

Angel Leaves

by M. Shoat ©2000
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EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A misty highway, filled with vehicles.

We focus on one, not moving on the side of the road, a pale old taxi, with two figures in front.

Their faces are obscured by the mist and haze of an overheated highway.

A gunshot rings out, and glass sprays with blood across the highway:

INT. LEILA THOMAS' BEDROOM - DAY

LEILA THOMAS, 17, beautiful blonde hair in tumbling ringlets, rolls over on her bed in a cream oversized mens' shirt.

She stares for a moment at a clock display reading 6:59.

The alarm goes off.

Leila whacks the switch off and stands, flinging off the shirt.

She briefly pauses, silent, to look at the door.

LEILA

I'm up.

ANGELA (OS)

There's a letter.

LEILA

Okay.

Leila pulls open a drawer by the door and grabs some underwear.

She hops across the room, slipping it on, then picks up some knee-length cut-off jeans draped over a pale blue chair in the corner.

She bangs into the dresser, knocking off a photo frame.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Shit.

As she replaces the photo, we see it is of a girl the same age as Leila. Mousy hair.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Sorry, Sam.

She resumes her dressing, pulling up the cut-offs.

She rushes across the room toward a bright top hanging on the door.

As she loses her footing, and slides, SLAM! face down on the rug, we go to :

INT. THE THOMAS' KITCHEN - DAY

Angela shakes her head silently, focusing intently on Leila's bloody nose.

ANGELA
You can't go swimming with this.

LEILA
I'm fine.

She conceals a laugh.

Angela looks away as she dunks the cotton wool ball into a glass of water.

Leila tries to look into her eyes.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Does it look okay?

Still looking away Angela responds.

ANGELA
Sure, hon, it's fine.

Angela glances at the clock over the door and in a flourish grabs the TV remote off the table in front of her.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Jerry!

The TV beams into life, opening mid-argument on a violent talk-show.

LEILA
Where's my letter?

Angela, consumed by the TV, flaps her arm over to her daughter, simultaneously making an attempt to look as though she is tidying up the table.

ANGELA
It's on the table.

JERRY (TV)
"Now, Betty, your son was injured in one of these raids ..."

Leila searches briefly, finds the letter, picks it up.

LEILA
It's not from dad.

She tries to read her mother's face to see how her nose is,

then picks up her bag and turns to the door.

LEILA (CONT'D)
I'm going now.

She goes back to Angela and pecks her on the cheek.

Angela turns back to the TV, where BETTY's mascara runs down her cheeks with rivers of tears.

BETTY (TV)
"I just want him to know ... you'll be caught for this ... I just want him ... to know that..."

EXT. ROAD - DAY

School bus flies past.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Leila sits next to the girl from the photo, SAM CARTER, also 17.

Leila has a relaxed look next to Sam, who is unable to stop biting her thumbnail and scratching her cheek.

SAM
Can you hear them?

LEILA
Don't listen. You'll go crazy. Hey -

She dips into her sequin-and-fabric-paint-covered bag.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You won't believe this.

She pulls out the now-opened letter.

LEILA (CONT'D)
I got this this morning. Guess who it's from.

SAM
I don't know.

LEILA
You've gotta guess.

SAM
A clue?

LEILA
R-O-U-G-E ...

Sam listens carefully and takes time to process Leila's clue.

Leila smiles.

SAM
Rouge Vamp?! JESUS! It's from her?

Leila mouths "Shhh!" at Sam and pulls out the letter.

Sam grabs Leila's hand, moving the letter into focus.

LEILA
Look at the heading!

Sam's eyes flit up the page.

Sam lets out a strange high-pitched squeak as she draws her breath in.

Leila looks behind her, smiling the staring faces out.

A giggle comes from the back of the bus.

CRYSTAL (OS)
They're fucking on the bus now. Have an orgasm, Leila?

The laughter grows slightly before the backup girls get bored.

Squinty-eyed, Leila turns back to Sam.

LEILA
Remember, Sam.

SAM
Don't listen.

LEILA
Tina wants me to go to Seavale and babysit their little Ellie.

SAM
You've got to take my books!

LEILA
I can get your books signed anytime. Why are you so excited? You know I know her.

SAM
By mail, you get them signed. This is the real thing.

Leila takes the letter back and folds it up.

LEILA
I don't know if I'm going yet.

SAM
Leila - if you don't go, I'll kill you.
It's Tina De Franco.

Sam and Leila stare into each other's eyes a moment.

SAM (CONT'D)
Po-pul-arity?

Her attention shifts as she sees something in Leila's hands.

SAM (CONT'D)
What's that?

Leila quickly draws the envelope out of Sam's reach and pushes the letter back in.

LEILA
Nothing. It's one of those things we
don't show.

After a long beat, with the girls staring ahead, Leila snaps
out of a daydream.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Tina's a friend.

INT. SCHOOL. HALLWAY - DAY

Rushing down the empty hallway toward room 7A as the bell
RINGS out.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

Sam and Leila, alone at their desks.

Where a board used to be on the wall at the front, there is a
faded and cracked piece of concrete.

SAM
Listen -

From outside the room, a STAMP, STAMP, STAMP of ten to
fifteen pairs of feet marching is heard.

Leila leans back from her desk and then flops down resting
her cheek on the surface, looking away from the door.

LEILA
Here they come -

STAMP, STAMP, STAMP.

First two shadows in the doorway.

Then THE GIRLS enter.

SHERRY McCOO, MONICA, CELESTE and REGAN lead up the gang, all
wearing colour-varied versions of the same short dress.

Leila looks up from her desk and sees Sherry and Regan giving
looks of pure hate as they pass.

They all SIT, noisily.

A sudden FLOURISH of books opening together is heard as all
of the girls begin to read.

SAM
(aside)
Jesus.

Leila looks over from the door to Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
Look.

Leila turns around to see Sherry and the others turn the page
in such synchronisation that it makes an unnatural sound.

Leila smiles, turns her head back to the front as STEVE

HOPKINS, the teacher, enters.

Hopkins notices the smile and instantly flashes his eyes over Leila's figure.

HOPKINS
Hi, Leila.

LEILA
Hi, Steve.

Beneath the table, Sam's foot lashes out at Leila's.

They exchange a cheeky smile.

Hopkins claps his hands together, looking out for attention from the girls at the back of the class.

The only response is a ripple of pages turning, followed by a synchronised gasp of enchantment as the girls all put one hand to their chest.

HOPKINS
Hmmm.

He looks at Leila and Sam.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)
Tina De Franco?

LEILA
Rouge Vamp number three.

SAM
Hardback copies.

Hopkins freezes a second, staring at the readers.

He coughs, clearing his throat.

Leila smiles and looks away, covering her mouth, so Hopkins can't see.

HOPKINS
Oka - ay!

The girls roll their eyes and close their books.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)
Shall we start?

He breaks off as two dungeree-clad delivery men, MAXY and GERARD stand at the door with a knock.

Suddenly a smile cracks Hopkins' expression.

MAXY
We have a white board for this room.

He points at his nametag.

MAXY (CONT'D)
My name's Maxy - You want it up now?

HOPKINS

Yes!

He turns his head back to the class, smiling at Leila who smiles back.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Don't say it.

The board comes in carried by the dungaree men.

MAXY

This hero's Gerard.

Gerard looks up, a toothy grin for the girls.

Sherry and the others crack up to Hopkins' embarrassment.

Hopkins steps forward.

They lift it off the ground and hook it onto the nails sticking out near the ceiling.

MAXY (CONT'D)

There you go.

As they leave, Maxy turns with a mocking smile on his face.

He rubs his nose from side to side as if trying literally to wipe the expression away.

MAXY (CONT'D)

You used permanent ink on the last one?

A titter begins to spread from the back of the class.

Hopkins nods his head.

HOPKINS

Yes. Thank you.

MAXY

Just had to say it.

In the background, Gerard disappears into the hallway, letting out a heavy donkey laugh.

The girls, uncontrollable, laugh hysterically at this.

Desperate to say something, Maxy simply turns and walks away, unable to find the words.

Hopkins turns to the class, an embarrassed grin on his face.

Back to life, as the girls slowly calm themselves.

HOPKINS

Well. We can write again.

A chain of whispers sets off at the back.

Leila turns to see more than a third of the faces looking at her.

EXT. LEILA'S HOUSE - DAY

Leila and Sam walk side by side past the houses.

Leila stops, staring at her house, and they turn to face each other.

SAM

So... do you have plans for Joe?

Leila laughs and hits Sam on the shoulder with a book.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hey! Sorry. Just a dream I had one time.

She pushes Leila back.

SAM (CONT'D)

I said I don't care - just get my books signed. Please?

LEILA

And I said that Tina's happy. You know they have a kid. Anyway, I told you I don't know if I'm going.

Sam shakes her head.

SAM

I can't believe you need to think about this.

LEILA

Sam, there's things I can't tell you. I have reasons, that's all.

SAM

Yeah? I know - I'm sorry.

She turns in the opposite direction.

LEILA

No, it's not like that. These problems came with the letter.

SAM

Is this something to do with what you hid from me? Never mind. Just think about it.

LEILA

I'm thinking, don't worry.

Sam walks away across the road.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Goodbye!

Leila walks a little further then turns to face her house, towering above her with dark shadows embracing it.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Tina De Franco...

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - MORNING

Leila stands putting clothes into a bag, not forgetting the nightshirt.

She looks in the mirror and shakes her head.

Stomping across to the closet, she mutters.

LEILA
What was I thinking?

She flings the door open and throws the bag in.

After SLAMMING the closet, she opens the main door and leaves in a flurry.

INT. THE THOMAS' KITCHEN - DAY

The TV presides over breakfast.

Leila enters, watching her fixated mother.

LEILA
Hi.

ANGELA
Morning.

As Leila goes into the fridge to get a pre-poured glass of juice, Angela partially enters the real world to talk.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Sweetie? Sweetie, are you taking drugs or anything?

Leila spins from the fridge.

LEILA
Too much TV, mother dearest.

ANGELA
No, they said yesterday that most of you would say if asked, and I thought why not ask to be sure, is all.

LEILA
You don't need to worry about me.

ANGELA
Well, that's good.

Leila leaves her mother watching the TV.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

Regan, Celeste and Monica, grin with self-satisfaction to the front of the room.

A chattering chorus of voices fills the air.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Down the empty corridor, away from room 7A, Leila and Sam.

LEILA
What is that?

SAM

I don't know. I don't want to know.

Sam and Leila's feet pace together slowly to their fate.

As they near the door, the chattering gets louder and the girls slow down even more.

Leila looks further down the hall to see Hopkins, who raises a hand and smiles.

Leila faintly gestures back.

They turn left and into 7A.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

Leila enters, followed by Sam, to see the glowing faces.

SAM
I'm concerned ...

They go to their places.

As Leila sits, she places her bag on the floor.

Then she looks up.

SAM (CONT'D) (OS) (CONT'D)
Oh. Jesus -

Leila tightens up her face and looks carefully at the new board.

"LEILA T - DYKE OF 7A"

An enhanced school portrait mocks below it.

SAM
Leila -

Leila, silent, stares straight ahead, her lip trembling as with frost-bite.

Still closer in to tighten and end on Leila's eyes.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila BURSTS past Hopkins sending his coffee scattering to the floor, her eyes fixed on the bright light at the end of the hall.

Close on the feet, padding quickly one after the other.

Sherry approaches from the entrance, rushing with her bag hanging from her shoulder.

Leila spots her instantly, swings the back of her hand to make contact with Sherry's eye.

Hopkins' watches as Leila vanishes into the light.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

She's gone.

Sam looks like the lowliest buoy in a sea of laughing gulls.

A cheer goes up.

Hopkins enters, half-shocked, half-amused, not noticing the scene entirely.

He sees the board.

HOPKINS

Oh, come on now.

He grabs the board rubber and starts scrubbing.

He looks to the class swiping coffee drops off his tie.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Where's Leila running to? I have to have a word with her.

He looks back to the board, and lets the board rubber drop as he realises it's not going to work.

Sam, looking around her, genuinely unsure of herself for the first time in a long time.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The empty exterior of the school. No people, no Leila.

Just silence.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

Sherry, shaken, her lip trembling, her face stained with tears, slowly paces into the classroom.

SHERRY

What happened? What the fuck did you do?

Regan starts to smile, then a look of slight realisation overcomes her.

The other girls look on with mixed feelings of shame and excitement.

Sherry looks at Hopkins, trying his best to scrub away the writing.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Steve?

Hopkins steps away.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Who did that?

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - DAY

Leila fleets in and goes to the closet.

She grabs the bag and rushes back to the door.

At the door she pauses and looks to the picture of Sam. She paces over and grabs it.

By the picture of Sam, the other photo, turned face down.

After a moment's hesitation, Leila picks it up too.

INT. ANGELA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Still the TV.

Leila brushes past Angela.

LEILA

School trip, ma, I forgot. I - I'll have
to call you with the details. Seeya.

She kisses her mother.

A partial look of surprise appears a moment after Leila is
gone, but it soon vanishes.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The taxi . . .

INT. TAXI - DAY

RUSSELL DIETRICH, mid-30s, shifty-eyed, oozes discomfort.

It fills the vehicle, touching Leila in the back seat.

Leila looks around, searching for conversation. Her eyes land
on a copy of Tina De Franco's "Rouge Vamp" - Part One. A
paperback copy.

LEILA

Are you reading that?

Russell looks down to see what further embarrassment is
waiting for him.

RUSSELL

Oh, that old thing? Kind of. I'm not a
reader.

LEILA

It's just - I'm sure you know that where
I'm headed is where the author lives.

She looks at him in the mirror for a second, reading his
face.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Tina De Franco.

Russell glances at Leila, a scowl.

RUSSELL

You think I don't know Tina De Franco?

LEILA

Just, I could have it signed ... is all.

He obviously is a reader, though, from his increased
interest.

RUSSELL

Well, my daughter would like it. That's her -

He points with his little finger at a small picture attached to the radio.

Leila thrusts forward and grabs the picture under Russell's objecting, helpless gaze.

LEILA

She's pretty.

Her look becomes a stare - Leila analyses the picture - a small girl, perhaps 7 or 8 years old, her body turned away from the camera wearing only the bottom half of a bikini. She smiles at the camera. Leila smiles back.

LEILA (CONT'D)

It's a nice picture - real pretty. She reads Tina De Franco?

Russell sweats under Leila's glare in the rear-view.

RUSSELL

Her?

He looks over his shoulder at the picture, then fixes his eyes permanently forward.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

No, of course not. My other daughter -

As Russell speaks, Leila curiously turns the picture over, to see the other side - another small girl, another bikini, a little white box next to her with a price printed and "Bikini, also in red".

She hands the picture back.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

- but I don't have a picture of her. Not here.

Leila's hand moves over to the glove box.

LEILA

Don't worry -

She looks at his I.D. on the dash.

LEILA (CONT'D)

- Russell. I believe you.

Russell sees Leila reaching for the glove box.

RUSSELL

Don't go in there.

Leila jiggles the glovebox anyway -- locked -- and sits back in her seat.

LEILA

Is the autograph for you? You can say. I don't care. I mean, it's not like it's

Danielle Steele or something. I know guys who read Tina's stuff.

RUSSELL

Can you get the autograph or not?

He spots her reaction in the mirror.

LEILA

Sure.

Leila ducks down into her decorated bag.

She produces a small pad.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I'll take your address so I can return it.

Silence.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Do you have an address?

She picks up the book and looks inside the cover.

Name and address, neatly printed.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Well, there you go. North County library.

A cheeky smile appears.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Are you planning on returning this? So, no address here. I bet you have tags in your underwear. Go on, you can say ...

Another glare from Russell.

RUSSELL

Are you on something? You're the right age. You're eighteen, right?

LEILA

You watch the TV too! No, I'm seventeen.

Russell looks at her, baffled, through the rear-view.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I need to pull over.

She stares at Russell who appears not to have heard.

LEILA (CONT'D)

For a pee!?

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Russell pulls into the side of the road and Leila hops out into the slight rain.

She runs into some lengthy grass and disappears.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Realising he can see Leila clearly, Russell throws his head up to the roof and sighs.

RUSSELL
Jesus Christ!

INT. TAXI - DAY (LATER)

Leila sits in the seat by Russell.

She slams the door, her hair straightened and lined by the rain.

LEILA
Are you going?

RUSSELL
There's a stop coming up. I'll go there, thanks.

LEILA
Res - erved, huh?

She sighs, looking in the rear-view at herself.

She looks down at the glove box.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The taxi storms into the mist.

INT. TAXI. AT SERVICE STATION - DAY

Leila watches as Russell walks through the rain to the toilet by the main shop.

She puts her hand out and rattles the glovebox again to no avail.

She sighs heavily, opens her door and steps out.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - DAY

Leila kicks at a puddle and walks toward the shop, keeping her eyes open for Russell.

INT. SERVICE STATION SHOP - DAY

Leila browsing newspaper headlines.

She looks up at the attendant, JUD, who is watching a ceiling mounted television set.

LEILA
Excuse me?

JUD
Just a second.

Leila rolls her eyes and stands with her right hand on her hip.

After a moment, the television is muted. Jud turns his attention to Leila, occasionally turning his eyes back to the

television.

LEILA
I'm wondering if you have some-

JUD
You see that?

LEILA
- really dark chocolate? See what?

JUD
He's still out there.

LEILA
Right. So do you have any?

JUD
Sure.

Jud takes another look at the television before turning around and picking up two different bars.

JUD (CONT'D)
We've got these.

LEILA
You do work here then -

She takes out some money.

JUD
Which one?

LEILA
That one. Thanks. I guess you can keep the change.

Leila grabs the chocolate and walks through the door back into the rain.

EXT. SERVICE STATION -- DAY

Leila stands, letting the rain wash her for a moment, staring at Russell in the taxi.

LEILA
Fucking fucker fuckman. Gaagh!!

As Russell rams the horn again, Leila grimaces at him and walks slowly to get back into the taxi.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Leila gets in and looks at Russell.

She slams her door.

RUSSELL
Better?

LEILA
You?

They sit gazing forward, until Russell shuffles over and

pulls Leila's top toward him.

Being dampened by rain, it slips effortlessly off her shoulder revealing the bra beneath.

She claws at his hands and finally hits him across the face, a jeweled ring leaving a slight cut down the left cheek.

Leila looks down at her hitting hand and, shocked, smiles to herself.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Shit!

RUSSELL

Bitch!

LEILA

Excuse me?

Russell sits back in his seat looking at Leila.

Free, Leila pulls the top back onto her shoulder.

Russell, silent, puts the engine in gear and starts moving the car.

Leila is flung back into her seat as Russell speeds forth.

On Leila's face, streaking with road-lit rain, we go to:

EXT. TINA DE FRANCO'S HOUSE - DAY

A clearing in a dense forest, misty and sunlit with tiny insects hovering in bunches away from the dewy branches.

The taxi swerves in on the scene and comes to a stop.

INT. TINA'S HOUSE. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

ELLIE DE FRANCO, 10 years old, gazing into a fish bowl.

She looks up and over the fishbowl out of the window at the new arrival, eyes wide.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Leila looks up at the trees as the door of the house opens and TINA DE FRANCO, Ellie's mother, 34 years old, crosses the clearing to meet Leila.

TINA

You're early!

Leila falls into Tina's arms.

LEILA

Hi, Teeny.

She stays, clinging to Tina like a lost mother.

TINA

Oh, come on. I've grown up too. I'm Tina now.

Leila relaxes her grip, slowly backs away.

She turns, enlivened, grinning, to Russell in the car.

LEILA
Russell! Come meet my babysitter! It's
Tina!

TINA
(to Leila, hushed)
Why?

Leila watches Russell walk around the car.

LEILA
He reads your stuff. Give him some time.
I think he's okay.

Russell wipes his hands down his trousers, brushes off his
shirt.

He approaches Tina as if apologising to a goddess.

RUSSELL
Miss De Franco.

He offers his hands.

Tina, smiling, takes one and shakes it.

TINA
It's Mrs - I didn't get your name?

RUSSELL
Dietrich, Mrs De Franco - I'm sorry -

Tina shakes her head 'okay'.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Russell Dietrich.

Leila goes to her bag and takes Russell's book out.

LEILA
I guess you can have this done now,
Russell, huh?

She gives the book to Russell.

Russell holds the book up to Tina.

RUSSELL
Would you mind signing this?

TINA
Sure.

She takes the book and continues, asking Russell for a pen.

Leila's eyes are distracted by young blonde-haired Ellie,
padding carefully out at a distance from the grown ups, her
eyes fixed on Leila.

Leila smiles.

Ellie returns the gesture ten-fold, showing her perfect teeth.

Leila walks out to her.

Ellie wears short cut-off jeans and a green top that stops above her belly button with silver tassles covering the gap.

LEILA
You're Ellie. Hi.

Ellie chirps a laugh.

ELLIE
You're Leila aren't you?

LEILA
Yeah.

ELLIE
Teeny used to babysit you?

LEILA
Where'd you grab that nickname from?

ELLIE
Heard you. You wanna come into my room and see it? It's great. I've got heaps of records. Marilyn Monroe.

LEILA
In a minute. I have to say bye to Russell.

Ellie laughs again, and makes her eyebrows go up and down.

ELLIE
(suggestive)
Russell.

She makes more faces, and Leila can't help laughing.

Leila looks over at Russell shaking the signed book like a maniac, chatting to Tina, who gives Leila looks requesting to be saved from the madness.

Leila walks back to them.

LEILA
So Russell? All done?

RUSSELL
Yeah, I guess.

He turns and gets into the taxi.

Leila smiles, waves.

Russell half-glares back, starts the engine, and goes.

As the car disappears, Leila looks down at Ellie's hand in hers.

Tina breathes out loudly.

TINA

How could you do that to me?! I can't stand those people. You're not one, are you?

LEILA

No, but I know them.

She laughs, and the three walk back to the house.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Tina and Leila sit on the bench outside the back door, watching

Ellie, playing in the main clearing, alone - singing, dancing, tossing a ball around.

As the scene goes on, we become increasingly aware of the VOICE of Marilyn Monroe singing various songs - the sound originating from the house.

LEILA

She's sure having fun.

TINA

We love it out here.

LEILA

So, when am I going to meet Joe? Where is he now?

Tina stands up.

TINA

He's mailing some manuscripts for me -

She fixes Leila with a glare and a practised smile.

TINA (CONT'D)

That's what he does.

She lets the remark settle, then :

TINA (CONT'D)

Would you like a drink? We have just about everything you could like.

LEILA

Just orange juice?

TINA

I'll be right back - you watch Ellie.

Tina walks into the house.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

Tina emerges and hands Leila a glass.

LEILA

Thank you.

She takes a sip.

TINA

Ellie!

Ellie drops her ball and rushes over.

Tina holds up the glass.

TINA (CONT'D)

Ellie, have a drink. It's hot now.

Ellie complies, taking a sip out of Tina's creation.

ELLIE

Has H been here today?

Leila looks at Ellie, trying to understand what she said.

TINA

No, he hasn't! And Ellie - your father
has told you not to bother that man.

ELLIE

I don't bother him. Am I done drinking?

Tina and Ellie stare at each other.

Leila watches, a bemused look of intrigue on her face.

Tina relinquishes, putting the drink down.

Ellie grins, at Leila, and skips back to the clearing.

TINA

This is why I wanted you to come and not
some part-time teen from the village.
Ellie needs someone with a clear head.
You're not on any drugs, are you?

Leila's eyes widen in disbelief.

LEILA

No!

She flings her arms up.

TINA

Sorry?

Leila laughs.

Ellie stops playing, watching Leila laughing, knowing she's
missing fun.

A CAR pulls into the driveway - a black Mercedes, very clean.

TINA (CONT'D)

Joe -

Leila's eyes wander to the car ...

JOE ELSBETH, 36 years old, a solid face and stern features.
The sunshades give away his love of fame and hide his shame
at not being the famous one.

He looks over, seeing Leila first in her short shorts and

shorter top, then his wife.

JOE
Tina, hi. You must be Leila.

He shakes Leila's hand.

LEILA
Hi. Joe.

JOE
You're early. I'd have been here -

LEILA
It's okay.

JOE
So -

Tina clasps her hands together.

TINA
Want a drink, Joe?

She goes without an answer.

Joe takes Tina's seat.

The music from the house is getting louder.

MARILYN M
"Talk to me Harry Winston, tell me all
about it ..."

Joe acknowledges the music with a sideways frown.

Leila knows she likes him.

He reaches down into his jacket.

JOE
I have something here...

Leila's eyes look down as Joe produces a small packet with a
candy bracelet in it.

LEILA
You didn't get that for me?

JOE
Yeah, I did. Just for you. I was getting
the papers this morning and I got that
too. For you.

Leila takes the bracelet.

LEILA
Thank you.

She slips it on.

Joe feigns surprise.

JOE
And look ... it fits!

They both look up to see Ellie staring down at them, once more making her eyes.

Leila puts the packet aside and then picks it up again.

LEILA

Oh, there's something else -

She pulls out a little piece of paper, a rub-on tattoo.

Leila turns it over and reads the reverse writing.

LEILA (CONT'D)

"I love who?"

She laughs, looking from Joe to Ellie, as Tina emerges from the house.

TINA

Ellie - go and turn that music off.
You're not listening to it. It's driving
me crazy.

Ellie stomps into the house.

ELLIE

It's people like you who killed her.

Leila bites her lip, looking at Tina.

TINA

Marilyn fucking Monroe.

JOE

Tina -

TINA

I forgot your drink.

As she turns, the peace of the forest setting is broken by a shrill scream.

ELLIE (OS)

Motherrrrr!

Tina dashes into the house.

JOE

Ah ...

He looks into the house as the THUNDER suddenly cracks overhead.

EXT. THE CLEARING - EVENING

A small wooden box, the name 'Flipper' scratched on with a knife.

Joe, Tina and Leila stand in the rain around a small hole in the ground.

Ellie lowers the box into the hole, and stands, tears down her face.

She now has a black wrap around her previous clothing.

ELLIE
Rest in peace, Flipper.

Leila looks at Ellie, confused but pitying, then at Tina, who is merely following the event through, then to Joe.

JOE
Couldn't we have flushed it down the toilet? I mean that's what most people do.

Ellie turns, deeply upset.

Tina looks at Joe.

TINA
Joe ... shut up.

Ellie kicks dirt over the hole.

JOE
Sorry. I can't see the significance of these fish funerals.

He illustrates with hand movements.

JOE (CONT'D)
Toilet - ground - toilet -

Ellie turns again, more violent.

ELLIE
He's not a turd, Joe!

She runs toward the coalshed, deeper in the trees.

Tina hits Joe square on the nose - a CRACK is heard.

LEILA
Fuck, Teeny!

Tina walks to the house, slamming the door behind, leaving Joe with a bloody nose and Leila trapped between laughter and terror.

Leila looks toward the coalshed and breaks into a dash after Ellie.

INT. COALSHED - EVENING

Darkness, broken by the striking of a match lighting up Ellie's tear stained face.

She touches the wick of a candle with the flame, filling the room with light.

A crack of white opens up on a wall and Leila enters, slamming the rain outside.

LEILA
What a start.

ELLIE

I hate him.

LEILA

No. He just doesn't understand.

ELLIE

So? He should have respect.

LEILA

You're not being respectful to him -

ELLIE

He's not dead yet. I mean respect for Flipper. He's suffered most.

Leila laughs a little.

LEILA

I'm sure he didn't suffer. Fish only have two seconds memory, 'member? so if it hurt - wow! two seconds later it doesn't matter.

ELLIE

But what if he's a slow thinker?

LEILA

Well, you wouldn't have called him Flipper, would you? Flipper's a dolphin, clever as you.

Ellie wipes her eye, looking at this angel before her.

ELLIE

Yeah.

LEILA

I haven't seen your room yet.

Ellie pinches the candle wick.

Darkness.

ELLIE

Come on.

INT. ROOM 7A - DAY

Sam, alone, walks across the classroom to the writing on the board, and stares at it.

She firmly presses a picture of a dove against it.

She stands back, checking her work, and returns to her seat.

Mr. Hopkins enters, carrying a file and pens.

HOPKINS

Good morning Sam.

Hopkins turns to the board.

He sees the dove.

Wagging his finger at Sam,

HOPKINS (CONT'D)
Very innovative.

Sam notices Hopkins' eyes shifting to her skirt and legs.

She can't help smiling.

Hopkins ruffles through his file.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)
Sam, I had some trouble marking some of
your test paper.

SAM
Oh?

HOPKINS
Yes, I didn't quite get the wording of a
few of your answers.

A bemused grin slides across Sam's face.

SAM
Right.

Hopkins looks up.

HOPKINS
Could I see you after class?

SAM
Sure.

Sherry walks in, a different hairstyle for her wounds.

Hopkins claps his hands together.

HOPKINS
Sherry McCoo! Umm ... how's the face?

SHERRY
It's okay. Bruised a little.

HOPKINS
Sherry, do you know where your friends
are?

SHERRY
I don't know. Maybe sleeping.

Sherry slides into the seat RIGHT NEXT TO SAM, as Sam turns
as surprised as she could be.

HOPKINS
(aside)
Maybe sleeping ... was there a party?

SHERRY
I don't know.

HOPKINS
Yeah, you don't know much, do you? Sam,
will one o'clock be fine?

Sherry leans over.

SHERRY
I guess he's upset 'cos the regular
hasn't shown.

Sam smiles uncomfortably.

She reaches down to the bag by her feet and pulls out Rouge Vamp 3, her paperback copy, opening it a third of the way through.

She tries to read, then, breathing deeply, looks up to Sherry.

SAM
Sherry?

Sherry smiles.

SHERRY
Yeah?

SAM
The test was multiple choice, wasn't it?

SHERRY
I think so.

She looks at Hopkins.

SHERRY (CONT'D)
Don't worry. He does this all the time.

Sam returns to her book.

After a moment of reading, she looks up at Sherry peering at the text over her shoulder.

They stare at each other as Hopkins ruffles through papers.

SHERRY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about Leila. I didn't know.

SAM
I know.

Sam returns to "Rouge Vamp".

Again, Sherry reads over the shoulder.

Sam stops, looking more friendly at Sherry.

Sherry smiles as they both start to laugh together.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Leila, wearing her baggy nightshirt, grabs the coffee pot off the counter and pours herself a cup.

She turns to Joe reading his newspaper.

LEILA
It's so quiet in the morning here.

JOE
Tina sleeps in. I don't know what Ellie
does.

Leila turns to look out of the window at the calm forest.

LEILA
No - the area is quiet.

JOE
Oh yeah. That too.

He swipes his eyes over Leila's body, noticing the
nightshirt.

JOE (CONT'D)
What is that?

LEILA
It's my dad's!

She tugs at the bottom of the shirt.

LEILA (CONT'D)
It was supposed to be a present - I think
- I think there was supposed to be a
card? But, I never got the card.

JOE
I remember Teeny telling me about that.

LEILA
It's what brought us together.

Suddenly, a knock at the door followed by a yelp - Ellie's -
from the hallway.

ELLIE (OS)
H!!!!!!!

A tumble of feet precede the sound of the door opening.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe appears, a supervising presence behind Ellie, eyeing
HORATIO, mid-twenties, floppy-haired.

JOE
I'll go and get Tina. Don't bother him.

As Joe moves into the house, Leila is revealed in her
nightshirt, smiling at Horatio.

ELLIE
This is H.

Leila nervously puts a hand out.

Horatio firmly takes it.

HORATIO
Horatio, actually. I do herbal medicines.
Interesting, huh?

JOE (OS)

Tina, your drug-dealer's here.

Leila laughs.

LEILA

I'm Leila.

HORATIO

A beautiful name.

On Ellie's face, doing the eyes, smiling upon the couple she's brought together.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Tina stands listening carefully to Horatio, now in his business mentality, spouting advice.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Joe, Leila, and Ellie stand outside the kitchen like school children staying out of the way.

They talk quietly.

LEILA

Could you take us to the beach, Joe?
Horatio's going.

JOE

(to Ellie)
You want to pester him more.

LEILA

It'll be fun.

Joe listens to Leila, ignoring Ellie's upset puppydog technique.

JOE

We'd leave Tina to do her writing.

ELLIE

Yes!!

With Joe trying to calm her down, she charges into her room.

Within seconds, "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" comes on.

TINA (OS)

Tell Ellie to turn that down!

MARILYN/ELLIE (OS)

"My name ... is Lolita ... and ah ... I'm
not supposed to ... play ..."

Leila goes into Ellie's room.

She closes the door, and Marilyn is silenced.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Ellie, jumping on the bed.

She flings her arms out, still singing the song.

ELLIE

Moi?!

Ellie's room is a shrine to Marilyn. Posters on the wall.

The main colour is pink, and everything has a sparkle like the glitter on the wall.

LEILA

Calm down!

ELLIE

He really likes you.

LEILA

I don't know.

Leila crosses to the bed, kicking off her shoes.

ELLIE

I like you too. More than H.

Leila climbs onto the bed and starts jumping.

Ellie laughs.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe and Tina watch as Horatio's van drives away.

JOE

Leila asked to go to the beach. I said sure. You'll have some quiet time.

TINA

Excuse me?

JOE

You keep saying it's too noisy.

TINA

You can't leave me.

Joe laughs, not believing this.

TINA (CONT'D)

I'll have to come with you. I can't write anything today, anyway.

They go into the house.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Tina stops as she hears a SQUEAKING offscreen.

TINA

And what on earth is that?

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Ellie and Leila continue to bounce on the bed.

Leila SHRIEKS as her foot gives way and they both collapse on the bed together.

Facing each other, they laugh.

Ellie suddenly kisses Leila on the lips.

Leila gives it back as much.

They pull away from each other and stare for a second.

Leila sits up quick, looking across the room.

LEILA

What are you doing? Running away?

She goes over to a half packed suitcase.

ELLIE

I wish. I'm going to sleepover at my so called friend's house.

LEILA

Is she nice?

ELLIE

I don't know.

Leila laughs.

LEILA

Well, what's her name?

ELLIE

Amber.

LEILA

So ... what do you do?

ELLIE

Nothing. It's really Tina's fault. She goes to see her friend which makes her daughter my friend. It's a change. Convenient.

She smiles.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

And you and Joe will be alone.

Leila shakes her head.

LEILA

I came to babysit you, and you leave the second night!

ELLIE

You came here just to babysit?

Leila stares, checking it's still a ten year old talking.

LEILA

You're very grown up, Ellie. It's scary.

ELLIE

Remember who's daughter I am! I have Rouge Vamp genes, darling - so tonight,

forget Russell.

LEILA

Huh?

ELLIE

You know.

LEILA

Ellie - !

Leila turns and leaves the room quietly.

Ellie sits on the bed, lost.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A shaft of sunlight separates the two De Francos and Joe from the rest of the beach crowd.

Ellie is wearing a lime green bikini, with a silk wrap about her midriff, and orange tinted, star-shaped sunglasses.

Behind them, Leila's head repeatedly bobs up and down behind a windbreaker.

Tina wears a conventional one-piece swimsuit - she looks good, like a character from a fifties postcard.

Joe wears bermuda shorts and an old "Hawaii" souvenir T shirt.

He also wears sunglasses, though his eyes are not visible through the pitch black lenses like Ellie's.

As we enter the scene, we focus on Ellie watching Tina and Joe, gradually taking in Leila behind the windbreaker.

TINA

Take it off!

JOE

It's f-

He looks at Ellie.

JOE (CONT'D)

Freezing, Tina.

TINA

It is not - it's probably your skin.

She touches his forehead affectionately.

TINA (CONT'D)

(hushed)

Y'okay?

Joe looks around at the people on the beach like a child having chocolate wiped off his lip by his mother.

JOE

I'm fine.

Tina twists round to the windbreaker.

TINA
How you doin' Leila? Does it fit?

LEILA (OS)
Think so.

She steps out from behind the shelter.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Daa!

She flings her arms out, stunning Joe.

The bikini hardly worth mentioning, Leila sports the tattoo - the text, "I LOVE WHO?", in a bubbly pink heart outlined in black - on her hip. It may be obvious that it's a fake, but it suits Leila perfectly.

The beach seems to have stopped dead, its pulse gone momentarily leaving only Joe and Leila.

Leila walks to Joe.

Joe feels the wind on his own face as Leila's hair blows across hers.

Leila stops before Joe, hands on her hips.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Are you going swimming?

TINA
Joe doesn't do anything fun.

ELLIE
I'll go with you, Leila.

TINA
Take off the T-shirt, Joe. Get in the water.

Joe takes off his shades, fires his eyes at Tina.

Tina, playing for once, starts tugging at his T-shirt.

TINA (CONT'D)
Take it off, Joe, take it off. Take it off.

Joe cracks.

JOE
"Jaws", Tina, remember?

He turns to Leila.

JOE (CONT'D)
I hate the sea. I won't swim in it.

TINA
You won't swim anywhere.

ELLIE
I'll go down with her!

JOE
We never go anywhere else.

ELLIE
I'll go!

Leila snaps Ellie's wrist up.

LEILA
Come on, Ell.

She looks at Tina and Joe, hateful at their behaviour.

Tina and Joe look from Leila to each other, half wanting to shout back.

Ellie takes off the silk wrap, exposing her belly button.

ELLIE
Free!

Still holding hands, Leila and Ellie run down to the water leaving a trail of sparkling footprints.

They splash into the water and start splashing each other.

Joe stands up.

JOE
Do you want something to eat?

TINA
No.

JOE
Well, I'm getting something. Shall I get Leila something?

TINA
Couldn't you have gone swimming?

JOE
No!

Joe holds up a hand, and walks away.

Tina looks down to the water.

No sign of Leila or Ellie, but we do get a glimpse of Horatio and some friends tossing a ball around.

EXT. WATER - DAY

Leila and Ellie are out far.

LEILA
This is so great.

ELLIE
You picked a good costume.

Leila looks down.

LEILA

I could've got better.

ELLIE
You look great.

LEILA
So do you. Race you back!

Leila starts swimming.

ELLIE
Hey!

Leila stops, turns.

Ellie swipes some water off the surface and swings it into Leila's face.

Leila disappears in the spray.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Leila?

She suddenly screams, loud.

She starts treading water, laughing.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Tina looks up at the noise.

Through her eyes, we sweep the water.

No Leila or Ellie.

She turns to the shops.

No Joe.

Tina shrugs, smiles, and lies back on her towel, eyes closed.

EXT. WATER - DAY

Ellie is frantically swimming after Leila.

ELLIE
Give them back!

LEILA
You've got to catch me!

Ellie dives under.

Leila follows the shape as far as possible, then waits.

She buckles suddenly, grabbing below the surface.

Ellie comes up choking for breath, but laughing.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Okay! Okay!

She hands Ellie her bikini bottoms back.

Ellie quickly puts them back on.

ELLIE
Now I'll race you back.

Ellie breaks away swimming very fast.

EXT. SHOPS - DAY

Joe steps out of a milkshake bar, holding a paper cup of coke, and two icepops.

We follow him to the sand, where he stops, looking to the sea.

Leila steps out of the water, flicking her hair back.

She looks from left to right, then forward, instinctively at Joe.

Their eyes meet.

Joe mouths "Ellie?"

Leila shrugs.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Two shadows, one large one small, eclipse Tina's motionless body.

HORATIO (OS)
Mrs DeFranco?

No response.

Ellie kneels down by Tina.

ELLIE
Sleeping. Tina!

She laughs, then looks up as Joe and Leila arrive.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Sleeping.

JOE
Kick her.

He looks around at the others.

JOE (CONT'D)
Kidding?

Leila smiles.

Tina slowly opens her eyes, squinting at the sun flickering around Horatio's figure.

TINA
Shit!

She looks around.

TINA (CONT'D)
Everybody ...

Horatio helps Tina up.

HORATIO

You should get inside. It's really hot today. Are you taking those pills?

Tina gets to her feet, wrapping a towel around her, embarrassed.

TINA

Yeah, thanks.

HORATIO

Uh ...

He gestures to Ellie.

HORATIO (CONT'D)

I found her down by the water.

ELLIE

I was trying to get away ... Kidding.

LEILA

I guess I won.

ELLIE

(defiant)

Prove it.

Horatio turns to his friends yelling for his return.

HORATIO

I should be going. Leila, you wanna play?

Ellie looks to Leila, pleading.

Leila's eyes settle on Horatio.

LEILA

Sure.

They walk off, away from Ellie, who watches with her lips threatening tears and tantrums.

ELLIE

Seeya H.

Leila waves.

As they leave, Joe taps his feet around nervously in the sand.

JOE

Are we going?

He sighs.

As they walk away, Joe looks below Ellie's waist.

JOE (CONT'D)

Ellie, your bottoms are inside out.

Ellie looks down, feels the label.

ELLIE

Oh! ... ooops.

Joe turns for one last look at Horatio, suspicious.

As he faces Tina again, Ellie breaks into laughter.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Leila and Horatio rush past a kid's sandcastle to a light clearing on the beach.

HORATIO

Shit. They must have gone.

LEILA

Well, we can still play.

HORATIO

No - Yolanda had the ball.

Leila fights a laugh.

LEILA

Yolanda?

HORATIO

I know, we have the best names, don't we?

LEILA

Well - how about a drink? There's a place up there. I saw Joe.

INT. FIFTIES-TYPE SODA FOUNTAIN - DAY

A 'yaa-yaa'ing tune plays out of a huge radio set in the corner as Horatio and Leila sip on shakes.

LEILA

This is surreal.

HORATIO

Nothing ever changes around here. We're stuck.

LEILA

It's nice though. To visit.

HORATIO

Try living in it.

LEILA

I don't plan to stay.

She looks up at Horatio.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I ran away. School expects me back.

HORATIO

Oh. You know, it's dumb from me but you shouldn't miss school.

LEILA

I know that. I hate it though.

HORATIO
Everybody hates school.

LEILA
Well they all want me to die, so I say
fuck them.

HORATIO
But you're a great person - if they see
that?

LEILA
Thank you.

Leila looks up with her eyes red for tears.

LEILA (CONT'D)
I just don't understand anymore.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Leila and Horatio walk across the beach, talking, Leila
sipping on a drink.

EXT. BEACH COVE - DAY

Alone, Leila and Horatio rock in each other's arms for
comfort.

As we move in closer we see tears streaming in torrents from
Leila's eyes as Horatio tucks his head in over her shoulder
to hide his expression of confusion.

The sun dips over the horizon shooting out a fast spreading
sheet of orange that hits them.

INT. TINA'S HOUSE. HALLWAY - EVENING

Leila enters into silence.

She walks to the kitchen door.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Joe sits quiet at the table.

LEILA
How's Tina?

Joe looks up, surprised to see Leila.

JOE
Oh! She's fine - you know, just needs
rest.

He shrugs.

LEILA
Right.

She sits opposite him.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Could you get me some coffee?

Joe momentarily stares in protest, then courteously rises for his houseguest.

JOE

Sure.

Leila stands.

LEILA

Could you bring it to Ellie's room?

JOE

Oh. Yeah.

Leila leaves.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Coloured spotlights light the room almost like a disco.

As Leila enters, she looks up.

LEILA

Wow!

She looks to Ellie, upset on the bed.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I guess you're not going to Amber's now.

ELLIE

Tina said maybe tomorrow.

LEILA

Oh. Well, you know it's probably for the best.

ELLIE

I know!

Her expression changes in a flash from anger to fear.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Leila?

LEILA

Yeah?

ELLIE

Could you sleep in here tonight? I don't want to be on my own.

LEILA

W - sure! That's why I'm here.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe carries the coffee toward Ellie's room.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

The door swings open with a light knock and Joe halts at the sight of Ellie and Leila in bed.

ELLIE
Leila's sleeping in here tonight.

JOE
I guessed. Okay -

He sits the coffee down by Leila's side.

JOE (CONT'D)
That's yours.

LEILA
Thank you.

Joe returns to the door.

JOE
Good night then.

ELLIE
Night!

LEILA
Bye, Joe.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila, breathless, rushes out of Ellie's room and snatches the phone off Joe.

LEILA
Thank you. Sam?

SAM (VO)
Was that Joe?

LEILA
Yeah.

Leila holds the phone away as a scream crackles over the line.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Done?

SAM (VO)
I can't believe you went. But you forgot my books.

LEILA
That doesn't matter. Is everything okay at school?

SAM (VO)
Yeah, but you'll never guess what I'm going to a party!

LEILA
Huh?

SAM (VO)
Celeste's having a party, you know the girl who - ?

Leila, frozen, takes a moment to gather her thoughts.

LEILA
Explain?

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

Sam curls the telephone wire around her fingers.

SAM
I told them you're at Tina's.

LEILA (VO)
Who?

SAM
Sherry McCoo, Regan, Celeste.

LEILA (VO)
Jesus! What's going on?

SAM
I told them where you went, and they
jumped on me. It's great.

LEILA (VO)
So I guess you're not missing me.

SAM
Of course I am.

LEILA (VO)
Popular girls' friend, then.

SAM
Yes, you are. I guess. How's Joe?

LEILA (VO)
Shut up about him. Everybody's really
nice here. Just a second -

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila looks to Ellie's door where Ellie now stands hopping
from one foot to the other.

LEILA
I think Ellie wants to say hi to you.

SAM (VO)
Cool!

LEILA
You don't know her!

ELLIE
Don't care!

LEILA
Okay. Sam - this is Ellie.

Ellie rushes to the phone and screams down it.

ELLIE
Hi, Sam!

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

Sam laughs.

SAM
Morning, Ellie. D'you like Leila?

ELLIE (VO)
Yeah! I love her!

Sam smiles.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila takes the phone back.

SAM (VO)
Have you found a new me? So, when are you coming back?

LEILA
I don't know yet. I need to figure a lot out.

SAM (VO)
Okay.

LEILA
I'll call you again.

SAM (VO)
Okay. Seeya.

LEILA
Bye, Sam.

Leila puts the phone back, and pulls the sheet around her.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Ellie has her little pink and white bag open on her bed, and is placing clothes neatly at first, then thrusting them in as they start refusing to fit.

Leila enters, not announcing her arrival, and sits at the dressing table, looking at herself in the mirror.

LEILA
So you're going finally. It's Amber, isn't it?

She jumps up, looks in the bag.

LEILA (CONT'D)
So what are we packing?

ELLIE
Underwear, music. Pajamas.

LEILA
What music?

ELLIE
Marilyn!

She says it like no other music was written.

LEILA

I'm sorry! I'll remember next time.

Leila looks around the room at the posters.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You like old stuff. It's weird.

ELLIE

Why weird? I could be a normal girl. But this place has stuck itself to me.

She looks at Leila's intrigued expression, then to the poster of Marilyn above her bed.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I love her.

LEILA

And your friend likes all this?

ELLIE

Who cares?

LEILA

So you have no real friends.

Ellie smiles, hugs Leila.

ELLIE

I have you.

Leila looks down at Ellie, clutching her, in another world of thought.

LEILA

Yeah you do.

She hugs Ellie back, kissing her hair.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Joe is taking dishes out of the dishwasher and wiping water off, with Leila putting them away in cupboards.

Ellie walks in, an unimpressed expression at the pink rucksack affixed firmly to her back, making her walk too upright.

Leila turns, laughs.

LEILA

Oh, no!

Ellie's eyes open in fear.

ELLIE

What?

LEILA

Here -

She goes to Ellie and takes the bag in her hands.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You've got to have one strap hanging off.
Believe me, it'll look better.

She takes the right strap and pulls Ellie's little arm through.

The bag drops down, and Leila gives it two firm pats to straighten it out.

ELLIE

I don't see the point.

LEILA

I do.

Leila takes a step in front and admires her work.

ELLIE

It feels better.

LEILA

Much better.

Joe looks.

JOE

Is it like earrings? Which strap is off,
you know?

The answer is a firm glare from each of the girls.

Joe shrugs and gets back to the dishes.

TINA (OS)

Ellie!

Ellie's eyes roll.

She turns and marches into the hallway.

Leila continues putting Joe's dishes away.

TINA (OS) (CONT'D)

Put your bag on properly, Ellie.

Joe looks at Leila, giving her a "You see?" look.

TINA (OS) (CONT'D)

Come on, Ellie. Take it off. Take it off!

Leila grins, looking at Joe.

She smiles shyly.

LEILA

Do we have any plans for the evening? Or
shall we just ...?

She trails off, letting Joe imagine the rest.

JOE

I don't know. There's the TV so we can't

go insane. But I'm sure you've got stories to tell.

Leila turns, back from another daydream.

LEILA
I don't want to talk about school.

Joe smiles, reaching for the good stuff.

JOE
What about Russell? You know, Ellie and Tina -

LEILA
I don't want to talk about him either.

She turns and walks to the door.

On the way out -

LEILA (CONT'D)
I've gotta go.

She leaves Joe alone.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - EVENING

The bright silver light of the full moon illuminates the clearing now.

Tina stands by the car, Ellie inside in the back seat, restrained by the seatbelt and her rucksack.

Joe and Leila stand side by side.

TINA
You look happy.

LEILA
Yeah. Why not?

Tina flicks her eyes suggestively at Joe.

TINA
Don't do anything I wouldn't approve of, Joe. We'll be here tomorrow at nine.

JOE
Yes, m'am.

TINA
Now, Leila - remember what I taught you when I used to babysit?

Leila's eyes go from frown to nervous.

TINA (CONT'D)
You did get my picture.

Leila goes pale.

Tina smiles wickedly.

Ellie yells from the car.

ELLIE

Come on!

TINA

That's my cue. We should go.

JOE

Then go.

Tina, running through the formalities, leans over and pecks Joe on the cheek.

Leila watches.

Tina gets into the car, starts it up.

ELLIE

Tape! Put the tape on, quick!

TINA

Okay!

She fumbles feverishly under her seat and grabs a cassette, "Let's Make Love"

Tina smiles, looks at Leila and Joe.

TINA (CONT'D)

Good song.

The car drives away into the darkness.

Joe and Leila sigh.

JOE

You want to have a drink out here?

LEILA

Sure.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

Joe and Leila, an image of peace, relax on the bench with a double shot of whisky each.

Leila smokes.

JOE

Good to get her away.

Leila gives a questioning look.

JOE (CONT'D)

You thought I meant Ellie.

He looks at Leila's body.

Leila sees, appreciating it.

JOE (CONT'D)

We were going to talk about you. Why can't we talk about school, and why can't we talk about Russell?

Leila finishes her shot.

She holds it up, swinging the glass in front of Joe's face.

LEILA

I'll need another one of these for half
of that answer.

JOE

Give me the half you can, and it's yours,
Miss Thomas.

Joe, a little drunk, is now on Leila's level.

Both of them begin moving closer, and Joe's arm is creeping
over.

LEILA

School - everybody hates me. Everybody
except my friend Sam.

Joe stops his arm.

JOE

A boyfriend?

LEILA

No! She's a girl. Samantha.

Leila stifles a laugh.

JOE

That's it? Why do they hate you?

LEILA

I don't know. That entire part of the
country is a lost cause. It's not worth
fighting for.

Joe's arm starts again.

LEILA (CONT'D)

When Sam gets it, she'll leave too.

She swings the glass again and playfully holds it out of
Joe's reach before, leaning over her, he grabs it.

Joe stands up and goes to the kitchen.

Leila takes off her sweater and puts it under the bench.

She holds the pissed off expression that grew during her
school story.

JOE (OS)

No ice.

He emerges from the house.

He hands Leila her glass.

JOE (CONT'D)

Where's your sweater?

LEILA

I wasn't wearing one.

JOE

Oh.

Leila swigs the shot.

JOE (CONT'D)

This had better be good.

Leila wraps her arms around herself.

LEILA

I'm cold. Let's go inside and get warm.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV is on.

Joe turns to Leila.

JOE

Are you warm enough?

LEILA

I don't know. I'm okay ...

JOE

'Cos I'm cold now.

Leila sits up as Joe stands and crosses the room.

LEILA

Where are you going?

JOE

I've got to get coal for the fire.

Leila notices for the first time the fireplace.

LEILA

God ...

She looks at Joe.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Where's the coal?

EXT. THE CLEARING - NIGHT

A torch-beam cuts through the darkness, picking out the trees.

Leila pads carefully behind Joe, with a blanket wrapped around her.

LEILA

It's fucking freezing!

JOE

Believe me, it's worse for me. I told you to stay.

LEILA

No, not on my own.

The wind bites against Leila's cheek - she winces, holding her blanket tight.

At the coalshed, Joe yanks the door open and holds it.

The WIND is at a deafening volume.

INT. COALSHED - NIGHT

Darkness.

The door SLAMS. Silence.

LEILA
Some light?

JOE
The torch died.

Leila strikes a match, lighting up her face.

Joe sets to work.

JOE (CONT'D)
Can you give me a hand?

LEILA
I'm the match girl.

JOE
There's a candle - there.

Joe grabs a candle off the shelf and gives it to Leila.

Leila lights it and holds.

JOE (CONT'D)
I need that shovel.

Leila looks and finds a shovel.

LEILA
Shit.

JOE
What?

Leila puts the shovel down and holds up a sooty hand.

Joe's unimpressed - he doesn't want to be here.

Leila laughs at his expression and walks to him.

She sticks the candle in a paint covered jar as she passes it.

Joe gasps as Leila plants her cold sooty hands on his cheeks and kisses him on the nose.

As she backs away, she laughs, but her smile dissolves as she sees Joe's expression, really pissed off.

But Joe's expression soon changes as he picks up a lump of coal and paces to Leila, playing the game.

Leila holds up her blanket and it catches on the candle jar.

As Joe tries to get her, they fall to the floor.

The jar goes too, and the candle goes out.

LEILA

It's cold!

JOE

Your fault - you started it!

LEILA

Fuck! What is that?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe and Leila, covered in coal dust, step onto the mat.

Joe carries a chrome bucket filled with coal.

JOE

Be really careful. Take off your shoes.

Leila looks down at her coal covered clothes, and Joe's.

LEILA

You think Tina will notice?

JOE

Just take off your shoes.

LEILA

Just the shoes?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Water GUSHES from the taps.

Joe watches, in his robe.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Joe in the tub, relaxing.

Outside, music comes on. Marilyn.

Leila can be heard, trying to sing along.

She suddenly goes quiet.

There's a knock at the door.

Joe sits up in the water.

JOE

Leila?

LEILA (OS)

(gruff voice)

No, neighbourhood burglars. We've come to steal your wallet. I need to go, Joe. Do you mind?

JOE
Just a sec.

He carefully places a flannel.

JOE (CONT'D)
Okay.

Leila enters, slowly, eyes instinctively on Joe in the tub.

She's wearing a plain white T-shirt which she tugs down to cover the tops of her thighs.

LEILA
Is it coming off?

JOE
I think so.

Leila pulls the shower curtain across.

Joe can see her feet.

Leila's panties fall about her ankles.

Joe closes his eyes.

LEILA (OS)
I'm so bored.

JOE
It can be that way out here.

LEILA
Ellie seems fine.

JOE
You like Ellie.

LEILA
Yeah. Kind of reminds me of me. Kind of.

The toilet roll spins.

JOE
She's clever.

His eyes dart down with shock as he sees Leila casually kick off her panties.

The toilet flushes.

Leila pulls aside the shower curtain.

LEILA
Joe, you've got to do something for me.
Will you?

She slips in on top of Joe, still wearing the T-shirt which becomes instantly transparent in the water.

JOE
I can try ...

The song outside reaches a climax, pounding away with a

chorus.

LEILA
Joe, I want to know you.

JOE
I like you.

LEILA
Good.

Leila is breathing heavily now.

She kisses Joe.

Joe feels the T-shirt.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Take it off. Take it off, Joe. Take it
off.

Joe reaches down and pulls the T-shirt over Leila's head.

He throws it aside.

His hands rise up to Leila's breasts.

LEILA (CONT'D)
It's not right here.

She stops, considering something.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Your room. No. My room.

Joe nods.

LEILA (CONT'D)
I'm not clean.

They trade places, Leila in the water.

She runs water through her hair.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Now you.

She thrusts her face forward and kisses him again on the
nose, licking off a speck of coal.

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A waterbed.

Words overlap.

LEILA
I love this thing.

JOE
I don't feel safe.

LEILA
Let yourself go.

She rolls onto him.

Joe finds himself on top of the remote control for the TV.

JOE

Wait.

The remote pierces a tiny hole in the bed.

JOE (CONT'D)

Damn.

Leila laughs, tosses the remote aside.

Joe puts his hands on her.

JOE (CONT'D)

What are we doing?

LEILA

Does it matter?

She glances over at a framed picture of Ellie on the wall and kisses Joe.

JOE

No. Stop.

Leila turns to him, serious.

LEILA

Really?

JOE

Yeah.

A look of fear comes over her.

LEILA

I told Sam ... I guess I can't.

They both breathe a sigh of relief, and lie back, side by side, naked.

After a beat, they suddenly in sync turn and fall into each other, grappling with passion each other's bodies.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellie and Tina approach the house.

Tina's eyes search the area as if expecting to find something. She spies Leila's sweater.

Going to the bench, she takes on a bemused air, looking at Ellie.

ELLIE

That's Leila's.

TINA

I know.

Tina picks up the sweater.

They enter the house.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Tina and Ellie walk in on the unnatural image of Joe and Leila facing each other, silent, as Joe reads his newspaper.

After a beat, Joe looks up.

JOE

Oh! I didn't expect you early.

He looks at the clock over the door.

TINA

It's eight o'clock. We haven't interrupted ...?

She smiles at Leila.

LEILA

Hi. Hi, Ell.

ELLIE

Hi, Leila.

Tina circles the table like a proud lioness, beaming her eyes at everything in the room.

TINA

Did you have a nice night?

LEILA

My bed burst.

TINA

Oh no!

ELLIE

Are you going to sleep in my room now?

Leila looks to Tina, not having thought about this.

LEILA

I guess I'll have to.

TINA

We have a foldaway bed.

Leila screws up her face.

LEILA

I hate those things. It's okay.

She looks at each of the De Francos individually.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I don't know if I'll be staying much longer.

Joe looks up from his paper.

TINA

Going home?

LEILA

Yeah. I've gotta fix things. I'm calling Sam this morning if it's okay.

JOE

You're leaving?

Leila looks across.

Joe, sitting upright, has closed his newspaper and pushed his coffee away.

LEILA

Yeah.

Tina looks at Leila, smiling that practiced smile, while addressing Joe.

TINA

Problem, Joe?

JOE

No.

Tina turns to leave, then holds out the sweater.

TINA

By the way - I found this.

Leila takes it, ignoring Joe's look.

LEILA

Thanks.

Tina leaves, followed by Ellie.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Ellie unpacks her bag on the bed, the room almost having begun to lose life with her absence.

Leila enters, looking at Ellie, willing her to turn around.

Ellie keeps her back to Leila.

LEILA

Did you have a nice night?

ELLIE

Did you?

LEILA

I asked you first -

Leila stands awaiting an answer.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I had a great night.

ELLIE

But now you're leaving.

Leila paces to the bed and sits next to Ellie. They still face in opposite directions, not looking at each other.

LEILA
And now I'm leaving.

Even more distant, Leila's eyes grow empty.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Ellie, I'm not supposed to be here
anyway. I ran away from school, I left
home. And I only get away with it because
I'm lucky. I'm lucky to have spent only a
few days with you, Ellie.

ELLIE
If it's so perfect, why are you going
back?

Leila puts her hand on Ellie's and faces her for the first
time.

LEILA
Don't be upset.

ELLIE
Are you going to sleep in here tonight?

LEILA
Yeah.

ELLIE
Okay.

LEILA
Okay.

Leila stands quietly and leaves the room.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Tina and Joe at the table, staring at each other silently.
Leila enters.

TINA
Not calling Sam?

LEILA
No. It'll be a surprise.

A KNOCK from the hallway.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Ellie lies on her back on the bed, feet together, not moving.

She turns her eyes slowly to the window, seeing a faint
silhouette of Horatio.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Second KNOCK.

JOE
Do you want to go, Tina? He's probably
here for you.

TINA

Yeah.

She puts down her coffee and goes out to the door.

We hear offscreen Tina talking with Horatio.

HORATIO (OS)
Where's Ellie today?

Joe looks into the hallway.

He turns back to Leila.

JOE
I'm going to post some manuscripts.

LEILA
Oh yeah. Your job, right?

She strikes a smile but it blows away as she sees Joe's face.

JOE
Do you want to come?

LEILA
No, it's okay.

She looks through to the hallway and catches Horatio's eye briefly, trying not to smile.

JOE
Okay.

He stands and walks out of the kitchen.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Leila, Ellie and Horatio throwing a ball between them.

LEILA
I feel so bad. Ellie, your dad's so nervous around me.

HORATIO
You don't make me nervous.

LEILA
You're not Joe.

She looks at Ellie.

LEILA (CONT'D)
And as for Russell -

Ellie and Leila break out laughing.

LEILA (CONT'D)
But don't worry. He's always going out, so you and Ellie can still see each other.

She flings the ball out toward Horatio.

It overshoots by far.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Shit. I'm sorry.

HORATIO
It's okay. I'll get it.

He runs off into the trees.

Ellie does her eye movements at Leila.

LEILA
Don't move.

ELLIE
I won't.

Leila jogs out after Horatio.

Ellie watches as Leila disappears into the trees.

Alone, she starts kicking her shoe into the grass and singing to herself.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

Leila catches up with Horatio.

He straightens up with the ball in his hand.

They stare at each other for a time, and then Leila steps forward and reaches for Horatio's hand.

She kisses him gently.

LEILA
Thank you -

They kiss again.

LEILA (CONT'D)
No -

She takes a step back.

Horatio steps back, catching his breath, not knowing what to say.

They both look at each other, figuring each other out - failing - before Horatio finally opens his mouth.

HORATIO
I got the ball.

Leila can't help but smile.

Horatio puts out his hand, helps Leila up.

They walk through the trees to the clearing where Ellie anxiously awaits.

INT. CELESTE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Music pounds at the crawling mass of dancers.

Amidst the noise and the movement, Sam and Sherry.

Sherry watches Regan and Crystal at the drinks bar, laughing and looking at Sam.

SHERRY

Drinks!

Sherry pulls Sam through the crowd, Sam grateful for the shield.

Regan turns with a glass as the two other girls arrive arrive.

REGAN

For you, Sam.

Sam takes it.

SAM

What is it?

REGAN

A little something we cooked up together.
Crystal? Crystal - how shall we call it?

Crystal turns, glassy-eyed.

CRYSTAL

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

She laughs, excessively.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

I don't know. Regan and Crystal's Mix of
fun.

Regan nods as Crystal speaks, a disinterested vacancy about her.

REGAN

Okay Crystal. Sam, drink up Crystal's Mix
of Fun.

Sam gestures as if about to down it in one, but after it touches her lips she quickly lowers the glass.

Her face contorts as the drink shudders its way through her.

SAM

Fuck!

The girls laugh with her.

Sam gathers herself once more, and downs it in one go.

As she does so, the other girls look at each other, mouthing such things as 'Jesus Christ!' and 'She did it!'

Sam lowers the glass, a big smile on her face.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well!

SHERRY

Some more?

SAM
Absolutely.

Regan pours another glass.

Sam takes it before she's done, making Regan spill on the carpet.

REGAN
Shit. Where's Celeste?

SHERRY
In the bathroom, masturbating I think.

The girls react with horror.

REGAN
Sherry!

SHERRY
I swear! I heard her - she was like, 'Ai, Ai, mi amigo, Ai - ... Ai!' I wish I took Spanish last year.

Sam holds up the glass.

SAM
Leila!

Celeste is momentarily forgotten.

All look at Sherry, with her bruise, for how to react.

Sherry smiles at Sam.

REGAN
Hmm. Whatever.

Sam downs it.

SAM
Good.

She slams the glass down.

SAM (CONT'D)
Let's dance.

Her face suddenly goes slack, then she rushes off with a smile into the crowd and grabs a guy.

SHERRY
What's in it?

REGAN
Uh ... everything, I think.

CRYSTAL
Everything but the stuff Celeste's mother left.

She points at an immaculately arranged, untouched collection of fruit juices and soft drinks.

REGAN

I'd better go and see Celeste. Are you sure you heard ... all that?

SHERRY

Yeah!

REGAN

Well, I'm gonna go and check. If anything good happens, come and get me.

SHERRY

Remember to knock. You'll embarrass the piss out of her!

Regan walks off, muttering 'Yeah, real funny'.

Sherry turns to the others.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Bet she's going to join her.

They laugh.

Sherry spots Sam dancing with SEAN.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

How the fuck did Regan know she'd go for him?

INT. CELESTE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the middle of the dancing, Sam is far more energetic, dancing with Sean.

SEAN

Where's Leila?

SAM

Don't matter. Shut it.

SEAN

It's too loud in here.

SAM

You think?

SEAN

Do you want to go upstairs?

SAM

I like dancing.

SEAN

We can dance upstairs if you want. You pick the music.

Sam finds herself dragged away, without the time or will to react.

She quickly pulls away and darts toward the drinks.

SAM

Lemme get another drink.

She stops dead.

Sam's juddering POV the empty bar.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's Regan and Crystal? I wanted their drink.

SEAN

We'll make our own.

He drags her the rest of the way to the bar.

INT. CELESTE'S HOUSE. LANDING - NIGHT

Regan stands by the bathroom door.

She knocks carefully.

REGAN

Celeste? You're missing the party!

CELESTE (OS)

Quee? Regan! Regan, wait!

Regan laughs a little at the worry in Celeste's voice, and the scurrying that follows.

The door is unlocked, and Celeste opens it.

REGAN

Hi! What's up? Sherry's been telling stories. Your noises.

CELESTE

No! She must not!

REGAN

Yeah? Well, she told me, everybody's talking.

Sam appears at the top of the stairs, alone, holding a drink.

Her stance is at first odd - until she steps forward to reveal Sean coming up behind holding her back up.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Here's Sam.

Celeste silently disappears behind the bathroom door.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Sam! Enjoying the party?

Sam laughs.

SAM

Who doesn't enjoy a party? Sean - Sean, I'm gonna fall soon.

Sean supports her as she stumbles past the bathroom.

SAM (CONT'D)

Celeste!

The bathroom door slams shut.

Regan and Sean exchange smiles as Sean takes Sam into a bedroom.

Celeste slowly reopens the door.

CELESTE
We are alone?

REGAN
Why'd you ask that, Cel?

Celeste checks from side to side.

She gives Regan a searching look.

CELESTE
Regan, we are like good friends, no?

REGAN
Of course!

Regan attempts to look beyond Celeste.

REGAN (CONT'D)
What, are you taking something?

CELESTE
No! No, I can't get it.

REGAN
But you're not ... you know, practising self-love?

CELESTE
No, I think worse!

REGAN
Look, Celeste? I'm probably drunk already, and you can convince me you are.

She takes a further step toward Celeste, their lips nearly touching.

REGAN (CONT'D)
You can tell me, Celeste, and nobody will know.

CELESTE
Okay.

Regan steps aside and a fifteen year old girl, JENNA, scurries out.

Regan remains expressionless.

REGAN
Wow. Celeste. You've kind of surprised me a bit.

CELESTE
You wanted to use the bathroom?

REGAN

Not really.

She moves into the doorway with Celeste.

Celeste breathes deeper.

Regan stands with her lips brushing Celeste's face, and whispers with heavy breath.

She looks out onto the landing.

Regan takes Celeste's hand and draws her into the bathroom, the door closing behind them.

INT. CELESTE'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sean and Sam are kissing.

Sam's eyes widen suddenly with awareness.

She pulls away.

SAM

Wait a sec. I need a sec to breathe.

SEAN

Okay ...

He steps off the bed and goes into the corner.

He takes off his shirt and looks back at Sam.

Sam looks at his shirt on the floor.

SAM

Are we - ?

SEAN

Yeah.

He goes to the bed and pushes Sam down.

Her face twists as he kisses her again.

SAM

Wait.

SEAN

No ... no more waiting.

He puts his hands on her breasts and massages her.

SAM

That's real nice, but -

She laughs.

SEAN

See?

SAM

It's just ... it tickles.

She laughs again.

He moves one hand down.

Sam's hands go over her head as she enjoys it one moment more.

SAM (CONT'D)

No.

Sean's hands go between her legs and she quickly grabs them.

She pulls out from under him and stands by the door.

SEAN

Get back on the bed. You don't want this.

She puts her hands on the door handle.

Sean quickly paces over and raises his arm ...

... but Sam quickly, and surprisingly, swipes her arm up, catching Sean on the upswing CRACKING his nose.

SEAN (CONT'D)

FUCCCCCKKKKKKKK!

He buckles onto his knees, looking at the blood on his hands.

Sam looks for a moment, amazed.

Recovering, she pushes him aside and scrambles shakily through the door.

SAM

Fuck you.

INT. TINA'S HOUSE. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sunlight streams through the shutters onto Leila's bare freckled shoulders as she enters, a pure white towel loose about her.

Closing the door, she lets the towel drop to the floor.

Water gushes from the taps, and Leila locks the door.

She dips her toe in to check the heat, then in a single motion reaches over and unlocks the door; turns off the taps; and submerges herself in the tub.

A moment of silence, and she jerks her head toward the door.

JOE (OS)

Leila, I'm making coffee. You want some?

Leila's eyes do flip-flops in her skull.

LEILA

Sure.

She smiles, peace again, and lowers her body back under the water.

Joe is heard murmuring inaudible words.

Leila grabs the soap and works up a lather over her

shoulders, her breasts.

A creak outside the door disturbs her, and she looks directly at the crack beneath the door.

Two little feet pad around on the carpet outside.

Leila ducks under the surface in a flash, rinsing off all the soap, and sits up.

She flicks back her hair as the door opens, and Ellie saunters in.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Hi.

Ellie stops dead, holding her towel, at the sight of Leila baring all above the waist.

She turns to the door.

ELLIE

Sorry -

Leila twists around to face Ellie.

LEILA

It's okay.

Ellie looks out into the main body of the house.

We see Joe through the door, stirring coffee, oblivious.

Ellie pushes the door almost shut.

She turns back to Leila.

Leila doesn't move.

After a tantalizing beat, Leila turns back.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I remember Tina used to have baths when she came round. Real hot water, I remember. And peach bubbles. In the winter I got terrified - 'cos it got dark early when she was still here. So I'd go in with her, sit on the toilet seat and talk.

She turns to the uncomfortable Ellie.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I'd wash her back.

Ellie smiles.

She looks nervously past Leila at the blank wall.

ELLIE

I need to go.

Leila sinks back into her water.

INT. TINA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joe carefully knocks the drips off the teaspoon into a second cup.

He places it on the worktop.

Turning away, coffee in hand, he frowns.

JOE

Ellie?

He walks across toward the bathroom.

ELLIE (OS)

I'm in here.

Joe walks to the door and stands, ear against the wood.

JOE

Where's Leila?

LEILA (OS)

I'm in here too.

ELLIE (OS)

We're just talking. You know.

Joe nods, drinks coffee.

JOE

Coffee's done, Leila.

Her response is dulled by the toilet flushing.

LEILA (OS)

Okay.

Joe acknowledges her with a satisfied nod, turns and walks away.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ellie holds the towel tight again.

Leila looks up like a begging puppy.

LEILA

So?

ELLIE

So what?

She laughs.

LEILA

Wash my back?

Ellie shrugs and kneels down by Leila.

Leila hands her the soap, and Ellie begins rubbing up and around Leila's back.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe, half-way back to the kitchen, stops and turns.

He walks back and resumes his place by the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ellie's soapy hand goes over the fading "I LOVE WHO?" tattoo.

Leila is looking up beyond the ceiling, like a thousand silk feathers are massaging her entire body.

LEILA

Mmmmm...

Ellie keeps looking to the door.

She spots the feet below the door.

She smiles, and suddenly can't help giggling.

Out of nowhere, Leila's hands emerge and grab Ellie's.

The laughing stops; the soap falls.

ELLIE

What are you doing?

Leila loosens her grip, her smile gone.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Get off please?

She doesn't struggle.

Leila lets go of the hands.

LEILA

I'm sorry.

She looks down.

Slowly, she raises one hand.

Ellie lets her hand be taken gently.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Get in with me?

Ellie's other hand is taken, and both are brought around Leila's body, to touch.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Frozen, Joe listens at the sound of somebody getting in or out of the water.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT/DAWN

Ellie and Leila lie in each other's arms bathed in blueish light from the moon.

Suddenly, an orange tint takes hold of the room as the bright sun shoots its light through the window.

Leila opens her eyes to face Ellie staring at her.

LEILA
I don't want to get up.

ELLIE
I don't want you to get up.

Leila rolls her feet onto the floor and sits on the side of the bed.

LEILA
I'll never forget any of this.

ELLIE
You'd better not.

LEILA
But I should phone Sam.

Ellie watches as Leila takes a robe off the door and slips out into the hallway.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - MORNING

Sam picks up the phone.

SAM
Hello?

LEILA (VO)
How was the party?

SAM
Leila.

LEILA (VO)
I'm coming home.

Sam stares offscreen, silent.

LEILA (CONT'D) (VO) (CONT'D)
Sam?

SAM
Yeah, I'm here. Sort of. The party was good.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila is tightening up, stumbling over her words

LEILA
Well, listen. I'm coming home today, so -
I don't know when I'll be back.

SAM (VO)
Did something happen?

LEILA
Plenty. I'm bored. I know what I want
now.

SAM (VO)
What is that?

LEILA

I want you, Sam.

She looks at Ellie, standing outside her room with the door closed behind her.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam sits, the phone held tight.

She stares off into the mirror at her messy face.

LEILA (VO)

Sam?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila, anxious, listens.

SAM (VO)

You know what I did at the party? I beat the living shit out of Sean Foster.

Leila laughs, not focused.

LEILA

Wow. Sam? Is it okay, me coming back?

SAM (VO)

Sure it is! Why not? You know, everybody went wild when I told them where you were.

LEILA

You told me - that's great! But - is everything the same as before?

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

Sam looks up to the ceiling.

SAM

Not exactly?

She pauses, but nothing further comes from Leila.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sean wanted to have sex with me at the party.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila's lips crack open, letting a sigh out.

She looks to Ellie and waves her hand up.

Ellie shrinks back into her room.

LEILA

Did anything happen?

SAM (VO)

No. But that's the point. I think I ruined the party. They hated us before, they'll hate us more now.

Leila leans her head against the wall.

SAM (CONT'D) (VO) (CONT'D)
So yes, I guess. Things are exactly as
they were before, I think.

LEILA
I don't care. Do you?

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

Sam wipes her eyes with her sleeve.

SAM
I don't think so. Do you? No - I don't
think I care either.

She smiles at the realisation.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila smiles too.

LEILA
I don't care.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

Sam stands, relieved.

She looks in the mirror, groans.

SAM
I've gotta clean my face.

LEILA (VO)
I'll be there sometime.

SAM
I'm not going anywhere. Not even school
today.

LEILA (VO)
I can't wait.

SAM
Bye, Leila.

LEILA (VO)
Bye.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila puts the phone down.

She looks at Ellie's door.

She goes and knocks gently.

LEILA
Ellie?

INT. TINA'S ROOM - MORNING

Tina WHIPS a sheet of paper full of words out of the

typewriter.

TINA

Trash.

Leila stands behind her on a tiny rug.

LEILA

Can I sit?

TINA

Of course you can. Try out my grandma's handiwork.

She points to a wicker chair in the corner.

Leila crosses over to it and sits.

Tina turns her chair around, and holds up the paper.

TINA (CONT'D)

You know how long it took to write this?

LEILA

An hour? I don't know.

TINA

Altogether, about five hours. That's with planning and everything, you know.

She stares at another sheet on her desk.

TINA (CONT'D)

But your friends will take thirty seconds to read it. It's trash and they know it-

LEILA

- and they love it.

Tina screws up the paper and tosses it to the wastebasket in the corner.

Leila leaps up.

LEILA (CONT'D)

No!

She grabs the screwed up ball off the floor, unravels it trying to smooth out the creases.

TINA

It's just paper.

LEILA

Just let me keep this. I'd like to read it.

TINA

It's trash.

LEILA

Apparently, it's all trash, so -

She stops, and puts the paper aside.

Tina smiles.

She stands and goes over to Leila's side.

Leila looks up at Tina as they move closer and finally make contact.

They kiss gently.

LEILA (CONT'D)

So I guess you did take pictures that time. I can't remember.

TINA

I had to get you here. I had to see you.

LEILA

You did that.

TINA

Ellie is so much like you.

LEILA

And I'm just like you.

TINA

But I changed.

LEILA

What do you mean?

Tina answers with a kiss.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Leila steps out into the sun with Tina.

TINA

You're sure you don't want Joe to take you? It'll be no trouble, I'll make sure of it.

LEILA

No. I want to remember all this as it is now. All alone in these trees. I want it all to stay here.

Tina smiles.

She looks around anxiously.

TINA

He should be around somewhere - and Ellie - did she say good bye?

LEILA

She cried a little, last night.

TINA

She'd hate to miss you going.

A taxi appears out of the trees and slows down a few feet away from them.

LEILA

So soon ...

TINA
You'll write, I hope.

LEILA
You too. I'll be reading your next novel,
Tina. I don't care how trashy it is.

Tina smiles.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Just - try and make it a little less
trashy for me.

TINA
I'll try. Oh - and tell Sam to expect a
package?

Leila grins.

LEILA
Your books.

TINA
I'd send them with you but they're
hardbacks. Joe couldn't carry them.

LEILA
She'll go crazy.

Leila looks off screen sharply at Ellie in her bedroom window
looking out.

INT. ELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

A new fish swims around in front of her eyes.

Ellie jumps up and turns to the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ellie runs from her room to the front door.

She slows, pulling the door open before her.

The sun flashes in streaks on her face, her smiling face.

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Leila lowers her bag to the floor and picks Ellie up.

LEILA
You're too heavy.

They kiss tightly.

ELLIE
I love you!

LEILA
Yeah, I know.

TINA
Come on, Ellie.

Ellie slides off Leila and shrinks back into her mother's arms.

Tina looks down to see Ellie looking up.

Looking closer, Leila sees Ellie and Tina's hands, joined.

Leila sees this, grabs her bag and turns to the taxi.

She halts abruptly.

ELLIE
Hey! It's Russell!

Russell steps out of the car and goes to Leila.

RUSSELL
Take your bag?

Leila, trancelike, gives him the bag.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Hi, Leila.

He's changed, more confident.

Intense.

He looks beyond Leila at Tina.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Miss De Franco.

Down at Ellie.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Young lady.

Ellie goes in closer to her mother.

ELLIE
Ellie.

RUSSELL
Well good morning Ellie.

Leila gets into the car, front seat.

She sucks in her breath.

LEILA
Well, damn, Russ - should we get going?

Russell doesn't take his eyes off Tina.

RUSSELL
Sure.

He holds his look to the point of nervous breakdown for Tina.

As she feels herself released, as Russell turns away, she clutches Ellie's hand.

Russell gets into the car.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Russell turns to Leila.

RUSSELL
Didn't think I'd see you again.

Leila unsuccessfully fakes a laugh.

LEILA
No?

RUSSELL
But here we are.

He flings his hand out and WHACKS the glove compartment by Leila's knee.

Leila follows his movements eagle-eyed.

The glove compartment SNAPS shut before we can make out the shadows.

Leila looks out of the window at Tina and Ellie.

LEILA
I promise you I'll write.

Ellie suddenly breaks out and jumps forward a few paces.

ELLIE
Send me a separate letter.

LEILA
Sure. Com' ere.

Ellie trots over to Leila's side.

They kiss again and the car begins to move.

Ellie steps back from the vehicle, Leila's lipstick across her cheek, a tear making it run.

Tina waves to Leila.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Bye. Say bye to Joe.

Russell drives her away.

Tina looks up as a dark black cloud moves in front of the sun.

She puts her arm around Ellie, and, against the wind, guides her back to the house.

INT. TAXI - EVENING

Uncomfortable silence once more.

RUSSELL
Did you have fun?

LEILA

Sure. Let's not talk.

RUSSELL

Come on. You owe me. I've been thinking.

Leila looks concerned at the glove compartment.

She toys with the candy necklace near to her hip. The tattoo is gone.

Surprised, she looks out of her window and follows a black Mercedes.

LEILA

That's Joe.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Joe looks out of his window at the passing taxi.

He sees Leila, but doesn't acknowledge her.

He slows the car down as he passes.

His eyes are on Russell.

INT. TAXI - EVENING

Leila turns back to face the front.

LEILA

That's odd.

She considers this for a second, then shifts around in her seat.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Can we pull over at that place? I need to get some food and, you know.

RUSSELL

We just left.

LEILA

Yeah. And I'm paying you.

Russell closes his mouth, looking at Leila.

RUSSELL

It's about five minutes.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Joe's Mercedes speeds past a massive truck. A bassy, heavy HORN echoes overhead.

INT. JOE'S CAR - EVENING

Joe's EYES on the road.

INT. SERVICE STATION. MAIN SHOP - EVENING

Leila gazes at the TV, the news reporter running through headlines.

JUD (OS)
I remember you.

Leila looks up.

Jud smiles.

JUD (CONT'D)
Jud Herald, remember?

Leila frowns.

LEILA
Yeah, I remember you. Not the name,
though.

Jud points at the display behind him.

JUD
Dark chocolate.

Leila smiles.

LEILA
Yeah. Thanks.

Jud looks at the TV.

JUD
Still haven't caught him. It's
incredible.

LEILA
Yeah.

Jud picks up one bar of chocolate, puts it back, and picks up
a different one. He turns to Leila.

JUD
So, how 'bout trying the other one. I
think it's nice.

LEILA
Why not?

She gives him money.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You can keep the change again. It's the
end of my holiday. That's the end of my
holiday money.

She smiles.

JUD
Thanks. This is what makes up my pay.

Leila looks at the TV.

LEILA
What does he look like?

JUD
He's got kind of - well, here, look -
he's in all the papers.

He starts searching through a stack of papers as Russell starts BEEPING his horn outside.

Leila, anxious and pissed at the noise, starts frowning at Russell.

LEILA
I'm sorry - I've gotta go ... my taxi.

JUD
Sure .. it was here somewhere. He's got dark hair I think.

Leila walks to the door.

LEILA
Bye, Jud.

The door beeps as she leaves.

Jud finds the right page, and, seeing Leila leave, talks to himself.

JUD
There he is...

He put his hand to his face and examines the picture with fascination.

It's Russell.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Leila slams her door.

LEILA
I don't like being rushed, Russ.

She bites a piece of candy off the bracelet.

Russell's eyes edge over to the glove compartment then slip onto Leila's legs.

He starts the engine and drives onto the road.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The misty highway, filling with vehicles.

Russell's old taxi, with the two obscured figures in front, moves towards the camera.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Leila pushes her knees together noticing Russell's stare.

LEILA
I was only nice back there 'cos I didn't want to upset Ellie. Why did you come to pick me up?

RUSSELL
I got the call.

LEILA
Bullshit. Bullshit.

RUSSELL
Are you scared of me?

LEILA
You'd love that. No. I just hate you.
You're creepy.

RUSSELL
No chance of finishing what we started?

LEILA
It was a mistake!

RUSSELL
Leila.

Leila turns her head away.

LEILA
What?

Russell sighs and turns the car into the side of the road.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The car in the rain slows to a stop as a few cars pass it.

The headlights turn out, the light inside on.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Leila stares at Russell.

LEILA
What?

Russell puts his hand on Leila's knee. She flings her arm out to slice his cheek again with the ring but he catches her arm and twists it hard.

Leila screams and starts kicking, reaching for her seatbelt with her free hand.

Her left foot catches the glovebox and it flies open.

Russell advances, putting his hands anywhere they'll go.

Leila finds the door handle and opens it behind her, tumbling out into the road where several cars swerve to avoid her.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Leila rushes across the road, oblivious of the traffic.

Russell watches her, waiting to cross.

He runs after her and effortlessly grabs her as she looks around, completely lost.

LEILA
Fuck you!

She finally manages to hit him, in the eye, and runs once again across the road to the car, she rattles her door to find it locked, and rushes around to the driver's door.

Russell stands, waiting for a gap in the traffic.

INT. TAXI -- NIGHT

Leila slams the door, wheezing heavily, and checks through the window for Russell.

She locks the door and sits poised in the driver's seat.

As her eyes wander, she catches a glint from the glovebox.

A handgun.

Russell rattles the door outside and starts pounding at the window.

Leila, shaking, picks up the gun and her breathing slows. She stares out at Russell, no longer afraid.

Russell starts kicking the door, screaming like a monster, and as Leila wipes the condensation from the inside of the window, we see his face staring in.

Leila holds the gun to the window, lined up with his forehead, and reaches for the lock.

She unlocks the door.

LEILA
Get in Russell.

Russell takes a step back from the car.

LEILA (CONT'D)
GET IN!

Russell opens the door and sits down calmly in the passenger seat.

He's pathetic suddenly.

RUSSELL
I'm sorry.

LEILA
I've had enough of people like you.

She braces her shoulder and aims.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

From the lone taxi in the side of the road, blood sprays with glass across the open highway, and Leila's scream pierces the night.

INT. TAXI -- NIGHT

Leila collapses into the steering wheel, trying to cry but only moaning.

She slowly turns her head to see Russell, and instantly,

frantically forces the door open to scramble out.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Leila rushes out of the car, getting as far away from it as possible, as a dark shape emerges slowly from the mist.

Joe's Mercedes approaches, and Leila watches, amazed.

She rushes towards Joe as he steps away from the vehicle.

In his arms, she cries.

LEILA
I forgot to say bye!

Joe walks her away from the taxi, whispering "it's okay".

FADE OUT:

LEILA (VO) (CONT'D)
I'm home!

FADE IN:

INT. THE THOMAS' KITCHEN - EVENING

Empty. The TV is off.

Leila walks around the table.

LEILA
Hello?

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Leila places the photograph of Sam back in its place.

She takes the other photo out of her pocket and looks at it.

Shaking her head, she rips it up into tiny pieces and throws them into the dustbin.

She looks offscreen at the sound of the door opening.

INT. THE THOMAS' KITCHEN - EVENING

Angela looks up at Leila.

ANGELA
Leila! What happened?

She goes to touch the dressings on her face and neck.

LEILA
Just an accident. Where have you been?

Angela takes off her coat to reveal a sparkling new outfit.

ANGELA
I've been out.

LEILA
You had your hair cut?

Angela touches her hand to the side of her head and pushes her hair up a little.

ANGELA

Why not?

Leila lets out a giggle.

LEILA

You look really good!

Angela sits at the table.

ANGELA

Was your trip good?

LEILA

It was great.

ANGELA

That looks bad... I'll redo it for you.

She goes to touch Leila's face again.

LEILA

It's okay! It was done in a hospital.

Angela's eyes widen.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, okay? I'm fine.

Leila turns to the door.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I'm really tired.

Leila goes back and puts her arms around her mother.

ANGELA

Okay.

LEILA

I love you.

ANGELA

I love you, too.

She pierces her eyes at Leila.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

What do you want?

LEILA

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

INT. THE THOMAS' KITCHEN - DAY

The sun shines bright onto Leila's ringlets as she rushes past Angela at the table.

On the TV, the news.

LEILA

I've gotta go now.

She kisses Mrs Thomas, and is gone.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam slices the tape sealing the box.

SAM
I can't believe this.

She pulls the flaps out and looks in.

Her mouth drops open.

She silently draws the top copy out.

SAM (CONT'D)
They're hardbacks.

She opens the cover and looks at the signature.

A tear forms in her eye.

She takes out the second one.

SAM (CONT'D)
This one hasn't come out yet!

Leila watches, grinning.

They hug once more.

Settling down, they stand and sit side by side on the bed.

They look at each other, and then collapse into each other, sealing their lips with passion.

LEILA
Are you ready?

SAM
I think so.

They continue to kiss.

LEILA
It could be really hard.

SAM
You shot a guy, Leila. They'll love you.

Leila smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)
But it doesn't matter. We don't care.

LEILA
No.

SAM
We ... don't ... care.

INT. SCHOOL. HALLWAY - DAY

Leila and Sam, backlit by the sun, walk side by side toward

the camera.

Sam is confident, Leila concerned.

Their footsteps in sync, they fix their eyes on the door of room 7A.

As they near it, Sam lets her hand be taken by Leila.

Leila hitches her bag up on her back and pulls out the candy necklace around her neck.

Clutching hands tightly, they enter room 7A, as we

FADE OUT:

THE END

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