

FIN & LADY

Written by

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Based on the novel of the same name

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INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

A foggy morning light seeps into an old-world country bedroom. FIN, 11, sits by his MOTHER. She's in bed in a flannel nightgown, thin as a skeleton, depleted. He looks at the dark blue lines on her chest.

FIN'S MOTHER

My tattoos.

Fin looks up and meets his mother's eye, sees that she's trying to make him laugh. She starts to sing *Popeye the Sailor Man*, her voice faint, but spirited.

FIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

(singing)

I'm Popeye the sailor man/I'm
Popeye the sailor man./ I'm strong
to the fin-ich/cause I eats me spin-
ach/I'm Popeye the sailor man.

But he's not laughing. She raises her skinny arms as if to flex her Popeye biceps. He smiles and tries to laugh, if only to make her stop, her strain so apparent. She lowers her arms, but hums a bit longer.

FIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm one tough Gazookus/Which hates
all Palookas/What ain't on the up
and square...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Her funeral. A small group gathered. Fin in a dark suit, a size or two too small. We do not hear the MINISTER, but instead hear Fin's mother's song.

FIN'S MOTHER (V.O.)

I biffs 'em and buffs 'em/And always
out roughs 'em/But none of 'em gets
nowhere./I'm strong to the fin-
ich/Cause I eats me spin-ach...

EXT. CHURCH - A LITTLE LATER

Fin stands with MR. and MRS. POUND outside a white New England clapboard church. Mr. Pound has his hand on Fin's shoulders. The Pounds are solid farmers, here dressed in their Sunday finest. Beautiful Vermont countryside spreads out all around.

But the threesome are staring down the road to something or someone we can't see. The sound of a SPORTS CAR ENGINE nears, then comes to a sudden stop, the car door opens, closes.

They continue to stare.

MR. POUND
(concerned, to Fin)
I'm sure your mother knew what she was doing.

MRS. POUND
(a whisper to her husband)
I don't think she had much choice, dear. There was no one else, was there?

Fin, however, is mesmerized.

FIN
She looks like a horse.

Mr. Pound raises an eyebrow.

FIN (CONT'D)
A racehorse.

MRS. POUND
I'm not sure she'd like that comparison, dear.

FIN
I think she would.

And now we see the object of their stares:

LADY HADLEY, 24, stunning, glamorous, coltish, hot-wired, enthralling, clad - it's 1965 - in sunglasses and a navy blue Twiggy dress with white patent leather piping approaches. Arms thrown wide open, a cigarette dangling from one hand.

LADY
Fratello mio! It's all so dreadful...

She throws her arms around a stunned Fin and holds him close. Tears roll down under her black Chanel cat shades as she kisses him on both cheeks and then on the temple, leaving red lipstick marks.

The Pounds and the other village mourners stare at Lady. She positively vibrates with a life force.

Her tempo, her long, lush mane of hair, her display of emotion - she's entirely alien to them.

Lady releases Fin.

LADY (CONT'D)
Did I miss the funeral?

Fin nods.

Lady wipes the lipstick mark she'd left on Fin's cheek away, or rather smudges it to a blush.

In the background, the Minister coughs, signaling that the time has come for the assembled group to follow him down the path to the graveyard. Fin turns to follow the Pounds -

LADY (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

MR. POUND
To the grave site, Miss Hadley.

LADY
Not Fin! He's just a boy. That's utterly barbaric. Fin, come with me -

She holds out her hand, but he doesn't take it.

LADY (CONT'D)
Just look at him! The kid is hanging on by his eyelids.

FIN
I saw Daddy buried. And Grandma and Grandpa.

LADY
I rest my case.

MR. POUND
You're the boss.

Mr. Pound heaves a sigh, then reaches a hand out to shake Fin's.

MR. POUND (CONT'D)
Good luck in your new life, Fin -

The words hit like a ton of bricks. He takes off RUNNING, TEARS streaming down his cheeks.

He runs down the drive, then turns onto a country road...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MINTUES LATER

He runs, trying to out-race his grief.

And then we see the nose of a TURQUOISE KARMANN GHIA CONVERTIBLE come into frame. Lady slows the car and keeps pace with Fin. But he splits from the road and heads cross country through a pasture towards a beautiful FARM.

INT. BARN - MINUTES LATER

Fin sits on a heap of hay, curled up in the corner of an empty horse stall.

In a moment or two, we hear the car stop - that engine again.

Lady appears at the stall door. She opens it, walks in. Embarrassed, Fin shuffles to his feet.

FIN

Go away.

LADY

Fat chance.

FIN

Leave me alone.

LADY

Come on...

She takes his hand in hers.

FIN

Just please go away.

He tries to pull back his hand, but Lady doesn't let go. Instead, she gives a violent pull, yanking him nearly off his feet.

FIN (CONT'D)

Hey! Quit it.

LADY

See? Nothing like a good shock. No more tears! Poof! Just like hiccups.

She takes his hand, gently this time.

LADY (CONT'D)

Come on, Finino.

He softens.

LADY (CONT'D)
Come on, Finino. Let's go home.

He wipes his eyes on the rough wool sleeve of his suit jacket. Lady looks away, giving him a private moment to gather himself.

The sound of COWS MOOING fills the silence.

FIN
(sudden)
What about the cows? I can't just leave them.

He turns urgently to Lady.

FIN (CONT'D)
The cows?

LADY
(snapping to)
Is that them? Mooing? Come on, Fin, let's go see what they want.

She takes his hand and leads him outside.

LADY (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Cows! Oh, cows!

Fin gives her a sideways glance to see if she's making fun of him, but she looks earnest.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Fin leads Lady past a manure pile, through a farm gate and across a pasture.

EXT. PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

At the top of a grassy hill, Lady takes Fin's hand and starts running down to a lower pasture, which is spotted with COWS.

EXT. LOWER PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Most of the cows are grazing, but two amble over to Fin. He pats them, talks to them.

Lady stands a few yards away. Fin looks back at her. Her presence, her vivid energy incongruous in this sleepy pasture. She seems to thrum or vibrate with urban life. He looks down at her shoes, white patent-leather Chanel ballerinas now covered in muck.

FIN

You ruined your shoes, I guess.

LADY

Are they okay? The cows?

FIN

I guess they are.

LADY

You do a lot of guessing, don't you, Fin?

FIN

(a small grin escapes him)
I guess.

LADY

Introduce me?

FIN

This is Daisy, and this is Darlington. They're Guernseys, my mother's favorite...

His words catch.

Lady steps forward until she is standing next to Fin. She pats the cows.

FIN (CONT'D)

My father called you a loose cannon.

LADY

Our father. He was mine too.

Fin looks over expecting more, but Lady has quieted down in the presence of the steady cow she's stroking. And the only sounds are now those of nature, the breeze rustling leaves, the faint buzzing of bees and the chirping of distant birds. A moment of stillness and peace.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

A grand old New England white clapboard house of sizeable proportions, dark green shutters and a well attended garden.

Dirty and disheveled, Fin and Lady climb the porch steps. At the top, Lady turns to Fin and puts a hand on each of his shoulders, surveying him very seriously.

LADY

Now, Fin, this has been a tragedy of monstrous proportions.

He waits for more.

LADY (CONT'D)

So. Of course you'll want a nice bath and then a nap.

FIN

No, thank you.

He looks down at the porch floor. Lady appears genuinely surprised.

LADY

No? Really? That's what I do, you know, when tragedy strikes. A nice stiff drink, a soak in the tub, a nap..."

FIN

I'm eleven.

LADY

Ah. Too old for a nap, too young for a drink. Is that what you're saying?

He nods.

FIN

But I am thirsty.

LADY

What do you drink?

FIN

Water?

LADY

Water is for washing.

FIN

My mother made lemonade.

LADY

Lemons, sugar, water... I can do that.

He follows her into the kitchen.

INT. FARM KITCHEN - A MINUTE OR TWO LATER

Lady opens cabinets, searching for supplies. Not immediately finding anything she needs, she lights a cigarette.

Fin fetches lemons, sugar, a pitcher, setting each, hopefully, on the table. Lady blows him a smoke circle and smiles.

INT. FARM - FIN'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Fin's room is what you might expect of a country boy. A SUITCASE lies open on the bed, and Fin carefully transfers the last of the clothes from the dresser into the suitcase.

Into an old leather duffel that must have once belonged to his father, he places his baseball glove, toy soldiers, comics, models, books and records. At the last moment, he remembers his toothbrush and sticks it in too. He works deliberately, but uncertainly. Everything he does now is a first.

INT. FARM - HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Carrying the two bags, he stops outside his mother's bedroom. He sets down the bags.

INT. FARM - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed has been remade with clean, pressed sheets and coverlet.

Fin lies down in his mother's place, as if in her imprint. He closes his eyes. Sinks deep into the memory of her.

INT. FARM - STAIRS/FOYER - A LITTLE LATER

Fin carries his bags down the stairs. Lady is smoking and pacing like a caged animal in the large foyer. But when she sees Fin, she breaks into a smile. He places his two bags on the ground near the front door.

LADY

The rest will be put in storage,
Finny. So don't worry.

FIN

This is all I have. There is no other stuff. No stuff that's mine.

LADY

I'm afraid it's *all* yours now...

With a sweep of her arm, she encompasses the whole house, then she points out the window.

LADY (CONT'D)

The cows, too, Finny.

(beat)

A Mister Cornelius is going to move in to manage the farm until you're of age -

FIN

My music teacher?

LADY

Beats me. But the lawyers have it all worked out -

FIN

(sudden and desperate)

What about Gus?

LADY

Gus?

FIN

Our dog.

(beat)

My dog.

LADY

Oh God. A farm mutt?

FIN

He's not a mutt. He's a Collie.

LADY

Shouldn't it stay here with its flock of cows? Won't it be sad without them?

FIN

He would be sad without me.

Lady stops pacing to consider this.

LADY

Well, where is Rin Tin Tin hiding,
anyway?

FIN

He's at the Pounds'.

LADY

(pacing again)

He's at the pound. Good grief,
they couldn't wait until after the
funeral?

FIN

No. The Pounds, the people you
met, the people who took care of
me.

LADY

Thank God. I do not approve of
euthanasia, Fin. Remember that.
If it ever comes up.

FIN

What's euthanasia?

Lady looks at Fin and thinks twice.

LADY

Come on, Finino. Lassie's waiting.

With a wink, she's out the door.

EXT. HIGHWAY - A LITTLE LATER

The Karmann Ghia speeds down the highway.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The top is down. Fin has his arms wrapped around GUS, who is
sitting on his lap, all seventy-five pounds of him. The wind
whips at their faces.

Lady has wrapped a silk scarf round her head and with her
shades appears unperturbed by the wind. She looks over at
boy and dog.

LADY

Quite a lap dog, you've got there,
Fin.

Fin holds Gus closer, resting his face on top of Gus's silky head and closing his eyes to the wind.

A truck pulls up along side and the driver checks Lady out. She gives him the finger. Outspeeds him.

Lady reaches for a pack of cigarettes, then takes her hands clear off the steering wheel to light herself a smoke. Fin stares wide-eyed with fear.

Lady takes a drag. Then reaches out and takes Fin's hand, squeezes. She gives him a smile. He looks from her to the road and back again.

LADY (CONT'D)
Family is family.

Fin nods quickly and turns back to the road, urgently willing her to do the same.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DUSK

"A World Without Love" on the car radio.

The sun is setting over the Hudson, and Manhattan glows gold, as Lady steers her way downtown and into the village. She's SINGING and swaying along to the music.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Fin's been asleep, all curled up down low in the seat, wrapped up in his dog. He wakes to the sound of Lady, the RADIO, the city. He looks up at the streetlights, the blinking restaurant signs and bright storefronts. He sits up straighter to see better.

Lady, bathed in golden light, reaches out for his hand. This time, taking it to her lips and gently kissing it.

She smiles and Fin smiles.

The moment cements something between them. He seems to know this. And maybe she does too.

She looks back out at the world beyond their cocoon.

LADY
Greenwich Village.

Fin looks back out at the city. It's the height of the 60's, and the village is thrumming with an energy uniquely its own. Fin looks on wide-eyed at the people gathered outside bars, on corners, sitting on stoops. Music is everywhere. Bob Dylan songs seem to mingle with Van Morrison, Simon & Garfunkel, Joni Mitchell. Clouds of POT hover over kissing couples and drift out of windows.

Lady drives quickly through every green light and every red one as if she owned the city.

They turn onto Charles Street, and Lady slows down.

LADY (CONT'D)
That's the house.

He looks where she's pointing.

LADY (CONT'D)
Our house.

A brick townhouse, five stories tall, a thick, beautiful wisteria growing up its facade, purple flowers hanging dramatically over the entrance.

Lady stops the car out front, gets out and stretches, looks up with pleasure at the tall house.

Gus jumps out of the car, has a long, luxurious pee on a tree. Fin climbs out last, just as Lady's opening the front door.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Lady flips a switch and a chandelier comes to life, filling a high-ceilinged, freshly painted white room with light. The room is empty, as is the next room and, quite apparently, the whole house. Not a lick of furniture, not even a chair.

LADY
Isn't it terrific? Isn't it
perfect?

She glides into the next room and fills it, too, with light.

LADY (CONT'D)
Home sweet home.

She's beaming. She turns to him, expectantly. He's uncertain what to say.

FIN
Home sweet home?

He walks back to the front door and opens it.

LADY
Wait! What are you doing?

FIN
I'm going to get my suitcase.

LADY
(relieved)
Oh. Christ, I thought you were
running away. Already.

He looks at her and sees that she was genuinely panicked. He closes the door.

FIN
I should probably feed Gus.

LADY
Gus. Good grief! Dinner! You
probably want dinner, too.

FIN
Don't you?

LADY
I don't eat. Lord, I'd be as big
as a house.

Without pause, she sails back out the front door, leaving Fin and Gus to follow her.

INT. DINER - TEN MINUTES LATER

Sitting opposite Lady in a booth, Fin devours a burger. So does Gus. Lady nurses a Gimlet. All around them are TWENTYSOMETHINGS feeding their pot-induced hunger, chain-smoking, humming to their own music, necking and pouring over the JUTE BOX.

The waitress clears Fin's plate and sets down a slice of lemon cream pie. Fin stares at the neon lemon, as alien to him as his new world. He looks lost.

LADY
(softly)
We're both orphans now, I guess.

Lady reaches over and touches his cheek. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket, dabs at his eyes.

Lady's gaze settles on the monogram on Fin's handkerchief. Her jaw sets and, in a violent change of mood, her voice suddenly drips with sarcasm.

LADY (CONT'D)

Well, look at that. H.H.H.

FIN

It's Daddy's.

LADY

Yes, Fin. I see that.

She takes a sip of her drink.

LADY (CONT'D)

I never liked Daddy much. What about you?

FIN

I guess I did.

Then, just as quickly as the wintry Lady had appeared, she turns calm and sunny again.

LADY

Well, it's just us now. Fin and Lady.

An overwhelming idea to them both.

Fin looks down, takes a bite of pie.

FIN

I met your mother once. She came to our house when I was little.

LADY

We didn't get along that badly, you know? Mommy and me. I mean, compared to Daddy, she was a saint. I miss her.

FIN

I miss my mother.

LADY

(not hearing him)
And after all the shit I put her through, she left me everything.

(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

I really thought she'd leave it all to the Whitney. She thought they'd never finish building it, but there it is, and here we are.

FIN

So now you're rich?

LADY

You're not supposed to ask people about money. It's considered déclassé.

FIN

Sorry, Lady.

LADY

I am pretty rich, though.

The waitress clears Fin's empty pie plate.

LADY (CONT'D)

Bring him another slice.
(titling her empty glass)
And top this off, would you?

WAITRESS

Yes, Ma'am.

The waitress leaves.

LADY

You're out of school a month early -

FIN

Two months.

LADY

I told them I'd enroll you here.
But for two months it hardly seems worth it. Right?

Fin nods vigorously.

INT. FIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Fin wakes to blinding sunlight. He's in a king-sized bed that's been placed on a diagonal in the middle of an empty, freshly-painted white room. The bed is angled so Fin can see the trees in the garden below outside his window. His suitcase lies open on the floor. The bed has no sheets or blankets. Fin's covered in a silk evening coat of Lady's. He sits up.

FIN

Gus?

Not there.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He traipses down the stairs. His bedroom's on the fourth floor. On the landing of the third, he sees Lady's door open. She's still asleep, sprawled across another huge bed, also covered in an evening coat. He goes down another flight, passing the living room and dining room, then hears sounds of cooking below. He walks down one more flight.

Gus rushes at Fin to greet him.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Fin follows Gus into the kitchen, where he finds the HOUSEKEEPER, late 50's, African-American.

MABEL

I'm Mabel. From the look on your face, I don't suppose Miss Lady told you about me.

FIN

Pleased to meet you, Mabel.

He extends a hand. She takes it, pleased, in turn, by his manners.

FIN (CONT'D)

I'm Fin.

MABEL

You're Mr. Fin to me.

She turns back to the stove, and Fin sees she's bought pans and groceries.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Have a seat, Mr. Fin.

She brings him a plate of fried eggs, toast, bacon and a glass of orange juice.

MABEL (CONT'D)

I'll stop for dog food later.

(to Gus)

Looks like it's bacon and eggs for you too.

She sets a second plate on the floor.

MABEL (CONT'D)
Better buy dog bowls.

She looks round the empty room, shaking her head in dismay.

MABEL (CONT'D)
I don't see why Miss Lady had to
move.

FIN
Where'd she live before?

MABEL
Uptown. The way she should.
Definitely not here with the
riffraff and beatniks. Miss Lady
says she needs to be herself. Why
you need to move from top to bottom
to be yourself, I don't know. I
could run a hundred blocks and back
and I'd still be myself. This is
me, standing on my own two feet,
wherever I am. She needs to be
herself? I told her, Miss Lady, I
wouldn't wish that on anybody, even
you.

FIN
How far is a block?

MABEL
Twenty in a mile.

FIN
They don't have blocks where I
live. They have roads. And lanes.

MABEL
(laughing)
I've heard of them.
(beat)
Well, you live here now. Better
make the best of it.

She looks around again, shaking her head. Fin, however, is looking out a set of French doors to the garden:

Peering over the back brick wall is a GIRL, about the same age as he is. Pigtails. She looks straight back at him, then slips back behind the tall wall. In a moment, she reappears. This time, she's taken her pigtails down. He smiles, and she drops back out of sight.

Mabel, who has watched this exchange, gives Fin a look, but he stares at his empty plate.

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - LATE MORNING

It's a beautiful Spring day. Fin takes Gus down the stoop to pee on the tree. Upstairs, Lady opens the window and leans out.

LADY

(calling down to him)
Shouldn't you be in the park
playing baseball with your friends,
or whatever it is boys do?

FIN

(calling up to her)
I don't know anyone here. I don't
have any friends yet.

LADY

Oh.
(beat)
Then I'll just have to do for the
time being.

She gives him a wide smile.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - A LITTLE LATER

Fin speed walks, trying to keep up with Lady's long, purposeful strides.

Her lush mane of hair, her long legs - men stare at her, wide-eyed. She walks like she owns the city, but cares little about ownership.

Fin catches up.

FIN

Are we late?

LADY

No, Farm Boy. We're alive!

She takes his hand and starts running.

EXT. LITTLE ITALY - A LITTLE LATER

Fin and Lady at an outdoor table. Lady is teaching Fin to blow smoke rings.

Passersby notice his cigarette and shake their heads. Fin and Lady blow a set of rings right at each other, and the rings of smoke collide and rise.

LADY
Well done, Finino!

FADE IN: A WALTZ

INT. PLAZA HOTEL - PALM COURT - DAY

TEA at the plaza. The BAND plays a waltz. And there, among the tables of sedate ladies who lunch, Lady teaches Fin to dance. His embarrassment loses to Lady's infectious spirit.

After a spin, Fin, dizzy, collapses in his seat. Laughing, Lady plucks a *petit-four* from a multi-tiered tea tray.

LADY
Catch!

She tosses it to Fin, who catches it, pops it in his mouth.

And the waltz plays on...

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

LADY (O.S.)
(cooing)
Oh, Knight in Shining Armor, where
hast thou been, these long years of
my life?

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - HALL OF KNIGHTS - DAY

Lady gazes up at a striking life-size model of a knight in shining armor astride a horse.

Fin steps up behind her.

FIN
(in a deep voice)
On a quest, Lady Lady.

They burst out laughing.

FIN (CONT'D)
Why did Daddy name you Lady?

LADY
Mockery, no doubt. Or maybe to
remind me to mind my manners.

Fin suppresses a laugh.

LADY (CONT'D)
(goadng him)
Go on, say it. His plan failed!
Well, why did he name you Fin with
only one "N?"

FIN
It means "the end" in French.

LADY
(sarcastic)
Do tell.

FIN
You know French?

Lady nods.

FIN (CONT'D)
My parents - I mean our father and
my mother - were at a movie
theater. I guess it was the last
word they saw before I was born. I
guess I was finished before I was
even born.

LADY
Daddy didn't know French. Even he
wouldn't have done that to you.

She looks up at the Knight, grows suddenly pensive.

LADY (CONT'D)
(in small voice)
Oh, Finny, will this guy do as a
father figure?

FIN
(trying for her sake)
I'll say!

LADY
(brightening)
Done! Now, I don't need to get
married.

INT. FIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SOBBING. Missing his mother, his father, his home, Fin is crying himself to sleep.

Lady pushes open the half-closed door. She walks over to the bed and gets under the covers and holds Fin, as he cries.

When his sobs quiet, she starts to hum to him, ever so softly.

And they lie there, washed in the moonlight coming through the tall windows.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

A small Frenchman, PIERRE, in a pink ascot is barking directions at a team of MOVERS, orchestrating an invasion of FURNITURE into the house, while simultaneously trying to impress Lady.

Mabel stands guard at the door, shaking her head. Gus next to her, emitting a long, low growl. Fin stares.

PIERRE

(to Lady)

"Groovy" is the word you are searching for. For the groovy debutante.

LADY

Oh, I left the debutante uptown, where she belongs.

MABEL

Uptown with all the real furniture.

LADY

Mabel doesn't approve of anything I do.

MABEL

No, I do not.

Shaking her head, she retreats downstairs to the kitchen.

Fin stares at Pierre.

PIERRE

The child's eyeballs are popping out of his head.

LADY
Put them back in, Fin.

Fin tries to escape to the garden.

LADY (CONT'D)
Wait, fratello mio! Look!

Fin stops. Lady points to a large box.

LADY (CONT'D)
A color television, just for you!

FIN
Color!

Amazed, Fin rushes over to examine the box.

FIN (CONT'D)
Can I watch it whenever I want to?

LADY
When do you want to?

Fin looks at her blankly, waiting for parental restrictions.

LADY (CONT'D)
Oh well, if you don't know. I
certainly don't.

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Fin reads a comic under the big tree in the back garden with Gus next to him. Suddenly, a HOT DOG lands a few feet from Gus. Fin looks up and sees the girl across the way climbing over the garden wall.

GIRL
Don't worry, it's not poisoned or
anything.

Fin turns to Gus.

FIN
OK, boy!

Gus claims the dog.

GIRL
I'm a cat person.

Fin nods. The girl plops down next to him, picks up his comic, peruses it, tosses it down, losing his place.

GIRL (CONT'D)

My parents let me charge whatever I want at the book store. Record store too. Culture is educational and all that. Wanna go?

FIN

I have my own money.

GIRL

I should get you a moving-in present. Like bringing over banana bread or something.

(getting to her feet)

Come on -

FIN

What's your name?

GIRL

Phoebe.

FIN

I'm Fin.

But she's already on her way. He scrambles up to follow.

INT. VILLAGE RECORD STORE - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

The place to be. This is where new music lands first. Fin's not in his element.

Phoebe, browsing the bins of records, already has a stack to buy. She adds a Dave Van Ronk. Fin picks up the Rolling Stones album (I can't get no) SATISFACTION and inspects the cover.

PHOEBE

My advice, not that you've asked for it, but, as the daughter of two shrinks, I feel compelled to give it, is -

FIN

What's a shrink?

PHOEBE

(ignoring the question)

Is to scare away the men.

FIN

What men?

PHOEBE

All of them. If Lady gets married,
you're out. Shipped off. No man
wants to take on a kid who is not
his own. It's anti-Darwinian.

Off Fin: realizing, with a painful jolt, that she's right.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

I'm guessing it's off to boarding
school for you... if you're lucky.
(beat)
But it could be an orphanage.

Phoebe hands him an LP of Herman's Hermits.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

(dramatic)
This is to remember me with.

He takes the record, but doesn't look at it.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Keep it always in memory of our
brief but beautiful friendship.

FIN

Maybe she won't get married... Or
maybe the husband - I don't know...
Maybe he won't mind me?

Phoebe cocks her head, "doubtful."

FIN (CONT'D)

Lady doesn't even *want* to get
married. She told me so.

PHOEBE

Why would she? You don't need to
tie the knot to do the hokie pokie,
anymore Fin, at least not in New
York.

(continuing to browse)
But she will. Everyone expects it.

She turns to Fin, looks him straight in the eye.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You need a plan.

FIN

(unsure)
I need a plan.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Fin, wearing a Knight's helmet and wielding a sword, fences an invisible opponent on the sidewalk. Gus dozes on the stoop.

A taxi pulls up, and out gets a MAN, 30's, nattily dressed in an expensive suit and hat. He looks up at Lady's house. Gus growls.

MAN

There, there, Lassie.

His tone rubs Fin the wrong way. He follows the man up the stoop.

The man rings the doorbell, and Mabel opens the door.

MABEL

(dry)

Well, look who's here.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The man hands Mabel his hat as he enters, Fin and Gus at his heels. Fin gives Mabel a questioning look. She gives him a wary look back.

The man stops short when he sees Lady. She is pacing and smoking furiously, as if smoking were something you worked at.

MAN

Beautiful as ever.

LADY

Merry as a cricket.

MAN

It's been a long time.

LADY

Has it?

Lady looks ready to bolt.

FIN

Lady, I'm home.

MAN

Yes, I seem to have acquired an entourage.

Lady pours Scotch into a tumbler and hands it to the man.

MAN (CONT'D)
You remembered.

LADY
It's a drink, Tyler.
(turning to Fin)
Mr. Morrison is an old friend.

TYLER
I hope I am. I want to be friends
with you, too, son.

FIN
Don't call me son. My father's
dead.

Fin turns and walks down the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mabel fills a glass with milk and hands it to Fin, who's
seated at the kitchen table.

FIN
Who is he, really?

MABEL
He's a lawyer.

FIN
Is Lady in trouble?

MABEL
White people have lawyers before
they get in trouble.

Lady calls down to him.

LADY (O.S.)
(stiff)
Fin, would come upstairs darling?

With a look at Mabel, he drags himself back upstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Fin now sits uncomfortably on the edge of the pink couch.

LADY

You see, Mr. Morrison is your fiscal guardian.

FIN

You're my guardian.

LADY

Oh, absolutely, Finino. Tyler is another kind of guardian. He guards your money. Like Fafner.

TYLER

Who's Fafner?

FIN

A dragon.

TYLER

Thanks so very much.

FIN

I don't need anyone to guard my money. Guard it from who?

TYLER

Whom.

LADY

From me, I suppose.

TYLER

Don't worry about it, son. It's called a trust.

LADY

But it means you don't trust.

TYLER

But you do. You know, you're a lucky little boy to own a whole farm.

LADY

Jesus, Tyler. His mother just died. I don't think 'lucky' is the word.

Tyler turns back to Fin, who clearly now loathes him.

TYLER

Let's look at it like this. I'm here to make sure you have a big, big piggy bank full of money for when you grow up. Get it? First order of business is to sell the farm -

FIN

You can't sell the farm! You CAN'T!

TYLER

You're a cocky one. Must run in the family.

Lady shoots him a warning look.

FIN

The farm belongs to me, and you don't have my permission to sell it.

(turning to Lady)

I'll never give it up.

Lady meets his eye. Instinctively, she goes to his side, takes his hand in hers and squeezes.

Tyler pulls a gold cigarette case from his jacket pocket, then a lighter. Fin hates everything he does. Even the way Tyler flips open his lighter infuriates Fin.

TYLER

Well you see, young man, that decision is up to me, to liquidate your property or not to. As I see fit.

LADY

Yackety-yack. You sound like my father. Were you always so pompous? 'Liquidate your property' They're cows, Tyler.

TYLER

Ah, Lady, fairest Lady. You really haven't changed, have you?

FIN

(urgent)

My cows, Lady -

Fin now thrums with panic.

LADY
Lavender Jesus!

TYLER
And land too - not an insubstantial
acreage, either.

Lady takes Tyler's empty glass from his hand, walks over to the bar and refills it. She brings it back to him, but doesn't move away. Simply stands close, disarming him. Holding him in the moment. And maybe falling into it herself.

Finally, she puts her hand on his chest and looks up into his eyes.

LADY
(a gentle murmur)
Don't sell, Ty. Don't do it.

He lets her plea hover.

LADY (CONT'D)
For me?

After a long moment, Tyler lets out an odd, forced laugh, as he tries to break free from her spell.

TYLER
I surrender.
(bitterly)
I always do.

After a beat, he leaves, and the front door shuts after him.

Lady sinks into the nearest chair.

LADY
The past is never where you thought
you left it, Fin.
(beat)
I forget where I read that.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING - A FEW DAYS LATER

Fin at the table, eating breakfast. Gus sits by his dog bowl. Mabel cocks an eyebrow. Relents and adds a fried egg to his food.

Tyler walks in, a little too jaunty for Fin and Mabel's taste.

TYLER
A cup of coffee, Mabel.

But Mabel's already handing it to him.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Morning Fin.

Fin eyes him over his cereal. Tyler drinks his coffee in one go, pulls his jacket straight and heads for the door.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Carpe Diem, Fin. Carpe Diem.

They hear the front door open and close upstairs.

FIN
Why does Lady put up with Mr. Morrison? He acts like he lives here.

MABEL
Well he almost did, didn't he?

Fin stops eating.

MABEL (CONT'D)
Lady jilted him. Left him standing at the altar.

FIN
You mean like a wedding?

MABEL
That's what I mean.

FIN
I went to a wedding that was Lady's wedding, but Lady never came.

MABEL
That's the wedding, then. Even Miss Lady didn't skip out on two weddings. Went off to Europe on an ocean liner. Our Miss Lady is foolish, but she's no fool.

FIN
Yeah. Our Miss Lady is no fool.

MABEL
Foolish, though.

FIN
Yeah. Foolish.

MABEL
But no fool.

FIN
She wouldn't get married to him
again, would she?

MABEL
That, Mr. Fin, is the question.

Lady appears bleary-eyed in a silk robe.

LADY
What is the question?

FIN
Are you going to marry Mr. Morrison
this time?

Lady frowns at Mabel.

MABEL
The truth will set you free, Miss
Lady.

LADY
Well, I didn't marry him, did I?
Good grief. What is this, the
Spanish Inquisition? I was
eighteen years old, for crying out
loud.

FIN
You're not eighteen now.

LADY
Neither are you. So dry up!

FIN
Hangover?

LADY
No.
(she glares at him)
Yes. So sue me.

FIN
Don't marry him, Lady.

MABEL
Amen to that.

But Lady is humming a Lesley Gore song and ignoring them:

LADY

(crooning)

And don't tell me what to do.
 Don't tell me what to say... Cause
 you don't own me. You don't own
 me. Don't try to change me in any
 way. You don't own me. Don't tie me
 down cause I'd never stay. I'm
 free, and I love to be free to live
 my life the way I want, to say and
 do whatever I please...

Taking her coffee upstairs, her voice trails away.

FIN

She didn't say she wouldn't.

MABEL

No, she didn't.

INT. FIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fin changes into his P.J.s. His room is starting to fill up - he has sheets and blankets now, a bookshelf, a dog bed for Gus - but still no curtains. As he changes, he notices a light on in the house across the garden and...

In the window, Phoebe watching him with a pair of binoculars.

Fin jumps back, out of sight - he hopes - and scrambles into his P.J.s He turns back: she's still looking.

He scrawls on a sheet of paper: "What are you doing?" and holds it up to the glass of his window.

He watches as she writes in big red capital letters across a whole page of The New York Times: ICE-CREAM? She shines a light on the paper and holds it up to the window glass so he can see.

EXT. GARDEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Two hands appear over the garden wall, each with a pint of ice-cream and a spoon. Fin takes the ice-cream and then Phoebe climbs over.

They sit under the tree side by side, Gus too, and eat ice-cream. For every spoonful Fin takes, he gives one to Gus.

PHOEBE

Gross.

FIN

Dogs have anti-bacterial properties
in their saliva. It's practically
sterile.

PHOEBE

How Darwinian.

FIN

Not so with cats.

Phoebe gives him a look. As if on a dare, she offers Gus her
spoon. He licks the ice-cream off. She takes the next
spoonful.

PHOEBE

Well, I'm not *dead* yet.

(beat)

Sorry, Fin.

Fin shrugs it off, but they grow quiet. He buries his
fingers in Gus's fur.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

What was your mother like?

FIN

Gentle.

(beat)

She was gentle.

He leans back against the trunk of the tree and closes his
eyes.

They sit in silence for a moment.

Suddenly, Phoebe reaches over and kisses him on the lips.

He opens his eyes.

PHOEBE

We're going through puberty, you
know. It's time to start
practicing.

FIN

Oh.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - EVENING

The DOORBELL RINGS. Fin answers. It's Tyler.

TYLER

Hi Scout.

FIN

Lady will be down soon.

They can hear her singing upstairs as she gets ready.

Fin's about to go back upstairs, when Tyler puts his arm around the boy's shoulders and leads him into the living room.

TYLER

Tough growing up with just that beautiful girl to raise you, isn't it?

Tyler pours himself a Scotch at the bar.

FIN

No.

TYLER

Sometimes a guy needs another guy around to talk to.

FIN

I don't.

TYLER

They've done studies, you know. Better to have a mother and father. Even, say, foster parents. Its healthier. Emotionally.

FIN

I'm very healthy.

Lady appears, all dressed up. Tyler turns to take her in, whistles. She makes a little cat-walk spin. Fin leaves the room, unnoticed.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Fin's walking Gus when he hears a CAR HORN BEEP. He looks up and sees the Karmann Ghia. Lady, driving, is looking terrifically pleased with herself, the setting sun shimmering on her bare shoulders and long hair.

She drives alongside, shouting to him.

LADY
I have the answer!

FIN
To what?

LADY
To what we can do with you while
you're here!

FIN
While I'm here? Where am I going?

She stops the car.

LADY
You're not going anywhere, for the
love of Mike. But we have to have
something for you to do, n'est pas?

Several cars are backed up behind her. One HONKS. She ignores it.

LADY (CONT'D)
Don't you want to know?

FIN
I guess.

LADY
You will help me get married!

Another HONK. She inches the car forward. Fin hurries to keep up.

FIN
(urgent)
You don't have to marry Tyler.
I'll be good. I'll play by myself!
I'll help Mable. I'll make
friends, too. I'll even go to
school -

LADY
Tyler? Good God, no.

Lady hits the breaks. Another HONK.

LADY (CONT'D)
Hop in.

Fin gets into the car and Gus jumps in after him.

INT. KARMANN GHIA - CONTINUOUS

As soon as they're in the car, Lady takes off.

FIN

Who? When? When are you getting married?

LADY

Well, let's see... I'm twenty-four. The deadline is twenty-five. After that you really do become pathetic. So we have a year. A little less than a year.

Relieved, Fin leans back.

LADY (CONT'D)

Just like the Bible. Except that was seven years. And I won't have to share my husband with my sister.

FIN

Because you don't have a sister.

LADY

Well, that's one reason. So what do you think, Fin? Can you help me find someone to fall in love with in one year?

FIN

Don't worry. Everyone falls in love with you, Lady.

LADY

That's not what I said.

Fin knows.

LADY (CONT'D)

Twenty-five. Then it's all over. How's your Shakespeare, Fin? Taming of the Shrew?

She stops the car in the middle of an intersection.

LADY (CONT'D)

(theatrical)

I will be master of what is mine own: She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn, My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing."

Lady pokes Fin's chest. Again, cars have stopped short all around her and have starting HONKING.

LADY (CONT'D)

I don't want a master. And I don't want to be an ass.

She starts driving again, creating more traffic havoc.

LADY (CONT'D)

And that's where you come in, Finino. You really have to help me. One year to find a man, a good one, one I'm in love with. Is that too much to ask?

She stops the car again. Holds out her hand to shake.

LADY (CONT'D)

No lemons! There are a lot of lemons out there.

They shake.

FIN

No lemons.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fin writes on blank paper: "PLAN: I CHOOSE THE HUSBAND." He holds it to the window glass.

Across the two gardens, Phoebe stands at her window, binoculars trained on the paper. Then she writes: "OUR MISSION IS CLEAR. WE WILL NOT FAIL."

She holds it up for Fin to read.

SOUNDS OF A PARTY FADE IN...

INT. HALLWAY - STAIRS - NIGHT

Phoebe, Fin and Gus sit on the top stairs looking down at the parlor floor, where a PARTY is in full swing. Chatter and music drift up to them. The smoke is thick as a cloud. The guests are a mix of rich boho chic and 60's radicals. Lady's at the center of it all, her vitality, a magnet.

PHOEBE

The challenge is finding a man who can love you.

Off Fin: Is it really that hard?

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
 They'll all make nice to get on
 your good side, so we need a test.
 We need to determine paternal
 intent... We need a family man.

FIN
 Lady will never go for that.

PHOEBE
 They are boring. That's why I'm
 never getting married.

FIN
 What about puberty?

PHOEBE
 Oh, I'll have lovers. Lots of
 them. That's what men are good at.
 A patient of my Mom's said that.

FIN
 You listen?

PHOEBE
 Of course! It's where I learn
 everything. Like size really does
 matter. And you can tell by
 looking at a man's shoe size.

Fin tries to hide his feet by sliding his knees out over
 them.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
 Oh, I looked already.

Phoebe stands, stretches like a woman.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
 (languorous)
 I think I'll have a gin & tonic.

Without waiting for an answer, she descends the stairs.

Off Fin, looking at his feet.

INT. CHARLES STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Phoebe weaves through the crowd, Fin at her heels. She's
 holding a gin & tonic, as if it were a fashion accessory, but
 no one seems to notice it.

On a mission, they're taking stock of the male guests, one by one. They stop, assess, pass verdict, move on.

Phoebe appraises an Easy Rider-type with bushy sideburns:

PHOEBE
(to Fin)
Fails the personal hygiene test.

They move on. Off a man in a plaid suit and wide lapels:

FIN
He looks like a blanket.

Off a man sporting a tan suede jacket and a mustache:

PHOEBE
Jacket gets a ten. Mustache
disqualifies him.

They bump right into a very tall man wearing a tight polyester patterned shirt that's open down to his navel.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Suffocating use of cologne.
Compensating for what we do not
know -

FIN
Soap?

They come face to face with a WOMAN wearing a plastic Twiggy dress. Fin stares, wide-eyed: the dress is see-through.

FIN (CONT'D)
Is that saran wrap?

PHOEBE
Let's just say it's not Pucci.

He takes a second look. Phoebe yanks him forward, sloshing her drink. She leads him out into the garden.

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

While also crowded, at least the air is fresh.

A WOMAN in a mini eyelet dress ruffles Fin's hair.

FIN
Hi, Mirna.

MIRNA

(to Phoebe)

And you must be the girl next door.

Fin, mortified, studies the ground. Phoebe, however, beams. She shakes Mirna's hand.

PHOEBE

Glad to meet you, Mirna.

Phoebe follows Fin to the tree, and they sit against its trunk.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

(on task)

We'll need to widen the scope of our search.

Fin, however, is looking back through the open French doors to the party.

FIN

In Vermont, men dress to stay warm in the winter and to keep the bugs off in the summer.

(beat)

Everyone here looks confused.

His gaze find Lady - never hard, as she seems to carry her own spotlight. She's surrounded by an entourage of men. One of them moves in on her, places his hand on the small of her back. Fin looks away.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Lady and Fin BIKE through the park. It's a Sunday, and everyone's out, the road closed for summer. They race each other, Lady the greater dare devil, but Fin a boy with tricks. They zigzag through the crowd, calling out apologies.

At a light, Fin stops. His gaze falls on a mother teaching her son to bike. There's such tender love there, he can't look away. It guts him.

Lady circles back. She follows his gaze and sees what he sees, sees what it's doing to him.

LADY

Race you? If you beat me, I'll take you to Schraff's for frozen hot chocolate?

Fin shakes his head, hiding tears.

LADY (CONT'D)
 Finino! Watch out! I'll marry
 Tyler if you don't beat me.

He looks at her, incredulous. She's like a wild child.

LADY (CONT'D)
 You know I will -

And he does. She takes off. He powers after her.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Fin's lying on the couch tossing a ball in the air, when the
 DOORBELL RINGS. Reluctantly, he gets up, answers the door.

To find JACK, a blond college football star.

FIN
 Lady will be downstairs in a
 minute.

Jack follows Fin inside. From upstairs, they can hear Lady
 singing along to the radio. Jack smiles.

FIN (CONT'D)
 In Victorian England, men used to
 polish their boots so they could
 see up ladies' dresses.

Jack stares at him.

FIN (CONT'D)
 In the reflection.

JACK
 Oh. Well, this isn't Victorian
 England, is it?

Jack sits down, his tall, muscled frame filling an armchair.

JACK (CONT'D)
 This, this is the age of the
 miniskirt!

He chuckles to himself.

Lady appears, looking ravishing. Jack gets to his feet.

LADY

Get up, Finino mio. Jack, I'd like you to meet my brother, Fin. Fin, this is my dear, dear friend Jack... Jordan, right? Jack Jordan. He's come to take us golfing.

JACK

Oh, come on, Lady. Golf is no fun for kids.

LADY

He's brilliant at miniature golf.

Lady winks at Fin, glides over to the bar. Jack sits back down.

FIN

So, what are your interests, Jack?

JACK

My *what*?

Satisfied that Jack is stupid, Fin smiles. Lady shoots him a look.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - LATER

Fin's never played golf, and he's lagging behind a hole. He looks up ahead and sees Jack give Lady's ass a squeeze.

Disgusted, Fin walks to the top of a mound overlooking a pool of water and takes a swing, sending the golf ball straight into the water, where it lands with a satisfying SPLASH! Entirely on purpose. He takes another shot and another and another.

JACK

(shouting out)

What are you doing?

But Lady's already beside Fin now, and she starts doing the same. One after the other with a wild fury, the balls hit the water. SPLASH! SPLASH! SPLASH! Brother and sister in unison. Jack stares.

JACK (CONT'D)

You people are insane.

LADY

Don't you know it!

She grabs Fin to her and kisses the top of his head.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

Fin and Phoebe drag a record player out to the top of the stoop. Phoebe already has a stack of records ready to go.

The front door opens, and Jack steps into the sun, looking a little too cocky by half.

JACK
(by way of greeting)
Kids.

Jack passes them on his way down the stoop.

But on the sidewalk, he pauses and looks up at Fin.

JACK (CONT'D)
Tell me something. Does your
sister confide in you? You know,
about things?

FIN
What kind of things?

JACK
Well, if I knew that, would I be
asking?

Fin waits a beat, relishing Jack's stupidity.

FIN
Yes, she does.

JACK
Good to know.

FIN
Everything.

Pleased with himself, Jack struts down Charles Street.

PHOEBE
(watching him go)
Not a rocket scientist... But he
does emanate a strong, athletic
energy.

Fin's satisfaction dissipates.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
 He could protect the wigwam, build
 the teepee and carry home a
 buffalo. It's Darwinian.

FIN
 So is intelligence.

PHOEBE
 Only among Jews. And, then, only
 in New York.

She picks an album from her stack. Reconsiders.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
 But we need to keep an eye on that
 one. He'd get rid of you even
 faster than Tyler.

FIN
 You mean like spy?

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - LATE NIGHT

Fin and Phoebe walk surreptitiously about twenty paces behind
 Jack and Lady. They're almost home.

PHOEBE
 I'll distract them. You make a
 dash for the door -

Up ahead, Lady stops short. Tyler is sitting on the stoop
 steps.

LADY
 What the hell are you doing here?

TYLER
 Thought I'd stop by.

Fin and Phoebe huddle in the shadow of a tree.

PHOEBE
 A mating fight!

FIN
 Tyler doesn't stand a chance.

PHOEBE
 You loathe Tyler.

FIN

I loathe Jack even more. His stupidity is insulting to Lady's judgement.

PHOEBE

Does Lady have judgement?

Up ahead, Tyler has stood up and is now wobbling.

TYLER

(to Lady)

You broke my heart. Do you know that?

Lady snaps back.

LADY

Yes of course I know.

TYLER

It's still broken. I bet you didn't know that.

LADY

Of course I know that, Ty. Am I blind? Now, come on, let's get you home.

TYLER

I hope someone breaks your heart, Lady.

LADY

I don't have a heart.

TYLER

True, true...

Tyler starts to collapse against Lady.

LADY

Jack! Help me, for God's sake.

JACK

Who is he?

LADY

Just someone.

TYLER

Why thanks!

Jack hoists Tyler's arm up around his shoulder.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 (to Jack)
 Who are you?

LADY
 He's no one.

JACK
 Hey!

LADY
 (with a whistle)
 Taxi!

A cab pulls up and Lady opens the door. Jack folds Tyler into the cab and slams the door shut.

Lady whistles for a second taxi. It pulls up. She opens the door and motions for Jack to get in.

Jack folds his tall frame into the cab.

JACK
 Where're we going?

Lady closes the door on him, too. The window is open.

LADY
 You're going. Home.

JACK
 Hey!

LADY
 You said that already. Off you go.

She gives the cabbie a nod, and he drives away.

Fin bolts up the stoop and turns at the front door as if he'd been waiting for Lady.

LADY (CONT'D)
 (walking up the stoop)
 What are you doing up, Fin?

FIN
 Just going to bed.

LADY
 Stick around. Keep me company.

Before closing the front door, Fin shoots Phoebe a goodnight wave. She winks back.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO MINUTES LATER

Fin follows Lady into the living room.

LADY
Lavender Jesus, what a night!

Fin and Lady sink into the couch side by side and are quiet for a moment.

LADY (CONT'D)
Sometimes it gets to me.

FIN
What?

LADY
It.

FIN
Yeah. Me too.

LADY
What if I really don't have a heart?

FIN
Like the Tin Man. But he really did.

Lady puts her arm around him and draws him close.

LADY
I do love *you*, that's for sure.

FIN
I guess you have a heart, then.

Fin gives a small smile, but Lady has fallen asleep on his shoulder.

FIN (CONT'D)
(a whisper, to himself)
It hurts. Having a heart.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Fin and Gus stand idling across the street from a school.

Dismissal. The doors burst open, and a sea of kids emerge and disperse from this bastion of progressive sit-in-a-circle education.

A TEACHER in bell-bottom jeans sits on a car hood playing a Joan Baez tune on the guitar, while ANOTHER TEACHER in a flowered mini-dress accompanies him, singing and waving to the departing kids.

Phoebe emerges. Before Fin can get her attention, a pack of girls surround her. They walk to the corner diner.

Fin and Gus head for home.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - LADY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Lady, sitting at her dressing table, tries on jewelry, getting ready for an evening out. Fin paces behind her.

FIN
Tyler is a Yankee fan.

LADY
I'm sorry, Fin.

FIN
And Jack is a moron.

LADY
What is it you want me to do,
Finny. Send them to bed without
any supper?

FIN
Perché non? You said I should help
you find the lemons.

LADY
But I didn't say you should spoil
all my fun!

Outside, they hear a car HORN HONK lightly twice. Lady looks out the window: It's Tyler in the Karmann Ghia. She waves, gives Fin a kiss on the cheek and flies out the door.

Fin watches from the window as Lady makes Tyler move to the passenger seat while she takes the driver's seat. And then they are gone.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - LADY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The Sunday New York Times spread out on the bed. Lady's in a silk robe doing the crossword puzzle. Fin's sprawled in his P.J.s reading the obituaries.

LADY
Country in Africa that begins with
Ben. Five letters.

FIN
Benin.

LADY
Good boy! Did you learn that in
school?
(she fills in the letters)
Tyler went to boarding school. He
really liked it. He said he felt
independent.

Fin's alarm radar shoots up. He feigns fascination with the
Obits.

FIN
Here's a woman named Faustina.
That's a funny name.

Lady, focused on the puzzle, isn't paying attention.

LADY
He said boys like boarding school.
They play sports and they play
tricks on each other.

FIN
Yeah, but look how he turned out.

LADY
Mmm.

Fin turns back to the paper, one eye still on Lady.

FIN
And a man named Lucifer.

LADY
I hope I'm doing the right thing
with you. After all, I went to
boarding school. Of course, I
hated it. But maybe boys are
different.

FIN
Faustina and Lucifer went to school
together.

LADY
(distracted)
Boarding school?

FIN

They hated it. They ran away to sea disguised as pirates, then plunged to inner earth and created their own country. They called it Hell. And they were happy because it was better than boarding school.

Lady finally notices that he's pulling her leg. She kicks him, laughing.

LADY

Okay, okay, you had me... Faustina and Lucifer. Very clever. Maybe you don't need to go to school after all.

FIN

I want to go to Phoebe's school.

LADY

Oh.

INT. ART STUDIO - DAY

A NUDE MODEL poses for five art students - the students are Fin, Lady, her friends Mirna and JOAN, and an attractive MAN, 37, dapper, slightly eccentric and intently focused on his drawing. The students draw in charcoal at wooden EASELS that form a circle around the model.

Fin's mortified. Instead of drawing the nude, he's drawing the book in the model's hand... But it's hard not to look.

Lady, at the next easel, whispers to Fin.

LADY

Go see if the man's drawing is any good.

Fin looks up at the man across from them. Striking dark hair and intelligent looks, he is hard at work, barely aware of anyone else in the room.

Fin nods, relieved to have a job to do. He walks around the studio, with the pretense of needing more charcoal. He takes the long route back, pausing to observe the man's drawing, before circling back to his own easel.

FIN

(whispering to Lady)
Exceptional.

Lady nods. An afterthought, she digs in her purse and retrieves a pack of life-savers, which she now gives Fin.

Mirna notices. She whispers to Lady. But Fin hears.

MIRNA

Do you ever... *regret* it?

LADY

Regret what?

MIRNA

You know. The *operation*?

LADY

Jesus, Mirna, shut up.

Fin overhears, but is too young to know what it means. Joan chimes in from the other side of Mirna.

JOAN

You were so *young*.

LADY

(snaps back)

I'm still young.

Lady steps back to assess her work.

LADY (CONT'D)

I attended the school of hard
knocks.

(a beat for drama)

And I got knocked up!

The three women burst out laughing. The man, snapped out of his focus looks up and meets Lady's eye. For a moment, neither looks away.

Fin looks from one to the other.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Lady lies on the living room couch, a pillow over head.

Fin approaches and lifts the pillow enough to whisper in her ear. She immediately tosses off the pillow and emerges ravishing, eyes bright.

LADY

Ciao, Biffi! I wasn't expecting
you!

And now we see the elegant man from the art studio.

 BIFFI
 No? You invited me, you see.

Biffi speaks with a foreign accent that seems to add suspense and poetry to his speech, and a touch of mischief. He settles down on one of the low chairs and crosses his legs, revealing red socks under his suit pants.

Fin, meanwhile, has gone to the bar and is making martinis.

 BIFFI (CONT'D)
 (to Fin)
 Who taught you this sophisticated skill?

 FIN
 Lady did.

 BIFFI
 Did she?
 (turning to Lady and
 raising an eyebrow)
 Did you?

 LADY
 He doesn't drink them.
 (turning to Fin)
 Do you, Fin?

 FIN
 No. They're disgusting.

 BIFFI
 (laughing)
 Well then.

Fin carries their martinis over. Biffi lifts his glass to Fin.

 BIFFI (CONT'D)
 To the young maestro!

Fin likes this, but looks to Lady -

 LADY
 Master.

 BIFFI
 Of an art, not a people. An important distinction to me.

FIN

Lady doesn't like masters.

BIFFI

No, I can see that she wouldn't.
Neither do I. That's why I came to
America.

FIN

From where?

BIFFI

Hungary. I'll tell you more at
dinner.

FIN

I can come?

LADY

Perché non?

BIFFI

I wouldn't have it otherwise.

Fin can't believe his luck.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT WEST VILLAGE - LATER THAT EVENING

Fin is eating spaghetti and meatballs and talking up a storm. Biffi is more than gracious in return, he's engaged and has an eccentric, old-world charm. Lady's as intrigued as Fin, but quieter this once.

FIN

How far is Hungary from Italy?

BIFFI

Only a few days drive, but a much
longer distance in temperament.

LADY

I'll say.

FIN

I've been to Italy. When I was
five. We were looking for Lady -

BIFFI

She fled the coop, did she?

FIN

We tried London, Paris and Rome
before finding her in a café on an
island called Capri. Then I didn't
see her again until my mother died.

Biffi glances at Lady, but looks away discretely when she
fidgets.

LADY

(to Fin)

You remember all that?

FIN

You were faster than my pony.
That's what I remember.

Biffi laughs.

LADY

He's usually quiet as a mouse.

FIN

I am?

BIFFI

Are you?

FIN

(after a beat)

Maybe.

BIFFI

I was a quiet boy.

LADY

Quiet children hear things.

BIFFI

All children hear things.

Dessert arrives.

FIN

Spumoni!

BIFFI

A traditional Hungarian dessert.

FIN

Ha ha.

BIFFI
 Oh yes! It is true. And Spumoni
 is my middle name.

 LADY
 Biffi Spumoni Deutsch - it just
 rolls off the tongue.

They all start laughing, and Lady and Fin repeat the name
 again and again like a tongue twister.

LADY (CONT'D)	FIN
Biffi Spumoni Deutsch. Biffi	Biffi Spumoni Deutsch. Biffi
Spumoni Deutsch. Biffi	Spumoni Deutsch. Biffi
Spumoni Deutsch...	Spumoni Deutsch...

Fin hasn't laughed like this since... he knows when.

INT. CHARLES STREET GARDEN - DAY

A hot late summer day. Lady sunbathes in the garden, a
 TRANSITOR RADIO beside her turned low to Cousin Brucie. Fin's
 under the tree reading THE SPY WHO LOVED ME.

He finishes the book, closes it and looks absently at its
 cover.

 FIN
 Lady?

 LADY
 Finino?

 FIN
 I've decided. I choose Biffi.

Her eyes still shut, she reaches out and turns the radio off.

 LADY
 For what?

 FIN
 Husband.

Lady turns and peers at him over her sunglasses.

 LADY
 I do like Biffi.

 FIN
 Me too.

LADY

But you have a full-year contract.
Don't fink out on me, Fin.

FIN

No. Okay. But what if he's the
really, really good one?

LADY

I can't give up so fast.

She rolls back and closes her eyes again.

FIN

You wouldn't be giving up with
Biffi, you'd be winning.

Lady turns the radio up and starts humming along. But the
song abruptly cuts out:

RADIO

We interrupt our programming with a
news flash. Today, MACV Commander
General Westmorland asked the U.S.
Department of Defense to authorize
offensive operations in Vietnam:

(Westmorland's voice now)

"We have reached a point in Vietnam
where we cannot avoid the
commitment to combat of U.S. ground
troops."

In a sudden rage, Lady HURDLES THE RADIO at the garden wall,
where it falls to the ground in smithereens. She sits hugging
her knees to her chest. Fin goes still, watching her.

The song EVE OF DESTRUCTION by Barry McGuire fades in...

INT. THE BITTER END - VERY LATE NIGHT - A FEW WEEKS LATER

McGuire, on stage, playing the guitar and singing to a packed
house at this music club on Bleecker Street.

BARRY MCGUIRE

(singing)

You're old enough to kill, but not
for votin'. You don't believe in
war, but what's that gun you're
totin'? And even the Jordan river
has bodies floatin'. But you tell
me over and over and over again my
friend, ah, you don't believe we're
on the eve of destruction.

Fin, Lady, Mirna and Joan are at a table in the front. Fin's eyes keep shutting - it's well after 2 am. But Lady is wide awake. And when McGuire repeats the refrain, she's right there, belting out the lyrics with the rest of the audience.

BARRY MCGUIRE AND AUDIENCE

(singing together)

But you tell me over and over and
over again my friend, ah, you don't
believe we're on the eve of
destruction...

Fin's now staring at Lady. She's on fire, caught in the rising tide of conviction. He can see it - and, with a pang, he can see that she is momentarily lost to him.

BARRY MCGUIRE AND AUDIENCE (CONT'D)

(singing together)

But you tell me over and over and
over again my friend, ah, you don't
believe we're on the eve of
destruction.

INT. CHARLES STREET - A FEW WEEKS LATER

ABC NEWS is on. Fin's sitting on the sofa between Lady and Biffi. They're watching intently.

On screen, a wounded American soldier, in a hospital, talks to camera. His voice is shaky, slow and low, as if he's trying to piece the events together as he describes them.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Our platoon was selected that
morning to go on a patrol, just a
search and clear type patrol. It
was a hot and humid day and the
rice paddies were flooded. I had
just walked into the water when I
felt myself getting hit and then I
heard the explosion...

The soldier stops talking, the memory too much. The camera stays on him, close on his agony.

WOUNDED SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Then I felt people pulling me out
of the water, and I heard them
yelling Medic! Medic! And then...

The soldier turns away, his eyes wet with tears. The seconds tick by. Again, the camera stays on him, demanding that the viewer bears witness to his suffering.

Lady suddenly turns to Fin and grips him by the shoulders.

LADY
 Promise me, Fin, promise me you
 will never go to war.

FIN
 What if I'm drafted?

LADY
 I'll take you away, far, far away,
 Fin, so far no one can find us.

Biffi puts his hand on Lady's arm, trying to calm her. She flicks it away with unexpected force.

LADY (CONT'D)
 (to Biffi)
 He's got to promise, me.
 (to Fin)
 Promise me, Fin.

FIN
 I promise you, Lady.

LADY
 Say it!

FIN
 I promise you I won't go fight in
 the war.

LADY
 In any war!

BIFFI
 He's promised. That's enough.

But she grips tighter.

FIN
 In any war.

Lady releases Fin. She gets up, lights a cigarette, and starts pacing. Coiled, taut.

Biffi gets up, turns off the television. Fin makes for the door, but, before leaving the room, he turns around:

Biffi has his arms around Lady, but she's pounding on his chest, fighting tears that come anyway.

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - LATE NIGHT

Fin's walking Gus, when a taxi pulls up and Tyler and Lady get out. They're in the midst of an argument.

Lady makes a beeline for the stoop steps.

TYLER

You're making a huge mistake.
Huge.

From the top:

LADY

Maybe I am. But I get to make it.
It's mine.

Tyler pays the cabbie and follows her up to the door.

TYLER

You belong to me, Lady.

LADY

This is 1966. I don't belong to
anyone.

TYLER

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You and your
activism. What're you going to do
a single old maid, Lady, be a
lawyer.

LADY

Maybe.

TYLER

You never even finished college,
for Christ's sake.

LADY

Thanks to you.

Tyler mumbles something Fin can't hear.

LADY (CONT'D)

Fuck you, Ty.

She slams the door behind her.

Tyler staggers back a step, turns, just as Fin and Gus walk up the stoop. Startled, Tyler nearly jumps.

TYLER
Jesus! Shouldn't you be in bed?

FIN
Indubitably.

TYLER
You're an even bigger pain in the ass than your sister, you know that?

FIN
I'll tell her you said so.

TYLER
I wouldn't if I were you.

Tyler gives Fin a long look.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Moo, moo.

Fin tenses.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You know why Lady likes you so much?

FIN
Because I'm her brother. I'm her only brother. She loves me.

TYLER
Yeah, you're her brother. But you know what else? You're the kid she never has to have. You know what I mean?

FIN
No.

TYLER
Sure you do.

Tyler passes Fin on the stairs and gives him a mock sock to the gut, then disappears into the night.

Fin stands in the dark for a long moment, before leading his dog inside and closing the front door. We hear the lock get bolted and then silence.

INT. CHARLES STREET KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

Fin is the first one up, and not even Mabel is in the kitchen. He walks into the empty room, flips on the light switch, then picks up the phone and dials.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(on the other end)
Hello?

FIN
(into the phone)
Mr. Cornelius, it's Fin Hadley
calling.

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)
Of course, Fin. How are you liking
the big city?

FIN
It's different, all right.

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)
That, it is.

FIN
I wanted to see how my cows are.
You see there's a lawyer here who
wants to sell them, but you mustn't
let him. Hide them at the Pounds,
if you have to. They'll look after
them until I can figure something
out... I know they will.
(catching his breath)
How are they, Daisy and Darlington?

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)
The cows are doing beautifully,
Fin, though they do miss you.

FIN
How can you tell?

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)
A mournful moo.

FIN
(after a beat)
Thank you, Mr. Cornelius. I'll
call again soon. I... I...

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)
I understand, Fin.

FIN

Goodbye.

MR. CORNELIUS (O.S.)

Goodbye, Fin. You take care of
yourself.

Fin hangs up and buries his head in Gus.

EXT. CHARLES STREET - NIGHT

The house dark, the lights all off or dimmed, except for one room. And through the window: Fin, on a sofa watching TV.

INT. CHARLES STREET UPSTAIRS DEN - SAME TIME

Credits roll as an episode of THE MUNSTERS ends. And suddenly POPEYE THE SAILOR MAN comes on.

Landing Fin right back in the quicksand of grief.

He tries to change the channel, but his eyes are wet with the threat of tears. Frustrated, and on the brink of losing it, he rushes from the room and down the stairs. Gus chases after him.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

Boy and dog hit the pavement running.

They run down Charles Street.

Turn down Greenwich.

End up at Washington Square Park.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - CONTINUOUS

Winded, Fin slows to a walk.

As he and Gus move through the park, Fin comes out of himself enough to take stock of his surroundings. The place is alive and nowhere he should be.

They walk through clouds of pot, past dealers, lovers, a Hare Krishna gathering. A YOUNG HARE KRISHNA stands and offers him a cookie. Her gaze is too fixed, and he shakes his head No and moves on.

A MAN stands on a box, delivering a speech in a drug-induced fog to no one in particular. A TEENAGE GIRL, who seems to be listening, reaches out, offering Fin her hand. She doesn't notice when he walks on without taking it.

She stands with her arm still held out, now swaying to a song playing only in her head.

Fin starts walking faster. He leaves the park, Gus close at his side.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

They pass the record shop, still open, the lights inside glaring brightly. The place is packed. A few loners listen through large, heavy headphones. Fin pauses to look through the window. A group of YOUNG WOMEN emerge, wearing mini skirts. One of them sees Gus.

YOUNG WOMAN 1
Oh, hello, doggie. Do you shake
paws?

She bends down.

YOUNG WOMAN 2
(to Fin)
We're going to a party. Want to
come?

YOUNG WOMAN 1
The dog can come too.

YOUNG WOMAN 3
You're sad, aren't you?

Fin doesn't have time to answer.

YOUNG WOMAN 2
Taxi!

A YELLOW CAB pulls over.

YOUNG WOMAN 3
Here! Take this -

She hands him her JOINT.

The three woman climb into the cab. The third turns and blows Fin a kiss.

Fin stares at the joint. A WOMAN walking by, stops, plucks it straight out of Fin's hand, takes a long drag. Fin and Gus cross the street and the woman shrugs, feeling lucky.

EXT. CHARLES STREET GARDEN - EVENING

Fin sits perched on a branch in the tree. Below, Biffi and Lady are having drinks. Lady's in the chaise longue and Biffi next to her, in an upright chair.

LADY
You're too serious.

BIFFI
Certainly, not I am serious. I am a joker. Everyone says I am a joker.

LADY
Everyone is wrong. You're a superficial joker.

BIFFI
I am a deep joker. That is my charm.

LADY
No, but you're deep. And you scare me.

BIFFI
I am deep. And I am a joker. This is on my positive, surely.

LADY
And I don't buy that pidgin-English bit, Biffi.

She turns to him with sudden directness, catching his eye and holding it. He takes her hand and kisses it.

Just as suddenly, she turns away with a glimmer in her eye.

LADY (CONT'D)
What you really are is old world in a new world.

She stands, stretches, takes his empty glass.

BIFFI
So, you think me old-fashioned?

LADY
Terribly.

She kisses him on the lips.

BIFFI
And you?

LADY
I'm an activist - we're getting rid
of your lot.

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - DAY

Music plays. Phoebe and Fin, listening to LPs, in their usual spot on the top step of the stoop.

Jack drives up, gets out the car.

FIN
You again.

PHOEBE
Hi, I'm Phoebe.

Fin looks at Phoebe, jealous and betrayed. She's cocked her head and is smiling in a way he's never seen before.

JACK
(shaking her hand)
Jack Jordan. Pleased to meet you.

Lady appears at the door in the shortest of tennis skirts, racket in hand, hair in a ponytail. Jack's fantasy come true: Lady the athlete.

LADY
Finny, Mabel's making you kids
fried chicken tonight. Your
favorite.

She ruffles his hair as she sails past him down the steps.

But Jack has other ideas. He lifts Lady up, hoisting her over his shoulder and carries her up the stoop.

She starts laughing and play hitting him on the rear with her racket.

JACK
You're not going anywhere in that
skirt, young lady.

As he passes the kids, he drops a five dollar bill from his pocket onto Fin's lap.

JACK (CONT'D)
Kids, why don't you go for a long
ice-cream float or something...

He carries Lady inside and kicks the door shut behind him.

PHOEBE
Mr. Manly Man is back.

Phoebe's a little too impressed.

FIN
Not you too.

He gets up and heads down the block without looking back.

PHOEBE
Wait up!

INT. CHARLES STREET KITCHEN - DAY

The PHONE rings. Fin answers.

FIN
(into the phone)
Hi Biffi!

And now we see Lady pouring herself a coffee. Lady signals to him: No. Mouthing the words: "Not Home." She takes her coffee and glides up the stairs.

Fin's excitement dies. He looks to Mabel. She just shakes her head, having seen it all before.

FIN (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
She said to say she's out, but
she's not.

BIFFI
Ach.

FIN
Yeah, ach. There's this guy Jack,
and he's a jerk.

BIFFI
We'd better talk. The Italian
place?

FIN

Okay. Meet you there.

Fin hurries out, leaving the plate of cookies untouched.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - A FEW MINUTES LATER

An Italian coffee shop, old school. Biffi has an espresso, Fin a hot chocolate with whipped cream. We catch them mid-conversation.

FIN

So that's the story. Pretty bad, huh?

BIFFI

Love is bondage.

FIN

Lady likes freedom.

Biffi rests his chin on his hands. Fin does the same across the small marble-topped table.

FIN (CONT'D)

Do you want to go to the movies or something?

BIFFI

Life is not a movie.

FIN

No, a movie's a movie.

BIFFI

You are very young, Fin.

FIN

God, you're as bad as her.

BIFFI

Bad as *she*. And no one can compete with Lady.

EXT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

They are now sitting on the stoop.

BIFFI

If your sister finds me here on her doorstep, I am a dead duck.

Biffi sighs, takes out his PIPE, pulls out a tobacco pouch.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

Here.

He hands the pipe to Fin.

Fin fills the pipe, using Biffi's little tool to tamp it down, clearly not for the first time. He enjoys doing it. He hands it back to Biffi and watches the flame of the lighter sucked down into the bowl of the pipe as Biffi puffs. Biffi nods to him: Job well done.

FIN

Sometimes I miss my father,
although I guess he wasn't such a
nice man.

BIFFI

I miss my father every day, and he
was a terrible and selfish man.

Biffi puffs on his pipe. Fin closes his eyes and smells the sweet smoke.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

You'll tell me what goes on with
this unworthy jock?

Fin opens his eyes.

FIN

Like a spy.

BIFFI

Like a friend.

INT. PHOEBE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Fin sits on the windowsill. Something in his house, across the gardens, catches his eye. He looks closer and Phoebe grabs her spyglass and joins him.

What they see: the tall French doors to Lady's dining room are open. Tyler's in there and is opening his briefcase at table. He takes out a stack of papers and a pen and sits down at the head of the table, his back to us. Lady sits down next to him.

FIN

I don't like it.

PHOEBE
Lady looks bored.

FIN
Business always bores her.

PHOEBE
She wouldn't be bored if she were
doing something awful, like sending
you away or selling the farm.
(beat)
But you never know with Lady -

She turns to Fin, but he's gone. She turns back to the
window and sees him climb over the garden wall.

INT. CHARLES STREET HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fin bursts into the dining room.

FIN
Why is he here?

LADY
Taxes, Finino, the curse of the
rich. This time yours.

TYLER
Hello, Fin.

FIN
You haven't sold the farm, have
you?

TYLER
Lady forbids it.

Fin gives Lady a grateful look.

FIN
Are you sending me away?

Tyler stands to go. He slips the papers into his briefcase.

TYLER
Do you want to go away?

FIN
No.

TYLER
And who could blame you.

He walks towards the door, pausing to touch Lady's shoulder, just where her sun dress gives way to bare skin.

INT. LADY'S ROOM - EVENING

Lady fixes her hair, sitting at her dressing table. Fin paces behind her. Fin's starting to pick up some New York attitude and irony.

LADY

Maybe Tyler's right. Maybe you do need someone more mature and responsible to look after you.

FIN

I need you.

LADY

No one has ever accused me of being mature and responsible.

FIN

You're taking child-rearing advice from Tyler? I don't get it. I thought he controlled my money, not my destiny.

LADY

No one controls your destiny, Fin. Not even you.

FIN

That's profound.

(angry)

So Biffi is out and Tyler's back? Is that it?

LADY

No one is out and no one is back. I'm allowed to go out with my friends, aren't I?

FIN

Ask Tyler.

LADY

You really dislike him, don't you?

FIN

News flash.

LADY

He said you assume a nauseated expression when he enters the room.

FIN

Observant.

LADY

He wants to take you skating.

FIN

At my boarding school or my foster parents'? He's such a hypocrite. And a brownnoser.

LADY

That's a truly vulgar expression.

Fin considers the literal meaning of brownnose.

FIN

Gross, Lady.

LADY

He wants to take you skating at Rockerfeller Center, okay? Right here in New York City. Anyway, they're all brownnosers.

FIN

Gross. Gross. Tyler has ulterior motives, okay? And he's not worthy of you. At all.

LADY

I know. Don't think I don't. But sometimes, well...

FIN

Ultrior motives. Unworthy. And ubiquitous.

LADY

Can you spell all that?

Fin shakes his head "no."

LADY (CONT'D)

Tyler has your best interests at heart, Finny. He didn't mean -

FIN

Yes, he did.

LADY
Christ, it's just skating.

FIN
Tyler wants to get rid of me. You
just said so.

With a soft sigh, Lady pulls Fin into a hug. He stands awkward, furious, hands scrunched down in his pockets.

LADY
I won't let anyone send you away.
Ever.

FIN
Promise.

Lady nods.

LADY
I'm sorry, Fin. I'm no replacement
for a mother, am I? I know you
miss her. You probably miss your
father, too. Poor Fininio, *mio*.

FIN
(mumbling)
He's your father too. I keep
telling you.

LADY
I know it's not the same.
(she kisses his head)
Not the same as a real family -

Fin almost violently pulls away. His words come out fast, sudden and sharp.

FIN
Of course it's not the same! It
can't be the same. I don't want it
to be the same. I just want it to
stay the way it is. Why don't you
ever listen? No one listens. Tell
Tyler to go break up someone else's
family. Tell Tyler to go to hell!

Lady, startled, nonetheless reaches out a hand, which Fin brushes aside.

FIN (CONT'D)
(in pain)
How can you say we're not a real
family? How can you, Lady?
(MORE)

FIN (CONT'D)

I'm your brother.
 (staring her down)
 What even is real to you?

He turns and runs up the stairs, two at a time, trembling.

INT. FIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He slams the door shut and opens the window. He leans his head out, breathing in the cool evening air.

In a moment, there's a knock on the door and Lady enters. Fin doesn't turn around.

FIN

Why do you flirt with everyone and go out with everyone and, and, you know... if you don't even really like them?

Fin closes the window and leans his head against the pane.

FIN (CONT'D)

Why?

LADY

I don't know, Fin. How should I know? I'm trying, that's all. Maybe I think that the next one will turn out to be The One, like in a song. I do think that sometimes. I hope that. Why shouldn't I hope that?

She sits down on the floor and puts her face in her hands.

LADY (CONT'D)

Even if it's not true.

FIN

Maybe it's true. It's true. It's definitely true. But...

LADY

But what?

FIN

But it hurts people, it hurts their feelings.

LADY

Love is cruel. Right? But it really is. It just is.

FIN
Are you in love with Tyler?

LADY
Fin, come on.

FIN
No, really.

Lady stands up and switches on the light.

LADY
What are you, the House of Un-American Activities Committee?

FIN
Tyler says I'm the child you don't have to have.

Lady reels around to face him.

LADY
He said that?

Fin nods.

LADY (CONT'D)
That FUCKER!

She starts pacing again.

LADY (CONT'D)
Damn him!

Fin now stands too.

FIN
And what about Jack? You can't be in love with all of them.

Lady suddenly looks deeply tired.

LADY
Who said I was? Some people make you feel easy and good when you're with them, that's all.

FIN
Like Biffi. I feel good whenever Biffi is here, puffing on his pipe.

LADY
No, not like Biffi. Biffi is triste, which means sad.

(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

He skips around and grins and jokes, but Biffi carries the world around with him. And the world is triste.

FIN

Well, Tyler should be triste. And Jack is stupid.

LADY

Jack is a little stupid, granted. You have to be a little stupid to be happy.

FIN

But you're happy. Sometimes.

LADY

Q.E.D.

Fin can only laugh.

Lady grabs him into a tight hug.

LADY (CONT'D)

How could you think I'd ever let anyone take you away? Lavender Jesus! We're the one thing that's real around here.

EXT. STREET - SOHO - DAY

Fin walks into an elegant art gallery, passing a sign on the facade reading THE DEUTSCH GALLERY.

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Fin spots Biffi across a room speaking to a CLIENT. The gallery is a serious one and contains works by Daniel Buren, Donald Judd and Robert Morris.

Fin takes a seat at Biffi's desk in an adjoining office and pulls a comic out of his back pocket to read. But a black and white photograph catches his eye. In the photograph, Biffi, in his twenties, is holding hands with a young woman. At his other side is a man, who looks like Biffi. They're all three smiling.

Fin hears Biffi walking the client out and looks up. The client gives him a small wave.

CLIENT

Your son?

BIFFI

Ah, would that I were so lucky...

Fin smiles to himself.

In a moment, Biffi returns alone. Fin gestures to the photo.

FIN

Is this in Hungary?

BIFFI

Yes, in Budapest. The river is The Danube.

FIN

You look happy.

BIFFI

I was young, a student at the university, and in love. We thought we'd changed the world. Or at least our world. And for a little while we had.

FIN

Was that your girlfriend?

BIFFI

Yes, and my brother.

FIN

Are they still in Hungary?

Biffi pulls up a chair, close to the photograph and to Fin.

BIFFI

They were executed by the Soviet military.

FIN

(softly)
I'm sorry, Biffi.

BIFFI

I am too.
(beat)
I should have been with them, but I was in jail.

FIN

You?! What did you do?

BIFFI

It wasn't what I did. It was what I believed. I was a dissident.

(beat)

Fin, this is a dark tale. Perhaps not well suited -

FIN

I saw both my parents die.

BIFFI

So you did.

FIN

What happened?

BIFFI

The Soviet Union controlled Hungary. There was censorship, fear, poverty. We lived as if a cancer had spread through our land.

Biffi walks over to a bookcase.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

I was fortunate because my family lived in the country, far enough away that we escaped notice. We had land, quite a lot of it, and my father had a formidable library. Tibor, my brother, and I learned what was wrong with our government, but we didn't feel it until we moved to Budapest to go to university.

Biffi finds what he's looking for: a photo, this one of a very grand old house in the countryside. He brings it back to Fin, who studies it.

FIN

You had a dog.

BIFFI

And cows. Horses, too.

He sits back down.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

In 1956, university students revolted against the totalitarian regime. And in what was a most improbable scenario, we were victorious.

(MORE)

BIFFI (CONT'D)

Budapest erupted with joy. It was unlike anything I could have imagined.

FIN

That's when this picture was taken.

Biffi nods.

BIFFI

A few weeks later, the Soviets sent in troops to crush us. I was arrested to set an example. Terrible violence erupted and, in the fighting, the prisons were stormed. I was freed along with the other political prisoners.

Biffi turns to the first photo with grief, still raw.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

I was free, but the streets were filled with bodies, my brother and Anya among them.

He turns back to Fin.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

I drove home to the country to tell my mother that Tibor had died. When I arrived, she had her ear to the radio: We'd lost the good fight. We fled with her jewelry and silver, whatever we could carry. You see I am not only an immigrant, Fin, I am a political refugee. And that is why I love this country.

Fin's overwhelmed. Biffi sees this. He gets to his feet.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

And we mustn't forget the national importance of the ice-cream float.

INT. PHARMACY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Biffi and Fin sit at the counter drinking ice-cream floats.

FIN

Does Lady know?

Biffi pours a cup of coffee into his float.

BIFFI

Yes, Lady knows my story. But she doesn't know hers yet, or what she stands for, only that there's more to it than moving downtown to be groovy. There's greatness in Lady. But don't tell her.

FIN

Why?

BIFFI

She's easily frightened.

FIN

Lady's never frightened. You should see her drive.

BIFFI

Ah, but she is. She's frightened of herself, of not knowing who she is or what she will be if and when she stops running.

Fin is quiet.

FIN

I wish you'd stop her running.

BIFFI

I know you do.

INT. CHARLES STREET - AFTERNOON

Fin downs a glass of milk in one go. Mabel chuckles.

FIN

Thanks, Mabel.

Lady walks in, carrying a bag.

LADY

I've got a book for you, Finny.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out a copy of Colette's The Courtesan.

FIN

What's a courtesan?

LADY

Look it up.

Fin stares at the old-fashioned drawing of a racy girl on the cover.

LADY (CONT'D)
Don't mind that.

FIN
Is it dirty?

LADY
Is love dirty?

Satisfied, Fin takes the cookies and the book and races upstairs.

Mabel stands shaking her head at Lady.

MABEL
Good thing he's got Biffi to set him on an honorable path.

LADY
Biffi, Biffi, Biffi! All I hear about is the great Biffi.

MABEL
That's because he's the only one of your playthings who loves the boy and can handle you.

Lady suddenly turns to Mabel, earnest and sharply focused.

LADY
Do you think Biffi would take care of Fin? I mean if I weren't around.

MABEL
I'm certain he would.
(eyeing her)
What're you getting at, Miss Lady?

LADY
Nothing, Mabel.

Lady walks upstairs and Mabel turns around, muttering to herself.

MABEL
Nothing always means something...

INT. PHOEBE'S ROOM - DAY

Lying close to each other on the floor, Fin and Phoebe read The Courtesan with intense curiosity.

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Biffi smokes a pipe in an armchair and reads. Lady is lying on the sofa, also reading. And Fin is resting on Gus on the floor with a comic.

BIFFI

Tell the boy about his education.

LADY

Good grief, what's the hurry?

FIN

Where am I going to school? I want to go to Phoebe's school.

LADY

That's the very one. I didn't want to tell you until I had to. The prison-house walls and all that.

FIN

Thanks, Lady.

LADY

It's against my principles.

FIN

I know.

BIFFI

It's the American law, I believe.

FIN

Unless you get kicked out. Like Holden Caulfield.

LADY

It's not boarding school, Fin! For criminy Dutch sake.

FIN

I know. You would never do that. Not now. Not with Biffi here.

Lady looks from Fin to Biffi and back to Fin.

LADY

They sent me to boarding school
because they didn't like me around
the house. But I like you around,
Fin.

Biffi stands.

BIFFI

Come, I'll take you for a
celebratory hamburger. That great
American culinary invention.

Off their look:

BIFFI (CONT'D)

I am utterly in earnest.

LADY

You two go.

BIFFI

First, we need to get you some
clothes.

Biffi looks at Fin's ankles and Lady notices that he's grown
out of his pants.

LADY

Lavender Jesus! Finino, I thought
I told you never to grow up. You
mustn't. You really mustn't.

And she is up in a flash and has his hands in hers and spins
him around until they are both dizzy and Biffi catches them,
steadies them and they both lean into him.

INT. DINER - THAT EVENING

Fin and Biffi in a booth eating burgers.

FIN

You really aren't angry about Tyler
and Jack?

BIFFI

Lady is a force of nature. A
hurricane, a tornado, a sunrise, a
shower of gentle rain.

(beat)

Never be angry at the weather.
There is no gain in it.

FIN

Well, thank God it's Biffi season again.

Biffi laughs.

BIFFI

In truth, I was furious - and hurt. Very hurt. But Lady needs to get the storm out of her system. I'll wait as long as it takes.

FIN

Last man standing.

BIFFI

Precisely.

FIN

She doesn't even like Tyler. But there's this hold he has over her.

BIFFI

History.

FIN

I guess. And Jack - forget it, she doesn't like him, either. Not really.

BIFFI

But here is the question, my friend: Does she like Biffi?

Thinking a beat too long, Fin eats four French fries dipped in ketchup in one go so his mouth is too full to answer.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

And, really, does she like anybody? Really like them? Sometimes I don't know. But we know she loves you.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Fin and Gus are on a walk through the park. Suddenly something above catches Fin's eyes. He looks up and sees a flock of GEESE flying south in formation. When they're gone, he looks around him and sees the wind blowing flurries of autumn leaves down the path.

INT. CHARLES STREET HALLWAY - DAY

Fin's heading upstairs to his room when he spots Lady through her open door. She's watching a news brief on Vietnam, her hand covering her mouth in shock and disbelief.

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - DAY

The first snow of the year blankets the city.

SNOWBALL FIGHT. Fin and Phoebe duck behind cars, sending missiles flying over traffic.

A loose snowball hits Fin in the face. He's about to retaliate on Phoebe, when he sees Jack getting out of a taxi. It's irresistible...

He shoots one at Jack, hitting him square on the back of the head.

Jack turns, the bulk of him now looking more Hulk than quarterback. Fin moves to the far side of the car he's hiding behind. Jack picks up a handful of snow and starts packing it tight and hard. This is no game. He tests his shoulder, like the athlete he once was -

And Lady opens the front door laughing.

LADY

If you could only see yourself Mr.
Jack Jordan -

And she starts to laugh again. Fuming, he drops the ball.

Fin relaxes - then screams!

Phoebe's come around and has stuffed a snow ball down his jacket. He scoops up a handful of snow and takes off running after her, and, in a moment, they've turned the corner and are no longer visible.

EXT. STREET - A MINUTE LATER

Fin catches Phoebe on the next street, hidden in a doorway. The street is otherwise empty. Before she can stop him, he stuffs a snowball down the front of her shirt.

She lets out a yelp from the cold, unzips her jacket and tries to shake it out. Then stops.

PHOEBE

Brush the snow off.

She's lifted her shirt out and up a bit. He looks at her - is she really...

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Go on! I know you want to.

He does. Very much. But he doesn't move.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Well, don't you?

Fin slides his hands up her shirt and, in no hurry, brushes the snow away. Their eyes meet.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
It's Darwinian.

Fin just nods.

INT. CHARLES STREET FIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Fin's on his bed day-dreaming when Gus gets up barking and bounds down the stairs. Fin listens and hears the front door.

INT. CHARLES STREET HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He goes after his dog, but, hearing Tyler and Lady speaking in urgent tones, he stops mid-way down and sits on a step to listen. He can see them in the reflection of the large foyer mirror.

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tyler is a wreck, uncharacteristically disheveled, raw, desperate. His usual attitude nowhere in sight.

Lady gets him in a chair.

LADY
Hey. Calm down. Tyler, Jeez
Louise, what's wrong?

She pulls the ottoman close and perches on it.

TYLER
I'm going to die.

LADY
(harsh)
What are you on?

TYLER
You have to marry me. You have to.

LADY
Okay. Okay, just sit quietly. Ty.
I'm right here... I'll get you
through this.

TYLER
I got drafted, goddamn it.

LADY
(jumping up)
You got fucking drafted? You got
drafted?

TYLER
Reserve forces. The army paid for
college. Now they own me.

LADY
No one owns you!

But Lady looks stricken.

TYLER
You have to marry me, Lady. Okay?
Get it? You have to. We can start
a family right away... At my age,
married, pregnant wife... You owe
me.

Tyler breaks down sobbing.

LADY
Stop it, Tyler. Immediately.
Godfrey fucking Daniels. You're
not going to Vietnam. No way. So
just stop it.

TYLER
You mean...

She starts pacing nervously back and forth, like a caged
animal.

LADY
That I'll marry you?
(beat)
Don't be absurd.
(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

I'm not marrying you. And you're not going to Vietnam. You're a lawyer, Ty. You'll find a way out. Everyone does. Except poor people. And black people.

TYLER

You're my way out.

LADY

Thanks.

TYLER

My way out, my way in, you're everything, Lady. I've been in love with you since you were eighteen years old.

Lady stops pacing. She reaches for a pair of sunglasses on the table and slips them on.

LADY

You knocked me up and agreed to marry me. That's not love.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Fin hears this, and it all comes clear. The wedding that never happened, the operation, the history between them. His mind reels.

TYLER

Not for you, maybe. But it was for me. It was love.

Fin gets up and tries to walk back upstairs. He doesn't want to hear more. But the floor board creaks and -

LADY

Fin! Fin! Get in here.

Fin walks down the rest of the stairs and Gus circles him, barking.

TYLER

The whole damn menagerie.

Fin stops short when he sees Lady. She's sitting now on the lounge chair, her long legs folded beneath her. She's wearing a Russian peasant shirt and tight bell-bottomed jeans. Despite the evening dusk, she's in sun-glasses. Perched there, thin and fragile.

And trembling.

Gus starts circling Fin, moving him in from the doorway.

LADY
He's herding you.

She smiles a small smile.

TYLER
Lunatic asylum. Even the dog is
nuts.

LADY
This morning, Fin and I were
talking about his farm. We thought
we'd drive up, just to check up on
things.

TYLER
(weary)
The cows. The everlasting cows.

FIN
It's okay. We don't have to.

TYLER
Go see your cows. What's it to me?
Tell them I said hello.

FIN
I'm sorry.

It just bursts out.

LADY
For what? Sorry for what?

Lady is on her feet. She takes his hand, lowers her
sunglasses and gives Fin her gentlest gaze.

LADY (CONT'D)
What for, Finino?

FIN
(after a long moment)
I don't know. Nothing I guess.

INT. KARMANN GHIA - DAY

Lady driving, Fin in the passenger seat. No Gus, this time.

LADY

You know how I said I have to get married before I turn twenty-five?

FIN

I told you Biffi's the one. Tyler and Jack are lemons.

LADY

Well, I've thought about it a lot, and I've thought about you too, and what would be best for you.

FIN

You're best for me.

LADY

Really?

Suddenly serious, she reaches her hand out and turns his head to face her.

LADY (CONT'D)

Thank you for saying that Fin. I mean I always hope you're happy. But how can anyone be sure of how anyone else feels?

A car HONKS behind them and Lady turns back to the road.

LADY (CONT'D)

I vowed I would be married by twenty-five, and I'm a girl of my word.

She looks at him, lowers her shades and winks.

LADY (CONT'D)

Well, vows are made to be broken, I always say. So I have decided to give myself an extension.

She makes a sudden U-Turn and cars all around screech to a stop.

LADY (CONT'D)

An extension. Of one year. Which is pushing it. But if you don't push it, what's the point, right?

She stops the car and listens. The sound of a MARCH, the sound of SHOUTING. It's an ANTI-VIETNAM WAR DEMONSTRATION.

She pulls into something that is possibly a parking spot.

LADY (CONT'D)
Come on! We're pacifists, babe!

And before Fin can react, Lady has come round the other side of the car and is dragging him out.

INT. CITY HALL - LATER THAT DAY

The lobby is filled with a HUNDRED OR SO ACTIVISTS in what has become a SIT-IN.

Squeezing inside, Lady leads Fin by the hand. Eyes fall on her, a gust of beauty blown in. She sits down on the floor with Fin, joining the rest of the crowd, but hardly blurring in.

Immediately, Lady and Fin are spotted by the television CREWS who rush over, mics in hand. As one crew starts up with Lady, another REPORTER sticks a mic in front of Fin's face and asks:

REPORTER
What brings you here, son?

FIN
I read about Napalm. It's liquid fire. It sticks to you.

The reporter has just bagged the story, and he knows it.

REPORTER
What's your name, son?

FIN
Fin Hadley.

REPORTER
And the lovely lady you're with?

FIN
My sister.

CAMERAS start flashing. Fin is momentarily blinded. Next thing he knows, arms are on him.

LADY
(urgent)
Just go Limp, Finny.
(to the police)
We're nonviolent. This is civil disobedience. Napalm kills!

And the chant spreads:

CROWD
Napalm kills.

But when Fin can see again, Lady is being dragged away and a policeman is dragging him in a different direction.

FIN
Lady! LADY!!
(to the policemen)
I'm with my sister!

POLICEMAN
I don't care if you're with the
Virgin Mary.

And Fin looks at the policeman, whose face is red with rage, and he is terrified.

And the cameramen, having caught up, flash away and the screen goes white hot.

INT. JAIL - LATER

Fin's sitting in the corner of an all-men packed jail cell. No danger here, everyone is arguing politics, chanting out the occasional slogan, one guy starts singing a Pete Guthrie tune, while another plays it on a harmonica. But Fin is twelve, and he nervously scans the hallway through the bars, not knowing what's next.

A guy passes him a joint. Fin passes it to the next guy without taking a drag.

CELL MATE
What're they gonna do, throw us in
jail?

Stoned, he finds himself hilarious.

A WARDEN unlocks the cell:

WARDEN
Fin Hadley?

Fin gets up.

CELL MATE
Did we make the news?

WARDEN
The boy did.

The cell-mates start clapping. One guy stands up and starts pointing at Fin, who's trying to climb through the packed cell to door.

CELL MATE

You're our voice! Our mascot!
America's fragile innocence. You,
you -

But Fin's now out, and he doesn't look back. At the end of the prison hall stands Biffi, and Fin rushes into his arms.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Biffi, Lady and Fin emerge from the police station. It's now nighttime and dark.

Lady breathes in the night air, like someone on a great adventure. She's in a high octane state.

Biffi turns to Fin.

BIFFI

You were very brave.
(beat)
She?

He nods sideways at Lady.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

A fool.

LADY

Fools rush in where angels fear to
tread.

Wrong note. Biffi is furious.

BIFFI

Dilettante! Crazy American! What
if I was not there for extrication?

LADY

(her eyes glowing)
Jail, Biffi -

BIFFI

We shall not talk of jail.
(to Fin)
Are you hungry?

LADY

We stood up to the government, to
Dow Chemical, to the police! Who
can you think of food at a time
like this?

BIFFI

A boy.
(putting his arm around
Fin)
A growing boy.

Fin is suddenly overcome with exhaustion and leans into
Biffi.

Biffi walks Fin down the street. Lady follows. In a moment,
she takes Biffi's other arm.

LADY

You're sweet. In your obnoxious
way.

BIFFI

(to Fin)
I brought you a chocolate bar.

LADY

Oh goody! Three Musketeers. Bite?

FIN

Lipstick?

LADY

All worn off in the pokey.

BIFFI

Pokey? This is not funny!

And he lets out an ANGRY BARRAGE OF HUNGARIAN at Lady. Then
turns to Fin.

BIFFI (CONT'D)

No more arrests.

FIN

(sleepy)
But Napalm kills...

Biffi gently, but fiercely, lifts Fin's head up by the chin,
so that the boy is looking right at him.

BIFFI

I am protecting you, the whole you.
You must listen to me, Fin. You
and Lady are everything to me.

Fin nods. Biffi turns to Lady. She's like a horse pacing
before entering the starting gate. He stares her down.

LADY

Okay, okay. Okay, you're right,
Biffi, okay?

INT. CHARLES STREET FOYER - DAY

Lady's walking downstairs in a fabulous Pucci minidress,
slipping on her bracelets, when she stops and stares.

At the bottom landing, Jack, in a brand new starched military
uniform, is beaming up at her.

LADY

(horrified)

Not you too! What've you done?

JACK

They say the ladies like a man in
uniform.

(seeing her expression)

Oh, Lady, I won't get hurt. Not a
big, strapping guy like me. You
never saw me on the football field -

LADY

It's a war, Jack! A war, not a
ball-game.

JACK

You're worried about me. That's
sweet, Lady. Real sweet. Does it
mean -

He starts up the stairs, thinking it's love.

LADY

It means you're a God-damn idiot!

She turns, storms back up the stairs. In a moment, her
bedroom door slams shut.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Fin, Lady and Gus are cutting through the park. Everywhere, there are SIGNS OF WAR, PROTEST, DRUGS, MUSIC, a cacophony of SOLDIERS and HIPPIES and POT-HEADS and DRUMMERS and the occasional MAN IN A SUIT.

But Lady's not taking any of it in. She's in a state, a caged animal, talking faster and faster. Fin looks on, concerned.

LADY

I have to get away. I have to get away.

FIN

From where?

LADY

Here. There. Everywhere.

FIN

Lady, what's wrong?

LADY

I have to get away from all of them. I don't know what to do.

FIN

It's going to be OK, Lady. Whatever it is.

Lady stops short and looks at him.

LADY

Do you really think so?

FIN

I do.

She kisses him on the forehead. Then, without warning, she takes his hand and starts running.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

They run all the way home.

INT. BEDROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Fin wakes to the sound of TYLER SHOUTING and GUS BARKING at his closed bedroom door.

Fin takes Gus by the collar, holding him back. He opens the door and boy and dog walk down two flights of stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Still holding Gus by the collar, Fin sits at the top step, looking down a flight at the front door. He sees Tyler's reflection in the mirror. He is drunk, disheveled, enraged and desperate. He shouts, repeating himself again and again:

TYLER

You need me! You need me! You
need me! You need me! You need
me!

And then a pause. Lady sits opposite him on a chair, quite still and thoughtful, oddly (for her) measured.

TYLER (CONT'D)

(a whisper now)
You need me...

And Lady looks back at him.

LADY

I can't think what for.

Tyler reels, as if struck, hands to his head, faltering backwards. But she gives not an inch. Her lack of cruelty is all the more stinging.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Backing to the door, Tyler reaches for his hat. He catches sight of Fin and Gus staring down at him in all his vulnerability and shame. His humiliation is complete.

He leaves, the door closing behind him with a loud jolt to the silence that has fallen upon the house.

INT. FIN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Fin stirs awake. He opens his eyes and sees the rising sun in Lady's hair, setting it aflame. She's perched on his bed, looking down at him, goddess-like.

FIN

Lady?

LADY
(softly)
Go back to sleep. It's still
early.

FIN
(sleepy)
You need to sleep too...

Lady kisses him on the temple.

LADY
I love you, Finino.

FIN
You too.

LADY
Don't ever forget that.

Fin yawns and curls up, falling back into a deep sleep.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Bright sun now pours into the room. Fin sits up, stretches.
And then something jolts him.

He rushes downstairs.

INT. LADY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lady's door is shut. Fin knocks. No answer. He knocks
again. Worried now. No answer. He opens the door.

The bed is neatly made. The lavender silk bedspread smooth.
And resting on the pillow a note, "Fin" written on the
envelope.

Fin, his heart starting to pound, tears it open and reads the
big, scrawling script: "Gone to Berkeley. Joined the
movement. Must stop the war."

And that's it. Not a word more.

INT. CHARLES STREET KITCHEN - DAY

Out of breath, Fin rushes into the kitchen, where Mabel's
scooping flour into a mixing bowl.

He holds Lady's note out in front of Mabel, for her to read.

Fin scrutinizes her face for information, but all he sees is shock. When she speaks, her voice is small, far away.

MABEL

She ran away.

Lost in thought, Mabel sprinkles some salt on the flour.

MABEL (CONT'D)

She ran away from home. Now, why did she do that? Miss Lady is not eighteen years old.

FIN

(desperate)

She didn't really run away, did she?

Mabel turns to him. "Yes," say her eyes, "and we both know it."

She turns back to the bowl.

MABEL

She'll be back.

Fin, reeling, sits down.

FIN

What do we do?

Mabel answers softly, a quiet chant that isn't an answer at all.

MABEL

What do we do? What do we do?

FIN

Mabel?

MABEL

Don't you worry. I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. I'm here...

(shaking her head in disbelief)

She told me to make fried chicken. Then she left.

FIN

I'm calling Biffi.

This seems to snap them both out of shock.

MABEL

That's right. Biffi's the right one to call, the *only* one worth calling if you ask me. The rest of them just want what they want whenever they want it.

INT. FRONT HALL - TEN MINUTES LATER

Biffi's barely got his key in the door when Fin pulls it open.

BIFFI

This is unbelievable. Even for Lady.

FIN

It's my fault. I'm sure of it.

Biffi takes Fin by the shoulders and looks him in the eye.

BIFFI

Certainly not.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Biffi walks in, pours himself a tall Scotch straight-up and sits down on the sofa. Fin sits across from him on Lady's usual chair.

They hear the front door being unlocked and immediately rise to their feet in hope...

It's Tyler. They sit back down.

TYLER

Salutations.

FIN

She's not here. She ran away.

TYLER

I know.
(to Biffi)
Salutations, brother.

Biffi nods curtly.

Mabel appears at the door, taking in the sight of Tyler.

Already one or two in, Tyler pours himself a Scotch straight-up and turns to Fin and Biffi.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I come bearing tidings from the
runaway.

FIN
Why did she get in touch with you?
It makes no sense.

BIFFI
Ah...
(sighs bitterly)
Sense? When did Lady ever make
sense?

Tyler takes a telegram out of his jacket pocket and reads:

TYLER
(reading)
Sorry. Not good at goodbye. Pay
bills.

FIN
That's it?

TYLER
No. Sadly. It goes on: "Don't
come after me. I need to breathe."

Biffi gets to his feet.

BIFFI
If telegrams are arriving, I will
go home for mine.

TYLER
She sent me one for you too.

BIFFI
To you? For me? She is
infuriating.

Tyler reaches in his jacket for the square yellow telegram
and hands it to Biffi.

BIFFI (CONT'D)
(reading)
I can't sit quietly and watch. You
will understand that better than
anyone.

Biffi crumples the telegram.

BIFFI (CONT'D)
This is all very dramatic of her.

Biffi sits back down on one end of the sofa. Tyler takes the other end.

Fin, the twelve-year-old boy that he is, sinks to the floor and buries his head in his dog's fur.

FIN

I want Lady to come home.

Mabel kneels down beside Fin and puts her arms around him.

MABEL

You're a good boy, you hear me? I told Miss Lady she was lucky to find you.

FIN

You never told me that.

MABEL

It was none of your business. But now it is.

The sound of the front door startles them, and everyone stands...

It's Jack, in his military uniform. He's holding a yellow telegram too. They sit back down.

JACK

Where is she?

TYLER

Gone.

(gestures at the telegram)

What's in yours?

JACK

(reading)

"Stay alive. Marry a debutante."

Wry smiles all around.

JACK (CONT'D)

(petulant)

What if I choose not to stay alive?

That would show her a thing or two!

TYLER

No argument from me.

Biffi and Fin say nothing. Jack, confused, unravelling sits down in the middle of the sofa, between Tyler and Biffi. He takes up the bulk of it.

Mabel and Fin look at the three suitors lined up on the long pink velvet sofa. There couldn't be three more different men, but they all wear long, heartbroken faces.

MABEL

Am I to understand that you gentleman are staying for dinner?

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Fin comes downstairs to find Biffi on the sofa, where he's clearly spent the night.

BIFFI

Life is bitter, Fin. Remember that always.

FIN

I'm not going to school today.

Biffi sits up.

BIFFI

You are absolutely going to school today. Tuck your shirt in -

FIN

No one tucks their shirt in.

Biffi, deflated, sinks back down, hand on his temple.

BIFFI

America. The land of squandered opportunity.

He reaches for last night's whiskey glass.

FIN

I'll ask Mabel to make you some coffee.

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Fin arrives home from school to find Tyler, Jack and Biffi settled into a routine. Tyler's reading the newspaper. He passes Jack the sports section. Biffi is smoking a pipe.

TYLER

Well, my father says not to worry. He knows a shrink who can keep me out of Vietnam. People like us don't have to go - Lady was right.

BIFFI

Lady was wrong.

(puffing his pipe)

People like you run the country.
You should know what it is to go to
war.

JACK

(to Fin)

Shorty, make us a pitcher of
martinis, would you?

FIN

No. I owe martini fealty to only
one master. And she is gone.

JACK

Christ, you're a pain in the ass.
Since the minute I met you, you've
been nothing but a pain in my ass.

FIN

Then my work has been successful.

Fin takes a bow. Biffi, amused, raises an eyebrow.

JACK

(to Tyler)

Fresh little brat, isn't he?

TYLER

He's part of the package, Jack.
Better make your peace with the
kid.

JACK

Yeah? Well, when I was a kid, kids
went to boarding school.

Fin turns on him.

FIN

You're not a kid anymore. And this
is my house, and I think you should
all get out of my house.

TYLER

No one's going anywhere, sport.

Tyler turns the page of his newspaper.

EXT. CHARLES STREET SIDEWALK - DAY

Jack's teaching Fin to catch a football. They're down the block a bit, and Jack is showing Fin how to hold the ball.

Jack raises his arm to toss it. Fin runs forward to catch - just as Tyler gets out of a taxi, holding up a yellow telegram. The ball lands right between them.

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - TWO MINUTES LATER

The men gather. Fin reads the telegram aloud.

FIN

(reading)

This is not goodbye, Fratello Mio.
Never goodbye. Will come home to
you when I am sane again and when
we have been heard.

TYLER

Sane?

BIFFI

When was Lady ever sane?

JACK

Who's this Fratello guy?

FIN

(quietly)

It means brother.
(off Jack's confusion)
Me.

JACK

Then's who's the we?

BIFFI

The peace movement.

TYLER

Not exactly a precise schedule, but
that's no surprise.

FIN

Do you really think she will come
home for me?

BIFFI

Yes. She will show up one day
without explanation or warning.

TYLER
The question is when.

BIFFI
The *mystery* is when.

JACK
So we just wait?

Without other ideas, the three men sit back down on the pink couch.

INT. CHARLES STREET DINING ROOM - EVENING

Mabel serves the three suitors and Fin dinner. She sets down a bowl of mashed potatoes and then a carving platter with a rib roast. Biffi and Tyler both stand and reach for the carving knife at the same time. Biffi stands down as Tyler grabs the knife.

FIN
(looking down at his plate)
I didn't mean this to happen. I shouldn't have, but...
(looking up)
I told her she liked keeping all of you on a leash. It meant she was needed on the other end.

The men turn to Fin, but say nothing.

Finally...

JACK
(processing it)
Hmmm...

TYLER
You're a smart boy, Fin.

BIFFI
But it is not your fault.

TYLER
Well, it's not your fault, that's for sure. She could've just sent you to boarding school. I certainly suggested it more than once. She didn't need to get away from you. She needed to get away from me.

He lays down the carving knife and sits down, pained. Biffi takes it and continues carving.

TYLER (CONT'D)

I was the one putting too much pressure on her. But if I could just see her, talk to her...

JACK

You? No, it was me. She was scared I'd die on the battlefield, didn't want to be a widow.

BIFFI

Actually, I am the one who made her run. Biffi the sad man, the man who dragged the grief of the world into her house, who might have smothered her flame had she not escaped -

A LOUD NOISE as Mabel slams a bowl of salad on the table, startling them.

MABEL

No wonder she ran away!

The three men turn and stare at her.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Just continue your little discussion all about what you need, what you did, never a thought to that poor girl, what she needs. You just eat your dinners at her dinner table and drink her whiskey right down to the barrel and feel sorry for yourselves. Nothing's changed. You just go right ahead.

And, with that, she stomps out.

TYLER

Should we fire her?

FIN

She doesn't work for you. So you can't.

Tyler thinks, nods.

JACK

Bif, would you mind passing the potatoes?

TYLER
Did Mabel make gravy?

BIFFI
Horseradish and sour cream instead.

He passes it to Tyler.

BIFFI (CONT'D)
Have you started your homework,
Fin?

FIN
Not yet.

TYLER
I'll take math, Biffi you take
writing, Jack...

JACK
(with a slap on Fin's
back.)
This boy is going to learn to catch
a football.

TYLER
Not a half-bad idea.

BIFFI
After homework.

TYLER
We'd better watch the news tonight.
McNamara's back before the Senate
subcommittee...

INT. CHARLES STREET LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

The three suitors on the couch nursing their drinks and
watching a young Walter Cronkite on the CBS Evening News.

JACK
I ship out tomorrow.

Tyler turns off the television.

TYLER
Jesus, Jack! Why don't you let me
get you out of it?

JACK
I can't just sit here and mope the
rest of my life.

Off Tyler and Biffi, uncomfortable.

JACK (CONT'D)
No offense.

BIFFI
No offense taken.

Fin's been looking at Jack, who now turns to him.

JACK
(holding out his hand)
Fin, we weren't always -

FIN
(shaking his hand)
Jack, just don't try to prove
anything over there, okay? You
don't need to.

TYLER
Amen to that.

The men shake hands. It's a surprisingly emotional moment for this crowd, particularly for Jack.

JACK
Well, I guess I'm off.

But just as he's leaving, he suddenly spins around:

JACK (CONT'D)
(to Fin)
Catch!

He tosses Fin the football, and Fin catches it, surprising even himself.

With Jack gone and headed for war, the mood shifts. The two remaining suitors sit back down on opposite ends of the pink sofa. An air of loss permeates the room.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Phoebe and Fin eat ice-cream under the tree in the dark.

PHOEBE
My father says Lady wants to see
which of them will go after her.
That's why she said not to -

FIN
You told your Dad?

PHOEBE
Everyone in the neighborhood knows.

FIN
Great.

PHOEBE
Lady, he said, wants someone to
rescue her, like you and your
father and mother did. It's a
psychological manifestation.

FIN
Of what.

PHOEBE
How should I know?

FIN
Your Dad's wrong.

PHOEBE
That's what my mother said. She
thinks Lady realized she didn't
need a man, any man, that they were
all suffocating her and that
running away is actually a physical
manifestation.

FIN
Of what.

PHOEBE
The will to survive, of course.

FIN
And me?

PHOEBE
They all say you're the grown-up in
the house anyway and... well,
that's it.

FIN
And...

PHOEBE
(in a hush)
Boarding school.

Fin groans.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
If Lady's gone, Tyler's in charge.

FIN
Then, I'll run away next.

BIFFI (O.C.)
(from the darkness)
Certainly not. I will adopt you.

FIN
Biffi?

They look and see that Biffi has been sitting on the chaise longue in the dark, a blanket covering him, a drink in hand.

BIFFI
Forgive me for not making myself known. I woke and found you talking.

FIN
You really would? Adopt me?

BIFFI
Do you doubt it?

Fin thinks a moment.

FIN
No.

BIFFI
Then I have lost a girlfriend but gained a son.

Feeling happiness for the first time in weeks, Fin and Biffi are quiet a moment, privately taking in what's been said.

BIFFI (CONT'D)
Perhaps you'd like to introduce me to Daisy and Darlington.

FIN
Yes -

PHOEBE
(jealous)
Who are Daisy and Darlington?

BIFFI
(taunting)
Very beautiful Guernseys, I hear.

Biffi turns to Fin, and the moonlight just catches the mischievous glimmer in his eye - and the deep well of affection.

INT. LADY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Fin writes a note on Lady's stationary: Gone to Farm. He seals it in an envelope, writes "Lady" on the front and sets it on her pillow.

EXT. CHARLES STREET - MORNING

Fin's saying goodbye to Tyler. Biffi, Gus and Mabel are already in the car.

TYLER

Ahh, the everlasting cows. Of course.

FIN

If you get a telegram...?

TYLER

You'll be the first to know.

Tyler locks the door to Lady's house and follows Fin down the stoop. They've grown close in their way, and neither is quite ready to part.

FIN

You can visit, if you'd like.

Tyler's about to say something clever, stops himself. He holds out his arms, and Fin steps into a long hug.

TYLER

I'd like that. I'll do that, Fin.
I'll do that.

Fin climbs into the backseat of the car. Tyler tips his hat to Biffi, who nods back.

Fin stares up at the house. Lady's house. His house. Not knowing when he will return.

EXT. CHARLES STREET - CONTINUOUS

Biffi drives down the street. Tyler watches the car go for a moment, then turns and walks the other direction.

The house, empty, waiting. The wisteria in full bloom again.

EXT. VERMONT - EVENING

It's almost evening when Biffi turns onto the long, winding driveway to the farm. It's beautiful.

The car stops midway down. The backseat door flies open, and Fin and Gus rush out and race, boy and dog at full speed, down the driveway towards the white house and the red barn and the cows in the pasture.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MONTHS LATER

Mabel is slicing apples straight into a pie crust when Fin walks in. First thing he sees is a letter on the table addressed to him. It's in Lady's slanted handwriting. He stares at it a moment. Mabel, watching, sprinkles cinnamon sugar onto a layer of apples.

MABEL

You plan on opening that?

Fin takes the letter outside, tears it open and starts to read.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LADY (V.O.)

Finino Mio, you must be back on the farm with Gus and Biffi and the cows and Mabel too. How do I know this?

Lady's voice continues over a montage:

Fin reads lying in the grass. Next to him, standing at an easel, Biffi sketches.

The cows, their faces filling the frame, stare back with their big sad eyes.

LADY (V.O.)

Oh, Finny, I wouldn't have disappeared on you if I wasn't absolutely sure Biffi would step in. I didn't mean to hurt you. I know I did. Badly. It's the worst thing I've ever done. Can you forgive me? Will you try, Fin? Please try.

Fin sits on his mother's bed, hugging his knees to his chest. He's looking at a photograph of his mother holding him in her arms when he was just a baby.

Cemetery. Fin stands before his mother's tombstone. Biffi at his side. Fin leans into Biffi who pulls him into a hug. The tears flow.

LADY (V.O.)

I couldn't stay, Finny. I just couldn't. I couldn't see next week or next month, let alone next year, rushing to nowhere, always rushing about to nowhere.

Fin hears the rumble of a truck from his bedroom and opens the window wide. He sees a horse trailer.

Fin and Biffi ride through the forest, Gus trotting up ahead.

LADY (V.O.)

The war finally knocked me out of my self-contained little universe and into action. Well, I mostly march and shout at politicians. It's hardly action, let alone heroic. But I believe every word I say, and maybe that's what it means to grow up.

Pouring rain. Fin emerges from the village schoolhouse amidst a throng of kids. Biffi is there waiting for him, leaning on the car, smoking his pipe under a big umbrella.

LADY (V.O.)

Finny, I'm in Los Angeles, and we're building a Tower of Peace. Tell Biffi, all his artists are helping - Lichtenstein, Motherwell, Stella. Even Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir have sent telegrams from Paris. When it's done, I'll take a picture for you and come home. Yes, Finny, I'm coming home to you.

Sunshine. Fin is riding his bike down the road leading to his farm.

LADY (V.O.)

I don't know if marriage is for me, but I think you and Biffi and I can make something right together. Give me a second chance, won't you Fin?

(MORE)

LADY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I'll never disappear on you again.
 Never. Ever. Not ever...

The sound of the KARMANN GHIA somewhere on the road behind him. Fin looks over his shoulder and sees a flash of turquoise through the trees. Or thinks he does.

Thinking his imagination is playing tricks on him, he turns back to the road ahead.

But the sound grows...

The sound of the Karmann Ghia engine grows until it is unmistakable.

Fin turns and sees it. Still a ways off. And then Lady's hand waving at him. And then he can see her face, lit with excitement.

And then the turquoise nose of the car pushes into his line of vision. And Lady is driving right next to him.

LADY
 Finino Mio!!!

Fin turns and their eyes lock. Lady beams back at him, radiant, adoring, thrumming with life.

And Fin breaks into a wide smile. Their bond, a force of its own.

He shouts, laughing.

FIN
 Look at the road, Lady! Look where
 you're going!

She shouts back over the engine.

LADY
 No! I want to look at you! You've
 grown. I thought I told you never
 to grow up. Lavender Jesus, you're
 nearly a man!

FIN
 What?

LADY
 I love you!

She hits the accelerator, speeds ahead.

Fin peddles after her, fast as he can, racing Lady in her turquoise car. He makes a sharp turn down the driveway. She missed it. He hears her breaks screech up ahead. He races towards the farm, ahead now...

And then she is right behind him, catching up, there again.

And they make for the farm, side by side once more, the countryside spread out all around them...

THE END