

Island of Brilliance

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Dawn O'Leary  
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FADE IN:

EXT SKY NIGHT

Snowflakes tumbling hard.

EVIE (VO)

Henny Penny, the sky is falling . .

CREDITS OVER:

INT EVIE'S CAR NIGHT

First we see the lit dashboard, then a map crumpled on the passenger seat, then the steering wheel, and finally EVIE BRIGHTON. Age eighteen. In the darkness she is only a hunched-over figure in a knit hat and scarf, straining to see the road.

EVIE

A million tiny paint chips . .

She pulls over and stops the car. Picks up the map, straining to read it by the dashboard light. Reaches for the overhead light but it fails to work. Looks out the side window, then unrolls it and, shivering, brushes off the snow that comes in.

EVIE cont.

Excuse me. Excuse me, sir? Can you tell me how to get to Rt. 206?

An older man's face appears in the window.

OLD MAN

Where you headed?

EVIE

Princeton University . .?

OLD MAN

Well, then it's 206 all right. You go straight up here to the railroad tracks. Then a left - that's Forest. Take you right into 206.

EVIE

(rolling up window)  
Thank you very much.

OLD MAN

You take it slow now, miss. It's real slippery.

EVIE

Oh, it's not so bad. But I will.

She resumes driving, still straining to see.

EVIE cont.

Plaster dust . . each mote unique . .

The sound of a train whistle.

EVIE cont.

but falling just the same, Henny Penny.

A sudden beam of light fills the car. Signal bells.

EXT FREIGHT TRAIN NIGHT

Boxcars clatter by. The gates are down; in front of them, Evie's snowy car. The noise is deafening.

INT EVIE'S CAR

She stares at the train with a look of terror, then cranes to see it after the noise wanes.

EVIE

(wistfully)

A gust, and I land . . lightfooted  
as a hobo in a boxcar, empty, and  
lurching . .

Sound of a car horn. She resumes driving.

EVIE cont.

and going in circles.

END CREDITS

EXT PRINCETON CAMPUS NIGHT

Evie walks through the quad, looking all around despite the heavy snow. Bundled students hurry past her in their boots. She is wearing tennis shoes.

She takes a detour toward a lit dorm window and peers inside. Evie's POV: Heaps of dirty laundry. Rock posters. A pyramid of empty beer cans - many different brands, arranged in groupings. She stares, blinking, then turns away.

INT PRINCETON INTERVIEWER'S OFFICE NIGHT

A small room with plain furnishings but warmly lit and elegantly trimmed with wood moldings. A school seal on the wall.

The INTERVIEWER, primly dressed, sits at her desk taking notes. Just as she checks her watch, there is a knock on the door. She rises, opens the door. EVIE stands in the doorway, hat in hand, long brown hair dripping. Her sneakers slosh when she walks.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER  
Evelyn Brighton? You made it.  
Come in.

EVIE  
(entering)  
Thank you.

Evie takes off her coat. She is wearing an oversized sweater, skirt, and tights.

EVIE cont.  
Sorry I'm late.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER  
Don't worry about it. I just wondered  
if you'd gotten stuck.

EVIE  
It wasn't too bad. The highway was  
pretty clear.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER  
Let me take your coat . . . You know,  
We could've just set you up with an  
alumnus -

EVIE  
Oh, I don't mind.

Evie sighs, faces the Interviewer and attempts to smile brightly. She has a softly attractive face with an open, vulnerable expression. Utterly guileless. A sweetness and simplicity; she is not at all affected. Her voice is softly breathy, and this is so regardless of what she's saying, because she naturally assumes the receptivity and good will of her listener. She is never "testing" or seeking a reaction.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER  
(pointing to chair)  
Have a seat. Is this your first time  
to Princeton?

They both sit.

EVIE  
Yes. It's a really nice campus. I  
came through that quad by the chapel.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Mmmm . .

EVIE

I love how the buildings are so beautiful and Gothic, and then you look in the window and the room's a disaster!

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Uh - oh, the dorms, well . . Students tend to be messy.

EVIE

Are they happy here?

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Happy? I certainly hope so . .

EVIE

Because there were a lot of beer cans.

Interviewer glances at her, then ruffles through her papers.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Well, to start . . Evelyn. I -

EVIE

Evie.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Evie. I'd like to start by asking you why you applied. What is it about Princeton that makes you think it's a good school for you?

EVIE

I applied because my guidance counselor - Mrs. Carr - she thought I could get in. . She was basing that on my SAT's and my school records, I think.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(glancing at Evie's records)  
Yes, that would make sense . .

EVIE

She said I might have a problem with extracurriculars, though.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

It says on your application that you'd like to be an English major.

EVIE

I don't think I could stand anything else.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Tell me something you've read in the past year that you really liked.

EVIE

Well, in sophomore year I liked "Romeo and Juliet," but this year . . . no, I haven't liked anything. But it's because of my teacher. He's a cannibal.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(clearing her throat)

A "cannibal"?

EVIE

(laughing)

I'm sorry. That must sound really strange. His name is Mr. Worthy, and he has this way of killing things. Like he'll take a poem, and sort of zing it through the heart. Then he cuts it up and makes you eat it.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Well . . . Poetry can be difficult to teach.

EVIE

And to swallow! Actually, though, I like poetry. I even write it sometimes.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

That's wonderful. Does your school have a literary magazine . . . ?

EVIE

Yes. It's called . . . I forget what it's called. Oh - I don't put my poems in it.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

I hope you show them to someone.

EVIE

Just my sister. Emily. Actually, no one else knows I write. Just her - and you.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

And why is that?

EVIE

No one ever asked. See, that's what I like about going on these interviews. You get asked lots of questions, and it's kind of fun.

EVIE cont.

(secretive tone)

Actually I'm glad my mother never asks me questions, because I don't have to lie. About the poems. See, she thinks she asked me where they came from. But she didn't.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry. I don't follow.

EVIE

It's kind of complicated . . . O.K. My mother thinks the poems are Emily's.

(a touch of cynicism)

I knew she would, because . . .

(brightens)

because it'd be so neat! For Emily. And for her too.

(firmly)

I think it's going to be a lot of fun.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(baffled; decides to change subject)

Tell me, Evie. If you had to name someone that you would emulate - someone extraordinary, that you'd consider a personal role model - who would it be?

EVIE

I feel like a Miss America contestant . . .

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

I assure you, it's a serious question.

EVIE

No - I know it is. In fact I think about that a lot. About being "extraordinary." And I would have to say my sister.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

The one you just mentioned?

EVIE

Yes. Emily.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

She's an older sister?

EVIE

(nods)

She's twenty.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

And what is it about her that you find so special?

EVIE

There's lots of things . . . She's almost always cheerful, and simple, and she's always got time for me, and of course - she's terrific with words.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

So she's a writer too?

EVIE

No. She's a savant.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Pardon me?

EVIE

I'm sure you've heard of it. See, her I.Q. is only 40, but she has an incredible ability. It's like her mind is a deep grey ocean but right in the middle is this brilliant island teeming with birds and flowers.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Oh. She's an idiot savant.

EVIE

(quietly hurt)

Could you recite Anderson's Fairy Tales word for word if I asked you to?

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be insulting.

EVIE

(sighs)

It's all right. You're not the first.

(earnestly - not cynically)

She kind of makes you wonder who the "idiots" really are.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(curtly)

Did you have any questions you wanted to ask? Because we did start late, and I have a dinner appointment.

EVIE

We're done already?

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(rising)

Did you have any questions?



EVIE

Uh . . . Well, I wondered if it might help with my extracurriculars, if I told you . . .

The Interviewer is helping her on with her coat.

EVIE cont.

that I've been doing some tutoring . . .

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Is that right.

EVIE

Just after school, mostly math.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

That's very nice. Being as bright as you are. . .

(handing Evie her hat)

you can a real contribution to your fellow students.

EVIE

Contribution?

(puts on her hat)

No. I just show them how to do the math.

(puts her hand out)

It was nice to meet you.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

(shaking Evie's hand;

a look of pity)

Best of luck to you.

EVIE

Thanks. Oh. One more thing.

PRINCETON INTERVIEWER

Yes?

EVIE

If I go along Nassau Street, can I get back on 206?

INT EMILY'S ROOM NIGHT

A brightly colored room with "bird" motif: paintings, figurines, a quilt with a pheasant pattern. The bookcase is crammed with large picture books.

EMILY BRIGHTON sits cross-legged on the bed, turning the pages of a glossy book. EVIE enters, in coat, hat and scarf.

EVIE

Hey Duckie.

Seeing how Evie is dressed, Emily starts to get out of bed.

EMILY

Time to see cardinals.

EVIE

No. It's late. It's snowing. And I need to warm up.

Emily makes a face. Evie points to the bed.

EVIE cont.

If you get out of it - you'll have to make it.

Emily scrambles back into bed. Taking off her hat and scarf, Evie sits on the bed next to her, points to page.

EVIE cont.

What you got here?

EMILY

Cardinal.

EVIE

(softly, not patronizing)

No . . . I don't think so . . . See the black wing? It says, "Scarlet Tanager."  
(smiles)

Pretty.

EMILY

(smiles back)

Pretty.

Evie turns the pages, as Emily is rapt with attention.

EVIE

This one's cute. It's a chickadee.  
. . . That's a "yellow-bellied sapsucker."

She chuckles. Emily chuckles too.

EVIE cont.

Here's a hummingbird. Remember we saw that tiny bird in Pennsylvania, it could fly backwards?

She hums; Emily hums.

EMILY

Blue jay, Evie!

EVIE

Yes! That's right! Good for you.  
(affectionately)  
It's good to be home.  
(slipping off coat)  
What did Mommy read to you while I  
was gone?

Emily stares at her blankly. Evie scans the room, spots a book on top of bookcase, picks it up.

EVIE cont.

Did you learn some sonnets?

Emily breaks into a broad smile. She half-kneels and is about to speak.

EVIE cont.

Later, O.K.? I've got a request first.  
Do you mind? "The Emperor's New Clothes."

Immediately Emily begins, as if a switch has been pulled. She speaks with absolutely no expression, no understanding of what she's saying. But clearly she relishes the sound of the words and takes enormous delight in saying them.

EMILY

"Many years ago there lived an emperor who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all his money in order that he might be very fine.

Evie is hanging up her coat.

EMILY cont.

"He did not care for his soldiers, nor for going to the play; or driving in the park except to show his new clothes.

Evie is taking off her wet shoes.

EMILY cont.

"He had a coat for every hour of the day, and just as they say for a king, 'he is in the council room,'

Evie gets into bed, pulls up the quilt and sighs contentedly.

EMILY cont.

"so they always said of him, 'the Emperor is in his dressing room.'"

Evie closes her eyes.

EMILY cont.

"The great city where he lived was very gay; and every day strangers came there . .

INT THE BRIGHTONS' DINING ROOM NIGHT

Modest furniture. A sideboard cluttered with books and papers - clearly this is a workplace, though at the moment it's being used for "entertaining" as well. On the table are two cups and saucers, and unlit candlesticks.

MARTHA BRIGHTON is bringing in a plate of cookies. She is a plain middle-aged woman with a very nervous manner.

Seated at the table, STEWART WORTHY: somewhat overweight, professorial, wearing glasses and a rumpled suit. Pompous, he is as anxious to please as Martha is, which gives an edge of awkwardness to their scenes together.

WORTHY

I'm so happy to hear that.

MARTHA

Do you like Lorna Doones?

WORTHY

I like all cookies.

MARTHA

(sits)

It's the only kind I've got left. Emily has such a sweet tooth.

WORTHY

Now. I am given to understand that it's because of her, not Evelyn, that you asked me here.

MARTHA

That's right.

WORTHY

Good. Because Evelyn does consistently well.

MARTHA

She's very bright.

WORTHY

But quiet. She hardly ever -

MARTHA

I know. She never gives me cause to worry.

MARTHA cont.

Thank God. But Emily. That, of course, is a different story.

WORTHY

Yes. I'm curious to know more. You say she's . . . a . . .

MARTHA

She's a savant. Are you familiar with Savant Syndrome?

WORTHY

I seem to recall a segment on "Sixty Minutes" - it was very well done, about - what was his name? He's quite famous.

MARTHA

Leslie Lemke.

WORTHY

Yes. The musician.

MARTHA

(rises)  
I'll show you something.

She rummages through papers on sideboard, comes to a folder and slips a paper out. Places it in front of Worthy.

MARTHA

A letter from May Lemke. His mother.

WORTHY

(reading)  
Ten years ago.

MARTHA

Yes. I wrote to her just after we realized Emily was a savant. Isn't it nice?

WORTHY

It's an endearing letter.

MARTHA

Isn't it? I try to stay in touch with other families of savants.  
(points to sideboard)  
That's what all that mess is. We sort of "network." Savant Syndrome isn't quite as rare as you'd think, though of course there's all kinds.

WORTHY  
(passing letter back)  
Remarkable.

She puts the letter back in its folder.

MARTHA  
He could play entire symphonies from memory.

WORTHY  
Your daughter, then is a musician?

MARTHA  
No. She is drawn to words.

WORTHY  
Oh?

MARTHA  
Being an English teacher, you'd appreciate this. Emily can recite "Hamlet" if you ask her to.  
(laughs)  
But you'd better have time for the whole play, because once she starts, there's no one can stop her!

WORTHY  
Amazing.

MARTHA  
Oh, that's just one of many. She adores Shakespeare because the words sound so rich. But poetry! She can recite Browning, Keats, Tennyson, Poe - "The Raven" was the first one. She was seven, and it seemed to come from nowhere. You can imagine our surprise!

WORTHY  
That's truly astounding.

MARTHA  
Yes. It would be astounding for someone of normal intelligence. But Emily can barely dress herself. Making her bed . . . is a major accomplishment.

WORTHY  
So she can simply read a piece of literature and -

MARTHA  
Oh, she can't read.

WORTHY:

She can't?

MARTHA

We read to her. I do, Evie . . . Holly Romano, she's from the MHA, where I work. She spends a lot of time with Emily. Emily calls her Grammy Holly. Isn't that nice?

She's had other volunteers over the years . . . Plus records and tapes, though we have to be careful she doesn't get too exhausted.

She doesn't comprehend, Mr. Worthy. She loves the words - the way they sound. To her, it . . . isn't language.

WORTHY

I see.

MARTHA

Or at least that's what we thought, up until now.

(voice catches)

The past few weeks . . . I've heard her reciting . . . some poems, and . . . I don't know where they're coming from . . .

WORTHY

Mrs. Brighton, are you all right?

MARTHA

(regroups)

Let me see . . . Savants are not known to be creative. Original. How can I explain? Leslie Lemke can do some improvisation. Others paint pictures or do sculptures, but it's . . . it's more like duplicating. I don't mean to be disparaging - some of it is incredibly beautiful. But the idea that a savant could . . . think up something entirely new, a symphony or an abstract painting, or . . . a poem . . .

(chokes up)

WORTHY

Then Emily has been reciting poetry that you can't identify.

Martha nods.

WORTHY cont.

I see.

MARTHA

I thought maybe . .

WORTHY

Yes . . ? You thought . . ?

MARTHA

(struck by his obtuseness)  
I thought maybe you could!

WORTHY

Oh. Of course.

MARTHA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It's just that  
after all these years . . the idea that  
somewhere in her heart . . and brain . .  
she might actually be . . growing something.  
(filled up)  
That there might be another threshold . .

WORTHY

(afraid to say it  
as a question)  
Threshold.

MARTHA

"Knocking on my chamber door" . . It was  
a day I'll never forget, Mr. Worthy.

WORTHY

Of course not.

MARTHA

But I'm jumping the gun. I'm counting  
my chickens.  
(laughs)  
You can tell I'm not a poet!  
(sighs)  
I know that in all probability there's  
a writer out there somewhere, who'll  
yell "plagiarism" if I take this too far.

WORTHY

Can't you just ask Emily where she heard them?

MARTHA

She doesn't even understand the concept of  
an "author." And she'd never remember who  
read her what.

WORTHY

Couldn't you just ask the people who have  
read to her?



MARTHA

Oh, I started to. But there are so many, plus the tapes, and T.V. And you have to realize - sometimes she'll come out with something she heard two or three years ago.

WORTHY

Well, I would certainly be glad if I could help, Mrs. Brighton. Could I see some of the material?

MARTHA

Of course!

She rushes to the sideboard and retrieves another folder.

MARTHA cont.

(excitedly)

Some of them don't sound very polished. You might even call them amateurish. But I'll let you be the judge

She spreads several out in front of him.

MARTHA cont.

I've been trying to write them down.

WORTHY

(reading)

"Waterbird" . . .

MARTHA

Oh - I called it that. They don't seem to have titles . . . Can't you just see that bright orange bird against the water?

WORTHY

(clears his throat)

Well, it's quite facile . . . An attempt at meter . . . Some false rhyme . . . A suggestion of synechdoche in the third line . . .

MARTHA

I think it's touching.

WORTHY

Touchingly simple, yes. It's a children's poem.

MARTHA

(rapidly)

What strikes me is this "bird" thing. Emily has a passion for birds. She spends hours on end looking at them in her books, and

MARTHA cont.  
in the trees outside. I told you - it all started with "The Raven"!

WORTHY  
(reading)  
Hmmm . .

MARTHA  
Some are so simple - they're almost like fairy tales. And don't you get the feeling that there's a lot more going on, underneath the surface?

WORTHY  
Well, of course it sounds so sing-song.  
(looks up)  
But yes. That's so.

MARTHA  
(urgently, but with lowered voice)  
This theme of falling. It's in a lot of them. And there's something I should tell you, Mr. Worthy.  
(pause)  
Emily was born perfectly healthy. Her retardation was the result of a fall.

WORTHY  
I see.

MARTHA  
This is not something that is common knowledge.

WORTHY  
I would never -

MARTHA  
She was only a year old. But who can account for the subconscious? Am I right?

WORTHY  
I myself am a great believer in the role of the subconscious -

MARTHA  
There, then! Can you understand why I'm so optimistic?

WORTHY  
(thumbing through poems)  
This is all very intriguing . .

WORTHY cont.

Would you mind my taking some of these  
with me?

MARTHA

Oh my God - take them all. Please.  
(gathers them up)

You don't know how much this means to me.  
I didn't know who to turn to. And then  
I thought of you, and I said, "Why not?  
Why not consult an expert?"

WORTHY

(flattered)

Well, I do have avenues of research . .

MARTHA

Exactly.

WORTHY

(still browsing  
through poems)

I don't want to "count chickens" either,  
Mrs. Brighton. But . . if this turns out  
the way you hope . .

EVIE appears just outside the doorway, unseen to them. She is  
carrying her coat, shoeless. Hearing voices, she peeks in, and to  
her surprise and puzzlement, spots Mr. Worthy.

WORTHY cont.

. . then it would be clear enough . .  
that you have a most extraordinary daughter!

Evie smiles.

MARTHA

(beaming)

Yes.

They both rise. Evie steps back.

WORTHY

(sentimental)

It's humbling, isn't it - we think we've  
seen it all, the outer reaches of human  
potential, and then someone like her comes  
along.

Evie - amazed, delighted, still hesitates.

MARTHA

I know.

WORTHY  
(like a pronouncement)  
I would love to meet her.

Evie's face sinks.

MARTHA  
Of course!

She turns and sees Evie.

MARTHA cont.  
Evie! You're back already.

EVIE  
Uh . . .

WORTHY  
Look who's here!

EVIE  
Hello, Mr. Worthy.

WORTHY  
My star pupil. How are you, Evelyn?

MARTHA  
She was just up at Yale for her interview.

EVIE  
Princeton.

MARTHA  
Of course.  
(to Worthy)  
Yale's next week.

Evie moves to correct her but pulls back.

WORTHY  
How was the interview?

EVIE  
Oh. It was . . . great.

WORTHY  
(to Martha)  
Now, I tell them never to use words like that.  
(to Evie)  
It was . . . ?

EVIE  
(flatly)  
Resplendent.

WORTHY

Much better.

They walk toward the doorway.

HALLWAY

WORTHY cont.

I hear a classmate of yours was accepted  
at Yale.

EVIE

Oh?

WORTHY

Russell Parks.

Evie looks surprised.

MARTHA

Russell? He lives across the street!  
We've known the family for years. As a  
matter of fact - Evie tutors him.

WORTHY

Really? Not in English.

EVIE

Math.

MARTHA

He's a lovely boy.  
(moving off with Worthy)  
Do you know his sister Rachel?

EVIE

(bewildered)  
I hope everything is all right . .

MARTHA

What's that?

EVIE

(embarrassed)  
I mean . . Did Mr. Worthy come over for . .uh-

MARTHA

Oh. No, no. Everything's fine.  
(louder voice)  
I invited him here to ask his help in  
determining the origin of those poems.

EVIE

Oh. You mean -?

MARTHA

(smiling at Worthy)

And he has graciously agreed to.

EVIE

You mean the poems -

Worthy is waiting for her.

MARTHA

(impatient)

Yes! Emily's poems.

## STAIRCASE

Martha leads Worthy up.

MARTHA cont.

I'll warn you - her room is full of "bird" things. I've never met anyone so obsessed, except maybe Harry with his model trains. I guess that's where she gets it from - ha!

## HALLWAY

Evie breaks into a broad smile. She turns back toward the dining room.

## DINING ROOM

Looking very pleased with herself, Evie slowly starts to clear the table.

The faint whir of an electric motor.

## INT HARRY'S BASEMENT WORKSHOP NIGHT

Evie has just pulled the string of an overhead lightbulb. All we can see in the dim yellow light is the edge of a worktable; on it, some miniature houses, a model locomotive, and several tiny paint bottles. A certain duskiness falls on the room because of the way it is lit.

HARRY BRIGHTON, in his fifties, is dressed in overalls and a flannel shirt. Half-seated on a stool, he is squinting at a model boxcar that he is painting with intense concentration.

EVIE

Daddy?  
 (waits)  
 Daddy?

HARRY

Uh-huh.

EVIE

I borrowed your sweater, O.K.?

HARRY

Uh-huh.

EVIE

How's it going?

She strains to see what he's working on.

EVIE cont.

You're weathering it?

After a moment Harry holds the car so she can see it.

HARRY

Coal soot. And some rust in the seams.

EVIE

It looks great. Will you sunbleach it too?

HARRY

(shakes his head)  
 It's a mining town. Pennsylvania.  
 (resumes painting)  
 Not like the Western layout.

EVIE

I loved that one best.  
 (pause)  
 Remember what I named it when I was little?

HARRY

Huh?

EVIE

Happy Valley. Remember? But this one's neat too.  
 (inspecting houses)  
 The houses are so . . . smudgy.

HARRY

There'll be some barracks too.

EVIE

Really?

HARRY

Take a look at those photos.

He nods toward two or three photographs. Evie picks one up.

EVIE

(holding it to the  
light)

Pennsylvania?

HARRY

Bethlehem. I had an uncle lived there.

EVIE

Did he live in a barracks?

HARRY

Uh-huh.

EVIE

(sighs)

I don't think this is going to be another Happy Valley.

HARRY

Look over there. The roadbed's done.

EVIE

Good.

HARRY

Doesn't look like much yet. But I've got some ideas for the mine.

Evie watches him paint.

EVIE

I had my Princeton interview.

HARRY

Great school.

EVIE

The roads weren't bad. But there's a foot of snow.

(smiles)

It looks magical.

(sighs)

Sometime you should do a village in the snow.

HARRY

Maybe.



Evie turns to go.

HARRY cont.

So - how'd you like Princeton?

She turns back, eager.

EVIE

Well, I - I'm not sure.

Harry puts his paintbrush down and faces her squarely.

HARRY

It's a big decision. Give it time.  
And remember: Only the best for my  
girl.

Evie smiles broadly, nods, and hurries up the stairs.

INT EMILY'S ROOM NIGHT

EMILY is kneeling in the middle of her bed, rapturously reciting.

EMILY

" . . . So, buried in a coverlet  
as soft as dust, I'm safe.  
No dreams are in my pillow  
though beyond the curtain lace

We see the window, snow still falling softly.

EMILY cont. (VO)

the snow falls quick as Christmas  
for the children loved by Time  
for now. 'For now,' I whisper;

We see the pattern of her quilt.

EMILY cont. (VO)

in my coverlet I'm safe.

Emily's ardent face.

EMILY cont.

I have no one to dream about.  
Can someone see my face?"

We see MARTHA and MR. WORTHY, standing beside the bed. Martha turns to Worthy with a look that says, "See? I told you."  
Anxious to keep their attention, Emily begins again.

EMILY cont.

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold

EMILY cont

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

We see one of the bird figurines.

EMILY (VO)

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet  
birds sang . ."

A doorbell.

INT FRONT DOOR DAY

Carrying a book, Evie opens the door for RUSSELL PARKS. He is seventeen, a tall, thin boy with a sensitive face. In contrast to Evie's parents, who rarely look directly at her, Russell is always watching Evie.

RUSSELL

Sorry I'm late.

Evie leads him toward the dining room.

EVIE

(coolly)

I hadn't really noticed.

RUSSELL

The yearbook meeting ran over.

DINING ROOM

They sit at the table. Evie opens her book.

EVIE

Circular functions, wasn't it?

RUSSELL

Yeah. Good old "sine and cosine."

EVIE

So, Russell. You tell me.

RUSSELL

What?

EVIE

I'm a little fuzzy on the formulas.  
You want to take me through it?

RUSSELL

What are you doing, Evie?

EVIE

I'm getting some help with the math.

RUSSELL

(pause)

What's the matter.

EVIE

What's the matter. Hmm. The "matter" is . . . that Mr. Worthy was here the other day, and he happened to mention that you got accepted at Yale.

RUSSELL

I was going to tell you -

EVIE

Russell. I'm really happy for you. Don't get me wrong.

RUSSELL

O.K. . . ?

EVIE

Someone who gets into Yale - early - doesn't need to be tutored in math.

RUSSELL

Oh. Well, that's not necessarily true. Math is my worst subject. You know that.

EVIE

What did you get on your S.A.T.'s?

RUSSELL

Look. I've been testing really well . . .

EVIE

Just what's been going on here?

He looks at her. Clearly he has something to say but just shakes his head.

EVIE cont.

Go ahead, Russell. Say it. Be direct with me. I can take it.

RUSSELL

(angrily)

O.K.! O.K.!!

RUSSELL cont.

(pauses)

You want to go to a movie this weekend?

EVIE

(taken aback)

What?

RUSSELL

Well? Do you?

EVIE

Uh . . . No, I don't think so, no . . .

RUSSELL

Great. I said it. You happy now?

EVIE

I'm sorry . . . I thought . . .

RUSSELL

It's just like last time.

EVIE

(weakly)

Last time?

RUSSELL

(incredulous)

In sophomore year. I asked you out.

(disgusted)

You don't even remember.

EVIE

I'm so sorry . . . I thought . . .

RUSSELL

Yeah - if it wasn't for math, what did you think I was coming over here for?

EVIE

I was afraid . . . you felt sorry for me, because . . . because I have no friends.

Russell's anger melts away. He stares at her for a moment.

RUSSELL

No. That wasn't it.

EVIE

(sighs)

I really am sorry.

RUSSELL

It's O.K.

EVIE

I don't think we ever had a fight before.

RUSSELL

Are you kidding?

EVIE

What?

RUSSELL

Monopoly . . . ?

EVIE

Oh.

RUSSELL

Great loser.

EVIE

You always got Boardwalk. I didn't care if I won. I just wanted Boardwalk.

RUSSELL

Oh yeah? What about Clue? Checkers? Sorry?

EVIE

O.K.! O.K.!

RUSSELL

Chinese checkers! What about cards?

They grin affectionately at one another.

EVIE

I used to pretend you were my brother.

Russell looks away. A pause. Then he turns back.

RUSSELL

What was Worthy doing here?

EVIE

My mom asked him over. He's going to help her research some poems . . . that Emily's been coming out with.

RUSSELL

Huh?

EVIE

Mom thinks maybe Emily wrote them herself.

RUSSELL

No kidding.

EVIE

That's what she thinks.  
 (genuinely enthused)  
 Wouldn't it be fantastic? Emily would sort of make history. And she'd get lots of attention. She'd love it!

RUSSELL

Are the poems any good?

EVIE

They're O.K. I guess . . .  
 (sudden smile)  
 But coming from her - they're great!

She looks away wistfully, lost in thought. Then she becomes conscious of Russell, who is simply watching her.

EVIE

You want something to eat?

RUSSELL

No, that's O.K.

EVIE

I made some Montego Bays . . .

RUSSELL

Some what?

EVIE

They're little squares, with dates and oats -

Russell makes a face.

EVIE cont.

And chocolate. Emily loves them.  
 Come on.

She rises, and he follows her into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

RUSSELL

Your mom said you got an interview  
at Yale.

She is absorbed in cutting into the pan of cookies.

EVIE

Huh?

RUSSELL

I saw your mom. She said you're  
interviewing at Yale.

EVIE

Oh. No, it's Dartmouth.

RUSSELL

That's pretty far. Is she going with you?

EVIE

No. Here- try this.

She hands him a cookie.

RUSSELL

I'll drive up with you.

EVIE

Thanks, Russell. You're sweet. But-

RUSSELL

Does she ever go with you? To any  
school?

She nudges his hand toward his mouth and he takes a bite out of the  
cookie.

EVIE

One time she almost did . . . But I like  
going alone. It sort of makes me think.

RUSSELL

She ought to go once. Tell her.

EVIE

(panicky)  
Oh, I couldn't do that.

RUSSELL

Sure you could. You should hear how  
Rachel talks to Mom.

EVIE

That's different. Your mother . . . She doesn't-  
It's just different. How do you like the  
Montego Bays?

RUSSELL

They're good - you know, your Mom's a nice  
lady and all, but . . .

(shakes his head)

When are you going to see Yale?

EVIE

(flustered)

I don't remember . . .

RUSSELL

I think you'll really like it.

EVIE

Russell.

(deep breath)

I'm not sure if I applied.

RUSSELL

What?

EVIE

I filled out so many applications . . .

RUSSELL

You don't remember if you applied to Yale?

EVIE

I set up a bunch of interviews, and I  
put them on my calendar, and then I sort  
of stopped thinking about it. I know  
it sounds really stupid.

RUSSELL

(taking her hands)

No. It's not stupid. Did you keep any  
records?

EVIE

(faintly)

I just wrote down the interviews I could  
get . . .

RUSSELL

(tenderly)

You should've told me you needed help  
with this. I would've been glad to help.

(smiles)

We could've skipped the tutoring.

(steps back)



RUSSELL cont.

Well listen. Let me know if you change your mind about the drive.

EVIE

Thanks, Russell. I'll be O.K.  
Here. Take some of these with you.

She is putting some cookies on a plate.

RUSSELL

What about Emily?

EVIE

Well, take a couple at least.

She removes a few. MARTHA walks in, carrying some groceries which she puts on the table.

MARTHA

Hello everyone.

RUSSELL

Hi, Mrs. Brighton.

MARTHA

How'd the math go?

Russell glances at Evie.

RUSSELL

Fine. Evie sort of . . . puts it in perspective.

MARTHA

(to Evie)

What are your plans for the rest of the afternoon?

RUSSELL

Uh - I'd better be going.

MARTHA

(to Russell)

I hope you gave her some pointers for her trip to Yale.

RUSSELL

Mrs. Brighton -

EVIE

He was a big help, Mom.

MARTHA  
 (warm smile)  
 Thank you, Russell.

Russell nods, glances again at Evie and leaves. Martha starts to unpack the groceries and Evie immediately goes to help her.

EVIE  
 I was planning to hang out with Emily.

MARTHA  
 Good, because Holly called and said she couldn't make it, and I'm supposed to work today.  
 You know, I just had a nice conversation about you with Mrs. Carr down at the high school.

Evie looks surprised.

MARTHA cont.  
 I was dropping off some things for Mr. Worthy. He's been spending a lot of time on this - what a dedicated man. He's almost as excited about Emily as we are!  
 Oops. I was supposed to call the library.

Martha goes to the wall phone and opens address book.

EVIE  
 Mom-  
 MARTHA  
 I thought we had that number.

EVIE  
 Mom!

MARTHA  
 Here it is. What?

EVIE  
 What were you and Mrs. Carr talking about?

MARTHA  
 (dialing)  
 Oh. I told her what a wonderful sister you are to Emily. She was very impressed. She should be - it's true.  
 (into phone)  
 Periodicals, please.

Furious but struggling against it, Evie leaves the room.

DINING ROOM

Evie stands with her back against the wall, fighting her anger.

MARTHA (OS)

Dress her warm if you take her out . . .

INT HARRY'S WORKROOM DAY

A moment of darkness while we hear the whir of a small motor. EVIE pulls the lightbulb string and we see HARRY, holding a small metal box with a dial on it. The sound stops.

HARRY

Damn.

He picks up a screwdriver and begins to take the box apart. Quietly EVIE approaches and watches him work.

HARRY cont.

Goddamn throttle.

EVIE

Loose wire?

HARRY

I suppose.

He removes the first screw; she holds out her hand and he drops the screws into her palm one by one, as if they have done this many times before.

She looks in the direction of the layout.

EVIE

The foliage looks great.

HARRY

Believe it or not - it's foam.

EVIE

Really?

A silence.

HARRY

See the new tender?

EVIE

Where? Oh wow.

She brushes the screws into a tiny jar. He is fiddling with the wires.

EVIE cont.

We should go back to the trainyard  
sometime . . . Remember that old man, who  
said he was an engineer for the Erie  
Lackawanna?

HARRY

Had me going.

EVIE

Yeah. We should go back there . . .  
You want to go tomorrow?

HARRY

Hand me that screwdriver. Green handle.

She hands it to him. A silence.

EVIE

Sometimes . . . I have these feelings  
about Mom.

HARRY

She's had a hard life.

EVIE

She blames herself for Emily,  
doesn't she. That's why I shouldn't  
get mad at her.

Harry nods. He puts down the screwdriver and faces her.

HARRY

She loves you very much.

EVIE

Really?

HARRY

Very, very much.

Beaming, Evie starts to leave.

HARRY

The trainyard.

She looks back, nods eagerly. Harry resumes working on the throttle.  
He turns it over and tries it out. The engine whirs; CLOSE-UP on the  
engine taking a curve.

HARRY (VO)

Now we're in business.

INT TOWN LIBRARY DAY

MR. WORTHY is at the Circulation Desk, checking out a stack of books and literary journals. He is looking away absently while the LIBRARIAN waits for his card.

LIBRARIAN

May I have your card, sir?

Clumsily he fumbles for his card.

EXT WORTHY'S HOUSE DAY

WORTHY is in the driveway, sweaty, taking out the books. He carries them into the house by the side door that leads to his apartment.

INT WORTHY'S KITCHEN DAY

Heavily dropping the books on the counter, WORTHY turns and goes straight to the refrigerator. CLOSEUP on its mostly empty shelves. He closes it, then turns and surveys the room: Dented teakettle. Calendar: Wooded scene, "Drake and Son Heating Oil." Sugar bowl on the table, uncovered and empty except for some hard brownish clumps. He sighs. Suddenly he turns and picks up the phone, dials, smiling.

WORTHY

Mrs. Brighton? It's Stewart Worthy -  
(pleased)

All right then: Martha. I - I think we're drawing to a close here. I have just one more set of materials to peruse, and then it is my hope that . . . we will have a clear go-ahead . . .

INT EMILY'S ROOM DAY

CLOSEUP: EMILY, sitting cross-legged on her bed, reciting.

EMILY

"Then he felt quite shy, and hid his head under his wings, for he did not know what to do; he was so happy, and yet not at all proud, for a good heart is never proud. He thought of how he had been persecuted and despised; and now he heard them all saying that he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds.

Now we see that EVIE is under the covers, quite blissful.

EMILY cont.

"Even the lilac bent its branches straight down into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and mild. He ruffled his feathers and lifted his slender neck, and from his heart he cried joyfully:

'Of so much happiness I never dreamed when I was the ugly duckling!'"

EVIE

(sighs)

Thanks, Emily.

EMILY

(points to herself)

Duckie.

EVIE

(laughs, sits up)

Yes. That's you.

EMILY

What else?

EVIE

You want to go outside?

Immediately Emily scrambles out of bed, goes to the bookcase for a pair of binoculars, which she hangs around her neck.

EMILY

Let's go.

EVIE

Aren't you forgetting something?

EMILY

Forgetting something.

Evie rises and starts to make the bed.

EVIE

Come on. I'll help you.

EMILY

(unmoving)

That's stupid.

EVIE

You know, it really is. It seems like you're no sooner out of it than you're back in it again. And what's it for? The covers don't care!

EMILY  
(grins)  
Covers don't care!

EVIE  
And the pillows don't care . .

EMILY  
Pillows don't care!

EVIE  
And you don't care . .

EMILY  
You don't care!

EVIE  
And neither do you. So fluff your  
pillow . .

EMILY  
Huh?

EVIE  
(demonstrating)  
Fluff your pillow . .

Emily does.

EVIE cont.  
And let's go outside.

Evie gets Emily's jacket, scarf and hat and helps her dress.

EVIE cont.  
The sun's out. It's a really nice day.  
You want to sing a blackbird?

EMILY  
That's stupid.

She reaches for a book.

EMILY cont.  
Read a story.

EVIE  
(adjusting Emily's  
binoculars)  
I'll tell you one outside.

EMILY  
Nocalars.

EVIE  
Bin-oc-u-lars. Say it. Bin-

EMILY  
Nocalars.

EVIE  
Right. Want to try a button?

Emily shakes her head. Evie buttons her up, puts the hat on her, and steps back.

EVIE  
(affectionately)  
You look great.

EXT THE BRIGHTONS' YARD DAY

A pleasant, snowy yard with a birdbath and a bench.  
Evie leads Emily toward the bench.

EMILY  
(kicking)  
Hey. Snow.

EVIE  
The sun melted a lot of it.

Emily looks up; Evie thrusts her hand out.

EVIE cont.  
Don't look right at it!

EMILY  
(startled)  
That's stupid.

EVIE  
I'm sorry. It can hurt your eyes.

Evie crouches and tries to gather some snow.

EMILY  
Want a snowman?

EVIE  
There isn't enough.

Emily slowly relinquishes the idea and they sit on the bench.  
Emily takes up the binoculars and looks around.

EVIE cont.  
See anything?



EMILY

Blue jay.  
(scanning)  
Yellow-belly sapsucker.

EVIE

(laughing)  
Can I have a look?

Emily raises the binoculars again. After a moment she offers them to Evie, who looks around.

EMILY

Story, Evie.

EVIE

It's just another little rhyme, O.K.?

Emily smiles at her. Evie turns to face her and takes her hands.

EVIE

"My mother was a cumulus.  
She left me high and dry.  
My father was a thunderhead.  
He taught me how to cry.  
But when precipitation makes  
Me grey along the seams,  
I make it snow, as if to show  
The world below's a dream."

EMILY

"My mother was a cumulus.  
She left me high and dry.  
My father was a thunderhead.  
He taught me how to cry.  
But when precipitation makes  
Me grey along the seams,  
I make it snow, as if to show  
The world below's a dream."

EVIE

It's about a cloud.

EMILY

Cloud.

Emily looks up at the sun again, then glances over to see if Evie has noticed. She hasn't.

EVIE

Are you cold?

Emily shakes her head. Evie fishes into her pocket and pulls out a small bag.

EVIE cont.  
Hey Duck. You want a cookie?

EMILY  
(snatching one)  
Chocolate chip.

EVIE  
(also eating)  
Montego Bays. Remember?

EMILY  
(pointing)  
Evie! Pigeon over there!

Evie breaks off a piece of cookie and scatters the crumbs. Emily looks at the cookie in her own hand, considers, then reaches over and breaks off a piece of Evie's and also scatters crumbs. She takes up the binoculars and aims them down at the pigeon.

EMILY cont.  
Pretty.

She sits back, checks the bag to be sure it's empty, and sighs.

EMILY cont.  
Sing a blackbird.

Evie starts to sing, as Emily looks around - she joins in only at the word "blackbird," at Evie's prodding.

EVIE  
(singing)  
"Pack up all my cares and woe, here I go,  
singing low, Bye, bye blackbird. Where  
somebody waits for me, sugar sweet, so is he.  
Bye bye blackbird. No one here can love  
or understand me. Oh what hard luck stories  
they all hand me. Make my bed and light the  
light. I'll be home late tonight. Blackbird,  
bye bye."

Evie moves closer to Emily, puts an arm around her, and smiles contentedly.

EVIE cont.  
Oh, Duck. Together we make quite a swan.

Emily is nodding off. Gently Evie makes her rise, and guides her toward the house.

INT EMILY'S ROOM DAY

Emily's clothes are piled on the floor. EVIE is helping EMILY into bed. Evie pulls the quilt up and kisses her on the head. She leaves the room.

After a moment Emily opens her eyes.

EMILY  
Grammy Holly, you come back.

EXT STREET OUTSIDE EVIE'S HOUSE DAY

Carrying a backpack, EVIE is walking home from school. A car pulls up across the street and RUSSELL gets out of the back - it's filled with high school kids. He spots Evie as the car pulls away, and waves, and crosses over.

RUSSELL  
Hey.

She eyes the car uncomfortably as it speeds by.

EVIE  
Hi Russell.

RUSSELL  
How was Dartmouth?

EVIE  
It's tomorrow.

RUSSELL  
Did you know Paul Schuler got in there?

Slowly they walk together along the street toward the hedge that marks Evie's house.

EVIE  
(archly)  
Guess he did better than Gordon McDermott.

RUSSELL  
Yeah. Guess so.

EVIE  
I don't know, Russell . . . All these schools-  
they all seem pretty much the same.

RUSSELL  
The same? How can you say that?

EVIE  
They are. You walk around those campuses,

EVIE cont.

and everybody's trying to look smart, and I swear, you could take the student body from one campus and plunk it down on another, and no one would ever know.

RUSSELL

That's ridiculous. All schools aren't the same. Why do you think it's so hard to get into some of them?

EVIE

That's not what I mean . .

They stop at her hedge.

RUSSELL

What, then?

EVIE

(dreamily)

It's just that . . I don't know, when you drive there, you go through such . . bleak scenery usually . .

FADE TO:

EXT A COUNTRY ROAD DAY

Evie's car is winding its way through a poor rural landscape.

EVIE (VO)

It's miles and miles of dried-up cornfields with ramshackle farms set back in the mud . . And the trees sort of look hunched over, and all the dogs seem to walk with a limp . .

EXT A MILL TOWN DAY

Evie's car on a residential street.

EVIE (VO)

Or it's one of those towns that used to have a mill that it's named after, but it's long gone. And now everyone looks depressed, and there's a junked car in every yard, and the kids look like old people . .

She stops for a light. CLOSE-UP: A little girl on the sidewalk, pulling along a younger brother. The light changes. She doesn't realize it. A car horn behind her. Mesmerized, she pays no attention. A second horn - now angry.

INT EVIE'S CAR DAY

Evie jumps and looks into the rear view mirror.

EVIE  
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

She looks up as she starts to drive; then she stops abruptly - the light is red again.

EXT COLLEGE CAMPUS

Evie's car turns into at heavy stone gates.

EVIE (VO)  
And then you turn onto a campus and you expect it to be different, and it's really not - it's just a lot of grey buildings, some have ivy, that's nice, or a pretty chapel. But there's nothing - special about it, and nobody seems especially happy, they might as well go live in the mill town . . .

A sign: ADMISSIONS. She pulls into a small parking lot.

EVIE (VO)  
And you start thinking about joining the circus, you sort of . . . start looking for a caravan of gypsies . . .

INT DARTMOUTH ADMISSIONS OFFICE DAY

YOUNG MALE INTERVIEWER hangs up the phone and looks at EVIE.

DARTMOUTH INTERVIEWER  
Sorry. Things get crazy this time of year.

EVIE  
Oh, that's O.K.

DARTMOUTH INTERVIEWER  
So. Where were we?

EVIE  
You were asking me how I got interested in Dartmouth.

DARTMOUTH INTERVIEWER  
Yes, Evie. How did you?

EVIE

Well, a couple of years ago there was a student at our school who really wanted to go here - he always used to wear these "Dartmouth" sweatshirts and had "Dartmouth" bookcovers. But he got rejected, and that made him try to commit suicide - he took all sorts of pills. Did you hear about that?

DARTMOUTH INTERVIEWER

I don't believe so.

EVIE

His name was Gordon McDermott . .? Anyway. So I figured I'd come up here and see if it's worth attempting suicide over.

DARTMOUTH INTERVIEWER

(smiling bravely)

And what did you decide?

EVIE

Well, I haven't had the tour yet. But I'd be surprised.

INT CORNELL ADMISSIONS OFFICE DAY

MIDDLE-AGED FEMALE INTERVIEWER is smiling at EVIE in a kindly way.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

I'd like to ask you one of those questions that people have been asking you since you were a little girl.

EVIE

(eagerly)

I think I know.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

Go for it.

EVIE

What do I want to be when I grow up.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

That's it.

EVIE

You know how I knew that? My interviewer at Wesleyan asked me it exactly like you just did. But the funny thing is, when I was little, nobody ever did ask me what I wanted to be when I grow up!

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

That's . . . unusual.

EVIE

I guess.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

Well - how about if I ask you now?

EVIE

Oh, I don't want to be anything.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

(pause)

I don't mean a definite career. Just -  
you know, a general area of interest . . .

EVIE

Is this a trick question?

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

Uh- no, it's -

EVIE

Because don't you think it'd be better  
if people thought about "who" they want  
to be, not "what"? The "what" never  
turns out right anyway. I mean, think  
about it. Who do you know that loves  
their job? And isn't happy when Friday  
rolls around?

(sincerely)

Are you?

CLOSEUP: Interviewer's set face, studying Evie.

EVIE cont.

I'm not saying there's no one. I just  
haven't come across them, except maybe  
my Dad - he loves model trains. But  
that's not his "job." He's a banker  
and he never liked it enough to say  
much about it except he gets his own  
parking space.

(sits back, sighs)

So that's why I don't worry about it.  
I'd just like to try to be good person.  
That's all.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER

(softly)

I like my job, Evie.

Evie looks around the room, thoughtful.

EVIE  
(earnestly)  
You wouldn't want to do it for the  
rest of your life, though, would you?

After a moment of silence, a wry look crosses the Interviewer's face.

CORNELL INTERVIEWER  
Oh, I don't know. You meet a lot of  
interesting people . . .

INT AMHERST ADMISSIONS OFFICE DAY

This time the interviewer is a senior at the school, a friendly,  
upbeat young woman.

AMHERST INTERVIEWER  
I really think you'll like it here.

EVIE  
(brightly)  
You do?

AMHERST INTERVIEWER  
I can remember thinking I could never  
possibly like anyplace as much as my  
high school-

EVIE  
Oh, I hate my high school.

AMHERST INTERVIEWER  
Really?

EVIE  
The whole thing is so absurd! Didn't  
you ever get the feeling that somebody  
was playing this big trick on you?  
(laughs)  
Lately I've been thinking about  
graduation, and when I do, all I picture  
is Mr. Williams - he's our principal -  
looking out over all the square hats and  
and talking about our "promise." He's  
always saying that.

AMHERST INTERVIEWER  
Well, young people are the future of the world.

EVIE  
I guess. But I think it's kind of  
misleading. I mean - a lot of these kids  
I go to school with, next year they're



EVIE cont.

going to be working at the gas station or the A&P, and the rest will be walking around schools like this that cost so much that everybody figures we'll come out all set for the world.

But the truth of it is, I don't think the world is all that happy to be getting us. Maybe now we're the "future." But when the future comes, we're just going to be part of the world, and from what I can tell, nobody's going to be too excited about us then.

(sighs)

So actually, I think it's a lot nicer just being "promise."

AMHERST INTERVIEWER

(concerned)

It's really not so bad. I go to school here. I'm having the best four years of my life!

EVIE

(terrified)

That's what my mother says about high school!

Evie starts to cry. The interviewer is alarmed, leans across the desk.

AMHERST INTERVIEWER

Are you all right?

Evie nods, wiping her eyes.

EVIE

Why don't you ask me some questions . . .

AMHERST INTERVIEWER

(very awkward)

O.K. . . Uh . . . So. Have you thought about a major?

INT EVIE'S CAR EARLY EVENING

Evie is straining for a last look at the scenery before darkness falls. She is humming to herself, then softly forms the words.

EVIE

(singing)

"Make my bed and light the light, I'll be home late tonight. Blackbird bye bye."

FADE IN:

EXT THE BRIGHTONS' STREET DAY

Spring. Forsythia are nearly in full bloom, lining many of the lawns, which are finally thickening. Magnolia blossoms are just starting to open. Whispers of dogwood. Tulips, and some hyacinths. Several children are racing down the street on bikes.

INT MENTAL HEALTH CENTER - STAIRCASE DAY

MR. WORTHY is puffing up the stairs. He reaches a landing, goes to door labeled MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION. He pauses, checks his watch.

INT MHC - PUBLICATIONS OFFICE DAY

MARTHA sits at a computer, transcribing from a notepad. She glances up and spots WORTHY coming toward her, then pretends not to have seen him.

WORTHY  
(still puffing)  
Martha.

MARTHA  
(typing)  
Stewart. What are you doing here?

WORTHY  
I need to speak with you.

MARTHA  
(stops, alarmed)  
You haven't found anything . . . ?

WORTHY  
You mean an author? Oh no.

MARTHA  
(relieved)  
Good.  
(continues typing)  
I have this newsletter to get out . . .

WORTHY  
Do you have a T.V. in here?

MARTHA  
A T.V.? Why . . . ?

WORTHY

Martha.

MARTHA

(looks up)

Stewart, what is going on?

WORTHY

(checks his watch)

Is there a television set? Please.

MARTHA

(rising)

It's in the waiting room. You walked right past it.

WORTHY

Does it get cable?

Annoyed yet curious, she leads him out of the room.

INT WAITING ROOM DAY

On the television screen, a show is just starting.

T.V. ANNOUNCER (VO)

. . as we'll see, it is a story of a son's inner struggle and the courage of a father who will tell us their story here on . . LIVETIME. And now our host, Maxine Gray.

MARTHA

What are you doing, Stewart?

WORTHY

(smug smile)

Have you ever seen this show?

MARTHA

(mustering patience)

We don't have cable.

WORTHY

Well, you'd better get it.

(gleeful)

If you want to see yourself -

MARTHA

What-

WORTHY

And your daughter!

MARTHA

(stunned)

Stewart . . Are you saying . .

WORTHY

I've set the whole thing up.

MARTHA

Oh my God!

WORTHY

I spoke to Maxine Gray this morning,  
and she wants to have a preliminary  
meeting with you and Emily.

MARTHA

(eyes brimming)

Oh my God . .

WORTHY

And they'll tape next week. She's  
very excited, Martha.

MARTHA

(now weeping with  
joy and disbelief)

My baby . . .

Worthy snaps off the television and turns to her triumphantly, but she has already left the room.

MARTHA (OS)

Holly! Peter! Listen to this!

He is nonplussed for a moment, then follows her.

INT J.C. PENNEY MISSES DEPARTMENT DAY

EVIE, wearing her usual careless oversized clothes, and carrying a Macy's shopping bag, approaches SALESLADY ticketing dresses.

EVIE

Excuse me.

SALESLADY

Yes?

EVIE

I'm looking for a blouse with a bird  
print.

SALESLADY

Excuse me?

EVIE

You know - maybe tiny birds, or  
even birds and flowers.

SALESLADY

Well, I really don't know . .

Saleslady leads Evie to racks of blouses.

EVIE

Hummingbirds would be nice.

SALESLADY

(rummaging)

I think we'll be lucky to find  
anything . . What size?

EVIE

Twelve.

Saleslady scrutinizes her, trying to figure out if a size 12 could be  
underneath Evie's clothes.

EVIE cont.

Oh, it's not for me.

Saleslady pulls out a blouse with a print of wild ducks, in greens  
and browns - quite ugly.

EVIE

That's perfect!

Smiling, Evie takes the blouse.

SALESLADY

Good.

EVIE

(holds up bag)

I've already got a skirt.

(big smile)

Thanks for your help.

INT SHOPPING MALL DAY

Evie is happily strolling past the stores carrying her two bags. As  
she passes a chocolate shop, we see that RUSSELL is standing in  
line. He spots her and immediately catches up to her.

RUSSELL

Evie!

EVIE

Hi Russell. What are you doing here?

RUSSELL

It's my mother's birthday.

EVIE

(sees he has  
no bags)

No luck, huh?

RUSSELL

I thought maybe candy.  
(embarrassed)  
I guess I'm desperate.

EVIE

Why don't you get her a C.D.?

RUSSELL

Maybe.

EVIE

Come on. I'll walk you to Sam Goody.

They start to walk together.

RUSSELL

You're in a good mood.

EVIE

Yes I am. Guess what, Russell?  
Emily's going to be on television!

RUSSELL

You're kidding.

EVIE

I mean - not like NBC or something.  
It's Channel 21. Do you get cable?

RUSSELL

Sure.

EVIE

Well, it'll be on this Thursday,  
a show about Emily! Mom too. There's  
this woman who does an interview thing -  
Guess who set it up? Mr. Worthy.

RUSSELL

I can't believe he did something useful.

EVIE

(stops)  
And look what I got!  
(pulls out blouse)  
It's for Emily to wear on the show!

RUSSELL

She'd like that.

EVIE

And she really hates to shop. It's exciting, isn't it?

They resume walking.

RUSSELL

I noticed you weren't in school today.

EVIE

Can you believe it?  
Mom let me take the day off, to shop for Emily.

RUSSELL

Oh.

EVIE

Why? Did I miss something?

RUSSELL

Ummm . . . No, not really. It's just that . . . a lot of people are buying prom bids . . .

EVIE

Prom what?

RUSSELL

Bids. You know - tickets.

EVIE

Uh-huh.

They are passing a dress shop. Russell glances at it.

RUSSELL

(nervous laugh)  
When I saw you with those bags, I thought maybe somebody already asked you.

EVIE

(short laugh)  
No.

An awkward silence.

EVIE cont.

(softly)

Does that mean . . . you want me to go  
with you?

He nods. Evie looks away. Her whole mood has changed; she is very quiet, almost sad.

EVIE cont.

When is it?

RUSSELL

May fifth.

(forced smile)

Do we go to the same school?

(pause)

Well?

She reaches over tentatively and touches his arm.

EVIE

I don't think so.

RUSSELL

That's what I thought you'd say.

EVIE

Russell -

RUSSELL

Would you at least think about it?

EVIE

I just don't -

RUSSELL

It's our senior prom.

EVIE

(looks at him  
sadly)

O.K. I'll . . . think about it.

They have reached Sam Goody.

RUSSELL

Great. That's great. I'll come  
over tomorrow, O.K.? You can  
tell me then.

EVIE

Sure . . . Good luck with the C.D.



RUSSELL

Yeah. Hey - did you hear from any colleges yet?

EVIE

(shrugs)

No news is good news.

RUSSELL

Jillian Sanders got into Duke.

EVIE

Who?

RUSSELL

Jillian . . ?

EVIE

Oh. That's good.

RUSSELL

(moving away)

See you tomorrow, O.K.?

EVIE

O.K.

She turns, then turns back and yells after him.

EVIE cont.

And don't forget about Thursday -  
Channel 21, 7:30!

She spins around, happy again. Russell watches her go.

INT DINER DAY

CLOSEUP: MARTHA. Her usual nervous manner is suspended and she is speaking with a deadly calm.

MARTHA

There was a room on the second floor that I used for a workspace, and I was ironing there when I realized that I hadn't heard a peep out of Emily.

FLASHBACK: MARTHA'S POV: the iron gliding over a shirt.

MARTHA cont.

I was almost finished ironing Harry's shirt, and I thought I'd check her in a minute.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Martha is sitting at a brightly-lit table in a DINER with STEWART WORTHY. They are having coffee; there are cups in front of them, and Worthy is slowly eating a Danish.

MARTHA cont.

And just as the iron touched down, I remembered that I hadn't closed the gate at the top of the stairs.

Deep breath; then she plunges ahead, speaking quickly and evenly.

MARTHA

It took exactly three seconds to reach the hall - I timed it years later -and as I rounded the corner I saw her about to fall, and my hand went out to stop her -

FLASHBACK: A small child teeters at the top of the stairs.

MARTHA

- but she went forward. It was almost like a dive.

And then she was out of sight . .

FLASHBACK: The empty space.

MARTHA cont.

. . and I heard her land,

An echo, almost slow speed, of that sound.

MARTHA cont.

The sound of it . . It was like your heart exploding. And when I saw her an instant later, it was over, it was all over and everything had changed.

She finally chokes. Worthy moves his hand toward hers but she ignores it and he pulls it back.

MARTHA cont.

Three seconds.

(opens her palm)

One. Two. Three.

(closes palm)

A penny's worth of time.

WORTHY

My God . .

MARTHA

(dreamily,  
to herself)

Once Evie came home from school all upset because someone had told her that if you dropped a mere penny from the top of the Empire State Building and it landed on the head of someone in the street below, it would kill them . .

WORTHY

That's true.

MARTHA

(still dreamily)

But there we were, my baby and I, and I was screaming and she was perfectly still, and bleeding, and I could smell the shirt burning upstairs . .

After a moment she rouses herself and looks at Worthy with deep, relentless sorrow.

MARTHA cont.

That's how it happened.

WORTHY

It's a tragic story . . I have a cousin who had polio. His mother never got over it.

Martha looks at him; his inappropriateness snaps her back into her usual nervous manner.

MARTHA

A couple of my friends said it was horribly unfair - that the same thing could just as easily happened to them, all mothers turn their head now and then -

WORTHY

Yes. My aunt thought it was terribly unfair, I mean, I was fine . .

MARTHA

Hmmm. Well, they were kind, but . .  
(shakes her head)  
It was mine.

And my only consolation - to this day - is that she herself will never have to feel like this . . My happy girl.

(fills up)

For that I am truly grateful.

WORTHY

What about your husband? Was he -  
understanding, or . . . ?

MARTHA

Harry?

(short laugh)

You know, for a while I thought he blamed  
me so deeply that he'd never forgive me.  
But that was me. Not him. Harry . . . how  
can I explain? Such a little boy. His  
toys, his needs . . . his little world . .

Maybe I wanted him to blame me. It would've  
been something.

She waves away the thought of him.

WORTHY

This is a societal problem, Martha. Men  
are not encouraged to express their  
emotions. Hence, despite their assumption  
of responsibility and professional  
achievement, they never grow up.

MARTHA

(eyes him)

Hmmm. Yes . . .

In a burst of awkward spontaneity, he grabs her hand.

WORTHY

(intensely)

Your daughter is a genius in ways  
you and I could never hope to be.

MARTHA

Stewart -

WORTHY

And I am convinced that your devotion  
to her created the fertile soil in which  
her remarkable ability could blossom.

MARTHA

(patient smile)

Thank you.

WORTHY

I mean it.

MARTHA

I know. And you've been a great help.  
I still can't believe what's happening!

WORTHY  
I had an idea.

MARTHA  
What.

WORTHY  
After the show, I want to present  
Emily with a gift.

He flaps his arms like wings. Martha is unable to suppress a giggle.

MARTHA  
What?

WORTHY  
Which do you think - a canary? Or a  
parakeet?

MARTHA  
(touched)  
Oh . . . No, no. It's a sweet idea.  
But no.

WORTHY  
Why not?

MARTHA  
She had one. His name was Sparrow. God,  
we had him for years. He was more Evie's,  
actually. Emily lost interest in him.

WORTHY  
(disappointed)  
I see.

MARTHA  
Maybe a picture book.  
(glances at her  
watch)  
Now, if you don't mind - I ought to go  
home and wake Emily. I have a feeling  
she's been asleep for hours . . .

Worthy doesn't move. He is looking down into his coffee cup.

MARTHA cont.  
Are you all right, Stewart?

He looks up at her with a mixture of terror and longing. Clearly  
this is very difficult for him.

WORTHY

Martha, I . . . I am . . .

(softly)

Sometimes I experience . . . quite a  
measure of . . . loneliness.

MARTHA

(moved)

I know.

WORTHY

You do?

MARTHA

Yes.

(pause)

But . . .

WORTHY

I know. I know. You don't have to  
spell it out. It's impossible.

MARTHA

You're a good man - look at all you've  
done for me! Please don't take it  
personally. I'm just - all done with  
that. Can you understand?

WORTHY

(feeble smile)

Not from experience, I'm afraid.

MARTHA

(a movement toward  
leaving)

Wish us luck with the show.

WORTHY

(quietly)

I wish you luck.

MARTHA

Evie is making copies of  
Emily's poems. For Maxine. Would  
you like a set?

WORTHY

Oh yes. I would.

She forces his hand into a weak handshake.

MARTHA

Thank you, Stewart.

He nods, unable to speak, and looks away. She leaves, and he stares out the window till he can see her in the parking lot. Then he glances down at his plate and miserably finishes a last bit of Danish.

INT EMILY'S BEDROOM LATE AFTERNOON

EMILY is in bed, asleep. MARTHA enters quietly and sits on the edge of the bed. She watches her, sighs, reluctant to wake her. She begins to stroke Emily's hair and hums the first line of "Mockingbird." At the second line she sings softly.

MARTHA

"Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird.  
And if that mockingbird don't sing . .

She hums the next line. Emily opens her eyes.

MARTHA cont.

Hi. Time to wake up.

Disoriented, Emily sits up. After a moment she smiles broadly.

EMILY

Dinnertime.

MARTHA

Pretty soon.

Emily looks around, spots a book on the floor next to the bed, reaches down and picks it up. She hands it to Martha.

MARTHA

Just one, O.K.? I have to cook.

EMILY

That's stupid.

MARTHA

Lasagna.

EMILY

(grins)  
O.K.

Emily settles back to listen. Martha opens to the bookmark and starts to read.

MARTHA

"As a decrepit father takes delight  
To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,  
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth;

As she continues, FLASHBACK, MARTHA'S POV: Emily as a one-year-old, sitting in her crib playing. She spots Martha and rises eagerly, holding onto the bars.

MARTHA (VO)

(heard as from  
a distance)

"For whether beauty, birth, or wealth,  
or wit,  
Or any of these all, or all, or more,  
Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,  
I make my love engrafted to this store:

DISSOLVE to Emily's face as it is now, listening raptly.

MARTHA cont.

"So then I am not lame, poor, nor  
despis'd

(voice catches)

Whilst that this shadow dost such  
substance give,  
That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,  
And by a part of all thy glory live.

Look what is best, that best I wish  
in thee;

This wish I have; then ten times happy  
me!"

Moved, she closes the book and puts it down.

EMILY

Sad.

MARTHA

Happy too.

EMILY

Ten times happy me!

MARTHA

Yes.

(takes Emily's  
hands)

Emily . . . I'm so . . . I'm so . . .  
sor-

(looks into  
Emily's smiling  
face)

I love you very much.

EMILY

I love you very much.



MARTHA

Do you have any poems for me?

EMILY

Poems for me?

Martha smiles and kisses her, rises. The door opens. EVIE enters quietly, carrying her shopping bags.

EVIE

Should I come back?

MARTHA

No. I have to go make dinner.

EMILY

Lasagna.

MARTHA

Emily. I think your sister has something for you.

Emily kneels on the bed and tries to look into the bags.

EVIE

(laughs)

Wait a minute, Duck. I'll show you.

On her way out, Martha touches Evie's arm and smiles warmly.

MARTHA

Thanks.

Evie smiles back and turns to Emily as Martha leaves. Excitedly she pulls out a pale blue skirt and holds it up.

EMILY

That's stupid.

EVIE

Emily! This is for you to wear on the show! You like blue.

EMILY

(grins)

T.V.

EVIE

Yes. When you're on T.V.

(rummages)

I think you'll like this . . .

Triumphantly she holds up the blouse with the duck print.

EMILY

Wow.

Emily grabs the shirt and starts to pull it on over her clothes. Evie stops her gently.

EVIE

No. It's for Thursday. Here.  
(spreading out  
shirt)

Practice on the buttons.

Emily does, sitting in the middle of the bed, quickly absorbed. Evie takes off her shoes and curls up next to her.

EVIE cont.

Not too rough. You'll pull them off.

Emily holds up a button.

EVIE cont.

It's O.K. I'll sew it back.  
Just go easy.

Evie demonstrates. Emily becomes frustrated and grabs the book of sonnets.

EMILY

Read!  
(grabs binoculars)  
Outside!

EVIE

(patiently)  
Say please, Emily.

EMILY

Please!

Evie slips a notebook out of the shopping bag and smiles secretively.

EVIE

O.K. And look - I've got something  
new.

Emily scrambles out of bed as Evie puts her shoes back on.

EXT THE BACKYARD DAY

The yard is now full of pastel flowers and blossoming trees. Evie sits on the bench with Emily, who is looking through her binoculars.

EVIE

(reading)

"My name is Sparrow. Here's my cage  
Above the kitchen sink.  
The world's beyond my window and  
That's close enough, I think.

EMILY'S POV: Birds in the trees, through the round holes of the  
binoculars.

EVIE (VO)

For I know when the seasons change -  
I tell it by the light:  
So pale in winter, but in spring  
It's yellow, long and bright.

CLOSEUP: EVIE

EVIE cont.

I have a mirror, that's enough  
To keep me company.  
For when I want to talk to him,  
He wants to talk to me.  
I flap about from perch to perch  
Upon the urge to fly;  
And that's enough, for birds like me  
Weren't born to touch the sky.  
So don't be sympathetic 'cause  
I live above the sink.  
For freedom's not an open space.  
It's someplace you can think."

You like it, Duckie?

EMILY:

(puts down  
binoculars)

Sparrow . .

EVIE

Yes! Remember? He was blue -  
like your skirt. And he made those  
funny noises in his throat . .

EMILY

(doesn't remember)

That's stupid.

EVIE

It wasn't that long ago. Try -  
you can remember.

EMILY  
 (sudden smile)  
 Open the door. Whoosh!

EVIE  
 Right! You opened the cage door,  
 and Mom yelled because she thought  
 he'd fly out. But he didn't. He  
 just sat there.

EMILY  
 That's stupid.

EVIE  
 You wanted him to fly out, didn't  
 you?

They look at one another and giggle. Then Evie whispers in Emily's ear, and settles back to listen to the story, closing her eyes.

EMILY cont.  
 "Many years ago there lived an emperor  
 who thought so much of new clothes  
 that he spent all his money in order  
 that he might be very fine.

Evie snuggles a little closer to Emily.

AERIAL SHOT: The yard, all colors, surrounding them.

EMILY V.O  
 He did not care for his soldiers  
 nor for going to the play; or driving  
 in the park except to show his new  
 clothes.

He had a coat for every hour of the day . . .

INT TOWN LIBRARY DAY

WORTHY is standing at the circulation desk, returning a stack of books. With a dazed expression he waits while the LIBRARIAN helps someone else. Finally the LIBRARIAN turns to him.

LIBRARIAN  
 Hello again. Are these overdue?

WORTHY  
 Overdue . . . ?

LIBRARIAN

(checking)

No. They're not. You can just  
leave them.

WORTHY

Oh. All right.

Librarian goes back to work. Worthy stands frozen, staring at the books. The librarian looks over his shoulder and notices this.  
CLOSEUP: Worthy's face. He gazes at the books as if he can't part with them.

INT RUSSELL'S BEDROOM NIGHT

RUSSELL sits at his desk, doing homework. He looks out the window and sees lights coming on in the Brightons' house across the street. He puts down his pen and stares straight ahead.

INT BRIGHTONS' DINING ROOM/HALL NIGHT

EVIE is busily collating Emily's poems into at least twenty piles.  
DOORBELL. Reluctantly she pulls away to answer it, still carrying a folder of poems. She opens the door; it's RUSSELL.

EVIE

(distracted)

Oh hi.

RUSSELL

(sees folder)

You busy?

EVIE

Sort of. It's O.K. Come on in.

She leads him into the dining room.

EVIE cont.

I was just making some sets of the  
poems, for Maxine Gray and  
everybody . .

RUSSELL

Want some help?

EVIE

Thanks. But it's kind of a one -  
person job. You can just sit and  
watch me get confused.

Russell pulls out a chair and sits on it backwards, watching her work, waiting. Absorbed, she resumes as if he isn't there. Then she remembers and glances at him.

EVIE cont.

So how are you, Russell?

He looks at her, painfully realizing she doesn't remember why he's come.

RUSSELL

Evie.

EVIE

What?

(remembers)

Oh, I'm sorry. I did think about it, like I promised. I really did.

(puts down the folder)

But all I could do was come up with more reasons for not going. And I want you to know - it's not your fault.

RUSSELL

What's that supposed to mean?

EVIE

I mean . . .

(pulls a chair close to him and sits)

If I had my choice of anyone in the school to go to the prom with, I'd choose you. You're the only person I could choose. But I don't want to go.

RUSSELL

Why not? It's our prom. It happens once in a lifetime.

EVIE

It's just . . . I don't know . . . It's . . .

RUSSELL

Come on, Evie. I deserve to know.

EVIE

O.K. Because it would be the start of something. Something I don't want, because it's . . . doomed. It's doomed, Russell. That's why.

RUSSELL

I don't know what you're talking about.

EVIE

Yes you do. Think about it. Who do you know that's a "couple," and has been a couple for any length of time?

RUSSELL

You mean, like, at school? Or . . . ?

EVIE

God no. I don't mean - where all you have to do is . . . fall in love, and talk on the phone, and have a special song. I mean - married people. Do you know any married people who still love each other?

RUSSELL

I'm not proposing! I'm asking you to the prom!

EVIE

But it all starts somewhere. A party. A prom. A . . . date to go bowling. And look where it ends up. Somebody always goes. They quit. Do you know any really good marriages?

RUSSELL

(exasperated)

I don't know . . .

EVIE

Not my parents. And yours - I don't think I've ever seen your father and mother in the same place at the same time. I'm sorry if that offends you.

RUSSELL

My parents just don't have a lot in common.

EVIE

Do you think they did, once? Do you think they ever expected to "have nothing in common"? Huh?

RUSSELL

I don't know . . .

EVIE

They probably don't even remember when it happened. But one day they took a step, and they crossed to the other side. That's all it takes, Russell.

RUSSELL

What you're saying - it's one of those huge generalizations again! I hate it when you do that! It's like saying all colleges are the same. You think you know everything because of two examples!

EVIE

Then refute me. Please. I would love to be wrong.  
(with affection)  
I'd love to be wrong.

RUSSELL

I don't know that many married people, Evie. But I do know that a relationship can be whatever you want it to be. Nothing's "doomed," for God's sake. You can work at it.

EVIE

(desperately  
sincere)

What kind of work? What do you do? Is it . . . like learning how to drive, or write a term paper? Are there rules? Who's going to tell me what to do, when everything changes, and it's not like, "Oh, I'd be lost without you," but it's jobs and bills and houses and kids and your family/my family and no time to breathe?

I can do a logarithm, Russell. I know how to do that. But nobody ever taught me a theorem about relationships. And I don't have a single role model on this earth.

He turns away. She waits for a response but he is silent.

EVIE cont.

(softly)

When we read "Romeo and Juliet" . . .  
I thought they were so smart . . . to  
leave it when they did . . . so pure . . .



EVIE cont.

Before time could spoil it . . .

(pause)

And that's why I can't go with you to the prom.

(pause)

Please don't be mad at me. Please. Do you see how fragile it all is?

(touches his arm)

Russell. You're the only person I talk to.

Slowly he turns toward her and puts his hand on hers.

RUSSELL

O.K.

(sighs)

O.K.

(looks at her)

You're not exactly brimming with hope, are you?

EVIE

(relieved)

Then how come I say the glass is "half-full"?

RUSSELL

What glass? The full one?

They laugh, settle back.

RUSSELL cont.

I'm just scared that . . . next year, we'll both go away, and when we come back, nothing will be like it was. We'll both meet different people, and when we see each other again, it'll be like we don't know each other anymore.

EVIE

Then we'll sit down, and we'll take out the Monopoly, and then it'll be O.K. again. You know?

He looks at her doubtfully.

RUSSELL

Well. I've got a paper to finish.

He rises. She does too.

EVIE

Russell. Promise me you'll ask somebody else.

RUSSELL

I don't know . . .

EVIE

I bet there are plenty of girls who'd love to go with you.

RUSSELL

Maybe.

She picks up a stack of poems.

EVIE

You want to read some of these?

RUSSELL

(shrugs)

Sure.

EVIE

Don't forget the show. Tomorrow night.

He nods, leaves with the poems. She looks after him, then turns busily back to work.

INT RUSSELL'S HALL/LIVING ROOM NIGHT

RUSSELL walks into the hall, sees his MOTHER sitting in front of the T.V. She is also working - there are papers on the sofa next to her.

RUSSELL

I'm back.

RUSSELL'S MOTHER

Hi honey.

RUSSELL

(in doorway)

Dad home?

RUSSELL'S MOTHER

(watching T.V.)

What? Oh - no, he had a meeting with Brian.

Russell pauses, nods, then starts up the stairs.

INT RUSSELL'S BEDROOM NIGHT

RUSSELL is standing at his desk, staring. He remembers the papers he's holding and throws them on the desk. Stares again. Then he looks at the top page and reads a line. Caught, he sits and continues to read.

INT BRIGHTONS' HALL/DINING ROOM NIGHT

EVIE is almost finished with her collation. As she's gathering up the last piles and putting them into folders, the DOORBELL rings.  
CLOSE-UP: RUSSELL, very agitated.

EVIE

Russell-

RUSSELL

(waving pages  
at her)

You wrote these!

EVIE

What -?

RUSSELL

Emily didn't write these. You did!

EVIE

Oh my God.

(looking around)

Let's go outside, O.K.?

RUSSELL

What's going on, Evie?

She pushes him out the door.

EXT BRIGHTONS' YARD NIGHT

EVIE is pacing; RUSSELL is keeping up with her.

EVIE

What makes you think they're mine?

RUSSELL

Are you saying they're not?

EVIE

Just answer me, Russell!

RUSSELL

We've been friends since we were little kids. They sound like something you'd write. O.K.?

EVIE

Yes, well, we're sisters so . . .

RUSSELL

Are you saying Emily wrote them?

CLOSE-UP: Evie's face, deciding. She can't bring herself to lie to him. She shakes her head.

RUSSELL cont.

Jesus! I knew it! This whole thing is a hoax!

EVIE

Please don't say that.

RUSSELL

But it is! It's a hoax!

EVIE

No. No. You don't understand.

RUSSELL

My God, Evie. How could you let people think your poems are hers? How could you do that?

EVIE

(glances at house)

Shhh. Shhh.

(shrill whisper)

Don't you see how special they are this way?

RUSSELL

They're yours.

EVIE

No they're not. Emily's my voice. Without her - nobody would care about them!

RUSSELL

This is crazy. This is really serious. Tomorrow Emily's going on some talk show, and - Does your mother know?

EVIE

No. No. Of course not.

RUSSELL

How could she read these and not know it was you?

EVIE

Because she wants it so much . .

RUSSELL

I can't believe that! Doesn't it piss you off?

EVIE

No! He said I shouldn't and I'm not mad -

RUSSELL

Who said?

EVIE

No one. I meant to say, I know I shouldn't . .

RUSSELL

Well, you got even.

EVIE

I wasn't trying to get "even"! I was trying to be nice! It was a gift. You don't understand . . You don't know what this means to her.

RUSSELL

Yeah. She gets to go on television.

EVIE

(near tears)

Please, Russell. Try to understand. My mother is a very . . good person. She's always trying to do the best thing, but see . . she really needs to believe that Emily . . is special, I mean, she already was, but this makes her . . extraordinary, and what it does is to make Mom feel - less guilty.

RUSSELL

What are you talking about?

EVIE

Oh God. I shouldn't be telling you this . . . But Emily - fell, she wasn't born retarded, she had a terrible fall -

RUSSELL

I know that.

EVIE

You do?

RUSSELL

Sure. I didn't know it was some big secret.

EVIE

Did you know that Mom thinks it was her fault? Did you know that, Russell?

RUSSELL

I never thought about it. I guess not.

EVIE

Well, she does, and it's a burden I wouldn't wish on anyone, because it's there in everything she does. Everything, from the minute she wakes up till she turns off Emily's light - you could trace everything back, and that would be the root of it. How would you like to live like that?

RUSSELL

Hey, I didn't know -

EVIE

But now you do, and that is why you won't say anything. Because this helps. It does. It helps.

(covers her face)

You can't ruin this. Please. I'll go to the prom with you. Please don't tell.

RUSSELL

Jesus!

He shakes his head, looks at her. Gently he takes her hands away from her face.

RUSSELL

(softly)

Stop. It's O.K. I won't tell.

She throws her arms around him. After a moment she pulls back, wipes her eyes, and sinks down onto the bench. Russell sits next to her.

RUSSELL cont.

You should tell her, Evie. You really should.

EVIE

No . . .

RUSSELL

You can't do this forever. What about when you leave? Aren't people going to put two and two together, when she suddenly stops "writing"? Didn't you think of that?

EVIE

Of course I did. But sometimes she stores things a long time before she'll come out with them. And after a while it'll all blow over. Maybe she'll just stop, and it will have been one brief shining moment . . . These things happen with savants. It doesn't always last.

RUSSELL

(sighs)

What a mess.

EVIE

It isn't, really. It's wonderful For Mom. And Emily. And me too.

RUSSELL

I can't see how it's so great for you.

EVIE

But it is.

RUSSELL

Doesn't it bother you that someone else is getting credit for what you wrote?

EVIE

It all depends on who that someone is. And I'll tell you something, Russell. I write so much now. Because everything I write is special. I am so inspired.

Russell looks away, then turns to her with a slight smile.

RUSSELL

I liked the poem about the swan.

EVIE

(very pleased)  
You did?

RUSSELL

Uh-huh. It was really good.

EVIE

I wrote a new one about my parakeet.

RUSSELL

I remember him. He was a nice bird.

EVIE

Yeah. I sort of miss him.  
(pause)  
I better go in now, Russell.

RUSSELL

Sure.

She rises, pauses, then kisses him on the cheek. Then she turns toward the house; he stands and watches her go.

INT HARRY'S WORKSHOP NIGHT

Evie has just pulled the lightbulb string. We see the workspace but Harry isn't there.

EVIE

Daddy?  
(panicked)  
Daddy?

HARRY walks out of the shadows, carrying several sections of track.



HARRY  
Damn switch. I thought I could  
get away with it.

EVIE  
Get away with it?

HARRY  
Putting a contact on it - Never mind.

EVIE  
You're cutting some track?

HARRY  
Yeah. I've got to fix that section  
over there - it loops too wide  
around the barracks. See?

EVIE  
(craning)  
Oh. Yeah.

HARRY  
Hand me that file.

She locates file, hands it to him. He starts to file the cut edge of  
the track.

EVIE  
Don't cut yourself. Remember  
that time you cut your finger?

HARRY  
Got blood on the roadbed.

EVIE  
You were so upset because it was  
your vacation and you couldn't  
work on the layout.

HARRY  
Didn't get it done till Christmas.

EVIE  
It was so beautiful . . . The tiny  
lights, remember?

She watches him for a few moments.

EVIE cont.  
Do you think I was getting even  
with her?

No response.

EVIE cont.  
I tried not to be mad at her,  
like you said.

HARRY  
It makes her happy, doesn't it?

EVIE  
It sure does.  
(sighs)  
That's true.

HARRY  
(nods toward  
layout)  
Check out the stream.

EVIE  
Wow. That's resin?

HARRY  
Swear it was water, eh?

EVIE  
Wow.

Harry puts down the file and faces her.

HARRY  
You're doing the right thing.

EVIE  
(delighted)  
I am?

HARRY  
Right thing. Right reason.

EVIE  
You think so?

HARRY  
She's lucky to have you. Lucky  
indeed.

CLOSE-UP: EVIE, smiling broadly.

INT BRIGHTONS' BATHROOM DAY

CLOSE-UP: MARTHA, at the mirror, putting mascara on. Her hand is shaking; she laughs at herself and tries again.

EVIE appears in the doorway, pulling EMILY, who's wearing all the new clothes - she keeps looking down at herself.

EVIE

Mom.

MARTHA

Is she almost ready?

EVIE

(proudly)

Look.

Martha turns around and steps back, admiring.

MARTHA

Oh Emily. You look beautiful.

EMILY

(tugging at  
skirt)

That's stupid.

MARTHA

No, it's wonderful.

(to Evie)

Are you going to meet us at the  
studio?

EVIE

I'll be there at seven.

(pulls out a  
barrette)

I thought I'd pull her hair back.

MARTHA

(nods, sighs)

Yes. Perfect.

EVIE

O.K. Come on, Duck. I'll  
fix your hair.

EMILY

I'm sleepy.

EVIE

(guiding her)

You can sleep later.

They leave the doorway; blissful, Martha listens to them.

EMILY (OS)

I'm sleepy.

EVIE (OS)

Your bed's already made. Remember?

Martha turns back to the mirror, calmer now, and very happy.

INT TELEVISION STUDIO DAY

A set at Channel 21, with an overhanging logo that says LIVETIME. On a raised platform, MAXINE GRAY sits behind her desk; alongside the desk, two chairs: MARTHA and EMILY. Martha looks attractive in a simple dress. Emily's hair is combed back neatly in the pretty barrette.

Bright "on camera" lighting: The cameras are rolling. In the audience - which consists of about a half-dozen chairs - EVIE sits watching. Only one other person is there, an ASSISTANT.

EMILY

"This thou perceiv'st which makes  
thy love more strong / To love  
that well which thou must leave  
ere long."

(smiles proudly)

MAXINE

That's wonderful.

MARTHA

(pats Emily)

Very nice, sweetheart.

MAXINE

Is that from "Romeo and Juliet"?

Emily perks up; Martha turns to her quickly.

MARTHA

No, Emily. It's not a request.

(smiles at

Maxine)

We'd be here all day.

MAXINE

In a minute I'd like to request  
one of hers. Would that be all  
right?

MARTHA

Of course.

MAXINE

Now, from what I understand about savant syndrome, the . . . the "retardation" itself can have a variety of origins - autism, premature birth -

MARTHA

Emily was born healthy. She . . . had an injury, when she was a year old . . .

MAXINE

May I ask -

MARTHA

She suffered a fall.  
 (nervous laugh)  
 Who would have thought then that we would be here today demonstrating -  
 (she has rehearsed this)  
 that genius has no qualifiers?  
 (a bit embarrassed)  
 Because that's what she is.  
 (takes Emily's hand)

MAXINE

(to T.V. camera)  
 Yes. As we said earlier, Emily's original writing is proof that savants can be creative in the truest sense of the word.  
 (to Martha)  
 Mrs. Brighton, I'd like to ask about Emily's schooling. Is that where she first started to accumulate this "treasure trove" of poems and such?

MARTHA

Actually no. As I said, Emily was seven when she first demonstrated her savant ability. But we didn't put her in school till she was twelve.

MAXINE

Tell us about that.

MARTHA

There's nothing much to tell. She hated it. It was the only time we'd ever seen Emily miserable.

MAXINE

(to Emily)

Is that true, Emily? Did you hate school?

EMILY

That's stupid.

They all laugh.

MAXINE

Yet she's amazingly well-educated.

MARTHA

We read to her all the time. As I said before, between her sister and myself -

(to Emily)

and Grammy Holly, right? - plus all the other volunteers, she gets plenty of that.

MAXINE

Of course. Now. Can -

EMILY

Sparrow.

MARTHA

She can tell you -

EMILY

Sparrow!

MARTHA

(flustered)

I know, Emily.

EMILY

(beaming)

"My name is Sparrow. Here's my cage Above the kitchen sink. The world's beyond my window and That's close enough, I think.

MARTHA

(whispers to Maxine)

A brand-new poem!

EMILY

"For I know when the seasons change-  
 I tell it by the light:  
 So pale in winter, but in spring  
 It's yellow, long and bright.  
 I have a mirror, that's enough  
 To keep me company.  
 For when I want to talk to him-  
 He wants to talk to me.

Maxine and Martha are smiling and nodding to one another.  
 CLOSE-UP: EVIE in audience, secretively smiling.

EMILY cont.

"I flap about from perch to perch  
 Upon the urge to fly;  
 And that's enough, for birds like me  
 Weren't born to touch the sky.  
 So don't be sympathetic 'cause  
 I live above the sink.  
 For freedom's not an open space -  
 It's someplace you can think.

You like it, Duckie?"

Beaming, Emily looks around for praise. Martha is stunned.  
 CLOSE-UP: EVIE, shocked, terrified.

MAXINE

Wonderful!  
 (leans toward  
 Emily)  
 Who's "Duckie"?

EMILY

(pats herself)  
 Duckie.

MAXINE

Well, Duckie, that was just  
 marvelous. We're very impressed.  
 Aren't we, Mrs. Brighton?

Evie is slipping out the studio door.

MARTHA

Oh . . . oh . . . yes . . .

MAXINE

(to T.V. camera)  
 I'm sure everyone watching will  
 agree that the kind of dedication  
 shown by this mother to her daughter  
 is nothing short of inspiring.

Martha looks faint.

MAXINE cont.

Belief in oneself - not in our shortcomings but our truly limitless potential - is a mother's greatest gift. It can work miracles, as we've seen right here on "Livetime."

Bright lights cut to normal.

MAXINE

We're done, Mrs. Brighton. Are you all right?

Shocked and mortified, Martha is trying to get Emily to get up and leave.

MARTHA

(to Emily)  
Say "thank you," Emily.

EMILY

(refusing to budge)  
That's stupid.

MARTHA

(to Maxine)  
She's overtired.

Martha manages to make Emily head for the door, avoiding eye contact with Maxine, who has already become preoccupied with other business.

EXT EVIE'S CAR NIGHT

EVIE is driving, with a noticeable degree of swerving, on an empty road.

INT EVIE'S CAR NIGHT

CLOSE-UP: BY the light of the dashboard we can dimly see her terrified expression. She is hunched over the steering wheel, mumbling frantically.

EVIE

Henny Penny Henny Penny Henny  
Penny Henny Penny . . .



INT BRIGHTONS' DINING ROOM DAY

MARTHA sits at the table, her head down into her folded arms. She is perfectly still.

DOORBELL. Martha doesn't move. DOORBELL again.  
After a few moments RUSSELL appears and enters hesitantly.

RUSSELL  
(softly)  
Mrs. Brighton?  
(approaches her  
tenuously)  
Mrs. Brighton?

MARTHA  
Please go away.

Russell turns and starts to leave.

MARTHA cont.  
Did you know?  
(raises her head;  
her face is  
drained)  
Well? Did you?

Russell nods.

MARTHA cont.  
When did she tell you?

RUSSELL  
She didn't.

MARTHA  
Don't play games with me,  
Russell.

RUSSELL  
She didn't tell me. I  
figured it out.

MARTHA  
You figured it out.

RUSSELL  
Yes.

A silence. Again Russell starts to leave.

RUSSELL cont.  
(mumbles)  
You could've too.

MARTHA  
What did you say?

RUSSELL  
I have to go . .

MARTHA  
Did you just tell me - I  
could've figured it out?

Russell stops and just looks at her.

MARTHA cont.  
Could you please explain why  
a girl like that - who has  
everything - would do that to  
her mother?

RUSSELL  
(pause)  
I don't think Evie has everything.  
For one thing - you don't pay  
any attention to her.

MARTHA  
Is that right.

RUSSELL  
That's how it seems to me.

MARTHA  
And maybe you'd like to tell me  
what you base that on.

RUSSELL  
Well, look at the way Evie did  
her college search. She did it all  
by herself. You never even went to  
see a single school.

MARTHA  
Russell. Maybe your mother does  
things differently. Maybe she's a  
far better mother than I am. But  
she doesn't have a severely  
handicapped child in her care.

RUSSELL  
I know.  
(pause)  
Mrs. Brighton. She should've heard  
from some schools by now.

MARTHA

Of course. She heard from two today.

She rises, goes over to the sideboard and sorts through the mail.

MARTHA cont.

You act as if I should be holding my breath over this. A student like Evie doesn't have to worry. I don't have to worry.

(pulls out two envelopes)

Should I open them? Is that what a good mother does?

RUSSELL

(inspecting them)

You don't have to. She got rejected.

MARTHA

Oh did she.

RUSSELL

You can tell because the envelope's thin. If she got in, it'd be thick.

Martha snatches them and rips them open. She reads them, then sits, shocked.

MARTHA

How can that be? Did you know that too?

RUSSELL

(shakes his head)

Where is she?

MARTHA

(blankly)

I have no idea.

RUSSELL

You don't know where she is?

MARTHA

She wasn't here when we got in last night.

RUSSELL

She's been gone all night? Did you call the police?

MARTHA

She's probably at a friend's house.

RUSSELL

What friend? Evie doesn't have  
any friends!

MARTHA

I don't know, I don't know . .

EVIE appears in the doorway. Her face is haggard yet she appears oddly calm. She slinks over to Martha and huddles in the nearest chair.

EVIE

I'm sorry, Mama.

Martha reaches for the envelopes.

MARTHA

Where are the rest?

Evie stares at her blankly, then goes to the sideboard and opens a drawer. She takes out five unopened envelopes, hands them to Martha, and returns to her seat. Martha opens them one by one.

MARTHA cont.

Princeton . . No. Wesleyan . . .  
No. Cornell . . No. Vassar . . No.  
Amherst . . No.  
    (holds up the  
    other two)  
Duke no. Dartmouth no.

A silence. Evie turns to Russell.

EVIE

I guess I didn't apply to Yale.

RUSSELL

Jesus!

Martha turns calmly to Russell.

MARTHA

I think you'd better go, Russell.  
    (sincerely)  
Thank you for your help.

Russell approaches Evie, crouches so he is level with her.  
CLOSE-UP: Her hair is hanging over one eye; he smooths it behind her ear. Then he rises and leaves. Martha moves closer to Evie.

MARTHA cont.

Where have you been?

EVIE  
 (still oddly  
 calm)  
 I'm sorry, Mama.

MARTHA  
 Where were you all night?

EVIE  
 I wanted you to be happy.

MARTHA  
 Where were you!

EVIE  
 I was . . . driving. I'm sorry,  
 Mama.

MARTHA  
 (picks up an  
 envelope)  
 Explain this.

EVIE  
 Mrs. Carr . . . she said I'd get  
 in . . . I'm sorry, Mama.

MARTHA  
 I'm going to call her.

She rises and marches out of the room. Evie starts to mumble.

EVIE  
 Henny Penny Henny Penny Henny  
 Penny Henny Penny . . .

She picks up the letters and starts to read. There is an eerie, detached curiosity as she scrunches up her face and reads through them. Martha returns, pale.

MARTHA  
 She said . . . it must have been  
 your interviews.

She watches Evie, who is still reading the letters and mumbling. Then Martha covers her face with her hands.

MARTHA  
 My God.

EVIE  
 Don't be mad. We shouldn't be  
 mad . . . Daddy said we shouldn't  
 so let's not be mad . . .

Martha uncovers her face in disbelief.

MARTHA

Daddy?  
 (approaches her)  
Daddy?

EVIE

He made a barracks and a mining  
 town . . .

MARTHA

Evie! What are you talking about?  
Where's Daddy?

EVIE

(looks at her)  
 In the basement. Where he always is.

MARTHA

(tries to control  
 herself)  
 He's gone, Evie. Years ago. He  
 left us. Remember?

EVIE

(laughs)  
 No. He's in the basement.

Martha grabs her by the hand and pulls her through the doorway.

EVIE cont.

Where are we going, Mama? Where  
 are we going? Where -

INT HARRY'S WORKSHOP NIGHT

Martha pulls the lightbulb string. There is no workbench, no one  
 there. Evie is shaking; she has covered her face.

MARTHA

Look! There's no one here!

EVIE

Daddy Daddy Daddy . . .

MARTHA

(nearly hysterical)  
 Look!  
 (pulls Evie's  
 hands away)  
 Look!

Evie does.

EVIE

(screams)

Where's my Daddy? Where did  
he go?

Weeping, Martha puts her arms around Evie and gathers her up, stroking her face, her hair.

MARTHA

I'm so sorry . . . Oh my baby . . .

Evie pulls away, hysterical, furious.

EVIE

You sent him away! You made  
him go! It's not fair! You have  
Emily and I have him, and now  
you've sent him away!

MARTHA

(overcome)

No, no, oh my God no . . .

Evie realizes Martha is weeping.

EVIE

Don't cry, Mama! You can't cry!  
You're supposed to be happy!

(looks around  
miserably)

You said it was the right thing  
but look at her, Daddy, look at her!

Evie knocks her fist against her head. Martha rushes to her, forces her arms around Evie.

MARTHA

Shhh my baby . . . Shhh . . . Shhh . . .

Camera pulls back as Martha and Evie stand in the dusty funnel of the overhead light. A few notes of music, played very slowly:  
"Mockingbird."

FADE IN:

INT THE BRIGHTONS' KITCHEN DAY

Music continues slowly as MARTHA is washing dishes at the sink.  
CLOSE-UP: her face, as she glimpses something out the window that catches her attention.

EXT ACROSS THE STREET DAY

RUSSELL is loading duffel bags and a trunk into his parents' car. He's wearing a light jacket and the trees are just beginning to show tinges of a color change. His FATHER is helping him. CLOSE-UP: RUSSELL glances over at the Brightons' house.

FADE IN:

INT THE BRIGHTONS' LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The music continues. MARTHA is curled up in a corner, reading a book. She is wrapped up in a shawl. She glances up at the window and sees that it's snowing. CLOSE-UP: Snowflakes in a heavy tumble.

Then the sound of MARTHA'S VOICE, singing the music.

MARTHA (VO)  
"Mama's gonna buy you a diamond  
ring . . ."

FADE IN:

INT THE BRIGHTONS' DINING ROOM DAY

MARTHA continues the song, but now humming. All the paperwork is gone from the sideboard. Martha is standing at the table, wrapping two or three boxes in birthday wrap.

She wears a housedress. Her nervous manner is gone, as if it has been drained out of her forever. She is tired out, in the way of one who is living absolutely for someone else and not herself. DOORBELL. She goes to answer it.

MARTHA (OS)  
Russell! Come in!

She returns with RUSSELL, who's wearing a blazer and buttondown shirt and jeans.

MARTHA cont.  
(forced enthusiasm)  
Don't tell me you're home for the  
summer already.

RUSSELL  
They let you out a lot earlier in  
college.

MARTHA  
I was just wrapping Evie's gifts.  
Would you like something to drink?



RUSSELL

No. Thanks.

MARTHA

(resumes wrapping)

And was it wonderful?

RUSSELL

Excuse me?

MARTHA

Your first year of college. How was it?

RUSSELL

Pretty good. You know - once I got used to it.

MARTHA

(smiles)

Your mother told me you met someone very special . . . from out West, I think . . . ?

RUSSELL

Oh. Well, that didn't work out. Right now I'm going with someone from Rhode Island.

MARTHA

Oh, Rhode Island is beautiful. Once we rented a little house in Watch Hill.

RUSSELL

She's in Providence . . . Uh - Is Evie around?

MARTHA

She's up with Emily. Go ahead - she'll be so happy you came by.

RUSSELL

How's she doing?

MARTHA

Not too bad. Her doctor's going to let her take some classes at the community college this fall.

RUSSELL

Great.

(turns to go)

MARTHA

We do our best in this world,  
Russell. No one can expect more  
than that. Can they?

RUSSELL

(turns back)  
I guess not.

Tentatively he leaves the room. Martha continues to hum.

INT EMILY'S ROOM DAY

EMILY and EVIE are sitting on the bed, which is made, looking through  
a large picture book.

EVIE

(giggling)  
No, a cockatoo.

EMILY

Cockadoodledoo.  
(giggles)

A KNOCK at the door.

EVIE

Who's that? Come in . .

RUSSELL steps into the room.

RUSSELL

Hi! Hi Emily.

EMILY

(resents intrusion)  
That's stupid.

EVIE

Emily!

RUSSELL

It's O.K.  
(softly)  
Happy Birthday.

EVIE

Thanks . . When did you get home?

RUSSELL

Yesterday.

EVIE  
You look great.

EMILY  
Cockadoodledoo.

Evie and Russell laugh.

RUSSELL  
You think we could go outside?  
I want to show you something.

EVIE  
(nods, turns to  
Emily)  
I'll be right back, O.K.? And  
we'll do . . .  
(picks up a thicker  
book)  
this one. O.K.?

EMILY  
Whole book.

EVIE  
Whole book. I promise.

Evie gets up and goes with Russell.

EXT SIDE PATH/BACK YARD DAY

EVIE and RUSSELL come out the side door and walk slowly down the path.

RUSSELL  
How are you doing?

EVIE  
I'm working at the library. Did  
your mother tell you?

RUSSELL  
No.

EVIE  
I've seen her there once or twice . . .  
It's part-time. It's pretty good.

RUSSELL  
(craning)  
Hey. Where's your car?

EVIE  
 (uncomfortable)  
 We sold it . . . Unsafe, you know?

RUSSELL  
 It didn't seem unsafe to me.

EVIE  
It wasn't.  
 (looks away)  
I was.

RUSSELL  
 Oh.  
 (awkward silence)  
 Uh - I brought you a birthday present.

They round the corner. On the bench is a blue parakeet in a cage.

EVIE  
 Oh my God.

RUSSELL  
 (grins)  
 Looked just like your old one.

EVIE  
 (overcome)  
 Oh my God.

She sits next to the cage, then places the cage on her lap.

EVIE cont.  
 Wait till I show Emily.

RUSSELL  
 It's not for Emily. It's for you.

EVIE  
 (smiles)  
 I know.  
 (face clouds over)  
 I can't keep him.

RUSSELL  
 What are you talking about? Of course you can.

EVIE  
 My Mom . . . she'd . . . That poem was about . . .  
 (glances at bird)  
 Sparrow.

RUSSELL  
So name him something else.

EVIE  
(pleased)  
All right.  
(pause)  
What?

RUSSELL  
That's your problem.

Evie sighs happily and watches the bird.

EVIE  
Thank you.

RUSSELL  
Sure.

Awkward silence.

EVIE  
How's school?

RUSSELL  
Pretty good.

Awkward silence.

RUSSELL cont.  
You writing any poetry?

EVIE  
Oh, no. No.

RUSSELL  
That's too bad. You should.

Disturbed, Evie looks away. Russell notices this.

RUSSELL cont.  
I mean - in time. When you're ready.

Awkward silence.

EVIE  
Want to play Monopoly?  
(laughs)

RUSSELL  
I'll give you Boardwalk.

He looks around, then looks at her.

RUSSELL cont.

Well. I better go. I still haven't unpacked.

EVIE

Will you be around this summer?

RUSSELL

Uh, actually no. I'll be up in Rhode Island.

EVIE

Really?

RUSSELL

Yeah. Listen. Take care of yourself, O.K.?

EVIE

I will. You too.

He turns to go.

EVIE cont.

I love my present.

CLOSE-UP: RUSSELL, looking back, a sad smile. He leaves. She winces, feeling the moment pass over her.

After a time, she looks at the bird. Almost nonchalantly she opens the cage door and waits to see if he will fly out. He doesn't.

Nodding, she closes up the cage, rises, carries it back toward the house until she's out of sight.

Camera pulls back on the birdbath and empty bench. We hear the last three notes of "Mockingbird," each a second apart.

FADE OUT