

THE GREAT GILLY HOPKINS

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Based on the novel By
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EXT. HALESOM HOME-DAY

A wide shot from across the street reveals a decently put together middle class home with a well manicured lawn.

On the front stoop sits GILLY HOPKINS, a packed suitcase on the stoop behind her. She's casually blowing a big pink bubble with her gum. Eleven years old, she shoulders an attitude maybe twice that.

GILLY-POV

Through the blurry pink bubble, she watches a car pull up to the curb. ELLIS, mid twenties, wearing a jacket and tie, steps out of the car and walks toward Gilly on the steps.

ELLIS

What are you doing out here?

GILLY

Tammy had to go to work. Wanted to lock up before she left.

Ellis shakes his head in disappointment.

GILLY (Cont'd)

I told you she wouldn't work out.

ELLIS

Yeah, well that's what you've said every time.

Gilly notes a look on Ellis she's not seen before.

GILLY

You look worried, Ellis. You in trouble 'cause "this" didn't work out? You gonna lose your job?

ELLIS

Nobody wants my job. It's you I'm worried about.

INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

As the car heads down the street Ellis holds up a thick binder labeled GALADRIEL HOPKINS.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

See this? This is all you.

He tosses the file on the passenger seat next to him. He adjusts the rear view mirror so he can see Gilly as he talks to her.

In the back seat, Gilly blows another big pink chewing-gum bubble, watching Ellis through its blurry pinkness.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

This'll be your fourth home in less than three years. Now-I would be the last person to say that it's all your fault. The Glanville's move to Florida was just one of those unfortunate things. And Mrs. Morrison having to go into the hospital for her nerves-

POP! The PINK BUBBLE collapses all over Gilly's hair and face. Ellis closes Gilly's file, takes a moment to let what he has just said soak in. He shakes his head ever so slightly. They've been down this road before.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

What am I going to do with you?
(trying a new angle)
You can't really like all of this moving around, do you Gilly?

GILLY

(barely audible)
Sure I do. I get to see the world.

ELLIS

Those who travel the world usually look forward to returning home.

Gilly shrugs off the comment. Ellis plows forward.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

Maime Trotter, this next foster mother is very nice-

GILLY

(again mumbling)
I thought they're all supposed to be nice-

ELLIS

Well, she's supposed to be **really** nice. So let's try to get off on the right foot.

GILLY

Which one?

Suddenly Gilly plops her sneakers perilously close to Ellis's headrest. He flinches and the distraction allows him to almost miss a stop sign, forcing him to slam on the breaks.

Gilly's folder flies to the floor. Ellis scrambles to pick up the folder and put it back in order. He turns to face Gilly.

ELLIS

Gilly. I need to see some effort here. I know deep down there's a good person...

GILLY

How do you know?

ELLIS

Maybe it's a hunch. Or maybe it's because I know you better than probably anyone else in the world. With Ms. Trotter, be nice. Even if you don't mean it - fake it. It'll get you a lot farther.

Gilly looks away, staring out the window. Ellis stares at her, then turns back around and drives on.

EXT. STREET-DAY

In a neighborhood of huge trees and old houses, Ellis pulls over beside a faded white picket fence and a brown house with a sagging porch.

INT. CAR

He turns off the engine and looks at Gilly.

ELLIS

We're here.

EXT. SIDEWALK

As Ellis pulls Gilly's suitcase out of the trunk, Gilly attempts to pull some gum out of her hair. She looks up through a gnarled strand of her hair and briefly sees a curtain at a second floor window fall back into place, as if someone had been spying on her.

SFX: APPROACHING JET PLANE

Gilly looks straight up to see the bottom of a 737, at a low altitude, in final approach for a nearby airport.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Suitcase in hand, GILLY starts up the walk with a look like she is about to lead the invasion of Normandy-KNOWING she would win. Ellis fumbles with her file as he tries to catch up.

ELLIS
Wait, Gilly.

GILLY spins and stops, Ellis almost crashes into her.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
We need to make this work.

GILLY
Yeah right-whatever.

ELLIS
No-I'm serious here. You need to make this work. You're almost twelve. You know what that means.

GILLY
If this is the sex talk about me going through the changes-I think a lady should be doing it-

ELLIS
Twelve makes you eligible for the Murray Hill Teen Facility...that place is no picnic.

GILLY
So I'll pack my own lunch.

ELLIS
Wisecracks won't make it easier there.

GILLY
Lighten up E. I'm **sure** this will work out.

Gilly rolls her eyes and starts up the steps. They reach the door as Ellis prepares himself and rings the bell.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Your zipper's down.

He looks down. Gilly shakes her head at his naivete as the door to the house opens, revealing MAIME TROTTER. In her late fifties, her smile is as wide as a Georgia peach pie.

ELLIS
Good morning Ms. Trotter.

TROTTER
Well, I thought I heard you all
pull up! Welcome to Thompson Park,
Gilly, honey.

Gilly turns to look at Ellis.

GILLY
Seriously?

Appearing behind Trotter, barely visible behind her voluminous skirt, is half a small face, topped by muddy brown hair and masked with thick metal-rimmed glasses.

TROTTER
Well excuse me, you want to meet
your new sister, don't you? Gilly,
this is William Ernest Teague, we
call him "W.E."

WILLIAM EARNEST TEAGUE immediately disappears behind Trotter's skirt. Ellis gently prods Gilly towards the door, she resists.

ELLIS
C'mon Gilly.

He pushes her into the doorway and Trotter stands to the side. The door closes, sounding like a cell door slamming.

INT. TROTTER'S LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The three sit awkwardly in the darkened living room, with glasses of lemonade in their hands, Gilly by herself on the couch.

GILLY
You have cats?

TROTTER
What's that, honey?

GILLY
Cats?

TROTTER
No, sweetie.

GILLY
Smells like you do.

Ellis rolls his eyes - here we go again.

ELLIS
Galadriel-

A floorboard creaks and Gilly turns to see W.E. peeking from behind a wall in the dining room. Trotter crosses over and gently brings W.E. over to Gilly. Trotter forces W.E. in front of her, the boy looks terrified.

TROTTER
William Ernest, honey? You wanna
show Gilly where her room is?

W.E. buries himself behind Trotter.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Well, we can see that later.

Gilly runs her finger over the TV and looks at the dust on her finger. Ellis glares at Gilly.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
(chortling)
Well, we been needing somebody to
rearrange the dust around here.
Ain't that right, William Earnest?

ELLIS
Um, social services has forwarded
all of Gilly's medical information
to the school.

W.E. sits up on the back of the couch and stares at Gilly.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
She has no allergies-

GILLY
To cats or dust, thankfully.

ELLIS
Gilly is very, self-sufficient,
very um, very independent-

Gilly lurches towards W.E., making her scariest face. He lets out a squeal and falls back off behind the couch.

TROTTER
W.E. honey! Are you alright?

Trotter helps a sniffling W.E. up as Ellis shoots Gilly a glance. Gilly returns him an innocent look.

ELLIS
You have our contact info-

TROTTER
Yes, I do.

Ellis glances quickly at Gilly.

ELLIS
My cell number is right there.

TROTTER
We'll be just fine.

Ellis stands, nervously surveys the room.

ELLIS
Gilly?

GILLY
Yeah?

ELLIS
See ya. And um... be good. Please.

TROTTER
Don't you worry none, Mr. Ellis, I think Gilly and William Ernest and me is nearly friends already. My Melvin, God rest him, used to say that I never met a child I couldn't make friends with.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Gilly climbs the stairs.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM

Gilly stands in the doorway. The room is tiny, the single bed taking up almost half the room. Another house, another crap room. For a brief moment we see a softness. Gilly's eyes begin to well up, her face becomes flushed. She swallows her emotions and shakes it off. She will not cry. Gilly tosses her suitcase on the bed.

Trotter reaches the doorway, breathing heavily.

TROTTER
You need anything hon, you just give ole Trotter a holler...
(MORE)

TROTTER (Cont'd)
T.V.'s downstairs, you're welcome
to come on down to watch.

GILLY
Peachy.

Gilly stares at a fly as it skitters across the wall.

TROTTER
This is your home too, now...

Gilly ignores her, and watches the fly now buzzing on the window. Trotter searches for some comforting words.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
It's going to be okay, honey... I
know it's been hard to switch
around so much-

Gilly's had enough sweetness, she turns on Trotter.

GILLY
I like moving, it's boring to stay
in one place. This way I get to see
more of the world.

Gilly begins to unpack.

TROTTER
Well, welcome to our little corner
of the world. You make yourself at
home. You hear now?

GILLY
(tightly)
I'm making, okay?

Trotter exits and Gilly throws herself on the bed. Gilly spies a framed picture poking out of her open suitcase. She pulls the picture from her suitcase, and sits back on the bed, staring deeply into the picture, wistfully.

CLOSE ON PICTURE

The picture is of a young woman, early twenties. The autograph on the picture reads:

"For my beautiful Galadriel, I will always love you..."

She turns over the frame and it reads:

"Courtney Rutherford Hopkins"

Gilly hops up and crosses over to a bureau. She takes an old detective style fedora off the top, uses it to brush away dust and places the portrait in it's place.

GILLY
...if you only knew where they've
put me... if you only knew...

She swats the dust off the hat and places it on her head. She crosses to a closet door with a full length mirror attached. She angles the hat down.

INT. WAREHOUSE

In the far corner of a darkened warehouse two figures can be seen. One is hanging upside down, his feet tied with chains, the other appears to be interrogating him.

CLOSE on dangling figure.

It's Ellis. In his pajamas and clutching a teddy bear. His glasses are slightly askew (as he is upside down). Below him is an aquarium packed with piranhas. Not just any piranha- these have teeth almost as big as their bodies as they hungrily stare up at Ellis.

Camera pans back to reveal:

COURTNEY, a rather film noir-ish version. She's dressed in a Sam Spade trench coat. She wears Gilly's fedora.

COURTNEY
One last chance. Where is my
daughter?

ELLIS
I told you-the files are at the
office and, and

Courtney begins lowering Ellis into the tank of piranhas.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
OKAY OKAY OKAY-She's in Thompson
Park-

INT. TROTTER'S FOYER

Courtney kicks in the door, guns-a-blazing, peppering the walls with bullets.

COURTNEY
Where's my baby girl?!!

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Gilly smiles at the thought of her mother's rescue, then reluctantly focuses on her own image in the mirror. She frowns, then crosses to the bed and reaches into her case and pulls out her Calender. Lying on the bed, She opens the calender and marks the day she's come to Trotter's. She then ticks off 8 days and circles the date.

GILLY

Eight days. Tops. You'll be beggin'
for mercy, Maime Trotter.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Gilly stops cold at the doorway into the bathroom, holding her toiletries. It looks ancient, with original tiles and fixtures from probably the turn of the century. The tub holds a number of bath toys. The floor bath mat is a thick, blue, shag carpet.

GILLY

Holy crap...

INT. DINING ROOM

Gilly slowly walks through the house. It's seemingly frozen in time. She catches herself in the reflection of a large dusty mirror on the wall. She spies and pulls at a piece of gum in her hair, wincing slightly as she pulls it free.

INT. KITCHEN

Gilly enters the kitchen where Trotter is busy making a salad. The room was probably renovated during the Civil War. Trotter steadily chops up lettuce.

TROTTER

William Ernest is in the living
room watching Sesame Street, you
can go join him if you like.

GILLY

Why in Jesus' name would I watch a
retard show like that?

Trotter's knife stops mid-cut. She places the knife down and turns to face Gilly. Gilly can see by the look in Trotter's eyes she's crossed a line. Trotter takes a moment, then:

TROTTER

Listen here, Miss Gilly Hopkins.
One thing we better get straight
right now, tonight. I won't have
you making fun of that boy.

GILLY

I-

TROTTER

Just cause someone isn't quite as
smart as you are, don't give you no
right to look down on them.

GILLY

Who am I looking down on?

TROTTER

You just said-
(dropping her tone)
You just said that William Ernest
is retarded.

GILLY

I did not. I don't even know the
kid. I never saw him before today.
I just don't wanna watch some
stupid kid show.

TROTTER

He's had a rough time of it in this
world, but he's with Trotter now...

She crosses to the door where she can see him watching TV.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

And as long as the good Lord keeps
him in this house and sees fit that
I take care of him... ain't nobody
on earth gonna hurt him.

She stares down Gilly.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

Nobody. In any way!

GILLY

God! All I was trying to say-

TROTTER

One more thing. In this house, we
don't take the Lord's name in vain.

GILLY
Alright-alright, already. Forget
it.

TROTTER
Gilly... am I clear on this?

GILLY
Yeah... you are perfectly clear.

TROTTER
Supper's about ready. How about
you going next door and getting Mr.
Randolph?

GILLY
Who?

TROTTER
He eats here at night. I would send
William Ernest to fetch him but I
think you would be a nice surprise.
He knew you were coming today.

Gilly starts to argue but sees Trotter's eyes.

GILLY
Which house?

TROTTER
On the right. He's usually waiting
but just in case, knock on the door
good and loud so he'll be sure to
hear you.

Gilly leaves, Trotter watches her go. She knows Gilly's going
to be a hard case.

EXT. RANDOLPH HOUSE - NIGHT

Gilly runs out of Trotter's home. She crosses to the house
next door and halts. The once grand and stately home has
fallen into disrepair. It's actually kind of spooky. Gilly
climbs the stairs onto the old creaky porch. She knocks. No
answer. She knocks harder. The door swings open:

CLOSE ON GILLY'S PETRIFIED FACE

In the doorway stands MR. RANDOLPH, a tall black man whose
forboding figure fills the entire doorway. Looking up at
him, Gilly gasps as he takes a step towards her, even more
shocked by his milky white eyes.

INT. TROTTER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gilly enters the kitchen, breathless.

TROTTER
Where's Mr. Randolph?

GILLY
I don't know. He's gone. Some scary
black dude with white eyes was at
the door.

TROTTER
Gilly, that was Mr. Randolph. He's
blind. He can't see a thing.
You've got to go back and bring him
by the hand so he won't fall.

GILLY
I just got here and you want me
holdin' hands with a complete
stranger-

TROTTER
Never mind. I thought it was
something you could do, but if you
can't manage, I can always send
William Ernest.

GILLY
Oh, I can manage it!

TROTTER
I should go over and get him. You
probably got Mr. Randolph all
confused and upset by now.

GILLY
Well, you shoulda warned me.

TROTTER
Warned you? I shoulda warned poor
Mr. Randolph... I'll get W.E. to go-

GILLY
I said I could manage, God-

Trotter starts to reproach Gilly but she alters her curse:

GILLY (Cont'd)
-bless America, alright? I didn't
say it. Hel... heck, a person
can't even talk around here.

TROTTER

A smart person like yourself should
be able to think of a few regular
words to stick in amongst the
curses. Hurry up if you're going.

Gilly rolls her eyes and exits.

EXT. RANDOLPH'S PORCH - NIGHT

Gilly approaches the front porch. He is still there, waiting.

RANDOLPH

(a very deep voice)
William Ernest? Is that you?

GILLY

No... it's me.

RANDOLPH

Oh-you must be the new little girl.
Welcome to you, welcome. I'm
Reginald Randolph, pleased to make
your acquaintance.

He sticks out his hand, Gilly reluctantly takes his elbow.

GILLY

Yeah, well, Trotter sent me over
here to take you to supper.

RANDOLPH

Well, thank you kindly. Thank you.

GILLY

No sweat.

They step off the porch and begin to walk to Trotter's. Mr.
Randolph's foot catches the lip of the sidewalk and he
stumbles. Gilly grabs him and keeps him from falling.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Watch it!

Mr. Randolph rights himself and smiles at Gilly.

RANDOLPH

Thank you.

GILLY

Sure..

They continue on to Trotter's.

RANDOLPH

Now Mrs. Trotter did tell me your name, but I'm ashamed to say I don't recall it.

GILLY

Gilly.

RANDOLPH

Billy?

GILLY

GILLY.

RANDOLPH

Oh yes, it's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Gilly. I feel might close to all Mrs. Trotter's children.

They turn onto Trotter's walk leading to the porch.

GILLY

Yeah, well I'm almost eleven.

RANDOLPH

That's-

GILLY

Step here-big step. Three of them.

RANDOLPH

Yes-thank you. Little William Ernest is like a grandson to me. So I feel sure -

GILLY

Watch the door. And there's a door frame thingie you gotta step over.

RANDOLPH

Yes, yes. I thank you.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Trotter is setting the food as Gilly and Mr. Randolph enter.

TROTTER

Is that you Mr. Randolph?

RANDOLPH

Yes, indeed Mrs. Trotter, with the sweetest little escort you'd ever hope to see.

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (Cont'd)
This little angel kept me from
falling right on my face.

Gilly shrugs off the compliment as W.E. enters the room.

RANDOLPH (Cont'd)
I guess this old house is going to
be a bit more lively now, eh, Mrs.
Trotter?

TROTTER
I wouldn't be surprised... Now why
don't you two sit yourselves down?
Gilly, you sit here.

They all sit and Gilly begins to eat. Trotter stares at her
and then clears her throat. Gilly pauses, looks around the
table, sensing something is wrong.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Would you like to give grace Gilly?

GILLY
(with her mouth full)
Hmm?..

RANDOLPH
Mrs. Trotter, it would be my
pleasure to pass blessing on this
most bountiful feast in which we
all are about to partake.

TROTTER
Thank you Mr. Randolph.

They bow to pray, except Gilly. W.E. steals a peek at her.

RANDOLPH
Dear Lord, we thank you for this
most bountiful feast, and the gift-

Gilly attempts to swallow her food.

RANDOLPH (Cont'd)
and privilege to be sharing it with
the newest addition to our family.

TROTTER
Aay-men.

Gilly rolls her eyes. She clearly would prefer to be anywhere
else on the planet.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - LATER

Gilly, now in pajamas, sits in a chair by the window in her darkened bedroom, looking out at the stars. In the distance she can see the landing lights on incoming airplanes approaching the nearby airport. Her tranquil moment is interrupted by a gentle knock at her door.

GILLY

What?

TROTTER

I thought you might like to be tucked in.

GILLY

I don't get tucked, thank you.

TROTTER

Well... may I come in?

GILLY

(quietly)

The door is closed for a reason...
I am trying **to go to sleep**.

TROTTER

Alright then... good night.

Gilly returns to staring out the window. Her face shows her pain briefly, before she climbs into bed. In the darkness she stares at her mother's photo, which catches some of the light of the street lamp outside.

EXT. THOMPSON PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

SFX: SCHOOL BELL

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Children are bustling about, getting ready to go to their first class of the day. Gilly follows ALICIA, a pretty girl, (who knows it) who leads her to her new class, chatting away.

ALICIA

...And the sixth grade class has
three parties this year-

GILLY

Whoo-hoo.

As she passes through the hallway she catches the occasional stare from another student.

Her face remains unchanged, but she too surveys her new adversaries. Alicia stops at an open door and motions with her open hand.

As Gilly enters she takes out her gum and places it in the girl's open hand. Alicia is obviously mortified.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM

MS. HARRIS, a sharp dressed, no nonsense, African American stands before Gilly. Gilly takes a step back. She wasn't prepared for this new challenge.

HARRIS
Welcome to HARRIS - 6.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM-A FEW MINUTES LATER

Harris leads Gilly to her desk and picks up a file. A few of the CHILDREN in the classroom stare at Gilly, the rest concentrate on their work.

HARRIS
Galadriel Hopkins. What a beautiful name. From Tolkien, of course.

GILLY
No, Sherwood Elementary.

HARRIS
No, I meant your name. Galadriel is a character from one of Tolkien's books.

GILLY
I would prefer to be called Gilly.

HARRIS
Gilly it is then. Will you take that empty seat next to Monica Bradley? Here, we are on page twenty-seven.

She hands Gilly a book. Gilly walks over to an empty desk, and plops down, opening her book.

HARRIS (Cont'd)
Now, where were we?

All the student's hands shoot up in unison.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM-SOME TIME LATER

Harris comes up to Gilly's desk, where Gilly is clearly lost in the new math.

HARRIS
Did you do divisional fractions at
your last school?

GILLY
Uh...yeah...no.

HARRIS
Why don't you bring up your chair
to my desk, and we'll work on it?

Gilly doesn't know what to say, just then, the bell rings. A relieved Gilly hops up and heads for the door. Harris watches her go.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

STUDENTS entertain themselves playing various games. Gilly sulks alone in a corner, ignoring the stares.

AGNES(O.C.)
I know who you are.

Gilly turns to face AGNES, a smallish bedraggled girl.

GILLY
Oh yeah? Who am I?

AGNES
You're the new kid. Saw you in the
cafeteria. I get free lunch too!

GILLY
Very happy for you.

AGNES
I'm Agnes.

GILLY
I'm sorry.

AGNES
Well...you gonna tell me your name?

GILLY
You gonna get outta my face?

Gilly gives Agnes a shove.

AGNES

Hey, don't push me! What's your problem?

GILLY

My problem? My problem is a whiney little busy body named Agnes, who can't take a hint!

Agnes pauses, but clearly did not get the "hint".

AGNES

I thought since you was new you might want a friend to show you around.

GILLY

How about no? You're bothering me! So beat it. GOOOOOOOOO!

Gilly lunges at Agnes, who squeals and runs off. Gilly proudly leans against the wall. A basketball rolls in front of her, she grabs it. Several BOYS approach her.

SKINNY KID

Yo-little help!

GILLY looks at him like he's nothing.

SKINNY KID (Cont'd)

Hey-give me the ball!

Gilly smiles, dribbles over to the hoop and shoots. It bounces off the rim and a SHORT KID goes for the rebound but is shoved by Gilly who recovers the ball. She shoots again. This time it goes in but she catches it below the net.

A TALL BOY tries to pull the ball from her hands but she spins around, knocking him to the ground, shoots again, pushing away other boys and grabbing the ball once more.

She takes off with the ball, the boys in hot pursuit. She laughs as she runs through jump rope and hopscotch games, slipping in between a set of girls on swings. The closest pursuing boy is taken out by one of the girls on the swing.

Gilly returns to the basket and shoots once more, but as the ball bounces back to her the boys pile on and she goes down swinging. Gilly begins fighting, tooth and nail, swinging and scratching wildly before being smothered by half a dozen attackers.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE- MINUTES LATER

PRINCIPAL EVANS, mid-fifties, sits in a high back chair, his fingertips pressed together, silently studying her. Gilly smooths out her hair, returning an unbroken gaze. Finally-

EVANS

I would rather for us to be friends.

Gilly allows a small smirk to escape.

EVANS (Cont'd)

I know you are new to all this, but we have a zero tolerance policy at this school. Bullying, fighting, threatening-WE do not put up with it.

Gilly brushes some dirt off of her knee.

EVANS (Cont'd)

We will not put up with fighting on the playground... or anywhere else around here.

Gilly mulls over his words. He leans forward.

EVANS (Cont'd)

I think you need to understand that, Gilly. You're at a **new** school now. You have a chance to make a new start.

Gilly looks out of the window.

EVANS (Cont'd)

If there's anything you'd like to talk about-

GILLY

I'm okay. I'm fine.

He realizes he's talking to a wall.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Can I go?

EVANS

I hope you'll give yourself-and us a chance...but, yes. You can return-

GILLY

Thanks.

She's up and out the door before he can blink.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HARRIS' CLASSROOM-MINUTES LATER

Gilly and Harris stand outside the classroom in silence.
Harris studies Gilly's unflinching face.

HARRIS

Look...If you don't want help,
there's no way I can make you
accept it. But you're not going to
turn my class into a zoo.

She studies Gilly for a reaction. Nothing. She opens the
classroom door.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

Rajeem? Could you please come out
here for a moment?

Rajeem steps out into the hallway, clutching a math book.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

I've decided for the next few
recess periods, you can use the
time to catch up on math. Rajeem
has kindly offered to work with you
during that time.

Gilly looks at Rajeem, who doesn't seem overly excited at the
prospect of working with her.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

So, starting tomorrow, you will
come back here following lunch.

GILLY

The law requires me to have recess-

HARRIS

No, actually, it doesn't.

SFX: BELL RING

HARRIS

I'm going back into class. When
you're ready, you can come in and
join us. Come on Rajeem.

Harris goes into class. Gilly glares at Rajeem as he follows
his teacher back inside.

SFX: BELL RING

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Gilly heads home from school, Agnes trails behind.

GILLY
What do you want?

AGNES
Nuthin, I'm just walking home...

Gilly continues on. Agnes follows.

AGNES (Cont'd)
That was great about you beating up
those five boys.

GILLY
Six. One ran away.

AGNES
I thought you and me should get
together. I just thought since you
don't know nobody and I've been
here a while I could-

GILLY
I don't need to know anybody. I'm
not here for long.

Gilly moves on, Agnes falls behind, but soon catches up.

AGNES
Still haven't told me your name.

GILLY
Duh! You're really quick.

AGNES
So, you ain't gonna tell me?

GILLY
(spinning towards Agnes)
If I tell you, will you leave me
alone? My name is Gilly. Gilly
Hopkins! You got that?

AGNES
There's no need to snap...

Gilly continues on. Agnes decides to pursue.

AGNES (Cont'd)
You can call me Ag if you want...
Want to come over? My dad won't
mind.

GILLY
Can't. I'm almost home.

AGNES
Can I-

GILLY
Go to yours? Yes!

INT. TROTTER FOYER - DAY

Gilly enters slamming the door, Trotter calls from the
kitchen.

TROTTER (O.C.)
That you, William Ernest, honey?

GILLY
No.

TROTTER
Oh, Gilly honey, how was school
today? Make any new friends?

GILLY
No.

Gilly starts up the stairs as Trotter comes into the room.

TROTTER
Wait a minute honey-you got some
mail.

Gilly comes to the kitchen door.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
It's a postcard, came this morning-

Gilly takes the card from Trotter's hand and looks at it. A
hint of a smile peeks out before she sprints up to her room.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

She jumps on the bed, studying the postcard. It has various
images of SAN FRANCISCO, The Golden Gate Bridge, Cable cars,
etc. She turns over the card and reads.

COURTNEY(V.O.)
 My Dearest Galadriel. The agency
 wrote me that you had moved. I
 wish it were to here. I miss you.
 All my love, Courtney...

Gilly turns the card over and over, searching for any
 additional clues. But there is nothing.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Breathing heavily, Trotter appears at the top of the stairs.

TROTTER
 Anything I can do for you sweetie?

GILLY (O.C.)
 Can't anyone have any privacy in
 this dump?

TROTTER
 I just want to make sure that
 you're alright.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GILLY
 (under her breath)
 I will be as soon as you get your
 fat self outta here.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

TROTTER
 We'll be downstairs, dinner'll be
 ready in a little while.

Trotter starts down.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

After a pause, Gilly crosses to the door, opening it.

GILLY
 I don't need help from anybody!

She slams the door and Gilly throws herself on the bed,
 holding her mother's picture.

GILLY (Cont'd)

... except from you. Mom... if I
can find you, write to you, and if
I asked, would you come and get me?
I'd be good for you. I'd change
into a whole new person. I'd turn
from gruesome Gilly into good,
glamorous, gorgeous Galadriel.

She closes her eyes...

SFX: Doorbell

INT. TROTTER'S FOYER

Gilly opens the front door to reveal:

EXT. TROTTER'S HOME

A stretch limo pulls up to the curve. A DRIVER steps out and opens the passenger door for Courtney, dressed in a billowing formal gown. She is surrounded by PAPARAZZI as she walks up the wide red carpet wearing a sultry, seductive smile.

She looks up the walkway to see Gilly, now in full make up, gorgeous and dressed in an equally impressive dress. On either side of Gilly stands Trotter and W.E., wearing their normal, awful clothing.

Courtney joins Gilly on the porch. She kneels down and whispers to Gilly.

COURTNEY

Let's go home, baby.

They stand, And in one choreographed move, both push Trotter and W.E. off the porch and into the bushes. They don sunglasses, pose briefly for photos before running for the limo, holding each other and giggling in their devious exit as-

TROTTER(O.C.)

GILLY HONEY! DINNER!

The vision evaporates.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM

Gilly sits up on her bed. Her dream gone. Back to real life. She stares at the postcard.

GILLY
San Francisco...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gilly, Trotter, W.E. and Randolph are sitting at the dining table, dinner already having begun.

RANDOLPH
Well Miss Gilly, how was school for you today?

GILLY
I've seen better.

RANDOLPH
You young people have such an opportunity today. Back when I was going to school-

Trotter places a plate in front of Randolph.

RANDOLPH (Cont'd)
Oh, thank you Mrs. Trotter, what a delicious smelling plate. And the ketchup please? My oh, my-now what was I, oh yes, school. My days-

Gilly leans over towards W.E. and whispers:

GILLY
What's new Doo-Doo?

W.E. coughs up his milk and begins to wheeze. Trotter misses Gilly's exchange, but turns her concern to W.E.

TROTTER
What's the matter William Ernest, honey? Somethin' go down the wrong pipe?

GILLY
Want me to swat him one? On the back to knock it loose?

W.E. lets out a panicked wail.

TROTTER
Nobody's gonna hit you honey. Everybody just wants to help. Isn't that right, Gilly?

GILLY
Just want to help you little buddy.

TROTTER
He don't always know that.

GILLY
Well I got your back, W.E.

Gilly shows W.E. her clenched fist and glares at him with a twisted smile, but quickly changes when Trotter looks at her. Trotter suspects she's just missed Gilly misbehaving.

TROTTER
...I got an idea...Mr. Randolph,
since Gilly is feeling so helpful,
maybe she'd like to read for us.

GILLY
What?

TROTTER
Reading. We do that on Monday
nights. I know Mr. Randolph would
like to hear you read something.

RANDOLPH
Would you do that Miss Gilly? It
would be such a pleasure to me.

GILLY
I don't have anything to read.

TROTTER
Mr. Randolph's got enough books to
keep you busy for a thousand years,
haven't you Mr. Randolph?

RANDOLPH
Well, I do have a few... Course
we've got the bible right here.

GILLY
The Bible?
(starts to laugh)
I'll get a book.

INT. RANDOLPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gilly enters through the foyer and crosses into the livingroom. There are floor to ceiling shelves with hundreds of dusty books of all shapes and sizes. She tries the light switch but nothing happens. She goes over and tries another lamp which also fails to light up.

GILLY
Freakin' blind people.

She pulls aside some drapes which let in some of the fading daylight. She surveys a large wall of books. The first three shelves hold large books, with smaller ones higher up.

GILLY (Cont'd)
What is he, a librarian?

She drags a stool over to the bookshelf and stands on it, looking at the books. She suddenly loses her grip and grabs the bookcase. She ducks as several books tumble down around her. When she opens her eyes she sees two twenty dollar bills on the floor. She looks up to see another bill on the edge of the top shelf. She is just able to reach it when:

TROTTER (O.C.)
You alright Gilly, honey?

Trotter is at the front door. Gilly jumps down, stuffs the bills in her pocket, pushes fallen books to the side and sits on the stool, trying to look nonchalant as Trotter enters.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Mr. Randolph remembered that maybe the bulbs was all burnt out. He tends to forget since they really don't help him much.

GILLY
There's enough light here. If there hadn't been, I'd have gone back. I'm not retarded.

TROTTER
I believe you mentioned that before... Did you find anything you wanted to read to Mr. Randolph?

Gilly grabs the closest book to her.

GILLY
Got one here. "The Oxford Book of English Verse". I'll give it a whirl.

TROTTER
We best be gettin' back to dinner. C'mon honey.

Trotter exits with Gilly following, glancing back up at the bookshelf.

EXT. TROTTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gilly and Trotter approach the house.

TROTTER

I've been trying to get William Ernest to read for Mr. Randolph, but he's still a little on the shy side.

GILLY

No kidding. I hadn't noticed.

TROTTER

It's just a matter of time before he feels ready. Just time and love, time and love.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gilly and Trotter are seating themselves.

RANDOLPH

Now, what lovely reading material did you bring us?

TROTTER

It's the poems that we was reading last year, Mr. Randolph. English poems.

Gilly sits and opens the book.

GILLY

Here's one. The Cuckoo Song.
(she frowns)
Summer is a... *cumin* in, *Lhude*?-
sing cuckoo. Groweth sed-bloweth
med

Gilly stares at the weird letter type in the book, she scans further down the text, but it all is foreign.

GILLY (Cont'd)

And springthe the wude-nu

She turns to another page to see even more confusing text. She then slams the book shut.

GILLY (Cont'd)

You're trying to trick me or make me look stupid? This ain't English.

RANDOLPH

No, Miss Gilly. Nobody's tryin' to make a fool of you. The real old English is at the front. Try over a ways.

TROTTER

You want the Wordsworth one, Mr. Randolph, or do you know that one by heart?

RANDOLPH

(smiles)

Both. Page three-fifty seven, William Wordsworth... There was a time when meadow, grove and stream-

GILLY

Found it! At least it's real English.

She places her finger on the first sentence before proceeding.

GILLY (Cont'd)

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream, The earth, and every common sight, To me did seem, app-, apparell'd in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream...

RANDOLPH

Ah yes...

GILLY

It is not now as it hath been of yore: Turn wheresoe'er I may, By night or day-

GILLY AND RANDOLPH

The things which I have seen I now can see no more...

Gilly stops and looks up to Mr. Randolph, realizing that line could just as well be about him.

RANDOLPH

Go on child.

GILLY

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had elsewhere its setting, cometh from afar: Not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness. But trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home.

GILLY/RANDOLPH

Thanks to the human heart by which
we live, Thanks to it's tenderness,
it's joys, it's fears To me the
meanest flower that blows can give-

GILLY

Thoughts that often lie too deep
for tears.

They all are quiet for a moment around the table. Mr.
Randolph smiles broadly.

MR. RANDOLPH

Miss Gilly, that was just lovely.

TROTTER

She sure is a handsome reader
alright.

Gilly's uncomfortable with the sudden warmth and compliments.

RANDOLPH

Well, what do you think of Mr.
Wordsworth, Miss Gilly?

GILLY

Weird... and it makes no sense-
cometh from afar? Nakedness? That's
some weird sh-stuff. And right
here, "The meanest flower" Whoever
heard of a mean flower?

RANDOLPH

The word "mean" has more than one
definition, Miss Gilly. Here the
poet is talking about humility,
lowliness, not bad nature.

GILLY

I never seen a flower blow, either.

W.E.

...Dandelions.

They turn to look at W.E. Trotter beams with pride.

RANDOLPH

Why that is probably exactly the
flower that Mr. Wordsworth meant.
Surely it is the lowliest flower of
all.

TROTTER

And they sure do blow, just like
William Ernest says. They blow all
over the place. Isn't W.E
impressive, Gilly?

GILLY

I didn't know he could even speak.

Mr. Randolph chuckles and Trotter pats W.E. on his hand.

TROTTER

Oh, our little W.E. can speak,
bless him. He just chooses his
times to do it. Special moments.

Trotter looks at Gilly, her eyes misting for a moment. Gilly
will not fall for it.

GILLY

Can I go now?

TROTTER

Sure, honey...

RANDOLPH

Sure do appreciate, more than you
know-

Gilly is already out of the room.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As she sits on the bed, she pulls out the two bills from her
pocket. She smooths them out.

GILLY

I bet there's more...

Gilly crosses to her bedroom window. The sun is setting.

GILLY (Cont'd)

I'm coming Courtney... Trailing
clouds of glory as I come...

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Gilly is walking to school and deep in thought as she reaches
a corner where she runs into Agnes.

AGNES
Howdy partner! Funny how we keep
running into each other!

GILLY
It's freakin' hilarious.

Gilly shakes her head and keeps walking. Agnes falls in step.

AGNES
You have any pets? We had a pair of
gerbils but they eat their babies-
did you know that?

GILLY
I did not know that.

AGNES
Freaked the crap out of my Dad so
we let them go in our backyard.
Pretty sure they live in the sewers
now-

GILLY
I'm sure they welcome visitors-

AGNES
Hey-how late do you stay up?
Sometimes I can-

Gilly continues on with Agnes following like a yapping puppy.

SFX: BELL RING

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM - DAY

Rajeem sits at his desk, nervously awaiting Gilly. The
classroom door opens and Gilly walks in. Rajeem manages a
weak smile. Gilly crosses over and sits down next to him.

Rajeem opens up his math book.

RAJEEM
Do you have your math book?

GILLY
No.

RAJEEM
That's okay-

GILLY
Why the hell would you want to do
this? Tutor me?

RAJEEM
Well, I-I offer to help tutor
anyone in class for Ms. HARRIS. For
extra credit.

GILLY
Do you need extra credit?

RAJEEM
Well... no.

GILLY
It's like using three pieces of
bread for a sandwich. Doesn't make
much sense.

RAJEEM
I-uh-I'm sorry, a sandwich?

GILLY
How bout I call you loaf. That work
for you?

RAJEEM
Um...no?

GILLY
Loaf it is. Let's just do this.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - LATER

Gilly sits at a computer, on the screen are phone numbers of
San Francisco residents. There is no listing for a *Courtney
Hopkins*. She's clearly frustrated.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Gilly walks at a heavy stride with Agnes trailing behind.

AGNES
I'll wait for you everyday, okay? I
don't mind, specially with the
weather bein' how it is an all-

GILLY
Pray for rain.

AGNES
You talk to yourself a lot.

GILLY
I also know when to shut up.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - MINUTES LATER

Gilly continues a fast pace with Agnes chatting away.

AGNES
What do you think of coach Delany?
I don't see how she can be a gym
teacher when she's weighing in at
two-fifty-

EXT. DIFFERENT STREET - MINUTES LATER

AGNES
And I can't see how she can be our
Gym teacher when she smokes. I mean
I didn't see her smoke but Darlene
Wickers saw her at the mall and-

Gilly has had it. She stops in her tracks.

GILLY
Agnes. I've grown to hate you. Not
in the "I hate broccoli" type of
hate, more like "if we were walking
on a cliff I'd push you" kind of
hate. I know we've known each other
for the briefest of time, but if
you open that freakin' pie hole one
more time I'm gonna shove my fist
right down it, tear out your tongue
and mail it to Mars.

Agnes is truly shocked. She seems to start to say something
but Gilly cuts her off:

GILLY (Cont'd)
If you speak. It will be your last
words on this planet.

Gilly turns and continues on her way. Agnes is crestfallen.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MORNING

Gilly comes around the corner to see several BOYS in a semi-
circle. As she comes around the group she sees that they are
teasing a small boy. It's W.E.

CLOSE ON GROUP OF BOYS

The largest, STEVIE, stands in front of W.E, going through W.E.'s lunchbox. Stevie has very pronounced ears.

STEVIE

And we have an apple...

He tosses it to ED, a squirrely looking kid.

STEVIE (Cont'd)

And a sandy-wich...

He tosses the sandwich to HERMAN, another kid.

STEVIE (Cont'd)

And a juicy-box!

He tosses it to Ed.

CLOSE ON JUICE BOX

It's caught mid-air by Gilly. All focus is now on her.

STEVIE

Hey-

Gilly ignores him at first.

GILLY

W.E., head inside.

W.E. doesn't know what to do.

STEVIE

I said-

GILLY

Hang on there Dumbo. W.E., it's fine. Go inside.

W.E. walks away but when he turns the corner he peeks back to see what's going to happen. Gilly turns to face Stevie.

STEVIE

What did you call me?

GILLY

Listen Ears McGee, It's like 8:00 AM, you already finish off your own lunch? Or did you misplace it? I'd check behind the ears.

STEVIE
I'm gonna kick your ass.

GILLY
That's only if you catch me but
chasing me with those satelllites on
your head might kill you if there's
a wind shear or something.

STEVIE
What?

Gilly mimes sign language and pretends to be talking to a
deaf person.

GILLY
U have BIG ASS EARS!

Eddie and Herman snicker.

STEVIE
Shut up you two.

She grabs the sandwich from Eddie's hand. Stevie steps
towards her.

STEVIE (Cont'd)
Alright sweetie, prepare to-

Gilly delivers a lighting strike kick to Stevie's right shin.
He drops like a rock.

GILLY
Nobody calls me sweetie. I'm
getting enough of that crap at
home.

Stevie can barely whisper because of the pain.

STEVIE
I think you broke my leg.

GILLY
That's called a shin-kick, Spock.
Hurts a little more on kids like
you when most of the blood is in
the head.

Gilly rolls up her sleeves as she studies the three boys.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Now, if I ever see you even near
that kid you will wish the Gods
above had never let your parents
meet. You should put some ice on
that or you'll have a wicked
bruise.

She defiantly walks away, Ed and Herman giving her plenty of room, but there is a slight hint that even she was scared of the showdown.

ED

Who are you?

GILLY

Name's Hopkins...

She stops, turns and strikes a 007 pose.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Gilly Hopkins.

She walks on proudly and passes W.E., whose eyes are wide with wonderment and pride. She turns to him.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Don't get any ideas about me liking
you, or us bein' buddies or
anything like that. People just got
to know that if anyone's gonna pick
on you, it's gonna be me. Got that?

W.E. nods with a solemn understanding.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM - DAY

Harris is passing out graded papers. Gilly can hear whispers about her but pretends to ignore them. As Harris passes by she drops Gilly's paper on her desk.

CLOSE ON PAPER

The title on Gilly's essay reads:

WHY SESAME STREET MAKES ME PUKE

Her grade: an A

HARRIS

Interesting perspective, Gilly.

Gilly scans the paper, she's clearly annoyed.

GILLY
There's no marks on it-why don't I
get an A-plus?

The entire class is in shock at her challenge. Harris stops
and casually turns to Gilly.

HARRIS
I said it was interesting. But it
wasn't brilliant. But give yourself
some time. You're new here.

She winks. Gilly lowers her head as it begins to turn a shade
of crimson.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

Gilly sits at a table by herself. The next nearest seat is
eight seats away. She should be enjoying her earlier victory
of the day, but Harris' comment still burns.

She looks up to see Agnes standing in front of her, holding a
food tray. She continues to stare.

GILLY
What?!

Agnes puts down her tray and hands her a note, which reads:
"Can I talk now?"

GILLY (Cont'd)
What do you want?

AGNES
Can I sit with you?

Gilly scans the open seats.

GILLY
These are all taken.

Agnes turns to leave.

GILLY (Cont'd)
That was a joke, you spaz. You can
sit here if you want.

Agnes is almost giddy. She sits down directly across from
Gilly and takes a big breath to talk, Gilly cuts her off.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Let's start with small sentences.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM - RECESS

Rajeem and Gilly sit at two desks pushed together. He is trying to explain a problem to her.

GILLY
Why would anyone, seriously, need
to know how to divide one-third by
two-fifteenths?

RAJEEM
I'm not sure if we necessarily need
to question the reason for the
equation-

GILLY
That's how the Nazi's got started-
just do it-don't ask why.

RAJEEM
What?

GILLY
Nazi's were huge mathematicians, by
the way.

Rajeem has absolutely no answer for her, and is stuck on how to proceed when:

SFX: SCHOOL BELL

Rajeem looks up to the heavens and closes his eyes.

RAJEEM
Al hamdulillah.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gilly walks home from school. Lost in thought, she suddenly realizes a car is slowly following her. She picks up speed and the car follows suit.

As she passes a trash can by the curb she grabs a piece of wood and spins-ready to fight.

ELLIS(O.C.)
Hey, Gilly.

Gilly turns to see Ellis in his car.

GILLY
What do you want? Are you freakin'
stalking me?

ELLIS

I was on my way to your house for a home visit.

GILLY

Well, hey, I'm great. Nice visit. Now just leave me alone.

ELLIS

Gilly, you know I'm required to check in on you-You know the drill.

GILLY

So you can pretend to care-I get it.

ELLIS

I want to know if you took my advice and pretended to be nice. Come on, Gilly, it's hard having a conversation this way. Hop in.

Gilly continues walking, ignoring him.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

Gilly, will you please get in the car?

GILLY

No!

ELLIS

Why?

GILLY

Because you're gonna have an accident.

ELLIS

What accident-?

Ellis had been so distracted by Gilly he didn't see the parked landscaper's truck. He runs over a leaf blower and crunches into the rear of the truck.

INT. ELLIS CAR - MINUTES LATER

Gilly sits in the front seat as outside Ellis attempts to pacify a very angry DRIVER of the truck.

As she sits there, her eyes wander and end up on the folder with all of her paperwork.

She casually opens it, all the while keeping an eye on Ellis, who at this point is emptying his wallet and giving all of his cash to placate the driver. Ellis can't see her.

CLOSE ON Gilly's face.

Gilly's eyes go wide as she looks at a document.

CLOSE ON DOCUMENT. It's a report on her mother. Gilly zeroes in on one specific notation.

"LAST KNOWN ADDRESS 32 Carter Lane, Apt. 1A, San Francisco, CA."

Gilly repeats the address to herself several times before closing up the folder.

EXT. STREET TROTTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellis's car pulls up.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gilly stares straight ahead. ELLIS looks flustered.

ELLIS
Gilly, saying "fine" to every
question I've asked is not what I
want from you.

GILLY
What do you want from me?

ELLIS
I want to know you're okay.

Gilly gives Ellis a long cold stare.

GILLY
I'm better than your car.

She exits the car. Ellis stares at her wondering if she will ever thaw.

INT. TROTTER FOYER - DAY

Gilly comes through the front door and tosses her backpack on a chair. Trotter calls from the other room.

TROTTER (O.C.)
That you William Ernest Honey?

GILLY

Nope it's me Maime Trotter sweetie
baby!

Trotter chuckles as she enters the foyer with a large plate
of cookies.

TROTTER

How bout' some of Trotter's world
famous chocolate chip cookies?

She's tempted, but heads upstairs.

GILLY

Nah... I'm dieting. And Ellis is
here to make sure everyone's still
alive.

TROTTER

Wha-?

SFX: Doorbell

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

On her bed she pulls out the two bills from under her
mattress, smoothing them out. Next to her is her calender
with several days crossed out past the day she had listed as
her leave date. On the blank page above the calender is
written:

"Operation San Francisco

Money-\$40"

Gilly quietly recites and writes down the address from Ellis'
file. She is very proud of herself.

GILLY

I'm too smart to be bought by
chocolate chip cookies. Nice try
Maime. You're gonna have to try a
lot harder to slip ole Gilly
up...There's gotta be more... but
how to get it. I could use Agnes to
help me get Randolph's loot, but
with that mouth, I need somebody
who won't talk...

(realizes)

somebody who can't talk!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

W.E. is on the couch, watching "Sesame Street." Gilly sits on the other end of the couch, studying him.

Gilly spies some paper and crayons on the coffee table. She shifts to the middle of the couch and takes a piece of paper. This catches W.E.'s eye. As Gilly finishes her paper plane, she gets up to leave the room. W.E.'s eyes follow her.

GILLY

Boy, I hope I can find somebody
outside to help me fly this sucker.

EXT. TROTTER'S PORCH - DAY

Gilly enters the porch, flying the plane in her hand. W.E. appears at the open door. Gilly throws the plane straight into the ground. W.E. lets a small smile escape.

GILLY

I just can't get the hang of this
airplane tossing stuff. You wanna
give it a try?

His eyes brighten, she hands him the plane. He tosses it and it gently floats down. He is mesmerized.

W.E.

Pow!

The plane lightly drifts to the grass.

W.E. (Cont'd)

See that? See that?

GILLY

Try it again.

She retrieves the plane and hands it to him.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Try from here, off the bench!

W.E. climbs up on the bench and lets the plane sail. This time, it's flight seems to last twice as long.

W.E.

Pow!.. It sure fly good!

GILLY

Nah, that's you, W.E.! You throw
real good! I was just admiring your
style. I guess you've had lessons.

W.E shakes his head vigorously.

GILLY (Cont'd)
No? You just taught yourself?

He beams proudly as he nods up and down.

GILLY (Cont'd)
No foolin'? Gee, man, you're a
real natural!

Trotter and Randolph are approaching the house.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Hey, you gotta see this Trotter!
W.E. can do this real good!

W.E.
Watch me!

TROTTER
We're watching William Ernest,
honey.
(to Randolph)
W.E. has a paper airplane.

W.E. climbs up on the bench and throws. Again it seems to
float on the air effortlessly before landing on the lawn.

W.E.
Pow!

RANDOLPH
How was it?

TROTTER
I declare, Mr. Randolph, sometimes
it's a pity you gotta miss seeing
things. I never thought paper
airplanes was for anything but to
drive teachers crazy before.

She turns and looks up at Gilly.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
That was really something.

Trotter helps Mr. Randolph onto their porch.

W.E.
That's cause I fly it so good,
right?

GILLY
Yeah... you sure do.

Trotter places her hand on Gilly's shoulder.

TROTTER
Thank you...

GILLY
Um... Sure. Hey, Mr. Randolph, how
'bout me helping you into the
dining room?

She takes his arm and helps him, followed by W.E.

RANDOLPH
Thank you, Miss Gilly.

Trotter looks almost overwhelmed, holding back her emotions.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

W.E. is talking about the plane as Trotter and Randolph
listen. Gilly fights the urge to actually enjoy it.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gilly prepares for bed as there is a gentle knock at her
door. It's W.E., his eyes brimming with tears.

GILLY
What's the matter, W.E.?

He holds up his airplane, a wing is torn.

W.E.
I broked it.

GILLY
Let me see that.

He crosses into her room and she takes the plane.

W.E.
It's ruined.

GILLY
Aw- man this is nothing. It's just
a tear. We can fix this right up.

W.E.
But it's not perfect anymore.

GILLY

Perfect? W.E., it wasn't perfect to begin with. Look at the wing fold. See, this side is bigger than the other. That's a chump move, can't believe I did that.

W.E.

No-

GILLY

'Cides, you don't want anything that's perfect. Nobody likes perfect.

W.E.

Really?

GILLY

Think of this little ole tear as a battle scar.

W.E.

Battle scar?

GILLY

Yeah-like in World War two, there'd be these planes that would come back from bombing missions, and they'd be all banged up, missing parts of their tails, holes in their wings, really beat up. But you know what? They were the tough suckers-they flew better than all the other planes that looked perfect. Their pilots didn't want the planes that were all new. They trusted their busted up plane. They liked their battle scars.

She pulls out some masking tape from her side drawer and tapes the small tear before giving it back to him.

GILLY (Cont'd)

You'll see. We'll fly it tomorrow before going to school.

W.E. loves the sound of the new phrase and strokes the plane's fixed wing.

W.E.

Battle scar...

GILLY
Yeah-now go to bed.

He heads out of the room, flying the plane in his hand. Gilly watches him go, feeling a warmth she hadn't felt in ages.

W.E.
Battle scar...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Gilly confidently strides through the hall, not even noticing kids clearing out of her way. Her mind is somewhere else.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - RECESS

Gilly and Rajeeb sit under a small tree, math books open, oblivious to the rest of the kids around.

RAJEEB
Now to page thirty-four-

GILLY
Nah, I think we're done here.

She closes her book and kicks back in a relaxing pose.

RAJEEB
But we have a quiz-

GILLY
Raj, you would agree that I'm pretty much caught up?

RAJEEB
Well yes, but-

GILLY
Time for Plan B. Harris knows I know what I'm doin'. So now I stop. Turn in blank papers. Drives 'em crazy. Works every time.

RAJEEB
But, that does not reflect well on me. I'm your tutor, your failure demonstrates I've failed in educating you.

GILLY
Are you freakin' kidding me? When the hell did this become about you?

RAJEEM

I have a reputation-

GILLY

As king of the math nerds. Nice
title Raj. Look, you did your deed,
pat yourself on the back and relax.
I now release you.

Raj sadly collects his books and leaves.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM - DAY

Gilly, at her desk as Harris is passing out several graded papers. Gilly looks around to see who's watching her. Gilly smiles as Harris hands her graded tests.

CLOSE ON PAPERS

The grade on all four tests are: F+. The only writing on the pages are where she signed her name where the name space is. Harris appears unfazed. She leans into Gilly and points to the "plus" next to the F.

HARRIS

You didn't completely fail. You did
receive your plus. You got your
name right on all of them. So if
you were attempting to succeed in
100% failure, your attempts were
flawed.

As she moves down the aisle she addresses the entire class.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

In order to receive a "zero" grade,
you should follow the efforts of
Jimmy...

JIMMY, a lanky, goofy-looking guy slinks down in his seat.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

...and cheat, or be like Mr.
Ramirez-

RAMIREZ, a tough looking kid in the back, looks up from a comic book placed in his textbook.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

...and simply not turn anything in.

A brief hint of a smile appears on Harris's face before she returns to her desk. Gilly is furious beyond words. Her face burns with embarrassment.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Gilly is walking very fast, mumbling to herself, clearly incensed. Agnes has trouble keeping up with her.

AGNES
Hold up already, why are you so
pissed off?

GILLY
She knows I'm the smartest in the
class. She knows I failed on
purpose.

AGNES
Why are you gettin' all wound up
about Harris?

GILLY
Cause she's trying to do one of
those reverse psycho-logic things.

AGNES
Maybe you just don't like Black
people.

Gilly stops in her tracks.

GILLY
That's not it you retard...wait.

AGNES
You gonna call me somethin' worse?

GILLY
No, no-actually I take that back.
You are a genius!

AGNES
Really?

We see a twinkle in Gilly's eye.

GILLY
Agnes, would you believe that your
little bit of misguided lunacy may
actually help me?

AGNES
So am I a genius or looney?

GILLY
I gotta go.

Gilly takes off, then suddenly something with Agnes clicks.

AGNES

Hey! Wait. Which am I??!!!

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Gilly is working on a card. The floor is littered with drafts of something she's been writing all night. Gilly finishes her card with a flourish.

Gilly closes the card and smiles, closing her eyes.

INT. HARRIS'S CLASSROOM

Harris sits down at her desk and sees the card. Smiling, she opens it and begins to read. She casually turns the page.

WIDE SHOT

From the back of the classroom we see her calmly place the card on the table. She takes a breath and lets out a wail before sweeping everything off her desk. Sobbing uncontrollably, she stands and writes on the Blackboard-

SHE HAS WON-I QUIT!!!!

She bolts for the window and dives through it.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM EARLY - MORNING

Gilly sneaks into the classroom and crosses to Harris's desk. She takes her math book and slides the card into it.

SFX: BELL RING

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Gilly watches Harris as she passes out worksheets. Gilly can see the card peeking out of her book.

SFX: BELL RING

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Gilly stares at the book. It is now math class. But Harris borrows a student's book rather than her own. It's driving Gilly crazy.

SFX: BELL RING

It's the end of the day. The book and card haven't moved. Gilly defeatedly lowers her head.

SFX: BELL RING

The kids gather their books and begin leaving. Gilly grabs her backpack to go.

HARRIS

Gilly, would you mind waiting for a moment?

Gilly's intrigued. Harris lets the last student out and closes the door. She motions for Gilly to take a seat.

She pulls up a chair and sits directly opposite her. They both stare at each other, unflinchingly, for what seems like an eternity. Harris picks up Gilly's card. She reads:

HARRIS (Cont'd)

They say black is beautiful.
But the best I can figger
Is anybody saying that
Looks awfully like a ...
A blank space was left, I'm
assuming for **me** to finish it.

As she puts the card down and lowers her head for a moment, Gilly swallows hard.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

...You may find this hard to
believe Gilly, but you and I are
very much alike... Both of us are
smart - and we know it. But the
thing that brings us closer than
intelligence is anger...

Where is she going with this? Gilly's confused.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

You and I are two of the angriest
people I know...I was always taught
to deny mine, which I did and still
do...And that makes me envy you.

Ms. Harris smiles as she points to Gilly's head.

HARRIS (Cont'd)

Your anger is still up here on the
surface where you can look it in
(MORE)

HARRIS (Cont'd)
the face - make friends with it if
you want to. Channel it for your
own design.

Harris now leans back, relaxed, as if she's talking to a best friend that she can tell anything to.

HARRIS (Cont'd)
But I didn't ask you to stay after
school to tell you how intelligent
you are or how much I envy you, but
to thank you...for your card...

Gilly's eyes widen as Harris leans into her.

HARRIS (Cont'd)
I took it to the teacher's lounge
at noon and cursed creatively for
over twenty minutes. I haven't
felt so good in years...

GILLY is dumbfounded.

HARRIS (Cont'd)
I'll see you tomorrow...(smiles and
taps the card) and thanks again.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Gilly barrels down the hallway, furious; Rajeeem approaches.

RAJEEEM
Gilly-

She stiff arms him into a set of lockers. His books scatter
as he slides down the lockers to the floor.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gilly storms into her room, carrying a cordless phone and
slams the door. She pulls the suitcase out from under the bed
and begins to pack haphazardly. She pulls out a folded bus
schedule and tries to decipher the routes as she dials.

GILLY
I need to know how much a cross
country ticket costs...to San
Francisco...from Maryland.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gilly comes into the room and sits down where W.E. is playing with some action figures. Gilly sits down.

GILLY
Trotter and Randolph leave yet, for the store?

W.E.
Yeah...and to welfare to get money...

GILLY
Well, Mr. Randolph wants me to do him a favor, while they're out.

INT. RANDOLPH'S FOYER - DAY

GILLY
Now Randolph doesn't want Trotter to know about this, it's kind of a surprise. So, it'll be our secret for now, okay?

W.E.
Okay.

They cross into the livingroom and approach the shelves. Gilly turns on the lamp and pushes a chair against the shelf.

GILLY
See, right up there, that big red book on the shelf?

W.E.
I can't reach it.

GILLY
Of course not stup-, I mean, I can't reach it either. That's why we both have to do it.

W.E.
I'm scared-

GILLY
Just think, man, how proud everybody's gonna be later. After the surprise can be told and everything. When they found out who was climbing -

W.E. puts his action figure that he was holding on a shelf and climbs up on the chair. He begins to step up on the shelf using Gilly's head for balance.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Just feel around, ya ain't got
nuthin' to worry about.

He reaches in and pulls out a wad of bills.

W.E.
POW!

GILLY
Lemme see-

W.E.
Don't let go of my legs!!!

He drops the roll of bills and grasps her hair again.

GILLY
Ow! I got you. Is there any more?

W.E.
No, I don't think so.

GILLY
Okay, here. Put the book back in.

She boosts him up and he slips it in. Then they get down and Gilly picks up the money. She pushes the chair back to it's original position. Gilly ushers W.E. out of the house.

INT. TROTTER'S FOYER - DAY

GILLY
I'll give the money to Mr. Randolph later. Now you can go back to TV, I gotta straighten up my room. And remember, this is our own secret surprise!

W.E.
Our secret. Okay...

Gilly runs upstairs to her room.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM

She pulls out the money and her smile dissipates. It's mostly one's with a couple five dollar bills.

GILLY

I get my hair torn out and I can
only get as far as the Mississippi
River. Brilliant Gilly, just
brilliant...

Gilly goes over to the bureau and looks at Courtney's
picture. She picks up the note pad and pencil on the bureau
and lies down on her bed. She thinks and proceeds to write.

GILLY(V.O) (Cont'd)

Dear Courtney Rutherford Hopkins, I
received your card. I am sorry to
bother you with my problems, but as
my real mother, I feel you have the
right to know about your daughter's
situation.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Gilly is sneaking down the stairs with the envelope.

GILLY(V.O.)

At the present time, I am very
desperate, or I would not bother
you.

She spies Trotter and Mr. Randolph in the dining room,
Trotter adjusting his tie as he babbles away.

GILLY(V.O.)

The foster mother is a religious
fanatic, her house is filthy, she
has weird friends who show up at
weird hours of the night.

Gilly sneaks out the front door.

GILLY(V.O.)

I practically live in a closet and
share a bug infested bathroom with
another kid here who is probably
retarded and who I'm expected to
take care of which is very hard
with all of my schoolwork, which is
excessive from a very mean teacher.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gilly walks up to a mailbox.

GILLY(V.O.)
I have saved up sixty-five dollars
toward my ticket to California. The
full cost is one hundred and eighty
nine dollars.

She opens, and hesitates for a second before dropping it in.
She then turns and starts back towards the house.

GILLY (V.O.)
If you could send me the rest I
will get a job in California when I
get there and pay you back.

A mail truck passes Gilly and she turns to see it pulling up
to the mailbox. The postman opens the box to exchange bags.

GILLY(V.O.)
I am very smart and can take care
of myself, so I will not be a
burden to you in any way.

The postman closes up the mailbox, and drives off.

GILLY (V.O.)
Yours sincerely, your loving
daughter, Galadriel Hopkins.

INT. TROTTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Gilly, deep in thought, walks through the hallway, but
something catches her eye through the window outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

W.E. lies motionless, facedown in the grass.

INT. TROTTER'S KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Gilly enters. Trotter is wiping down the counter.

GILLY
What's up with the "W"?

TROTTER
Oh Bless him, he had his heart all
set out to be Mr. Cookie Monster
this year for Halloween, we just
don't have the money for the
costume.

GILLY
That sucks.

Trotter looks up.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Stinks.

TROTTER
I'm sure we can find something else
for him...

EXT. BACKYARD

Gilly comes out and crosses over to W.E. She stares at him for a few seconds, then lies down next to him, looking up.

GILLY
You know you gotta be on your back
to watch the planes comin' in to
land.

W.E. remains motionless.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Ya know... when I was a kid, part
of the fun of Halloween was making
my costume.

W.E. turns to look at Gilly.

W. E.
I can't make anything.

GILLY
I bet **we** could.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gilly and W.E. are exiting Gilly's bathroom, dragging the dark blue shag carpet with them.

EXT. STREET HALLOWEEN - NIGHT

Camera opens on a crudely costumed W.E. as Cookie Monster. Two plastic lids with black magic-markered eyeballs. Where the mouth is cut out we see W.E.'s glasses and nose.

Gilly walks along his right. Agnes to his left. Neither girl is in costume, yet both carry bags.

AGNES

It sucks that tonight's a Thursday.
Next year it's on a Friday, and we
can stay out extra, extra late.

GILLY

Wow Ags, that sounds like extra,
extra fun.

AGNES

My dad says I can stay out late if
I want to-

GILLY

And what does your mom say?

AGNES

(matter of factly)
Oh, my mom's dead.

Agnes continues on with W.E, But her answer stops Gilly cold.
She sees Agnes in a whole new light. Gilly walks to catch up.

EXT. STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Gilly, Agnes and W.E. walk down the street as other kids
scurry about. Agnes spies someone in the distance.

AGNES

Oh, great...

ALICIA, the prissy schoolmate approaches with her entourage.
Their costumes clearly cost a bundle.

ALICIA

Hi Agnes. Great costume.

Agnes tries to ignore her. Alicia looks at Gilly.

ALICIA (Cont'd)

And what are you supposed to be?

GILLY

Annoyed. But if you must know, I'm
Cookie Monster's agent, Agnes is
his publicist.

Alicia turns to her girls and whispers loudly.

ALICIA

Maybe they can't afford them.

Gilly casually reaches for the corner of Alicia's bulging paper bag. She slowly lowers her hand as it tears the corner down to the bottom, candy pours out all over the sidewalk.

GILLY
You should always double bag, boss.

She turns and Agnes proudly follows with W.E. in tow, leaving Alicia speechless.

EXT. SCHOOL- DAY

Kids empty out of the school heading home or towards buses.

EXT. RANDOLPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Gilly and W.E are coming home from school. As she passes Mr. Randolph's house, she spots a fancy BMW in the driveway.

INT. TROTTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Gilly enters the kitchen, Trotter is peeling carrots.

GILLY
There's a sweet car in Mr.
Randolph's driveway-

TROTTER
Yes-Mr. Randolph won't be joining
us tonight cause his son's in town.

Gilly turns ashen.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Over there now. Helpin' his Daddy
clean the place up. Most of his
rooms haven't been touched for
years-

Gilly rushes to the window. She can see that Randolph's living room shades have been pulled back, the windows are open, and a step ladder leans against the bookshelf. At that second, MR. RANDOLPH'S SON, a stern looking man in his early sixties, comes to the window.

Gilly's eyes meet his. She quickly steps away from the window. He must know about the money!

GILLY
Trotter? I'm gonna go upstairs and
do my home work instead.

TROTTER
Alright, honey.

Gilly looks panicked. She heads upstairs to her room.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

She paces in the room, trying to rationalize.

GILLY
It's okay, it's okay. His son
wouldn't know about that money.

SFX: DOOR BELL

Gilly freezes.

INT. TOP OF STAIRS

Gilly peeks down. Trotter stands at the open door, talking to Mr. Randolph's son. Randolph's son holds up W.E.'s action figure, the one he left on the shelf.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM

Gilly takes the money from under her mattress and stuffs the money in her pocket. She pulls the suitcase out and empties the contents of the drawer into it.

GILLY
He's callin' the cops right now!

She puts the portrait in the suitcase and closes it. She takes a look around the room, takes a breath and turns to go. W.E. stands in her doorway.

W.E.
Where are you going?

GILLY
I, uh, just gotta take some stuff
over to Agnes'.

W.E.
Don't go.

GILLY
I'm, I'm not... Don't tell Trotter-
this is part of our secret.

She pushes past him and heads down the stairs. She spies Trotter's purse on the table. She clearly is torn but knows she needs more money.

She cautiously goes over, opens it, and takes out the cash. She puts the wallet back, stuffs the money in her pocket and heads out the front door.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Agnes, riding her bike, tows Gilly on a skateboard. Gilly's wheeled suitcase bangs along behind her. Agnes stops.

AGNES

This is as far as I can go. I know
the bus station is that way but I
don't know where.

Gilly hands the skateboard back to Agnes.

AGNES (Cont'd)

You are like, really brave, or
crazy.

GILLY

The "Crazy One" calling me crazy?
THAT'S crazy.

Agnes attempts a weak smile.

AGNES

Thanks for pretending to be my
friend. Be careful.

Before Gilly can respond Agnes starts off on her bike, heading down the street. Gilly watches her go.

EXT. DESERTED STREET - DUSK

Gilly walks nervously down the garbage strewn street.

A DOG lunges at Gilly, barking viciously, separated by a chain link fence. Gilly picks up her pace.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

Gilly hears a bottle smashing. She hurries on.

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The area around the terminal is rundown. Gilly steps around a homeless woman who is coughing violently. She looks away and notices a MAN, leaning against a newspaper stand. He smiles at her, but something in the smile clearly unnerves her, and as he starts towards her, she hurries into the station.

INT. BUS TERMINAL RESTROOM

Gilly splashes water on her face and pulls out a comb. She plays with her bangs, trying to brush them back and up in an effort to look older. She stands on her toes, looking taller.

Gilly approaches the ticket counter. She stands up on her toes, using the booth to balance on her toes. A bored TICKET AGENT is reading a magazine. He finally notices her.

AGENT

What?

GILLY

Ticket to San Francisco, please.

AGENT

Round trip?

GILLY

One way.

She shoves the crumpled bills and change into the slot. The agent looks nonplussed. He scans the station.

AGENT

You here by yourself?

GILLY

Me? No-

She turns looking for-anything. Across the room there is a magazine kiosk. A WOMAN, mid-thirties, pages through a book.

GILLY (Cont'd)

My mom-she's over there, but-she
doesn't speak English-Dad's second
wife...and she has her ticket
already, needs me to get mine.

The agent looks at the woman, then Gilly.

GILLY (Cont'd)

I can't wait to ride a cable car!

The nonplussed Agent stares at Gilly, she beams proudly.

AGENT

The computer is down. It's gonna
take me a few minutes.

GILLY

Okay.

Gilly steps away from the counter, but she can feel the Agent's eyes on her, so she has to play it cool. She makes her way over to the WOMAN at the magazines. The agent continues to watch.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Um-excuse me, miss?

WOMAN
Yes?

Gilly looks back at the ticket agent who is watching her.

GILLY
You have very pretty hair.

WOMAN
Why aren't you sweet. Thank you.

Gilly notes that the Agent is no longer looking at her.

GILLY
Well, have a nice trip.

INT. STATION SHOP KIOSK - NIGHT

Gilly puts down several bags of chips, magazines and sodas on the counter, along with several dollars.

INT. BUS TERMINAL - LATER

Gilly is leaning on her suitcase. She has a bag of chips and an empty soda to her left. She's watching a BUG cross the dirty station floor. Suddenly, two pairs of legs stop in front of her. She looks up. In front of her stands the ticket agent, and a COP.

GILLY
Crap.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - AN HOUR LATER

Gilly sits stone-faced in a chair in front of a desk. On the opposite side, DETECTIVE ALVAREZ, a scary looking undercover cop, stares back at her. Slowly he moves his left hand towards her-

CAMERA PANS BACK, revealing a chess board in between the two. Alvarez moves his piece, watching Gilly for any hint of strategy. He lets go, but before he can even sit back Gilly moves her chess piece. Alvarez stands, clearly annoyed.

ALVAREZ
Damn man, not again.

He leans back in the chair.

ALVAREZ (Cont'd)
Okay that's three in a row. So you
should give me somethin'.

GILLY
But I won.

ALVAREZ
At this new home...they doin
anything-?

SFX: Knock on the door.

The door opens, revealing DETECTIVE SYKES.

SYKES
We got the lady from the home
comin' in.

ALVAREZ
You stay here.

Alvarez crosses to the door and closes it, but it swings slightly ajar. Gilly sees a red-faced Trotter, holding the hand of a white-faced William Ernest, puffing through the station house. Alvarez stops her some twenty feet from the door, and tries to calm her down.

Totter looks past him, her eye immediately catching Gilly's, still seated in the room. She tries to smile, but Gilly jerks away from the gaze.

TROTTER
Maime...Maime, I'm the Trotter.
We's got a taxi waiting, but no
money, to, to pay him.

ALVAREZ
Just a minute, please. Detective
Sykes?

Gilly sees Sykes join them. Alvarez produces Gilly's postcard. Trotter nods. As Trotter lifts up her hand to speak Gilly slips out of her chair and crosses to the open door.

TROTTER
San Francisco, yes, but she's not-

ALVAREZ produces the envelope with Trotter's cash. She sighs and nods. She then reacts angrily to something Sykes says.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Press charges? She's just a baby.

Trotter continues to shake her head. Gilly spies W.E. clutching at her shabby coat, looking at Gilly, his eyes telegraph his desperate fear. Trotter calls out to her.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
We come to take you home, Gilly,
honey. Me and William Ernest come
up to get you.

SYKES
Maybe we should keep her tonight
and call Family Services in the
morning.

Gilly opens the door more to watch the argument.

TROTTER
You mean to lock the child up?

ALVAREZ
She'd be safe. It would just be
overnight.

SYKES
Sometimes it teaches them a lesson-

TROTTER
You don't think for one minute I'm
going to let you lock a child of
mine up in jail?

ALVAREZ
Maybe it would be best.

TROTTER
Best? What do you mean? What are
you trying to say?

ALVAREZ
She really doesn't seem to want to
go with you, Mrs. Trotter. Now, I
don't know-

TROTTER
Oh Lord-please Jesus no. PLEASE
officer-What can I do?

W.E. Breaks away from Trotter running to Gilly.

W.E.
Gilly! Gilly!

He drops in front of her and begins to beat his fists on her knees.

W.E. (Cont'd)
Come home, Gilly. Please come home!
Please, please!

The blood vessels stand out blue and strained on his white neck. Gilly takes his hand and helps him up. She slowly approaches the group. Relief floods Trotter's red, sweaty face.

TROTTER
Thank you, precious Jesus.

Gilly reaches them. Trotter's grateful eyes lock with Gilly's.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Thank you.

INT. TROTTER HOME - NIGHT

Trotter paces the room as Ellis, with clipboard in hand, tries to talk to her calmly. W.E. watches from the kitchen, clearly upset by everything.

TROTTER
Never! Never! Never!

ELLIS
You're going to need to calm down
Ms. Trotter. Nobody blames you and
it's no indication of failure on
your part.
(with regret)
It's really more my fault.

TROTTER
No-it's-

ELLIS
I always thought that if she were
in the right place with the right
person... I mean, I never thought
of Gilly as a flight risk. She's
never done this before, but I-

TROTTER
She's just a little mixed up-that's
all.

ELLIS

Ms. Trotter, you've been a terrific assistance to the program for many years. I think maybe it's time-

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gilly watches from the top of the stairs.

TROTTER

I ain't giving her up!

ELLIS

If you won't think of yourself, think of William Ernest. He's come too far-

TROTTER

It was William Ernest who told me she left-he wanted her back!

ELLIS

Probably because he saw how upset you were. He's a very sensitive child and that's even more reason to remove...

(hard for him to say it)

...a damaging influence-

The "damaging influence" remark stings Gilly.

TROTTER

William Ernest has lived with me for goin' on near a year and a half. He's gonna make it. I know he is. Sometimes, Mr. Ellis, you gotta walk on your heel and favor your toe even if the heel's gonna get a little sore. Somebody's got to favor Gilly, she's been long overdue. Lord knows I need her! I like to die when I found her gone.

Gilly reaches the bottom of the stairs.

ELLIS

You can't do that. You can't let them tear you to pieces. To be honest, your emotional state worries me. Should we be considering a change? Maybe for **both** children?

TROTTER

Both?

Trotter steps back speechless. W.E.'s eyes grow wide with fear. Ellis suddenly sees Gilly.

ELLIS

Hi, uh Gilly... we were just discussing the present situation. Which is not a good one-

TROTTER

I was 'splainin how children sometimes make mistakes-

Ellis looks at Gilly, torn between his always-hopeful feelings for her and his need to be professional.

ELLIS

Too many in my opinion.

Ellis spies W.E. at the doorway, his eyes moist, his lip trembling. Ellis just can't do it. He pinches the corners of his eyes and rubs his forehead.

TROTTER

But Mr. Ellis is willing to give you one more chance...

ELLIS

Uh-actually-

TROTTER

...With Thanksgiving coming and everything...the holidays...

ELLIS

The holidays...

She sees his hesitation, so Trotter takes his lead.

TROTTER

Yes, if you want to stay on here with William Ernest and me, that's fine... You want Mr. Ellis to find you someplace else to live... well, that's fine too.

GILLY

What about my real mother? She wants me to come to California!

ELLIS

If you're referring to the postcard, I'm aware that you received one... but that was the first one in three or four years. Gilly, if... if your mother really wanted you with her, she'd -

GILLY

It's different now! I know it! She's waiting for me! She really wants me! She said so!

Gilly throws herself on the couch. Trotter comes over and rests her hand gently on Gilly's shoulder.

TROTTER

If she known you.... If she just only knowed what a girl she has ... she'd be here in a minute.

Gilly looks up at Trotter, gets up and walks to the stairs, turning to Ellis.

GILLY

'Till she comes, 'till Courtney comes for me, I guess I'll just stay here.

ELLIS

You guess? Seriously? That's really not enough, Gilly, given the circumstances you're created.

TROTTER

Please let her stay... please...

Ellis tries to size up the situation, knowing he should follow the rules.

ELLIS

Officer Alvarez told me you had well over a hundred dollars with you at the bus station... I have trouble believing that was your own money -

Gilly sees a true hint of caring desperation in his eyes. She gets it. She dutifully nods. Ellis tries to compose himself.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

So, I call taking other people's money stealing.

Trotter gently grabs Gilly's shoulders.

TROTTER

So do we, Mr. Ellis. Surely you don't think this is the first time something like this has happened to me over the last twenty years?

ELLIS

Oh-I know it's not.

TROTTER

Then how about trusting me to handle it?

ELLIS

It's not you I don't trust.

He looks at Gilly.

TROTTER

We're gonna do just fine. Don't you worry your pretty little head about us, hear?

Ellis pauses looking straight into Gilly's eyes.

ELLIS

I need to hear it from Gilly. Can I trust you? Should **we** trust you?

With just a hint of a turn of the head, Gilly nods yes. Ellis turns to Trotter.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

Mrs. Trotter, against my better judgement, but based on **trust**...I guess we'll hope for the best.

Ellis exits. Gilly turns to Trotter.

GILLY

Boy, you showed him.

Trotter's face is hard; Gilly knows she is not off the hook.

EXT. RANDOLPH'S PORCH - DAY

Gilly sits on the porch swing with Randolph. The swing is resting on cinder blocks as the chains have long since given way.

CLOSE ON GILLY'S HANDS

She takes Randolph's hand and puts the cash back into his hands. He pats her gently on the shoulder, then gently places his hand on her head, as if pardoning her. He says nothing.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

GILLY

Sure wish Trotter reacted like you did. She's made up this huge chart for chores to make up for the money I spent on snacks and junk I bought. For housework I get a measly twenty five cents an hour. That's slave labor-

She realizes what she just has said.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Uh...sorry about the slave thing-

RANDOLPH

I believe Miss Trotter feels the payment should equate with the punishment. If she paid you a lot it wouldn't seem like a punishment. Right?

GILLY

Yeah, I guess... but you know what? For seventy five cents an hour I can help W.E. with his school work. So naturally I'm gonna be spending a lot of time with W.E.

RANDOLPH

Naturally.

EXT. TROTTER'S BACK PORCH - DAY

Gilly sweeps the back porch. W.E is nearby, playing. She rests the broom as she picks up a scrap of paper. The broom slides off the railing and hits the floor with a loud SMACK.

W.E. throws his arms over his head in a defensive posture. Gilly shakes her head.

GILLY

It's just the broom, goofy...

He looks up, apologetically. Gilly regrets the comment.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Listen, what are ya gonna do when
somebody socks you?

W.E. looks terrified.

GILLY (Cont'd)
I'm not gonna hit you, silly. You
gonna go through life letting
people pick on you?

He looks at her blankly.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Look, W.E., I'm gonna teach you how
to fight. You hear 'bout how I
fought six boys at school, all by
myself?

W.E. nods.

GILLY (Cont'd)
Well, before I get through with
you, you're gonna do the same
thing!

Gilly crosses to be next to him.

GILLY (Cont'd)
First thing, when somebody yells at
you, ya gotta stand tall. See, they
might not even want to hit you. You
stand tall, take a deep breath, and
say GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY! Try
it...

W.E. attempts a fist, squints his eyes, and:

W.E.
...Hells my way!

GILLY
Ah-no. Just follow me... Get the

W.E.
Get the-

GILLY
Hell-

W.E.
Hell-

GILLY
Out of my way.

W.E.
Out my way.

GILLY
Now-yell it. Like you mean it.
Louder than you've ever yelled in
your life.

W.E. starts to channel Gilly as Trotter enters the porch.

TROTTER
Gilly honey-

W.E. spins around and faces Trotter, his fist raised high.

W.E.
GET THE HELL OUT MY WAY!

Trotter stumbles back, speechless.

GILLY
Better leave the cussin' part out.
Trotter, I'm not gonna teach him to
push on people-just how to take
care of himself. If he knows how to
read and how to stick up for
himself, he'll be okay.

Trotter throws her arms around Gilly and kisses her on the
cheek. She stands up, trying to play down her outburst.

TROTTER
I'm sorry, I know you don't allow
no kissin', sometimes I just haul
off and go crazy.

GILLY
Aw, it's... okay. Don't worry about
it. Probably won't leave a mark.

Trotter swishes her dish towel at Gilly who dodges it.

GILLY (Cont'd)
C'mon W.E.

They head into the yard as Trotter proudly watches them go.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - RECESS

Rajeem sits under a tree reading. Gilly approaches. He looks
up, then returns to reading his book.

GILLY

Hey.

He ignores her.

RAJEEM

I'm not doing extra credit anymore.

GILLY

Yeah, I know, I just wanted to thank you, not that I'm ever going to use it-the math, but thanks anyway.

She turns to walk away.

RAJEEM

...You're welcome...

EXT. RANDOLPH'S PORCH - EARLY EVENING

Gilly approaches the front door and knocks, but the door swings open.

GILLY

Mr. Randolph?

Gilly cautiously enters the house.

INT. RANDOLPH HALLWAY - EARLY EVENING

Gilly turns on the hall light, looks about, but no one is there. She passes by the darkened dining room.

GILLY

Hello?

INT. RANDOLPH KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Gilly flicks on the kitchen light and jumps when she sees Mr. Randolph sitting at the kitchen table.

GILLY

Whoah!

She recovers. She sees that he has been crying.

RANDOLPH

I'm sorry Ms. Gilly, is it dinner time already?

GILLY

Yeah... are you okay?

Gilly crosses over to him. He holds a picture frame.

RANDOLPH

Oh, I'm alright... just a little
under the weather I guess.

Gilly looks at the portrait, it's of a beautiful WOMAN
scantily clad in an exotic feather costume.

GILLY

Who's that?

RANDOLPH

This was my wonderful wife of forty-
four years. When I first met Miss
Mary, she was a dancer in a
burlesque club. An exotic dancer.

GILLY

She was a stripper?

RANDOLPH

An exotic dancer... when I first
met her. It was a little different
back then.

GILLY

She was pretty.

RANDOLPH

She was my world... today is our
anniversary...

GILLY

Oh...

RANDOLPH

Now I know what you're thinking,
what's a crazy old blind man doin'
starin' at a picture he can't see,
but I can. See, as my eyesight was
going I'd look at this picture
every night before I went to bed. I
know this picture better than I
know myself. I'm missing her a
little bit today...

Gilly understands his pain, even if his is a bit different.
Mr. Randolph puts the framed picture aside and lets out a
phlegmy cough as he rises. Gilly takes his hand.

RANDOLPH (Cont'd)

Well Miss Gilly, we should not keep
our dinner party awaiting.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gilly, lying in bed, can't sleep. She hears a quick patter of feet as W.E. rushes past her room. Gilly hears him throw up.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

W.E. is slumped against the wall next to the toilet.

W.E.
I got sick. Sorry.

GILLY
You didn't do anything wrong.

W.E.
I didn't get all of it in the potty.

GILLY
Looks like you got most of it.
C'mon.

INT. W.E.'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gilly helps W.E. into his bed. Gilly turns to leave.

W.E.
Gilly?...Why'd you run?

Gilly really doesn't have an answer.

W.E. (Cont'd)
Gilly?

GILLY
Yeah?

W.E.
Are you gonna run again?

GILLY
...No.

W.E. manages a weak smile and turns over to go to sleep.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gilly surveys the mess around the toilet. She grabs a towel and kneels down to start cleaning up around the toilet.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Gilly opens the washer and tosses the towel into it. She spies the pile of dirty laundry, decides to load the rest of it into the washing machine and reaches for the detergent.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Gilly quietly climbs the stairs but a sudden shadow blocks the light from above. She looks up to see Trotter.

TROTTER

I heard noise downstairs.

GILLY

It was just me. Doin' some laundry.

Trotter looks surprised. Gilly decides to have a little fun with it. She heads up the stairs and mimics Trotter.

GILLY (Cont'd)

Gilly honey baby sweetie-whats'
gotten into your sweet little
darlin' head to do the laundry at
this god-forsaken hour? Well, I
don't know Trotter baby sugar
honey, maybe I jist felt like
gettin' some cleanin' done.

Gilly scoots past Trotter with a smirk, Trotter beams.

TOTTER

Sweet dreams, honey.

GILLY

Right back at you sugar plum.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gilly helps W.E. get situated on the sofa to watch TV. She sets a tissue box and places a plate of saltines on his lap.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Gilly pulls a fold-up cot on wheels out of a closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gilly opens the cot as a flu stricken Mr. Randolph stands in his bathrobe. Trotter appears with sheets and blankets.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Randolph and W.E. sit on the sofa, both dully watching the TV, with a plate of Saltines in their laps.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Gilly, with bandanna wrapped on her head, casually washes dishes in the sink. She bobs her head to the music of a nearby radio.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Trotter, in her bathrobe, has now joined Randolph and W.E. on the couch, a plate of saltines in her lap.

EXT. TROTTER HOUSE - THANKSGIVING - DAY

Yellow and gold leaves blow across the lawn. A Turkey/Pilgrim flag rustles in the breeze.

INT. TROTTER'S HOUSE

Gilly, in kitchen apron and bandana, walks through the hallway carrying folded sheets. She's fighting exhaustion.

She crosses into the living room, where in the corner behind the couch Mr. Randolph lays on the cot. A cold compress is on his forehead, his face, pale and clammy.

RANDOLPH

I promise not to die in your house.

GILLY

It's just the flu, not the plague.

Trotter appears, soaked in sweat and pale as well.

GILLY (Cont'd)

You're not lookin' too good either-

TROTTER

Oh, I'm just fine-doctor says we need to just ride this one out-

GILLY

Then you can ride it out upstairs.

Gilly takes Trotter's arm and they start upstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - AN HOUR LATER

Gilly is at the open stove, basting the turkey with one hand, reading a cookbook with the other.

SFX: DOOR BELL

Gilly jogs over to the front door, opens it, revealing NONNIE, an elegant woman in her mid-sixties. Next to her is a tall paper bag with handles.

Nonnie's face changes from a worried expression to one of wonder and disbelief. Without thinking, she smiles meekly and raises her hands towards Gilly who takes a step back. Nonnie catches herself.

NONNIE
Are you Galadriel? Galadriel
Hopkins?

GILLY
Who wants to know?

NONNIE
I'm...I'm your grandmother...

Gilly is dumbfounded. Speechless.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
... May I come in?

INT. LIVING ROOM

It's a disaster. Nonnie sits down on the edge of the sofa, placing her bag down beside her. Gilly is too shocked to say anything.

TROTTER (O.C.)
Gilly, honey? Who is it?

GILLY
It's okay, Trotter! I got it!

NONNIE
I'm right, aren't I? You are
Galadriel?

Nonnie produces a wrinkled letter from her purse. She awkwardly reaches into the shopping bag and hands Gilly a doll. Gilly remains speechless.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Oh-this is for you. I also brought
a pie.

She places the pie on a side table.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Courtney, your mother, left home
many years ago. She and I... well,
it was a difficult time. I never,
it was just...I'm not doing this
well am I?

Gilly has no reply.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
See, your grandfather died nearly
twelve years ago -

GILLY
Jeez, that's too bad.

NONNIE
Yes, yes, it was. I tried to
contact your mother, at the time,
of course. But I was not able
to...In fact, as a matter of fact,
this letter, **this** letter is the
first direct word I've had from
Courtney in thirteen years. I
didn't even know she'd had a baby.
Wouldn't you think she'd want her
folks to know she'd had a baby?

A thousand questions race through Gilly's mind but are
interrupted as W.E. enters the room.

W.E.
Gilly! I called you and called
you... I wet.

GILLY
It's okay.

W.E.
I couldn't help it.

GILLY
I know buddy. When you're sick,
you just can't help it. C'mon,
I'll help you change.
(to Nonnie)
'scuse us for a sec.

A delirious W.E. sways as he crosses over to Nonnie. He
weakly raises his fist.

W.E.
 (feebly)
 Get the hell out my way.

He then vomits in front of Nonnie.

Gilly pushes a pile of dirty laundry on top of the vomit.
 Nonnie is horrified.

GILLY
 Sorry, I'll be right back.

They exit, leaving Nonnie alone in the room. She looks as if she's trapped in a snake pit. She gently reaches to adjust a pile of towels but they fall back onto Mr. Randolph. He sits straight up, startling Nonnie.

NONNIE
 Oh my Lord!

RANDOLPH
 What is it? Who is there? Miss
 Gilly? Miss Gilly?

NONNIE
 Galadriel? Galadriel?!

Gilly rushes in.

GILLY
 Mr. Randolph, I'm right here-you
 can relax. Just lie back down and
 get your rest.

Trotter calls from upstairs.

TROTTER (O.C.)
 Gilly, you got company down there?

GILLY
 No-

NONNIE
 Bless your heart, child.

Nonnie shakes her head with dismay but Gilly doesn't quite pick up the signals as mentally she's exhausted too.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
 How could they have put you in such
 a place?

GILLY

Oh-this? Everybody's got the flu.
Not me, but-

NONNIE

I know I shouldn't have come to see
you like this, on Thanksgiving,
without any warning but what you
wrote in your letter and Courtney
calling me yesterday, I felt I had
to see for myself before I talked
to your case worker.

GILLY

This isn't like it always is-the
mess and all. Trotter keeps it -

Trotter stumbles in, pale and disoriented.

TROTTER

Oooh... Lordy me, I forgot, I
forgot the turkey...

GILLY

I got everything in control. Go
back to bed Trotter. I've got the
turkey in the oven.

TROTTER

I better sit a minute, my head's
light-Oh mercy!

GILLY

Watch out!

Trotter collapses, knocking over the end table and pinning
Gilly underneath her. Mr. Randolph snaps up again making
Nonnie jump. Trotter begins to giggle.

TROTTER

Well I done it now, I squished you
juicy.

RANDOLPH

What is it? Someone fell, I heard
someone fall!

TROTTER

Yeah, I fell alright. But it's
okay, ain't it, Gilly honey?

GILLY
(semi-muffled)
Just roll Trotter... roll over and
you'll be off me.

TROTTER
It's poor little Gilly... here I go-

With a big groan, Trotter rolls off Gilly and rights herself up, sweaty and puffing. She now notices Nonnie, who stands.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
You said wasn't nobody here-

NONNIE
I was just leaving... I don't seem
to have come at a very good time.

GILLY
Yeah, you're right. Trotter, get
back to bed, I'll be up to check on
you. Dinner will be ready in an
hour.

Trotter exits as Gilly leads Nonnie out. Gilly opens the door and Nonnie turns around. She kneels slightly to be on the same level as Gilly.

NONNIE
Don't you worry. You're blood,
Galadriel. I am so, so sorry about
all of this...

Nonnie forces a wider smile and gently touches Gilly's shoulder. She stands and pauses to study her new found kin. Gilly looks away, unable to maintain eye contact with her. Nonnie seems about to tear up but manages a departing smile and walks down the porch steps.

INT. FOYER

Gilly leans against the door. She is not sure what has just happened but she knows it isn't good. But with no time to rest, she wipes her brow, adjusts her bandanna and heads back inside.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The ragtag bunch of patients gather around the table. Gilly enters from the kitchen with a small, burned turkey. Mr. Randolph sniffs the air.

RANDOLPH

I declare Miss Gilly, you're the only person I know who can equal Mrs. Trotter's culinary skill.

TROTTER

I haven't seen such a tasty presentation since the Thanksgiving before my Melvin passed—rest his soul.

W.E.

A tasty presentation!

They all dig in, Gilly smiles. They clearly are lying and yet she really, deeply, feels grateful for this moment.

SFX: SCHOOL BELL

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gilly is walking home, with W.E. at her side. Agnes trails behind her, blabbing away.

AGNES

Or we could go to my house and call people on the phone and breathe weird! It really wigs 'em out.

GILLY

It's dumb, Agnes. Dumb, dumb, dumb.

AGNES

C'mon Gilly. Let's do something. You [ain't] done nothing with me for a long time.

GILLY

I've been busy, my family's been sick.

W.E. smiles confidently at this remark.

AGNES

Oh pulease—

Gilly ticks them off using her fingers to count.

GILLY

My brother, my mother and my uncle were sick. I've been taking care of them.

AGNES
You got a black uncle?

GILLY
Yes I do.

W.E.
And me too!

AGNES
It's too dumb to even talk about.

She turns away at the corner. Gilly and W.E. continue on.

W.E.
Bet I could beat her up.

GILLY
It wouldn't be fair. You against
that poor little puny thing?

As they turn the corner to approach Trotter's house, Gilly stops in her tracks. In the driveway is Ellis' car. Trotter comes out the door with a pained look on her face.

GILLY (Cont'd)
What's the matter?

TROTTER
C'mon inside honey...

W.E. goes in but Gilly doesn't move. She sees Ellis in the doorway, who, at this moment, actually looks compassionately at Gilly.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
Please Gilly... come inside.

INT. TROTTER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gilly enters the living room, where Ellis forces a smile.

ELLIS
I have got some pretty cool news
for you, Gilly.

GILLY
My mother's coming?

ELLIS
No. Not exactly. Your mother is
still in California.
(MORE)

ELLIS (Cont'd)
But your grandmother, your mom's
mom, called the office this
morning and then drove in from
Virginia to see me...

Gilly looks at Trotter who stares out of the window.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
She wants you to move in with her,
permanently.

This news is a punch to Gilly's gut. She's confused.

GILLY
I never said I wanted to live with
her! I don't even know her!

ELLIS
Your mom wants you to go too. I
talked to her about it.

GILLY
You talked to my mother?
You're lying.

ELLIS
I'm not.

GILLY
Then let me talk to her-

ELLIS
(pained)
Gilly...it doesn't work that way.

Gilly looks at Trotter.

GILLY
They can't make me go.

Ellis looks directly at Gilly, dead serious.

ELLIS
Yes, Gilly, they can.

GILLY
Trotter won't let them take me,
will you Trotter? Trotter?

Trotter continues staring outside but her lip trembles.

GILLY (Cont'd)
You said you'd never let me go. I
heard you! Never! Never! Never!
That's what you said!

W.E steps into the room. He clutches the doll Nonnie gave
Gilly earlier. He runs and hugs Gilly.

W.E.
Don't cry Gilly.

GILLY
I'm not crying!

She clearly is fighting off the tears.

GILLY (Cont'd)
I'm yelling.

She notices how upset W.E. is, so she places her arms on his
tiny shoulders.

GILLY (Cont'd)
It's gonna be okay, right Trotter?

Trotter avoids Gilly's eyes and turns directly to Mr. Ellis.

TROTTER
You tell the child what's got to be
done. C'mon W.E., come with me.

Trotter crosses to W.E. and takes his hand. She leads him out
of the room but he doesn't take his eyes off of Gilly.

ELLIS
You seem to have changed your mind
about a lot of things.

Gilly stands strong. She will not cry.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
...Why did you write that letter?

GILLY
You wouldn't understand.

ELLIS
I think I do. But why you won't
learn from your mistakes is beyond
me. You couldn't do a more
brilliant job of screwing things up
for yourself... I mean, Jesus,
Gilly...

Gilly considers a smart comeback but bites her lip instead.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
 You could have stayed here-you
 could've stayed here indefinitely,
 They're both crazy about you...

Gilly looks to Ellis. Maybe he can fix things. Ellis seems to read her mind. He lowers his head.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
 I can't...I can't fix this.
 That letter you wrote, it did
 serious damage. And not just for
 you...It affected all of us, me-
 Trotter, even W.E...

This snaps Gilly to attention.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
 Yes, the agency is considering
 removing William Ernest from Ms.
 Trotter's care.

GILLY
 What? Why?

ELLIS
 You made some serious accusations
 of abuse and conditions of this
 home. They can't ignore when-

GILLY
 I lied.

Ellis holds up his clip board and reads:

ELLIS
 "Foster mother is a religious
 fanatic."

GILLY
 Not true.

ELLIS
 "Strangers coming and going at-"

GILLY
 I made that up.

ELLIS
 "Forced to live in a closet, bug
 infestation-"

GILLY
ALL OF IT OKAY! I LIED ABOUT ALL OF
IT! NONE OF IT'S TRUE! Why would
anybody believe me? I'm nobody!

Gilly drops to Ellis's feet, the tears are now flowing.

GILLY (Cont'd)
I'm bad-I know it-but please don't
hurt Trotter. Please don't hurt
W.E. It's all my fault. But please-
don't hurt them because of me.

ELLIS
You're not bad, Gilly... but this
is what I do-And my hands are tied.
My boss got a copy of your letter
and there are consequences.

GILLY
Do whatever you want with me, I'll
do whatever you want, but please,
please leave my **family** alone.

This comment stops Ellis cold. He did not expect this. He
pauses, clearly conflicted with the situation. The silence is
deafening. The only sound is the old clock on the mantle.

ELLIS
...Alright...

Ellis grabs his coat and starts for the door, then pauses.

ELLIS (Cont'd)
Your grandmother will be at my
office tomorrow. I'll be by around
nine to pick you up.

GILLY
Tomorrow?

ELLIS
Believe me, it's better this way.
Waiting around is no good in these
situations.

GILLY
But I got school-

Ellis puts on his coat.

ELLIS

They'll send your records on... I understand from Ms. Harris that you've done quite well at school...

He starts to leave but pauses and turns back.

ELLIS (Cont'd)

I must admit that last month when you ran away, I thought, here we go again, but I was wrong. You've done well here. You should be proud.

GILLY

Proud?...**Proud?**

ELLIS

Yes, I'm proud of you.

He puts his hand on her shoulder for just a moment, then turns and leaves. Gilly is drained of all emotion, literally numb.

INT. TROTTER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

No one is talking. W.E. has clearly been crying, Gilly is eating nothing and Mr. Randolph nervously picks at his plate as Trotter surveys the table.

TROTTER

If you all don't start eating this supper, I'm gonna jump up and down on the table, squawking like a two-hundred pound lovesick chicken.

W.E.

Really?

Trotter starts flapping her arms.

TROTTER

Squawk, Squawk, Squawk.

Mr. Randolph chuckles, W.E. giggles and Gilly smiles weakly.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

Now, that's more like it. This was supposed to be a party, not some kind of funeral. We gotta get rid of this food, now...

Mr. Randolph attempts a few stabs at the plate.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
 Gilly's folks are from Loudon
 County, Mr. Randolph.

RANDOLPH
 Oh, that's lovely, lovely country,
 Miss Gilly.

W.E.
 We come and see your country,
 Gilly?

TROTTER
 When folks leave, William Ernest,
 honey, they gotta have a chance to
 settle in. Sometimes it's best not
 to go visiting, right away.

GILLY
 You mean never?

This catches Trotter, but she chooses not to answer her
 remark, instead she tries to cut some meat on W.E.'s plate.

RANDOLPH
 Miss Gilly... I wasn't quite
 certain when to give you this ...
 but I wanted you to have it-

Randolph hands Gilly the OXFORD poetry book. She opens it to
 see all three have signed it.

TROTTER
 We signed our names in it for ya.

Gilly is overcome, she runs upstairs with the book.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gilly throws herself on the bed sobbing. Trotter gently
 knocks on her door. Gilly attempts to pull herself together.

TROTTER
 Gilly, honey? Can I come in?

Trotter comes in. She stands at the foot of the bed. She
 absentmindedly scratches the paint on the bedpost.

TROTTER(Cont'd)
 I know I ain't supposed to let on
 how I feel... I ain't got no blood
 claim on you, but...but it's
 killing me to see you go.

GILLY

I'm not going to go. They can't make me.

TROTTER

No, baby, you've got to go. Lord forgive me for making it harder for you.

Gilly rushes to Trotter, throwing her arms around her. With both, the tears begin flowing.

GILLY

I'll come back. I'll come back and see you all the time.

TROTTER

No, baby. It don't work that way. Like I tried to tell you at supper. Once the tugboat takes you out to the ocean liner, you got to get all the way on board. You can't straddle across both decks.

GILLY

I could.

Trotter lets out a stifled chuckle and hugs her tight. She then holds Gilly at arms length, looking into her eyes.

TROTTER

You're gonna make me proud, ya hear?

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gilly lies on her bed in the dark, staring up at the ceiling. Her eyes drift across the room. She spies a folded airplane. Her handkerchief from Thanksgiving. The signed book.

INT. NONNIE'S CAR - DAY

The car speeds down the road. Nonnie is driving. Gilly is seated in the back seat, fighting to remain emotionless.

NONNIE

Would you like for me to turn on the radio? I don't really mind, as long as its not too loud....

Gilly doesn't even acknowledge the offer.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Mr. Ellis seems like a nice person... He thinks I may have gotten a wrong impression of that foster home he'd put you in.

GILLY
They were all sick last week.

NONNIE
Mr. Ellis tried to tell me that you really liked it there, despite everything. From your letter, I-

GILLY
I lie a lot.

NONNIE
I hoped you'd be glad to come with me.

Gilly leans her head against the window.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
I thought you might like to have Courtney's room. What do you think?

Nonnie spies a reluctant shrug from Gilly.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Well, you can choose when we get there.

EXT. NONNIE'S HOME - DAY

The car pulls up to a large country home. Time has made its mark on the structure and clearly it has seen better times. They get out of the car. Gilly tries to take in the size of the house and the massive land surrounding it.

INT. GILLY'S NEW ROOM - DAY

The room is quite beautiful. On a secretary desk is a laptop computer. Her own computer. She touches it as if it's a magical and delicate object. Her eyes drift to a bureau. There are several pictures of Courtney in her younger years: on a horse, swimming in a pond with her father, Courtney next to a Christmas tree.

Gilly crosses to her open suitcase, taking out Courtney's picture. Gilly places it among the other photos. Gilly walks to the window, staring out at horses on a nearby field.

INT. NONNIE'S DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Nonnie and Gilly sit at opposite ends of the table in the dining room. Classical music plays from the living room. Nonnie appears to be studying Gilly. Noticing the distance between them, she picks up her plate and moves two chairs closer to her, but leaves one space between them. She retrieves her glass and flatware and sits down in her new spot. Gilly fails to look up at the change. Nonnie is at a loss how to proceed.

NONNIE

I hope you don't mind the music.

Gilly shrugs.

NONNIE (Cont'd)

When you're by yourself, sometimes silence is the last thing you want to hear. So I started playing music during my meals.

GILLY

I've heard some of this before.

NONNIE

Really?

GILLY

Heard it in a cartoon.

NONNIE

That's quite possible, this is a very famous symphony.

GILLY

So I guess it's old.

NONNIE

Yes...Do you like your computer? I'm not very familiar with them, but the man at the store thought it was the right kind for you.

GILLY

I haven't turned it on.

NONNIE

Well, there's time for that. On Monday you are supposed to begin school. Perhaps you'd like to stay home another day, to get used to your new surroundings...

GILLY

Might as well get it over with...
can I be excused? I'm not really
hungry.

NONNIE

Yes.

Gilly leaves the room.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

A horse trots along with her foal in a field. In Gilly's face, a thousand questions can be seen in her eyes.

INT. HALLWAY WINDOW-DAY

Nonnie pushes a curtain to the side and looks out to see Gilly sitting on the ground, leaning against a tree.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Gilly sits in front of her makeup table, wearing pajamas, staring at herself in the mirror as she slowly pulls a brush through her wet hair. She puts down the brush and opens the drawers of the secretary desks but sees nothing of interest.

INT. CLOSET

Gilly opens the door. Several boxes are piled in there. She chooses a shoebox and sits down on the floor. She opens the lid, revealing dozens of unopened letters, written by Nonnie, for Courtney, all stamped RETURN TO SENDER.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Nonnie's car pulls up in front of the school.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Nonnie and Gilly sit quietly on a couch. Principal MAYNARD enters. She's a fastidious woman with a buttoned up collar in her early fifties.

MAYNARD

Ms. Hopkins, it's been sometime
since we've seen you around here.

NONNIE

I just wanted to make sure my grand-daughter was properly introduced to her new school.

MAYNARD

Your grand-daughter?

-NONNIE

Yes, Margaret. This is my grand-daughter, Galadrial Hopkins.

MAYNARD

Hopkins.

NONNIE

Yes. She's Courtney's child.

Gilly notes Ms. Maynard's eyebrow raises ever so slightly.

GILLY

Hi.

MAYNARD

I didn't even know Courtney was married?

NONNIE

(firmly)

She wasn't.

Gilly looks with newfound admiration at Nonnie: she's gutsier than she looks.

Maynard looks down at Gilly's paper work. She picks up a pen.

MAYNARD

I see, Hopkins. Now how do you spell her Christian name?

NONNIE

(deliberately slowly, a rebuke)

Her name, is spelled
G...A...L...A...D

Clearly Maynard is annoyed with Nonnie's pace.

NONNIE (Cont'd)

Am I going too fast for you, dear?

MAYNARD

No, not at-

NONNIE
 (quickly finishing)
 R,I,E,L. Her school records are
 being sent to you directly. You'll
 see she is quite bright.

Nonnie smiles at Gilly, her pride clearly showing.

MAYNARD
 Well, we are looking forward to a
 having new Hopkins to join our
 ranks, I'm sure.

NONNIE
 So am I.

INT. CLASSROOM - MINUTES LATER

STUDENTS are chatting, getting into their seats as their
 teacher, MRS. MORRISON pulls down a large map of the world.

MRS. MORRISON
 Okay, settle down-

She sees Gilly appear in the doorway.

MRS. MORRISON (Cont'd)
 You must be Galadriel. Or would you
 prefer Gilly?

Gilly is surprised at her question.

MRS. MORRISON (Cont'd)
 Your teacher, Ms. HARRIS, called
 me. She said you would let me know.

Gilly scans the room and spies an empty desk.

GILLY
 Gilly is fine.

She crosses to the empty desk and sits down.

INT. NONNIE'S FOYER- A FEW WEEKS LATER

Nonnie holds a small package. She calls upstairs.

NONNIE
 Gilly!

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Gilly opens up the package, she pulls out a small bag of chocolate chip cookies. But her eyes light up when she picks up the bandanna she wore during the flu siege. But below that is the real treasure, W.E.'s carefully folded paper airplane.

INT. TROTTER HOME - DAY

Trotter is at the dining room table sorting the mail. She comes across a letter and smiles broadly;

GILLY(V.O)
Dear William Ernest-

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

W.E. joins Trotter as she reads Gilly's letter to him.

EXT. NONNIE'S FARM - DAY

Gilly leans on a fence. A pad of paper in her lap and a pen in her hand. She watches A STABLE HAND running a horse along a track.

GILLY(V.O.)
I told you I wouldn't forget you. I am good here at the farm but miss you all... They train horses to race here. My favorite one is called "Clouds of Glory"; Can you believe that? I know she will win a lot of races.

Gilly suddenly looks troubled. She writes the truth this time.

GILLY (V.O.)
They're not our horses. Nonnie rents out the barns and the land... but there is a horse, a real pretty one, and fast, that I call Clouds of Glory. I don't actually know her real name.

A horse gallops around the track, without a harness, free and beautiful.

INT. HARRIS CLASSROOM - DAY

Harris opens a letter and reads:

GILLY(V.O.)
Dear Ms. Harris. I have read the
Tolkien books you sent me. They are
very exciting. Thank you. School
here stinks, none of the teachers
here are as smart as you.

EXT. COUNTRY MAILBOX - DAY

Gilly pulls out a letter and starts to read:

TROTTER(V.O.)
Dear Gilly, guess who got in a
fight?

INT. TROTTER FOYER - DAY

Trotter opens the door, revealing W.E. dirty and scratched
with a torn shirt, but his right hand raised high in a
clenched fist. He triumphantly squeals:

W.E.
BATTLE SCAR!!!

TROTTER(V.O.)
He got a little busted up but he's
gonna be alright.

Trotter looks very concerned but the smile widens on W.E.'s
face.

TROTTER (V.O.)
Thank you for writing and bless you
out there. I hope you get
everything you want.

INT. GILLY'S ROOM - DAY

At her desk Gilly clicks on a web-link. Raj suddenly appears
on the screen. He strikes a pose.

RAJ
Whad up, playa?

He's pushed aside by Agnes whose mouth fills the screen.

RAJ(O.C.) (Cont'd)
Hey!

AGNES
(To Raj)
Shut up.
(MORE)

AGNES (Cont'd)
Anyway, you remember Clark Gibbons,
the kid who always smelled like
banana farts? He now is dating, if
you can call it that, Melanie
Smurf.

RAJ (O.C.)
Agnes let me-

AGNES
Easy there Taj-

RAJ
You know it's Raj-

Gilly sits back and laughs.

INT. NONNIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A Christmas tree stands in the livingroom, partially
decorated. Nonnie opens a box as Gilly hangs an ornament.

NONNIE
Ohhh...

GILLY
What?

Nonnie lifts up a string of red and green paper chains.

NONNIE
Your mother made these when she was
about your age, maybe a little
younger.

She stands lifting them and a section tears the chain.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Oh Nonnie, Nonnie...

Gilly takes the chain from Nonnie.

GILLY
It's okay. I can fix these.

She gives Nonnie an assuring smile which is clearly
appreciated.

INT. GILLY'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

Gilly wakes in her darkened room. She hears Nonnie's muffled
voice. She glances at her clock: 12:15am

INT. HALLWAY

Gilly makes her way down the darkened hallway towards Nonnie's dimly lit bedroom.

NONNIE (O.C.)
Yes...I will yes. Tomorrow...this
means so much to-what? Okay.

Gilly appears in the doorway. Nonnie, in her nightgown is on the phone. She does not see Gilly.

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Yes...goodnight.

Nonnie slowly puts the phone down. After a beat she looks up to see Gilly. Nonnie's eyes are red and moist, but she smiles when she sees Gilly.

INT. NONNIE'S HOME-DAY

Gilly, dressed up very nicely comes to the top of the stairs. She looks very apprehensive.

GILLY (V.O.)
Dear Trotter, Mr. Randolph, W.E.
I just found out something amazing.
My mom's coming to see me. I know I
sometimes lie-but she really is
coming...to see me!

Gilly comes to Nonnie's bedroom door and looks in.

INT. NONNIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nonnie, dressed in her Sunday best, sits motionless in the darkened room. Gilly comes to the doorway.

GILLY
Ready to go? Nonnie?

Gilly crosses over to Nonnie's side. Nonnie slowly turns and looks at Gilly. Her face is ashen, her eyes moist.

NONNIE
It's silly to be nervous, isn't it?
She's my own daughter. It's just
that it's been so long and she was
hardly speaking to her father and
me in those days.

Unsure how to respond, she puts her hand on Nonnie's shoulder.

GILLY
I'm nervous, too.

EXT. NONNIE'S PORCH - DAY

As Gilly waits for Nonnie to come out, she carefully studies W.E.'s paper airplane.

She tosses it in the air. A slight breeze picks it up briefly before heading back towards her.

AIRPLANE'S POV

The paper plane rushes towards the grass, then suddenly passes over the end of an airport runway. The sound of the jet's tires touching down reveals that we are now at-

INT. AIRPORT - ARRIVAL GATE - DAY

*

Nonnie and Gilly nervously wait near a gate. Nonnie spies a flower vendor.

NONNIE
Maybe we should have some flowers?
For Courtney?

GILLY
Yeah.

Nonnie opens up her purse and nervously hands several bills to Gilly. Gilly heads over to the flower Cart.

NONNIE(O.C.)
Gilly!

Gilly turns to see that people are now coming off the plane, exiting through the gate. Gilly hurries back to join Nonnie as people with luggage pass them by. Nonnie stands behind Gilly and hesitantly puts her hands on Gilly's shoulders. Gilly looks up at Nonnie who manages a nervous smile.

*

COURTNEY enters. She is in her late twenties and has a casual air about her. She looks about, but in no way seems "desperate" to find Nonnie and Gilly. Nonnie steps out of the crowd to greet Courtney. It is strained and awkward for all.

*

NONNIE (Cont'd)
Hello Courtney.

COURTNEY
Hello mother.

They attempt a hug, but no love is seen in it. Nonnie steps back to reveal Gilly.

NONNIE
This is Galadriel, Courtney.

GILLY
Hi.

COURTNEY
Hey there.

She clumsily hugs her, but pulls away too fast for Gilly.

COURTNEY (Cont'd)
She's as tall as I am.

NONNIE
She's a lovely girl.

COURTNEY
Course she is, she's mine, isn't she?

NONNIE
Maybe we should get your luggage-

COURTNEY
I've got it. It's all right here.

NONNIE
I, I don't understand-

COURTNEY
I'm only here for two days.

Gilly feels as if she's just been smacked in the face.

NONNIE
Two days? But you said-

Courtney pulls Nonnie over and out of the crowd but Gilly hears it all.

COURTNEY
I told you on the phone that I'd come for Christmas and see for myself how the kid was doing-

NONNIE
But when I sent you the money-

COURTNEY

Look, I came, didn't I? My God,
I've been gone thirteen years and
you still think you can tell me
what to do...

NONNIE

I'm not, I-I'm sorry honey, please
let's not make a scene here.

COURTNEY

Fine. Can we get out of here?

Gilly's head is spinning. She can barely breathe. She has to
get out.

GILLY

I gotta go to the bathroom.

Gilly runs towards the bathroom. Nonnie looks torn between
Gilly and Courtney. She turns back to Courtney.

COURTNEY

What? You started it...

*

Gilly runs towards the bathroom. Nonnie looks torn between
Gilly and Courtney. She turns back to Courtney.

*

*

COURTNEY (Cont'd)

What? You started it...

*

*

NONNIE

I'm sure you're tired from the
flight-

*

*

*

COURTNEY

I wasn't drinking if that's what
you mean-

*

*

*

NONNIE

I didn't say that-please Courtney-
don't look for reasons to fight me-

*

*

*

COURTNEY

Then don't try to shame me in front
of my own kid. Jesus-you did enough
of that with me when I lived here.
I didn't come back here for more.

*

*

*

*

*

NONNIE

Please don't tell me you just came
back for money?

*

*

*

COURTNEY
You're such a b-

NONNIE
Yes, a fool, I know, both Gilly and
I, we, WE thought, you see, that we
were coming to get **my** daughter, **her**
mother. But were we wrong?

COURTNEY
I'm here aren't I?

NONNIE
Yes...I just don't know why you're
here. Who you are. Or how to start
to explain it to her...

Nonnie looks up, searching for Gilly.

Nearby, a set of double doors opens, revealing a row of empty taxis, with the drivers waiting for fares. Gilly looks down to her clenched fist. She opens it, revealing three twenties and some singles.

INT. TAXI

As the taxi speeds down the highway exit ramp, Gilly uses the window's reflection to comb back her hair, wipe away her tears.

INT. RANDOLPH'S KITCHEN-DAY

Mr. Randolph slowly enters his darkened kitchen and opens the refrigerator. He takes a soda bottle out and closes the door, revealing Gilly standing silently in the corner. Mr. Randolph stops, sensing something.

RANDOLPH
Hello?

He places the bottle back into the fridge, then crosses to the back door nearly brushing past Gilly. He gets his cane and steps out the back door.

Gilly tiptoes into the main hallway, looking around, clearly with no plan. She crosses back into the kitchen and sits at the kitchen table. She stares at the photo of Randolph's wife. She empties the remaining cash from her pocket and places it on the kitchen table. She starts for the front door but freezes when she sees Trotter at the open front door. Trotter looks exhausted but relief is visible in her face.

Their eyes lock, and for a moment, nothing is said. Then-

GILLY
I wanna come home.

TROTTER
Oh honey-

GILLY
I wanna come home.

Gilly chokes on her last words and runs into Trotter's arms. Trotter holds her, stroking her hair.

TROTTER
Oh, my poor baby-

GILLY is now beginning to lose it.

GILLY
She came, but she only came because Nonnie paid her to. She doesn't want me-she doesn't even want to stay! It's all wrong. Nothing turned out the way it's supposed to!

Trotter holds Gilly out at arms length.

TROTTER
How do you mean "supposed to"? Life ain't supposed to be nothing 'cept maybe tough.

GILLY
But, I always thought that when my mother came -

TROTTER
My sweet, sweet, baby, ain't no one ever told you yet? I reckoned a girl as smart as you had that all figured out.

GILLY
Figured out what?

TROTTER
That all that stuff 'bout happy endings is lies. The only real ending in this world is death. Now that might or might not be happy, but either way, you ain't ready to die yet, are you?

GILLY

Trotter, I'm not talking about dying, I'm talking about coming back-

TROTTER

Sometimes in this world things come easy and you tend to lean back and say, "Well, finally, a happy ending.. This is the way things is supposed to be." Like life owed you good things. And there is lots of good things, baby.

Trotter wipes away Gilly's tears.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

Like you comin' to be with us here this fall. That was a mighty good thing for me and William Ernest. But you just fool yourself if you expect good things to come regular, don't nobody owe 'em to you.

GILLY

But if life's so bad, how come you're so happy?

TROTTER

Did I say bad? I said it was tough. Nothing to make you happy like doing good on a tough job, right?

Gilly breaks from Trotter and walks towards the front door.

GILLY

Trotter, stop preaching at me. I want to come home.

TROTTER

You've been home, baby. Your grandma is home now.

GILLY

I want to be with you and William Ernest and Mr. Randolph.

TROTTER

And leave her all alone? Could you do that?

GILLY

But I don't want to lose you!

TROTTER

Oh sweetie-you're not losing a family-you're gettin another one. Don't think we are gonna up and vanish on you. Me and William Ernest and Mr. Randolph are going nowhere. But your grandma is your family, you need time to get to know her.

Trotter brushes Gilly's hair out of her eyes. She leans over and looks into Gilly's eyes.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

You are a part of me and me a part of you now. Ain't no one can take that away from us. Ever.

Gilly sees Nonnie's car pulling up in front of the house. Gilly steps back to accuse Trotter of calling Nonnie, but Trotter reads her mind.

TROTTER (Cont'd)

She called from her car...She's lost, child. If you had heard her voice. She needs you-

Gilly tries to stand tough but sees Nonnie stumble out of the car. Courtney sits in the front passenger seat of the car, feet on the dashboard, looking distractedly away.

GILLY

Please, Trotter. Don't try to make a stinking Christian out of me.

Trotter has come up behind Gilly, her strong hands resting on Gilly's shoulders. She too watches Nonnie. Randolph has now joined Nonnie, he pats her arm to comfort her.

TROTTER

I wouldn't try to make nothing out of you...Me and William Ernest and Mr. Randolph kinda like you the way you are.

Mr. Randolph comes up his walkway. Nonnie looks towards the house, her eyes bloodshot and red. Seeing Gilly, she holds a handkerchief to her mouth to stifle a cry.

TROTTER(Cont'd)

I was thinking...about Thanksgiving.

Gilly looks up at Trotter who is now fighting back tears herself.

TROTTER (Cont'd)
I owe you a Turkey dinner...
maybe...maybe come Easter we visit
you. Bring you a ham...and a
chocolate bunny.

Gilly seizes the moment.

GILLY
You gonna put some rabbit ears on
Randolph?

Trotter lets out a desperately needed laugh and throws her arms around Gilly.

TROTTER
Oh, I think he and William Ernest
would love that.

Trotter recovers and strokes Gilly's hair. Gilly is trying to summon all the strength she has.

GILLY
Trotter... I love you.

CLOSE on Trotter

TROTTER
I know baby... I love you, too.

Trotter gently pushes Gilly towards the front door. Gilly opens it as Mr. Randolph reaches the doorway.

Nothing is said, then Gilly wraps her arms around Mr. Randolph who pats her head and strokes her hair.

Gilly lets go and walks to the edge of the porch. Nonnie extends her hand out towards Gilly, but is terrified to come any closer.

Gilly looks to the car, noticing Courtney has stepped out and is now leaning against the car. Sensing her daughter's gaze, Courtney reaches over and open the rear door for Gilly. Satisfied that Gilly acknowledges the gesture, Courtney climbs back into the front seat and shuts the door.

Gilly steps down off the porch and looks back for one final look at Trotter. Trotter covers her mouth, fighting for control. Mr. Randolph puts his arms around Trotter, whispering comforting words.

RANDOLPH
Our little girl is gonna be just
fine, Maime...

Gilly manages a weak smile, she is spent. But she will go. She takes a deep breath, and tries to compose herself. She wipes her eyes and brushes back her hair with her fingers. She turns and walks down the steps to Nonnie.

With each step she takes we can see her regain a little more strength, a little more confidence. She finally reaches Nonnie and takes her outstretched hand.

CLOSE ON GILLY'S FACE

GILLY
...I'm ready to go...

NONNIE
...Thank you...
(then to Trotter, quietly)
...thank you.

Trotter smiles, acknowledging what they both now share.

GILLY
I'm ready to go home now.

Nonnie nods her head gratefully. The two walk together, hand in hand to the car. Gilly takes one final look back.

CLOSE ON GILLY:

She's going to be okay.

THE END: ROLL CREDITS

As the closing credits roll, we see various snapshots of Gilly's new life:

GILLY AND NONNIE STANDING ON EITHER SIDE OF A HORSE. GILLY IS SMILING AND HOLDING THE REINS.

GILLY IN WINTER CLOTHES, FROWNING AS SHE SHOVELS HEAVY SNOW IN FRONT OF NONNIE'S PORCH.

GILLY IN THE HORSE STALLS JOKINGLY FROWNING, HER SHOVEL NOW FULL OF POOP.

GILLY, IN SCHOOL SOCCER UNIFORM, USING HER HEAD TO HEAD A BALL PAST TWO OPPONENTS.

GILLY ON A DIFFERENT HORSE, SHE NOW WEARS RIDING GEAR.

GILLY ON DIFFERENT HORSE, NEXT TO HER IS WILLIAM ERNEST ON A PONY. HE LOOKS EUPHORIC.

GILLY ON THE PONY, W.E. ON THE HORSE, TROTTER NERVOUSLY HOLDING THE HORSES' REINS AND RANDOLPH NEXT TO GILLY. HE IS WEARING A PAIR OF RABBIT EARS.