

"THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE"

Screenplay by
Laird Koenig and Dick Lochte

From the novel by
Laird Koenig

REVISED: NOVEMBER 24, 1975

OPEN ON:

EXT. NEW ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE - FARMHOUSE - LANE - LS - DAY

Beside a tree-lined lane is a small, secluded farmhouse with a smoking chimney. A fall wind is blowing, whipping brown, dry leaves against the door to the house. The trees are almost bare. The front door opens. RYNN JACOBS steps from the house. She is thirteen, fair, with a heart-shaped face, freckles and light-colored hair. She is dressed for winter -- a duffle coat and scarf, levis. She locks the door behind her very carefully. Then she begins walking down the lane.

CREDITS IN.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Waves of slate-grey water and whitefoam break against the rocky coast. The feeling should be of unbrooked power. CAMERA PANS TO INCLUDE a section of sand and rock and Rynn, hunkering on the damp sand, her feet inches from the incoming surf. She is staring out to sea. She looks lonely and a little uncertain. Beyond her are a gathering of SEAGULLS. She touches the water with a finger.

RYNN AND GULLS

She stands, sticks out her chin in a determined gesture and turns from the ocean. Her movement scatters the gulls. We HEAR the SOUND of CHILDREN YELLING: "C'mon, hey, c'mon." "Over here . . ."

RYNN - CLOSE - LOOKING AT KIDS

She seems to be studying them, confused about something. She looks to the right suddenly. CAMERA PANS to pick up a little GIRL of seven or eight, standing near the fence, staring at Rynn. Rynn is unnerved. She backs away, then starts running down the sidewalk.

ANGLE ON SIDEWALK FROM CORNER - RYNN APPROACHING

She is composing herself, slowing down, moving away from the school. Before she reaches the corner, a car door swings open into frame, not exactly blocking her way, but somehow intimidating. She gives it a wide berth.

THE CAR (STATION WAGON)

A YOUNG MAN slides out of the car. Pleasant-looking. Smiling. His name is FRANK HALLET. He nods to Rynn. She gives him her back, moving away down the sidewalk. Hallet continues to watch her move away.

EXT. NEW ENGLAND VILLAGE - LS - MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

The street is grey and cold. The only bright spots of color are tacky Halloween decorations carelessly hung. Traffic is light. Few PEOPLE on the sidewalk and they are moving bruskiy.

A bus stops with a belch of exhaust. When it goes on, Rynn is standing on the sidewalk.

EXT. THE STREET - DIFFERENT LOCATION - BAKERY STOREFRONT

Through a goblin-decorated window, we see the little girl standing at a counter, receiving a cake box from an unsmiling OLD WOMAN with black dyed hair. Using both hands, the little girl carries the box toward us and the door.

EXT. THE STREET

The little girl waits for a bus. Nearby, a boy stands in front of the service station. Wearing white overalls, spotted with grease. He seems chilly. The girl senses that the boy, whose name is Mario, is staring at her. She turns. He smiles. The bus arrives. The girl turns and steps onto the bus.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - RAINY

A strong wind whips wet leaves from the ground in a frenzy. The farmhouse is dark except for a downstairs light. We hear Chopin music from inside, faintly.

Rynn appears at a downstairs window, framed in backlight. She looks out at the chilly night for a beat, then draws the curtains shut with finality.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Rynn pulls the curtains shut. She runs on bare feet to the fireplace and lifts the lid on a woodbox. She takes out a poker and prods the red coals into a blaze --the only wavering light in the house. She holds out her hands for warmth, then hurries to the stereo to RAISE the VOLUME on CHOPIN'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1. From overhead SPEAKERS the house floods with MUSIC. She hurries across the gleaming oak floor to the kitchen area where modern appliances reflect the fire's glow.

THE KITCHEN

The cake box is on the counter. She carefully lifts out a small yellow cake. Slowly she pushes thirteen yellow candles into it from a ring. She strikes a match and brings all the candles alive and dancing with fire. She carries the cake.

Instead of going directly to the parlor, she moves to a mirror by the front door. At her approach the mirror blazes with reflected light. The girl studies herself. A white caftan edged with blue clings to her slender body.

RYNN

(to girl in mirror)
Happy birthday.

She leans forward, examines a chipped tooth, runs her tongue over it. Then she turns and, like a solemn virgin princess, enters into the throbbing MUSIC of the parlor.

Placing her offering on the coffee table, she kneels.
THUDS POUND on the front door. Rynn springs to her
feet and runs to lower the music's volume. More THUDS.
She moves to open the curtains just enough to peer out.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR - RYNN'S POV - NIGHT

Lit by a strange, orange light that wavers like the candles
on her cake, a MAN in a raincoat stands at the door. Rynn
lets the curtains close.

She waits for a moment, tiptoes to the front door. Three BANGS THUD LOUDER than before. At the door she speaks.

RYNN

Yes?

MAN'S VOICE

Mr. Jacobs?

RYNN

Who is it?

MAN'S VOICE

Frank Hallet.

RYNN

(considering the name)

Hallet?

She hesitates, suddenly turns, races back into the parlor.

RYNN

(calling)

Just a minute.

At the coffee table she opens a cigarette box and from a blue package of French Gauloise draws out a cigarette, holding back her long hair leans into the flames of the birthday candles to light the cigarette. Rising, she blows smoke behind her. Repeating the process she sends more smoke into the room's four corners before she hurls the cigarette into the fireplace and runs back to the hall.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

The girl turns the lock and opens the door on the cold night and the wind that sends leaves scratching across her newly-polished oak floor. The man's jack-o-lantern flickers fire through its grinning gash of a mouth.

HALLET

Trick or treat.

RYNN

What?

HALLET

(shouting over the wind)

Trick or treat.

The girl's arms hug her caftan as she shivers in the cold blast.

HALLET

Halloween . . .

The girl moves trying to block the door. But the man, peering inside, takes a step forward to see into the parlor.

HALLET

Somebody's birthday?

Rynn's hands tighten into fists.

HALLET

Yours?

(she nods)

Well, Happy Birthday.

RYNN

(flatly)

Thank you. May I tell my father what you want?

HALLET

Besides your birthday, tonight's also Halloween. Trick or treat.

(she remains expressionless)

My name's Hallet. Frank Hallet.

Your father knows me. My mother leased him this place.

(glancing back into the night)

My two kids will be by any minute.

Trick or treating. I'm making sure they won't find any real goblins lurking around.

RYNN

The expressionless girl stares straight at the man.

RYNN AND HALLET

He studies this strange little girl.

HALLET

Like dirty ole men who try to give candy to pretty little girls, right?

RYNN

Her face betrays nothing. The record ends.

RYNN AND HALLET

The man's hair blows and he brushes it forward to give himself a boyish look. HALLET

You've been living in England, right?

(she nods)

They don't have Halloween in England? Hey, we're letting all the heat out.

He thrusts himself into the hall.

HALLET

Tell your father you've got company.

RYNN

The girl, seething with anger, masks her hate. She glares.

ANGLE ACROSS RYNN ONTO HALLET, THE HALL AND THE PARLOR.

The man with the glowing pumpkin pushes past the girl to go to the front window. His wet suede shoes splotch footprints on the polished floors. Rynn does not move from the door. She watches Hallet shove back the curtains and shade his eyes to look out through the glass.

HALLET

Tonight's the night all the kids get dressed up, come by with masks and pumpkins.

The girl, still masking her hate, stares at the man. Finding her eyes on him, Hallet puts the jack-o-lantern down on the gateleg table. From a raincoat, he draws a Chapstick. The hand that glints with a heavy gold wedding ring runs the glistening balm over his lips. He drops the Chapstick back into his pocket and slides his hand to his head to arrange his hair.

HALLET

HALLET

One of the kids is a green skeleton. The other's Frankenstein.

RYNN

Her hand claws on the door knob.

RYNN AND HALLET

The girl moves to the parlor.

HALLET

When they holler 'trick or treat'
you're supposed to act scared. If you
don't give them a treat they pull some
terrible trick on you.

(winking)

Something dire.

Hallet presses his face to the window to peer out into the
night. His breath makes a patch of fog on the black glass.

RYNN

What's considered a treat?

HALLET

Popcorn. Candy.
(possibly suggestive)
Anything.

RYNN

Would they like a piece of cake?

Both the man and the girl look at the cake glowing with
candles. A few have burned down and their flames have
died. Others flicker.

HALLET

But that's a birthday cake.

In the kitchen area, the girl opens a drawer, slams a cup-
board door. With a long knife and a box of waxed paper,
she returns to the coffee table and kneels before the cake.

HALLET

You shouldn't . . .

The girl uses the tip of the knife to draw a careful line
through the frosting.

HALLET

. . . cut it. Just for them,
I mean.

His hand rises in protest, but falls. He turns back to
the window, then suddenly to the girl who is frowning in
concentration over cutting the cake.

HALLET

Where's your mother?

She lifts a large wedge of cake onto the waxed paper.

RYNN

She's . . . not with us any longer.

HALLET

You mean she's passed away?

(Rynn doesn't answer)

But your father's here.

(sniffing air)

Smokes French cigarettes, right?

She rips a long piece of waxed paper from the box.

HALLET

Am I right? French cigarettes?

RYNN

Yes.

HALLET

Very wicked.

(the girl ignores him)

Very wicked, French cigarettes.

Out here on our provincial island. Ho, ho. Very wicked.

(pause)

Upstairs?

RYNN

She stares straight at the man.

HALLET (O.S.)

Your father's upstairs?

RYNN

In his study. Working.

ANGLE TO INCLUDE HALLET

Rynn wraps a second piece of cake.

HALLET

Mother says he's a poet. And when Mother says anything -- automatically it has to be true. Wouldn't dare not be.

Rynn rises, carries the pieces of cake to the man.

HALLET

The kids'll love this.

His hands touch her slender fingers. She pulls her hands away, almost dropping the cake. Hallet finds her staring at his hands. He shrugs, returns to the window.

HALLET

Clearing up. No more rain tonight.

Rynn takes the knife, the waxed paper and carries them to the kitchen.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON RYNN

From the kitchen she watches the man's every move.

HALLET (O.S.)

Gets too lonely for most people out here in Winter. Happens every year. The summer people clear out and we have our village back. But it gets lonely. Right?

RYNN AND HALLET

He turns from the window, looks at the girl, as if expecting an answer. When none comes, he turns to the cake.

HALLET

You're thirteen, huh? Just thirteen.

Rynn stays in the kitchen, far from him. She says nothing.

HALLET

Thirteen candles.

RYNN

All I had.

HALLET

Then you're older? Fourteen?

His hand slides across his hair.

Rynn says nothing. In the fireplace, a log burns through, rolls burning coals onto the hearth. Rynn rushes from the kitchen, opens the woodbox for the poker.

HALLET
What's your name?

RYNN
(trapped into replying)
Rynn.

HALLET
R-Y-N-N? Very unusual.

Hallet glances around the room, sees a rocker and moves to it. He starts it rocking.

HALLET
This is your father's favorite
chair, I bet.
(he smiles at Rynn)
And you don't like for anybody
else to sit in it, right?

RYNN
It's not very comfortable.

She moves to a corner of the room past the woodbox and opens a tiny wire mesh cage. Whatever she takes from the cage gives Hallet an excuse to move closer, to see.

HALLET
A hamster.
(to the pet)
What's your name, pal?

Rynn turns from him with the pet, kissing the pet's nose.

HALLET
Got to have a name. C'mon, Rynn.
Tell Frank your hamster's name.

RYNN
(looking at hamster)
Gordon.

She places Gordon on the coffee table.

ANGLE ACROSS TABLE ONTO RYNN AND HALLET

As Rynn kneels, Gordon raises his head and surveys the mountain of cake, the wavering candles. Rynn feeds Gordon a crumb. As he nibbles, her eyes sparkle in the candlelight. Gordon stands, his front claws sink into the frosting.

HALLET

You had your music pretty loud
when I came up. Doesn't that
bother your father?

RYNN

No. He likes it.

HALLET

I'd think it would distracting
. . . if someone was working.

Hallet watches the girl for a long, silent moment.

HALLET

Anybody ever tell you you're a very pretty girl? Pretty hair. Especially in the candlelight.

His hand reaches out but stops short of touching Rynn's hair.

HALLET

Pretty girl like you -- on your birthday and all -- no boyfriends?

Rynn, putting her face close to Gordon, ignores the man who studies her shining hair, the white caftan that stretches tight across her back and over her hips.

HALLET

Come on. I'll bet you've got a boyfriend. Lots of boyfriends...
Pretty girl like you.

should carress the girl's behind as
Suddenly the man well as slap it. The girl
wheels around to face him, her eyes glaring hate.

HALLET

(giggling nervously)
It's okay. I get to spank you. On your birthday you have to get spanked. Once for every year. And then one to grow on...

Rynn's eyes lock with the man's until he slides his eyes away.

HALLET

(protesting)
It's a game. A birthday game.

Backing away, Hallet stumbles against the gateleg table.

HALLET

You think... Wow. Look, I've got two kids of my own. Out there.

He retreats to the window and peers out.

HALLET

Hey, here they come now!

He scoops up the glowing pumpkin, shoves the wrapped cake into his raincoat pocket mashing the slices.

HALLET

Anybody ever tell you you're a very pretty girl? Pretty hair. Especially in the candlelight.

His hand reaches out but stops short of touching Rynn's hair.

HALLET

Pretty girl like you -- on your birthday and all -- no boyfriends?

Rynn, putting her face close to Gordon, ignores the man who studies her shining hair, the white caftan that stretches tight across her back and over her hips.

HALLET

Come on. I'll bet you've got a boyfriend. Lots of boyfriends... Pretty girl like you.

Suddenly the man slaps the girl on her buttocks. The girl wheels around to face him, her eyes glaring hate.

HALLET

(giggling nervously)

It's okay. I get to spank you. On your birthday you have to get spanked. Once for every year. And then one to grow on...

Rynn's eyes lock with the man's until he slides his eyes away.

HALLET

(protesting)

It's a game. A birthday game.

Backing away, Hallet stumbles against the gateleg table.

HALLET

You think... Wow. Look, I've got two kids of my own. Out there.

He retreats to the window and peers out.

HALLET

Hey, here they come now!

He scoops up the glowing pumpkin, shoves the wrapped cake into his raincoat pocket mashing the slices.

HALLET

Thanks for the treats. No tricks
on you, I guarantee.

RYNN

Her eyes hold on Hallet.

RYNN AND HALLET

With long steps, he backs toward the door.

HALLET

Well, ah . . . tell your father I'm
sorry I missed him.

He flings open the front door. Behind him, out in the dark,
TWO COSTUMED CHILDREN wait in the blowing leaves.

RYNN

She faces Hallet, surprisingly full of hate. He
exits through the door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Hallet hurries away with the two kids.

HALLET

(shouting above the wind)
Happy birthday, Rynn!

The wind hurls his voice into the night. The girl SLAMS
the door. Lost in the black of night except for the light
behind the curtain, the little clapboard farmhouse stands
far back in the naked trees.

EXT. THE LANE - AFTERNOON - LS

In the amber light of autumn woodsmoke curls from burning
leaves. A dark-red 1966 Bentley moves down the lane toward
the farmhouse behind its screen of tree branches.

IN FRONT OF FARMHOUSE

The Bentley stops. In the distance, crows CAW. From the
car a woman in a tweed coat emerges. Her hair shines gold,
but it has a hard unnatural glint. She carries a basket.
MRS. HALLET strides toward the house with its open windows.
Her suede shoes CRUNCH acorns and scatter dry leaves. A
bluejay flashes past. Halfway up the path, Mrs. Hallet slows,
listens. SOUNDS from the house bring her to a halt. Instead
of going to the front door, she walks through the high grass
and the dead flower stalks.

A GRAPE ARBOR - FAR SIDE OF HOUSE

Against the sunny wall of the house, Mrs. Hallet finds shriveled clusters of grapes furred with mold. An espaliered apple tree bears a few pieces of fruit, but these are pockmarked with wormholes or brown with rot.

MRS. HALLET
(muttering to herself)
They really might have sprayed.

She finds a quince bush sprawled across the ground loaded with green and gold fruit. She snaps off the choicest and fills her basket. She steps close to the house to an open window where the VOICES are LOUDER but even less fathomable.

MALE VOICE
Ha-oo-KHAL luh-tal-PAYN mee POH?

RYNN'S VOICE
Ha-oo-KHAL luh-tal-PAYN mee-POH?

Mrs. Hallet peers in the open window.

INT. PARLOR - AFTERNOON - MRS. HALLET'S POV

The inside of the farmhouse is spotlessly clean, shining -- the polished oak floor, the furniture, the pewter candlesticks on the gateleg table.

MALE VOICE
Ha -too-KHAL luh tal-PAYN a-voo-REE?

The room appears empty. Mrs. Hallet's view cannot locate the source of either voice.

RYNN'S VOICE
Ha-too-KHAL luh tal-PAYN a-voo-REE?

EXT. THE WINDOW - MRS. HALLET - AFTERNOON

She moves closer to see more of the inside of the house.

INT. PARLOR - AFTERNOON - MRS. HALLET'S POV

In a dark corner by the fireplace, Rynn in Levis and a black sweater, barefoot, sits stroking her hamster. The girl realizes she is being watched, rises, slips the animal back into his mesh cage. Then she runs to the stereo, the source of the other voice.

VOICE
A-va-KAYSH see KHAH muh-ko-MEET, mees-PAHR.

With the sound off, crows CAW in the distance. Rynn runs to the front door.

EXT. THE WINDOW AND MRS. HALLET - AFTERNOON

She moves through the grape arbor. She pauses to primp, pat her hair, put on a smile.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

At the open front door Mrs. Hallet brushes past the girl. Entering the parlor, she holds up the basket.

MRS. HALLET
Quinces. No grapes this year.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Rynn INTO the parlor. Mrs. Hallet puts her basket on the gateleg table, glances around.

MRS. HALLET
How are you two getting along out here? Everything all right?

RYNN
Fine.

Rynn nods. The woman's sharp eyes dart around the room, move to Rynn, appraising the girl from head to toe.

MRS. HALLET
You do remember me? I'm Cora Hallet.
Your father leased this house from me.

RYNN
I remember you.

Mrs. Hallet inspects her domain as landlady. She runs a questioning hand over the back of the rocking chair.

MRS. HALLET
Where did this come from?

RYNN
It's father's.

Mrs. Hallet drags the rocker into a corner. Rynn watches her shove the coffee table into its place.

MRS. HALLET
Belongs here.

She moves to the couch to plump cushions and line them in a precise row. Her eyes go to the gate leg table.

MRS. HALLET

That table and the braided rug --
they belong against the wall.

Rynn makes no move. Mrs. Hallet flicks on a smile.

MRS. HALLET

Poets aren't supposed to live like
other people. Is that it?

Still smiling, she moves to the mantel. Frowning, she
takes down a pewter tankard, turns it over to study its
touchmark. From her tweed coat she draws eyeglasses dangling
from a gold chain.

MRS. HALLET

(muttering)

Not bad, but wrong for this room.

(returning to Rynn)

I understand a very attractive
woman was in town last week,
asking about your father. Did
she find him?

RYNN

(flatly)

Yes. She was from his publisher.

Mrs. Hallet seems relieved.

MRS. HALLET

He . . . must get rather lonely
out here. Such a vital man.

RYNN

The girl smothers her seething anger.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman picks up a book from the mantel. She cracks open
the thin volume.

MRS. HALLET

I keep forgetting to have him
autograph one for me.

She fans the leaves to the first page. Adjusting her glasses.

MRS. HALLET

'I love you.' Signed 'Father.'
Nice and simple.

She snaps the book closed, slides it back onto the mantel.

MRS. HALLET

We don't see much of you two in
the village. Even at the market.

Her raised eyebrows demand an answer.

RYNN

The market delivers.

MRS. HALLET

If one can afford it.

The woman draws a box of cigarettes from her pocket, lights one, turns to the window that opens on the grape arbor.

RYNN

Did you want me to give my father some message?

MRS. HALLET

Such a shame about the grapes.
Nobody bothered to spray.

Ash grows on the cigarette. Rynn brings an ashtray.

RYNN

I can give my father a message.

MRS. HALLET

I came to get the jelly glasses. For as long as I can remember, the owners and I have been making jelly from those grapes. We stored last year's glasses in the cellar.

The woman turns to find the girl staring at her.

MRS. HALLET

I take it your father's not home.
(Rynn shakes her head 'no.')

That's too bad. I was hoping . . .
He's a very distinguished-looking man, your father. So typically a writer. An intellectual. I'm having a little gathering at my home and I was hoping . . .
Is he in the village?

RYNN

New York.

MRS. HALLET

When I was outside I could have sworn I heard voices.

Mrs. Hallet moves to the stereo; her fingers pick up a disc.

RYNN

The girl fights to cover her rage.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

Rattling her glasses on their chain, Mrs. Hallet reads.

MRS. HALLET

Hebrew?

Mrs. Hallet clatters the record back on the turntable.

MRS. HALLET

I should think French would be more help. Or Italian. Lord knows there are enough of them around here these days to speak it with.

RYNN

I can give my father any message.

Mrs. Hallet explores the albums.

MRS. HALLET

So many outsiders in the village these days.

(with her fake smile)

You'll have to forgive me, but you see there've been Hallets out here on the Island for more than three hundred years.

The woman's hand moves to the couch's glazed chintz.

MRS. HALLET

This couch belongs over there.

She moves to the gateleg table and picks up an English newspaper.

MRS. HALLET

From London?

RYNN

Yes.

MRS. HALLET

I adore crosswords.

RYNN

Take it with you if you like.

Mrs. Hallet examines the puzzle on the folded newspaper.

MRS. HALLET
But your father's doing it.

RYNN
I'm doing it.

MRS. HALLET
And Hebrew. How very clever.

She tosses the paper back on the table. Rynn refolds it.

MRS. HALLET
My grandchildren tell me you
gave them some of your birthday
cake the other night. Halloween.

Mrs. Hallet moves a pewter candlestick, lining it with its
mate.

MRS. HALLET
(deliberately casual)
Did he . . . come inside the house?

RYNN

The girl's eyes stare straight into Mrs. Hallet's.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman pretends to study the pewter.

MRS. HALLET
My son, I mean.

RYNN
Yes. He came in.

MRS. HALLET
Your father . . .
(frowning at the pewter)
. . . he was home that evening?

RYNN
Yes. In his study . . . working.

Mrs. Hallet moves to the rocking chair. Her hand brings it
to life.

MRS. HALLET
(trying to make it sound
unimportant)
Has my son come back?

RYNN

The girl's eyes never leave the woman.

RYNN

No.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET .

MRS. HALLET

You're certain.

Rynn doesn't repeat her answer. Mrs. Hallet's hand caresses the polished wood.

MRS. HALLET

Well, if my son should come back and your father isn't here . . .

(pretending interest in the grain of the wood)

. . . it might be better if you didn't let him in.

RYNN

He didn't ask my permission before.

MRS. HALLET

(icily)

I hope you didn't intend that to sound so rude.

RYNN

I'll tell my father you said not to let your son in the door.

MRS. HALLET

She stifles her flash of red anger.

MRS. HALLET

That won't be necessary.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

RYNN

Perhaps I don't understand what it is you want . . .

MRS. HALLET

What I certainly do not want is to chatter on and on about something that doesn't matter in the slightest. I came here for the jelly glasses.

RYNN

The girl's silence is worse than an accusation.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

MRS. HALLET
We'll get them now.

RYNN
~~Your son~~ thinks I have pretty hair.
Did he tell you that?

Mrs. Hallet grips the rocker till her knuckles go white.

RYNN

The little girl's eyes lock with the woman's.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

MRS. HALLET
I want those jelly glasses -- now.
They're down in the cellar.

RYNN

Her eyes falter.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman goes to the gateleg table.

MRS. HALLET
We have to move this table, so that
I can take up the rug and raise the
trapdoor.

Rynn buries her fists under the waist of her black sweater.

RYNN
(quietly)
I'm sorry, Mrs. Hallet, but I'll
get them for you later --

MRS. HALLET
Move this table!

RYNN
This is my house --

MRS. HALLET
You are an extraordinarily rude
little girl who is going to do
exactly as I say.

To Rynn's surprise she finds herself shouting at the woman.

RYNN
Last week you came and took the only
good grapes we had! And now the
quinces. You never asked if you
might... today you just walked right into
my house!

MRS. HALLET
This is not your house.

RYNN
My house!

MRS. HALLET
(spitting out the word)
Leased!
(cold control)
You are thirteen?

RYNN

The girl knows she must stare straight into the woman's
eyes.

MRS. HALLET (O.S.)
Why aren't you in school?

For the second time the girl's eyes falter.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman knows that now she has found her weapon.

The bewildered girl tries to turn away.

MRS. HALLET

Look at me when I talk to you --

RYNN

I study at home.

MRS. HALLET

It so happens I am the chairperson of the school board. Monday when we meet they'll be very interested in your case.

Mrs. Hallet draws the cigarette box from her pocket, finds it empty, crushes it, throws it into the fire.

MRS. HALLET

Where is your father?

RYNN

I told you. New York.

MRS. HALLET

Exactly where in New York?

RYNN

He's having lunch with his publisher.

MRS. HALLET

I want the publisher's telephone number.

RYNN

I don't have it --

MRS. HALLET

The publisher's name.

Mrs. Hallet goes to the mantel, grabs the book, tears it open searching for the publisher. She hurls the book aside.

MRS. HALLET

This one's London. Your father will call me the minute he comes home. Is that understood?

RYNN

Are tears shining in her eyes?

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

MRS. HALLET

Speak up so I know you understand.

RYNN

(her voice is steady)

This is my house.

Mrs. Hallet seizes her basket and hurries out the front door. Rynn moves to the corner, takes Gordon from his cage, sits and murmurs to him.

EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET IN THE VILLAGE - A RAINY SATURDAY MORNING

At a bus stop across the street from a house with an iron deer on the lawn, Rynn stands alone under a huge black umbrella and bundled in a moss-green duffle coat and high rubber boots. A yellow bus, splashing water, squeals to a stop, bangs open its door. The girl disappears inside.

INT. THE BUS - RAINY SATURDAY MORNING

The bus is not full of passengers but Rynn moves to the back. The misty windows glow with car headlights, a neon sign. She sits in the long back seat, unbuttons her duffle coat against the heat and pulls a paperback book of poems from her pocket.

CLOSER ON RYNN

The book's cover is a drawing of Emily Dickinson, a young woman in a severe black dress, dark hair parted in the middle, an infinitely wise face with enormous eyes. Rynn opens the book.

RYNN

(murmuring to herself)

'That love is all there is,
Is all we know of love.'

Giggles, shrieks of laughter, break her concentration. She glances up from her book.

RYNN'S POV - THE SEAT FOR TWO FACING THE AISLE

Two GIRLS a year older than Rynn hold football pennants bright with snarling cat faces blazoned with "Wildcats." Both have long hair. Glasses of one magnify the size of her pretty eyes; she wears braces on her teeth. Around her neck winds a long white scarf. The other whose scarlet coat is the same color as the Queen's Horse Guards, chews pink bubble gum. Whispering together, these two giggle, shriek with laughter.

INT. BACK OF BUS - RYNN AND THE TWO GIRLS

GIRL WITH GLASSES
... practically every single night...

The red coat blows a bubble, laps it back into her mouth.

GIRL WITH BUBBLE GUM
No kidding. Today? After the game?

The Girl With Glasses leans close, whispers in her friend's ear.

GIRL WITH BUBBLE GUM
Like what did you say?

Talking to be overheard, the two Girls glance at Rynn.

GIRL WITH GLASSES
Like what do you think I said?

The two yelp with laughter. The Girl With Gum almost strangles on a bubble. She buries her giggles in her friend's wool scarf.

RYNN

The girl with the book stares with undisguised disdain.

INT. BACK OF BUS - THE THREE GIRLS

The two in the aisle seat steal glances at Rynn. As they whisper together, Rynn knows they are talking about her. Her cheeks and forehead redden with embarrassment and she retreats into her book. The Girls' wild laughter grows till they exchange a Kleenex to dry their eyes. Bubble gum swells from pouting lips till suddenly the Girl With Glasses screams and tugs violently on the cord signaling the bus to stop. They run off in a final burst of giggles, waving their pennants.

THE TWO GIRLS
Yeah Wildcats!

Rynn picks up a rock-and-roll fan magazine they left on the seat.

CLOSER ON RYNN

She stares at the vivid colors on the cover of a lovesick, slender boy clutching a guitar. In big black letters the heading demands: "Why Do They Tell Us We're Too Young To Love?" Rynn turns a few pages and with an exaggerated yawn, tosses the thin magazine back on the aisle seat.

RYNN
 (muttering to herself)
 Too young, indeed?

She returns to the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

MATCH CUT:

INT. BANK - SAME MORNING - CU ON RYNN'S PASSPORT

The open passport should be framed approximately the way that Emily Dickinson's photo on the bookjacket was. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal a CLERK, a girl with spun-sugar-pink hair. She is studying a card from a file.

RYNN AND THE CLERK

The little girl is seated across a desk from the clerk in a moderately crowded bank. They are near the door to the safety deposit vaults.

RYNN
 That's my signature. R-Y-N-N.
 My father and I have what you
 call a joint account.

The Clerk compares the signature on the card with a paper Rynn has signed.

CLERK
 (doubtfully)
 You, uh, got your key?

Rynn holds up a silver key that she takes from a chain round her neck. The Clerk presses a buzzer, a door clicks open. Rynn moves toward it, scooping up the passport.

INT. SAFE-DEPOSIT VAULT

The Clerk uses Rynn's key and her own to open a shiny steel door. She steps aside and Rynn draws out a black box.

CLERK
 You can take it into one of those
 booths . . .

RYNN
 Yes, thank you. I know.

INT. BANK - THE CLERK AND A JUNIOR OFFICER

They watch as Rynn exits from the vault, joins a line of FOUR or FIVE at a teller's window.

INT. BANK TELLER'S WINDOW

A CUSTOMER moves away and Rynn arrives at the window. She passes over two signed \$50 traveler's checks. The TELLER, a young man with sideburns and long teeth, examines them with a frown. He slides a piece of paper and a ballpoint at the girl.

TELLER

You'll have to sign your name.

Rynn obeys, in careful script. The Teller takes the signature coldly, then signals to a plump WOMAN with several loops of beads that clack on the counter. She too examines the checks and casts a doubting look at the girl.

WOMAN OFFICER

Do you have any identification?

From her duffle coat, Rynn has already pulled out her British passport which the Teller and the Woman Officer study.

TELLER

(as if to justify refusal)

Well, she's only thirteen.

The plump woman untangles her glasses from the beads on her neck to examine the girl.

WOMAN OFFICER

You're traveling with your parents?

RYNN

My father and I have an account here. A joint account. Jacobs.

The plump woman gives the girl another long look and initials the check. She moves away. The overruled Teller shoves the money at Rynn who takes time to count it. Annoyed because others are waiting, the Teller waves her on. She does not move until she has finished counting.

RYNN

May I have the paper with my signature, please?

The annoyed man shoves the paper at Rynn who turns from the window. Walking away, she tears the paper into bits and drops them into a waste basket.

EXT. CITY STREET AND SIDEWALK - RAINY SATURDAY MORNING

Rynn hurries through the rain and the crowd of shoppers. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her as she slows at a record shop. Ignoring the pop records, she stares through the window at a display of discs: Julian Bream playing Bach. She hurries on.

INT. BOOKSTORE - CUSTOMER

He is a tall, elderly man. He looks away from his open book and smiles, somewhat patronizingly. CAMERA PANS TO ANGLE that includes Rynn standing before a display table that contains books of poetry. Her eyes devour the books. She looks up, sees the old man smiling and, reluctantly, pushes away from the table, hurrying now.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - RAINY SATURDAY AFTERNOON - LONG SHOT

Rynn hurries across the square and into the open front door of the town hall.

INT. TOWN HALL - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The building appears empty, silent. Rynn listens. A TYPE-WRITER TAP-TAPS and she moves toward the sound. CAMERA FOLLOWS. She pauses before an open, pebble-grain door, then, taking a deep breath, she enters the doorway.

She stares into a small, cluttered office. Piles of brochures here, pamphlets there. A WOMAN who looks "Country" English to Rynn, her grey hair under a scarf, is seated behind an old, wooden desk, before a battered typewriter. She looks up at the girl.

RYNN AND THE WOMAN WITH SCARF

WOMAN WITH SCARF

(unmistakably American)

Well, what are you doing here, young lady?

Rynn is taken aback by the question.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

Why aren't you at the game?

RYNN

Oh! I've got this paper to do. On government. I was hoping to find out when the schoolboard holds its meetings.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

Would you like to visit one?

RYNN

Actually, I just have to know when it meets.

The woman opens a drawer, roots into it, pulls out a folder.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

Ah. Looks like twice a month. Next meeting'll be a week from Thursday. Every other Thursday.

RYNN

I thought . . . somebody told me
it meets this Monday.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

People who don't know are always
the first to say. It's right
here in the bulletin . . . Thurs-
day. If you need anything else . . .

RYNN

No. This is super. Thank you.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

This isn't any time for you to
be doing homework. You should be
at the game. Or whatever it is
young girls do on Saturdays.

(Rynn nods)

Whose class is the paper for?

RYNN

(suddenly excited)

Ah, excuse me, but I would like
to get to the game.

WOMAN WITH SCARF

(consulting wristwatch)

You can make the kickoff
if you hurry.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - RAINY SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Rynn dashes from the town hall across the square.

RYNN - CLOSE

She runs through the rain, laughing. Her breath is misty.

RYNN

Mrs. Hallet, you're a liar. A
liar is what you are! Liar!

EXT. STREET - RECORD SHOP FRONT

Rynn is leaving the shop, still elated. Evidently, she
has returned to buy the record, which is in a bag under
her arm. CAMERA MOVES with her down the street. She
is ebullient.

As she passes a seafood restaurant, there is a TAPPING
sound -- a KNUCKLE against a window. Rynn turns to
see.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - RYNN AND RESTAURANT WINDOW

Frank Hallet and his two sons are at the window table,
eating lobster. The little boys and Hallet are each

wearing lobster bibs on which cartoon lobster are drawn. Hallet is knocking on the window, trying to get Rynn's attention. He moves his hand, indicating that she should join them. She shakes her head, starts away.

RYNN

She moves down the street. There's a fine mist in the air.

HALLET (O.S.)

Hey there, Rynn. Don't be such a stranger.

She turns.

HALLET AND RYNN

He is standing in the doorway of the restaurant, wearing the silly bib.

HALLET

Come in and have a bite with us. Join the stag party . . . me and the boys.

RYNN

No thanks, Mr. Hallet. Father's expecting me at home.

HALLET

(grinning)

Not very friendly. Here you are. Here we are. Kismet and all that. I was hoping we could get acquainted.

A CAR HORN SOUNDS. Hallet looks off past the girl. His grin fades. He backs away from Rynn.

ANOTHER ANGLE - TO INCLUDE POLICE CAR

It has pulled abreast of them, at the curb. A uniformed cop is staring through the window at Hallet.

HALLET

(to Rynn)

Uh, well, some other time, then.

RYNN

Oh, Mr. Hallet.

(he pauses, nervous,
conscious of the cop)

Could you give your mother a message, tell her I have the jelly glasses she wanted. Whenever she cares to come ' round.

HALLET

I could pick them up later, myself.

RYNN

(stiffening)

It would be better if she came.
My father wants to chat with her
about something.

The HORN SOUNDS again. Hallet moves inside the restaurant.
His comment may be cut off by the closing door.

HALLET

(mind elsewhere)

I'll be talking to her later.

RYNN AND THE CAR

She turns from Hallet and stares at the cop in the car.
He rolls down his window. He is wearing a raincape and
plastic-covered cap. His name is RON MIGLIORITI. He's
alone in the car.

MIGLIORITI

Everything all right, mam?

RYNN

Quite.

MIGLIORITI

I mean . . . he wasn't bothering
you?

RYNN

Mr. Hallet?

MIGLIORITI

Oh, you know him, huh?

RYNN

His mother leased us our farmhouse.

MIGLIORITI

The one out on the lane?

RYNN

(apprehensive)

Yes.

MIGLIORITI

(opening the door)

Hop in. I'll take you home.

(sensing her reticence)

No sense getting any wetter than
you have to.

She still hangs back.

MIGLIORITI

C'mon.

Facing the inevitable, Rynn gets into the car. She looks back at the restaurant. Hallet is glaring at them through the window. He tears off the lobster bib.

The car pulls away.

INT. CAR - RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

He has dark, curly hair, blue-black sideburns and heavy black eyebrows that almost meet over shining black eyes. He is a big man with a nice smile that shows perfect teeth.

MIGLIORITI :

Your folks let you wander around town by yourself?

Rynn is annoyed by the question, but she tries to hide it.

RYNN

I live with my father. He . . . allows me to come into town.

Miglioriti nods, concentrating on the road.

MIGLIORITI

Maybe I could have a little talk with him. You think?

RYNN

Why?

MIGLIORITI

Oh, nothing to worry your head over.

Rynn looks hard at him. She doesn't know what to make of him.

RYNN

Do you have a name, officer?

MIGLIORITI

(giving her a surprised look)
Huh? Oh, sure. I'm sorry. The name's Miglioriti, Ron Miglioriti.

RYNN

Mine is Rynn Jacobs.

(poetically)

Mi-gli-o-ri-ti.

MIGLIORITI

Hey, I got members of my family
don't pronounce it that nice. But
call me Ron, huh?

RYNN

It's lovely. Mi-gli-o-ri-ti.
And have the Miglioritis been
living in the village a long time?

MIGLIORITI

Say, you been talking to Mrs. Hallet.

RYNN

She stares at the cop, anxious to find out his interest.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

MIGLIORITI

According to Mrs. H., you had to
be on the first sailing ship that
put in here. Otherwise, you'll
always be an immigrant. An outsider.

RYNN

Of which we are the newest, my
father and I.

MIGLIORITI

You been here what -- a couple of
months?

RYNN

(very guarded)
About that.

MIGLIORITI

Like it?

RYNN

She nods.

MIGLIORITI (O.S.)

School o.k.?

Rynn swallows, forcing down rising panic. She shrugs.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

RYNN

It's o.k.

MIGLIORITI

Being new isn't easy. Around here,
people can seem a little cold at
first. But when you've been here
longer . . . they'll seem even colder.

He laughs at his joke. Rynn forgets her tooth and laughs, too. She finds the policeman watching her and quickly closes her mouth. She looks through the window.

RYNN

Here's the lane.

Miglioriti turns down the lane.

EXT. THE LANE

The police car stops in front of the farmhouse yard. Rynn's door opens.

RYNN

Thanks for the ride.

Miglioriti gets out and follows her to the front door. She looks at him, mildly annoyed but trying to hide it. She unlocks the door.

RYNN

You look as though you could
use something warm to drink.
Some tea?

He smiles, follows her into the house.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - CLOSE ON CUPS IN SAUCERS

They're resting on the coffee table. Rynn pours hot liquid into them, then picks up a cup and saucer and hands it to Miglioriti who is standing beside the fireplace.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

He takes the cup and saucer and holds them awkwardly. Rynn sits beside the coffee table.

RYNN

It's a comfort knowing you're
our policeman.

MIGLIORITI

'Policeman.' Thanks.
(boyish grin)
Sounds much nicer than 'pig.'

He splashes tea in his saucer. Rynn hands him a napkin.

MIGLIORITI

Speaking of pigs. Thanks.

(recovering)

Anyway, the village is a pretty nice place. Even if there are some, like Mrs. Hallet, who live by hassling . . .

(looking at Rynn, sheepish)

There I go, talking out of turn. You're probably friends or something. I mean, she rented you this place.

RYNN

I expect we were allowed in her village because father's a poet. That's one of his books. There -- on the mantel.

Miglioriti welcomes the chance to put down the tea. He dries his big hands on the napkin before picking up the slim book.

MIGLIORITI

(in awe)

He wrote this?

Like a bear examining a flower, he turns the pages, impressed.

RYNN

He's very strict about being disturbed when he's working and just now he's in the middle of translating some Russian poetry.

(pause)

Some other time, I know he'd like to meet you and sign a copy for you, if you'd like.

MIGLIORITI

(another radiant smile)

Would I? First writer I ever knew.

(of the book)

Don't laugh if I tell you something? I've never really believed that people like poems. I'm not counting the birthday card stuff. Honest to God poems. You know, when it doesn't even rhyme.

RYNN

(smiling)

Father says that most people who say they like it are pretending. They're not as honest as you.

(watching as he puts back the book, picks up teacup)

RYNN

Mrs. Hallet said she'd read all of my father's poems. Which is absurd. Not even English professors have read all of them. I bet she hasn't read a one.

MIGLIORITI

Don't know where she'd get the time. She's too busy running everybody else's business and avoiding her own.

RYNN

Meaning?

(Miglioriti awkwardly sips tea, avoiding the answer)
Is her son a pervert?

Miglioriti coughs on the tea, looks around for somewhere to put the cup and saucer. Rynn takes them.

RYNN

I must say he acts strangely.
Are those boys really his?

MIGLIORITI

(frowning, not answering right away)
His wife's. From another marriage.

Miglioriti runs his big fingers through his curly hair.

RYNN

And you think a little girl should not accept candy from Frank Hallet.

He scuffles a bit, then looks directly at her.

MIGLIORITI

Not if she was smart. No.

He starts for the door.

RYNN

Then I certainly shan't. I'm glad you happened by, Officer Miglioriti.

He stops, turns to her.

MIGLIORITI

Yeah. I am too. Hope we didn't bother your father with our yapping in here.

Rynn looks back over her shoulder.

RYNN

No . . . with the study door closed
I doubt he heard us.

MIGLIORITI

(a last look around)

Guess you two are gonna have a
big turkey dinner for Thanksgiving . . .

RYNN

I don't think so.

(pause)

Birds are reptiles. From way back.
Biologically. Did you know that?

MIGLIORITI

(bemused by this odd info)

Uh . . . I guess I didn't.

Opening the door, Miglioriti checks his cap to see that the
plastic liner is in place.

MIGLIORITI

So long, Rynn. See you around.

He rushes through the bad weather to his car. He waves to her
and gets inside. Rynn watches him go from the door.

INT. HALL

Rynn shuts the front door and moves toward the study. She
opens the study door.

INT. THE STUDY

The room is filled with wall-to-wall books, framed photos,
documents. There is a neat, empty desk and empty chair.
Rynn pauses by the desk, runs her hand over the back of the
empty chair. She picks up a framed photo from the desk.

RYNN AND PHOTO

In the picture, Rynn is younger -- three or four. Her father
stands beside her, holding her hand. Behind them is an
attractive woman in her twenties, frowning at the two of them.
Rynn presses her thumb against the photo, blocking out the
woman.

MRS. HALLET (O.S.)

Hello? Rynn?

Rynn runs from the study, but at the door she slows her step.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE

Carefully, the little girl shuts the study door. At the open front door where rain splashes, Mrs. Hallet lowers the red-and-white umbrella.

MRS. HALLET
(coldly polite)
I may come in?

RYNN
(sounding calm)
I invited you, Mrs. Hallet.

The woman moves in wet shoes directly to the fireplace and taps her umbrella tip on the hearthstones to shake off the rainwater.

MRS. HALLET
We had a meeting of the school board this morning. I spoke to them about you.

RYNN

The girl fights to show nothing in her face.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

MRS. HALLET
When they learned about your case, I must say they were very interested.

The woman turns to warm her hands.

RYNN

The little girl speaks at the woman's back.

RYNN
(forming the words
without a sound)
Liar!
(aloud)
I was just about to put the kettle on.
Would you care for a cup of tea?

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman at the fire does not turn.

MRS. HALLET

Very interested in your case.

(turning to face Rynn)

Wouldn't you like to hear what they said?

RYNN

For tea I can offer you Earl Grey or Darjeeling.

MRS. HALLET

I came quite prepared to forget what happened yesterday. However, I must say, I don't care for your tone any better today.

RYNN

Then it's up to me to apologize If I've offended you in any way, Mrs. Hallet, I am sorry.

Mrs. Hallet furls the umbrella tight against the rod.

MRS. HALLET

What I find particularly surprising is that your father is such a marvelous gentleman . . . while you, Miss Jacobs, are as ill-behaved as the worst of your race.

Rynn's face, shining in firelight, stays a mask. Mrs. Hallet breaks their locked glances to move to the wall to hang her striped umbrella on a wooden peg.

RYNN

Mrs. Hallet, please accept my apology for yesterday . . .

Mrs. Hallet returns to the fireplace -- her position of command.

MRS. HALLET

It's not that simple, I'm afraid.

(picking up poker, jabbing at flames)

In any case, you told my son that your father wished to speak to me. I certainly wish to speak to him.

RYNN

Her face betraying nothing.

MRS. HALLET (O.S.)

Call him.

RYNN
He's translating right now. He
couldn't even be disturbed for
a policeman.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

MRS. HALLET
What policeman?

RYNN
Officer Miglioriti.

MRS. HALLET
Miglioriti works for people like
me.

(she gives the fire another
poke)
I'm not going to leave until
you call your father.

RYNN
You didn't tell me which tea
you prefer.

Mrs. Hallet glares at her, shakes her head.

MRS. HALLET
For the life of me, I can't imagine
what made me think you could be
happy here . . .

RYNN

My father and I love this house.

MRS. HALLET

Such a lonely place for a little girl
who's by herself so much of the time.
No, I think we'll make other plans . . .

RYNN

We have a lease for three years.

MRS. HALLET

(rubbing her hands at fire)
Leases have been known to be broken.
No. As I say, you'll both feel more
comfortable somewhere else.
(pausing)
Unless, perhaps, your father and I
could come to some . . . understanding.

RYNN

What would that be, Mrs. Hallet?

MRS. HALLET

There it is again. That continual
mocking tone. And don't look at me
with those baleful eyes and pretend
you've been misunderstood. We both
know very well you're a rude girl
who says exactly what she intends to.

RYNN

There are the glasses, Mrs. Hallet.

MRS. HALLET

Am I being dismissed?

RYNN

She watches the woman closely.

MRS. HALLET (O.S.)

(raw with anger)
Call your father! Right this minute!

RYNN

I told you. He can't be disturbed.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman leaves the fireplace and goes to the hall.

MRS. HALLET

I think you've been lying to me.
He's not even here.

RYNN

Open that door, Mrs. Hallet and
I'll tell my father about your son.

MRS. HALLET

(stopped cold, snarling)
Frank? What about Frank?

RYNN

What he tried to do Halloween.
With my father right in the next
room, too.

MRS. HALLET

Why didn't you tell me this the
other day?

RYNN

I just thought he was acting sort of
weird. Now that I know about his
fondness for little girls . . .

MRS. HALLET

(interrupting, incensed)

His what? It's that damned Miglioriti!
He's a filthy liar who's been persecuting
my boy. Did he also tell you he had an
affair with my son's wife, before they
were married?

(gaining control)

But why am I even discussing this with you?

RYNN

I'm surprised the police don't
do anything . . .

MRS. HALLET

(throttling her rage)

Why should they?

RYNN

(very innocently)

Well, if your son is going around
attacking little girls . . .

With great viciousness, Mrs. Hallet slaps Rynn across the
face. Rynn backs away, runs to the table. She shoves the
glasses close to the edge.

RYNN

Your glasses, Mrs. Hallet.

MRS. HALLET

You are going to leave this house!

Rynn blinks back hot tears.

RYNN

It's my house!

MRS. HALLET

With -- or without -- your father --

RYNN

(choking down a sob)

It is a lonely place out here.
Often I am alone. That doesn't
worry me, Mrs. Hallet. If it
worries you, that's a problem
you had better work out with
your son.

MRS. HALLET

You little witch!

In the silence that follows, the rain beats on the roof.
Mrs. Hallet moves to the table, tries to compose herself.
She thrusts her hand into the carton.

MRS. HALLET

No seals. Without the rubber seals
the glasses are worthless.

Rynn peers into the box. Defeated, she closes the lid.
The woman's stony eyes hold the girl.

MRS. HALLET

The seals are in the cellar.

RYNN

powerless to speak, the girl can only shake her head no.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman grabs the table, drags it off the braided rug.
Rynn clutches madly at the woman's coat.

RYNN

Get out of my house!

Table legs screech across the oak floor. Mrs. Hallet
flings back the braided rug to reveal a trapdoor. As
she claws at the hasp, pushes back the bolt, she is
smiling, triumphant.

RYNN

The girl shakes with fear and rage, helpless to move.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET

The woman lifts the door to its full height, drops it back over its hinges to rest against the wall. Stunned with terror, Rynn watches the woman go to the steps..

RYNN

(nervous fury)

I'm warning you, Mrs. Hallet!

The warning fails this time. Mrs. Hallet pauses only long enough to wind her coat about her before her first footstep scrapes against the ancient stone. Rynn trembles, almost in a trance, watching the woman sink into the cellar with each step. When Mrs. Hallet is forced to lower her head to pass under the oak planks of the floor, she brings her glasses to her face to peer down into the dark. Another step. She stops.

MRS. HALLET

(in a whisper)

Oh, my God . . .

(She SCREAMS!)

RYNN

The little girl covers her ears. She knows her secret has been discovered.

RYNN AND THE CELLAR DOOR

Mrs. Hallet rushes up, a mixture of horror and crazed power. She continues to scream.

MRS. HALLET

(half-scream, half-talk,
the words a mad jumble)

You monster . . . you monster.

Mrs. Hallet's face is a grotesque mask of fear and hate. Terrifying. Her claw-like hands grab out for Rynn.

Rynn, off-balance, stumbles back. Her hand goes out to stop from falling. It accidentally pushes the cellar door. The door smashes down on the rising Mrs. Hallet. It crashes against Mrs. Hallet's head, forcing the woman back down into the cellar. We HEAR Mrs. Hallet's scream stop suddenly, the SOUND of her body falling back down the stairs under the now-closed cellar door.

Rynn, stunned, staggers forward. The door is firmly in place.

The little girl is terrified, completely lost. A CHILLING GROAN comes up from beneath the cellar door. The woman is moving to come back up again!

Rynn, acting without thinking, throws herself on top of the door. There is a POUNDING from beneath. Rynn pushes the rusty bolt on the cellar door through the hasp. The POUNDING continues.

Rynn rises slowly. An incessant POUNDING, each THUD sounds, like her own heartbeat, driving her step by step back away from the door. MORE THUDS.

CAMERA MOVES WITH RYNN as, suddenly, an image springs at her, blocking her retreat. Not even daring to gasp, she turns.

THE ROCKER - RYNN'S POV

CREAKING wildly back and forth, empty. She has evidently bumped it.

NEW ANGLE ACROSS THE ROCKER - INCLUDES RYNN AND CELLAR DOOR

The girl's hand stills the rocker. ^{afraid} Entranced, Rynn sits in the rocker. She stares at the cellar door, from which the THUDs continue to sound. A log burns through and falls in the fireplace. Rynn does not turn. RAIN patters on the roof. The girl shivers, rubs icy sweat on her hands against her Levis. A fainter THUD.

RYNN ON ROCKER - NEW ANGLE

She continues rocking, eyes on the trapdoor. Another THUD, fainter than ever before. Then . . . nothing!

RYNN - CLOSER

She stares at the trapdoor. She lets the chair rock to a halt. She eases herself from the chair, tense, almost holding her breath. She moves slowly toward the cellar door. She stands before it. Silence, except for the patter of rain. She bends, puts her ear to the door. No sound. She hunkers on the floor. Then she stands, moves into the kitchen. Camera holds on the cellar door.

RYNN - MINUTES LATER

She is sitting on the rocker, sipping tea, staring at the cellar door. No more thumps. She puts the cup and saucer on the floor, gets out of the chair. She moves to the cellar door.

Rynn's hand reaches out. She slips the bolt on the lock. The RASPING SOUND is magnified in the still house. It startles her and she reacts.

Very cautiously, she lifts the door. CAMERA MOVES UNTIL it is positioned to capture CLOSE ANGLE over Rynn's shoulder. Rynn lifts the door slowly. We see the darkness of the cellar. Everything is still. Rynn begins to descend.

INT. CELLAR - LOW ANGLE - RYNN DESCENDING

Suddenly, there is a scuffling noise and a talon hand shoots out, clasping the girl's ankle, as her foot touches the third step.

FAST CUT TO:

MRS. HALLET - RYNN'S POV

She looks like a monster hot from hell. Blood trickles down her forehead, mixing with makeup and mascara. She is completely insane -- more animal than woman. She leaps forward, growling incomprehensible words that escalate into screams.

RYNN AND MRS. HALLET - ANGLE ON MRS. HALLET'S BACK

Rynn instinctively kicks out to free her foot, as one would kick at a mad dog. Mrs. Hallet is thrown backwards head-first out of frame. CAMERA MOVES IN ON RYNN to catch her moment of revulsion as we hear a sickening off-screen crack of Mrs. Hallet's body smashing against the cellar floor. A chill attacks Rynn. Sniffling, half-crying, she waits a beat, staring down. Then she backs up the stairs. Looking down, she slowly lowers the cellar door.

INT. PARLOR

Rynn closes the door, locks it, then returns to the rocker where she begins to rock back and forth . . . back and forth.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Rynn shuts the front door quietly and locks it. Buttoning her duffle coat, she looks up through the trees at the sky. The rain has stopped. She plunges her hands deep into her pockets. One hand pulls out Gordon. She walks through the yard and the dead flower stalks. Something she sees stops her cold. When Gordon squeaks, she realizes she is clutching him too tightly. She puts him back into a pocket, continuing to stare at something.

RYNN'S POV - THE LANE

On the road is Mrs. Hallet's Bentley.

THE LANE

Rynn turns and runs down the front path, away from car. CAMERA FOLLOWS. In the road, she turns and glances back.

RYNN'S POV - THE LANE

The blood-red car, gleaming.

THE LANE

Rynn walks away briskly, putting the car behind her. Gold leaves drift past. She looks up.

RYNN'S POV - ELM BRANCHES

They're like skeleton fingers. A squirrel skitters across on them, rattling their bare limbs.

THE LANE

The girl hurries on.

A CROSSROADS

At this intersection with no houses, Rynn hears A CAR HORN, the BLAST of ROCK MUSIC. As the sound GROWS CLOSER, she sees a convertible filled with SEVEN HIGH-SCHOOL KIDS waving pennants and screaming. As the car flashes by, they wave.

KIDS IN CAR

The Wildcats won! We won! Twelve to seven!

Rynn raises her hand to wave back, but stops. The car is already gone. The HONKING and MUSIC FADE in the wet afternoon.

ANOTHER ROAD

Rynn walks alone. Overhead the FAINT CALL of BIRDS makes her look up.

RYNN'S POV - THE SKY

A straggling V of geese slowly flying south.

RYNN

Gathers her coat tighter, suddenly blinking back tears. A sob breaks from her. Crying, she turns, rushing back home.

THE LANE AND THE BENTLEY

As Rynn dashes from the road into her front yard, she allows herself one last look at the car.

RYNN'S POV - THE BENTLEY

The car still gleams. It will not go away.

RYNN

moves toward the car, cautious as if it were a sleeping animal. She looks in through the passenger window, pensive.

She bites her lip, frowns. Her hand goes to the car door.

HAND - CU

Her thumb presses the lock, but the door doesn't open.
It's locked.

RYNN

miffed, and even more disturbed. She tries the back door, and it, too is locked. She races around the car, trying the other locks, growing progressively more frantic to find that all are locked.

She looks back at the house, apprehensive. She needs the keys and she knows where she must go to get them.

As she rushes to the house, CAMERA HOLDS on the front grill of the Bentley. The car seems to be smiling, mocking the little girl.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Rynn pushes the gateleg table aside; as it leaves the rug, it scrapes the bare floor. The JELLY GLASSES in the carton CLINK. She hurls the rug from the trap. Her fingers work at the hasp until the bolt yields. For a long moment the kneeling girl can make no move. To break her fear, she forces herself into sudden action and flings back the door that falls against the wall with a CRASH. She draws a deep breath and rushes down the stone steps.

CAMERA HOLDS on the trapdoor. For an almost unbearable time.

Rynn appears like a surfacing diver gasping for breath. She clasps the keys in her hand.

She flips the trap door back and hastily replaces the rug and the table. The JELLY GLASSES CLINK.

Rynn rushes to the front door. As she moves through the hall, CAMERA HOLDS and ZOOMS IN ON

MRS. HALLET'S STRIPED UMBRELLA

hanging on its wooden peg, unnoticed by the little girl.

THE BENTLEY

Its right door is open. Rynn is seated behind the wheel. She looks small and fragile, doll-like, inside the giant machine.

INT. BENTLEY

Rynn is holding the key, looking at the intricate panel of the car. After all she has gone through, she now does

not know where to put the key. Tears are in her eyes. She is frustrated, mad at herself, furious with the car. And afraid. That's when she hears the tap on the window.

Startled, she looks over and sees a MAN in shining black silk top hat and black cape, tapping on the window with a walking stick. She lets out a frightened YELP.

The man moves closer and we see that it isn't a man at all. It's Mario Podesta, whom she met on Halloween in the village. A false moustache hangs unevenly from beneath his nose. His cheery face is smiling, but when he sees his effect on Rynn, the smile freezes.

MARIO

Jeezus! I'm sorry . . . I didn't mean to scare you.

Rynn can only stare at him, speechless. The boy's face breaks into a friendly grin. His eyes sparkle.

MARIO

Hi. I'm Mario Podesta. From the village, remember? The garage.

RYNN

looks away from him. She stares at the car's dashboard, her mind working quickly. She must figure out her next move. We HEAR the boy moving around the car, FOOTSTEPS and the CLICK of the walking stick.

MARIO (O.S.)

I was riding by and saw you. Thought you might need some help . . . or something.

Rynn is composed now. She has a plan. She looks up.

RYNN AND MARIO

He is framed in the open door, smiling in at her.

RYNN

You're a bit late for trick or treat.

MARIO

I told you . . .
(swirling his cape)
. . . Mario the Magician.

RYNN

Then you really are a magician.

MARIO
I'd be a total asshole to run around
like this if I wasn't.
(indicating Bentley)
What's with the car?

She isn't ready to answer that one. Instead, she gets out.

RYNN
Your moustache is on crooked.

MARIO

MARIO
Yeah?

He checks his reflection in the car, adjusts the moustache.

MARIO
(mock British)
Is that bettah now?
(his own voice)
I'm on my way to put on a
show. Some creepy rich kid's
birthday party.

MARIO AND RYNN

He looks at the girl and finds her studying him.

The afternoon is darkening. Leaves rustle. Mario presses
his moustache to stick it to his upper lip, breaking the
mood. Rynn smiles.

MARIO

You know you got a broken tooth?

Rynn stops smiling, but says nothing.

MARIO

You're not a Catholic, huh? I mean, I haven't seen you in school. You probably go to that creepy Edgeworth.

RYNN

I don't go to school.

MARIO

Not at all?

(pause)

You sick or something?

RYNN

Why do you say that?

MARIO

Well, you've gotta have some excuse. Some kinda incurable disease or something.

RYNN

(brushing hair from face)
School is stultifying.

MARIO

(reacting to what he thinks is snobbery)
Yeah. Right.
(he turns to the car)
You going for a ride?

RYNN

I was driving it to the train station to leave for my father.

MARIO

It's hers.

RYNN

(panicked, but trying to be casual)
Whose?

MARIO

Old lady Hallet's. A beauty. Only thirty-four thousand miles. Pop works on it, at the garage.

RYNN
She's lending it to us.

MARIO
(very suspicious now)
No way.

RYNN

She looks away to peel a wet leaf from the car. A CROW
caws from somewhere above.

MARIO (O.S.)
Absolutely no way.

RYNN
That shows how much you know.

ANGLE TO CINLUDE MARIO

RYNN
(veddy British)
We can just go into the house and
ring her. She'll tell you.

She finds Mario's eyes staring into her's.

MARIO
She won't even let her own creepy
son drive it. Nobody, except Pop.

RYNN
(petulantly)
Well, she lets us.
(changing her tone)
Look, you really are being awfully
stupid.

Mario shrugs, turns from Rynn and starts for his bike.

RYNN
Wait!
(he turns)
I was hoping you . . . could . . .
would . . . help me with it.

Mario just stares at her.

RYNN
I mean, I'm not very used to the
car. And the roads are damp. Couldn't
you . . . drive it for me?

Mario waits a beat, then turns, going toward his bike,
limping.

Rynn runs after him, stops him at the bike.

RYNN
I wouldn't expect you to do it
for nothing.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a wallet. She
takes out a five dollar bill. Mario turns from her, disgusted.
He slips his stick into the canvas bag and hops onto his
bike. She steps in front of the bike.

MARIO
What the hell's wrong with you?

RYNN
Nothing's wrong!

MARIO
(testing)
Your father's train, when's it
get in?

RYNN
Any minute now.

His black eyes hold her.

MARIO
There isn't a train in until after
seven.

Rynn puts the money away.

RYNN

Look, I'm sorry if I offended you.
But it's true about the car.

MARIO

No, it isn't.
(pause)

I gotta go. The party.

He starts away. Rynn places her boot in front of his tire, holding him.

RYNN

Come back after.

MARIO

He stares into her eyes.

RYNN AND MARIO

RYNN

Please?

She reaches out to straighten his moustache, but he twists away. Now it is her eyes that search him.

RYNN

I need your help.

Mario turns away. He could be a little boy. He moves the front wheel away from her and pushes off.

Rynn stands in the road watching him drive away. She takes Gordon from her pocket, pets him. Without turning his head back, Mario says:

MARIO

Maybe I'll be back.

She watches him go, glumly, not believing he'll return.

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT - CLOSE ON RYNN

She's almost smiling.

RYNN

I wasn't sure you'd come.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Mario, squinting, driving the car. No hat or cape, but he's still wearing his moustache.

MARIO

Your big hangup is you don't trust anybody.

Page 55 delete reference to Rynn and Mario in town.
REV. Nov. 24, 75 Pick up action on:

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - CLOSE SHOT - FIREPLACE

Rynn turns away from him, and the implied question.:

RYNN

We'd better catch the next bus.

She moves on down the street. Mario hurries after, limping on his cane. She realizes he can't keep up. She turns, waits, and they move away together.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - CLOSE SHOT - FIREPLACE - NIGHT

Fire crackles in the hearth. CAMERA PULLS BACK to find Mario sitting on the hearth with the telephone on its long cord.

MARIO

(into phone)

I'm sorry. I should've called earlier . . . I'm still here -- at the birthday party, Mom.

CAMERA PULLS BACK even further, disclosing the gateleg table set for two. On it are a salad bowl, plates containing buttered broccoli and parsley potatoes.

MARIO

Well . . . they asked me to stay, you know, for dinner. Just burgers and cokes.

He looks up suddenly, at the entrance. He seems almost stunned, momentarily forgetting the phone.

NEW ANGLE- FAVORING RYNN

She has just entered, carrying a plate of lamb chops, broiled. She looks lovely -- glistening long hair, neatly pressed caftan. Her effect on Mario is understandable.

MARIO

(into phone)

Huh?

(distracted)

Tell Tom he can take her to the creepy movie for a change. It's his turn anyway. 'Bye.

Mario hangs up the receiver and moves toward Rynn and the table.

MARIO
Jee-zus, you look . . . great.

RYNN
(liking it, but pretending
to be blase)
It's the dress. My father and
I bought it in Morocco.

She places the plate on the table, then looks around the room. She moves to the STEREO and turns on Julian Bream's guitar.

RYNN
Could you light the candles, please?

MARIO
Huh? Oh, sure.

She watches him limp to the coffee table and take matches from the cigarette box. They both move to the table.

MARIO
Uh, I heard they smoke a lot of
hash in Morocco.

RYNN
(testing the salad
dressing)
They do a lot of things there.

Mario lights the candles, straightens them in their pewter candlesticks. Wine glasses and silverware sparkle.

MARIO
(trying to be casual)
You, ah, ever smoke hash?

RYNN
Hundreds of times.

MARIO
(turning to her, admiringly)
No kidding?

RYNN
(shaking her head)
Not really.

He moves toward her chair and after several awkward maneuvers, he manages to settle her at the table.

THE TABLE

Across the candlelight from each other, they drop napkins

into their laps and smile self-consciously.

RYNN
Care for wine?

MARIO
Do you?

RYNN
I hate it.

MARIO
Me, too.

Rynn, holding her knife and fork in opposite hands from his, eats skillfully. Mario, untrained in table manners, is inhibited. Only by struggling does he get a bite of meat.

MARIO
Very good.

RYNN
Thank you.

She sees his problem. She picks up a bone and nibbles. Mario watches closely, follows her lead and begins to enjoy the food.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to a FULL SHOT of them at table, smiling at each other, enjoying the meal as the music fills the room.

CUT TO:

MARIO'S EMPTY PLATE - CU

The music has skipped to another selection: time has passed. A clean bone hits his plate.

MARIO AND RYNN

He wipes his fingers on a napkin. A dessert now sits before each of them -- a raspberry parfait.

MARIO
You're really a super cook.
Better than my mother.

RYNN
That surprises you?

MARIO
I only meant -- for being thirteen
and all . . .

Annoyed, Rynn glares at Mario. He realizes he's made her mad and he says nothing.

RYNN
Why don't people understand --
age has nothing to do with anything.

She pushes her chair from the table and moves quickly to the stereo. She changes the record. Guitar music evoking a summer night in Spain. She moves beside the boy.

RYNN

Mario?

(he looks up warily)

Thank you. About the car, I mean.

MARIO

That's okay. You know, you oughta smile more. I mean, so what if you got a chipped tooth?

RYNN

(moving back to her seat)

You let me worry about that.

MARIO

My oldest brother got all of his upper teeth knocked out playing football. He smiles. He smiles his goddamn head off.

Rynn grins at him and the grin turns into a smile.

RYNN

I wasn't sure you'd come back.

MARIO

Your big hangup is that you don't trust guys.

RYNN

You didn't have to ...

MARIO

Damn right I didn't.

(assuming an air of authority)

You're not as smart as you think. I mean, if you wanted to get that car away from here, why take it to the train station? See, the trick in magic is to do the one thing that's so simple no one ever thinks of it.

(Rynn studies the boy)

Like what's simpler than putting it back where it came from?

RYNN

She forces herself to think hard.

RYNN

Anybody see you leave it at
the office?

RYNN AND MARIO

MARIO

(scornfully)

Sure. I wanted to get busted
for stealing the famous Halletmobile.

(pause)

The thing that gets me is that
you won't even trust me enough
to tell me why I did it.

RYNN

RYNN

You did it it help me.

RYNN AND MARIO

She wins. The boy shrugs. It's clear, he'll do anything
she says.

RYNN

You locked the aar doors?

Mario pulls the keys from his pocket and jingles them.

RYNN

You should have out them through
the mail slot at the office.

MARIO

No I shouldn't.

(pause)

Here I am sitting in her Bentley
in front of her creepy goddamn office.
In the goddamn dark. Trying like
crazy not to get caught. I don't
know what the hell I'm even doing
there. Or why? But one thing I
do know. She wouldn't have put
the keys anywhere her creep son
would get 'em. She'd keep 'em.
They'd be with her. . . wherever
she is.

Mario pushes the spoon around his glass. Doesn't eat. He
takes out the keys again and ~~xxxx~~ slides them across the
table. They rest there, accusingly. Both of them look
at them in silence. Rynn scoops them up.

RYNN

(rising)

I feel like wine now.

MARIO

Me too, I guess.

She goes off to the kitchen. A cupboard door BANGS. She hurries back with a bottle and a corkscrew, handing them to Mario.

MARIO

Fancy. No top to unscrew. Got a cork and everything.

(digging screw into cork)

Rynn . . . you still haven't told me why . . . she didn't drive it back herself.

RYNN

That's a very good vintage.

MARIO

Look. You better tell me what the hell's going on, because if I had left that car at the station like you wanted, everybody would have wondered what it was doing there.

RYNN

They'd have thought she'd taken the train into New York.

MARIO

No chance. Everybody knows Mrs. Hallet hates New York. Too many foreigners. She'd never set foot in New York.

RYNN

She stares at the boy.

RYNN AND MARIO

MARIO

You didn't know that, did you?
(pause)

C'mon, ~~what's it all about~~
*why'd you need the
car brought back*

RYNN

(surprisingly harsh)

I asked you to do me a favor.
And you did. That's why.

MARIO

Yeah, but . . .

RYNN
(shrill)
You didn't have to!

MARIO
I risked my goddamn ass for you!

She stares at him coldly.

MARIO
Look. You better tell me what the
Christ's going on. Remember, if
it wasn't for me, the goddamn
car would still be out front.

RYNN AND MARIO

She grabs the bottle from his hand, splashing its red
on her white caftan. She pours a glass and gulps, gags,
bangs the glass down.

RYNN
I hate it.

MARIO
You don't trust anybody, do you?

RYNN
My father.

MARIO
(shrugging, pushing wine away)
Yeah, well, lots of luck.

A glance at the girl shows him she has not detected his
sarcasm. She seems miles away. He picks up the bottle.
Drinks from it.

MARIO
(wincing and swallowing)
Where is your father, anyway?

RYNN
Staying in New York overnight.

Mario's eyes never leave Rynn though she avoids looking
at him as she moves to her chair.

MARIO
Your mother with him?

She glares at him.

RYNN
No. Never.

Mario is looking at her, curious. Obviously some further explanation is necessary.

RYNN

She . . . they've been separated
. . . for a long time. I live with
my father.

MARIO

You ever stay alone before like
this?

RYNN

Hundreds of times.

MARIO

Like all those times you smoked
hash?

The stereo clicks off.

MARIO

Aren't you scared?

RYNN

Of what?

MARIO

Being alone.

RYNN

Haven't you ever been alone?

MARIO

With eleven brothers and sisters?

Rynn stands, moves to the fireplace.

RYNN

It's better . . . being alone.

MARIO

I'm not sure that's normal.

RYNN

Not for you, maybe.

Mario, suddenly nervous, rises, limps to the front window to
peer out between the drapes.

MARIO

You know you got an outside light?

He goes to the hall and flicks switches until a spotlight shines outside the curtain.

MARIO

From now on, leave it on all the time. Okay?

RYNN

Okay. And thank you.

He limps back to the table, his mood changing. He drapes a napkin over his fist. He dips a finger into the fireplace soot and dabs two eyes and a mouth on his knuckles to create a fist puppet. Bringing the old woman's face close to Rynn, the mouth opens.

MARIO

(French accent)

Mademoiselle, that was a marvelous dinner. Merci.

Rynn speaks directly to the puppet face.

RYNN

That was English cooking.

The face waggles.

MARIO

(British accent)

Was it now! Then I should say --
how absolutely smashing!

RYNN

(applauding, giggling)

You're very good!

MARIO

Mr. Show Biz. That's me.

RYNN

(lifting Gordon from cage)

You should have a bigger audience.
Meet Gordon.

MARIO

(British accent)

How d'ja do, Gordon.

RYNN

(kissing Gordon)

Isn't Gordon super? I love him.

Mario tosses the napkin back on the table, brushes the soot from his hand and reaches for the pet. Rynn hesitates.

MARIO

Don't you even trust me with your
pet?

Rynn hands Gordon to Mario. The hamster begins to squeak. Mario sighs and hands him back to Rynn.

MARIO

O.K., so I'm not so big with pets.

They move to table where Rynn allows Gordon to nibble at a shred of lamb. Mario and Rynn stand close. Neither moves.

MARIO

If you tell me about the car, I'll
tell you why I'm a gimp.

(he waits for Rynn to answer;
she doesn't)

Polio. I've got so many brothers
and sisters, my mother forgot who
got the shots and who didn't.

(pause)

Now it's your turn.

Rynn shakes her head. Mario gives her a disgusted look. She doesn't want to lose his friendship.

RYNN
(quickly)
I'll tell you about my tooth.
She broke it.

Gordon scuttles across the table. Rynn scoops him up. Mario's interest is caught by her statement.

MARIO
Who broke it?

RYNN
My so-called mother. She used
to beat me.

MARIO
You mean spank you.

RYNN
(standing, with Gordon)
I mean beat me. She'd drink
herself into a stupor and knock me
about.
(returning Gordon to cage)
That's why father threw her out.

She looks over at Mario. He's very depressed. She smiles. She picks up his hat and cape and tosses it to him.

RYNN
It's time for . . . the one . . .
the only . . .

He stands, withdraws his gloves and wraps his cape around his spindly shoulders. Flourishing his cape and spreading his hands to the audience, he speaks theatrically.

MARIO
Mario the Magician. In person!

Rynn claps, delighted.

RYNN

Do a trick.

MARIO

Ladies and gentlemen. I shall now
make an automobile disappear.

RYNN

(pretending a yawn
from boredom)

You already did that.

MARIO

Then behold. I shall disappear.
Close your eyes and count to three.
Close them tight. Ready?

Rynn nods.

RYNN

MARIO (O.S.)

One. Keep 'em closed... two... three!

Rynn opens her eyes, gazes about, laughs and claps. Suddenly she stops laughing.

RYNN

(with apprehension)

Mario?

(pause)

Can you reappear?

(sharp with fear)

Mario?

She looks around the room, runs to the hallway and looks at the study door.

RYNN

Mario?

She is about to go to the door when she hears FURNITURE SCRAPE on the FLOOR in the parlor. She returns toward the couch. Mrs. Hallett's candy-stripe umbrella snaps open and jumps high.

MARIO

Mari-o. Poppins!

Rynn rushes at the boy. Her voice shrieks with fear.

RYNN

Give me that!

In his excitement, Mario does not sense the girl has ended the game. He laughs at her shouts. Teasing her with the umbrella, he pokes it at her, jabs it, snaps it open and shut.

MARIO

Come and get it!

The girl dashes at the couch, clutching at the umbrella. Mario waves it, shakes it, jerks it out of her reach. She lunges.

RYNN

(with desperation)

Stop it!

The stripes, like some wild creature fighting her, snap open and shut. The girl drives the boy across the hearth and into the corner. Rynn, now in tears, arms flailing, grasps at any movement. Exploding with laughter, Mario dashes past Rynn. His cane clatters. He sprawls on the floor. Rynn throws herself on him, struggling for the umbrella. Rocking together, they rise. The boy's arms work around her in a hammerlock till he pins her helpless. His cape falls over both of them.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Rynn struggles against Mario in her frantic fight for the umbrella. Nothing else in the room moves but the wavering glow from candles and the fireplace flames. Rynn stiffens in Mario's arms. Against the curtains a shadow races.

RYNN

(whispering)

Sshh. Listen.

MARIO

Somebody's out there!

Mario releases Rynn, who grabs the umbrella. Without a sound, she lifts the cover of the woodbox and drops it inside. Noiselessly, she lowers the cover. The two shrink from the window.

RYNN

(whispering)

Put out the candles!

Mario pinches out the flames. Only the fire glows red in the dark. The two sink to the floor, huddle together, watch the window. Across the curtain, the shadow flickers.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE

The fire has burned lower. Mario dares rise and go to the curtains. Rynn comes to his side. Both press their faces against the glass. With his cape, Mario wipes away the mist from their breath. He sees something, pulls Rynn back and the curtains fall into place.

MARIO
(without whispering)
Cop car!

Mario goes to the hall, switches on the light. Rynn moves to his side.

AT THE DOOR

As Rynn reaches for the latch, a KNOCK THUDS on the DOOR.

MARIO
You want to open it or shall I?
(she nods that he should)
Ah . . . it'd look more natural
if you do. I mean, it's your place.

Rynn opens the door. Instead of a uniformed man, she sees a tall man in a black-and-white checkered jacket and grey slacks.

MARIO
Hey! It's my Uncle Ron!

Miglioriti smiles at Rynn, looks curiously at Mario.

MIGLIORITI
Am I interrupting something?

RYNN
Hi.

Stepping back from the door, she suddenly becomes the hostess.

RYNN
Please, won't you come in?

The officer's glance includes Mario, who still wears the black cape. Mario takes off the cape. Miglioriti runs his fingers through his hair, looks around the house.

MIGLIORITI'S POV - THE HALL

where Mario's bike stands. Under the dark of the stairs the study door is shut. The CAMERA MOVES ON to the parlor, the fire, the table set for two.

MIGLIORITI, RYNN AND MARIO

MARIO

What happened? You alone on
Saturday night? Your Playmate of
the Week split on you?

MIGLIORITI

She's out in the car.

MARIO

(making curvy shapes
in the air with his hands)
He likes the ones who look like
they were blown up with a bicycle
pump.
(to Miglioriti)
Ask her in.

MIGLIORITI

I'm only gonna be here a minute.
(pause)
Just the two of you here?

MARIO

says nothing.

RYNN

She remains cool.

RYNN

My father's asleep.

THE TABLE AND THE THREE

Mario's eyes slide for a brief second to Rynn. Then he picks
up the wine bottle and pours a glass.

MARIO

Rynn asked me dinner. Cooked it
all herself. Really terrific.

MIGLIORITI

(to Mario)
You meet Mr. Jacobs?

MARIO

Sure.

He holds the glass of wine out to Miglioriti, who shakes
his head "no."

MIGLIORITI
(to Rynn)
Your father have dinner with you?

MARIO
How many plates you see, Dick Tracy?
He was tired, went right to bed.

He takes a swig of the wine.

MIGLIORITI
Easy on the vino.

MARIO
You gonna bust us for drinking
under age?

Miglioriti, in spite of himself, grins, turns to Rynn.

MIGLIORITI
See what I mean: no respect for
the law. Not even from your own
family.

MARIO
Look who wants respect. With
him using a police car for
personal pleasure.

Miglioriti moves about the room, goes to the stereo, noses
around.

MIGLIORITI
Frank Hallet called in about his
mother. Says she's missing.

MARIO
Probably out house pimping.

MIGLIORITI
(to Rynn)
Mario doesn't like the Hallets.

MARIO
(to Rynn)
Me?? Ask him to tell you about the
time he tried to bust Hallet for
dragging some little girl into the
bushes . . .

MIGLIORITI
That's enough . . .

MARIO

All old lady Hallet did was to marry the creep off to a cocktail waitress with two kids . . . to prove he was normal.

MIGLIORITI

Enough, I said. Don't be a smartass all your life.

(to Rynn)

Anyway, her car's by her office. But no sign of her. Hallet said she was coming out here to pick up some glasses or something.

Rynn points to the jelly glasses.

RYNN

Still waiting for her.

MIGLIORITI

She never came by?

Rynn shakes her head. Miglioriti nods, takes one last look around the room, then heads for the front door.

MARIO

You came all the way out here to ask about Mrs. Hallet?

MIGLIORITI

I came out here because I thought Rynn might be alone.

MARIO

And you figured that creep might . . .

MIGLIORITI

So I borrowed the prowl car. Okay with you?

MARIO

Well . . . she's not alone.

MIGLIORITI

(hand on door)

So I noticed.

RYNN

Thank you for coming.

Mario, looking sheepish, moves forward.

MARIO

Ah . . . uncle Ron . . .

MIGLIORITI

If you don't want me to tell your
folks you were here, don't be such
a smartass.

Mario's fingers flatten against his chest -- the innocent.

MARIO

Me? A smartass?

MIGLIORITI

(to Rynn)

Maybe you can teach him some manners.

(pause)

If Mrs. Hallet should come by, have
her call the station.

RYNN

Of course.

Miglioriti smiles and moves quickly through the door.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Rynn to the door.

RYNN

Good night.

She shuts the door. Mario moves by her side. He holds a
silencing finger to his lips. They wait until they hear
the car engine start.

MARIO

(exploding)

Wow! Scary, huh? I mean, wasn't it?

Rynn turns away.

THE PARLOR

Rynn pours a glass of wine and holds it out to Mario who
gulps. He throws his cape over his shoulders, claps
his silk hat on his head, waves his abracadabra cane.

MARIO

We make a great team. How'd you
like the way we made your father
disappear?

RYNN

You lied.

MARIO

Bet your ass. So did you.

Angrily he adjusts his cape, sets his hat at a rakish angle, smacks the floor with his cane, marches toward the door.

RYNN

Where do you think you're going?

Mario neither turns nor answers. With his cane he walks as straight as he is able, directly for the door. Rynn rushes after him. He turns. His smile is huge.

MARIO

Just testing.

(enjoying his victory)

Like you don't really want me to go or anything, do you?

Rynn shakes her head no.

Insert stage

direction for Mario to walk back into room as if he's there to stay . . .

In relief Rynn throws her head back and bursts into giggles she lets grow into roars of laughter. Even though she knows Mario is looking at her chipped tooth she goes on laughing. Mario begins to laugh, too. Both laughing, they fall into each other's arms and clinging together, fall on the couch. Suddenly Mario stops.

MARIO

Listen!

Rynn tenses.

MARIO

Jesus! He's back.

Rynn rises from the couch.

THE FRONT DOOR

With one hand on the latch, Rynn waves to Mario on the couch and all but hidden in the shadows to watch her handle the officer. She throws the door wide.

Frank Hallet stands on the porch. Behind him -- in a rush of cold wind -- bare BRANCHES SCRAPE and CLACK together.

RYNN

(a gasp)

No!...

Hallet strides in, smoothing tangled hair over his head. He pulls off his raincoat, throws it over a wall peg.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Hallet. Without seeing Mario in the shadows, Hallet walks directly into the parlor. His muddy shoes clink the carton of glasses.

HALLET

The fabled jelly glasses.

He draws his Chapstick from his pocket and slides it over his lips. He moves close to the fire.

HALLET

It's time you and I had a talk . . .

Mario's cane clatters to the floor. Only now does Hallet see the boy in black cape rise from the couch. Hallet says nothing. He goes to the table, picks up the napkins, looks at the soiled dishes.

HALLET

Dinner a deux?

Rynn enters the parlor. Hallet takes a cigarette from the box on the coffee table. He sniffs the air.

HALLET

Your father hasn't been smoking
his racy cigarettes?

Hallet sits in the rocking chair. He snaps his fingers at the boy who obeys, limps to the table, brings the man matches. Hallet shakes his head no. Mario strikes a flame and lights the man's cigarette. Hallet draws deeply, then allows the smoke to curl up his face. He stands.

HALLET

Cold. We need another log on the fire.

Hallet moves toward the woodbox. His hand is on the lid. Mario, stifling a gasp, sees Rynn staring rigid with fear at the box. She pushes past Hallet.

RYNN

(her voice betrays no fear)

Let me.

Hallet shrugs. Mario crowds onto the hearth to block the man's view of the box. With Rynn, the boy lifts out two logs, quickly closes the box, pushes the wood into the fire. To hide what is in the box, Rynn sits on the lid. Hallet seizes this moment of confusion to lift Gordon from his cage. Only when the hamster squeaks does Rynn realize the man holds her pet. She gasps.

HALLET

Gordon. You love Gordon?

Rynn tries unsuccessfully to reach out for her pet.

HALLET
I asked you a question.

RYNN
Yes.

HALLET
Yes what . . . ?

RYNN
(frightened)
Yes, I love Gordon.

Hallet raises Gordon to eye level as the creature struggles to escape the curling cigarette smoke. He taps the ash from the cigarette, sucks it to red-hot.

HALLET
I think I love Gordon, too.

He moves the cigarette quickly to the hamster's eye.

MARIO AND RYNN

They look on in horror. The hamster SCREECHES.

RYNN
NO . . .

MARIO
DON'T . . .
(he lunges forward)
Why the hell . . .

HALLET AND MARIO

Hallet moves away from Mario easily, looking at hamster.

HALLET
We always hurt the ones we love.
(pause)
As the good book says: "an eye
for an eye."

MARIO

moves toward Rynn, helpless, trying to comfort her. The hamster SCREECHES again.

MARIO
Jesus, what'd you do that for?

THE ROOM

Hallet studies the little brown creature wriggling in his hand.

HALLET

Oh, sort of an object lesson.

He tosses Gordon into the fire, flicking his cigarette after it. He turns to Rynn, thrusts his hand in front of the girl's face. Torn marks in his palm are oozing blood. The girl hides her face against Mario's chest.

HALLET

(to Mario)

Get me something to put on this.

For a long moment, the shaken boy makes no move. Hallet picks up Mario's cane, pokes him with it.

MARIO

(to Rynn)

The medecine cabinet? Upstairs?

The trembling girl nods. Mario limps across the room to the stairs. Looking at his hand, Hallet sits on the rocker. Slowly he brings himself full-tilt toward Rynn till he breathes in her face.

HALLET

Now. Where is your father?

(she twists away)

Is he working or sleeping?

The girl says nothing. Hallet rocks away from her. Mario quietly enters the room with a bottle of disinfectant. Hallet grabs it from him, opens the bottle.

HALLET

(painting his scratches)

Where's ~~the~~ old man?

Mario shoots a glance at Rynn to get some clue, but she's facing the fire.

MARIO

Who?

HALLET

Who'd you think? The jolly old man in the moon?

He moves his hand closer to the light. Rynn turns to look at Mario.

MARIO

Mr. Jacobs is upstairs. Sleeping.

HALLET

I thought Rynn said he was in the study.

Mario is confused. He looks at Rynn. She shakes her head.

MARIO
He's upstairs.

Hallet rises from the rocker. He goes to the fireplace and picks up the poker, stirring the fire.

HALLET
(to Rynn)
Who is your little damaged friend?
I didn't catch the name.

MARIO
I'm Mario Podesta.

HALLET
(to Rynn)
I asked you.

RYNN
Mario Podesta.

HALLET
I think I've seen him before. Bobbing
about the village.

MARIO
My uncle . . . he's a cop.

HALLET
(turning to Mario)
A noble calling.

MARIO
His name's Ron Miglioriti.

HALLET
(poker-faced)
Should that mean something to me?

MARIO
He was just here.

Mario looks at Rynn, then lowers his eyes, helpless.
Hallet snaps his fingers for Mario to raise his eyes to look
at him.

HALLET
Why?

MARIO
He's coming back.

HALLET
That's not what I asked.

RYNN
Tell him.

HALLET
Yes. Tell me.

MARIO
He said you called about your
mother being missing. He
thought you might come out here
to look for her.

HALLET
But surely mother wouldn't be
out here this time of night . . .
after the gentleman of the house
had retired. Unless, of course,
she retired with him . . .

RYNN
She's not here.

HALLET
No.

MARIO
My uncle's coming back.

HALLET
I'm sure he will . . .
(settling back in rocker)
. . . some day.

Hallet rocks, glances at his watch. Is it a trick of the wavering firelight? Is he smiling? He holds his hand to the fire.

HALLET

(to Rynn)

The other night you told me you didn't have any boyfriends.

(to Mario)

You her boyfriend?

MARIO

Yes.

Hallet turns his face, fiery red in the light, to Rynn.

HALLET

You told me 'no boyfriends.'

(suddenly to Mario)

She's very young. How old did she tell you she was?

MARIO

Thirteen.

HALLET

Don't you know any girls your own age? Or do they all like to dance?

RYNN

(in a rush of boldness)

The jelly glasses.

HALLET

Yes?

RYNN

They're ready for you to take.

HALLET

Not now.

RYNN

She weighs what the man's words may mean.

RYNN, HALLET AND MARIO

HALLET

Perhaps mother came by when you were out?

RYNN

I was here all the time.

HALLET
Didn't go to the football game?

RYNN
No.

HALLET
(to Mario)
You go to the game?
(Mario shakes his head "no")
I never go myself.

Hallet snaps his fingers at the cigarette box. Mario makes no move. Instead of pushing it to a challenge, Hallet gets his own cigarette, lights it, exhales.

RYNN
(clearly, almost calm)
It's very late, Mr. Hallet. I'll have to ask you to excuse us now.
(he ignores her comment)
What is it you want?

HALLET
(to Mario)
What is it you want?

MARIO
What do you mean?

HALLET
Exactly what I said.

Not knowing how to answer, Mario looks at Rynn. She can't help him.

HALLET
I'd say you want what all boyfriends want. Isn't that it?

MARIO
No.

Hallet's eyebrows climb on his brow

HALLET
You don't like girls?

MARIO

Yes, but . . .

HALLET

Then you don't want Rynn?
I mean, Rynn is a girl. She looks
like a girl to me. A very pretty
girl.

RYNN

Powerless, she watches as Hallet continues his cruel game.

THE ROOM

HALLET

Little magician. Why don't you
do a trick we'll all like. Make
yourself disappear.

(turning to Rynn)

Tell him to get lost.

RYNN

He's my friend.

HALLET

Ah, but not boyfriend?

Hallet, vastly pleased with himself, inhales his cigarette.

HALLET

(to Rynn)

Shall I tell you what you want?

Rynn cannot bring herself to raise her eyes to the man.

HALLET

We'll save that. First I shall
tell you what I want.

Hallet rises, moves to the fireplace to stand over Rynn.

HALLET

I want to know what's happening.
Here -- in this house. I want to
know what's been happening. What happened today.

RYNN

Nothing.

HALLET

All day is a long time for
nothing to happen.

Rynn shakes her head.

HALLET

Just now. The police were here.
That happened.

(Rynn starts away, but he blocks
her retreat)

Police. Here. Yes or no?

(Rynn nods)

Yes or no?

RYNN

Yes. Officer Miglioriti said
you were worried about your mother.

HALLET

And . . .

RYNN

There are the glasses. Waiting for her.

He doesn't glance at the carton.

HALLET

So they are. Meaning?

RYNN

She hasn't been here.

HALLET

That doesn't follow at all. No
proof at all.

RYNN

Then I'm afraid I can't help you.

HALLET

You want to help?

RYNN

Yes.

HALLET

(to Mario)
You want to help?

Mario looks at Rynn.

MARIO
(almost inaudibly)
Yes.

HALLET
Then get the hell out of here!

MARIO
(to Rynn)
Call the cops.

But Rynn makes no move. Mario lunges for the phone but Hallet grabs it first, twists the cord, ready to tear it from the wall. In the same move, the older man blocks the boy, already off balance, to shove him sprawling across the table, scattering plates and breaking glasses onto the floor. Hallet looks at the phone. He holds it out -- offering it to Rynn.

HALLET
Go ahead.

The girl rushes to the boy instead of the phone. The man shoves it onto the kitchen counter. Turning to the boy on the floor, he picks up the cane and flings it at him. He grabs the cane and prods the fallen boy.

HALLET
Tell your wop cripple to get the hell out!

After another jab with the cane, the man moves to the front door and hurls it wide. Jabbing with the cane, he signals for the boy to leave. Boiling with rage, Mario picks up his cane and rises slowly to his feet.

MARIO
(to Rynn)
We both go.

Rynn can make no move.

HALLET
You and your goddamn cane -- out of here!

Mario explodes. In a fury, his black cape flying, the boy leaps, stumbling toward the man at the door.

Just as suddenly, he stops his attack, grabs the out-stretched cane in the middle which clicks open in half. The man holds an empty sheath. The seething boy's fist tenses around the middle of a long, shining blade.

MARIO
(cold rage)
All wops carry knives, right?

Hallet, afraid, twists away from the boy, pressing against the door frame. His hand signals for Mario to keep his distance.

MARIO
And as you said, I am a wop.

The furious boy jabs at the man. Hallet struggles back.

MARIO
What do they call creeps like you
who hang around little girls?

HALLET
Watch out with that thing, now.
You could hurt somebody. Get into trouble.

MARIO
I could sink this into your gut
and all the cops would do is
thank me . . .

Hallet takes another step back.

HALLET
It's a trick! A trick cane!

MARIO
(cold)
You wanna find out?

Hallet's face trickles sweat. He grabs his raincoat and plunges out of the door. The boy, jabbing the sword, follows him out. He re-enters, slams the door shut, hurls himself against it. He picks up the other half of his cane pushes the trick blade back into the handle and fits the stick together.

RYNN
(staring through curtains)
He's gone.

MARIO
Call the cops now.

RYNN
No.

At a sudden thought, the boy hurries across the parlor toward the woodbox. Rynn races past him to stop him from lifting the lid. She sits on the box.

Mario stares at her. He won't be stopped.

She rises, steps away from the box. Mario lifts the lid, takes out the umbrella, snaps it open.

MARIO

Hers?

Rynn takes the umbrella, closes it and tosses it onto the couch. She moves to the table. Her glance signals Mario to pick up his side. They move the table off the rug. With her bare feet, Rynn rolls back the rug. She kneels, unlocks the trap door, then lifts it, letting it fall against the wall. She rises, stands before the steps.

RYNN

Bring the candle.

Mario takes the pewter candlestick, lights it, and carries it to her. She waits for him to go first. Clearly, his every instinct makes him hesitate.

CLOSE ON MARIO AND RYNN

Across the wavering candle flame, the boy looks at Rynn. Their eyes meet. His falter. The girl waits.

THE PARLOR

At last, Mario begins down the stairs. Rynn follows.

INT. STEPS - CLOSE ON MARIO AND RYNN'S FACES - REACTIONS

Mario's eyes widen. He nears panic.

MARIO

Oh, Christ! And the other one . . . ?

RYNN

(concerned about him)

My mother.

MARIO

How . . . long . . . has she . . . ?

RYNN

October seventeenth.

MARIO

(horrified, but fascinated)

I thought bodies got . . . you know.

RYNN

Decomposed? You can put this stuff on them. I learned how to do it from a book at the library.

Mario can't take it any longer. He may even be getting sick. He backs up the stairs, tripping because of his bad leg.

MARIO

I gotta get out of here.

Rynn watches him, concerned. She backs up the stairs, Mario almost pushing her out of the way.

THE PARLOR

Rynn and Mario clamber out of the cellar. He's pale as a ghost.

MARIO

. . . gotta go.

He moves across the room, reacts to the umbrella with distaste.

RYNN

I shouldn't have shown you.
Shouldn't have trusted you.

That stops him. He turns to face her.

MARIO

No. It's not that. I just . . .
can't . . . not right now.

He turns, grabs at his top hat, his cape, moves to the bike in the hall. She follows.

RYNN

But I want to explain. About
all this. I want you to know
why.

MARIO

I want to know. But I can't talk
about it now. I just can't
handle it. I'm sorry.

Rynn's eyes fill with tears. She looks absolutely wretched. Mario melts slightly.

RYNN

(muttering to herself)
My father was right. Should have
obeyed him.

MARIO

I'll be back. I just have to
pull it all together. My mind's
too screwed up.

Rynn looks at him ,emotionless, through wet eyes.

MARIO
I swear I'll come back. We'll
figure something out.

RYNN
We?

MARIO
Sure. I want to help you.

RYNN
When?

MARIO
I don't think I can get away
before next Saturday.

RYNN
(stiff upper lip)
Then next Saturday. it will have
to be.

He starts to roll his bike toward the front door.

MARIO
It might not be so good an idea
for us to talk on the phone.
Never know who's listening in.

She nods, resigned, opens the door for him. Outside the
wind howls.

MARIO
(moving bike to door)
You better keep that outdoor light
on. And watch out for that creep
Hallet.

He looks back at the open cellar door.

MARIO
And for Christ's sake, cover
that up.

She nods, demurely, still unsure of him. He rolls the
bike into the night.

MARIO
See you . . .

RYNN
(looking after him)
See you . . . Saturday.

EXT. A CATHOLIC CHURCH - LONG SHOT - SUNDAY MORNING

Mario, surrounded by his mother and brothers and sisters, leaves the church. He looks up at a grim statue of the crucifixion. It's bloodiness causes him some concern. He pulls himself away from it and joins his family.

EXT. RYNN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She stands in the front door. She throws a switch and the spotlight illuminates the front of the house.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD -AFTERNOON

Mario, with an armload of books, passes a band of dawdling football players. Judging by their actions, the boys are discussing sex. One of them does an exaggerated bump-and-grind. Mario hurries past them, limping.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE -AFTERNOON

She is putting a disc on the stereo. She pauses, freezes. She rushes to the window, opens the curtain. A bare branch is tapping against the window. Relieved, she closes the curtain.

EXT. GARAGE AND SERVICE STATION - TWILIGHT

Mario, in mechanic's greasy overalls, moves to an outdoor telephone booth. He has the coin ready. He hesitates, turns to look away. CAMERA PANS to include, down the street, the dark-red Bentley parked across from the Hallet Real Estate Office. Mario puts the coin back in his pocket.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting before the fire, Rynn turns to watch a light sweep across her front curtains. She runs to the window. Careful not to betray her presence, she peers through a slit.

EXT. THE LANE THROUGH THE TREES - RYNN'S POV - NIGHT

The beam of a police car's searchlight swings through the empty front yard. The car moves on.

RYNN - INTERIOR

She lets the curtain fall back into place. Shivering, she hugs her arms. She crosses to the phone, pauses there, as if deciding, then walks back to the fireplace.

Mario's head pokes out from under a car, face smudged with grease. Something in the garage fills him with anxiety.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON GARAGE

A tow truck is bringing in the red Bentley. Hallet gets out of the truck, as a police car pulls in. Miglioriti gets out, crosses to Hallet. The cop checks the car's doors. Locked. Mario apprehensively watches the car, the cop, Hallet.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

The girl turns on lamps. As she passes Gordon's empty cage, she pauses. Her eyes tear, but she fights it. She picks up the cage and grimly carries it to the kitchen and tosses it into the refuse can. Then she goes to the front door and flips on the floodlight.

EXT. LANE - SATURDAY MORNING - LS - PARTIALLY CLOUDY

Mario's bike is resting against the front of the house.

INT. KITCHEN - RYNN AND MARIO

They are obviously overjoyed to be with one another. She is preparing tea.

MARIO

I told you I'd be back.

RYNN

I just wasn't sure.

MARIO

Look, we're in this together.

RYNN

I didn't even know if you'd . . .
tell your uncle . . .

MARIO

(amazed)

Jesus, I'm glad you think so much
of me. Why would I tell anybody
about it? We're in this together.
But you gotta trust me.

She pours boiling water into the teapot.

MARIO

~~Ymxx~~ You gotta tell me everthing.

She nods, then continues to fuss with the tea.

RYNN

We were in London when father discovered
that he was going to die, that not
even an operation would help.

RYNN

We took a long walk one soft
Spring night and he told me about
it . . . and about his plan.

MARIO

(watching her drop tea
leaves into the pot)
What kind of plan?

Rynn takes the rest of the tea things from the cupboard and puts
them on a tray. She opens the refrigerator and takes out a
carton of milk.

RYNN

About what I must do when he
passed away. Mainly about my
mother.

Mario uneasily looks in the direction of the cellar.

MARIO

You mean about her beating you.

RYNN

I don't remember much about that.
I was too young. I only saw her
once before that I can recall, when
I was five.

CAMERA FOLLOWS the girl from the kitchen to the hearth.
She continues to talk as she clears a place on the
coffee table. Holding the tray level to compensate for his
limp, Mario brings it in front of the fire.

RYNN

Father had won a prize for his
poetry and she smelled money. But
he sent her away again. He never
had a lot of money. But we figured
that there was enough so that, once
she heard about his death, she'd
probably come swooping down on me, grabbing
with her red-painted claws.

RYNN AND MARIO AT THE COFFEE TABLE

MARIO

Jesus. Couldn't he have set up
a guardian or something?

RYNN

Who? We had no living relatives.
The only people we knew were other
poets -- wildly talented, but not
much use as parents.

Mario puts the tray on the table.

Rynn settles herself on the floor
beside the table, drawing her bare feet under her.

RYNN

So we sold off everything and
we left England without a word to
anyone. All summer we drove
through the United States . . .
to find the place I liked best.
And this was it. It was wonderful
here until father got sick . . .
and went away.

Rynn pours the tea.

RYNN

Milk and sugar?

At Mario's nod, the girl's motions are expert. Exactly the correct amount of sugar, milk. She hands Mario the cup which he holds chattering against the saucer.

RYNN

His last night . . . he sat in that chair and told me I wasn't like any other person in the whole world and that people would never understand that. They wouldn't let me be myself. They'd want to change me into the kind of person they wanted me to be.

She offers the plate with the cookies. The boy takes one with slivered almonds. Mario sips his tea. Rynn's goes untouched.

RYNN

Since I was technically a child, the only thing I could do would be to remain alone, to stay out of trouble and make myself very small in the world.

MARIO

(unable to imagine it)

Alone.

RYNN

We worked out every detail. We knew it wouldn't be easy. 'Don't give in and play their game,' father told me. 'Do anything you must. Fight them any way you have to. Survive.'

(pause)

Then he kissed me and walked off through the trees and down the lane.

(Mario listens raptly)

I found some charts he used in the study -- tide tables of the waters in the Sound and the ocean. He'll never be found.

MARIO

Leaving you all by yourself . . .

RYNN

I can take care of myself.

MARIO

But it's not natural. People
have to . . .

RYNN

(sharp)

I won't play their game.

MARIO

Would that be so awful?

RYNN

It's pretending. Going through
the motions of living. But not
really living.

MARIO

But you have to do some things.
Like going to school.

RYNN

Why?

MARIO

O.K. Your father taught you.
But what if a person doesn't have
a father like yours?

RYNN

Did I say I was talking about
anybody else? (pause)
Anyway, did school teach you
how to do your magic tricks?

MARIO

Everybody can't be like you.

RYNN

So: they want me to be like everybody.

MARIO

Wow. You keep talking about
'they' and 'them', like
everybody's out to get you.

RYNN

Maybe they are.

MARIO

You've gotta trust someone.

Rynn smiles at him, indicating that he is the one. This
satisfies him temporarily.

Mario sips his tea.

MARIO

Good tea.

(Rynn smiles; does not
drink her tea)

How'd your mother find you?

RYNN

By lying to my father's publisher.
(heated)

The nerve of her coming here.
Walked right in and sat~~d~~ down
. . . smoking her gold-tipped
cigarettes . . . going on and
on about the pollution in the
Mediterranean and how much
she hated the Greeks . . .
and how marvelous it would be
to live here.

Mario watches her. She stirs her tea but does not drink.

RYNN

She wanted a drink and I lied
and said we hadn't any. I fixed
her tea. And almond biscuits.

(Mario's interest increases)

Father had given me a small red
china bottle containing a white
powder. He told me that if she
should ever arrive I was to
use it in her tea. It would calm
her, he said, make her more
reasonable, less aggressive.

MARIO

Jesus, it sure did. You didn't
know what it was?

RYNN

Not until after. I looked it up,
based on its properties. Potassium
cyanide.

MARIO

And that's what you put in the tea?

Rynn nods. Mario finishes his tea, then finds he has trouble finishing swallowing his cookie.

RYNN

Father meant what he said about surviving any way I had to.

Rynn's full cup of tea catches Mario's eyes. Rynn's eyes meet his. He begins to sweat. He looks again at her untouched cup.

MARIO

You're not drinking yours.

RYNN

Still too hot. I didn't use milk.

(pause)

I can still see her red nails holding the cup. After a few sips she said her tea tasted of almonds.

Mario sweats more. Coughs. His cup clatters until he manages to put the saucer aside.

RYNN

'It's the almond biscuits,' I told her. 'They come from Fortnums.' She loved that. I thought it was the truth.

Mario struggles for breath. Rynn doesn't notice. She's staring into the fire.

MARIO

How . . . long did it take?

RYNN

Pretty fast.

MARIO

Uh . . . like you can't breathe at first?

He's swaying. Rynn looks at him.

RYNN

Are you all right?

Studying the boy with concern, Rynn lifts her cup of tea and sips. He returns her stare. She nibbles a cookie. Mario gulps down his fear. He tries to rise, finds he's able to stand.

RYNN
Something's the matter.

MARIO
(tremendously relieved)
No. I'm fine. Great.
(bluffing because he's
standing)
We'd better get going.

She nods.

EXT. THE LANE - SAT. MORNING

The two walk close, though not hand in hand. A blue sky
above the tree branches, dappled by clouds.

EXT. THE BEACH - SATURDAY MORNING

pick up scenes 243 , 244, 245, 246, 247 etc.

RYNN

Something's the matter.

MARIO

(tremendously relieved)

No, I'm fine. Great.

(bluffing, because he's
standing)

But maybe we'd better get going.

She nods.

EXT. THE OCEAN - MARIO'S BIKE IN THE SAND

Footsteps in the sand leading to the water. CAMERA PANS
and we see Mario and Rynn standing by the water's edge, looking
out to sea.

MARIO AND RYNN - CLOSER

RYNN

I won't play their game.

MARIO

Would that be so awful?

RYNN

It's pretending. Going through
the motions of living. But
not really living.

MARIO

But you have to do some things.
Like going to school.

RYNN

Why?

MARIO

O.K., your father taught you.
But what if a person doesn't
have a father like yours?

RYNN

Did I say I was talking about
anybody but me?

(pause)

Anyway, did school teach you
how to do your magic tricks?

MARIO

Everybody can't be like you.

RYNN

So they want me to be like
everybody.

BEACH DIALOGUE

REVISED 90-402

98-102

MARIO

(looking at her)

Wow! You keep talking about 'they' and 'them.' Like everybody's out to get you.

RYNN

Maybe they are.

MARIO

You've gotta trust someone.

Rynn smiles. She reaches into her pocket, takes out the keys to the Bentley. She hands them to Mario. He realizes the implication of her action. He takes the keys and hurls them out into the grey water.

EXT. THE GRAPE ARBOR - EARLY AFTERNOON

Rynn and Mario lift the sprawling bush back and the boy begins to dig. The girl helps by tearing out roots, lifting stones. She looks up. She feels drops of rain on her hand. Mario's shovel digs and scrapes.

EXT. THE GRAPE ARBOR - LATER - DIFFERENT ANGLE

Light rain is falling. Rynn, wrapped in her duffle coat, smooths her hand across her wet hair and leans against the window sill. Mario's shovel lifts dirt but the boy almost disappears in a hole which is shoulder deep. Rynn goes toward the house.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - MID AFTERNOON

The wet girl draws the front curtains tight. The muddy boy enters, looks at her.

MARIO

Okay?

She nods yes. Together, they lift the table from the braided rug.

EXT. THE GRAPE ARBOR AND CORNER OF THE HOUSE

Rynn shrinks back under the eave to watch Mario work with the back of his shovel to flatten gobs of mud. He pulls the bush back over the wounded earth. Rynn runs into the house. The boy finishes work, finds Rynn in dry clothes standing at the back door with a huge bath towel.

MARIO

Mud- spattered and in soaking wet clothes that cling to him, he looks at the girl standing there.

THE WINDOW AND RYNN

Her eyes glistening with tears, she urges the boy to come to her and the towel.

THE BACK YARD

The boy hurls the shovel into the dense underbrush at the back of the garden and trudges through the rain toward the girl in the window.

INT. THE HALL OF RYNN'S HOUSE - RAINY AFTERNOON

Rynn meets Mario in the door, slams and locks it. She tugs off his muddy boots. She covers his dripping black hair with the towel. She begins to rub vigorously.

RYNN

We have to get you warm and dry.
Hurry!

The boy falters, reaches out to his bicycle for support. Rynn nudges her shoulder under his arm and bearing much of his weight, moves him through the hall. He coughs. She pushes him down on the steps and pulls off his wet socks. His teeth chatter. His body shakes. She tugs off a pullover, heavy and wet. She unbuttons his shirt.

RYNN

I've got a hot tub waiting upstairs.
Hurry...

She strips the wet shirt from his shivering white shoulders.

RYNN AND MARIO

She unbuckles his belt. His shaking hands, blue with cold, fumble but work the zipper. She draws off the Levis. She finds his black eyes watching her. Both white legs appear the same, both white and hairless, both shaking with cold.

MARIO

(trying for a laugh)
Like letting someone look at your
chipped tooth.

She pulls him to her, wrapping the towel around him.

RYNN

Come on.

They start up the stairs. She stops. He lifts the towel from his head.

MARIO
You hear something?

RYNN
No.

MARIO
What's wrong?

Rynn stops. She cannot move.

RYNN
Her umbrella.

MARIO
It's with her.

INT. BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Rynn kneels next to a steaming bathtub, scrubbing Mario's back. RAIN DRUMS on the roof. The TELEPHONE SHRILLS. The girl stops scrubbing and listens. The RINGING CONTINUES. She rises, dries her arms with a towel.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS the girl racing from the bathroom into a hall and down the stairs.

INT. THE PARLOR - LATE AFTERNOON

Rynn clutches up the instrument.

RYNN
(into phone)
Yes?

She freezes in fear. Summoning her courage, she forces herself to speak.

RYNN
(into phone)
Mr. Hallet?
(she waits, then
into phone)
I know it's you, Mr. Hallet. This
afternoon everyone else is at the
football game.
(imperiously English)
Mr. Hallet, you should know that --
as a matter of actual fact -- the
police are watching this house this
very minute.

She waits a beat, then hangs up the phone.

THE HALL

Rynn picks up Mario's wet clothes.

THE FIREPLACE

The girl drops the muddy boots in front of the fire. She spreads the wet shirt across the back of the rocker and hangs the socks from the armrests. She shakes out the Levis and drapes them between the coffee table and the hearth. With paper and kindling she builds up the fire, puts a log on the blaze, brings the music up on the STEREO. The SOUND begins to fill the room. A sock falls from the chair. She picks it up. Her finger finds a hole above the heel. She hears footsteps, turns.

RYNN'S POV - THE PARLOR

It's a trick of the light, of course, but for a moment Rynn sees her father, complete to a pipe at his mouth, standing in silhouette.

MARIO

Nice robe. Even fits.

THE PARLOR

Rynn tosses the sock onto the rocker and runs to the boy who wraps a towel around his neck. He draws the pipe from his mouth and hands it to her.

MARIO

In the pocket.

She takes the pipe in one hand. With the other she draws the boy to the fire.

THE FIREPLACE

Rynn kneels behind the boy to dry his hair with the towel.

MARIO

Who called?

RYNN

No one.

She towels his hair.

MARIO

Rynn?

RYNN

Truly. Whoever it was didn't say a word.

MARIO
Hallet?

RYNN
Of course.

MARIO
Creep.
(he coughs)

RYNN
You're still shivering.

She reaches a blanket from the couch, unfolds it and wraps Mario.

RYNN
Here. Closer to the fire.

MARIO
(shivering)
Okay.

RYNN
You're like ice.

Her hands go to his shoulders and down inside his robe to his chest. She rubs.

RYNN
That feel better?

Mario kisses her arm that brushes his face. The kiss causes a silence neither knows how to break. She strokes his breast, his stomach.

MARIO
(barely able to talk)
Getting dark.

The firelight plays on the two. The room around them is deep in shadow. Rynn rests her head against Mario's neck and shoulder.

RYNN
Mario?

He says nothing.

RYNN
If you want, I'll get into bed with you.

Not daring to look at the girl, Mario clears his throat. Rynn pushes the coffee table to one side to bring the couch to the fire. At her bidding, Mario in the blanket sits on the couch, his head hanging between hunched shoulders. Rynn draws off her black sweater, unzips her levis and pushes them down her legs. She climbs past the boy on the couch, lies beside him, and, sharing the blanket, pulls it over them both. She snuggles close, her face against his neck. The boy tenses.

RYNN

Better?

Mario nods. His arm goes around her. They lie wrapped together. They look up at the ceiling.

THEIR POV - THE CEILING AND RAFTERS

Firelight moves shadows across the rafters. The Chopin concerto ends in a final rush, a burst of shimmering notes. The player clicks off. The only SOUND is PATTERING RAIN.

THE COUCH

Mario covers his face and coughs. Rynn's fingers touch his cheek.

RYNN

Shhh.

They watch the shadows deepen as the only glow in the room burns low.

RYNN

Your hair getting dry?

The question gives her an excuse to run her fingers through the boy's curls. Her hand lingers.

RYNN

Mario.....?

MARIO

I know what you're going to ask.

RYNN

Well?

MARIO

Hundreds of times.

RYNN

Like me and hashish.

She kisses his back. Her finger trails across his face. Her hand falls to his shoulder. They stare up at the growing shadows.

INT. THE FIREPLACE

The fire casts no more glow.

The CAMERA PANS TO the couch. Rynn rises on an elbow to look at Mario. He turns away.

RYNN

I'll get another blanket.

He shakes his head. She waits for him to break the silence.

RYNN

Once you're warm it'll be all right.
It'll be lovely. Truly it will.
You'll see...

The boy's shoulders are shaking. He is crying. As she rises from the couch, the boy sits up, reaches for his still-damp shirt and pulls it on. Rynn holds another blanket.

RYNN

They expect you home for dinner?

Buttoning his shirt, the boy nods yes.

RYNN

Mario?

The boy slides his white legs from the couch. The girl, desperate to keep him from going, to do anything to stop him, blurts out what she immediately wishes she had not said.

RYNN

It wasn't your fault.

Mario pulls on leg of the Levis. He stands to draw on the other.

RYNN

Would it be so terrible if you didn't go? I mean if your family did find out about us?

Taking his anger out on his shirt, Mario jams it down over his hips and zips up his trousers.

RYNN

Mario?

(he works on one damp sock,
searches for another)

Your Uncle Ron knows . . .

MARIO

They'd want to know all about you.
Every goddamn thing. I couldn't
handle it. I'm not as good a liar
as you are.

RYNN

Hurt, she shakes her head, but says nothing.

RYNN AND MARIO

MARIO

(reaching for wet shoes)

Like your father told you. Since
when do they let kids do what
they want?

Rynn wraps the blanket around her. Unable to stop him, she follows silently to the hall. He rolls his bike to the door, opens it. Outside, in the twilight, a soft rain falls. She drapes her father's raincoat over Mario's shoulders. He turns the collar up against the rain.

RYNN

Come back after dinner?

Mario coughs. He and his bike are suddenly gone into the twilight. Rynn shuts the door and returns to the parlor, where she sits in the dark, alone.

EXT. THE LANE - NIGHT

Miglioriti's car stops in front of the farmhouse. He gets out. He's wearing the checkered coat, not a uniform. He goes to the door, knocks. He knocks again. A light goes on inside the house.

INT. THE PARLOR - NIGHT

Rynn moves down the stairs, tugging her sweater on over her head.

THE HALL

The girl hurries to the door. She stops.

RYNN

Who is it?

MIGLIORITI (O.S.)

Ron Miglioriti.

With her hand on the lock, Rynn pauses to glance into the parlor. Apparently everything is back in place for she opens the door. The officer wears his checkered jacket. Only his shirt is different. At the collar and cuffs it froths into lace. He grins his wide grin.

MIGLIORITI

Hi. I'm making my
regular Saturday night call.

Rynn steps back from the door, her welcome for him to come in.

MIGLIORITI

Are you all right?

RYNN

Of course. I'm fine.

Miglioriti's grin grows even more dazzling.

MIGLIORITI

Just checking.

RYNN

"I really appreciate it, but
you don't have to ~~be~~ sorry about me."

MIGLIORITI

I was coming by anyway.

RYNN

Cup of tea?

MIGLIORITI

Can't stay.

RYNN

"Your pumped-up lady waiting?
Sorry. Now I'm being the smartass."

Miglioriti looks into the parlor and Rynn switches on the light so the man can see everything is in order.

MIGLIORITI

All alone?

RYNN

My father's here.

Miglioriti continues to study the room.

MIGLIORITI
(turning to her)
Your father. Yeah. Right. I been
kinda hoping that sooner or later
you'd level with me about that.

RYNN
(cool, almost haughty)
I don't understand . . .

Her eyes stare straight into his. Her look stops him. He
runs his fingers through his hair.

MIGLIORITI
C'mon, Rynn. Anything you don't
understand isn't worth knowing
in the first place. I'm not
here to hassle you. I want to
help.

She looks at him coldly. He shrugs, moves down the hall
to the study door.

MIGLIORITI
You gonna tell me he's in there
working?

RYNN
He was. All afternoon. Translating.

Miglioriti stops in the hall.

MIGLIORITI
(annoyed)
I see.
(exaggerated patience)
But he isn't now? That it?

Rynn tosses her head with arrogance.

RYNN
He's resting. Upstairs.

MIGLIORITI
(frowning)
I've been in this house three times.
Each time I noticed how good you
are with words. The way you speak.
You're very careful. Maybe too
goddamn careful.

RYNN

You don't believe he's upstairs?

The girl runs to the foot of the stairs.

RYNN

Father?

She runs halfway up the stairs and calls again.

RYNN

Father?

Miglioriti strains to hear if a voice answers. The girl runs back down the stairs.

RYNN

He'll be right down.

MIGLIORITI

(calling)

Mr. Jacobs?

RYNN

You're perfectly right, of course. I haven't always been telling the truth. That's because... well, you see, my father is not always well.

Miglioriti waits to hear more.

RYNN

Perhaps you simply don't realize about poets. I mean Edgar Allen Poe was a drug addict. Dylan Thomas drank himself to death. Sylvia Plath took her own life --

MIGLIORITI

We're talking about your father.

RYNN

He sometimes goes into that room and locks the door. He's got some kind of medicine -- I don't know what it is. But when he locks that door it's because he doesn't want me to see what it does to him.

Miglioriti's face shows nothing. He turns and walks down the hall to the door. The girl follows him. The door opens and he looks inside.

Yes?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

An astonished Miglioriti turns, moves back to look up the stairs.

MIGLIORITI'S POV - THE STAIRCASE

Silhouetted against the light at the top of the stairs stands a man in a robe and what might be gray flannel trousers. The man takes a step or two down, then grasps the railing.

JACOBS

(English accent)

I do hope you'll forgive me if I don't come all the way down. Bit under the weather, I'm afraid.

The CAMERA ANGLES ACROSS Rynn and Miglioriti up the staircase.

RYNN

Father, this is Officer Miglioriti I've told you about.

MIGLIORITI

(embarrassed)

Good evening, sir. I'm sorry to bother you.

JACOBS

Quite all right. I'm the one to apologize.

Miglioriti takes a step forward. He can see the older man's gray hair, poetically long, his carefully-trimmed beard.

JACOBS

I confess to being a bit tired. Now, how can my daughter and I help you?

MIGLIORITI

No problem, sir.

The officer's fingers burrow through his hair.

JACOBS

Rynn, nip into my study and get one of my books, will you?

The girl goes into the study.

JACOBS

(calling)
And a pen.
(to Miglioriti)
Rynn tells me we've promised you
an autographed edition.

The girl returns to the staircase. As she passes the cop, she can't help but smile at his chagrin. She takes her father the book and pen.

JACOBS

(coughing)
If you'd be good enough to spell
Miglioriti.

MIGLIORITI

Ron will be okay.

JACOBS

Of course.

The man writes, hands the book back to Rynn who gives it to the cop. Miglioriti backs toward the door.

MIGLIORITI

Good to meet you, sir.

The man on the stairs pulls the collar of his robe close to his neck and waves.

JACOBS

The pleasure was mine.

MIGLIORITI

Good night, sir.

Jacobs nods, turns and slowly mounts the stairs.

THE FRONT DOOR

Miglioriti forces himself to look at Rynn.

MIGLIORITI

(ashamed, but trying to
be light)
Okay, so I'm no Kojak or Columbo.
(the names mean nothing to
Rynn)
I mean, I'm sorry I . . .

RYNN

(smiling)
I hope you like the book.

He looks down at it, as if he'd forgotten it.

MIGLIORITI
Oh, yeah. Thank you . . . both.

He manages to get the door open.

MIGLIORITI
' night.

He exits into the dark.

RYNN
 (calling)
 Good night.

The girl watches the patrol car disappear down the lane. Slowly she shuts the door, locks it, and with a burst of wild laughter, dashes three stairs at a time up the steps.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL AND DOOR TO RYNN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Full of joy, Rynn runs to her door, stops, leans against the doorframe and smiles.

ANGLE ACROSS RYNN INTO THE BEDROOM

The room is white and yellow -- white paneling, yellow curtains, wallpaper with yellow roses. A bedspread the same color lies half on the floor, leaving the bed a blaze of yellow and white under the light of a yellow lamp shade, cheerful as May sunshine. Mario sits on the bed, a box of yellow Kleenex in his lap.

RYNN
 Your voice. Absolutely perfect.
 So deep.

MARIO
 That's this damn cold.

The boy smothers a sneeze.

RYNN
 God bless. I mean you really sounded English.

MARIO
 You write good dialogue.

The boy turns his bearded profile to the girl, thrusts the pipe into his mouth.

MARIO
 (with the English accent)
 How do you spell Miglioriti?

INT. THE BEDROOM - EVENING

The two break into peals of laughter as Rynn flings herself on the bed.

THE BED

Rynn pulls off her black sweater and struggles out of her jeans to jump under the sheet. She helps Mario peel off the beard which she hangs on the bedpost.

They roar with laughter. Rynn becomes calm, serious.
Mario snuffles into a Kleenex.

MARIO

We're lucky I found out about
Uncle Ron coming out here tonight.

RYNN

I'm glad he did . . . if that's
what brought you back.

MARIO

(seriously)

I would've come back anyway.

RYNN

I hoped you would.

MARIO

Except . . .

Her hand seals his mouth. But the boy insists on speaking.

MARIO

I mean after what happened -- or
didn't happen -- the first time.

Rynn raises his robe and kisses his white shoulder.

MARIO

Wow. I mean I should have told
Uncle Ron what he was interrupting,
right?

RYNN

(exaggerating accent)

A gentleman does not tell. Ever.

MARIO

Maybe in England they don't. Here
they never shut up about it.

She draws her face back and watches Mario pull off the robe
and drop back on the pillow, a huge grin spreading across
his face.

MARIO

I bet half -- hell, most of the
guys on the football team -- that's
all they do, talk about it.

His eyes meet Rynn's. He reaches out and begins counting
her freckles.

MARIO

You know I won't...

He pokes his bare chest with a finger and draws two lines.

RYNN

There. You just crossed your heart.

She smiles, but hot tears fill her eyes.

MARIO

We have to trust each other. I mean most people don't go through as much as we have -- not even in a whole, entire lifetime.

Rynn kisses him lightly behind the ear.

MARIO

No one will know about us.

Rynn settles her chin on Mario's chest so she can look into his face.

RYNN

I didn't know how much I needed you.

She raises herself on her elbow to smile down at the boy.

MARIO

You're smiling. How come?

RYNN

You. Me.

Rynn giggles and kisses his lips.

MARIO

Rynn?

RYNN

Hm?

MARIO

You ever think maybe I'm playing your game?

RYNN

Because you want to.

MARIO

Because I love you.

She searches his face. He is about to sneeze. She reaches across, grabs a handful of tissues for the boy before he explodes.

MARIO

You're going to catch my cold.

She deliberately kisses his mouth.

RYNN

When I told you I don't mind being alone I lied...

MARIO

Shhh.

The boy's lips seal hers.

RYNN

Dear, dear, Mario, don't ever go. Promise?

The boy takes the girl into his arms. Their young bodies fit together, the comforter and the comforted.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD - FALL AFTERNOON

In the changeable weather the sun shines for a few minutes. Rynn wears her duffle coat as she burns a pile of leaves. Officer Miglioriti watches the smoldering fire, the white smoke curling up.

RYNN

The smell of burning leaves makes me think of London.

The officer studies the fire for a moment, then moves in the direction of the back yard.

MIGLIORITI

While the ground's still damp it might be a good time to have a look and see if you and your father have had any visitors.

RYNN

The girl's face betrays none of the fear that sweeps over her.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

The two walk to the side of the house. In order to cover her nervousness, the girl chatters.

THE GRAPE ARBOR

RYNN

I Love detective stories.
(MORE)

RYNN (CONTD)

You ever read Agatha Christie? Most
of her murders take place in England
in the most super old country houses . . .

They reach the corner of the house, go into the grape arbor.

RYNN

I love to garden. Even in London
we had a garden. All in dahlias and
snapdragons . . .

Miglioriti slowly crosses the freshly-turned earth. His
shoe scrapes leaves from the soil.

RYNN

(chattering nervously)
New tulip bed. We put in parrot
tulips. You know them? Ragged
edges, terribly brilliant colors . . .

MIGLIORITI

See these?

RYNN

Footprints? Mine and my father's
I expect.

MIGLIORITI

They're not very clear.
(he glances around, stares
at her)
Y'know, I can't figure you out at
all.

RYNN

She knows the policeman is studying her closely.

MIGLIORITI

Black eyes search the girl's face.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

The girl senses she must make some move so she tugs her
black sweater down over her hips.

MIGLIORITI

I mean . . . you haven't even asked
about Mario.

RYNN

(frowning)
What about him?

MIGLIORITI

You didn't know? He's been in the hospital for three days.

RYNN

She looks at him, totally concerned. Almost frenzied.

RYNN

What happened?

MIGLIORITI (O.S.)

Pneumonia.

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

RYNN

How serious?

MIGLIORITI

Very. Without antibiotics, we'd have lost him for sure.

RYNN

Nobody told me!

MIGLIORITI

I should have thought of it. I figured Anna, Mrs. Podesta, would've . . . You keep so much to yourself out here.

RYNN

I have to see him.

MIGLIORITI

I could drive you in now.

She nods, rushes toward the house.

INT. PATROL CAR - FALL AFTERNOON

Rynn and Miglioriti are driving into town.

RYNN

Have you been there today?

Miglioriti nods.

MIGLIORITI
He was out of his head. Mumbling.

RYNN

Her heart is in her mouth.

MIGLIORITI (O.S.)
About the two of you.

RYNN
(cautiously)
Yes?

RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

MIGLIORITI
About how much he loves you.

Rynn's face shines, wet with tears. They drive in silence.

MIGLIORITI
She never came by, huh?

RYNN
Who?

MIGLIORITI
Mrs. Hallet.

RYNN
No.

MIGLIORITI
I saw Frank Hallet this morning,
driving the Bentley . . . just
like he never expected to see
his mother again.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The patrol car heads toward town.

INT. - RYNN AND MIGLIORITI

RYNN
You really don't like him much, do you?

RYNN

You don't like him much, do you?

MIGLIORITI

Like him? Hell, I think he's real cute.

(toughening)

I just wish I could be here to catch him getting too cute.

The car stops for a light. Miglioriti looks at the now-silent girl. He reaches over, buttons the top of her duffle coat.

MIGLIORITI

Our leading citizen now. The son of a bitch'll probably even show up at the police raffle tonight.

~~(driving away)~~

No. You could say I don't like him much.

The car windows cloud. Diffused lights flash. The car slows.

EXT. STREET AND HOSPITAL - RAINY TWILIGHT

The patrol car stops before the hospital.

INT. PATROL CAR - RAINY TWILIGHT

MIGLIORITI

Before you go running off, I got something to tell you.

Rynn's eyes are scouring the building. She turns reluctantly.

MIGLIORITI

I won't be driving out to your place any more. Fact is, I'm taking off.

It takes a moment for Rynn to realize what he's saying.

MIGLIORITI

Heading out to California.

RYNN

(close to panic)

But you work here!

MIGLIORITI

(pulling off his cap)

Finally got up the guts to quit.

RYNN

No. I mean you can't -- can you?
I mean quit -- just like that?

MIGLIORITI

I been thinking about it for over
a year.

RYNN

You mustn't . . .

MIGLIORITI

Thanks. But there's not much of a
future for me here. Hallet's not
on the advancement board, but he's
got friends who are.

RYNN

You can't go!

MIGLIORITI

I'll miss you, Rynn.

She sits in stunned silence.

MIGLIORITI

I never liked the idea of you being
all alone out there in the lane . . .
(he examines his cap and
insignia)

I came out today just as a sort of
last check to see if Hallet had got
the word about not hanging around.
(flashing a big smile)

But there's nothing for me to
worry about . . . your father
can take care of things.

The girl fights back tears.

MIGLIORITI

I probably won't get another
chance to see you. . .

Rynn presses her face to the man's cheek. Then she's gone.
The slamming door covers her sob. Miglioriti awkwardly
puts on his cap.

EXT. HOSPITAL STEPS - RAINY TWILIGHT

Rynn hurries up the stairs to the front door.

INT. A WHITE CORRIDOR - TWILIGHT

Rynn hesitates outside Room 407. She leans close to the
panel and listens. Then she pushes the door open.

INT. HOSPITAL DOUBLE ROOM - TWILIGHT

An accordin-fold divider separates two beds. In the nearest a fat man watches TV. No sound comes from the set. Near the other bed, a PLUMP GIRL OF TWELVE squats on the floor scattering papers from a box of chocolates. A DARK-HAIRED BOY of Rynn's age reads a comic book. At Rynn's first look at Mario's bed, she gasps.

THE HOSPITAL BED - RYNN'S POV

The sleeping Mario looks grey as death.

RYNN

She stifles her shock.

THE ROOM

The plump girl, munching, offers Rynn a chocolate. Refused.

TERESA (PLUMP GIRL)

You see Momma out there? She's late.
We're waiting for her to take us home.
You been here before?

Rynn, not taking her eyes from Mario, manages to shake her head 'no.'

TERESA

He's sleepy. Right now he's full of
antibiotics.

TOM (DARK-HAIRED BOY)

Drugs.

Fighting tears, Rynn stares at the boy in the bed.

TOM

You go to St. Andrews?

Rynn moves toward the bed.

TERESA

Where do you know Mario from?

RYNN

From his magic show actually. That's
how I . . .

Teresa goes to the door.

TERESA

I wish she'd get here.

(to Rynn)

Don't mind our Mom, but if
you're a friend of Mario's,
she's gonna bug you with
a hundred questions about
yourself.

Rynn is unnerved by the statement. She hesitates, the
turns to the bed. She pauses. Tom rises, begins to
pull the divider to give Rynn and Mario privacy.

TOM

Go ahead. You can't catch
anything, the doctor says.

Tom leaves them. Rynn rushes to the bed.

RYNN

Mario? Oh God . . .

(she kisses him)

Please . . . before your
mother gets here . . . please,
Mario . . . don't just lie there.
I want to tell you how much I
need you.

(choking with tears)

My father's plans, they . . .
just won't work. I can't
stay out there by myself.
Not without you . . .

(she kisses the grey
face again; no response)

Mario?

She realizes that she is not getting through to him.
CAMERA MOVES with the girl as she moves from the bed,
pushes past the divider and runs from the room. Tom
looks up from his comic book, puzzled. Then he shrugs
and returns to the book.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - RAINY EVENING

Rynn races through the bright Christmas decoration lights
and the crowds under umbrellas.

RYNN

Her hair and face are streaming wet. Tears and rain.

INT. A WOOLWORTH LUNCH COUNTER - RAINY EVENING

In the glare of florescent light, Rynn shoves away a
hamburger, unfolds a dollar, puts it on the counter and leaves.

EXT. A SIDEWALK - RAINY EVENING

The girl alone among the Christmas shoppers, runs.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Night is falling. Rynn hurries past dark store windows.

EXT. A BUS STOP - NIGHT

Rynn's hair blows in the cold night wind. She turns her coat collar up against the blast, buries her hands in the coat and peers into the empty street for a bus.

WHAT SHE SEES: THE STREET - NIGHT

In the empty street a car with a THROBBING ENGINE slowly appears and edges toward the girl on the curb.

Windows roll down and BOYS OF HIGH SCHOOL AGE, faces dead white in the light, splotched with acne. They WHISTLE and call.

RYNN

Terrified, she turns from them.

THE SIDEWALK AND STREET

Their car stops. The boys WHISTLE. One holds out a cigarette. Another makes an obscene SUCKING SOUND.

TEENAGE BOY

Cold, foxy? C'mon in. We'll warm you up.

The others guffaw. Rynn shrinks back from the curb to the windows of a camera store where the cold black eyes of lenses stare at her.

RYNN

She panics, darts out into the street behind the car. We HEAR the boy's ENGINE REVVING, ROARING AWAY. Rynn continues running. There is a SCREECH of BREAKS. The TAP of a HORN. She freezes, looks up.

ANOTHER ANGLE TO INCLUDE - POLICE CAR

A black and white patrol car. Two OFFICERS side by side. One of them taps on the window for Rynn to approach.

THE SIDEWALK AND POLICE CAR

From the open window a SKINNY OFFICER speaks:

SKINNY OFFICER

You all right?

Rynn nods.

SKINNY OFFICER

Better get in before you freeze to death. We'll take you home.

The girl makes no move. Her eyes search the street.

RYNN

That's awfully good of you, but --
I mean, thank you -- Here comes the bus now.

The cops glance back, move the patrol car ahead as the bus squeals to a stop. Rynn jumps into the bus.

INT. THE BUS - NIGHT

Rynn is the only passenger. As the bus starts up she drops her coins in the fare box. The DRIVER, a black man with an Afro, a scrawny moustache and dark glasses, is very hip, very cool.

DRIVER

Pretty late, isn't it?

ANOTHER ANGLE - INSIDE THE BUS

Rynn hurries to the back seat. She sits.

RYNN

The girl stares straight ahead.

WHAT SHE SEES: THE DRIVER

The black man turns; his dark glasses glint in her direction.

RYNN

The girl pulls her duffle coat close.

REVERSE SHOT - THE DRIVER AND RYNN

The dark glasses stare in the rearview mirror.

DRIVER
Where do you want off?

RYNN
(calling)
Two more stops.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The girl rises, moves to the front of the bus and the door.

DRIVER
Pretty late.

He slows the bus. The front door opens with a BANG.

DRIVER
Little lady?

Rynn hesitates.

DRIVER
You got far to go?

RYNN
I'll be all right.

DRIVER
If you say so. Night night.

EXT. THE ROAD - NIGHT

Rynn climbs down from the bus as the DOOR SMACKS SHUT. Tires spin gravel. Tail lights grow small moving into the dark. Across the street the iron deer stands on the lawn. Rynn pulls her coat around her and runs.

RYNN

Leaves blow past the running girl.

EXT. THE LANE - NIGHT

The girl reaches the lane and turns to race toward home.

RYNN

The girl claws hair from her face as she races through the night.

THE LANE

Tree trunks, pillars in a gothic cathedral, rise to touch swaying branches overhead in the clear night sky. The girl runs.

RYNN

Leaves flash past her. BRANCHES RATTLE. She turns to look at a house she's passing.

THE HOUSE - HER POV

It stands deserted -- black, ominous, windowpanes glinting cold as ice in the night.

RYNN

She runs with her hair flying.

THE CLAPBOARD FARMHOUSE - HER POV

Behind the treetrunks, the spotlight shines at the door.

THE FRONT YARD

Leaves scatter under foot as she dashes for the door. CAMERA FOLLOWS HER. Her key ready, she bangs open the door. Lights spring on. The front door SLAMS SHUT.

INT. RYNN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS GIRL to the cold hearth where ashes lay grey and white. She shivers, bends to the woodbox. She balls up several sheets of newspaper, carefully places a few logs on top. She picks a match from the box on the coffee table and lights the fire.

RYNN

She watches the fire for a second, then turns, moves across the room. CAMERA PICKS UP a black walking stick leaning against a wall. Rynn does not notice it.

THE STAIRS

Rynn turns on the upstairs light. She turns off the downstairs light, plunging that area into an eerie fireglow. Dancing shadows. She races up the stairs.

DOWNSTAIRS - DIFFERENT ANGLE

Light spills down the stairs into the faintly lit hall and the parlor. Then the pale light clicks off. Only the firelight remains.

THE PARLOR

The fire intensifies. Nothing else moves. The SOUND of the OCEAN ROARING far off. Then, the CREAK of a FLOORBOARD.

INT. RYNN'S BEDROOM

She sits before a mirror, brushing her hair. Suddenly, there is the blare of music from downstairs -- Chopin. Rynn goes from alarm to fear. She pulls herself together and stands in her shining-white nightgown. Moves to the upper stairwell. CAMERA FOLLOWS.

She apprehensively looks down the stairs to the dark room below.

RYNN

Who's down there?

On tiptoe and step by step she descends. Very frightened. The MUSIC suddenly LOWERS. She is off the stairs now. She turns to the parlor. Through the MUSIC we can HEAR the SOUND of the ROCKING CHAIR, moving back and forth.

Rynn catches her breath. Fighting terror, she moves to the entrance to the parlor.

SUBJECTIVE CAMERA - RYNN'S POV

We move to the parlor door. A tip of the rocker is visible on its backward swing. Then more. Then the whole rocker. It is facing away from us. Sitting in it is an elderly man -- tweed suit, grey hair, glasses. We have seen him before. In the photo, as an image from Rynn's imagination. As the model for Mario's deception. Rynn's father is sitting in the chair!

RYNN

Her confusion is total. Then a flood of relief.

RYNN

Father!

Released from fear, the girl's bare feet move across the floor.

THE PARLOR

RYNN

(sobbing in relief)

Oh, Father. Thank God you've come back. It's been terrible. So many things have gone wrong.

She is so exulted by his appearance, she seems slightly out of control.

RYNN

(words rushing out)

All these months I thought you
were . . . You should have told
me. Where have you been? Why
did you go off, if . . .

As she moves forward, the figure stands. He removes the
pipe from his mouth. He still has his back to her and us.

RYNN

I missed you so.

The man turns to face her. It is Frank Hallet under the
grey wig and glasses. He smiles in the fire's glow.

HALLET

No more than I've missed you,
dear girl.

Rynn stands frozen, horrified.

RYNN

G-g-get out of here!

HALLET

But I've been waiting so patiently.
Aw, you're all distraught. Frightened.
I've got it! You should call the
police.

—(pause)

Or maybe that little Dago.
Your cripple boyfriend.

RYNN

Mario's in the hospital.

HALLET

Nothing curable, I hope. Well,
I guess there's no one to call.
(putting down pipe)
Filthy thing.

RYNN

(whispering)

If you leave right now, I won't
say a word to anybody.

HALLET

Is this the famous British hospitality?
Couldn't we at least share a spot
of tea?

He pats his hair. Smooths the coat.

HALLET

After I got all dressed up?

(less fey)

I thought if anyone saw me
lurking about -- if anyone
really cared -- they'd assume
I was your daddy.

RYNN

Officer Miglioriti just brought
me home. He said he'd wait
outside until I signalled every-
thing was all right . . .

HALLET

That's unworthy of you, Rynn.

RYNN

He did. He promised to drive
by and keep an eye on . . .

HALLET

(cutting in)

He's at some little cop party.
Bazaar or something.

Hallet notices a smudge on his coat. He brushes it.

HALLET

Dusty down in the cellar.

RYNN

The cellar?

HALLET

I took a little tour of the
place. Just to kill time until
you came home.

He reaches into a pocket, then holds out his hand to Rynn.

HALLET

Found these growing down there
with the mushrooms. A hairpin.
But you don't wear hairpins --
not in that pretty hair.

RYNN

Could have been down there for
years.

HALLET

Hmmm. And it looks so new and shiny, too.

(he sniffs it)

Smells of Ma Griffé perfume. Mother's favorite. Says it mixes with male musk. I gave her a quart for Mother's Day.

(laughing)

And this. Broken fingernail, wouldn't you say? Bright red. Not Dear Mother's color at all. Now who do you suppose it belongs to?

Like a miser, he examines his treasures.

HALLET

I just bet that the police -- with all their equipment -- would have a field day rooting around down there.

He carefully places the objects in a glass ashtray. He crosses the room to the back window, parts the curtains to look out into the grape arbor.

HALLET

And how does your garden grow?

At the table, Rynn moves the two pewter candlesticks into line.

HALLET

Lots of digging out there.

He slides his Chapstick across his lips.

RYNN

RYNN

Tulips.

She stands silently at the table waiting for his next move.

RYNN AND HALLET

HALLET

(pointing at window)
Remind me to think of her as I stand here -- at this window -- next spring.

RYNN

At the mention that he will be here, the words cut deep.

RYNN AND HALLET

He strides past Rynn to the woodbox. Feeds the fire. His face reflects the growing orange glow.

RYNN

She stands motionless.

RYNN

I don't know what you mean.

RYNN AND HALLET

insert:

HALLET

You could have at least left
me the keys. What did you ~~you~~ do
with them anyway?

He stands before her. His hand reaches out to the chain
round her neck.

HALLET

On this chain round your
pretty neck?

Rynn stiffens as slowly, he pulls the chain out of her neckline.
He looks at the safety-deposit key, shakes his head. He
moves to the rocking chair, sits.

HALLET

There are a few details I still
have to work out.

(holding up his hand)

But don't tell me. I'll enjoy
figuring it out on our long
winter nights.

He snaps his fingers at the cigarette box. Rynn brings him
the Galoise, strikes a match, lights it for him. He leans
back and slowly begins to rock. He leans forward, takes
the pack from the girl.

HALLET

Pardon me. You want one, no?

He smokes and rocks, maintaining his amused air. The TELEPHONE

SHRILLS. Rynn looks to Hallet. His hand orders her to answer.

RYNN

RYNN
(into phone)
Hello? Oh, I'm glad you called,
Officer Miglioriti.

She glares at Hallet.

HALLET

He stops rocking and stands, moves to her.

RYNN
Yes, I saw him. But he was asleep.
Sedated. He looked so helpless.

Hallet moves close to the girl. Touches her hair. She pulls away.

RYNN
He'll get better. I know it.

Hallet moves his glowing cigarette in little circles, playful.

RYNN
Me? I'm perfectly alright. Fine.
(pause)
No, really.

She turns her back to Hallet. He moves around her. He pushes his cigarette toward her bare arm, but touches her instead with his little finger. She recoils. He grins.

RYNN
Yes. But it's nothing. A chill.

She looks up at Hallet. He smiles. He moves the cigarette near her face. With the other hand, he pats her behind. She jumps. Hallet grins.

RYNN
No. Not tonight. I'm just
going to bed. No, really.
(pause)
Thank you for calling.

She hangs up, moves away from Hallet. He exhales a cloud of smoke.

HALLET
He mention me?

RYNN
No. Why should he?

HALLET
I thought that perhaps, when
he noticed I wasn't at his cop
party tonight . . . Why did
he call?

RYNN
To ask about Mario.

HALLET
So much for that. And him.
(staring at Rynn)
Our wop cop is leaving us, you
know. California or bust.
(pause)
You like him, eh?

Rynn rubs her elbows in her nightgown. She doesn't answer.

HALLET
Demon lover Miglioriti. All
the girls love the Dago. I
suspect that even dear mom
. . . but I should speak justly.
You know what I think about good
old Ron?
(Rynn glares at him)
I think he's a fake, good old
Ron. I think he's been using
you.

RYNN
(angering)
What?

HALLET
Oh, yes. Pretty little girl, all
alone. Perfect bait to catch the
wily Hallet. Who cares about her?
Not old Ron. He's only interested
in evening the score with his
rival.

He stands, moves to the fireplace.

HALLET

It's like Robin Hood, don't you see. The evil sheriff, holding Maid Marian in the tower, knowing Robin cannot stay away. Knowing Robin's love is so strong that he cannot stay away.

He moves toward her. She steps back.

RYNN

(quietly)

Mario knows.

HALLET

Knows what?

RYNN

What happened.

He pauses, thinks. Then smiles.

HALLET

Maybe he'll die.

RYNN

(too quick)

No. He'll get better.

HALLET

Then perhaps he'll have an accident. Cripples do have accidents.

Rynn's eyes fill with tears. But she fights them.

HALLET

Or you could just explain to him that he's an accomplice. You're familiar with that word?

RYNN

Yes.

HALLET

I thought you would be. He is the only other person who knows the (burlesque) dread secret of the cellar?

RYNN

Yes.

HALLET
(grinning)
That's fine. Well, nothing more
for you to worry about. You just
let daddy take care of things.
Daddy knows best.

The ironic effect of his words hits Rynn hard. She backs
away, towards the kitchen.

HALLET
Where do you think you're going?

RYNN
You wanted tea.

HALLET
Ah, yes. England's answer to
everything. A nice hot cup of tea.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE PARLOR

Hallet lifts the poker for a few sword parries, then returns
to the chair, rocking, enjoying the situation, continuing to
talk.

HALLET
You handled yourself well on the
phone with Miglioriti.

THE CAMERA PANS TO RYNN IN KITCHEN

HALLET (O.S.)
Resourceful. Cool under fire.
Inventive. You're a very rare
girl, Rynn. I doubt that there's
another like you.

RYNN - CLOSE

She pauses by the counter, eyes closed, crying to herself.
The kettle is heating up.

HALLET (O.S.)
You know the secret -- survival.
It's the only important thing.

Rynn shakes her head.

RYNN
(mainly to herself)
No. That's wrong.

HALLET'S VOICE
What's that?

RYNN
Nothing.

THE PARLOR

Hallet rises, lifts a maple log out of the woodbox.

HALLET
No reason why you shouldn't go
right on the way you've been living.
Cut off from the slobby multitude.
Alone. Pristine. Elite.

RYNN CLOSE

She sobs softly.

RYNN
It was all so wrong. If only . . .

THE PARLOR

Hallet turns toward the kitchen.

HALLET
Eh? Did you say lonely? Well,
don't worry your pretty little
head about that. From now on
we'll be playmates. You and I.
I'll play the daddy . . . and
you'll play the mommy.

THE KITCHEN - RYNN CLOSE

She reacts to Hallet's words with total despair. She reaches
up, opens the cupboard.

HALLET'S VOICE
Forget about the petty people with
their petty minds. They don't
understand what it's like to be
different . . .

RYNN
(to herself)
I don't want to be different.

HALLET'S VOICE
Just the two of us. How does the
song go?
(half-singing)
'Nobody near us, to see or to hear us.'

RYNN AND CUPBOARD

We see a small ^{red} china bottle. She reaches up, anguished, grabbing the bottle.

HALLET'S VOICE

' . . . No friends or relations on weekend vacations . . . '

Rynn opens the bottle, sprinkles its contents -- white powder -- into a tea cup. Suddenly, there is the PIERCING WHISTLE of the teapot. Rynn reacts with a start. She lifts the pot.

PARLOR AND HALLET

He's staring into the fire, humming the melody.

HALLET

Mother absolutely adored that song. That and 'Roll Your Leg Over.'

RYNN AND TEAPOT

She pours the hot tea into the cup with the powder. Puts down the pot. She closes her eyes, then opens them. She lifts the cup to her lips.

HALLET'S VOICE

(closer)

That's very impolite, pretty girl.
Besides you must let it steep.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON KITCHEN - RYNN AND HALLET

Hallet is standing right beside her. He takes the cup from her, places it on the tray.

HALLET

Bring it into the parlor.

He watches as she carefully loads the tray with milk, sugar.

HALLET

Let's have some crumpets on there.

(grinning)

We'll have a high old tea.

She places a plate of almond biscuits on the tray, picks up the tray.

THE PARLOR

Hallet watches Rynn balance the tray on the corner of the coffee table. She sits on the floor, resignedly. Hallet is staring at the full cup of tea before her. Hallet eases down into the rocker. He reaches out a hand to touch Rynn's hair. She does not pull away from him immediately. She uses the act of arranging the tea things to move from his hand.

HALLET

Fire's catching. All nice and cozy.

Notes of the piano concerto fall like silver rain.

She pours into the empty cup.

RYNN

Milk?

HALLET

Please.

He watches her pour with skill. Her thoughts seem far away, yet she performs the mechanics of tea service to perfection.

RYNN

Sugar?

HALLET

I'll say when.

She drops cubes of sugar into his cup until his fingers snap.

HALLET

I'll expect you to remember that in the future.

She looks up at him. He's grinning at her. She takes one despairing look around the room -- a last look -- pausing in the direction of the stereo.

HALLET

Something bothering you, dear?

She shakes her head. Determined now, she lifts the doctored teacup to her lips. Hallet leans forward quickly, seizes her wrist with one hand, the cup with the other.

HALLET

Not so quickly . . .

Rynn is startled by his action. He rocks away with the cup of tea. Rynn reaches out.

RYNN

Please . . .

Hallet, with his free hand, pushes his cup of tea toward her.

HALLET

(winking)

Try mine . . .

Rynn frowns.

RYNN

You don't understand . . .

HALLET

Oh, don't I? Go ahead, now.

Rynn, helplessly, lifts Hallet's cup, sips from it. Hallet is watching her with fascination. She puts the cup down, waiting for him to give her's back. Hallet grins.

HALLET

Nothing like a good, hot cup of tea.

With that, before Rynn can stop him, he lifts her cup and takes a long swallow. She watches him in horror. Her hand reaches out. Too late!

HALLET
 (contented)
 Delicious.
 (sipping again)
 Know why I switched cups?
 (Rynn is silent; he
 picks up an almond biscuit)
 Because the only way to handle
 a tricky little lady . . .
 (nibbling cookie)
 . . . is to show her at the start
 her tricks will do her no good.
 Understand?

Hallet places his cup on the table.

RYNN
 (heartfelt)
 I really didn't want this to
 happen. . .

Hallet misinterprets her meaning. He leans forward, trying to be suave.

HALLET
 I know dear. But I'm sure
 you'll be very pleased that
 it did.
 (he reaches out, fondles
 her hair)
 After all, the future's as
 bright as a button. If it weren't
 for me, you might have wound up
 in some low-rent, cretin relation-
 ship with your cripple . . . in
 a tract house with a brood of
 bawling brats . . .
 (lifting his cup; coughing)
 What kind of life would that
 be . . . for a special little
 girl like you?
 (sipping tea)
 Tastes like almonds.

He puts down the cup, frowning.

RYNN
 Probably the biscuit.

He shrugs, leans back, snaps his fingers for her to move closer to the chair. She does. He caresses her hair again. He coughs, then closes his eyes, smiling.

HALLET

You'll see . . . everything is
going to work out better than
you could have imagined . . .

Rynn turns her head so that she can look up at him.

FADE OUT

THE END

THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE