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes.

DARLA

Are you insane? Women come in all shapes and sizes. Beauty is a much, much smaller category.

Grady sits.

GRADY

I don't wanna go.

DARLA

You can't love yourself until you let go of Diane.

GRADY

People have their demons. You edited a book about mine. My parents didn't give me what parents give their kids, so to write a book? That's conquering demons, and yes, letting go. Allow me some self-pity over Diane, cuz over the years, I've had demons on top of demons... You and your stupid books.

DARLA

You and your stupid you... In case you haven't noticed, you and I are dinosaurs on a collision course with extinction. So any urgency I convey is about money, not art.

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)

It's sad, but let's not conflate the two, cuz that's what got us in trouble last time.

GRADY

I can respect that.

DARLA

You better. Like it or not, Art is Dead; Cash is King. Back to basics.

INT. FOYER - DAY

DOORBELL. Andrew open the door a tiny bit. Peers through. Caitlin SLAMS it against him. Andrew recoils.

CAITLIN

Don't even front, Nathanson. Know your role.

She enters. Meghan appears.

CAITLIN

Hey, chica.

MEGHAN

Hey, girlfriend.

ANDREW

Her name is Ms. Fountain.

CAITLIN

Are you jealous that your sister and I are like, bros? While all you have is...Grady? Who may become my friend?

ANDREW

You got the claws sunk in. I see you.

CAITLIN

I'll bring her back in one piece. Don't wait up; don't be a jackass.

ANDREW

You're a teacher. You can't curse.

CAITLIN

A jackass is a donkey.

ANDREW

You're a teacher. You can't curse.

Caitlin leans into his ear.

CAITLIN

I can do whatever I want, pendejo.

Andrew holds on her, calls up the stairs.

ANDREW

Hey, Grady? Ms. Fountain is here!

(beat)

And don't keep her waiting! She totally changed her hair for you!

Mortified, Caitlin closes her eyes. Grady comes down.

GRADY

You showed up.

CAITLIN

Looks that way.

Caitlin sees a vase. Drops her guard.

CAITLIN

You got me flowers?

GRADY

You told me to.

CAITLIN

I was just being sassy. I didn't expect you to actually get them.

GRADY

I know. That's exactly why I did.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Meghan and Caitlin at the table. Grady at the counter. He opens Tupperware that Caitlin brought.

GRADY

Gingerbread men. Thank you. Are they laced with arsenic?

CAITLIN

Arsenic? Like *Flowers in the Attic*? I always wanted to read that.

GRADY

Have you? Great book. Great book. But yeah, the mom poisons her kids by lacing their gingerbread cookies with arsenic. The kids figure it out after one of the brothers dies, so they escape from the attic and run away.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

But...not before telling everyone at the reception how their mom tried to kill them all. It's a really good ending. Really well-executed.

MEGHAN

You ruined it for her.

GRADY

She's got tons of unread books at home. Oh, I almost forgot. I made a special flower formula so they stay fresh.

CAITLIN

What's wrong with water?

Grady begins replacing the flowers.

GRADY

Water alone doesn't cut it. You take a quart of water, add one tablespoon of vinegar, one teaspoon of sugar, one teaspoon of mouthwash...then just a little bit of dishwashing detergent. Liquid or powder; doesn't matter. And never put flowers in the fridge if there's fruit in there. Fruit releases ethylene gas, and ethylene gas makes them age faster.

DARLA (O.S.)

Hey Grady?

GRADY

Hey Darla?

DARLA (O.S.)

Do you think you could grab ahold of your sexuality and send Caitlin over?

GRADY

She's funny, right? That was a little inside joke with her and the kids and all. Darla's pretty cool as far as super serious people go.

CAITLIN

I like her.

GRADY

Interesting... Most women feel insignificant in her presence.

CAITLIN

Really?

GRADY

You should see what she does to men.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Darla pours wine. Caitlin eyes photos of Darla and writers.

CAITLIN

Is this you and...Jeffrey Dahmer?

DARLA

That's right. We did a book together in the 90s. Doubleday sent us to Wisconsin to visit him in prison. Believe you me, I did not want to be in that shot.

CAITLIN

A book? Like what, a biography?

DARLA

I voiced my opposition, believe me. Unfortunately, when you find yourself at the intersection of art and commerce, you recalibrate your moral compass and align yourself with some pretty loathsome creatures.

(beat)

Publishing is ugly people doing ugly business. You don't want to know how the sausage gets made. Literally, in Jeffrey's case... Sit down, sit down. May I pour you a glass of wine?

CAITLIN

I don't know if that's appropriate.

DARLA

(nodding briskly)

Sit down.

Caitlin quickly sits.

DARLA

Ms. Fountain... Do you know why I asked you to take Grady out?

CAITLIN

You wanted him to...get some air?

DARLA

No. I just think he would be less inclined to use drugs if his peer group included people like yourself.

CAITLIN

Oh.

DARLA

But that's not why I asked. At some point, Grady will leave, and I don't know anyone in Los Angeles. I was hoping that if you and Grady became friends, we could be friends, too.

(beat)

We could do...fun things.

CAITLIN

Okay. What would we do for fun?

DARLA

Good question. Well... What are the most expensive restaurants in town?

CAITLIN

Oh, wow. I know a few of the names from reading about them online. That said... I'm not sure if price is the best indicator of quality.

DARLA

Welllll, it's-gonna-have-to-do.

CAITLIN

Okay, there's Providence. Urasawa. There's an LA outpost of a French restaurant. Lamb... Lamb Bass...

DARLA

L'Ambassade d'Auvergne du Grenier St-Lazare?

CAITLIN

... I'd have to check, but that sounds about right. There's also Melisse, Mastro's, WP24 --

DARLA

Let's go there.

CAITLIN

Which one?

DARLA

All of them.

CAITLIN

Okay. Well I look forward to that.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady irons Vanessa's shirt. She considers her involvement in a potential love triangle involving Will and Heather.

VANESSA

You missed a crease. By the collar.

Annoyed, Grady looks at Vanessa. Then back at the shirt.

VANESSA

Grady... Have you ever like, stolen someone's girlfriend?

GRADY

What? Of course not. That's terrible.

VANESSA

You never stole someone's girlfriend?

GRADY

(stops ironing)

You can't steal someone's girlfriend. That assumes that women are property.

VANESSA

I never thought of it like that.

(beat)

Okay. So, have you ever moved in on anyone's girlfriend?

GRADY

Oh, fuck yeah. All the time.

VANESSA

Shifting gears: Monopoly. What would your favorite property be?

GRADY

St. James Place. It gets a little love, but not nearly enough.

VANESSA

Are you taking about me?

GRADY

I'm talking about St. James Place. No one gets excited about landing there.

VANESSA
I like Baltic Avenue.

GRADY
Baltic's great.

VANESSA
You don't like Boardwalk?

GRADY
I mean, if you're playing the game,
Boardwalk and Park Place are where
you wanna be. But they're not cool.

VANESSA
Baltic's cool?

GRADY
It's got street cred. Baltic and
Mediterranean are like the low-income
housing projects of Monopoly.

He finishes ironing her shirt, tosses it at her.

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Vanessa runs the table vs. Jocelyn. Sees Will, Footballers.

TABLE

Andrew plays with Lynda. Sees his bully Hildreth, looming.

LYNDA
Your sister is really pretty.

ANDREW
That's the feedback I get... She hates
the attention. Sometimes she dyes her
hair weird colors cuz she thinks girls
in L.A. don't take her seriously as an
academic powerhouse.

LYNDA
I wish people wouldn't take me
seriously as an academic powerhouse.

As Andrew sets his shot, Hildreth grabs the butt of his stick.

HILDRETH
What's up, Baby GAP? You here with
Lynda? She checks me out sometimes.

ANDREW
I bet. I'm sure you're her type.

HILDRETH

Is that supposed to be a back-handed compliment?

ANDREW

It's not supposed to be any kind of compliment.

Hildreth SLAPS Andrew. Will notices, Vanessa doesn't.

ANDREW

Stop.

HILDRETH

Stop? You're such a bitch.

Andrew calmly plunges a dagger.

ANDREW

And you have bad breath. We all bond over it. Would you like to know your nickname? Trust me, you fucking don't. Never ask anyone. It'll break your spirit. The same you break mine.

Hildreth, humiliated. In the distance, a voice:

VOICE

Andrew. "A" for effort? But that shit was mad corny, yo.

Andrew smiles. Hildreth, however, pushes him into a table. More Kids notice. Will calmly heads over. A "Fight! Fight! Fight!" chant breaks out.

Just as Hildreth's about to hit Andrew, Will grabs his wrist. Spins him around. Places him in a wrestling hold.

WILL

You're twice his size.

HILDRETH

I'm choking!

WILL

We have an honor code and it applies everywhere. I am disappointed in you.

Will applies pressure. Hildreth's face turns red. Will releases, Hildreth gasps for air. Will locates, puts an arm around Andrew.

WILL

Let's take a walk.

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Will sits on a milk crate. Little Andrew rips into him.

ANDREW

What in the fuck did I just fucking watch? "I'm disappointed in you"? Will, you are a linebacker, but you act like you manage a Dairy Queen in Kansas.

WILL

Well you're not in New York anymore.

ANDREW

Thanks for the heads up, you cowardly fucking lion.

WILL

I'm not a coward. I'm a stand-up guy.

ANDREW

I don't care if you're the Queen of Spain! Hit someone!

Andrew calms down. Will offers him a cigarette.

ANDREW

You smoke?

WILL

I do a lot of things... If it means anything, I don't inhale.

ANDREW

Of course you don't. So why bother?

WILL

I don't smoke for the nicotine, I smoke because I'm insecure.

ANDREW

You're insecure?

WILL

... Isn't everyone?

ANDREW

Not guys who date Heather Church.

WILL

You know her?

ANDREW

I don't "know her" know her, but
we're both in Chorus. She's nice.

WILL

We're talking about Heather.

ANDREW

I dunno; she seems nice. There's
always a joke at my expense, and
she's the only person who doesn't
laugh at me.

WILL

If she's not laughing, it's not
because she's nice. It's because
she doesn't get the joke.

ANDREW

Why do you like her? She's pretty?
(beat)
Because you're insecure?

WILL

... Why do people call you Baby GAP?

ANDREW

I don't fit into a "Small." All my
shirts are a "Youth Large." I wear
children's clothes, so... Baby Gap.
(beat)
It's okay if you need to laugh.

WILL

I don't.

ANDREW

I do.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Caitlin drives Grady.

CAITLIN

I'm just curious as to how you're
inclined towards this feminine world
of flowers and bunny rabbits and...
show tunes or what have you.

GRADY

My dad wasn't around much, so an
appreciation for dance, or a passing
familiarity with beauty and fashion?
(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

It was allowed to develop cuz things weren't gender specific. There was Aunt Mary, Aunt Pat, Aunt Caroline... Speaking of Irish women, I'm sorry again about that whole Rashaun spiel. I was trying to get you to laugh at yourself, and I aimed too high. Or maybe I aimed too low. It was cruel.

CAITLIN

You forgot something.

GRADY

I'm sorry.

CAITLIN

bell hooks had a lot to say about people who find that word funny. She'd roll in her grave if she knew a black man and a cis white male --

GRADY

What did you just call me?

(beat)

By the way, bell hooks is alive.

CAITLIN

She died in 2021. You can Google it.

GRADY

I don't. You're here now. It's fine.

CAITLIN

... You don't look like a writer.

GRADY

You don't look like a teacher.

CAITLIN

Things have changed since you were young... How do you know bell hooks?

GRADY

Never assume that the men you meet are as boring as the boys you date.

CAITLIN

Did you write that in your special book, or was that a freestyle made just for me? I'm sorry; where are my manners?

GRADY

I think you left them at the house.

CAITLIN

Ooh! I noticed you forgot my candy.
It's fine. I was obviously kidding
And the flowers were...appreciated.

Grady reaches into his pocket. Places something on the dash.
He pulls his hand away to reveal two Hershey's Kisses.

Caitlin looks at them. Then looks back at the road. She stops
at a red light. Takes one of the Kisses. She examines it,
then places it back next to the other Kiss.

CAITLIN

You fancy yourself as being quite
smooth, don't you?

GRADY

Not really.

CAITLIN

Fancy, fancy, fancy.

GRADY

Hm. Do I tickle your fancy?

CAITLIN

Yeah, you tickle me... I don't know
about my fancy, though.

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Vanessa comes outside, joins Andrew and Will.

VANESSA

Were you guys having a moment?

WILL

We were. It was nice, right?

VANESSA

(to Andrew)

I think there's someone waiting for
you in there.

Before heading in, Andrew stops at the door.

ANDREW

Thanks for taking me out, Vanessa.
I had such a magical night. I hope
we can do this again sometime.

WILL

Wait, that's your brother? I would
have helped him with Hildreth before.

VANESSA

It's fine, William.

WILL

It's "Will"... What are you doing right now? You should come with us.

VANESSA

Where?

WILL

Practice... Sunday night practice, under the lights with my old team. Not our prep team; my old high school.

VANESSA

You lost me.

WILL

You need to see how the other half lives, Vanessa. It's like, fun. You met some of the guys; they're great.

(beat)

It's not practice like we practice here. It's like a block party. It's this family affair on Sunday nights.

VANESSA

Those kids with the candy are there?

WILL

Six of us from our public school team came here to play prep in 9th grade. You're not the only new kids; you're just the newest... I'm not asking you to kick field goals, I'm inviting you to a cookout. And I know you eat meat.

VANESSA

... How does the other half live?

WILL

Well.

VANESSA

Where does the other half live?

WILL

Watts.

VANESSA

I thought Watts wasn't that bad. You say it like it's the barrio.

WILL

A lot of guys live there. It's home,
but it's not for everyone... I just
want you to feel safe.

VANESSA

I feel safe... Do you?

They hold eye contact.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Will drives Vanessa, Andrew, and Lynda.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Grady and Caitlin balance on a see-saw. Eat ice cream cones.

CAITLIN

So your book: I heard about it from
Darla yesterday... I've never met a
real writer before.

GRADY

Darla's hosting a party for Jonathan
Franzen next month. You should come.

CAITLIN

I'd love to. What's he like?

GRADY

Jon's great. I love him. Others...

(beat)

Darla actually has a feud going with
Nicholas Sparks, cuz...she calls him
"Nick." And the only thing Nicholas
Sparks hates more than his own fans?
Is being called "Nick." Darla knows
this, so she does it to tweak him.
She'll be like, "This is one of our
top writers: Nick Sparks." He gets
so upset. It really chaps his ass.

CAITLIN

I lied to you. I got your book
yesterday. I read it in one sitting.

GRADY

Thank you.

CAITLIN

I didn't say it was good.

GRADY

Okay.

CAITLIN

I returned it on the drive over.

GRADY

Okay.

CAITLIN

A line stood out. "The most inspired choice a man can make...is to wander the path to a woman's heart... Sadly, much time has passed since I have last been out for a walk."

GRADY

They're not all gems.

CAITLIN

Gag me with a spoon.

GRADY

The reviews were glowing. Rapturous.

CAITLIN

There's a reason no one bought it.

GRADY

It's not Jennifer Egan, but it's better than the trash you peddle. *Ethan Frome*? Boring. *Silas Marner*? Confusing. *The Scarlet Letter*? Now we're back to boring, but at least a message was sent.

CAITLIN

... What would you write about me?

GRADY

I don't know you.

CAITLIN

First impressions. Take a stab.

GRADY

So...you're a high school teacher.
(beat)
What were you like in high school?

CAITLIN

Use your imagination.

GRADY

"... Ms. Fountain is the kind of girl who will kiss you under the bleachers, as long as you promise not to tell anyone about it."

They go up and down on the see-saw. With Caitlin's end on the ground, she quickly dismounts, sending Grady crashing down, grade school-style.

EXT. DUCK POND - NIGHT

Caitlin and Grady feed ducks.

CAITLIN

Is being a writer a dream come true?

GRADY

It's more like a nightmare I never want to wake up from... Teaching?

CAITLIN

Teaching is rough. You go in thinking you'll mold these young minds. But it ends up being a perfect complement to one of those flat, suburban marriages.

(beat)

I'm up for tenure. I either get it, or I start over at another school... I don't think I have the right stuff.

GRADY

I'm sure you do.

CAITLIN

I don't. It's a top private school. You need the right car, the right clothes, the right pedigree. And I don't have any of those things.

GRADY

At least you have skills.

CAITLIN

At least you have talent.

GRADY

I can turn a phrase; let's not get carried away. It's not like I'm in a band or anything... I don't think I'll be around long enough for me to consider sleeping with you.

CAITLIN

I wouldn't be intimate with someone
unless it's something real. Boys I
date don't qualify.

GRADY

Ms. Fountain?

(beat)

It's not a date.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Will, Vanessa, Andrew, Lynda. Walk to Sunday night practice.
A tailgate of sorts. Happy football FAMILIES get together.
Charcoal briquettes and red wine, double dutch and dominoes.

While PLAYERS practice, action occurs at the field goal posts.
Folding chairs are set up behind the end zone. FAMILY MEMBERS
sit in them. KICKERS attempt field goals. Family Members in
the chairs try to catch the kicks.

Each time a kick misses, a hat full of money is passed to the
next chair. When Lynda catches a kick, everyone celebrates.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Darla and Meghan shop. SINGLE DAD and SON walk towards them.
Both pairs come to the check-out line. Our girls first. After
Darla places items on the belt, Single Dad follows suit. The
four of them wait. Son kicks Dad, nods towards Darla.

SINGLE DAD

Quite the selection.

DARLA

Pardon? Oh... It's Girls' Night Out.
In, rather.

SINGLE DAD

Same. We're having a Boys' Night.

Darla sees condiments, packages of hot dogs.

DARLA

Talk about your sausage fest.

Dad smiles. Soon, he angles to see Darla's food.

DARLA

I'm sorry; did I take something
from your pile?

SINGLE DAD

Oh. I was just craning my neck to see if you had a ring on... It's so hard to tell sometimes.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Vanessa and Will in the bleachers. Andrew and Lynda, nearby.

WILL

Do you miss New York?

VANESSA

I do. But it's a love-hate relationship. New York is like the dirty uncle that molests you, then pays your way through college.

(off his smile)

Our family friend came up with that. He grew up poor on Long Island, we grew up well-off in New York and Long Island. My neighborhood was more like Beverly Hills, his was more like this. He wrote a book about the differences.

WILL

I wish I could write a book.

VANESSA

My mom used to work for Doubleday, but now she works for St. Martin's. It was a lateral transfer.

WILL

What's a lateral transfer?

VANESSA

It's a demotion... I can't kick field goals, William.

WILL

The guys are all psyched about you.

VANESSA

Like who?

WILL

(avoids saying "Me.")

The game's the same night as the Art Show, and you said you're going. So come Wednesday, support your brother, then walk over to the field. Warm up, kick or don't kick...and get back to your normal life. No one'll care.

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)

In 48 hours, whether you join us or not, we're gonna get out there, and we're gonna lose. It's what we do best.

Vanessa, unmoved.

WILL

If you get to kick, it's won't be a game-winner we all remember. It's gonna be in a 4th quarter blow-out. But if you do kick a field goal, you can check the box score tomorrow and see your name in the paper.

VANESSA

... Is that why you play football?
To see your name in the newspaper?

WILL

I play for my teammates... And stop calling me "William." It's not cool.

He leaves her in the bleachers, walks to midfield.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Grady and Caitlin fish for fish. Sit close to one another.

CAITLIN

How'd you end up in rehab?

GRADY

I got arrested, and the choice was either one month in jail or six months in a treatment center. It was Phoenix House, which isn't a rich kid rehab where they sing Kumbaya and play dodgeball before lunch.

CAITLIN

What did people say? Your friends, family...girlfriend?

GRADY

That was subtle.

CAITLIN

Don't flatter yourself.

GRADY

Friends are supportive. I've only been in one serious relationship. What was your last boyfriend like?

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

What did you like about him?

CAITLIN

You tell me. He was reckless and aimless. Not "aimless," per se, just not fulfilling his potential... What did you like about your girl?

GRADY

She was not "my" girl. She was "a" girl, but she was not "my" girl.

CAITLIN

But what did you like about her?

GRADY

I mean... It wasn't one thing.

CAITLIN

Well. Now I feel like I have to know.
(beat)
Seriously. What'd you like about her?

GRADY

... How much time do you have?

CAITLIN

Sounds like she was a special girl.

GRADY

She was... Granted, it was New York; they're running around everywhere.
(beat)

Can I ask you a serious question?

CAITLIN

Is there any other kind?

GRADY

What's the best part about your job and the worst part about your job?

CAITLIN

Why do you want to know? You're a writer, so you like small talk and big talk.

GRADY

You're funny.

CAITLIN

I am funny. If you ask people who know me superficially, they wouldn't say I'm all that funny. But I'm witty.

(MORE)

CAITLIN (cont'd)

It's sort of a not-too-secret secret that I'm genuinely witty once you get to know me... Actually, I don't like funny people at all. At least people who make it their entire personality.

GRADY

How is a girl like you still single?

CAITLIN

Hm. I probably spend too much time making voodoo dolls out of people who ask "How is a girl like you still single"?

GRADY

There are plenty of fish in the sea.

CAITLIN

... We have to stop telling people that there are plenty of fish in the sea. Because that's not true anymore, literally or figuratively.

GRADY

Can I use that in my book?

She turns to him.

CAITLIN

Don't ask. Go in for the kill.

A moment.

GRADY

I dunno if I'll ever get over the fact that you made me gingerbread men on our first date.

Caitlin gives Grady a kiss on the cheek.

CAITLIN

It's not a date.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Will drives Vanessa/Andrew/Lynda. Lights go down in LA.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrew writes. Grady enters.

GRADY

How's the essay coming along?

ANDREW

I'm not a writer.

GRADY

Whenever I'm blocked, I just take a sentence from someone else. It sets me on my way, so then I delete that first sentence and replace it later.

ANDREW

How did it go by the way?

GRADY

Not sure. We didn't do much, but I can't imagine having more fun than I did. Do you know what I mean?

ANDREW

I think I have a pretty good idea.

GRADY

(beat)

Ms. Fountain has a terrific smile.

ANDREW

Yeah.

GRADY

And she's not afraid to use it.

ANDREW

... You can't afford a bus ticket.

GRADY

You're missing my point.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Vanessa gets ready for school. Grady appears, upset.

GRADY

Where are my candles?

INT. N.A. BATHROOM - DAY

Grady sniffs lines. He exits the bathroom...

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Right into the middle of a meeting he's attending.

LATER It's Grady's turn to share with ATTENDEES.

GRADY

At Phoenix House, they gave us this definition of "character." They say, "Character is what you do...when no one is watching." It struck a chord. Because it's never about the drugs, it's about the terrible behavior that's part of the package when dealing with people like us. Like me.
(beat)

I don't know how to tell people the truth. I want to, but don't know how.

ADDICT 1

I find the best way to tell someone the truth...is to just write it down.

Grady smiles, albeit painfully.

INT. ART ROOM - DAY

Again, Andrew works on a portrait of Lynda. Vibrant colors.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Vanessa and Will collect water samples at a pond. The CLASS employs microscopes and eye droppers.

WILL

Do you believe in God?

VANESSA

Now that I'm older, I definitely do.

WILL

Assuming there's a Heaven and Hell, what's your idea of a personal Hell?

VANESSA

What's wrong with you?

WILL

It's called small talk.

VANESSA

Small talk is saying how you messed up your Math test cuz the Scantron had bars instead of bubbles. And how you couldn't change answers cuz your pencil had one of those hard, Chinese erasers that don't erase... After we got home last night, Andrew told our mom about kicking field goals. If --

WILL

I told him not to; she might not let you play... Why did he tell her?

VANESSA

He tells her everything... Are you and Heather going to the Art Show?

WILL

We're taking a break.

VANESSA

Since when?

WILL

... Heather's dad was a tight end in the NFL, so she acts like a princess cuz of it.

VANESSA

Heather's dad is Robert Church?

WILL

You know who he is?

VANESSA

Of course I do. He never met a pass he couldn't drop.

WILL

You know Meredith Sims? Heather didn't like that we hang out. We go surfing before school on Tuesdays. Wanna come?

VANESSA

I don't know how to surf.

WILL

Neither does Meredith. That's not why I hang out with her.

INT. ST. MARTIN'S PRESS - DAY

Grady and Darla evaluate dust jackets hanging on clothespins.

DARLA

Football? Did she think about safety?

GRADY

Right? Like what if she hurts someone? You're gonna be in enough financial trouble once you lose your job.

DARLA

Andrew said she's not interested at all, and I believe it. She's won't compromise her femininity in the eyes of boys.

GRADY

Vanessa does not care about that.

DARLA

She wants to make a name for herself, but football isn't the answer.

GRADY

You're wrong.

DARLA

(beat)

When you Google me, what comes up?

GRADY

Book shit.

DARLA

When I Google you, what comes up?

GRADY

Book shit... And pictures of me with my shirt off.

DARLA

Pictures of you with your shirt off.

(beat)

What happens when you Google Vanessa?

GRADY

... Is that a trick question?

DARLA

Nothing comes up. She's a blank slate. She's not gonna fill it with football.

Grady indicates one of the dust jackets.

GRADY

It's weird how writers have no input with covers. You did great with mine.

DARLA

Andrew says you're giving girl advice?

GRADY

He wants to woo her with his writing.

DARLA

And you? How was the meeting?

GRADY

Be it here or Phoenix House, hearing people tell their crazy drug stories? It makes me feel like I didn't get as much out of drugs as I could have.

DARLA

You are an unevolved...Sagittarius.

GRADY

Fuck you, you fucking Capricorn.

(beat)

I was being honest. There are things I wanna tell you, but don't know how.

INT. HALL - DAY

Vanessa at her locker with Jocelyn. Andrew walks by, taps her, continues walking. Hildreth crosses his path. He knocks Andrew's hat off. As Andrew bends over to get it, Hildreth knocks the books out of his hands.

Hildreth to his locker. Vanessa follows, confronts.

VANESSA

Your name's Rob, right? I'm Vanessa.

HILDRETH

We call you the Long Island Lolita.

VANESSA

What's that supposed to mean?

HILDRETH

Don't tell people you're from New York when you're from Long Island.

VANESSA

Fuck you.

HILDRETH

You're not better than anyone else. You're pretty...but...you look old.

Vanessa had been twirling a flute like a majorette weaponizing her baton. Vanessa BASHES Hildreth's face. He DROPS. Vanessa kneels down.

VANESSA

Now you listen, and you listen good, because I'm only gonna say this once.

EXT. SHOE REPAIR STORE - DAY

A SUIT sits in a high chair while getting his shoes shined. Darla's in a chair as well, with Grady polishing her boots.

DARLA
We need to see pages.

GRADY
I'm editing; be patient... I'm also kinda sad. Diane's birthday is soon.

The Suit and Buffer finish and clear out.

DARLA
You can't keep mourning Diane. I lost my husband to divorce, and I'm going to lose the kids to college... I won't lose my grip on you.

GRADY
That's sweet. Your best work yet.

DARLA
It is sweet, you ungrateful shit.

GRADY
Divorce and college aren't death.

DARLA
Well they sure as fuck feel like it.

GRADY
Your happiness can't be determined by college, or marriage, or...

DARLA
You don't know anything about either of those things.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

JOHN GEREMIA (60) on the phone. Vanessa sits opposite him.

INT. KITCHEN (INTERCUT) - DAY

As Grady washes dishes, he lies to Principal Geremia.

GRADY
Darla's away on business, so. I'm looking after the kids.

GEREMIA

I see. "In loco parentis."

(beat)

It means "in place of a parent."

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Soon, Grady and Vanessa sit opposite Principal Geremia.

GRADY

No blood? She didn't break the skin?

(off Geremia)

So it's nothing. Girls will be girls.

Geremia reads from a sheet of paper.

GEREMIA

"Vanessa proceeded to strike Robert with the instrument, sending him to the floor. She then stepped on his neck, knelt down, and said, 'Listen up, and listen good. Because I'm only going to say this once. Laugh at us as much as you like, but people from Long Island run this country. The rest of America is our whore.'"

GRADY

So, there's a fair amount to unpack here. I think we all could have done without the last line. We'll discuss that at home. Now punishment.

GEREMIA

Not so fast. Rob's parents are reasonable people, and I did Vanessa the favor of drafting an apology.

He slides a document.

GEREMIA

As I understand it, the football team has two injured kickers. And Vanessa has a proven leg on the battlefield.

Reluctantly. Vanessa prints and signs.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Darla works. Grady and Andrew enter.

DARLA

Let me see what you have.

Grades takes a square from his pocket, hands it to Darla.

DARLA

What's this?

GRADY

My writing.

Darla reads.

DARLA

I can hear Michiko now: "Grady Herman's sophomore and sophomoric effort reduces a fine follow-up in the annals of American letters... to that of a cut-rate hack with the prose style of a bright, yet overly emotional high school student."

ANDREW

Why are you looking at me?

GRADY

I think there's something there.

DARLA

"Man is the hunter. Woman is his game. The sleek and shining creatures of the chase, we hunt them for the beauty of their skins. They love us for it, and we ride them down."

GRADY

You're right. When I read it over, I knew I could do better, too.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrew and Grady recap Darla's assessment.

ANDREW

Doesn't it bother you?

GRADY

It would bother me if I wrote it. You think I would write that shit? "Man is the hunter, woman is his game"? It was a quote from Tennyson.
(beat)
Do you know who Doris Lessing is?

ANDREW

No.

GRADY

Oh, she's a total fucking demon.
I stole a passage from her at the
library to get your mom off my ass.

ANDREW

Will she notice...? How do you know?

GRADY

Andrew, your mom is one of the great
editors of her generation. She
doesn't have time to sit around and
read books.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUSIC plays. Darla notices the boys through the window.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Four socks slowly move back and forth, in time with MUSIC.

Andrew and Grady speak quietly and seriously, like lovers.

ANDREW

What if she tries to kiss me?

GRADY

Just close your eyes and follow her
lead. Less tongue is better than more.

(beat)

There's a lot of nice things you can
do with a girl other than making out
and dancing.

ANDREW

Like what?

GRADY

I dunno. Hugging? Holding hands...?
Okay, this is important: What's the
hottest thing you can ask a girl?

ANDREW

... Her opinion.

GRADY

Nice. I like "How was your day."

They dance.

ANDREW

Why does Hildreth mess with me?

GRADY

They don't boo nobodies.

ANDREW

He isn't a jock stuffing me into lockers, he's a dirtbag. Things are going great with Lynda, so I should be on cloud nine.

GRADY

No one is on cloud nine. I don't ever expect to be happy. I just want to be.

ANDREW

... You should write a memoir.

GRADY

I've been told that.

(beat)

Do you want to know the truth?

ANDREW

Yeah... Tell me.

GRADY

Only assholes write memoirs.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Vanessa eats dinner with Darla and Meghan. Watches sports programming. A HOST explains how to "cork" a baseball bat.

She watches footage of "super balls" spilling from the bat of Graig Nettles in 1974. She puts two and two together.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa enters, grabs the candlesticks she stole from Grady.

She BANGS them against her dresser. They split in the middle. She does it again. Sees cocaine vials amidst the wreckage.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa has told Andrew about Grady's use. He studies a vial.

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE

Vanessa, Will and MEREDITH SIMS (16) float on their boards.

LATER Will surfs alone. Vanessa and Meredith sit on towels.

MEREDITH

You know what I like about that kid?
He's just so polite. It's a lost art.

VANESSA

I could see maybe being his friend.

MEREDITH

It's a start.

VANESSA

For what?

MEREDITH

You know why he and Heather broke
up, right? I know you guys have
been talking a lot lately.

VANESSA

... They break up because of me?

MEREDITH

No. They broke up because of me.

VANESSA

I'm confused.

MEREDITH

Heather doesn't get why Will wants
to hang out with an ugly girl. If
he hung out with you, she could at
least enjoy the drama of having
some competition. But me being
ugly means she has no right to get
upset. And that ended up making
her seriously upset.

VANESSA

You're not ugly, Meredith.

MEREDITH

... I know you mean well, but
when ugly people have to hear
beautiful people tell them that
they're not ugly, it makes them
feel even uglier. We know we're
being lied to, and we know that
like... Everyone we meet comes away
from meeting us thinking, "I know I
hate the way I look, but I am so
glad that I do not look like her."

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Andrew sits with a copy of the literary journal *Granta*.
He plagiarizes/adjusts a story. The byline: Grady Herman.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Caitlin smuggled in Grady. They furtively enter a space.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Grady looks around. Admires fine furniture.

GRADY

Is this heaven?

CAITLIN

No. It's the teachers' lounge.

LATER Caitlin picks from a box of Animal Crackers.

GRADY

Tell me something I don't know
about you.

CAITLIN

There are 15 animals in the Animal
Crackers cookie zoo. A lion, monkey,
elephant, gorilla, tiger, giraffe,
cougar, kangaroo... Seal, sheep,
hippo, zebra, camel...and bison.

GRADY

No ducks?

CAITLIN

There are also two bears. One is
walking; the other one is seated.

GRADY

Telling me about Animal Crackers is
something I don't know...as opposed
to something I don't know about you.

CAITLIN

I'm not too good at this game...
You mentioned your dad not being
around much. What's the deal there?

GRADY

My father left when I was a kid. He
got re-married, and I think he lives
in Colorado now.

(MORE)

GRADY (cont'd)

My mom drinks a lot, and she sees me as a reminder of him. I guess that's why the drugs started. Dad jets, Mom struggles, Grady's sad. That's why Darla has looked after me.

CAITLIN

My dad was a dentist. He worked at home. My mom was a teacher, too, so she worked outside the home. And I guess when I was around 10 or 11, she began to think he might be cheating on her. So one day, when he was at home and she was at school, she sent him flowers with a card that said, "I love you." That's it. Just "I love you." Unfortunately, when she got home that night, the flowers were nowhere to be found. And my dad never mentioned them. And that's when she knew.

GRADY

Jesus. You are good at this game.

CAITLIN

I've had a lot of practice. The men in my life always seem to have more than one set of eyes.

GRADY

I'm sorry. I wish I could teach, and you could stay with Darla.

CAITLIN

It'd be a good trade for both teams.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Vanessa practices with the team. Spends time with Will.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady edits. Darla enters, references Principal Geremia.

DARLA

In loco parentis?

GRADY

It means "in place of a parent."

DARLA

... Parenting isn't about basking in the joy of discovery.

(MORE)

DARLA (cont'd)

It's about what's happening here
and now, and if you're not actively
helping me, you're actively
hindering me... Is there anything
going on with you?

GRADY

Meaning what?

DARLA

Meaning anything.

GRADY

Whenever you've questioned my honesty,
white lie or otherwise, I've never
been lying in any of those instances,
I've been telling the truth... When I
do lie, you don't have the faintest
idea. That's what makes me good at it.

He hands Darla more fake, plagiarized pages. She leaves.

GRADY

It's because her dad can't see her.

(beat)

The reason Vanessa doesn't want to
play football is cuz her dad won't
be there to see her play. Half the
sport is fathers and sons bonding.
That's why she didn't agree to play
until the principal forced her hand.

DARLA

She told you that?

GRADY

We have a shorthand... Do you?

(beat)

Say something.

DARLA

Your entitlement amuses me.

(beat)

Allow me a moment. I'm giving grace
to your unprocessed emotions.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Coach walks with Vanessa and Will. Welcomes her aboard.

COACH

Vanessa, after tomorrow, it's vital
that you realize my commitment to you
extends beyond the field.

(MORE)

COACH (cont'd)

If you ever need anything, and I find out that you didn't come to me or my wife for help? We will have heavy hearts.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin at her desk. Sees Andrew in the back, drawing Lynda.

CAITLIN

Are you ready to meet your maker?

ANDREW

How come the meaner you are to me, the more I respect you?

CAITLIN

I'm a role model, I'm fun...and I'm as clever as almost anyone you know.

ANDREW

You're right. Of course, in four months I'll be 16. And you'll be four months older.

CAITLIN (smiling)

Thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW

Four months older than however old you are now. Nowhere near...26?

CAITLIN (smiling)

Thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW

Nowhere near...36?

CAITLIN (still smiling)

I'm gonna count to three.

Laughs. Andrew heads to the front. Reads "his" college essay.

ANDREW

The expectations I have for love are not often met, as the majority who express their interest are either exceptionally brilliant and not particularly attractive, or exceptionally attractive and none too bright.

(MORE)

ANDREW (cont'd)

The precious few who toe the median on both qualities, and express slight-to-moderate interest in befriending me, are invariably matriculating at St. Ann's or Stuyvesant. Or, as is equally the case, have children who are. These mothers of high esteem and higher privilege, live with their families in old money brownstones and hand-me-down townhouses.

Caitlin grabs the *Granta* that Andrew plagiarized/altered. Finds "Freeport" by Grady Herman. A finger follows along.

ANDREW

I live in a three-bedroom walk-up with one parent and two sisters. Our home lies among theirs, in the worst building with the most tenacious roaches on the wealthiest half-mile in America. After school on weekday afternoons, the Village sidewalks are dotted with socialites and their loved ones. The women, domesticated artists and standard-issue wives of the Seven Sisters among them, follow their Percocet sponsored naps with late lunches at Babbo. Over my left shoulder, a lone ingénue pretends to consider bath and body solutions as she poses for herself in the window of the L'Occitane boutique. And to my right, a mother and daughter wait on a sheet of brownies, as a nanny divides it with a plastic fork. Of the trio, one of them is gazing at me with a helpless, hopeless expression of both resignation and want. Slowly, a moment passes, and she turns away, aware that she's been smiling.

(beat)

I'm not going to college. I'm going back to New York... Who's with me?

A beat. Lynda smiles, raises her hand. Caitlin is furious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meghan and Grady read. Caitlin appears, out for blood.

GRADY

Can I talk to Ms. Fountain in private?

MEGHAN

It can wait.

Grady steers her head aside with his marble notebook.

CAITLIN

You like Nancy Drew books? I never read her, either.

MEGHAN

She's the best. Her mother's dead, so she has time to solve mysteries.

CAITLIN

That might be a little scary for me.

MEGHAN

Her father's a lawyer and he's rich.

CAITLIN

I'm listening.

MEGHAN

He bought Nancy a sports car.

CAITLIN

I heard you the first time.

MEGHAN

She putters around in it solving cases after school. You're just like her.

GRADY

Nancy Drew is the biggest prude in the history of young-adult fiction, a'right? We'll finish later.

MEGHAN

But she's about to crack the case!

GRADY

Meghan: If the girl dated Ned Nickerson from 1931 until 1985 without ever going past first base, she can wait fucking two minutes for me and Ms. Fountain to have a fight.

She leaves. Grady holds *The Secret of the Old Clock*.

GRADY

Meghan.

He taps the cover, calls back to *Flowers in the Attic*.

GRADY

The minute hand on the clock
points to where the minister's
body is buried. Bess and George
figure it out and tell Hannah
Gruen, Hannah Gruen tells Nancy,
and Nancy pins it on the farmhand.
He used a shovel, I think. I'm
foggy on the details.

MEGHAN

I hate you!

She leaves. Grady holds on Caitlin, raises a finger. Soon,
a door SLAMS in the distance. It OPENS...then SLAMS again.

CAITLIN

Does Andrew know what he's done to
himself? What he's done to me?

GRADY

What are you talking about?

CAITLIN

Did he think I wasn't gonna read
everything you've written? I told
you how I'm up for tenure. How I'm
not layoff-proof. If he gets
expelled, I take the blame.

INT. DARLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady, hashing out the situation with Darla.

GRADY

I copied the last batch of pages
from Doris Lessing. The quote you
criticized was from Tennyson. Andrew
knew...and probably just ran with it.

DARLA

... You have to fix this.

INT. HALLWAY (INTERCUT) - NIGHT

Listening on the other side, Vanessa presses her ear to the
door, while Meghan enlists the aide of a tall drinking glass.

GRADY

Granta's circulation is 50,000.
And if you Google me or the story,
nothing comes up. He didn't think
she'd get a copy of it.

DARLA

So if he cheated and got away with it, it would've been alright?

Grady thinks.

DARLA

It would not have been alright you fucking dickhead!

Darla walks backwards towards the door. Once there (still facing Grady), she KICKS it with the bottom of her foot. On the other side, Vanessa and Meghan go TUMBLING down.

DARLA

Do you know how much trouble he's in?

(beat)

I'm in trouble for believing in you. What your mom never said about your writing, it doesn't matter. What Ms. Fountain says, that doesn't matter. Unfortunately, sales matter... What the critics say, it does not matter.

GRADY

It's the **only** thing that matters!

A silence descends.

DARLA

I purchased this house with my own money. Not with family money, and not with my ex-husband's money. I purchased this house with my money.

(beat)

Let this be the last time you dare raise your voice in it.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Andrew paints a final oil-on-canvas of Lynda.

INT. GRADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grady's been busted by Vanessa. She holds up a coke vial.

GRADY

If you told Andrew about the candles, I guess that's why he plagiarized. Like, why not? He gets it from me.

VANESSA

You didn't put him up to it?

GRADY

I just showed him how I was copying
stuff myself. And you know how he is
with keeping things from your mom.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Darla knows. She and Grady sit in silence.

DARLA

I'm surprised. I shouldn't be.
(beat)
Why do you lie to me?

GRADY

... Because I care about you.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Caitlin transforms a chalky blackboard with a wet sponge.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady to school to address Andrew's plagiarism.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Grady, Darla sit before Geremia, Caitlin, ADMINISTRATOR.

GEREMIA

Ms. Fountain tells us that you're
quite the writer. It seems Andrew
agrees... Even if readers did not.

Darla places a hand over Grady's to calm him.

GRADY

This isn't Andrew's fault.

GEREMIA

I's lazy, laissez-faire parenting.
The decline of the nuclear family.

Now, Grady places his hand over Darla's.

GEREMIA

Ms. Nathanson, we don't want Andrew
to leave our school. Do you know why?

DARLA

Because you'll do anything you can
to appease the board? And expelling
my son is a strain on the endowment?

GRADY

Darla?

GEREMIA

That's not why.

DARLA

Academia needs its boot-licking, bean counters, too. I know the score.

GRADY

Quit while your behind, Darla. Sir? Here's the deal. You brought up my first book. It was sold as a story about drugs, but it was about family.

(beat)

I've have a new a manuscript that's the opposite. A story about family, but it's really about drugs. I've been keeping a secret while writing it, and Andrew's been keeping it, too. He found out from my friend in New York -- Frankie -- that I never used drugs cuz I lost my girlfriend. I use them because I've always used them. I met Darla as my mentor when I was 15, and I used them back then.

(beat)

With Andrew and his sisters, since they were born, I've left stuff in their rooms, forgot to pick 'em up, everything. People in my life know. Everyone but Darla knows the truth.

GEREMIA

You've written about this.

CAITLIN

I don't believe him.

GRADY

I don't expect you to.

CAITLIN

Good, cuz I don't expect anything from you at all... No one does, no one ever has, and no one ever will. Maybe you were a shit kid from the start, and your mom could sense it.

(beat)

That was unfair of me... I'm sorry.

GRADY

Don't be sorry. I just hope...this
can serve as...a teaching moment.

CAITLIN

Motherfucker! I knew he would say
that!

Grady winks at Administrator. She blushes.

GEREMIA

Let's breathe. We'll all be fine.

CAITLIN

Not me, and definitely not him. Have
you even met this guy? Do you even
go to this school...? Respectfully:
Is someone paying you off?

GEREMIA

Respectfully? In a word? No.

DARLA

That's not what I heard.

GEREMIA

Grady, your confession. A manuscript.
If the Devil is in the details --

CAITLIN

The Devil is in the details!
I saw the Devil up close. I looked
him in the eyes. They were gorgeous!

ADMIN

Is there something going on between
you two that we should know about?

GRADY

No.

CAITLIN

Yes!

GEREMIA

If the manuscript can serve as an
alibi to explain Andrew's actions,
show it to me.

DARLA

I'm sorry. I apologize for my
behavior. Partly. Now, if it's
okay with you, I wouldn't mind
seeing that manuscript first.

GRADY

Sir, I write slowly. In longhand.

DARLA
(to herself)
You savage.

GRADY
There's only one copy. I can only
share it with Darla at this point.
(to the Admin)
And her. She's cool.

GEREMIA
If you were telling the truth, you
wouldn't make flippant jokes while
discussing, well, sordid behaviors.

CAITLIN
He would. He can't help himself.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grady and Darla walk to the car. See Caitlin following.

DARLA
Make it quick.

Grady and Caitlin converge.

CAITLIN
When Andrew read it, I had to sit
quietly like a fool and listen to
your voice coming out of his mouth.
You lied to my face, and who cares,
but you did it through my favorite
kid. You know I struggle with this
job, yet you ruined the only joy I
get from it.
(leans in)
I can probably kiss tenure goodbye.
(beat)
You live under this assumption that
you're unique. But you're just like
every other guy: You're very common.
That's not a bad thing. You're just
not special.

GRADY
I never said I was.

CAITLIN
You implied it. That's worse.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla drives Grady.

DARLA

The Art Show was supposed to be
cause for celebration. And the game.

GRADY

I thought you'd be yelling.

DARLA

I don't know what to do.

GRADY

I'll book a flight out.

DARLA

I have a lot of questions.

GRADY

It's all written down.

DARLA

I'm with Ms. Fountain. I don't
believe you, either.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Art entries are set up. Uniformed Footballers walk through.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Kids clean. Darla gets ready. Phone RINGS. It's Single Dad.

DARLA

Hello...? Good, how are you?

I didn't expect you to call.

(beat)

I don't know; I just didn't.

Grady and the kids observe. She calmly swings her door SHUT.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The game is underway. A Footballer gets TACKLED hard. Grady,
Darla, Meghan watch from bleachers. Vanessa, Will ride pine.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Lynda wanders art exhibits. From a distance, Andrew watches.

Lynda comes to Andrew's work, stops in her tracks. She sees
colorful, vibrant paintings of herself.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lynda stops a STUDENT.

LYNDA
Have you seen Andrew?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andrew walks. Lynda spots him in the distance, follows.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

In uniform, Vanessa and Will stand next to one another.

INT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

As Lynda closes the gap, Andrew feels her presence, turns.

LYNDA
I saw the paintings you made of me.

ANDREW
You did?

LYNDA
Why would you embarrass me like that?

ANDREW
... What? I thought you'd like them.

LYNDA
It's too much. My parents are here.
They saw them... Everyone saw them.

ANDREW
I thought you liked me.

LYNDA
Why? I like guys who are confident.

ANDREW
You know who has confidence? Guys who
have been successful with girls and
sports since like, first grade... But
I totally respect what you're saying.
Don't get me wrong. I just figured...

LYNDA
That I like you?

ANDREW
... Do you not think I'm cute?

LYNDA
Of course I think you're cute.

Lynda drops her payload.

LYNDA

I'm just not attracted to you.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Vanessa and Will. The kind, overly friendly Coach sees her.

COACH

The fuck are you looking at; we're
moving the chains! Warm your ass up!

LATER Vanessa practices kicking. Offense nears the end zone.

A Footballer looks at a folding chair. He places the chair behind the end zone, just like in Watts. Andrew, now with his family, notices and heads over.

Seated in chairs, Footballer and Andrew await Vanessa's kick. The field goal unit assembles. Darla looks to Grady.

DARLA

Is this it?

GRADY

It's 4th and goal at the 16. It's
a tough kick: 33 yards.

Vanessa's ready. The ball is snapped. She strides and KICKS. The ball is drilled through the uprights.

Andrew and Footballer hug. Facemasks BANG against Vanessa's.

Grady and Darla CHEER. Will quietly watches from a distance.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Andrew sits on the floor. Back against a locker, head in hand.

Someone approaches. Andrew looks up...sees bully Rob Hildreth.

HILDRETH

Are you crying?

(beat)

I saw your stuff. You did good.

Hildreth offers his hand. Andrew takes it, and they shake.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa exits the girls' locker room in a professional, post-game outfit. Will is waiting in street clothes.

WILL

Hey, champ. How are you feeling?

VANESSA

My name in the newspaper, right?

WILL

Do you need me to carry anything?

VANESSA

I'm alright. I'm glad you pushed me,
but don't you dare tell anyone this:
It felt...a little anti-climactic.

WILL

What were you expecting, sparks?

VANESSA

Kind of, yeah.

WILL

... I have a thing for you, okay?
I think you're a tough, brilliant
girl, and I'm only hard on you cuz
don't think you have any idea how
hard normal girls have it.

VANESSA

(beat)

Why are you dressed like a farmer?
Everyone's wearing post-game ties
and jackets... Who did this to you?

WILL

I can't afford a suit... I had one,
but my brother stretched it out.

VANESSA

... I didn't know that.

WILL

Do you feel stupid now?

VANESSA

Yes.

WILL

Don't feel stupid... Let your guard
down and people will surprise you.
People admire you for the way you
look, when you're a model for what
people should be like on the inside.
You're the best... I'm just being
honest; you're incredible... But you
have to let your guard down a little.

VANESSA

... I'm only interested in guys who are cold and dismissive. I'm sorry, but that's who I am, Will. Love it or leave it.

A beat. He kisses her. For the first time, Vanessa smiles.

WILL

I like it when you call me William.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Grady packs his things.

INT. ANDREW'S ROOM - MORNING

Andrew holds a deer skull.

GRADY

When I left Phoenix House, I had to walk along these train tracks to get to the Montauk station. There were deer bones along the tracks.

(beat)

I don't know what to say.

ANDREW

Me neither.

GRADY

We'll figure it out.

ANDREW

We always do.

(beat)

So do you like her?

GRADY

She's a very special person.

ANDREW

You can do better than that.

A moment.

GRADY

It was fun while it lasted.

They hug.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Vanessa examines a silver heart pin that says "Love."

GRADY

What's more important than blood?

VANESSA

Love... You keep it.

GRADY

It's not real silver. I'm sorry.

VANESSA

I know. I believe you this time.

She stares at it, then pins it on his pocket.

GRADY

Do you know you remind me of?

VANESSA

Who?

GRADY

No one. Just you.

INT. MEGHAN'S ROOM - MORNING

Meghan holds a t-shirt. She raises it to her face.

MEGHAN

This was Diane's.

GRADY

It was her favorite... Now it's your favorite.

MEGHAN

It still smells like her.

(beat)

Does it ever go away?

GRADY

The smell? Her scent?

MEGHAN

The way it feels when you miss someone. Does it go away?

GRADY

No... They're always running around in your brain. And in your heart.

They sit.

GRADY

How are you doing out here?

MEGHAN
... It's better now.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla and Grady drive to the airport.

DARLA
I want to read the manuscript.

GRADY
You can read it when I'm gone.

DARLA
Print me a copy.

GRADY
... There's nothing to print.

DARLA
I knew it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Caitlin pushes papers. Andrew appears, approaches.

ANDREW
I just want to apologize again.

CAITLIN
I don't wanna hear it.

A moment. Then, Andrew leans down, kisses her on the cheek.
Caitlin freezes, wide-eyed. After a beat, she looks at him.

ANDREW
Grady said that when he gets some
money together, he'd give me \$500 if
I gave you a kiss on the cheek for
him. I said I'd never do it for less
than a thousand, and he said, "Deal."

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Grady and Darla stand in the same spot where they first met.

DARLA
Call me as soon as you land.

GRADY
Have fun on your date.

DARLA
Any advice?

GRADY
Make sure he's good to you.

DARLA
Obviously.

GRADY
Darla.
(beat)
Make sure he's good to you.

DARLA
I will.
(beat)
What else?

GRADY
Gingerbread men. Can't go wrong.

DARLA
You're my oldest baby. You know that,
right...? I love you, Grady.

GRADY
I love you, too.

He puts down his bags. They hug, and Darla cries.

INT. CAR - DAY

Darla arrives home. Andrew approaches her window.

ANDREW
How was it?

DARLA
Things tend to work out in life.

She extends a marble notebook, assuming it's his.

ANDREW
That's not mine.

He heads inside. On the passenger seat, Darla sees several marble notebooks. She then picks one up, opens it. Grady's writing covers page one. Darla flips pages. They're filled from top to bottom. She picks up another notebook and sees more writing. Darla closes the notebook/looks at the cover:

The Amazing Adventures of the Monogamous Duck. Darla smiles, and we flash back to four scenes featuring marble notebooks.

Grady was always finished, just editing like he said he was.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

About to board, Grady sees a wall of phones. GREETER smiles.

GREETER
Come see us again.

GRADY
I will.

Soon, Grady stops boarding. He takes out his phone, dials.

INT. APARTMENT (INTERCUT) - DAY

Caitlin answers her phone.

CAITLIN
What do you want?

GRADY
I'm sorry, I just...

CAITLIN
What?
(beat)
What?

GRADY
... I don't know your name.

CAITLIN
I don't understand.

GRADY
I don't know your name... At first
it was cute that I called you Ms.
Fountain. But then I realized that
I never asked you your name.

CAITLIN
... It's Caitlin.

GRADY
Caitlin Fountain. That's such a
beautiful name.

Grady calls back to his Page 1 beautiful/genius statement.

Ms. Fountain, in turn, is no match for the oncoming tears.

EXT. PHOENIX HOUSE - DAY

Dr. Rosen stands near the garden he and Grady walked in.

Previously, an Alto sang, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

SOPRANO (V.O.)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound /
That saved a wretch like me / I once
was lost, but now am found / Was
blind, but now I see.

A van pulls up. Grady steps out.

INT. PHOENIX HOUSE - DAY

Residents, packed in the meeting room. Grady observes.

SOPRANO

'Twas grace that taught my heart to
fear / And grace my fears relieved /
How precious did that grace appear /
The hour I first believed.

Female Residents join the Soprano.

RESIDENTS

Through many dangers, toils and
snares / I have already come / 'Tis
grace hath brought me safe thus far /
And grace will lead me home.

A hopeful Grady smiles. Male Residents join the women.

RESIDENTS

Yes when this flesh and heart shall
fail / And mortal life shall cease /
I shall possess within the veil /
A life of joy and peace.

THE END