

DIRTY GIRL

By

Abe Sylvia

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Norman, Oklahoma- 1989
OVER BLACK:

CLARKE (V.O.)
Every girl is born with a
reputation.

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL- LUNCHTIME

A PRETTY BLONDE GIRL takes a seat with her friends.

CLARKE (V.O.)
Some girls are sweet, dream of
pageant glory and republican meat.

A HOMELY GIRL makes her way across the front lawn with a
stack of books.

CLARKE (V.O.)
Some girls are hunchbacks, believe
what they're told. Never knowing
that their poo-nannies are gold.

THREE AVERAGE-LOOKING GIRLS pile into a car giggling.

CLARKE (V.O.)
Some girls fall in between, live
their lives unremarkable and clean.

A CONVERTIBLE MUSTANG rocks to and fro, steam fills the
windows.

CLARKE (V.O.)
...and some girls...

Clarke (15, a soft-natured, overweight nerd with a bruise on
his face) watches as the Mustang climaxes.

CLARKE (V.O.)
...that is, the best girls...

The car door flies open. A STOCKY BOY emerges putting on his
letterman's jacket. A curly-headed figure, DANIELLE, sits up
in the backseat. She's pissed about something.

CLARKE (V.O.)
... are born dirty.

DANIELLE
Fuck you, asshole!

Just then, THREE LARGE BOYS tackle Clarke and begin to beat him.

BLACK.

Title : "DIRTY GIRL"

INT. LIFESTYLE CHOICES CLASS

MR. POTTER (35, a hip-but-not-really sort a fellow) stands before a blackboard with the word, "Choices", scrawled across it.

MR. POTTER

Who can give me an example of a good choice?

A NICE GIRL raises her hand.

NICE GIRL

Waiting. I mean if a guy really likes you, he'll wait. And if he doesn't understand then, you know, so what.

Stocky Boy passes a folded note labeled "Danielle".

MR. POTTER

Most excellent. But I know how it is. I was young too. Our hormones will get the better of us. The only safe sex is no sex. If you don't stay busy, and practice abstinence, you could end up like this guy my mom knows. So tell me, what's a healthy alternative?

THE NOTE makes its way across the classroom, reaches its destination.

A REDHEADED GIRL raises her hand. Mr. Potter points to her.

REDHEADED GIRL

You could have a pizza party.

THE NOTE is opened.

MR. POTTER

Right on! Who doesn't love pizza? Anyone else?

A CLAMMY BOY this time. Mister Potter points.

CLAMMY BOY
Bowling's always fun.

THE NOTE reads, "Wanna Fuck? Same time. Same Place."

MR. POTTER
You said it, man. Although I have
to admit I myself am pretty rusty.

The CLASS laughs.

DANIELLE (16) raises her hand, her fingernail polish is chipped. She's that girl that every high school has. The one who is more mature, more sexual, and somehow, just inexplicably dirty. Her clothes are always too small, her hair is teased. She is a skinny girl with disproportionately large breasts, which are her pride and joy.

Mr. Potter notices Danielle, but does not point. She speaks without being called upon.

DANIELLE
What are your thoughts on the
pullout method?

MR. POTTER
Huh?

DANIELLE
I mean if he spills on your belly
you should be okay, right? Of
course right after the moment of
enchantment it only takes like five
seconds for things to get all
drippy.

(Yelling at Stocky Boy)
AND PRACTICALLY RUIN YOUR
UPHOLSTERY!!!
(back to Mr. Potter)
It's so hard to have nice things.

INT. PRINCIPAL MULRAY'S OFFICE

Danielle sits across from PRINCIPAL MULRAY (late 40's, balding).

PRINCIPAL MULRAY
You must like the time we spend
together.

DANIELLE
It's a real hoot.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

Your classmates are impressionable, Miss Edmonston. Your ears might be used to that kind of talk, but most of these kids come from good families.

Danielle, ignoring Principal Mulray, adjusts her bra, checking to make sure "the girls" look good.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY (CONT'D)

Do you have any positive males in your life?

Danielle, pulls out her compact, fixes her lipstick.

DANIELLE

No, I'm pretty sure everybody's negative, but you can never be too careful.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

I mean...

DANIELLE

It's none of your business.

She begins poofing her hair.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

You are an exasperating girl, Ms. Edmonston. According to Mr. Potter, you spoke quite explicitly about male projectile.

DANIELLE

Its a sex education class.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

(correcting)
Lifestyle choices.

DANIELLE

Whatever.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

I'm putting you in challengers.

With this news Danielle stops fidgeting.

DANIELLE

Special ed? That's for retards.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY
(correcting)
Challengers. It's either that or
expulsion. Mrs. Pierce will give
you your schedule.

DANIELLE
What's to know? It's like that one
room in the basement all the time.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY
You're a smart girl, you just make
poor choices. If you do your
homework and stop being a
distraction to others, you'll be
back with the normal kids in no
time.

Danielle starts to leave.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY (CONT'D)
Danielle, nobody likes a dirty
girl.

DANIELLE
Gosh, thanks for that really
awesome advice.

Principal Mulray busies himself with some paperwork.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
By the way, the challenger blew up.

Danielle exits.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY
(into speaker phone)
Mrs. Pierce, hold my calls.

Principal Mulray closes his mini blinds, sits across from
Danielle's empty chair, stares at it intently. We hear him
unzip his fly.

INT. CHALLENGERS CLASS ROOM

MRS. HATCHER (50's, a hand-dyed-linen-pantsuit kind of gal)
stands before the CHALLENGERS (mostly ethnic kids, with one
notable exception, CLARKE, who sits not at a desk, but at a
table apart, chewing his nails)

MRS. HATCHER

Okay. Today we are going to start a project that will hopefully teach us that parenthood is no joke, right Sabrina?

SABRINA, a very pregnant teen, shakes her head, "no".

MRS. HATCHER

Okay, everybody partner up with someone of the opposite sex.

Clarke watches as the other students partner up. His face is bruised from the morning beating. His lip is cut.

MRS. HATCHER

Who doesn't have a partner?

THREE STUDENTS, Clarke included, raise their hands.

MRS. HATCHER

Okay, Benita, why don't you move over next to Juan. And Clarke...

Clarke seems resigned to the humiliation of people not knowing what to do with him.

MRS. HATCHER

...we'll think of something.

Clarke puts a set of headphones on his head, presses play on a walkman. Melissa Manchester's 'You Should Hear How They Talk About You' is faintly heard.

The classroom door swings open, Danielle enters, hands a pink slip to Mrs. Hatcher. .

MRS. HATCHER

Class, this is Danielle Edmonston, she's joining us today, say hello...

The class is completely uninterested.

DANIELLE

(raising a black power fist)

Assalaam Alaikum.

This gets a stunned, silent response.

MRS. HATCHER

Danielle, we were just partnering up. Why don't you have a seat with Clarke back there.

Danielle plops herself across from Clarke at his private table, he removes his headphones.

DANIELLE

You're that fag, right?

Clarke bites his thumbnail.

Mrs. Hatcher pushes a cart between the desks, handing out sacks of flour. During the following speech, Clarke and Danielle stare at one another in silence.

MRS. HATCHER

For the next six weeks you are married to your partner, and these precious sacks of flour are your bundles of joy. You will have to name your baby, change your baby, and most importantly, make sure no harm comes to him-slash-her. You will make daily entry journals of your experiences.

Mrs. Hatcher sets a sack of flour between Clarke and Danielle. Danielle looks from the dumpy sack of white flour to Clarke.

DANIELLE

It takes after you.

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL LOCKERS- LATER

Danielle puts her books into her locker and slams the door, revealing Clarke behind it holding the sack of flour.

DANIELLE

What do you want?

CLARKE

We're partners.

Danielle prowls down the hallway, Clarke right on her tail.

DANIELLE

No offense bud, but my designated is, as of this morning, no longer designated.

CLARKE

I don't know what that means.

DANIELLE

Danielle's three D's of dating. Discriminate, designate, dump. And since the unfortunate dumping of Greg, due to his lack of sanitary respect, I am onto the next, and quite frankly as a dick smoker you don't qualify.

CLARKE

But we're supposed to be married.

DANIELLE

We're not on the same level.

CLARKE

Ms. Hatcher said we need to be good parents.

Danielle sees what she's looking for, a hot prospect named BOBBY(16, thin, but cute), smoking in his car with friends.

DANIELLE

(pointing at Bobby)
Discriminate.

She pulls a mirror out of her bag and hands it to Clarke.

DANIELLE

Hold this.

Clarke holds the mirror up as Danielle fixes herself.

DANIELLE

Ms Hatcher is a hippie twat, and you are currently lowering my market value.

Danielle freshens her lipstick.

DANIELLE

How do I look?

CLARKE

Great.

DANIELLE

Designate.

Danielle struts over to Bobby's car and knocks on the window.

DANIELLE
Hey, you got a light?
(to the other guys)
Hey fellas.

Bobby lights Danielle's cigarette.

BOBBY
(knowing)
You're that girl, aren't ya?

DANIELLE
(flirting back)
Yep I'm that girl.

BOBBY
You know what I heard about you?

DANIELLE
Don't believe everything you hear.
Unless it's really good. Then it's
true.

BOBBY
I hear you're with the retards now.

The boys start to laugh, peel out, leaving Danielle in a cloud of exhaust.

Clarke watches as Danielle is humiliated. The Three guys who clobbered him before, come seemingly out of nowhere and tackle him again.

INT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER- AFTER SCHOOL

Danielle's mom, SUE-ANN (mid-30's, but looks younger, certainly not old enough to have a 16-year-old daughter. Formerly trashy, she has cleaned up her act, but the transformation isn't entirely convincing). She is studying the book of Mormon. She calls to Danielle as she heads to her bedroom.

SUE-ANN
Your principal called me today. I
am very disappointed in you.

Danielle slams her bedroom door.

INT. DANIELLE'S BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

The walls of Danielle's bedroom are covered with photos of men ripped from magazines- a mad collage of dashing, idealized male images.

Danielle retrieves a spiral notebook from her closet. Inside there are names and phone numbers- a scrapbook of conquests, ink drawings and snapshots fill its lined pages. Danielle picks up the phone and dials one of the numbers.

DANIELLE

Hey, is this Patrick?

On the other end we hear garbled Spanish.

DANIELLE

Sorry, wrong number.

Undaunted, she dials another...

DANIELLE

I'm looking for Wes.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Who's this?

DANIELLE

My names Danielle, I'm a friend...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Listen bitch...

Danielle hangs up, dials another.

MAN'S VOICE (MIKE)

Hello?

DANIELLE

Mike? It's Danielle.

MIKE

Hey chicken, how you doin'?

DANIELLE

I could be doin' better.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE- LATER

Darkness.

THERAPIST

Just say whatever comes to mind.

An explicit slide of a naked woman circa 1978 flashes on the wall.

CLARKE

Popcicles.

Another slide, the same woman, this time with a well hung man with a beard.

CLARKE

Orange popcicles.

THERAPIST

And this one?

Another slide, this one of Jesus Christ, acting like Jesus.

CLARKE

Christian popcicles.

The florescent lights come on. Clarke is temporarily blinded.

THERAPIST

Pretty racy stuff, huh?

CLARKE

I guess.

THERAPIST

You know Clarke, sexual feelings aren't something to be afraid of. You wanna know what I think?

CLARKE

Okay.

THERAPIST

I think those pictures scared you. That's why your responses were so random. Do you follow?

CLARKE

You said to say what's in my head.

THERAPIST

Right.

CLARKE

I'm hungry.

THERAPIST

Tell me Clarke, now talking man to man, here. Just us guys. What's your favorite kind of breast?

CLARKE

Huh?

THERAPIST

Long ones? Pointy ones? If ya had to pick your favorite kind of booby, what kind of booby would you pick?

CLARKE

Boobies?

THERAPIST

Sure! Knockers, cha-cha's, hoo-ha's! How do you like 'em?

CLARKE

Hairy.

INT. DANIELLE'S BACKSEAT-NIGHT

Danielle rips open MIKE's shirt revealing a very appealing hairy chest. Mike is in his early thirties.

MIKE

Did you miss big Mike?

DANIELLE

Uh-huh.

MIKE

Tell him how much.

DANIELLE

A lot.

MIKE

A whole lot?

DANIELLE

A whole whole lot. A whole, whole, whole, whole, whole...

A flashlight in Mike's face stops his rather athletic petting. A COP knocks on the window.

INT. THERAPISTS LOBBY- LATER

Clarke waits on a leather bench. Muzak plays. He puts on his headphones. Laura Branigan's "Gloria" is faintly heard.

Clarke's Dad, JOSEPH (40's vaguely militant) leaves the doctor's office followed by his mother, PEGGY (40's- vaguely vague). Joseph is clearly pissed.

JOSEPH

Let's go.

INT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE-NIGHT

Sue-Ann is making out with her Boyfriend, RAY (40's, a pallid, milk-toasty king of fellow).

RAY

Waiting brings its own rewards, but you sure do look sweet tonight.

SUE-ANN

Stop.

RAY

I might be tempted to break a few rules, if you'd let me.

SUE-ANN

Far as I know, the lord didn't say nothin' 'bout second base.

Sue-Ann unbuttons her shirt. Things get hot and heavy.

RAY

(whispering)
There's a way that don't count.

SUE-ANN

You know that upsets my tummy.

RAY

I'll be gentle.

SUE-ANN

You marry me, you can have the front door.

Ray buries his head in Sue-Ann's neck.

The DOORBELL interrupts them.

INT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE- MOMENTS LATER

An OVERWEIGHT COP and his VERY THIN PARTNER stand over Danielle with Sue-Ann.

OVERWEIGHT COP

Near as we could tell they were in the early stages of groping.

SUE-ANN

So she wasn't hurt? You weren't hurt, were you baby?

VERY THIN PARTNER

If you pull her hair back, you'll see he left a mark.

Sue-Ann brushes Danielle's hair to the side revealing a monstrous hickey. She flashes Danielle a look of disapproval.

OVERWEIGHT COP

He says your daughter initiated contact, but that doesn't mean you can't press charges, since she's a minor and he's what?

Very thin partner checks his note pad.

VERY THIN PARTNER

Thirty-four.

Sue-Ann swallows hard.

OVERWEIGHT COP

But we suggest you leave the punishing to his wife. She seemed pretty P.O.'d.

VERY THIN PARTNER

Whew!

RAY

Well, we'll be sure to straighten things out on our end.

Danielle looks at Ray, rolls her eyes and heads to her room.

OVERWEIGHT COP

(calling to Danielle)

You be a good girl now.

Danielle slams her door.

SUE-ANN
Don't you worry, officer.
(taking Ray's hand)
She just needs a good man in her
life.

INT. CLARKE'S DAD'S CAR- THE RIDE HOME

Clarke's dad, Joseph, drives. Mom, Peggy, sits comatose on the passenger side. Clarke sits in the middle of the back seat.

JOSEPH
We had a deal son, and it seems to me you're not holding up your end. You know what that makes you? That makes you a welcher. Only thing worse then being a gay is being a welcher.

CLARKE
I'm trying.

JOSEPH
Who am I supposed to believe- a fifteen-year-old welcher or a qualified medical physician?

CLARKE
He's a chiropractor.

JOSEPH
He's got experience! And he says you are downright belligerent.
(then)
Never met a harder nut to crack.

This last bit makes Clarke giggle.

Joseph pulls over to the side of the road and smacks Clarke's face, grabs him by the shirt, and pulls him into the front seat.

JOSEPH
You think this is funny you little shit? You are a hair's breath from getting that fat faggot ass of your sent away for good. I still got the brochures, and right about now that military academy is looking like a pretty sweet option to me and your mother.

PEGGY
He's just scared of girls aren't
you, honey?

A knowing look from his mother, tells Clarke that agreeing
with her will free him.

CLARKE
Yes.

Joseph lets go, resumes driving.

JOSEPH
Girls are the last thing in the
world you need to be scared of.
Some little piece peaks your
interest all you go to do is walk
right on up to her and say, "how's
about..."

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL- LUNCHTIME

Clarke trying out his father's advice on Danielle.

CLARKE
... you and me catching a movie
sometime?"

Danielle, hard at work on another boy, GREG (17, curly-
headed, good stock) laughs at Clarke. Greg blows a bubble
with his gum.

DANIELLE
I want a piece of that.

Danielle plants a kiss on Greg.

CLARKE
We got a presentation to do.

Greg goes along with the kiss, but is embarrassed in front of
Clarke.

GREG
(pushing off Danielle)
Not right now.

Danielle, having retrieved Greg's gum from his mouth, blows a
bubble.

CLARKE
 (re: the sack of flour)
 You're not being a very good
 mother.

DANIELLE
 Fuck off, fat boy.
 (to Greg)
 Am I gonna see ya later?

Clarke, slowly walks away, then turns back.

GREG
 I gotta work.

DANIELLE
 In life Greg, windows of
 opportunity don't stay open too
 long. Right now, my window is, as
 they say, open. Who knows if it'll
 stay that way. You are the chosen
 one, meet me by my car after
 school.

Greg notices SOME GUYS watching them.

GREG
 I'll see what I can do.

Clarke holds their sack of flour, watching.

INT. CHALLENGERS CLASS ROOM- LATER

Benita and Juan are finishing up their flour baby
 presentation. Their baby has a face and wears a diaper.

BENITA
 ...Maggie enjoys long walks by the
 creek, stopping for sodas at Sonic,
 and shopping.

MRS. HATCHER
 Very good guys. Clarke, Danielle,
 you're up.

The class turns to look at Clarke and Danielle sitting at
 their table in the back with their untouched sack of flour.

INT. CHALLENGERS CLASS ROOM- AFTER SCHOOL

Clarke and Danielle stand before Mrs. Hatcher's desk.

MRS. HATCHER

Frankly, you both seem like smart kids, you shouldn't even be in this class, but as long as you don't do the work, this is where you're gonna stay.

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT- AFTER SCHOOL

Danielle sits on the hood of her Mustang waiting for Greg. She spots him and gets excited, but he gets into a car with his friends and takes off.

EXT. BUS STOP-AFTER SCHOOL

Clarke waits on the bench wearing his headphones.

Danielle's Mustang screeches to a halt.

DANIELLE

(calling to Clarke)

Get in, we got homework.

Clarke pulls off his headphones suspiciously.

DANIELLE

As long as I'm a retard, ain't nobody gonna fuck me!

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- LATER

Danielle enters, followed by Clarke.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Don't worry about being nice to my mom. She's a cunt.

Sue-Ann pops her head through the cubby that separates the living room from the kitchen.

SUE-ANN

Danielle, is that you?

DANIELLE

This is Clarke. He's from school.

Sue-ann extends a hand through the cubby.

SUE-ANN

Sue-Ann. I'm Danielle's mom, but
you wouldn't know it to look at me.

DANIELLE

That's like a totally gross thing
to say.

SUE-ANN

(to Clarke)

People always think we're sisters.
It's polite to clarify.

Sue-Ann extends a burnt cookie on a spatula.

SUE-ANN

Cookie?

DANIELLE

Nobody wants your sad instant
cookies, Sue-Ann.

SUE-ANN

You said you liked these.

DANIELLE

I said I liked the dough.

Danielle takes Clarke to her BEDROOM.

CLARKE

She seemed nice.

DANIELLE

If you need to use the bathroom,
avoid the mohogrammed towels.
Mama's certifiably herpified.

CLARKE

Ew.

DANIELLE

She was a big slut when I was
little, but now she's with this
Mormon guy so she thinks she's Suzy
homemaker.

Sue-Ann opens Danielle's bedroom door.

SUE-ANN

We talked about this. You can have
boys over, but this door stays
open.

DANIELLE

We're just doing homework, besides,
Clarke's a fag.

Clarke is shocked that he has been outed so casually. Sue-Ann is a bit worried.

SUE-ANN

Ray's bringing the kids over for
dinner, you guys think you'll be
finished by then?

DANIELLE

Maybe if you shut the God damn door
and leave us alone, we could
concentrate.

Sue-Ann reluctantly closes the door.

CLARKE

If I talked to my mom that way, my
dad would kick the shit out of me.

DANIELLE

I don't have a dad, so I do what I
want.

INT. DANIELLE'S BEDROOM- LATER

Danielle and Clarke work on their project. Clarke draws a
face on the bag of flour. Danielle writes in a notebook.

DANIELLE

Boy or girl?

CLARKE

I think I'd ruin a boy.

DANIELLE

(writing)

Girl. Name?

CLARKE

I don't know. Something regal.

DANIELLE

What about Joan? Like Joan Jett.

CLARKE

Or Crawford? Yeah that's nice.

DANIELLE

Is there some sort of special gene that made you say Crawford, when I said Joan?

CLARKE

Why? What?

DANIELLE

It's like the more times a person gets poked in the butt, the more likely they are to say stupid faggy shit.

CLARKE

I'm a virgin.

Silence.

DANIELLE

It's not that big of a deal.

CLARKE

Tell that to my dad. He'd be happier if I didn't exist.

DANIELLE

That's not true. I'm sure my dad loves me, and I don't even know him.

CLARKE

That don't make any sense.

DANIELLE

You know if you're not careful, you're gonna turn into one of those overweight homos with no one to love you but a gerbil named Bruce.

EXT. CLARKE'S HOUSE- LATER

Joseph waters the lawn like he's taking a big macho pee.

As the mustang comes to halt in front of the house, Joseph leers at his son, who visibly recoils in the passenger seat.

DANIELLE

Is that your dad?

Clarke nods.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

What is he, some kind of marine?

CLARKE

He likes people to think that.

JOSEPH

Where the hell have you been?

Clarke gets out of the car sheepishly, forgetting his bag in the back seat.

CLARKE

I had homework.

JOSEPH

You getting high? Answer me boy, were you getting high? I will cart you off so fast...

Danielle gets out of the car with Clarke's bag.

DANIELLE

You forgot this.

Danielle hands Clarke his bag. She plants a big wet kiss on him.

DANIELLE

(whispering)

You ruined me for anyone else.

(to Joseph)

Hi.

Danielle gets back in the car, Joseph watches her ass as she goes. He looks at his son, smiles.

JOSEPH

(proud)

Shit.

INT. CLARKE'S BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

Clarke's sanctuary is covered in posters of 1980's female pop stars, Pat Benatar, Laura Branigan, Melissa Manchester.

He turns on his stereo. Pat Benatar's "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" fills the air with defiant joy.

Clarke's body pulses. He is rather good dancer, given his size.

OUTSIDE HIS BEDROOM

His mother, Peggy, listens as her son sings along to the music. She smiles.

INSIDE HIS BEDROOM

Clarke reaches under his mattress and removes a few gay porn mags. As Pat warns us that she is about to, "put another notch in her lipstick case," Clarke opens a magazine to its centerfold- a thin blonde male.

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- LATER

Sue-Ann sits at the table with Ray and his son, CHARLIE (16, middle American cute). Danielle enters.

RAY
(announcing happily)
There she is!!

SUE-ANN
Baby, we saved you some. It's on
the stove.

Charlie's back is to Sue-Ann and Ray. He flicks his tongue through his V'd fingers.

DANIELLE
No offense, but I'm coming down
with something.

SUE-ANN
A cold?

DANIELLE
(to Charlie)
Bulimia.

RAY
Your mother and I have something we
want to discuss with you.

Danielle looks around the table. Something's wrong.

DANIELLE
Where's Mindy?

INT. DANIELLE'S BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

Danielle pushes her bedroom door open.

DANIELLE

Out, Bitch!

Mindy (8, Blonde, perky) plays Barbie's on the floor. She holds up a doll.

MINDY

You can be Skipper!

DANIELLE

Get out of my room.

MINDY

It's my room, too.

Sue-ann appears behind Danielle in the doorway.

SUE-ANN

Why don't you come have a talk with us, honey.

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- LATER

Danielle sits on the couch between Mindy and Charlie. Ray and Sue-Ann sit across from them in matching arm chairs holding hands.

DANIELLE

This is bullshit. You can marry this Mormon loser if you want to, but there's no way I'm sharing my room with that little twat.

RAY

Now that will be rule number one. Anybody caught swearing under this roof, gonna get their mouth washed out with soap.

DANIELLE

Fuck you.

RAY

Don't test me.

MINDY

What's a twat?

RAY

Now you see there. That's what I'm talking about. Evil has a unique way of spiraling.

SUE-ANN
Very well put, honey.

DANIELLE
(to Mindy)
A twat is an ugly, flatulent,
hairless vagina.

RAY
Mindy, go to your room.

Mindy heads to Danielle's room.

DANIELLE
Hey!

Danielle runs past Mindy and blocks her bedroom door. Mindy
kicks Danielle in the shin, and passes.

DANIELLE
Little bitch!

CHARLIE
Girl fight!

Sue-Ann tries to pull Danielle off of Mindy.

Danielle elbows her mother in the gut, Sue-Ann falls to the
side.

Ray steps in and easily hoists Danielle off of Mindy.

MINDY
My head hurts.

Danielle flails in Ray's arms.

RAY
Calm down! I am stronger and I will
win.

Danielle gives Ray a backward kick to the groin.

Ray falls next to Sue-Ann. Danielle has defeated all.

DANIELLE
You're not my dad.

SUE-ANN
That's something we'd like to talk
to you about.

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- LATER

Danielle, Mindy, and Charlie are re-set on the couch, Sue-Ann and Ray present a united, if wounded, front.

RAY
Let's pray.

All close their eyes, except Danielle.

RAY (CONT'D)
Dear lord, life is a struggle, and
we are only as good as the
struggles you make us fight.

Charlie begins to play with the back of Danielle's neck.

RAY (CONT'D)
We pray to you, dear friend, to
make the struggle worthwhile...

Danielle elbows Charlie in the stomach.

RAY (CONT'D)
Amen.

ALL (EXCEPT DANIELLE)
Amen.

RAY
Have you heard of the Personal
Kingdom, Danielle?

MINDY
That's the magical place in the sky
where we'll live for all eternity!

RAY
Very good Mindy.

DANIELLE
So?

RAY
We need you there with us,
Danielle. If not, there'll be a
problem...

SUE-ANN
With getting in.

DANIELLE

You're worried about being on the list?

RAY

After your mother and I are married. I'm gonna adopt you.

DANIELLE

The hell you are.

RAY

The hell I'm not.

MINDY

We're gonna wash your mouth out with soap, daddy.

SUE-ANN

Danielle, you have a choice, being sixteen and all. Law says you get to decide.

DANIELLE

Then, no. That's it. I'm not doing it.

SUE-ANN

Think about it, Danielle. You always wanted a dad.

DANIELLE

I have a dad.

RAY

I am taking this family on a retreat this weekend. A little fishing, a little hot cocoa, help you get used to the idea.

DANIELLE

I'm not going anywhere. Clarke and I have to work on our project.

SUE-ANN

I'm sure he'll understand.

DANIELLE

You told me I was a disappointment to you, now you're keeping me from doing my homework. Nice.

SUE-ANN

Danielle...

DANIELLE

Do you want me in special ed
forever? Jesus Christ!

SUE-ANN

You and I both know that I can't
leave you alone.

MINDY

I have a baby sitter, and I'm
seven.

CHARLIE

I'll stay if you need someone to
watch her.

DANIELLE

Screw you.

RAY

It's tough love time Danielle. You
don't want us. We don't want you
either. You can stay.

DANIELLE

Thank you.

SUE-ANN

Ray?

RAY

But we're taking all the food out
of the kitchen, the money out of
your pockets..

DANIELLE

Fine.

RAY

... and the keys to your car.

DANIELLE

What?

RAY

Then you'll know what it's like to
be alone and stranded for all
eternity.

SUE-ANN
Ray, this is not a good idea.

RAY
Now heck Sue-Ann, you want me to be the man of the house, you gotta let me make the tough decisions. After this weekend, Danielle will be begging me to be her daddy.

DANIELLE
(referring to Charlie)
Yeah? That would mean this guy would be my brother.

RAY
Is that a problem?

DANIELLE
Yeah, considering I fucked him.

INT. DANIELLE'S BEDROOM- LATER

Danielle lays in bed staring at the many men on her ceiling.

Sue-Ann pushes the door open.

SUE-ANN
You happy now? Wouldn't surprise me if he gave up on us.

DANIELLE
Fine by me.

SUE-ANN
Ray's a good man, he'll be a good father.

DANIELLE
Could you close my door, please?

SUE-ANN
We got a man who's willing to be the man for us...

DANIELLE
You can try and make me be a Mormon, but you're still a shitty mother.

SUE-ANN

Good guys don't come around that often. I'd like to keep this one.

DANIELLE

He's not even cute.

SUE-ANN

We got a nice little family goin' here. Don't screw it up.

DANIELLE

I don't want your stupid fake family.

SUE-ANN

Well, we'll see how you do on your own.

Sue-Ann closes the door.

Danielle opens her spiral notebook, pulls out a strip of photos taken in an amusement park booth. The pictures show Sue-Ann at 16 with a very good-looking young man- silly faces, rabbit ears, and finally, kissing. Danielle touches the young man's face.

INT. DANIELLE'S KITCHEN- THE NEXT MORNING

RAIN tinkles on the trailer's aluminum roof.

Sue-Ann and Ray pull the last of the food from the cupboard and pack it in Grocery bags.

A groggy Danielle emerges from her room in time to see them exit with it. She follows them to the FRONT DOOR

Sue-Ann puts the food in the trunk of Ray's car. Mindy and Charlie sit in the backseat, road trip ready. Ray heads to Danielle's Mustang.

RAY

(to Danielle)

You sure you don't wanna to come?

Danielle gives him the finger.

Sue-Ann begrudgingly nods to Ray, "it's okay", he, in turn, locks up Danielle's Mustang, and puts the keys in his pocket.

DANIELLE

How am I supposed to get to school?

EXT. RAINY STREET

Danielle makes her way to school. She's dry enough under her umbrella.

A CAR speeds past, dousing her in a wave of gutter-water.

INT. CHALLENGERS CLASS ROOM

Clarke, Danielle and Joan the flour baby stand before the class. Danielle is very soggy, her curly hair matted, make-up smeared.

DANIELLE

Meet Joan.

CLARKE

... so named for the irrepressible lead singer of the Blackhearts...

DANIELLE

... and a notoriously alcoholic, child abusing movie star.

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY- LATER

CLARKE

You look like shit.

DANIELLE

Don't fuck with me. I haven't eaten in like 13 hours.

CLARKE

Why not?

DANIELLE

Because my mother thinks she can starve me into being a Mormon.

CLARKE

That sucks.

DANIELLE

I'm having a really shitty day. If you don't mind, I just want to be alone.

CLARKE

My dad said I could take you out tonight, his treat. I have discriminated and designated, and I pick you.

DANIELLE

Really Clarke, just go away.

CLARKE

He'd give me his credit card, if you wanted to go to dinner or something.

Some CUTE GIRLS pass, giggling.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

You gotta eat.

DANIELLE

We're ordering in.

EXT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE-NIGHT

Clarke parks his father's Oldsmobile in the driveway.

Danielle opens the FRONT DOOR to find Clarke standing in a shirt and tie holding a corsage.

DANIELLE

Nice flower.

CLARKE

It was my mother's idea.

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- LATER

Chinese take-out is spread all over the coffee table. Danielle sits on the couch, Clarke is on the floor.

Danielle struggles with her chopsticks.

DANIELLE

Screw this, I need a fork. You want one?

Clarke nods. Danielle goes to the kitchen. Clarke turns down the lights and moves over to the couch.

DANIELLE

(from kitchen)

Chinese men, must be good with their fingers, I swear. I hear they have straight pubic hair. I tried to get a look at Shani Suzuki's in the locker room once, but she's really careful with her towel so I never saw shit.

(back in living room)

Why are the lights off?

CLARKE

Florescent bulbs hurt my eyes.

DANIELLE

Sue-Ann's so cheap.

(taking a seat next to Clarke)

You'd figure at her age she'd wanna give her face the benefit of the doubt, but it saves money, so I guess she don't mind being green.

(Clarke puts his arm around Danielle)

What are you doing?

CLARKE

Nothing.

DANIELLE

You're hitting on me and I don't appreciate it.

CLARKE

I have discriminated and designated.

Clarke clumsily goes in for the kill, tries to kiss Danielle. She stands up to get out of the way, and Clarke, unable to control his large body slams his nose into the wood arm of the couch.

DANIELLE

What the fuck? I thought you were a faggot.

CLARKE

Only 65 percent.

DANIELLE

What?

CLARKE

My therapist showed me a chart, and it says right now I am 35 percent hetero. If I get it up to 50 percent, my parents won't send me to military school.

DANIELLE

You're bleeding.

Clarke touches the blood trickling from his nose.

DANIELLE

I'll get you a Kleenex.

CLARKE

Thanks.

DANIELLE

Well, I don't want you getting your AIDS all over my sofa, now do I?

Danielle hands Clarke a Kleenex. He lays his head back, pinching the bridge of his nose with one hand, shoving the Kleenex up his nostril with the other.

DANIELLE

Soon as that bleeding stops, you'd best go. This is the part where you get dumped.

CLARKE

You send me back now, they're gonna know we didn't do it.

DANIELLE

Contrary to popular belief, I am not the world's personal whore bag.

CLARKE

I'm sorry.

DANIELLE

Yeah, well, you should be.

CLARKE

I just figured after yesterday you wouldn't mind.

DANIELLE

Yesterday was a rare act of pity bestowed upon the pitiful.

CLARKE

I suck.

DANIELLE

Yes you do.

CLARKE

Joan's family tree is due tomorrow.
Shouldn't we work on it?

DANIELLE

You go on home now.

CLARKE

Sometimes he hurts me.

Long Pause.

DANIELLE

Well, they already think we're
doin' it, what am I gonna save my
reputation now?

(then)

You owe me one.

INT. DANIELLE'S DINING AREA-LATER

Danielle and Clarke survey their work. On a piece of poster board, they have sketched out Joan's family tree. Clarke's side is heavy with names extending back a couple of generations, Danielle's side ends with Sue-Ann's parents.

CLARKE

It's lopsided.

DANIELLE

Looks like we're gonna be spending
the holidays with your side of the
family.

CLARKE

We should put something on your
side to balance it. Maybe draw some
birds or something to sit in the
branches.

Danielle quietly ponders her side of the tree, then Clarke's.

CLARKE

It just doesn't look very good.

Danielle leaves the room.

CLARKE
(calling after her)
Where you goin'?

Danielle returns with something behind her back.

DANIELLE
I'm gonna show you something, and
when I do you can't say it's stupid
or nothin'.

CLARKE
Okay.

Danielle hands him the photo strip of her parents.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
What'd you do to your hair?

DANIELLE
That's my mom, idiot.

CLARKE
This your dad?

DANIELLE
I found it in my mom's jewelry box
when I was little and swiped it.

CLARKE
He's hot.

Danielle takes the photo back as if reclaiming her privacy.

DANIELLE
Thanks.

CLARKE
Let's put him in.

DANIELLE
Don't know his name.

CLARKE
I'm a real good draw-er. Could
draw him in.

DANIELLE
Just do birds or something.

CLARKE

Poor Joan. She only has one grandpa and he's a total dick. What are we gonna tell her?

DANIELLE

That they were high school sweethearts, and that he was handsome and magical.

CLARKE

You know if they were high school sweethearts, he'd be in her yearbook.

DANIELLE

I've been through those things like a zillion times, he didn't go to her school.

CLARKE

Maybe he wasn't a student.

It is clear that Danielle has never thought of the possibility of her father having been a teacher.

She races to her MOTHER'S BEDROOM CLOSET

Pulls the yearbooks down from high, hands Clarke one.

DANIELLE

You take this one.

INT. SUE-ANN'S BEDROOM-LATER

Clarke and Danielle are on the floor flipping through the pages of Sue-Ann's yearbooks. Clearly, they have found nothing.

DANIELLE

It's just as well, I wasn't thrilled with the idea of my daddy being a pedophile.

Clarke flips through Sue-Ann's Senior book.

CLARKE

This one doesn't have any signatures.

DANIELLE

That's the year she dropped out
'cause of me.

Clarke casually flips the pages.

CLARKE

Football players, yummy.

DANIELLE

They're the worst. I mean the idea
and all is hot, but that cream they
use is so nasty.

CLARKE

I like the way they smell. It's
like Ben Gay and ferns.

DANIELLE

You have no self respect. I'm gonna
get some more food, you want some?

Clarke shakes his head no. Danielle leaves the room.

Clarke spots something in the yearbook.

INT. DANIELLE'S KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS

Danielle is fixing herself a plate.

CLARKE (O.S.)

Danielle?

DANIELLE

What?

Clarke enters the kitchen holding the yearbook open to face
Danielle.

CLARKE

I found him.

Danielle drops her plate. It shatters on the floor. She moves
slowly toward Clarke. She takes the book from him. She's so
anxious, she doesn't know where to look.

Clarke points to the head of her father in a group photo of
the football team.

DANIELLE
 (reading)
 Second assistant coach, Danny
 Briggs.

CLARKE
 Danny?

Danielle looks up at Clarke.

CLARKE (CONT'D)
 You're named after him.

The telephone rings. Danielle is stunned, cannot answer it.
 After four rings, she finally picks up the receiver.

DANIELLE
 Hello?

INT. CABIN-CONTINUOUS

Sue-Ann is on the phone, Ray is preparing a fishing rod next
 to Mindy.

SUE-ANN
 We made it in. Just checking on
 you. Everything going okay?

DANIELLE
 Fine.

RAY
 Ask her if she's done any good
 thinking?

SUE-ANN
 Have you had time to think about
 things?

In the KITCHEN Danielle picks up a magic marker.

DANIELLE
 Yeah... You're right. I do need a
 man in my life.

At the CABIN, Sue-Ann covers the receiver.

SUE-ANN
 (mouthing to Ray)
 It worked.

RAY

Told you so.

SUE-ANN

Listen baby, under the lamp in my bedroom I left you some cash. Go ahead and order yourself a pizza.

DANIELLE

Okay.

In the KITCHEN, Danielle begins to write something down.

SUE-ANN

We'll be back on Monday.

DANIELLE

Okay.

SUE-ANN

Love you.

DANIELLE

Okay.

Danielle finishes her writing.

In the space left vacant on the family tree, Danielle has written the name, DANNY BRIGGS.

CLARKE

Now what?

Danielle gestures to the stack of phone books behind Clarke

DANIELLE

Hand me that phone book.

EXT. QUIET STREET- LATER

Danielle and Clarke stop the Oldsmobile in front of a small but immaculate home. Joan is strapped into the back seat.

CLARKE

This it?

DANIELLE

(referring to the phone book)

816 South Lahoma.

CLARKE

Maybe there's another Danny Briggs
in Norman.

DANIELLE

No this is it. I feel it. Somethin'
simple about it, makes it true.

CLARKE

Maybe you shoulda' called first?

DANIELLE

And said what? Hi, I'm your
illegitimate daughter come back to
haunt you.

Just then, a GOOD LOOKING MAN (late thirties, put together)
exits the house with a bag of garbage.

DANIELLE

Oh my god.

CLARKE

That him?

DANIELLE

He's been nine blocks away for
sixteen years. And now he's right
in front of me.

CLARKE

He's gorgeous.

DANIELLE

Bet your sweet ass he is.

The Good Looking Man goes back into the house. Danielle, who
can't lose him again, impulsively gets out of the car, and
heads up the walk way. Clarke follows a few steps behind.

Nervously thrilled, Danielle takes a moment before ringing
the doorbell.

The Good Looking Man opens the door, but leaves the screen
shut.

GOOD LOOKING MAN

Yeah?

DANIELLE

Hi!

Good Looking Man spies Clarke hovering on the stairs behind Danielle.

GOOD LOOKING MAN

(suspicious)

Hi.

DANIELLE

I'm sorry. I'm Danielle, that there is Clarke.

GOOD LOOKING MAN

Uh-huh.

DANIELLE

I'm Sue-Ann's little girl.

Danielle waits for his response, but Good Looking Man draws only a blank.

GOOD LOOKING MAN

Good for you. Is there something I can help you with?

Danielle doesn't know what else to say. Clarke picks up the slack.

CLARKE

We're looking for Danny Briggs. You him?

A shot of recognition passes over the man's face, he's about to speak when we hear...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Who is it, Billy?

Danielle gets excited all over again, her hope revived.

BILLY

Couple of kids.

MAN'S VOICE

Tell 'em we don't want any.

BILLY

I don't think they're selling anything.

A SECOND GOOD LOOKING MAN appears in the doorway as well.

DANIELLE

Daddy?

SECOND GOOD LOOKING MAN
I should hope not.

BILLY
They're looking for Danny. Are you
his kid or something?

Danielle nods yes.

SECOND GOOD LOOKING MAN
I knew something was up with those
people.

INT. 816 SOUTH LAHOMA, LIVING ROOM-LATER

The decor is heavily mission, but clean and sparse, with well
chosen, well placed art on the walls.

Danielle and Clarke look out of place on the fine leather
sofa.

Billy enters with a tray of tea for four. Then sits beside
the good looking man, PETER.

BILLY
Okay we have lemon zinger, cinnamon
yerba matte or classic chamomile.

DANIELLE
So my daddy lived here? When?

CLARKE
Is that how you say that? Kam-o-
mile? I've never known how to say
that.

DANIELLE
Would ya shut the fuck up? We're
trying to have an adult
conversation here.

PETER
Let's see we moved in here what,
two years ago?

BILLY
Three. Remember? It was just after
my sister's wedding which was a
week before the space shuttle blew
up.

PETER

What a sad time for the country.

CLARKE

I'm still not over it.

DANIELLE

I don't want to be rude or nothing,
but where the fuck is my dad?

BILLY

You're saucy, I like that!

CLARKE

I like your house. It's super
tasteful.

Danielle shoots Clarke a nasty look.

PETER

You should have seen it when we
moved in. That wife of his had it
all done up in faux country.

CLARKE

I hate that. Like everything is an
antique, but when you get closer to
it, you realize that everything is
actually new and just made to look
old.

BILLY

Exactly.

CLARKE

So tacky.

DANIELLE

He has a wife?

BILLY

Judy, I think her name was.

PETER

No, Janet, like the middle Brady.

BILLY

Well if you asked me I think she
looked more like Sam the butcher.
We almost didn't get the house
because of her.

PETER

Once she found out that we were in
a long term committed life
partnership.

BILLY

Bitch.

DANIELLE

You got their address?

BILLY

Does she know about you? Danny's
wife?

PETER

Wretched sack of shit that she is.

DANIELLE

I didn't know about her.

Billy gets up and leaves the room.

CLARKE

(re:his tea)

This is delicious.

Billy returns with a shoebox full of mail and a note card.

BILLY

They wanted us to forward their
mail.

PETER

We never did.

BILLY

You wanna deliver it?

Danielle takes the shoebox and the note card.

PETER

She's gonna shit twice and die.

INT. CLARKE'S DAD'S BLUE OLDSMOBILE- LATER

Clarke drives as Danielle ponders the box of mail in her lap.

CLARKE

I've never seen a real live
homosexual couple.

DANIELLE

Get over it, you fuckers are everywhere.

INT. CLARKE'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Peggy, makes her son's bed. As she tucks in the sheets, her hand finds something under the mattress. She pulls out Clarke's cornucopia of gay porn. Joseph enters, sees what his wife is holding.

INT. DANIELLE'S DINING AREA-LATE NIGHT

Clarke is asleep on the sofa. Danielle sits at the dining room table, going through her father's mail, mostly outdated bills and junk mail, but she opens it nonetheless.

INT. DANIELLE'S LIVING ROOM- THE NEXT MORNING

Clarke snoozes. Danielle pokes him. She has a rather large pack slung over her shoulders.

DANIELLE

Get up!

CLARKE

What?

DANIELLE

We got's to go.

Clarke gets up and heads to the bathroom. We can hear him relieving himself on the other side of the door.

CLARKE

Where do you wanna eat breakfast? I think Sambo's takes credit cards.

DANIELLE

You're taking me to California.

The peeing sound stops suddenly. The bathroom door opens slowly.

CLARKE

You're a crazy person.

DANIELLE

I don't have a car, or I'd drive myself.

CLARKE

Danny you gotta be more sensible.
Talk to your mom when she gets
back.

DANIELLE

It's a three day trip if we haul
ass. By the time Sue-Ann notices
I'm gone, I'll already be there.

CLARKE

My parents will kill me.

DANIELLE

Tell them you were manipulated by
my pussy.

CLARKE

I feel for you, I do, but I can't
steal my dad's car. I don't know
what would happen, but somehow I
imagine it would hurt... a lot.

DANIELLE

I don't want to be a Mormon,
Clarke, and I don't want to share
my room with that pissy little cunt
bag. This is my chance. I've never
known my daddy, and now I got a
name and an address, and some hope.

CLARKE

I can't.

DANIELLE

You disgust me.

CLARKE

I'm sor..

DANIELLE

Get Out!

INT. CLARKE'S HOUSE- A LITTLE LATER.

The house is quiet, somewhat empty. Clarke enters.

CLARKE

I'm home! Mom?

No answer.

Clarke goes to the KITCHEN, opens the refrigerator door, drinks milk from the carton.

. Then, his father's voice from behind...

JOSEPH

You have a good time?

Clarke turns around to find his parents sitting at the kitchen table, clearly in conference mode.

Clarke sees his PORN COLLECTION spread all over the table.

JOSEPH

Now what are we gonna do about you?
You know you're not supposed to
drink from the carton.

Clarke's eyes meet his father's, he knows that look.

Clarke makes a break for it, darts for the FRONT DOOR, dropping the carton of milk.

Joseph tries to chase him but is hindered by the table, giving Clarke enough of a head start, so that he makes it to

THE OLDSMOBILE

Clarke starts up the car and peels out.

Joseph flies from the house, trips over a SPRINKLER, hops down the street after his son.

Clarke is too fast for him.

INT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE

Danielle eats cold Chinese food in the kitchen. Somebody outside lays on their CAR HORN.

Danielle opens the mini blinds in the LIVING ROOM window to see what's up.

Clarke yells from THE OLDSMOBLIE.

CLARKE

Bring Joan!

Danielle grabs her bag, and Joan, then heads out the FRONT DOOR.

Clarke takes the tape out of his walkman and inserts it into the car radio, sharing his music for the first time.

Melissa Manchester, full voiced, blasts out of the speakers, "You should hear how they talk about you!" as...

INSIDE THE BLUE OLDSMOBILE ON THE OPEN ROAD

Clarke drives. Danielle has her feet up on the dash.

Slow push in on Joan strapped into the backseat.

CLARKE (V.O AS JOAN)

Dear diary, I'm super excited about our family vacation. I'm only a week old and already am seeing all the great sites of this great land...

Danielle rolls up the window as they speed past a cattle ranch.

CLARKE (V.O. AS JOAN)

It is said that most American families don't spend enough quality time together...

The Oldsmobile speeds past a sign that says, "Now leaving Oklahoma. Ya'll come back now, ya hear?"

Danielle opens the small sun roof. She stands up raises her arms and screams as the wind blows through her hair.

Clarke looks up at her, smiles, and presses his foot harder on the gas

CLARKE (V.O AS JOAN)

My parents are different. They're rebel outlaws, out to cause trouble and have a good time.

DANIELLE

AHHHHHHHHHH!

Danielle plops back into her seat, a giggling mad woman.

DANIELLE

I've never been out of Oklahoma.
God Damn!

CLARKE

My grandma lives in Dallas, so I'm used to travelling.

DANIELLE

You ever see the ocean?

CLARKE

No.

DANIELLE

When we get to Fresno, we'll go to the beach.

Melissa Manchester finishes her song and fades out.

CLARKE

Don't you just love Melissa Manchester?

DANIELLE

I'm more of a Whitesnake girl.

CLARKE

I was thinkin' we could enter the talent show when we get back. Do one of her songs together.

DANIELLE

I'm not gettin' on no stage, especially with you.

Danielle notices that she has hurt Clarke's feelings.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

You got to understand Clarke, you and I come from different worlds. It just wouldn't be right in the public eye to see the two of us belting out the theme from Ice Castles.

CLARKE

What if we did, "Don't Cry Out Loud"?

DANIELLE

Clarke, I'm not going back.

CLARKE

Danny? He may not want you.

DANIELLE
I'm a fucking babe.

CLARKE
What about his wife?

DANIELLE
I'm sure I can handle her, thank
you very much.

Danielle begins to paint her toenails on the dash.

CLARKE
If you spill that, my dad'll kill
me.

DANIELLE
Baby, you came out of the closet,
stole his car and took off with the
class whore. You are the definition
of dead.

Danielle turns up the radio. Pat Benatar screeches "Hell is
for Children".

DANIELLE
(re: song)
Now this is me!

Danielle thrashes her head as she paints her nails.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Joseph and Peggy stand before VERY THIN PARTNER (one of the
cops that brought Danielle home) who is behind a tall
counter.

VERY THIN PARTNER
Why don't you go on home. I'm sure
your son is probably already there
waiting for you.

JOSEPH
My son is a problem child who has
gone off the deep end.

PEGGY
He's special.

VERY THIN PARTNER
Oh, he's a retard.

JOSEPH
I wish he were.

VERY THIN PARTNER
He's probably at a friend's house.

PEGGY
He has difficulty making friends.

JOSEPH
There's that trashy Danielle girl.

PEGGY
I wish you hadn't encouraged that.

JOSEPH
Are you questioning my ability to parent effectively?

PEGGY
He took up with that girl and now he's gone. Perhaps you shouldn't have forced him is all.

JOSEPH
Shut up, woman.

VERY THIN PARTNER
Does this Danielle girl have long curly hair?

JOSEPH
Yes.

VERY THIN PARTNER
A cherry red mustang?

JOSEPH
Yes.

VERY THIN PARTNER
The kind of boobies that'll give a lady back trouble in the future?

JOSEPH
That's her.

VERY THIN PARTNER
Ya'll got trouble.

EXT. A DUSTY GAS STATION, TEXAS PANHANDLE- LATER

Clarke fills up The Oldsmobile. Danielle gets out of the car.

DANIELLE
I'm gonna get me a slurpie, you
want something?

CLARKE
Bag of pork rinds.

DANIELLE
Gimmie your dad's credit card.

CLARKE
Huh?

DANIELLE
You still got his card, right?

CLARKE
I don't think he'd take kindly to
fitting the bill for your trip.

DANIELLE
Our trip. You're here too.

CLARKE
You didn't bring any money?

DANIELLE
I got the thirty bucks Sue-Ann left
under the lamp, but we should save
our cash.

CLARKE
This was not well planned.

DANIELLE
My daddy will pay your daddy back.

Clarke hands Danielle the card.

Danielle goes inside, Clarke finishes pumping the gas. He
watches Danielle inside the gas station, then heads to a

PHONE BOOTH

INT. CLARKE'S HOUSE-CONTINUOUS

The phone rings. Peggy rushes to answer it.

PEGGY

Hello?

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Collect call from Clarke, do you accept the charges?

PEGGY

Yes. Clarke, honey, where are you?

CLARKE

Is daddy really mad at me?

PEGGY

You best hurry home, the way he's been talkin', honestly honey I'm afraid of what he might do.

CLARKE

Do you still want to send me away?

PEGGY

Honey, I never wanted to send you away. Why don't you come home and we'll discuss it.

CLARKE

Does daddy still want to send me away?

PEGGY

Your father gets very determined when he makes his mind up about something.

CLARKE

I know.

PEGGY

We'll just have to try to convince him together. Clarke, are you with that girl?

Danielle appears behind Clarke. He does not notice her.

CLARKE

No.

PEGGY

She's bad news, honey.

Danielle reaches over Clarke's shoulder and cuts off the receiver.

INT. CLARKE'S HOUSE-CONTINUOUS

Peggy hangs up the phone.

JOSEPH
Who was that?

PEGGY
Telemarketer.

JOSEPH
Let's go on over to that girl's
house.

PEGGY
Somebody should wait by the phone.

EXT. A DUSTY GAS STATION- CONTINUOUS

Clarke turns to find Danielle staring at him.

CLARKE
You were right. I am dead.

DANIELLE
Why don't I drive.

INT. INSIDE THE BLUE OLDSMOBILE ON THE OPEN ROAD- ARIZONA

Danielle drives. Clarke stares vacantly out the window.

DANIELLE
Did you tell your parents where we
are? If you did I swear to god I
will pull this car over and kick
your ass out.

CLARKE
This is my car you selfish cunt!

DANIELLE
That is an ugly, hateful word.

CLARKE
I learned it from you.

DANIELLE
Well it's not nice to call people
names to their face. Especially a
friend.

CLARKE

Are you my friend?

Danielle will not answer this. She stiffens and returns to the matter at hand.

DANIELLE

Are you gettin' cold feet?

Clarke does not answer.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Why is it that every pussy I know has a dick attached? You can't count on men for shit.

CLARKE

You're runnin' toward somethin'. I'm just runnin' away.

DANIELLE

Ain't that just poetic.

CLARKE

You're gettin' to live your dream, I'm just gettin' into deeper shit.
(then)
You're not even nice to me.

DANIELLE

Did you tell them where we are?

CLARKE

Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't.

DANIELLE

Oh I get it we're playing mind games now. Did you learn that from your therapist?

CLARKE

You haven't even said thank you.

DANIELLE

(put off)
Well, some things go without saying.

CLARKE

Then, I guess it goes without saying that I think you are the neatest person I have ever known, and I feel less afraid when I'm around you, cause you're braver than I'll ever be. And it also goes without saying, I would never tell on you.

DANIELLE

You didn't tell?

Clarke shakes his head no.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

I promise I'll find some way to thank you.

EXT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE- SUNSET

Joseph eyes Danielle's mustang in the carport.

He goes to the front door, knocks on it vigorously, but there is no answer.

He walks around the side of the trailer, peaks in through the window, sees his son's backpack inside.

Joseph removes the vertical slats of glass in the window, sets them on the floor inside. He hikes his injured foot through the window first and awkwardly pulls himself through the opening.

One good heave and he thrusts himself into SUE-ANN'S BEDROOM, landing ass first on the slats of glass.

JOSEPH

AHHHHHH!!

ACROSS THE STREET

A FAT FEMALE NEIGHBOR (tragic, but jolly) heats up her franks n' beans in a dirty microwave. She hears Joseph's pained scream, looks out her window to see him hopping around freakishly.

FAT FEMALE NEIGHBOR

(screams)

911! 911!

INT. POLICE STATION- NIGHT

Joseph stands behind bars in darkness. Very Thin Partner clicks his tongue disapprovingly.

VERY THIN PARTNER
You should of left it to the professionals. Breaking and entering, was that really necessary? Couldn't you have called, wouldn't that have been the neighborly thing to do?

JOSEPH
My son is a troubled boy.

VERY THIN PARTNER
My friend, all sons are troubled.

JOSEPH
I need to see a doctor, my ass is bleeding.

VERY THIN PARTNER
You think that's news around here? I'll see if I can round you up a band-aid.

Very thin partner exits.

Joseph heads over to the toilet, gathers up a wad of toilet paper. He unbuckles his pants, reaches around to pat down his injury. Not only can he not reach it, but he can't quite see it either. He struggles, then out of the darkness he hears...

MAN'S VOICE
You need some help with that, Chief?

A BIG BIKER DUDE (late thirties, ZZ-Top beard) emerges from the shadows.

INT. A SHITTY DAY'S INN LOBBY- NIGHT

A CONCIERGE (Male early 20's, but has yet to outgrow acne) is asleep behind the counter. Danielle nudges him awake.

DANIELLE
Me and my husband need a room.

CONCIERGE

Can't rent you a room unless you're
eighteen.

DANIELLE

But this here's our wedding night.

CONCIERGE

I'm onto you two.

(then to Danielle)

You're Jimmy's new girl ain't ya?
They just keep getting younger and
younger.

CLARKE

This is my wife. We were married
this afternoon.

DANIELLE

(whispering)

Sort of a shotgun situation.

CONCIERGE

I know how it is when you want get
your nut for the first time. We've
all been there. You're smart to use
a workin' girl, gets everything out
of the way, no fuss, no muss. I
assume you'll be paying cash.

CLARKE

Credit.

Clarke reaches for his dad's card.

CONCIERGE

(re: Danielle)

You know she don't take cards?

DANIELLE

He knows.

Clarke signs the slip. The concierge hands over a key.

CONCIERGE

(winking)

I'm giving you the honeymoon suite.
You enjoy yourself now.

CLARKE

Thanks.

Clarke and Danielle head to the elevator.

CONCIERGE

(calling to Danielle)

Jimmy usually sends me over a free sample.

DANIELLE

You can work that out with Jimmy.

Danielle and Clarke step onto the ELEVATOR.

CLARKE

He can't tell the difference between a slut and a hooker.

DANIELLE

I'm not a slut.

CLARKE

Okay.

DANIELLE

Just because I've had sex with many, many, many men, doesn't make me a slut. You forget, I discriminate.

CLARKE

Jesus, I'm sorry. I didn't realize it was such a touchy subject.

DANIELLE

Yeah, well when was the last time someone thought you were a hooker?

CLARKE

Never.

DANIELLE

Well then, there you go.

CLARKE

But I wish someone would.

The elevator door opens.

DANIELLE

We gotta get you laid.

INT. CABIN-NIGHT

Sue-Ann, Ray, Charley, and Mindy sit around the table eating fish.

MINDY
(re:fish)
I don't like it.

RAY
Now Mindy, your brother and I
killed this special for you, and
Sue-Ann's been slaving away. Time
to show a little appreciation.

Mindy licks her fish.

MINDY
Tastes pooppy.

SUE-ANN
It's always hard to try new things.
I understand.

Sue-Ann winks at Mindy.

RAY
Isn't this fun all of us here
together? Makes a man thankful.

Mindy takes a bite of her fish, swallows it.

SUE-ANN
I wish Danielle were here to see
how nice things are working out.

Mindy projectile vomits across the table.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT.

Clarke lays on the vibrating bed. Joan, the flour baby, is next to him. His whole body shakes. He begins to sing, the bed gives his voice the added vibrato of a chipmunk.

Joan slowly, but surely bounces closer and closer to the edge of the bed...

CLARKE
(singing)
*Oooo, baby do you know what that's
worth? You make heaven a place on
earth...*

HOTEL ROOM BATHROOM

We can hear Clarke's Belinda Carlisle impersonation from the other room. Danielle, fresh out of the shower, wrapped in a white towel, performs for herself in the mirror.

DANIELLE

We were just passin' through,
thought we'd stop off and say
hello.

(tries another)

People tell me all the time how
much we look alike, and its true,
isn't it?

She notices the hickey on her neck left by Big Mike.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Shit.

She grabs a piece of ice from the ice bucket, and presses it to her hickey.

Back on the BED, Joan finally falls off the mattress and onto the floor. A small puff of flour escapes.

Danielle enters from the bathroom.

DANIELLE

(re: Hickey)

No wonder he thought I was a
hooker, I look like a fuckin'
leper. Where's Joan?

Clarke looks around. Scrambles to the side of the bed, looks over the edge to see Joan on her head.

CLARKE

Oops.

DANIELLE

You gotta be more careful with her.

CLARKE

Sorry.

DANIELLE

How would you like to be dropped on
your head?

CLARKE

I have been dropped on my head.
Daddy says, momma dropped me and
that's what accounts for my
feminine ways.

DANIELLE

So you wanna make Joan a lesbian.
Nice. You gays always trying to
convert everybody.

Clarke laughs.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

(picking Joan up)

Well, I don't see any damage. None
that Mrs. Hatcher would notice
anyway.

CLARKE

If you're not going back, why are
you worried about your grade?

DANIELLE

Go to sleep. We gotta long day
tomorrow.

CLARKE

Have you ever tried magic fingers?

Danielle lays down on the bed next to Clarke, Joan between
them. Clarke puts a quarter in the machine.

The bed vibrates.

CLARKE

Now do this.
(he opens his mouth)
Ahhhhhhhh!

DANIELLE

Ahhhhhhhh!

Joan and her parents jiggle happily on the bed.

EXT. DAY'S INN-NIGHT

The sound of Danielle and Clarke's vibrating screams echo
through the Texas panhandle.

INT. CABIN-NIGHT

Sue-Ann holds Mindy's hair back as she wretches in the toilet bowl.

SUE-ANN
That's a good girl, get it all out.
You'll feel much better.

OUTSIDE THE DOOR Sue-Ann hears the unmistakable sounds of someone else retching.

RAY
(calling out)
Sue-Ann!

SUE-ANN
(handing Mindy her pony
tail)
Hold this, baby.

Mindy takes her pony tail, holds it above her head and continues to throw up.

Sue-Ann opens the bathroom door, sees Charlie throwing up in the kitchen sink.

SUE-ANN
Was it the fish?

INT. POLICE STATION- NIGHT

Joseph lays on his stomach with his pants down. Big Biker Dude picks shards of glass out of his ass.

BIG BIKER DUDE
... and that's when I discovered
Kabbala.

JOSEPH
You tell anyone about this, and
you're dead.

BIG BIKER DUDE
The world is full of too much
violence, you got to be peaceable.

JOSEPH
Oh yeah, what are you in for?

BIG BIKER DUDE
Sort of a no-means-yes kind of
situation.

Very Thin Partner enters followed by Peggy.

VERY THIN PARTNER
(re: Joseph's compromising
position)
I see you've made a friend.

BIG BIKER DUDE
We're bonding.

PEGGY
Joseph, what happened to your be-
hind?

Joseph struggles to pull up his pants.

JOSEPH
Took you long enough. That boy
could be halfway to kingdom come by
now.

PEGGY
Clarke has one car you have the
other, I had to walk.

JOSEPH
First exercise you got in years,
probably did you good.
(to Big Biker)
She wasn't this fat when I married
her, honest..

The Officer begins to unlock the cell.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
When I get my hands on that boy,
I'm gonna kill him.

Peggy stops the Officer from unlocking the cell.

PEGGY
Wait! You gotta promise that you
won't hurt him.

JOSEPH
I got an injured foot and shards of
glass in my ass cause of that boy.

BIG BIKER DUDE

Them little pieces gonna need
tweezers.

JOSEPH

He has humiliated me for the last
time.

PEGGY

You're the humiliation. Drag me
away from that phone, cause you've
gone off and lost it again. Our son
could have called and here I am
bailing my husband out of jail.

JOSEPH

Open the God Damn door.

PEGGY

Officer, if I refuse to take my
husband right now, what's gonna
happen?

JOSEPH

Peggy!

VERY THIN PARTNER

Seein' as though it's a weekend,
judge won't be in til Monday.

PEGGY

And he has to stay here locked up?

VERY THIN PARTNER

Yep.

JOSEPH

You leave me in here, and it is
over.

PEGGY

I'm gonna find my son, and you will
never lay another hand on him.

JOSEPH

You are a stupid, stupid woman.

PEGGY

Rot!

Peggy exits. The guard shrugs and follows her.

JOSEPH
Get your fat ass back here.

BIG BIKER DUDE
See what I mean. God don't like
ugly.

INT. RAY'S CAR- NIGHT

The family is heading home. Sue-ann is at the wheel. Like the sick little dogs that they are, Mindy and Charlie hang their heads out the window to get some fresh air.

RAY
So much for family time.

SUE-ANN
I never made cat fish before.

Sue-ann looks to Ray, he says nothing.

SUE-ANN (CONT'D AS RAY)
"No baby it isn't your fault. I
know you were doing your best."

Silence.

RAY
Pull over!

Ray jumps out of the car and hurls in the bushes.

Sue-Ann looks away, notices a sign along the side of the road that reads, "No fishing due to spill."

INT. INSIDE THE BLUE OLDSMOBILE- I-40, NEW MEXICO- MORNING

Clarke and Danielle speed closer to their destination.

CLARKE (V.O. AS JOAN)
Dear Diary, New Mexico is a great
big bore.

Clarke writes in a spiral notebook.

CLARKE (V.O. AS JOAN)
Mom does most of the driving
because she thinks that dad goes
too slow. Daddy is happy, being a
man and all, just navigating. He is
a most excellent map reader.

(MORE)

CLARKE (V.O. AS JOAN) (cont'd)
 With the division of labor so neatly divided, and both of them willing to stay in their designated roles, I am convinced that I have the happiest family there ever was.

Danielle turns up the music, this time it's Blondie's Rapture.

The Rap Section of Rapture comes on, Clarke and Danielle have choreographed hand movements to it. They look like the best friends the world has ever known.

BLONDIE
 "Fab Five Freddie told me
 everything was fine/ DJ spinning he
 said, my my...and you don't stop,
 do the punk rock"

They pass a HITCHHIKER (early 20's, great ass). The sight of him shuts Clarke up.

CLARKE
 Did you see that guy? Pull over I
 want to ask him if those are Bugle
 Boy jeans he's wearing.

DANIELLE
 Press on we must Clarke, press on
 we must.

CLARKE
 You're the one who keeps saying you
 need to get me laid.

DANIELLE
 You're not his type, Clarke.

CLARKE
 And you are?

DANIELLE
 I'm everybody's type.

CLARKE
 Where do you get your confidence?

DANIELLE
 It's the natural result of having
 one's beauty repeatedly affirmed.
 The more people tell you you're
 hot, the more you're gonna believe
 it.

CLARKE

Nobody nowhere's has ever called me hot.

EXT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE-MORNING

Peggy sleeps at the wheel of her car as she stakes out Danielle's house.

Sue-Ann, Ray, Charley and Mindy pull into the drive way.

Peggy stirs at the sound of their car, but does not wake up.

SUE-ANN

Everybody go on in and lay down.

MINDY

Can I sleep in Danielle's room?

Peggy wakes up at the sound of their voices.

SUE-ANN

You can sleep wherever you want. Ray? I got a set of big bowls under the stove make sure everybody's got one.

PEGGY

Excuse me? This is incredibly embarrassing, but I am a desperate woman. I have reason to believe my son has run off with your daughter.

SUE-ANN

I shoulda never left that brat alone. Listen, I got a house full of sick people, horny children are the least of my worries right now. They're gonna turn up. They always do.

PEGGY

My son is gay.

Sue-Ann stops on the steps.

PEGGY

(surprised at herself)
That's the first time I've ever said that out loud.

SUE-ANN
Your Clarke's Mama?

PEGGY
I've been a terrible mother and
I've lost my son.

SUE-ANN
If you can stand the smell of sick
people, you can come on in.

Peggy follows Sue-Ann into the trailer.

The house is just as Danielle and Clarke left it, a complete
and utter pigsty.

RAY
Sue-Ann, there's glass all over
your bedroom floor.

PEGGY
My husband's a might high strung
when it comes to our boy. I'll be
sure to take care of any damages.

Sue-Ann notices the family tree left behind on the coffee
table. She picks it up and touches the name, "Danny Briggs".

SUE-ANN
Oh my god..

INT. A REST STOP MEN'S ROOM SOMEWHERE IN ARIZONA- LATER

Clarke stands at a urinal relieving himself.

In walks the sexy hitchhiker Clarke and Danielle passed
earlier. He takes the urinal next to Clarke.

Clarke peers over casually and is shocked to see who it is.

The Hitchhiker peers back, smiles knowingly.

Clarke goes to wash his hands. The Hitchhiker soon follows,
the two make eye contact through the mirror. Clarke quickly
looks away, and heads for the door.

He stops just short of exiting, turns and asks...

CLARKE
Excuse me, are those bugle boy
jeans you're wearing?

The Hitchhiker smiles.

EXT. REST STOP PARKING LOT

Danielle sits on the hood of the Oldsmobile eating a bag of chips. Clarke approaches with the Hitchhiker

CLARKE

Joel here was wondering if we could drop him off in Vegas.

DANIELLE

I...

CLARKE

I told him it wouldn't be a problem, this being my car and everything.

JOEL

I got a job there waiting for me.

DANIELLE

Listen Joel...

CLARKE

And the cool thing is, is that unlike some people, Joel is willing to help out with expenses.

JOEL

I got money.
(he produces a wad of singles)
I just don't have wheels.

CLARKE

Get in. Danielle, you don't mind driving do you?

Joel hops into the back seat.

DANIELLE

We don't know him.

CLARKE

You said you wanted to think of a way to thank me.

DANIELLE

This is a distraction from the stated goals.

CLARKE

You have your destiny, I have mine.

DANIELLE

Have I taught you nothing? You must discriminate before designating.

Clarke hops into the back seat with Joel.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Joseph sits in the cell with Big Biker Dude.

The officer enters with breakfast.

VERY THIN PARTNER

I got a lead on your boy. Seems he's been blazing quite a trail with your credit card.

INT. INSIDE THE BLUE OLDSMOBILE ON THE OPEN ROAD- ARIZONA

Clarke and Joel giggle in the backseat. Danielle watches them jealousy through the rear view mirror.

Joan is in the front seat now with Danielle.

DANIELLE (V.O. AS JOAN)

Dear Diary, It turns out that daddy is a big fat whore. I am a lucky girl that I am learning valuable lessons about the nature of men.

DANIELLE (ALoud)

What sort of work do you have in Vegas?

JOEL

I'm a dancer.

CLARKE

Like on Fame?

JOEL

I'm not all that technical, I'm more free form.

CLARKE

Can you do the splits?

DANIELLE
You dance for tips, right? That's
why you got all those singles.

JOEL
It's my art, if people want to give
me money for my art, that just
makes me a professional artist.

DANIELLE
You're a stripper.

JOEL
Erotic entertainer.

DANIELLE
Stripper.

CLARKE
Lots of people can't make a living
doing what they love. You're lucky.

JOEL
You get me, don't you?

Danielle can't take having the focus off of her.

DANIELLE
I can do the splits!

INT. DANIELLE'S DOUBLE WIDE-DAY

PEGGY
You're telling me that my little
boy is in California?

SUE-ANN
I kept it from her too long.

RAY
What kind of mother are you, Sue-
Ann?

SUE-ANN
I'm doing the best I can here with
what I got to work with.

PEGGY
We need to contact Danielle's
father.

SUE-ANN

I wouldn't know where to begin.

PEGGY

We have his address.

SUE-ANN

He don't know about her. I don't know what I would say, that part of my life is over.

RAY

Apparently it's not.

SUE-ANN

Ray, don't be like that. This is just a minor little big deal. And I'm going to take care of it and then we're gonna be real happy.

RAY

Says who?

PEGGY

This isn't about anything else but our kids. We want them home. We want them safe. I don't know much about the two of you..

(to Ray)

but these concerns really just need to stay secondary right now.

Ray exits.

SUE-ANN

I'm a terrible mother.

PEGGY

Join the club.

EXT. GAS STATION IN ARIZONA- DAY

DANIELLE

(to Joel)

This is on you, right?

JOEL

Sure thing.

Joel gets out, starts to pump gas.

CLARKE

He's so fine.

DANIELLE

You're making a fool of yourself
Clarke. That guy wants one thing.

CLARKE

My ass served up on a platter.

DANIELLE

He wants a ride and that's it.

CLARKE

You're jealous.

DANIELLE

I know some things that you don't.

CLARKE

You're the sexy one here, and
nobody else gets to play.

DANIELLE

He's not gonna fuck you Clarke.
Just telling you, start getting
used to the idea.

CLARKE

If you were really a friend you
wouldn't say stuff like that.

DANIELLE

I care about you Clarke.

CLARKE

I gotta pee.

Clarke gets out of the car. Danielle watches through the rear
view mirror as he and Joel pass each other, touching hands.
Joel gets into the backseat.

JOEL

I just wanna say, I sure do
appreciate your hospitality. Giving
me a ride and all.

DANIELLE

You make him any promises, you best
follow through.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY AIRPORT- NIGHT

An airplane takes off.

INSIDE THE AIRPLANE

Peggy and Sue-Ann sit next to each other.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE

...we got a nice tail wind so our flying time to Bakersfield should be just under three hours. Sit back and enjoy the flight.

An awkward silence sits between Peggy and Sue-Ann.

A man across the aisle begins to snore. The moms notice him.

PEGGY

I don't know how anybody sleeps on one of these things.

Sue-Ann takes Peggy's hand. They are a team.

EXT. A FIELD NEAR THE FREEWAY-NIGHT

The Blue Oldsmobile is parked under a large vintage billboard that reads "Fill 'er up!" The doors on the Oldsmobile are open, Clarke's tape provides ambience. Melissa Manchester sings "Midnight Blue".

Joel is stoking a fire. Danielle and Clarke are huddled in a blanket they stole from the Days Inn.

JOEL

(re:fire)

And I thought the boyscouts taught me nothing.

DANIELLE

(sarcastic)

Of all the hitchhikers in the world we could have picked up, how did we get one so masculine and capable?

JOEL

You learn a few things when you're on your own. Were you a boy scout, Clarke?

CLARKE

For about a week in second grade. They gave us these boxes of candy to sell door to door. I ate all mine so my mom gave me the money to buy the whole box so I wouldn't get in trouble. My dad was so mad, said the two of us was in cahoots.

JOEL

My daddy took off when I was little.

CLARKE

Like Danny's.

DANIELLE

Mine took off before I was born, so I win.

JOEL

Are we competing?

DANIELLE

I'm just saying I probably had it worse.

JOEL

You know what it's like then, don't you? That crazy thing when you look for him everywhere. Anytime you're in a crowd, there's a chance, so you walk around a little straighter hoping to look your best just in case. I could never be on the freeway, my neck would get so sore, looking in every car window, thinking one of these guys is my daddy. Looking everywhere for somebody who don't want to be found. You got that look Danny, like me.

DANIELLE

Oh yeah?

JOEL

Like you'll never be full, but there's that little teeny tiny bit of hope in our eyes, says maybe it ain't all shit.

Danielle looks at Clarke, who stares at Joel's beautiful, fire-lit face.

DANIELLE

I want to hear more about your art.

CLARKE

Show us.

JOEL

You guys are crazy.

DANIELLE

Come on. We got the music...

She turns on the car headlights...

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

The fancy lighting. All that's missin' is a pole.

JOEL

It's cold out.

DANIELLE

Keeps everything perky.

The next song starts, it's the Go-Go's "Our lips are sealed".

Clarke smiles at Joel, his heart melting.

JOEL

This is too fast, I only dance to the slow ones. Kind of my signature.

DANIELLE

The artist wants a ballad.

Danielle fast forwards the tape to the next song, The Bangles sing "Eternal Flame".

JOEL

I can't believe I am doing this out in the middle of nowhere. You best appreciate it.

CLARKE

Promise I do.

Danielle stays back by the car. This show is for Clarke.

Joel begins to move slowly in headlights. He is a terrible dancer, but there is something raw in his movements that make him attractive. It is the utter conviction that even without any sense of discernible rhythm, he is sexy. He unbuttons his shirt.

Clarke takes a deep nervous breath.

Danielle wraps herself in the covers they stole from the Day's Inn, picks up Joan, and walks away, leaving Clarke and Joel alone.

Joel begins to unbutton his pants.

Clarke pulls out a dollar bill, holds it up.

Joel grooves over to Clarke. Clarke tucks the bill into Joel's pants.

Joel takes Clarke's hand and pulls him to his feet.

He takes off Clarke's glasses and kisses him. The two dance close for a moment.

Joel leaves Clarke in the headlights, gets into the backseat of the Oldsmobile.

Clarke is blinded and nervous, standing next to the fire in the harsh headlights.

JOEL

Come on then.

THE BANGLES

Is this burning an eternal flame?

Joel extends his hand, Clarke takes it and gets into the backseat.

Danielle leans against the billboard next to Joan.

DANIELLE

Well Joan, what do ya know? Daddy's a man now.

EXT. THE SAME FIELD BY THE FREEWAY- THE NEXT MORNING.

Clarke wakes up in the backseat of the Oldsmobile with a smile on his face.

Joel is nowhere in sight.

INT. INSIDE THE OLDSMOBILE ON THE OPEN ROAD, SOMEWHERE IN THE DESERT- DAY

Clarke sits in the backseat looking out the window forlornly. Danielle, as always is at the wheel.

DANIELLE

I know you don't want to hear this right now, but you'll get over it.

CLARKE

I fell in love last night, and now he's gone. My one chance at happiness.

DANIELLE

Stop acting like a girl.

CLARKE

You drove him away.

DANIELLE

Clarke, I'm gonna stop this conversation right now while you re-adjust your thinking.

CLARKE

Welcome to life, Clarke. You're just another tainted grown up.

DANIELLE

Jesus Christ.

CLARKE

There is no room in the world for a love like ours, they hate us for it. Such a fragile thing, too beautiful and precious for this world. You will never be safe in this land of jealous saboteurs.

The Oldsmobile stalls. Danielle looks at the gas gage. Empty.

DANIELLE

Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!

Danielle gets out and kicks the car repeatedly, making a huge dent.

DANIELLE

You fucking bitch!

CLARKE

Joel would know what to do, if he were here.

DANIELLE

We best start walking.

CLARKE

Yes, you best.

DANIELLE

Clarke, let's go.

CLARKE

You're the one with the reason to live. You walk.

DANIELLE

Okay when I get to the next town, I'm gonna call your father and tell him his son is waiting for him with a torn rectum in his stolen car 20 miles East of Reno.

Clarke presses eject on the stereo, puts the mix tape in his headphones and gets out of the car. He walks three paces behind Danielle as he listens to his headphones.

Joan, the flour baby, is left behind.

EXT. HOME OF DANNY AND JANET BRIGGS- MORNING

A Taxi stops in front of a small, white, perfectly manicured house. A suburban dream. Peggy and Sue-Ann get out.

SUE-ANN

Do I look okay?

Peggy smiles, and the two head up the walkway.

EXT. ROADSIDE- SOMEWHERE IN THE NEVADA DESERT- LATER

A HIGHWAY PATROLMAN pulls up behind the car on his motorcycle.

Joan sits in the backseat of the Oldsmobile, where her parents left her.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Very thin partner opens the cell for Joseph.

VERY THIN PARTNER
Alright mister, your time is up.

JOESEPH
(to Big Biker Dude)
I wish I could say it's been a
pleasure.

BIG BIKER DUDE
You be good to that boy of yours.

JOESEPH
Or what? He'll end up like you.

BIG BIKER DUDE
No. He'll end up like you.

VERY THIN PARTNER
We found your car.

EXT. OKALHOMA CITY AIRPORT- DAY

An airplane takes off.

INSIDE THE AIRPLANE

A STEWARDESS offers Joeseeph some peanuts.

EXT. ROADSIDE- SOMEWHERE IN THE NEVADA DESERT- LATER

Danielle walks with her thumb out trying to hitch a ride.
Clarke still trails her.

CLARKE
Might as well put your arm down,
ain't no cars coming.

Danielle scowls at Clarke.

Just then, Clarke's tape stops.

CLARKE
Shit. Fucking batteries.

DANIELLE

Guess you're gonna have to talk to me now.

CLARKE

Never.

DANIELLE

He didn't leave because of me. He left because that's the kind of guy he is.

CLARKE

It really bugs you don't it? That a man found me more attractive than you. Maybe you're just not as cute as you used to be.

A semi-truck comes barreling down the freeway.

DANIELLE

Oh yeah?

Danielle sticks out her thumb. The truck squawks to a halt at the sight of her.

DANIELLE

I still got it, bitch.

INT. SEMI-TRUCK- LATER

Clarke and Danielle are squeezed in with the most HIDEOUS TOOTHLESS TRUCKER the world has ever seen.

HIDEOUS TOOTHLESS TRUCKER

You two are lucky I came along, it's hotter than blazes out there, wouldn't want a pretty thing like you gettin' dehydrated.

CLARKE

(to Danielle)

What's that word you're always using to describe yourself? Discriminating.

INT. GAS STATION OUTSIDE OF VEGAS- EVENING

A SWEATY ATTENDANT (40's, inexplicable hair) stands behind a counter ringing Danny and Clarke up.

SWEATY ATTENDANT

Tank of gas, will be fifteen dollars. My son'll drive you back to your car. Will that be cash or charge?

CLARKE

DANIELLE

Cash.

Charge.

CLARKE

I'm sick of paying your way. You are hateful and ungrateful.

DANIELLE

Don't be an asshole. You're just as stuck as I am.

CLARKE

You got an emergency fund. Use it.

DANIELLE

I can't.

CLARKE

Why spend your own money when you can spend someone else's?

DANIELLE

I don't have it anymore.

CLARKE

You spent it! The only cash we have? You are such a selfish bitch. What did you buy yourself?

DANIELLE

It's what I bought you!

Clarke is truly confused.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

I wanted to do something nice for you. To thank you.

Clarke still doesn't get it.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

And you liked him so much.

It dawns on Clarke slowly.

CLARKE
He didn't think I was sexy?

DANIELLE
I'm sure he did. It was just extra
encouragement.

Clarke is dumbfounded, he turns and heads for the door.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Clarke!

Clarke stops.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I need your credit card.

Clarke takes the credit card out of his pocket and throws it at Danielle. Unfortunately, because he throws like a girl it doesn't hit her, rather, lands limply right in front of him.

Exasperated, Clarke exits.

The Attendant gives Danielle a confused look.

DANIELLE
(off look)
That's what I get for marrying a
faggot.

The Attendant swipes the card.

EXT. THE SAME GAS STATION- MOMENTS LATER

Clarke dials a number at the PAY PHONE.

CLARKE
Yes. Collect. From Clarke.

Suddenly, Danielle bursts out of the gas station.

DANIELLE
Clarke! Run!

Danielle grabs Clarke, pulls him from the phone booth. Bewildered, Clarke tears off after her, leaving the receiver dangling.

The Attendant barrels out of the Gas Station

SWEATY ATTENDANT

Hey! Get back here!

Clarke and Danielle duck behind a dumpster.

CLARKE

What the fuck?

DANIELLE

Your card's been reported stolen.

CLARKE

That's what we get for breaking the rules.

DANIELLE

They're gonna know we're here.
Shit! Shit! Shit!

CLARKE

So, it's over.

DANIELLE

Now that you got what you wanted,
you want to throw in the towel?

CLARKE

I want to call my mom.

Across the street Danielle spots a neon sign that says, "The Bullet", and below that in plastic, changeable letters "Amateur Strip Contest."

DANIELLE

Come on.

Danielle crosses the freeway toward "The Bullet". Clarke reluctantly follows.

The Gas Station Attendant watches as Clarke and Danielle enter the bar.

EXT. ROADSIDE- SOMEWHERE IN THE NEVADA DESERT- LATER

A tow truck pulls the Oldsmobile away. Joan doesn't have her seat belt on and so tumbles into the rear window. Her face seems to let out a scream as it is pressed to the glass.

INT. THE BULLET- LATER

The bar is smoky and crowded. Danielle goes up to a BALD DOOR MAN in a leather vest.

DANIELLE
Hey. I want to enter the stripping
contest. Where's the sign up sheet?

BALD DOORMAN
You're looking at him.

DANIELLE
Great.

BALD DOORMAN
Not great. Wouldn't exactly be
appropriate, now would it?

DANIELLE
I'm young but I got the moves,
trust me. My friend can vouch for
me.

CLARKE
She's done her research.

DANIELLE
That prize money is mine. Just give
me a chance.

BALD DOORMAN
The winner is picked by the
audience. You think you can win
these boys over be my guest...

Upon closer inspection of the crowd, Danielle and Clarke quickly surmise it's a gay bar.

DANIELLE
What is it with you people? You're
taking over the world.

BALD DOORMAN
You kids run along now.

They start to go.

DANIELLE
Clarke, you have to do it.

CLARKE

No way.

DANIELLE

You wanna prove you're sexy, now's your chance.

CLARKE

I'm sick of doing your dirty work.

DANIELLE

Don't do it for me. Do it for you.

CLARKE

These guys won't like me.

DANIELLE

(to the doorman)

Sir? You're a hot blooded, bald, American homosexual. Is or is not my friend a chicken hawk's dream?

BALD DOORMAN

Bock Bock.

DANIELLE

You see that? He clucked for you Clarke. It's time you stood up and said, I'm Clarke, I'm here. I am two tons of homo fun.

CLARKE

I'm liable to piss myself.

DANIELLE

That would guarantee you a victory. Clarke, what would Joel do?

INT. THE BULLET- LATER

JADE, (a skinny stripper, too old to still act like a bottom), wearing an American flag g-string finishes up his act on THE SMALL STAGE. He picks up the two dollar bills that were thrown at him.

JADE

Thanks mom.

ANNOUNCER

Let's hear it for last week's winner, Jade. Six weeks and still undefeated.

JADE (O.S.)

Seven.

Danielle hands the Announcer Clarke's tape.

ANNOUNCER

I stand corrected, seven weeks
undefeated, and might I add,
uncontested.

Clarke runs out on stage with a cane back chair, sets it
center stage, and nervously runs back to the wings.

ANNOUNCER

But not this week. Direct from
tornado alley. Don't call him jail
bait, don't call him chicken, just
call him...

The lights fade. The opening strains of Blondie's "Call Me"
burn through the sound system.

Clarke takes the stage timidly. His knee pulses to the music.
All he can muster in terms of dance is snapping his fingers.

HECKLER 1

Take it off.

JADE'S MOM

You suck.

Clarke begins to unbutton his shirt, trying to move like
Joel.

DANIELLE

(to announcer)

Turn it up.

The music gets louder. Clarke closes his eyes and lets the
music carry him away.

The music segues to "Manhunt" from the Flashdance soundtrack.

Clarke rips off his shirt, revealing an undershirt that has
been cut ala Jennifer Beals in Flashdance.

DANIELLE

Woooooo!

The crowd starts to get into it. Clarke pulls off his pants.
In just his Flashdance T-shirt, BVD's and black socks he
mounts a cane back chair.

This is Danielle's cue. She rushes the stage with a bucket of water and douses Clarke.

The Audience goes crazy! They start throwing money at the stage, singles, fives, tens....

The song ends. Clarke Basks in the glow of his clear victory. He is sexy, Damn it!

Danielle crawls about the stage gathering up the money.

ANNOUNCER

By an overwhelming margin, the winner of the fifty dollar prize money, and new champ is

An unmistakable voice shouts out...

JOSEPH

Clarke!

Joseph is revealed in the back of the bar standing with the sweaty gas station attendant.

INT. INSIDE THE OLDSMOBILE- HEADING HOME

Clarke and Danielle ride in the backseat, like guilty troublemakers. Joseph drives.

JOSEPH

It's over for you boy, soon as we drop off your little friend here it's straight to the academy with you.

Clarke, still dripping wet, stares out the window.

DANIELLE

You have no right to kidnap me, you ugly mother fucker.

JOSEPH

And I'll hear no lip from you, it's because of you my son has gone off the deep end.

DANIELLE

Your son was a miserable, whiny douche bag before I got my hands on him.

JOSEPH
And turned him into a cock sucker.

DANIELLE
Mister, for a man clearly desperate
to get his tool drained, it
wouldn't be wise to knock the
willing.

JOSEPH
Don't make me pull this car over.

CLARKE
What are you gonna do, huh? Smack
her around? Knock some sense into
her?

JOSEPH
That's enough out of you.

Clarke slips Danielle the wad of money. She shoots him a,
What are you doing? look.

CLARKE
I tell you what. I like cocks! The
bigger the better.

JOSEPH
Don't make me come back there.

CLARKE
I like the dreamy, creamy taste.

JOSEPH
Shut up!

CLARKE
Somebody pass me a cracker for that
cheese!

Joseph pulls the car over, gets out and heads for Clarke's
side of the car.

DANIELLE
Don't you hurt him!

CLARKE
(to Danielle)
If I'm good at anything, it's how
to take a punch.

Joseph opens the door, grabs Clarke, and pulls him from the
car.

CLARKE (CONT'D)

Run! Now!

Joseph throws Clarke to the ground. Danielle can't leave him.

CLARKE

Go!

Danielle grabs her bag and Joan and takes off across the freeway.

Joseph notices the escape.

JOSEPH

(to Danielle)

You get back here you two bit slut!

Joseph tries to chase Danielle, but is hindered by the traffic.

Danielle runs up the freeway with her thumb out.

A station wagon pulls over. Danielle dives in, and is gone.

EXT. VEGAS BUS STATION- NIGHT.

The station wagon pulls up to the bus stop. Danielle gets out.

INT. VEGAS BUS STATION- LATER

Danielle waits on a bench with Joan. Over the loudspeaker we hear...

ANNOUNCER

Now boarding 12:15 bus to Fresno,
with stops in Barstow, Bakersfield
and Visalia.

EXT. VEGAS BUS STATION- LATER

Danielle boards a bus headed for Fresno.

A friendly male BUS DRIVER (40's, with a kind face) greets Danielle as she boards.

BUS DRIVER

You travelling alone little girl?

DANIELLE

Yep.

BUS DRIVER

Sit up front behind me, then. Some sketchy characters on these buses.

Danielle takes the seat directly behind the bus driver.

INT. ON THE FRESNO BOUND BUS- LATER

Danielle can't sleep. She holds Joan tight and looks out the window.

BUS DRIVER

Don't mind that sign says you can't talk to me. I like it. Helps keep me awake.

DANIELLE

You're a little old for me.

BUS DRIVER

You think I'm hitting on you? Can't say I don't blame you for the misunderstanding. What are you 'bout 16?

DANIELLE

Most people say I look older.

BUS DRIVER

Well you don't. My daughter's your age, ever since she begun to fill out, every man, every age seems to hit on her some way. Not when I'm around, mind you. Men know better then to hit on your little girl right in front of you.

DANIELLE

You're a good dad?

BUS DRIVER

Not perfect, but I try.

DANIELLE

I'm going to see my daddy.

BUS DRIVER

Been a while since you've seen him?

DANIELLE

Forever.

BUS DRIVER

He's gonna be happy to see you.
Somethin' about daddies and their
little girls. It's its own kind of
love.

Danielle looks out the window and smiles.

EXT. FRESNO BUS STOP- THE NEXT MORNING

Danielle gets off the bus, heads for the taxi stand, but
turns and goes inside the station.

INT. FRESNO BUS STOP- LADIES ROOM- MOMENTS LATER.

Danielle stands before the mirror. She pulls out her make-up
case and begins to freshen up.

She stops, pulls her hair back, looking for the hickey that
Mike left her. It's gone.

She turns on the faucet and washes off all of her makeup.

INT. TAXI

Looking fresh and clean for the first time ever, Danielle
passes the suburban houses of Fresno.

She looks at the photo strip of her mother and father, takes
a deep breath.

EXT. HOME OF DANNY AND JANET BRIGGS- LATER

The taxi pulls up to the house. Danielle does not get out.

TAXI DRIVER

We're here.

DANIELLE

I know.

TAXI DRIVER

Means you can get out now.

DANIELLE

Okay.

Danielle gets out of the taxi.

TAXI DRIVER
You still gotta pay me.

DANIELLE
Right, I'm sorry.

Danielle gives the cabby his money, then slowly makes her way up the long concrete walk.

At the FRONT DOOR she hesitates. She cannot bring herself to ring the doorbell.

Fuck it, she seems to say to herself, she almost rings the doorbell, when the door opens. Danielle looks up.

Sue-Ann stands in the doorway before her.

SUE-ANN
You got some explaining to do.

DANIELLE
Where's my father?

SUE-ANN
Danielle, it's best if we just go on home now.

A horsy blonde woman, JANET, peers through the front drapes, gives Danielle the once over.

Peggy appears in the doorway behind Sue-Ann.

DANIELLE
(re:Janet in the window)
Is that his wife?

SUE-ANN
Yes it is.

DANIELLE
Can I say hello to her?

SUE-ANN
Peggy and I have caused these people enough trouble. It's time we get out of their hair.

PEGGY
Where's my boy?

DANIELLE

His daddy found us. They're together now.

PEGGY

Jesus.

DANIELLE

Can I just come in? I'm really tired, and I need to use the bathroom.

PEGGY

If he's hurt I am going to hold you personally responsible, young lady.

SUE-ANN

The three of us are gonna go to the airport and head on back to Oklahoma, and when we get there we'll get all our feelings squared away.

Danielle sees Janet pass in the hallway beyond.

DANIELLE

(calling out, getting more desperate)

Janet? That's your name right? Can I use your bathroom? I just need to go. Is that okay?

Janet heads upstairs.

Danielle tries to force her way in, but Sue-Ann and Peggy block the door. Danielle runs around the back of the house.

SUE-ANN

Danielle!

Danielle will not stop. In the BACKYARD she is stopped cold by the sight of DANNY BRIGGS (a handsome 37 year-old, gone slightly to seed). His back is to his daughter as he grills some hamburgers.

DANIELLE

Danny Briggs?

He does not turn around.

DANNY BRIGGS

You Sue-Ann's little girl?

DANIELLE

Uh-huh.

He turns to look at her.

DANNY BRIGGS

If you aren't the spittin' image of your mother.

DANIELLE

People think we're sisters all the time.

Janet storms out of the back door.

JANET

You can't be here!

DANNY BRIGGS

It's okay, Janet.

JANET

Daniel. This is not what we discussed.

DANNY BRIGGS

Just go on inside.

JANET

(to Danielle)

Say your peace and be on your way.

Janet goes back inside.

DANNY BRIGGS

Don't mind her. She's upset.

DANIELLE

Them boys you sold the house to said she was kinda high strung and all. I was prepared in my mentality.

DANNY BRIGGS

Shows that you're a smart girl.

(then)

You know the trick to making hamburgers on the grill is to only flip 'em once.

Danielle rushes to her father and throws her arms around him.

Sue-Ann and Peggy stand at the gate watching. Peggy leads Sue-Ann away.

DANNY BRIGGS
(rationalizing to himself)
Okay. Okay.

DANIELLE
I knew it. I knew I'd find you.

DANNY BRIGGS
This wasn't supposed to be like this. Your mother was just gonna take you home...

DANIELLE
But I'm here now.

DANNY BRIGGS
Yes. I guess you are.

DANIELLE
And we never have to be apart again.

DANNY BRIGGS
Sweetie. I think you and I need to have a talk. A real good talk.

Danielle sits down eagerly on at the picnic table.

DANIELLE
We can talk about anything you want. We don't have to force nothing. We can just sit here and wait til one of us, or both of us, is inspired.

DANNY BRIGGS
Danielle honey, the last couple of days have been real strange for me. I hadn't seen your mama in a long, long time.

DANIELLE
Must've been weird. Seventeen years is a long time not to see somebody.

DANNY BRIGGS
Yes, that was weird.

DANIELLE
Super duper weird.

DANNY BRIGGS

Yes, I guess, super duper weird.

DANIELLE

She's a real hag, ain't she? Not the fine thing you fell in love with.

DANNY BRIGGS

Danny, I didn't know about you.

DANIELLE

She didn't tell you?

DANNY BRIGGS

Well, no, not exactly... I thought she had gotten rid of it.

(then)

You gotta understand. We weren't in love, we just liked hanging out I guess.

DANIELLE

You're wrong. She loved you. She named me after you.

DANNY BRIGGS

I'm not proud of myself. Sometimes people act on their impulses, and it doesn't always work out for the best.

DANIELLE

She decided to keep me?

DANNY BRIGGS

I had no idea.

DANIELLE

You know what this means?

DANNY BRIGGS

What?

DANIELLE

It means I don't have to forgive you for runnin' out on us. I was kind of looking forward to that.

DANNY BRIGGS

If you would forgive me anyway, it would mean a lot to me.

DANIELLE

Done.

DANNY BRIGGS

You must've missed a lot of school coming to see me.

DANIELLE

Just a couple of days. I brought my homework.

DANNY BRIGGS

Bet you're in a hurry to get back.

DANIELLE

I don't know what Sue-Ann has told you, but our situation ain't really ideal.

DANNY BRIGGS

Uh-huh.

DANIELLE

I know it's a shock, me being here and all, but if it's alright, and I know it would take a lot of adjustin' for everybody...

DANNY BRIGGS

You can't stay here, honey.

DANIELLE

I'll keep my room real nice.

DANNY BRIGGS

I'm sure you would, it just wouldn't be right is all.

DANIELLE

Families are supposed to be together, it's what's natural.

DANNY BRIGGS

Danielle, I'm a stranger.

DANIELLE

You're my daddy.

DANNY BRIGGS

You seem like a real nice girl and all, and I'm sure I'd be real proud of you....

DANIELLE
Don't bet on it.

DANNY BRIGGS
But...

A CHILD'S VOICE from the back door.

CHILD'S VOICE
Daddy, who's that?

TIFFANY BRIGGS (8) is revealed in the doorway.

DANNY BRIGGS
Just one of daddy's students. You
go on up and take your nap like a
good girl.

Tiffany defies her father and heads over to Danielle anyway.

TIFFANY
What's your name?

DANIELLE
I'm Danielle, what's your's?

TIFFANY
Tiffany, and you know what?

DANIELLE
What?

TIFFANY
My daddy is gonna take me to
Disneyland on my birthday.

DANIELLE
Well, that makes you a real lucky
girl.

TIFFANY
Are you in my daddy's class?

DANIELLE
Yes.

TIFFANY
The only time his students come
here is when they're failing. Are
you failing?

DANIELLE
Yes.

Danny Briggs picks up Tiffany and begins tickling her.
Tiffany screams gleefully.

DANNY BRIGGS
Tickle monster, coming to get you!

TIFFANY
Nooooo!!!!

DANNY BRIGGS
You gonna go upstairs, take your
nap?

TIFFANY
Bye, Danielle.

DANIELLE
Bye, Tiffany.

Tiffany runs back into the house.

DANNY BRIGGS
Sorry about that.

DANIELLE
She's real cute.

DANNY BRIGGS
That she is.

DANIELLE
She must be your pride and joy,
huh?

DANNY BRIGGS
You could say that.

A long awkward silence as missed years pass between them.

DANIELLE
I think I need to go, huh?

DANNY BRIGGS
Probably be a good idea.

Danielle turns to go.

DANNY BRIGGS
Danielle? You be a good girl now.

EXT. HOME OF DANNY AND JANET BRIGGS, FRONT YARD- MOMENTS LATER.

Peggy sits on the front stoop as Sue-Ann paces nervously.

Danielle appears from the side of the house.

DANIELLE
(sobbing)
Mommy?

Sue-Ann rushes to her daughter, and throws her arms around her.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I'm so stupid. I'm so stupid.

INT. AIRPLANE

Danielle sits between Peggy and her mother. She is asleep with her head-on Sue-Ann's shoulder.

INT. DANIELLE'S BEDROOM- LATER

Danielle enters her room to find Mindy asleep in her bed.

She stands on a chair and begins removing the collage of men from her walls.

Sue-ann enters.

SUE-ANN
Can I do anything for you, baby?

DANIELLE
Bring me a trash can?

EXT. CLARKE'S HOUSE-DAY

Danielle pulls up in her Mustang, gets out of the car and rings the doorbell. No answer.

Peggy appears from around the side of the house, taking the trash to the curb.

DANIELLE
Mrs. Gardner?

PEGGY

What are you doing here?

DANIELLE

I wanted to know how Clarke's doing.

PEGGY

He's going to be fine. It's all gonna be fine. You just go on...

DANIELLE

Is he at that school?

PEGGY

There's so much going on here. It's the best place for him right now.

DANIELLE

He must totally hate it.

PEGGY

I've got to figure a few things out.

DANIELLE

I'm sorry if I caused you any problems.

PEGGY

Honey, our problems started long before you.

DANIELLE

Where's his daddy?

PEGGY

He's getting himself a little apartment.

DANIELLE

I broke up your family. I'm sorry.

PEGGY

Sometimes things need to get broken so's they can be fixed. I'm not the person I should be. We got these ideas about what being a good parent is. As long as we're doing our best that's all that matters, but it's not true. I mean, if your best stinks, what good are you?

DANIELLE

Clarke would rather be with you.

PEGGY

All those times I let him hurt my son. I'm not what's best.

DANIELLE

I don't mean to do you no disrespect, Mam, but that's fuckin' stupid.

PEGGY

You'll understand when you're older.

DANIELLE

Will Clarke? What's worse, growing up with a weak mama, or no mama? He loves you now, but he's gonna hate you for this.

PEGGY

This is really none of your business.

DANIELLE

I know what it's like to find out you're not wanted, to find out that for your whole life, nothing's ever gonna be perfect. Seems to me though you should try to make the most of it if you love somebody.

INT. MORMON TEMPLE- DAY

A MORMON PREACHER marries Sue-Ann and Ray. Danielle and Mindy are the bridesmaids, Charlie is best man.

MORMON PREACHER

We stand before you in the eyes of the lord and ask that he accept this family, Sue-Ann and Ray and their children, Charlie, Mindy and Danielle, into his holy kingdom everlasting.

INT. CHALLENGERS CLASS ROOM-DAY

Danielle stands alone before class with Joan, who looks rather beaten.

DANIELLE

I guess you could say that our little girl has been through a lot in her short life. She has learned that sometimes you gotta accept what life throws at you, but only after a really good fight to find out what you're made of. It's the fight that will make accepting bearable.

MRS. HATCHER

Very nice, Danielle.

DANIELLE

I'm not done.

MRS. HATCHER

Okay.

DANIELLE

She also misses her daddy a whole lot, and hopes that someday her family will be brought back together, because it's fun.

INT. PRINCIPAL MULRAY'S OFFICE-DAY

Danielle sits as before in a chair across from Principal Mulray.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

You've come a long way Danielle. What happened to that girl who would act out at the drop of the hat?

Danielle shrugs.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

Mrs. Hatcher says you're doing great, that you're more involved, says you even signed up for the talent show.

DANIELLE

I'm working at being a more traditional kind of person.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

I might be taking a risk here, but
if you promise that I can trust
you, I'll put you back with the
normal kids. Can I trust you?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM-DAY

A GROUP OF BOYS finish up their act, a rather sad break
dancing routine on a square of linoleum.

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

Let's hear it for the Mid-City
Gangsters.

The Audience claps, as the boys do a choreographed bow out of
a "wave".

PRINCIPAL MULRAY

And now the musical stylings of
Miss Danielle Edmonston.

There is mild-to-no applause.

The curtain opens, revealing Danielle in spotlight behind a
microphone.

DANIELLE

This is for my baby's Daddy.

A piano intro...

DANIELLE

(singing as best she can,
but still rather badly)
Baby cried the day the circus came
to town/ Cause she didn't want
parades just passing by her/ So she
painted on a smile and she took up
with some clown/ While she danced
without a net upon the wire/ I know
a lot about her 'cause you see,
baby is an awful lot like me/ Don't
cry out loud/ just keep it inside
and learn how to hide your
feelings/ Fly high and proud/ and
if you should fall/ remember you
almost had it all...

The door to the auditorium opens, revealing the silhouette of
a man....

DANIELLE

Baby saw that when they pulled the
big top down/ They left behind her
dreams among the litter...

The man makes his way slowly down the aisle of the
auditorium. We cannot make him out fully in the darkness, but
he appears to be in uniform...

DANIELLE

And the different kind of love she
thought she had found/ There was
nothing left there but saw dust and
some glitter/ But baby can't be
broken, cause you see, she had the
finest teacher that was me, I told
her...

The man begins to sing, cutting off Danielle.

CLARKE

(singing)

Don't cry out loud, just keep it
inside and learn how to hide your
feelings/ Fly high and proud, and
if you should fall, remember you
almost had it all!

The spotlight finds Clarke in the aisle, dressed to the nines
in full military regalia, his entrance rivaling Richard
Gere's in 'An Officer and a Gentleman'.

Modulation...Clarke takes the stage to Danielle's utter
delight, the two finish the song as a defiant duet.

DANIELLE / CLARKE

Don't Cry out loud/ Just keep it
inside and learn how to hide your
feelings/ Fly High and proud, And
if you should fall remember you
almost made it / Don't cry out
loud/ Just keep it inside and learn
how to hide your feelings/ Fly High
and proud and remember you almost
had it all!!!!!!!

Danielle and Clarke finish with flourish. There is absolutely
no reaction from the audience.

EXT. NORMAN HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT- AFTER SCHOOL

DANIELLE

They let you out for good behavior
or something?

CLARKE

My mama came and got me. Said she
was compelled.

DANIELLE

It was the least I could do after I
ruined your family.

CLARKE

Thank you for that.

DANIELLE

How's it feel to be free?

CLARKE

Actually, I kinda miss that place.

DANIELLE

What?

CLARKE

In a school with no girls, I was
very popular.

DANIELLE

You fuckin' whore!

CLARKE

Taught by the best.

DANIELLE

Clarke, nobody likes a dirty girl.

CLARKE

Yeah, right.

Clarke and Danielle get into the Mustang and pull away.

Clarke pops his tape into the stereo and presses play. A hard
rock downbeat. Debbie Harry begins to sing "Dreaming".

The top is down. The wind blows through their hair.

In the backseat, Joan smiles.

The End.