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ANTHOLOGY
SPEAKING WITH THE ANGEL
AN EDUCATION:  
The Screenplay

Nick Hornby

RIVERHEAD BOOKS
New York
INTRODUCTION

The First Draft

I knew the moment I’d finished Lynn Barber’s wonderful autobiographical essay in *Granta*, about her affair with a shady older man at the beginning of the 1960s, that it had all the ingredients for a film. There were memorable characters, a vivid sense of time and place - an England right on the cusp of profound change - an unusual mix of high comedy and deep sadness, and interesting, fresh things to say about class, ambition and the relationship between children and parents. My wife, Amanda, is an independent film producer, so I made her read it, too, and she and her colleague Finola Dwyer went off to option it. It was only when they began to talk about possible writers for the project that I began to want to do it myself - a desire which took me by surprise, and which wasn’t entirely welcome. Like just about every novelist I know, I have a complicated, usually unsatisfactory relationship with film writing: ever since my first book, *Fever Pitch*, was published, I have had some kind of script on the go. I adapted *Fever Pitch* for the screen myself, and the film was eventually made. But since then there have been at least three other projects - a couple of originals, and an adaptation of somebody else’s work - which ended in failure, or at least in no end product, which is the same thing.

The chief problem with scriptwriting is that, most of the time, it seems utterly pointless, especially when compared with the relatively straightforward business of book publishing: the odds against a film, any film, ever being made are simply too great. Once you have established yourself as a novelist, then people seem quite amenable to the idea of publishing your books: your editor will make suggestions as to how they can be improved, of course, but the general idea is that, sooner or later, they will be in a bookshop, available for purchase. Film, however, doesn’t work that way, not least because even the lower-budget films often cost millions of pounds to make, and as a consequence there is no screenwriter alive, however established in the profession, who writes in the secure knowledge that his work will be filmed. Plenty of people make a decent living from writing screenplays, but that’s not quite the same thing: as a rule of thumb, I’d estimate that there is a 10 per cent chance of any movie actually being put into production, especially if one is working outside the studio system, as every writer in Britain does and must. I know, through my relationship with Amanda and Finola and other friends who work in the business, that London is awash with optioned books, unmade scripts, treatments awaiting development money that will never arrive.

So why bother? Why spend three, four, five years rewriting and rewriting a script that is unlikely ever to become a film? For me, the first reason to walk back into this world of pain, rejection and disappointment was the desire to collaborate: I spend much of my working day on my own, and I’m not naturally unsociable. Signing up for *An Education* initially gave me the chance to sit in a room with Amanda and Finola and Lynn and talk about the project as if it might actually happen one day, and later on I had similar conversations with directors and actors and the people from BBC Films. A novelist’s life is devoid of meetings, and yet people with proper jobs get to go to them all the time. I suspect that part of the appeal of film for me is not only the opportunity for collaboration it provides, but the illusion it gives of real work, with colleagues and appointments and coffee cups with saucers and biscuits that I haven’t bought myself. And there’s one more big attraction: if it does come off, then it’s proper fun, lively and glamorous and exciting in a way that poor old books can never be, however hard they try. Even before this film’s release, we have taken it to the Sundance Festival in Utah, and Berlin. And I have befriended several of the cast, who, by definition, are better-looking than the rest of us . . . What has literature got, by comparison?

I wrote the first draft of *An Education* on spec, sometime in 2004, and while doing so, I began to see some of the problems that would have to be solved if the original essay were ever to make it to the screen. There were no problems with the essay itself, of course, which did everything a piece of memoir should do; but by its very nature, memoir presents a challenge, consisting as it does of an adult mustering all the wisdom he or she can manage to look back at an earlier time in life. Almost all of us become wiser as we get older, so we can see pattern and meaning in an episode of autobiography - pattern and meaning that we would not have been able to see at the time. Memoirists know it all, but the people they are writing about know next to nothing.

We become other things, too, as well as wise: more articulate, more cynical, less naïve, more or less forgiving, depending on how things have turned out for us. The Lynn Barber who wrote the memoir - a celebrated journalist, known for her perspicacious, funny, occasionally devastating profiles of celebrities - shouldn’t be audible in the voice of the central character in our film, not least because, as Lynn says in her essay, it was the very experiences that she was describing that formed the woman we know. In other words, there was no ‘Lynn Barber’ until she had received the eponymous education. Oh, this sounds obvious to the point of banality: a sixteen-year-old girl should
sound different from her sixty-year-old self. What is less obvious, perhaps, is the way the sixty-year-old self seeps into every brush-stroke of the self-portrait in a memoir. Sometimes even the dialogue that Lynn provided for her younger version - perfectly plausible on the page - sounded too hard-bitten, when I thought about a living, breathing young actress saying the words. I had been here before, in a way, with the adaptation of Fever Pitch. In a memoir, one tries to be as smart as one can about one’s younger self - that’s sort of what the genre is, and that’s what Lynn had done. In a screenplay, however, one has to deny the subject that insight, otherwise there’s no drama, just a character understanding herself and avoiding mistakes.

The other major problem was the ending. Lynn Barber nearly threw her life away, nearly missed out on the chance to go to university, nearly didn’t sit her exams. And though lots of movie endings derive their power from close shaves, they tend to be a little more enthralling: the bullet just misses the hero, the meteor just misses our planet. It was going to be hard to make people care about whether a young girl got a place at Oxford, no matter how clever she was. Lynn became Jenny after the first draft or two; there were practical reasons for the change, but it helped me to think about the character that I was in the process of creating, rather than the character who existed already, the person who had written the piece of memoir: I could attempt to raise the stakes for Jenny, whereas I would have felt more obliged to stick to the facts if she had remained Lynn.

Some stories mean something, some don’t. It was clear to me that this one did, but I wasn’t sure what, and the things it meant to me weren’t and couldn’t be the same as the things it meant to Lynn: she had found, in this chapter of her life, all sorts of interesting clues to her future, for example, but I couldn’t worry about my character’s future. I had to worry about her present, and how that present might feel compelling to an audience. It would take me several more drafts before I got even halfway there.

**BBC Films**

The first time I had a formal conversation with outsiders in the film industry about An Education, it didn’t go well. Somebody who was in a position to fund the film - because Amanda and Finola, as independent producers, do not and cannot do that - had expressed an interest, read my first draft, invited us in to a meeting. His colleague, however, clearly wasn’t convinced that there was any potential in the film at all, and that was that. This reflected a pattern repeated many times over the next few years: there was interest in the script, followed by doubts about whether any investment could ever be recouped. Sometimes it felt as though I was in the middle of writing a little literary novel, and going around town asking for a £4 million advance for it. Our belief in the project, our conviction that it could one day become a beautiful thing, was sweet, and the producers’ passion got us through a few doors, but it didn’t mean that we weren’t going to cost people money. Another problem with the film’s commercial appeal was beginning to become apparent, too: the lead actress would have to be an unknown - no part for Kate or Cate or Angelina here - and no conventional male lead would want to play the part of the predatory, amoral, possibly lonely David, the older man who seduces the young girl. (Peter Sarsgaard, who responded and committed to the script at an early stage, is a proper actor: he didn’t seem to worry much about whether his character would damage his chances of getting the lead in a romantic comedy.)

The good people at BBC Films, however, saw something in the script - either that, or the desperation in our eyes - and funded the development of An Education, which meant paying me to write another draft, and giving Amanda and Finola some seed money. The meeting we had with David Thompson and Tracey Scoffield went the way no conversations of this kind go, in my experience: as we talked, their professional scepticism was replaced by enthusiasm and understanding. This is supposed to be the point of meetings, from the supplicants’ point of view, anyway; but in my experience (and probably in yours, too, whatever your profession), nobody who was previously doubtful is ever really open to persuasion or suggestion. The fact that the thirty minutes or so spent talking to David and Tracey wasn’t a waste of time is more remarkable than it should be.

I didn’t need money to write another draft of the script, of course; I am well paid in my other profession, and there’s very little to be earned in British film, especially at this early stage. But money has a symbolic value, too. We all needed some indication that others in the industry felt as enthusiastic about An Education as we did, otherwise we could be pretty sure that any future energy poured into the project would run right through it and down the drain. BBC Films gave us a sense of purpose. They were not in a position to fund the film, but they could help us get the project into shape so that others might want to.

**The Banana**
In the original piece, and in the film itself, our heroine’s seducer produces a banana on the night he wants to take her
virginity, apparently because he thinks it will result in ease of access. It was a strange and revealing detail that I
wanted to keep, because it indicated something of David’s gaucheess.

At a BBC script meeting, David Thompson, then head of BBC Films, started to muse aloud about this particular
scene.

‘The banana,’ he said hesitantly. ‘Could it . . . Would it work?’

He directed the question at Amanda and Finola. They shifted uncomfortably in their seats. There was a silence.

Jamie Laurenson, one of the executive producers, cleared his throat.

‘I don’t think . . . I don’t think it would be a peeled banana,’ he said.

‘Ah!’ said David. ‘Unpeeled! I see.’

We moved on, gratefully.

Directors

It helps to attach a director to the project, too, for exactly the same reasons. Beeban Kidron read whatever was the
most recent draft, liked it, met to talk about it, and then worked with me on the script for the best part of a year.
(These years slip by, so it’s a relief to remember that other things were happening while An Education wasn’t being
made. I wrote my young adult novel Slam, and my third son was born; Finola was off making the HBO drama
Tsunami. We have something to show for that time.) I loved working with Beeban, who lives round the corner from
my office and could therefore meet within five minutes of receiving an email, if she was around; it was through
talking to her, thinking about what she needed from the script as a film-maker, that I made several important
improvements to the script. Certainly Jenny’s complicity in many of David’s deceptions, her willingness to
manipulate her parents, came out of my work with Beeban; we took as our cue Lynn Barber’s admission, in the
original piece, that when she witnessed ‘David’ stealing the map, she didn’t do anything about it. The decision we
made during that time made the script more morally complicated, and the film is the richer for it.

Beeban and I had a cloud hanging over us, however. She was attached to another movie which, like ours, had
spent a long time in development. Eventually it became apparent that she couldn’t do both, that they were going to
clash, and reluctantly (I think and hope) she decided to go with the project which had predated ours. We were back
to square one.

We talked to several more directors after Beeban’s departure. Most wanted to develop the script further, which
was fair enough; the trouble is that no two directors could agree on the route we should be taking. One young
director even wondered whether the whole 1962 thing was a red herring - had we thought of setting it in the present
day? No, we hadn’t. I was particularly keen to work with a woman director - yes, I had female producers to keep a
watch on Jenny as she developed in the script, but the value of a woman director who could work with our young
actress on set would, I felt, be incalculable - and when Lone Scherfig, the Danish director of Italian for Beginners,
expressed an interest in making the film, we all wanted to listen to what she had to say. Lone turned out to be smart
about the script, endlessly enthusiastic, and with an outsider’s eye for detail; after she’d taken the job, she set about
immersing herself in the look of 1962 England, its clothes and its cars and its cakes. We were lucky to find her.

The Cast

So then we were four: Amanda, Finola, Lone and I. And, for some time, we’d been talking to casting director Lucy
Bevan. I’m quite often asked how much input I have in the various processes of film-making - ‘Do you have a say in
the casting, for example?’ And though I’d like to claim credit for just about everything, the truth is that I simply
don’t know enough about actors (or directors, or editors, or designers, or composers) to contribute to these decisions
in any meaningful way. How many young actresses did I know capable of playing the part of Jenny, for example?
None at all. What about male actors for the part of David? Well, there was Colin Firth, of course, who I knew from
Fever Pitch. And John Cusack (High Fidelity), and Hugh Grant and Nicholas Hoult from About a Boy, and the guy
with the haircut from No Country for Old Men; which I’d just seen, probably, right before I was asked for my
opinion . . . OK, not one of these was right, but they were all I could think of. Lucy Bevan’s job is to read a script
and come up with scores of imaginative suggestions for each part, and she’s brilliant at it. On the whole, it’s best
that the casting director, rather than the writer, has a say in casting.

Every now and again I’d say, ‘Oh God, you can’t ask him.’ Not because the actor in question was bad, or wrong
for the part, but because it seemed to me insulting and embarrassing to offer it to him. Lucy, Amanda and Finola
An Education

We were ambitious for An Education in ways that I could never have been, which is why we ended up with Alfred Molina, Dominic Cooper and Rosamund Pike, rather than, say, me, my friend Harry and my next-door neighbour.

We were helped immeasurably by Emma Thompson agreeing to play the headmistress at an early stage: she gives any project an aura of authority and potential excellence. It was Lucy who knew about Carey Mulligan, of course - she’s been in Bleak House and Pride and Prejudice, and those who had worked with her all talked of her phenomenal talent. But when I was told that they were thinking of casting a twenty-two-year-old as sixteen-year-old Jenny, I was a little disappointed (my exact words, Amanda tells me gleefully, were ‘Well, that’s ruined it all’); it would, I thought, be a different kind of film, with an older and as a consequence more knowing girl in the lead role. But when I saw the first shots of Carey in her school uniform, I worried that she looked too young, that we were involved in a dubious remake of Lolita. When Carey’s mother visited the set, she told us that Carey had always cursed her youthful looks, but here they worked for her: I cannot imagine any other actress who could have been so convincing as a schoolgirl and yet so dazzling after her transformation. And, of course, she can act. This was a huge part for any young actress - Jenny is in every single scene - but I don’t think one ever tires of watching her. There’s so much detail, so much intelligence in the performance that it’s impossible to get bored.

My only contribution was a small panic when I’d watched her audition on DVD - she was so clearly, uncannily right that I was concerned when I heard she hadn’t yet been offered the role. And yet this small panic, expressed after producers and director and casting agent had seen the audition, and long after she’d been cast in other high-profile productions, is easily enough for me to claim that I discovered her; so I will, for years to come.

Orlando Bloom

‘Oh God, you can’t ask him,’ I said. Well, they’d already asked him, and he’d already said he wanted to play the part of Danny. Arrangements were made for the care of his dog.

A couple of weeks before shooting, I was asked to talk to him about a couple of lines in the script. He called me at my office and told me that, much as he admired the writing, he wouldn’t be able to play the part. He hoped we’d be able to work together on something else. Confused, I called my wife and told her that, as far as I could tell, Orlando Bloom had just told me he wouldn’t, after all, be playing the part of Danny. Amanda spoke to his agent.

‘No,’ she said. ‘There has been a misunderstanding.’ (It was clear, I felt, from the tone of her voice, who had misunderstood whom.) ‘He just wanted to talk to you about the script.’

I replayed the conversation in my head. We already had a wonderful cast lined up, but Orlando Bloom’s fan club would, it was felt, help the box office of a small British film no end. How had I managed to drive him away, in under three minutes? What had I said?

‘He’s going to call you at home later,’ she said.

Don’t mess it up, she didn’t say. But that’s what I heard anyway.

He called that night, and we had exactly the same conversation. I strode around our kitchen, listening to Orlando Bloom talk about his regret and sadness, while I made throat-chopping gestures at my wife. As I wasn’t doing any of the talking, she could see and hear that I wasn’t doing any of the damage, either. I have no idea what any of it was about - why he’d turned us down, why he’d said yes in the first place, whether he’d ever intended to do it, whether it really was Orlando Bloom I’d been speaking to.

Incredibly, the brilliant Dominic Cooper stepped in almost immediately.

The Read-Through

The Read-Through
order, in real time. The film isn’t shot that way, and scenes get chopped, or never shot in the first place . . . For the writer, the read-through is the purest, most fully realised version of the script, before the actual film-making part of film-making gets in the way.

At one point in the afternoon, Matthew Beard, the brilliant young actor who plays Jenny’s first boyfriend Graham, got a laugh from the word ‘hello’; there was no such laugh in the script, and you suddenly see the point of a cast - while at the same time, of course, slightly resenting their talent.

**The Shoot**

I wasn’t there much, so don’t ask me. I had just started a book (*Juliet, Naked*, available now in all good bookshops), and wanted to make it longer; and in any case, being married to the producer of *An Education* played havoc with childcare arrangements. Some directors like to have the writer on set, but Lone didn’t seem to need me much, not least because she was so gratifyingly determined to be faithful to the script as it was written. And in any case, any questions she might have had could always be asked via Amanda, who could pass them on, quite often late at night or over breakfast. Lone was always perfectly warm and friendly if I did show up, and actors are always interesting people to waste time with. But that’s what filming is, time-wasting (even, most of the time, for a lot of the people directly involved); past experience has taught me that there is really no other way to characterise it. Our budget was tight, so everyone had to move fast, but this still meant that several hours a day, literally, were spent moving lights around, or re-arranging furniture. In the words of Homer Simpson: ‘I’ve seen plays that are more interesting. Seriously. *Plays.*’ All a writer can really do is marvel that an activity so solitary, so imprecise and so apparently whimsical, can result, however many years later, in the teeming humanity of a film set.

**The Ending**

I was struck, in Lynn’s original piece, by ‘David’ coming to find her in Oxford; it seemed like an appropriate ending for the film. And yet any event that happens after the main timeline of the script’s narrative was always going to seem more like a coda than a climax - I can see that now, but it didn’t seem so obvious during the writing nor the shooting of *An Education*. We shot the scene, and included it in all the early edits, but it never really worked: it didn’t give the actors enough to do, apart from restate their positions with as much vehemence and/or self-delusion as they could muster. The actors, meanwhile, had effectively found their own ending. The bravura performances of Carey and Alfred Molina during the emotional climax of the film, in which Jack talks to Jenny through her bedroom door, and reveals that he and Jenny’s mother had learned that the trip to Oxford had been a con trick, were enough, we felt; that, plus Jenny’s smile to herself when she receives the letter from Oxford (a moment that wasn’t scripted - it was something cooked up on the phone during the shoot). It all works, I think. But if you needed any further proof that film is a collaborative medium, here it is. That ending was created by Lone, Carey, Alfred and Barney Pilling, the editor. And me, I suppose, although not in the way I had intended to create it.

**The Music**

1962 was, I think, the last time that British youth looked across the Channel for inspiration, rather than across the Atlantic. The Beatles and the Stones existed, but hadn’t released any records when Jenny met Peter; and yes, we could have used music by Little Richard or Elvis, but pop had no kind of cachet among the young, clever middle classes, not yet. ‘I want to be French,’ Jenny says - because she loves French music, French films, French food. London was on the verge of swinging, but only a select few could have felt the first sensation of movement; London right at the beginning of the sixties still bore more than a passing resemblance to its wartime self. It is strange to think, for example, that Jenny would have experienced the privations of food rationing for the first half of her life. This was one reason why the UK needed interpreters of American music like Lennon and McCartney, people to transform it so that it made sense: American rock’n’roll, with its cars and girls imagery, was a product of American post-war affluence, but Britain had been ruined by the war. An English teenager waited in the rain for a bus. Jenny’s daddy didn’t have a T-Bird - nobody’s daddy did.

We wanted to give a sense of the uniqueness and the difference of this time aurally; that meant no electric guitars, no blue suede shoes. Jazz, chanteuses and classical music would all help place Jenny precisely in her cultural context. This didn’t, however, make the music any cheaper.
Well-known songs can command in excess of £10,000 each for publishing and recording nights, and these sorts of sums are almost never within reach of an independent production. We lost one song by Juliette Greco because of the publisher’s high demand; and we were only able to licence our final choice of Greco recordings - at a rate we could afford - after Lone and I wrote to the singer herself for permission.

Mostly this was music I knew very little about - it’s salutary to be reminded that what one thinks of as personal taste, an aesthetic that has taken years to achieve, is actually little more than the inevitable product of being born in a certain place at a certain time.

The Film

So, was it worth it? Yes, as far as I’m concerned, emphatically so. I am as proud of An Education as of anything I’ve ever written - prouder, if anything, if only because it’s so much easier to take pride in other people’s work. Whatever I think of the writing, I love the work of the actors, and Lone’s direction, and Andrew McAlpine’s beautiful design, and John de Borman’s camerawork, and if nothing else, I can take enormous pleasure in helping to create a structure in which this work was possible. ‘You probably can’t wait to start another one,’ somebody said to me after the Sundance Festival, where An Education was received well and won a couple of awards. It should work like that, of course. But the simple fact of the film’s existence, let alone any quality it might have, is miraculous, a freakish combination of the right material and the right people and an awful lot of tenacity, almost none of which was mine. And how many miracles does one have the right to expect, during the average working life?
SUNDANCE DIARY

Saturday, 17 January

The story so far: An Education, a film with a script I adapted from a piece of Lynn Barber memoir which originally appeared in Granta, has been invited to the Sundance Film Festival. An Education, directed by Lone Scherfig, stars Peter Sarsgaard and Carey Mulligan, a brilliant young actress, and was produced by Finola Dwyer and my wife, Amanda Posey. Now read on . . .

Amanda, Finola and I fly from LA to Salt Lake City. Utah is, I think, the twenty-third US state I have visited, and one I wasn’t sure I’d ever get to: for some reason, they tend not to send me there on book tours. Park City, where most of Sundance happens, is up in the mountains some forty-five minutes’ drive from Salt Lake City; there is thick snow everywhere, but the sun shines bright and warm every day of our visit. The snow thus becomes something of a mystery. In London it would have turned to an unappealing grey sludge before vanishing altogether. We dump our bags in the hotel, which also doubles as the Festival’s HQ, and head straight off out to see a movie that we’ve been invited to by its screenwriters. We have two tickets between the three of us, and the screening is completely sold out, but when we get to the cinema my wife explains plaintively that Finola has dropped hers in the snow somewhere. I wince, and then remember that it’s only through desperate lies like this that An Education got made at all. The flustered usherette waves us through, and we all find seats. The film, 500 Days of Summer, is great, fresh and funny and true in a way that romantic comedies rarely are.

Afterwards, we catch a shuttle bus from the cinema to a party for the movie. The bus is packed, and everyone is talking about film; in the gangway next to us, a young cinematographer is chatting animatedly to a Canadian documentary maker. In five years’ time the two of them will probably be onstage at the Oscar ceremony, remembering this first fortuitous meeting tearfully. We’re English, though (Finola is from New Zealand, but similar national stereotypes apply), so we don’t talk to anybody, apart from each other. That’s why we won’t be advancing our Hollywood careers this weekend.

At the party, we are all told several times that there is a tremendous buzz around our film. There are two sources for this: one was an enormously helpful and sincerely enthusiastic preview piece by the respected film critic Kenneth Turan in the LA Times, in which he described An Education as ‘probably the jewel of the festival’s dramatic films, and sure to be one of the best films of the year’; the other is that the film is premiering at the small Egyptian cinema, rather than the 1,400-seater where we saw 500 Days of Summer. Nobody can get tickets, and this only increases our desirability. I can now see that booking us in the smaller cinema was a stroke of PR genius. We’re the best film nobody can see.

We eat at a Thai restaurant around the corner from the party. We bump into my (English) film agent and two of her (English) colleagues; there are English film-makers at the table behind us. There are twelve English films from these islands on at the festival, a record.

Sunday, 18 January

I meet my friend Serge, of the rock band Marah, for a coffee. He lives in Salt Lake City with his wife, and they are expecting a baby now, this minute. I’ve got them both tickets for the screening, but they have no idea whether they’ll be able to use them. Serge tells me that twenty years ago, Park City was a proper gold-rush ghost town; now it’s a thriving, cute, middle-class ski-resort, full of smart gift shops and restaurants, like a snowy Henley-on-Thames. Those who have been before, like the actor Dominic Cooper (who, like Carey, has two films on at the festival - he is in ours and Brief Interviews with Hideous Men, an adaptation of the David Foster Wallace book), tell us that this year it’s much quieter, and therefore much nicer - the state of the economy has reduced Sundance attendances by a third, some reckon. But the streets are crowded and the movies are all selling out, so it feels like any more people than this would be unnecessary. The puffy jackets and the ski-hats flatten everybody out, turn the film stars into normal people; you can be walking behind a perfectly ordinary-looking man striding out on his own, and then watch him stop to have his photo taken by someone walking towards you, someone who has the advantage of seeing his face. (Well, that happened once. It was Robin Williams.)
Our screening is at 3 p.m. We meet up with the director Lone Scherfig, and Carey, and people from Endgame, the US financiers, in the green room, and now I’m properly nervous. Of course, just as you have to share the credit if a film turns out OK, you can deflect the blame if it goes wrong: it was miscast, badly edited, the performances were poor, it was under-funded, and so on. And actually, if it goes right, it will be Lone who attracts most of the praise. But this is a family affair: my wife and I will both be depressed if it goes down like a lead zeppelin (and doesn’t that spelling look weird?). And we were the ones who started this whole stupid, misbegotten project in the first place. I was the one who first read Lynn’s original piece, and Amanda and Finola optioned it. We are entirely the authors of our own misfortune.

We take our seats, but there’s a long delay while people mill around looking for empty places. The tickets at Sundance aren’t numbered, and some people have passes that get them in to any screening they fancy, which inevitably means that attendances can exceed capacity. Lone is standing by the side of the stage, waiting to introduce the film, so her seat is empty; three times a stressed-out official tries to fill it. I look for Serge, but can’t find him. I imagine him in a hospital in Salt Lake, urging his wife to remember her breathing. I wish we were having a baby this afternoon.

I have seen the film twice before, once in its finished version, and both times it has been difficult for me to read how it’s playing. The first two-thirds contain jokes, and on a good day people laugh at them; the last third is more serious, and intended to move an audience. In other words, the last half-hour is an agony of silence. (I often wonder whether I have always written would-be comic novels simply because it helps me ascertain whether people are awake at readings.) Three people leave in the second half of the film. Two of them come back (one of them, I realise, was Carey). I hate the third. I remember a story that a friend with a bad Sundance experience told me: he said that during a screening of one of his films a few years ago, all he could hear was the sound of slapping seats, as industry professionals decided that they’d seen enough to make their minds up. We fared better than that - you could definitely hear the soundtrack - but when the credits came up, I still wasn’t at all sure how we’d done.

Lone, Carey, Dominic and I go onstage for the Q&A - the people who’ve stayed for it seem genuinely taken by the film, which is a relief. Afterwards, I go outside to smoke round the back of the cinema, and Lone, our Danish director, introduces me to a compatriot, a woman who is a juror on the awards panel.

‘Hello,’ I say. ‘I hope you enjoyed it.’

I know she’s a juror, but it wouldn’t kill her to lie politely, I think. To tell a screenwriter that you enjoyed his film is not the same thing as telling him that you will shower him with prizes.

‘I cannot tell you that,’ she says firmly.

‘Oh.’

I try to think of another pleasantery that will not compromise her obviously formidable integrity.

‘Well... Thanks for coming.’

‘I had no choice,’ she says, but she still seems to expect a chat.

I shrug helplessly. ‘I’ve got nothing left,’ I tell her. She walks away.

I check my phone to see if Serge has left a message about Monica going into labour, and it turns out that they came to the screening but couldn’t get anywhere near it. The tickets we had worked hard to get them were useless. There’s another message from Scott, one the co-writers of 500 Days of Summer. His tickets were no good either. We only invited four friends, and none of them got inside the cinema.

One of the points - the chief point - of premiering the film at Sundance is to try and sell the film to an American distributor. An Education was made without any distribution already in place, which means that there was no guarantee that anyone would ever see it in a cinema, a fate that befalls a surprisingly large number of movies. To our delight, we had sold it for UK release shortly before the festival, but the US financiers need American distribution. It’s not our problem, but of course we all want it, too: it’s been made for people to watch, on a big screen. Everything I had read in the trade press about Sundance in the run-up to the Festival contained dire warnings about the economy’s impact on sales; nobody was expecting much to happen. Our sales agents were confident that they’d get something, but they thought it would take time, that distributors would need to see all the movies before committing themselves to one or two. We were prepared not to hear anything for a week or two. But when we get to the strange and rather cheerless village hall that is our post-film party venue, we hear that an offer has already been made. We are jubilant. It turns out that it is a very bad offer - insulting, even, if you know enough to be insulted, which I don’t. So I remain jubilant, like an idiot.

At the party I am introduced to David Carr, whose brilliant memoir Night of the Gun was one of my favourite books of last year: he wants to speak to me for his New York Times blog. It doesn’t seem right. The book is so great
that I feel I should be interviewing him.

He starts with an apology.

‘I’m sorry,’ he said. ‘I had to leave your film halfway through. I was called out to interview Robert Redford.’

The man who didn’t come back was David Carr, author of Night of the Gun! And he had a good excuse anyway! I can now account for 100 per cent of the leavers: two weak bladders (or in Carey’s case, completely understandable nerves) and a summons from a megastar.

When we get back to the hotel late that night, Amanda tells me that there is quite a lot going on: the insulting offer has been superseded by several less insulting offers. Distributors liked the film, and some of them want to buy it.

Monday, 19 January

Lone, Carey, Dominic and I have a day of publicity. It becomes apparent quite quickly that Carey’s life has changed this weekend; her other film ended up getting mixed reviews, but her performance was praised to the skies, and everybody loves her in ours, too - which is just as well, seeing as she’s in every single scene. Within twenty-four hours she’s being described as the Sundance ‘It’ Girl in Variety, and ‘the new Audrey Hepburn’ in the New York Post. It’s exciting to watch - like something out of an earlier, more glamorous age. As we walk through the Park City streets from appointment to appointment, several people want their photographs taken with her. She remains remarkably composed throughout the weekend. She’s a very bright girl, and I am certain that she will be able to handle this year with grace and charm.

Lone and I are interviewed together by a young woman from a news agency. For some reason, the news agency has positioned itself for the duration of the festival on the second floor of a guitar shop, in what looks like a broom cupboard; underneath them, rock bands are playing short, loud sets. It’s as if they have deliberately chosen the worst spot in Utah for recorded interviews. It takes us about half-an-hour to push through the music fans to the cupboard, and when we get inside it, it’s obvious that the young woman hasn’t emerged to see any films.

‘Tell us about your characters,’ is her opening shot.

‘Lone’s very calm,’ I tell her. ‘But I can be moody.’ She looks confused.

‘We’re not actors,’ I confess.

Flustered, she consults her notes.

‘It must be hard, working together when you’re married. Was there any tension?’

‘We’re not married,’ says Lone. Still. Where would we be without the press?

In the evening, Carey, Amanda, Finola and I go to see another film, and then attend yet another party. I think I have been to more parties here than in the whole of 2008. By now it’s obvious that things have gone much better for us than we dared hope: the reviews we’ve seen have been unbelievable (one of the first, on the normally snarky ‘LA gossip rag’ Defamer.com, I wouldn’t have dared write myself), the film is almost certainly going to sell for a decent amount, and to cap it all, here I am giving Uma Thur-man a light. I don’t have a lighter, so I hand her my cigarette. (I can only just reach - she’s about a metre taller than me.)

‘If you can live with the intimacy that implies,’ she says.

And then I woke up.

I am always on the verge of giving up smoking, but my habit has resulted in my meeting both Uma (as I now think of her) and Kurt Vonnegut. Where’s the incentive?

Amanda and Finola sign an agreement with Sony Picture Classics in the Virgin lounge at the San Francisco airport. When we get home we are told that An Education won the Audience Award and a prize for John de Borman’s cinematography. Nothing from the Danish juror, though.
CAST AND CREW

Cast (in order of appearance)

Jenny CAREY MULLIGAN
Miss Stubbs OLIVIA WILLIAMS
Jack ALFRED MOLINA
Marjorie CARA SEYMOUR
Graham MATTHEW BEARD
David PETER SARSGAARD
Hattie AMANDA FAIRBANK-HYNES
Tina ELLIE KENDRICK
Danny DOMINIC COOPER
Helen ROSAMUND PIKE
Headmistress EMMA THOMPSON
Sarah SALLY HAWKINS
Nightclub Singer BETH ROWLEY

BBC FILMS PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ENDGAME ENTERTAINMENT
A WILDGAZE FILMS / FINOLA DWYER PRODUCTION
A FILM BY LONE SCHERFIG

Casting Director LUCY BEVAN Line Producer CAROLINE LEVY Music Supervisor KLE SAVIDGE
Makeup & Hair Designer LIZZIE YIANNI GEORGIOU Costume Designer ODILE DICKS-MIREAUX
Music by PAUL ENGLISHBY
Editor BARNEY PILLING
Production Designer ANDREW MCALPINE Director of Photography JOHN DE BORMAN BSC Executive
Producers JAMES D. STERN, DOUGLAS E. HANSEN, WENDY JAPHET, DAVID M. THOMPSON, JAMIE LAURENSON, NICK HORNBY
Based on a Memoir by LYNN BARBER
Screenplay by NICK HORNBY
Produced by FINOLA DWYER & AMANDA POSEY Directed by LONE SCHERFIG
AN EDUCATION:

The Screenplay

1 INTERIOR: SCHOOL - DAY

Montage: A nice girls’ school in a south-west London suburb. We see girls doing what girls did in a nice girls’ school in 1961: walking with books on their heads, practising their handwriting, making cakes, playing lacrosse, dancing with each other.

2 INTERIOR: CLASS ROOM - DAY

In one of the classrooms, MISS STUBBS, an attractive, bright, animated schoolteacher, is talking to a small group of sixteen-year-old girls. Some of these girls seem to be daydreaming - looking out of the window, examining their fingernails. A couple, including a bespectacled girl (ANN), who looks five years younger than everyone else in the class, write down everything the teacher says. Only one, JENNY, beautiful and as animated as her teacher, seems to be listening in the spirit in which MISS STUBBS would like her to listen. She’s smiling, eyes shining - she loves MISS STUBBS and these lessons. MISS STUBBS asks a question and looks at the girls for a response.

MISS STUBBS
Anybody? . . .

JENNY puts up her hand - the only person in class to do so.

Anybody else? . . .

No one else reacts.

(mock-sighing)

Yes. Jenny . . .

JENNY
Isn’t it because Mr Rochester’s blind?

3 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - DAY

Title: TWICKENHAM, LONDON 1961

JENNY, her mother and her father are finishing Sunday lunch. Jenny’s father, JACK, is in his forties; MARJORIE, her mother, is slightly younger than JACK, but every bit as middle-aged. The food is grey and brown, in keeping with the colour scheme of the house. They aren’t talking - they’re listening to Mantovani on the radio. JENNY gets up from the lunch table.

JENNY
I’ve got an English essay to do by tomorrow morning.

JACK
Right. So, the only sound I want to hear coming through the ceiling this afternoon is the sound of sweat dripping onto textbooks.
JENNY
Cello?

JACK
No cello.

JENNY
I thought we agreed that cello was my interest or hobby.

JACK
Well, it already is your interest or hobby. So when they ask you at the Oxford interview ‘What is your interest or hobby?’ you can say, ‘The cello’ and you wouldn’t be lying. But you don’t have to practise a hobby. A hobby is a hobby.

JENNY
Can I stop going to the youth orchestra, then?

JACK
No, no, no. The youth orchestra’s a good thing. Shows you’re a joiner-inner.

JENNY
Ah. Yes. But. I’ve already joined in. So now I can stop.

JACK
No, no. Well, that just shows the opposite, don’t you see? That shows you’re a rebel. They don’t want that at Oxford.

JENNY
No. They don’t want people who think for themselves.

JACK
(missing the sarcasm, as is his wont)
’Course they don’t.

4 INTERIOR: SCHOOL HALL - DAY

JENNY with cello sits in the string section. Everyone is getting settled, tuning up, latecomers still arriving. Along the row from JENNY, tuning his violin, is a nice-looking boy of her age, GRAHAM, and she waves at him. Two thirteen-year-old boys sitting between them wave, too, parodically, and then blow kisses, much to GRAHAM’S embarrassment and JENNY’S fury. The silly boys dissolve in fits of giggles: this is clearly one of the funniest moments of their lives - until one of them farts noisily and, it would appear from all the frantic gesturing, pungently. The comic value of the fart tops even the comic value of the wave, and they are scarcely able to stay seated, such is their mirth.

5 EXTERIOR: SCHOOL - DAY

JENNY and GRAHAM are talking while he struggles to take his bike out of a bicycle rack, slightly unbalanced by the violin strapped to his back. GRAHAM is ner vous, chronically unconfident and shy.

GRAHAM
Should I wear, you know, Sunday best?

JENNY
You’d better, I’m afraid. Just to show my father you’re un jeune homme sérieux, not a teddy boy.

GRAHAM
Oh, God.

JENNY
(looking up at the sky)
I’m going to go. It’s going to bucket down in a minute.

GRAHAM
Oh, OK, right . . .

JENNY
I’ll see you at the weekend.

GRAHAM
Bye, then.

JENNY
Bye.

They move at the same time and bump awkwardly into each other.

JENNY/GRAHAM
Sorry.

The two silly boys from before are sitting on the school wall and start to blow more kisses.

SMALLER BOY 1
Goodbye, my love!

GRAHAM blushes as he and JENNY head off in opposite directions.

6 EXTERIOR: BUS STOP - DAY

The rain has begun. JENNY attempts to cover herself. A mother pushing a pram and holding the hand of her little boy crosses the road in front of her, and a beautiful, sleek red sports car - a Bristol - stops to let them across. DAVID, possibly in his mid-thirties, dapper, and almost but not quite handsome, is driving the car. DAVID, distracted, impatient, spots JENNY at the bus stop. In front of the car a small Wellington boot drops off the foot of the boy, further slowing down their painfully slow progress across the road. JENNY is wet. DAVID makes eye contact. JENNY smiles ruefully and enchantingly. Once the mother and boy have crossed the road, DAVID pulls the car over by the bus stop and rolls the window of the Bristol down.
DAVID
Hello.
JENNY ignores him.
Look. If you’ve any sense, you wouldn’t take a lift from a strange man.
JENNY smiles thinly.
But I’m a music lover, and I’m worried about your cello. So what I propose is, you put it in the car and walk alongside me.

JENNY
How do I know you won’t just drive off with the cello?

DAVID
He pulls out a wallet, takes out three five-pound notes, hands them to her.
JENNY laughs and waves the money away.
No? All right . . . Up to you.
DAVID gets out of the car to help Jenny with the cello.
I’m David, by the way.

JENNY
(hesitates)
Jenny.

DAVID
Very good.
He gets back in the car.

7 EXTERIOR: STREET, NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Moments later. The cello is in the backseat of the Bristol. JENNY is trotting alongside the car, while DAVID leans nonchalantly across the passenger seat to talk to her while driving.
DAVID
How did the concert go?

JENNY
It was a rehearsal. The concert’s next Thursday.

DAVID
What are you playing?

JENNY
(making a face)
Elgar.

DAVID
Ah, Elgar. I think it’s a shame he spent so much time in Worcester, don’t you? Worcester’s too near Birmingham. And you can hear that in the music. There’s a horrible Brummy accent in there, if you listen hard enough.

JENNY looks at him and smiles. She hadn’t expected him to be able to make Elgar jokes.

Anyway, Elgar and the Jews don’t mix very well.

JENNY
I’m not a Jew!

DAVID
(laughing)
No. I am. I wasn’t . . . accusing you.

JENNY
Oh. (She smiles awkwardly.) Can I sit in the car with my cello?

DAVID stops the car.

DAVID
Jump in.

8 INTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR - DAY

JENNY shuts the door and sinks approvingly into the leather seat. DAVID regards the dripping girl with amusement.

JENNY
I have never seen a car like this before. C’est très chic.

DAVID
It’s a Bristol. Not many of ’em made.

JENNY struggles for something to say.

JENNY
Oh.

DAVID
Where to, madam?
JENNY makes a face.

JENNY
I only live round the corner. (She pauses.) Worse luck.

DAVID
I’ll see what I can do.

DAVID changes gear to slow the car down.

9 EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/STREET NEAR JENNY’S HOUSE - DAY

The Bristol is crawling along the road at walking pace.

10 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR, JENNY’S HOUSE - DAY

DAVID
I suppose cellists must go to a lot of concerts.

JENNY
We don’t go to any concerts. We don’t believe in them.

DAVID
Oh, they’re real.

JENNY
So people say.

DAVID
Smoke?

DAVID reaches across JENNY while driving slowly, opens the glove compartment and takes out a packet of cigarettes.

JENNY
I’d better not. (indicating)
I live just up there.

DAVID pulls over near JENNY’S house.

DAVID
Why don’t we believe in them?

JENNY
He’d say there’s no point to them.

DAVID lights a cigarette.

DAVID
Your father, this is?

JENNY
(darkly)
Oh, yes. They’re just for fun. Apart from school concerts, of course, which are no fun at all, so we go to those. The proper ones don’t help you get on.

DAVID
Which, of course, is what is so wonderful about them. Anyway, you’ll go one day.

JENNY
(heartfelt)
I know, I will. If I get to university, I’m going to read what I want and listen to what I want. And I’m going to look at paintings and watch French films and talk to people who know lots about lots.

DAVID
Good for you.

JENNY
(laughing)
Yes.

DAVID
Which university?

JENNY
Oxford. If I’m lucky. Did you go anywhere?

DAVID
I studied at what I believe they call the University of Life. And I didn’t get a very good degree there.

JENNY smiles.

JENNY
Well . . . Thank you for driving me home.

She gets out of the car and takes the cello. DAVID stares after her for a moment, then drives off. We start to hear . . .

11 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM - DAY

. . . Juliette Greco ‘Sous le Ciel de Paris’. The sound of the French music plays as we pan across JENNY’S bedroom to find her singing along, next to her Dansette record player.

Suddenly there’s a thumping noise - someone underneath her is banging on the ceiling impatiently.

JACK (out of sight)
I don’t want to hear French singing. French singing wasn’t on the syllabus, last time I looked.

JENNY sighs and reaches for the volume control. She turns the music down so low that she has to lie down and put her head right next to the Dansette to hear it.

Close on JENNY as she silently mouths the words along with the almost inaudible track.

12 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

JENNY, her parents and GRAHAM are eating afternoon tea - neat fish-paste sandwiches, Battenberg cake, best china.

MARJORIE
Battenberg?
GRAHAM
Thank you. (As MARJORIE serves, the cake breaks up.) I actually like the crust.

JACK
So where are you applying, Graham?

JENNY looks embarrassed. She knows what’s coming.

GRAHAM
I’m not sure yet.

JACK
When will you be sure? You can’t let the grass grow under your feet, young man.

GRAHAM
I might take a year off.

JENNY winces. JACK looks at him as if he’s just said he’ll take all his clothes off.

JACK
What for?

GRAHAM
(mumbling)
I don’t know. Maybe do some travelling.

JACK
Travelling? What are you, a teddy boy? Close-up of JENNY- she knows what’s coming, and can’t bear it. Beat.

JACK
(nodding at JENNY)
You know she’s going to Oxford, don’t you? If we can get her Latin up to scratch.

JENNY sighs.

So she’s studying English at Oxford while you’ll be the wandering Jew . . .

JENNY looks at him curiously. GRAHAM steels himself to speak.

GRAHAM
Mr Mellor . . . I’m not a teddy boy. I’m an homme serieux Jeune. No.Yeah. I’m a homme jeune serieux homme.

JENNY winces again. Her father stares at GRAHAM. GRAHAM blushes.

13 EXTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - EVENING

It’s the day of the youth orchestra concert. JENNY, her mother and her father are on their way out of the door. JENNY is in her school uniform, with her hair scrubbed back in a severe ponytail and is carrying her cello. JENNY opens the front door.

MARJORIE
Ooh!

MARJORIE and JENNY have seen something on the doorstep, and JENNY stoops to pick it up - a large basket of flowers.
JENNY
They’re for me!

MARJORIE
(curious)
Who are they from?

JENNY opens the card that’s attached to the handle.

JENNY
Gosh. Him.

JACK leans over JENNY and stares at the flowers in disbelief. The bunch of flowers has created in JACK the kind of panic and fear more typically associated with a biochemical attack.

JACK
What’s this?

MARJORIE
(drily, knowing the trouble this will cause)
Jack, I’m afraid Jenny has been sent some flowers from a chap.

JACK
A chap? What kind of chap?

JENNY
(patiently)
He’s wishing me luck for tonight.

JACK
Is that all he’s wishing you? Where does he get the money from?

JENNY
He earns it, I expect.

JACK
Earns it? Why isn’t he at school?

JENNY
Can we just go? Otherwise the good-luck flowers will actually be responsible for me actually missing the concert. Which would be ironic, n’est ce pas?

JACK
I don’t like it.

MARJORIE
Objection noted. Jenny?

JENNY
Noted.

Gesturing at the flowers.

JACK
There’s got to be ten bob’s worth of luck here. That’s a bit much for a schoolgirl, isn’t it? You can’t leave it out. Even I’d burgle a house that had flowers outside. They’ll think we’re made of money.

MARJORIE puts them inside the house, shuts the door.

Thank you, Marjorie.
JENNY and two school friends, HAT TIE and TINA, are sitting at a table in a typical late-'50s coffee bar, sipping cappuccinos. JENNY is easily the most attractive of the three - and also, we will see, possibly the cleverest. HAT TIE is slower than the other two and a lot frumpier; TINA is pretty and sharp rather than clever. She is also the least middle-class of the three - she’s clearly a scholarship girl. They are all dressed in an unflattering and unambiguous school uniform - no attempts to disguise it with more fashionable accessories. JENNY is holding a copy of Camus’ The Outsider and smoking pretentiously, and seems to be practising some kind of pout. TINA starts to slurp the froth from her cappuccino with a spoon, inelegantly and noisily. JENNY tuts her disapproval. TINA sighs and puts her spoon down.

JENNY
Camus doesn’t want you to like him. Feeling is bourgeois. Being engagé is bourgeois. He kills someone and he doesn’t feel anything. His mother dies and he doesn’t feel anything.

TINA
I wouldn’t feel anything if my mother died. Does that make me an existentialist?

JENNY
No. That makes you a cow.

HATTIE
Une vache.

Laughter.

15 EXTERIOR: STREET/COFFEE BAR - DAY

JENNY, HATTIE and TINA emerge from the café, talking.

JENNY
After I’ve been to university I’m going to be French. I’m going to Paris and I’m going to smoke and listen to Jacques Brel. And I won’t speak. Ever. C’est plus chic, comme ça . . .

She breaks off. Parked outside a tobacconist’s booth on the other side of the road is the red Bristol. She looks towards the booth, and DAVID emerges with a copy of the Times and a packet of cigars.

Oh, crikey!
(to Hattie and Tina)
Wait here.

JENNY crosses the road to talk to him while the others watch.

DAVID
Hello.

JENNY
Hello. Thank you.

DAVID
How did it go?

JENNY
Oh, fine. I think. I mean, I didn’t mess my bit up. And no one got thrown out of the orchestra afterwards.
DAVID
Always the mark of a cultural triumph. Listen. I’m glad I ran into you. What are you doing on Friday?

JENNY
Going to school.

DAVID
I meant the evening.

JENNY
(embarrassed)
Oh. Yes. Of course. Nothing.

DAVID
Because I’m going to listen to some Ravel in St John’s, Smith Square. My friends Danny and Helen will be going, too, so it wouldn’t be . . . I’ll tell you what. I’ll come and pick you up, and if your mother and father disapprove, then you can have the tickets and go with one of them. How does that sound?

JENNY doesn’t know what to say. She looks at
DAVID, and his eagerness to please seems to convince her.

JENNY
Thank you. And I’d like to go with you.

DAVID
Seven? And we’ll probably go for a spot of supper afterwards.

JENNY
 flatt disbelief
Supper.

DAVID
If you want to.

JENNY
The trouble is, we’ll probably have eaten.

DAVID
Well, if you’d like supper, then, perhaps on Friday you could . . . not eat?

JENNY
(embarrassed again)
Oh. Yes. Of course.

JENNY smiles and rejoins her friends on the other side of the road. TINA and HATTIE are standing there almost with their mouths open, amazed. She doesn’t say anything and starts to walk on. TINA and HATTIE run to catch up.

TINA
(shrieking)
A spot of supper?

JENNY
You’ve heard of supper?

HATTIE
We’ve heard of it. But we’ve never eaten it.

They walk off, giggling.
You’re going to have to tell us everything. Otherwise it’s not fair . . .

16 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - EVENING

JENNY is dressed up for her evening out. She looks good, but also stiff, uncomfortable - she’s not herself in her dress, which looks too old for her. Her father is sitting at the dining table, shouting.

JACK
I won’t allow it!

JENNY
(coolly)
Fine. He’s more than happy for you to take me.

JACK
(uncertainly)
Fine. I will.

JENNY
Good.

MARJORIE comes into the room.

JACK
Where is it?

JENNY
St John’s, Smith Square.

JACK
Where’s that?

JENNY
I don’t know. I’m sure we could find out.

MARJORIE
It’s in Westminster. Just around the corner from the Abbey.

JACK looks at her as if she’d just given directions to the nearest opium den.

JACK
How d’you know that?

MARJORIE
I had a life before we were married, you know.

JENNY
He soon put a stop to that.

JACK
Well, there we are.

JENNY
Where are we?

JACK
Near Westminster Abbey. I’m not going all the way over there.

JENNY
The trouble is, that’s where St John’s, Smith Square is.

JACK
There must be something on locally. Where’s the paper?

MARJORIE
Jack, she wants to see someone who can play. She doesn’t want to see Sheila Kirkland scratching away. I’ll take her.

JACK
And how do you suppose to get there? RAF helicopter?

The doorbell rings.

JENNY
That’s him.

JACK
Oh, bloody hell.

MARJORIE
Jack!

JENNY starts towards the door, and then turns.

JENNY
Oh, and by the way . . . David’s a Jew.
A wandering Jew. So watch yourself.

She goes to the door.

JACK
(panic-stricken and shouting)
What does she mean by that? I’ve never said anything like that! It’s just an expression. I’ve got nothing against the Jews . . .
JENNY comes back in with DAVID, who seems intimidatingly exotic. He has obviously heard JACK’S last line.

    DAVID
    ( pleasantly)
    I’m glad to hear it. Hello. David.

He offers his hand.

    JACK
    I didn’t mean I’ve got nothing against you . . . Actually, I did mean that, but . . .

DAVID’S hand is still extended - in his confusion and embarrassment, JACK hasn’t yet taken it. He does so now and shakes it for way too long.

    I’m sorry. What I’m saying is that you’re not the sort of, of person I’d be against, if I were the sort of person who was against . . . people . . . Oh, dear. I’m Jack, and this is Marjorie.

    DAVID
    (deadpan)
    You didn’t tell me you had a sister, Jenny.

General confusion, until David chuckles naughtily. MARJORIE giggles, and then offers her hand.

    You’re a lucky man, Jack.

    JACK
    I suppose I am, yes.

They all sit down.

    DAVID
    (looking around approvingly)
    This is lovely.

MARJORIE smiles.

    MARJORIE
    Thank you.

    JACK
    I’m sorry, David. Would you like a drink?

    DAVID
    I’d love one, Jack, but we’re running a little late. If Jenny’s ready, perhaps we’ll shoot off.

    JENNY looks at her father and takes a calculated gamble.

    JENNY
    Actually, David, Dad has something he has to tell you.

    JACK
    No, no, nothing . . . It was more of a question, really. A point of reference. What’s the best way to get to St John’s, Smith Square from here?

    DAVID
    Oh, it’s a pretty straight run, really. Up to Hammersmith, take the A4 through Kensington and you’re there.

    JACK
    Simple as that.
DAVID
Simple as that.

JACK smiles broadly.

MARJORIE
(playfully)
Shall I book us some tickets?

JACK
 stil smiling)
No.

Beat.

Have her back by ten, David.

DAVID
Well, I was hoping she might come with me afterwards for a spot of supper with my aunt Helen.

JENNY studies him carefully. Suddenly his friends DANNY and HELEN have become ‘Aunt Helen’.

JACK
Oh, well, er . . . No, she’s usually in bed by then.

JENNY winces.

DAVID
What if I promise to have her back by eleven thirty?

JACK
Well, it’s Friday night. And you are going all the way to the West End . . .

DAVID
Thanks, Jack. I appreciate it.

They exchange warm handshakes. He turns to MARJORIE, who extends her hand. DAVID takes it, but kisses it
suavely, leaving her a little flustered.

JENNY
Bye.

JENNY and DAVID leave.

17 EXTERIOR: ST JOHN’S, SMITH SQUARE - EVENING

JENNY and DAVID run in the rain toward the beautiful hall. JENNY suddenly looks young in the dress that looks too old for her - other adults are milling around outside, and the women don’t look like girls dressed up. DAVID makes for an incredibly glamorous and attractive couple in their late twenties who are waiting outside - DANNY and HELEN. HELEN is as far from anyone’s idea of an aunt as one can get. She’s no more beautiful than JENNY, but she’s dressed both appropriately and spectacularly, in early-’60s, pre-hippy Bohemian gear. She turns heads in a way that JENNY is not yet able to. DANNY, too, is attractive, but soberly so. DAVID and JENNY are, in a way, paler, less striking versions of these two.

DAVID
Hello, hello. Are we late?

HELEN
No, I thought we were going to miss the beginning, and then it wouldn’t be worth going in, and we could all go off dancing or something.

DANNY
Helen is one of the more reluctant members of tonight’s audience.

JENNY and DAVID laugh politely.

DAVID
Jenny, these are my friends Helen and Danny.

JENNY shakes hands with the two of them. They both give her fascinated and clearly appraising looks. They have heard about her.

Shall we?

They walk into the hall.

18 INTERIOR: ST JOHN’S, SMITH SQUARE - NIGHT

It’s a beautiful hall - JENNY is dazzled by the surroundings and the company. She’s particularly bowled over by HELEN.

The girls walk over to the cloakroom where they join the queue. Almost involuntarily, JENNY touches the sleeve of HELEN’S fur jacket. She stops herself. HELEN notices.

JENNY
Sorry.

HELEN
(amused)
That’s all right. It’s nice, isn’t it?

JENNY
It’s beautiful. Where did you get it from?

HELEN
Oh, I don’t know, Chelsea somewhere.

HELEN looks at JENNY’S outfit, her frumpy ‘smart’ dress, apparently wanting to return the compliment.
(nodding at the dress)
This is . . . Well, it’s good for this sort of concert, isn’t it?

JENNY
(quietly)
Thank you.

HELEN is now at the front of the queue and hands her coat over imperiously.

HELEN
We should go shopping together one day, if you want.

She takes a ticket from the cloakroom lady.

JENNY

They stare at each other. HELEN is bewildered, JENNY embarrassed.

HELEN
Sorry?
JENNY
I just said . . . It’s too expensive for me.

HELEN
No you didn’t. You said something completely different.

JENNY
I just . . . Well, I said it in French.

HELEN
In French? Why?

JENNY feels humiliated; she is yet to realise what we can see - that HELEN is simply very dim.

JENNY
I don’t know.

JENNY looks away. HELEN stares at her. The performance bell rings, and they make their way back to the men.

To JENNY’S surprise and pleasure, HELEN links arms with her as they walk.

HELEN
Well, Chelsea’s too expensive for me, too, really. But we don’t have to worry about that. If you want something in Chelsea, get David to take you shopping.

JENNY
Why would David want to take me shopping? HELEN makes a knowing face.

19 INTERIOR: ST JOHN’S, SMITH SQUARE - NIGHT

DAVID, JENNY, DANNY and HELEN in a row in the middle of the auditorium, watching the stage and listening to the music. JENNY can’t concentrate - she’s too excited by the occasion and the company. JENNY sneaks a glance at HELEN, who stares straight ahead, unblinking and enigmatic. DAVID is smiling, as if he’s trying to communicate enjoyment; DANNY’S eyes flicker across the stage - he understands the music, its component parts, which musicians are contributing what. JENNY takes it all in.
20 EXTERIOR: ST JOHN’S, SMITH SQUARE - NIGHT

JENNY, DAVID, DANNY and HELEN emerge with the other concert-goers.

DAVID
I booked a table at Juliette’s. Will that kill the mood, do you think?

HELEN
Oh, I do hope so.

The others laugh.

I always think I’m going to my own funeral when I listen to classical music. (tentatively) That was classical, wasn’t it?

DANNY
Yes. Very classical. As classical as you can get.

HELEN looks pleased.

DAVID
Juliette’s it is, then. Heaven forbid that we should end the evening reflecting on our own mortality.

JENNY smiles in delight. She’s never met people like this.

21 INTERIOR: JULIETTE’S - NIGHT

A singer in the Julie London mould is singing while cigarette girls and glamorous waitresses patrol the tables. JENNY is sitting with the others at a table in the club, eating and talking. She looks about twelve, but she’s thrilled to be there. We know now that her life can never be the same again, and there will be no going back to fish-paste sandwiches with pimply GRAHAM.

DANNY
(mid-conversation)
. . . Miles Davis, Sartre, extraordinary woman, Greco. (aside) Just like you, Helen.

DAVID
What about Chante Françoise Sagan? Have you heard that one?

JENNY shakes her head. Her eyes are wide - she’s clearly awestruck. DAVID offers her a cigarette - a Gitane - which she takes. He lights it for her while she’s listening.

DANNY
Oh, it’s wonderful.

JENNY
I’ve only got . . . Well, I think it’s just called ‘Juliette Greco’. The one with the eyes on the sleeve. I saved up and got my French conversation teacher to bring it back after Christmas.

HELEN
You’ve got a French conversation teacher?

JENNY
Yes.

HELEN
Is that why you suddenly speak French for no reason?
DAVID
(to JENNY)
Have you never heard her sing?

JENNY shakes her head again and smiles. Where would she have seen Juliette Greco? DANNY, meanwhile, is baffled. Who hasn’t seen Juliette Greco?

She’s marvellous.

DANNY
You should see her in Paris, though, not here. David will take you.

DAVID
I’d love to. You’d fit right in.

HELEN
(sympathetically)
Better than here, really.

DAVID
It’s wonderful to find a young person who wants to know things. There’s so much I want you to see.

HELEN and DANNY exchange glances and they all sip their drinks pensively, possibly to allow time for the double-entendre to disappear into the smoke.

Are you still all right to come and have a look at that Pembroke Villas place with me on Friday, Danny?

DANNY
Oh. No. Can’t do it. There’s a Burne-Jones coming up at Christie’s on Friday. Desperate to get my hands on it.

JENNY
(laughing in disbelief)
You’re thinking of buying a Burne-Jones? A real one?

DANNY
I just have a feeling that the Pre-Raphaelites are going to take off.

JENNY
I love the Pre-Raphaelites.

DAVID
(excited by her education)
Do you?

JENNY
Yes, of course. Rossetti and Burne-Jones, anyway. Not Holman Hunt, so much. He’s so garish.

DANNY looks at her. There’s clearly more to this schoolgirl than he thought.

DAVID
Absolutely! Why don’t we all go to the auction together?

JENNY

DANNY
Next Friday morning.

JENNY
(crestfallen)
Oh. Friday.
DANNY
You’re busy?

JENNY
Well. Yes.

She doesn’t want to explain why.

DANNY
Tant pis. Quel dommage . . .

HELEN looks at him aghast. Why has he started speaking French?

DAVID
Are you sure you’re busy?

JENNY hesitates.

JENNY
No. I’m sure I could . . . re-arrange. That would be lovely.

The nightclub singer begins another song, ‘Wrapped AroundYour Little Finger’. DANNY and HELEN know this one and sing romantically along with one another. JENNY watches them entranced, then turns and smiles at DAVID.

22 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

JENNY lets herself quietly into the house. The hallway is dark, but she can hear noises from the kitchen. She pokes her head round the corner and sees her mother doing the washing-up.

JENNY
What are you doing?

MARJORIE
I can’t get this casserole dish clean. We had hot-pot tonight, and it’s all burnt round . . .

JENNY
It’s twenty-five to twelve. We finish tea at seven.

MARJORIE
I know what time it is. How was your evening?

JENNY
Best night of my life.

JENNY looks at her. She doesn’t seem to have heard what JENNY has just said.

Goodnight, Mum.

MARJORIE carries on scrubbing, turning to look at JENNY as she leaves the kitchen.

23 INTERIOR: CLASSROOM - DAY

JENNY, HATTIE and TINA are sitting on their desks, waiting for the start of a lesson. Nine or ten classmates are scattered round the room, talking distractedly, but JENNY’S group is much more animated: TINA and HATTIE are leaning forward, listening to JENNY, their eyes bright. They are clearly awestruck by JENNY’S tales of the outside world.

JENNY
I think there were two violins, one cello, two violas, a harp . . .

TINA
(to HATTIE)
I don’t want to know about Ravel. I want to know what else was on the programme.

Laughter.

JENNY
There was nothing like that. He was the perfect gentleman. He just said he wanted to take me places and show me things.

HATTIE/TINA
Things! Plural! Oh my Gawd!

More laughter. MISS STUBBS enters and picks up on the excitement of JENNY’S coterie.

MISS STUBBS
I knew that in the end Jane Eyre would work its magic upon you. I’m assuming that’s what you’re all so animated about.

The students start to sit down at desks in a more conventional arrangement.

JENNY
Of course.

TINA
Jane Eyre and Jenny’s new boyfriend.

JENNY
He’s not my new boyfriend. God.

TINA
That’s true. He’s more of a man-friend, actually.

HATTIE
He’s got a sports car, Miss Stubbs. It’s maroon.

MISS STUBBS
Ah. So we could call him a Mr Rochester figure.

TINA
I think he must be as blind as Mr Rochester.

Laughter. JENNY pulls a face at her.

MISS STUBBS
You may or may not have noticed, I’m trying to steer the subject away from Jenny’s lurid love-life and towards the matter in hand.

She starts to hand out essays.

And it’s quite clear on this evidence that most of you know far too much about the former, and next to nothing about the latter. Reluctantly I have to admit that Jenny is clearly an expert on both. Excellent as always, Jenny.

MISS STUBBS slaps an essay down on JENNY’S desk. We can see that it’s marked ‘A+’.

24 EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR - DAY

DAVID leaning against his Bristol, waiting.
25 EXTERIOR: SCHOOL - DAY

We see JENNY rush out of the school entrance, stuffing her school uniform into her bag and trying to avoid being noticed. She walks up to DAVID, parked on the opposite side of the street.

DAVID
Hello.

JENNY
(laughing)
Hello.

26 INTERIOR: CHRISTIE’S - DAY

DAVID and JENNY hurry into the hall where the auction is taking place.
At the back, DANNY is intent on a catalogue and HELEN is gazing dreamily into space, as DAVID and JENNY make their way through the auction room. The AUCTIONEER bumbles on in the background.

DANNY
You’re late.

JENNY is in awe of the surroundings. The AUCTIONEER clears his throat.

AUCTIONEER
We now turn to Lot 41, The Tree of Forgiveness, by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. This is a rare opportunity to purchase a key work of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Who will start me off at one hundred guineas?

JENNY glances at DANNY. He makes no move at this price. Neither does anyone else. He’s poised and listening hard.

Fifty guineas? . . . Twenty guineas?

A middle-aged lady, the epitome of the middle-aged contemporary Sloane - twin-set, pearls and a lot of face powder - raises her hand.

Thank you, madam. Forty?

A man raises his hand.

Thank you, sir. Do I hear sixty?
The middle-aged Sloane nods.

   Eighty guineas? Thank you. Any more, sir?
   One hundred guineas . . .

DANNY continues to sit there. JENNY is confused. The middle-aged lady bids a hundred. DAVID, standing next to DANNY, whispers something to him. DANNY nods.

   DAVID
   (whispers to JENNY)
   Your turn.

JENNY looks at him.

   JENNY
   (whispers)
   What?

AUCTIONEER
   Any further bids?

   DAVID
   (whispers)
   Your turn.

AUCTIONEER
   Any more?

   DAVID
   Quick!

JENNY raises her hand high, just as she’d do at school.

   AUCTIONEER
   One hundred and twenty guineas from the very eager new bidder.

People look round and smile when they see who has come in. JENNY blushes, but stares fixedly ahead.

   One hundred and forty, madam? Thank you.

JENNY looks at DAVID, who nods.

   JENNY
   looks at DAVID, who nods.
   One hundred and sixty guineas.

   JENNY
   gestures more economically.
   One eighty? Thank you, madam. Two hundred . . .

JENNY is almost insouciant this time.

   Two hundred and twenty? Another one, madam?

The middle-aged lady shakes her head and purses her lips. The AUCTIONEER looks round the room for any last-minute bidders, then:

   Sold for two hundred guineas. Thank you.

He brings down the gavel, and a murmur goes round the room. JENNY is excited and giggly. DAVID pats her on the back.

   Your name, please?

JENNY looks at DANNY, then back to the auctioneer.

   JENNY
   (too loudly)
   Mellor.
Murmurs from the room. The auctioneer moves on to the next Lot, while DAVID and DANNY turn to JENNY.

DANNY
Thank you. Couldn’t possibly have bought it without you.

JENNY beams. She’s thrilled.

27 EXTERIOR: LONDON STREET - DAY

The Bristol pulls into a smart Regency terrace. We hear their conversation from the car.

DANNY (out of sight)
A couple of years ago you could pick one of them up for fifty quid, you know. Nobody was interested.

JENNY (out of sight)
I would have been so interested.

28 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

A beautiful, large, airy sitting room inside the terrace apartment. The flat is unusually and tastefully decorated, opulent and indicative of Bohemian good taste. JENNY is sipping a glass of white wine and walking around the room enthralled, looking at DANNY’S collection. Suddenly JENNY sees a cello in the corner of the room - a good one.

JENNY
That’s not a Lockey-Hill!

DANNY
There aren’t many people who come in here and say that.

HELEN
Certainly not me.

JENNY
It’s beautiful. Do you play?

DANNY
I used to. I vowed to myself that one day I’d own one of these. And now that I do own one, I never touch the bugger. It’s vulgar to put it on show, really.

HELEN
Give it to Jenny.

DANNY
That would be even more vulgar.

DAVID
Play for us, Jenny.

JENNY
Gosh, no. One day. When I’m good enough.

DAVID
She’s good enough now.
JENNY
Oh, David. You’ve never seen me play.

DAVID
I shall come to hear you in Oxford, when you get there.

DANNY
We should all go and spend a weekend in Oxford. Straw boaters -

HELEN
(cutting in)
Boats!

DANNY
-punting, cream teas, antiquarian bookshops . . . Bit of business, if we can find it. What about next weekend?

DAVID / HELEN
Yes!

JENNY
I wouldn’t be allowed to do that.

*They all look at her.*

DAVID
I’ll talk to them.

JENNY hoots with derision.

JENNY
You’re going to ask my father if you can take me away for the weekend? He’d have you arrested.

DAVID
We’ll see.

JENNY
I’ll bet you you can’t.

DAVID
How much?

DANNY
(amused )
I’d be careful, if I were you, Jenny. You don’t know who you’re dealing with.

JENNY
Half-a-crown.

DAVID
You’re on.

29 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ DILAPIDATED HOUSE - DAY

JENNY and DAVID are driving along a North Kensington street.

JENNY
How do you know Danny?
DAVID is distracted. He’s driving slowly, apparently looking for an address.

DAVID
Oh, you know. We kept bumping into each other, and we became pals, and we’ve ended up doing a bit of business together, when it suits us.

JENNY
What kind of business?

DAVID
Property. A bit of art dealing. Some buying and selling. This and that . . .

He stops the car.

Right. I’ll just be two ticks.

He gets out of the car, and JENNY watches him as he crosses the road. Outside a dilapidated house covered in scaffolding stands a large West Indian family - mother, father, three or four small children and a dog. They are surrounded by what appears to be all their worldly goods.

DAVID squats down on his haunches, talks to the kids, tousles the hair of the smallest. Then he takes out a bunch of keys and ushers the family down the path. He unlocks the door and leads them inside.

In an upper window of the house, we see an old lady peering down anxiously.

30 EXTERIOR: STREET/DILAPIDATED HOUSE - DAY

DAVID emerges from the house, jangling his keys.

31 INTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR - DAY

JENNY opens the glove compartment where DAVID keeps his cigarettes, takes out the packet, removes and lights one for herself. DAVID gets in.

DAVID
Sorry about that.

JENNY
How do you know those . . . Negro people?

DAVID
They’re clients.

JENNY
Clients?

DAVID
Schwarzers have to live somewhere. It’s not as if they can rent off their own kind, is it?

He starts the car and drives off.

32 INTERIOR: CLASS ROOM/LATIN - DAY

JENNY is in her Latin class, waiting for the lesson to begin. TINA and HAT TIE aren’t with her, and she sits on her own - the atmosphere of the class is very different from MISS STUBBS’ English lessons. The girls are different, more serious, less fun, and the atmosphere is more sombre. The teacher, MRS WILSON, is older, plainer, stricter. She holds some papers.
MRS WILSON
Test results for the Virgil translation. We will start from the bottom . . . Patricia.

JENNY puffs out her cheeks. She’s not last.
Absent. Margaret. 48 per cent. Jenny . . .

JENNY winces.
52 per cent. That would just about scrape a pass in the exam proper. Not good enough for Oxford candidates.

33 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - DAY

JENNY and her mother are sitting on the sofa, staring into space, clearly upset. On the coffee table in front of them is the test, covered in red ink.
JACK enters, back from work. He’s wearing a suit and carrying a battered briefcase. He looks at them, and then notices the essay on the table.

JACK
It’s her Latin, isn’t it?

MARJORIE
Everyone’s doing their best, Jack.

JACK
But what if everyone’s best isn’t good enough? What do we do then?

JENNY
We don’t go to Oxford. Any of us.
Not even you, Dad.

JACK
Perhaps the whole thing’s a waste of time and money anyway.

MARJORIE
You don’t mean that.

JACK
Well, what’s she going to do with an English degree? If she’s going to spend three years playing that bloody cello and talking in French to a bunch of beatniks, then I’m just throwing good money after bad. I suppose she might meet a nice lawyer. But she could do that at a dinner dance tomorrow.

JENNY
Oh, because that’s the point of an Oxford education, isn’t it, Dad? It’s the expensive alternative to a dinner dance.

MARJORIE
What about private tuition?

JACK
Is anyone listening to me? How much is that going to cost me?

MARJORIE
Five shillings an hour. Maybe a little more for A-level.

JACK
Five bob! We spend five bob here and five bob there, next thing you know it’s our savings down the drain.

MARJORIE
And what else are we spending five bob on? What else are we spending sixpence on?

JACK
Oh, nothing. *(He gestures round the room.*) All of this is free. That vase was free.

MARJORIE
It was, actually. It was a present from Auntie Vi.

JACK
That chair was free. The sofa. We don’t have to pay for anything. That’s the beauty of life, Jenny. Everything’s free. Grows on trees. Wonderful, isn’t it? *(He warms to his theme and grows progressively more berserk.*) We’ve got a lovely Oxford tree in the garden, lucky for you, so that’s Oxford taken care of. And a whole orchard of school trees, so that’s all free. I’m sure there are some private tuition trees out there. I’ll go and have a look.

*He stands up.*

MARJORIE
Jack . . .

JACK
No, no, won’t take me a minute. I think I saw some out the front, right next to the pocket money tree. I’ll just nip out and check, see that they’re doing all right. Don’t want anyone climbing over the wall and scrumping, do we? And you never know. Maybe there’ll be a man with deep pockets growing out there. Because God knows we need to find you one.

*He leaves the room, apparently to look in the front garden for the mythical trees.*

34 EXTERIOR: STREET/COFFEE BAR - DAY

JENNY, HATTIE and TINA are walking back from school.

TINA
You can always go to secretarial college with Hattie.

JENNY
*(sarcastic)*
Oh, thanks.

HATTIE
Charming!

JENNY
Oh, God, no.

HATTIE and TINA follow JENNY’S eyes, and they see GRAHAM coming towards them pushing his bike, red-faced, trousers tucked into socks.

GRAHAM
Hello.

JENNY
Hello, Graham.

GRAHAM
I haven’t seen you in ages . . . It went a bit wrong, didn’t it? The tea-party, I mean. Was it because of the year off thing?
JENNY
No. I just have so much work to do if I’m going to get the grades I need.

TINA
Yes. She doesn’t have time for boys.

HATTIE and TINA try to suppress giggles. GRAHAM turns an even brighter shade of red. HATTIE and TINA enter the coffee bar. JENNY feels sorry for him, is on the verge of inviting him to join them . . . And changes her mind.

JENNY
(quickly)
Bye, Graham.

She follows the girls inside.

GRAHAM
Bye.

35 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM/ UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

JENNY is deep in her schoolwork. She has a Latin vocabulary propped open on the window ledge. She looks at it, walks away, mutters to herself, attempting to memorise. Her concentration is broken by a sudden gale of laughter from downstairs.

36 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HALLWAY - NIGHT

She stands outside the living room for a moment, listening. She hears a man’s voice that does not belong to her father, and then more laughter from her father and mother.

37 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

DAVID is in the middle of demonstrating his ability to mimic all of the Goons. JACK and MARJORIE are laughing so hard that they can hardly see - they certainly miss JENNY’S entrance.

JENNY
(curious)
Hello.
JACK
Jenny, David does the most fantastic Bluebottle.

JENNY
(incredulous)
You came to see my parents?

JACK
Why is that so hard to imagine?

JENNY spies an open bottle of wine on the coffee table.

JENNY
Why are you drinking? It’s not Christmas!
JACK
Ah, well, there’s a lot you don’t know about us, young lady. We had a life before you came along.

JENNY
Yes, that’s true. I’m only going on what I’ve seen for the last sixteen years.

MARJORIE
I’m trying to think what you missed. Nothing much comes to mind.

JENNY
Anyway. I’ve got a huge pile of Latin translation to do.

JACK
You didn’t tell us David went to Oxford.

JENNY looks at DAVID, who stares back at her straight-faced.

JENNY
No. I didn’t.

DAVID
For all the good it did me.

MARJORIE
Isn’t that funny?

JENNY
Extraordinary.

DAVID
I was just telling Jack that I’m going back next weekend. I go and visit my old English professor every now and again.

JACK
That’s what you need, Jenny. Someone on the inside track. It’s not always what you know, is it, David?

DAVID
Too true. Have you ever come across Clive Lewis?

JENNY
Dad has never come across anyone.

DAVID
He wrote a children’s book called The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe that did very well, I believe.

MARJORIE
C. S. Lewis? That’s the Clive you’re talking about?

DAVID
Well, to us he was the old codger who taught Medieval literature. But I came to know him very well. We just . . . got along, you know?

Everyone murmurs their comprehension.

MARJORIE
Jenny used to devour those books.

JENNY
I’d love to meet him.

There is a pause. JACK and MARJORIE look at the floor. Somehow, DAVID has manoeuvred a situation where,
effectively, he is the one being asked.

DAVID
I’m sorry. Am I being slow on the uptake? Would Jenny like to come at the weekend?

JACK
Oh, not this weekend. Sometime, perhaps, yes.

JENNY
How often do you see him?

DAVID
Not very often. Every couple of years. Maybe next time?

JENNY
(disappointed)
Oh.

JACK
(dubiously)
Well, I suppose . . . Would she have to stay the night?

DAVID
I wouldn’t recommend driving home after one of those Oxford dinners.

JACK chuckles knowingly.
Clive could get her a room at the college. It’s easy enough.

MARJORIE
Seems like too good an opportunity to pass up.
JACK
It wouldn’t be a bother to you, would it, David?

JACK, MARJORIE and JENNY all beam.

38 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

DAVID and DANNY are waiting for the girls to get ready. DANNY is sitting sprawled in an armchair; DAVID is pacing up and down.

DAVID
Come on!

39 INTERIOR: HELEN’S BEDROOM - DAY

An ornate four-poster bed occupies most of the space in the room. HELEN is doing something to JENNY, but we can’t see what.

HELEN
Just putting a few things in a bag. Don’t worry!

40 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY
DAVID and DANNY still waiting.

DAVID
Come on!

41 INTERIOR: HELEN’S BEDROOM - DAY

HELEN
We’re nearly ready! Be there in two ticks.

42 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

DAVID
How can they only be nearly ready?

DANNY
I wouldn’t be surprised if three of them came out of there. That’s the only explanation. They’re making themselves a friend. LADIES! Come on, let’s go.

43 INTERIOR: HELEN’S BEDROOM - DAY

JENNY is wearing a floaty print dress that she has borrowed from HELEN, and there are lots of other beautiful clothes strewn about the place. JENNY is sitting at the dressing table, being made up by HELEN. JENNY looks three or four years older, more sophisticated . . . more like HELEN. She can’t believe it. She looks in the mirror, and for a moment, she forgets to breathe.

HELEN
There. You should keep that one if you want it. One can only wear so many every day.

JENNY emerges from her reverie.

JENNY
(thrilled)
Thank you.

HELEN
What about tonight? Have you got a pretty enough nightie?

JENNY
Won’t I be sharing a room with you?

HELEN looks momentarily mystified.

HELEN
Oh, you haven’t slept with him yet?

JENNY
No.

HELEN
Good for you.

JENNY
Really? Do you think so?
HELEN
You’re only sixteen. And you don’t want to get preggers, do you?

JENNY
No. I wouldn’t let that happen. I want to wait until I’m seventeen. On my seventeenth birthday, hopefully.

HELEN
With David?

JENNY pauses.

JENNY
Well . . . Golly. It will be with David, won’t it?

HELEN
If that’s what you want. Anyway. I’ll find you a nightie.

JENNY stares at herself in the mirror again.

44 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

The girls emerge. Both men are entranced by JENNY’S transformation. DAVID can’t take his eyes off her.

DANNY
(thoughtful)
Shall, we, ah . . . Make a move?

He gets to his feet.

45 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Bristol on the country road to Oxford. We can hear voices in the car singing a reprise of ‘Wrapped around Your Little Finger’.

46 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR , OXFORD - DAY

The Bristol drives through Oxford. JENNY catches a quick glimpse of a dreaming spire.

JENNY
Can we get out and have a look around?

DAVID
Maybe later. There are a couple of things we have to do.

DANNY
Imagine spending three years here.

HELEN
I know.

She shudders, as if someone has walked over her grave.

47 INTERIOR: PUB - EVENING
HELEN and DANNY, JENNY and DAVID are standing in a quiet, old-fashioned pub. A group of students enter, all carrying musical instruments. They stand at the bar, waiting to be served. JENNY stares at them with longing - she wants to be one of them. HELEN, meanwhile, stares at them as if they were aliens.

HELEN
(sotto voce)
Why are university girls so strange-looking?

HELEN’S right. The girls in the group are all bespectacled and frumpy. The others laugh.

They can’t all have started off that way, can they? I mean most girls aren’t ugly, but most girl students seem to be. So there must be something about these places that makes you fat, or spotty, or short-sighted.

DAVID
Well, if you look at it like that . . . I mean, that’s proper scientific analysis. And you can’t argue with science.

HELEN looks pleased.

HELEN
I still don’t quite understand what you want to do when you get here.

JENNY
I want to read English.

HELEN
Books?

JENNY
Sorry?

HELEN
You want to read English books?

JENNY
Reading English is just another way of saying . . .

DANNY
Don’t worry, Jenny. You’re wasting your breath.

DAVID
Tomorrow we’ll get more of a feel for the place.

DANNY
Absolutely. This would be a good place to do a little business.

DAVID catches JENNY’S eye. This isn’t what he meant by ‘getting a feel for the place’.

All those little old ladies wandering around . . . This place is rife with stats.

JENNY
Please explain what stats are. You’re always going on about them.

DAVID
It isn’t very interesting.

JENNY
But you two are interested.

DAVID
That’s because we’re not very interesting, either.

HELEN
Oh, no, they’re not really.

DANNY
It’s true. That’s why we need you here. To save us from ourselves.

DAVID
(*laying it on with a trowel*)
Yes, to put some intelligence and culture into our brutal lives.

DANNY
Sing to us, sing to us.

JENNY
Please don’t make me sing to you.

DAVID
Please don’t make us talk about work.

JENNY and HELEN laugh.

CUT TO:

Later. They’re standing by the pub fireplace. DAVID has a pen in his hand, and he’s holding a book - The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

DAVID
Now. Is he Clive, do you think? Or C. S.?

HELEN
I’m confused now. I thought you’d made him up?

DANNY
(*attempting, briefly, to be patient*)
No, we . . . Never mind.

DAVID walks over to the nearest table and writes in the book.

DAVID
There.

He stands up, hands the book to Jenny.

JENNY
(*reads*)
‘To dear Jenny.
With the pleasure of meeting you. Come and see me again soon. Clive.’

HELEN
Dirty old man.

48 INTERIOR: B & B BEDROOM - NIGHT

A rather grotty and certainly unromantic B & B bedroom - so unromantic, in fact, that it even has the same musty curtains from JENNY’S sitting room. DAVID is in bed, his hands behind his head, waiting for JENNY. As far as we can tell - he’s wrapped up in the sheets quite tightly - he’s in his underwear. The bedroom is lit unromantically by the 40-watt overhead light. JENNY comes into the room wearing one of HELEN’S nightdresses, a glamorous satiny item quite inappropriate for the occasion or the surroundings. She looks nervous.
JENNY
We’ve got these exact same curtains at home.

DAVID
Let’s not talk about curtains. You look beautiful.

JENNY was about to get into bed, but his tone makes her pause at the edge of the bed.

JENNY
There’s something you should know, David. I’m a virgin. And I want to stay that way until I’m seventeen.

DAVID
I think that’s good. I think that’s right. We can still be romantic, though, can’t we?

JENNY
Well, yes. Of course we can. As long as it’s not actually . . .

DAVID
Minnie . . .

JENNY
Is that me?

DAVID
Yes. You’re my Minnie Mouse, and I’m your bubbalub.

JENNY
OK. If that’s what you want to do . . .

DAVID
Minnie.

JENNY
Yes, David?

DAVID
(prompting)
Bubbalub . . .

JENNY
Bubbalub?

DAVID
May I have a look? Just a peek?

His eyes stray to her breasts. JENNY stares at him.

JENNY
You just want to see them?

JENNY, awkwardly, looks down at her nightgown, then one by one pulls the straps down. It fall from her shoulders.

DAVID stands up and lovingly lifts the straps back up.

DAVID
Thank you.

He smiles at her. Relieved, she smiles back. He puts his arms around her and they embrace.

49 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ COTTAGE - DAY
The Bristol, containing DAVID and JENNY in the front seats and DANNY and HELEN in the back, passing through a pretty Oxfordshire village.

DAVID
I think there’s a house for sale around here.
DANNY
Really?

The Bristol pulls up outside a country cottage with a ‘FOR SALE’ sign outside.

50 INTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR - DAY

DAVID
Might be worth a look.

51 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ COTTAGE - DAY

DAVID, DANNY and JENNY get out of the car, and JENNY heads after DAVID and DANNY towards the house. HELEN stays in the car.

HELEN
(calling from the window)
Jenny!

JENNY turns around.

JENNY
Aren’t you coming?

HELEN
We don’t go in.

JENNY
What are you talking about?

DANNY
Why don’t you get a nice cup of tea somewhere? Helen will look after you.

JENNY is mystified.

JENNY
I don’t need looking after, thank you very much. David!

DAVID ignores her and walks off arm in arm with DANNY.

DANNY
I’m not going to tell you a second time. Run along.

52 EXTERIOR: COTTAGE - DAY

HELEN and JENNY walking around the village waiting for the boys. HELEN is blithe, chatty; JENNY has a face like thunder.

HELEN
They won’t be long. Either way.
JENNY
‘Either way’?

HELEN
Sometimes they find something, and sometimes they don’t. And when they do find something, we often have to leave quite quickly. They can be a bit naughty sometimes.

JENNY stares at HELEN. She’s beginning to realise who she is dealing with.

Anyway, it’s nice to have company.
I’m usually outside on my own.

53 EXTERIOR: CAR/COTTAGE - DAY

DAVID and DANNY hurry out of the cottage, something under DANNY’S coat. DAVID rushes towards the car, past JENNY playing catch with a small child.

DAVID
Come on. (to Helen, lounging by the car) Helen!

DAVID and HELEN get in, DANNY opens the door while JENNY hesitates.

DANNY
(calling)
You can stand there if you like.
But I wouldn’t recommend it.

JENNY puts a spurt on, catches up and jumps in.

54 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ NEW COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

An old picture of some kind is wedged between HELEN and JENNY on the backseat. JENNY, furious, is staring out of the window. HELEN attempts to peer around the partition, but settles for a wave.

HELEN
Coo-ee, Jenny.
JENNY doesn't respond. They continue driving in silence.

55 EXTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

The Bristol pulls up outside DANNY’S Regency terrace. They all get out of the car and pull out their weekend cases.

DANNY
Who’s coming up for a drink?

HELEN
Me!

JENNY
(still furious)
No, you go. I’ll make my own way home.

JENNY starts up the road. DAVID walks briskly after her.

DAVID
Jenny!

He catches up with her in the street.

It’s an old map. A Speed. The poor dear didn’t even know what it was. What a waste! It shouldn’t spend its life on a wall in wherever the hell we were. It should be with us. We know how to look after it properly. We liberated it.

JENNY snorts derisively.

JENNY
Liberated! That’s one word for it.

DAVID
(quickly and passionately)
Don’t be bourgeois, Jenny. You’re better than that. You drink everything I put in front of you down in one, then you slam your glass down on the bar and ask for more. It’s wonderful. We’re not clever like you, so we have to be clever in other ways, because if we weren’t, there would be no fun. We have to be clever with maps, and . . . and . . . You want to know what stats are? Stats are old ladies who are scared of coloured people. So we move the coloureds in and the old ladies move out and I buy their flats cheap. That’s what I do. So now you know.

JENNY nods reluctantly.

And if you don’t like it, I’ll understand, and you can go back to Twickenham and listen to the Home Service and do your Latin homework. But these weekends, and the restaurants and the concerts . . . They don’t grow on trees.

JENNY looks at him, startled. Trees again?

This is who we are, Jenny.

He turns to face her and holds out his hand. On JENNY: is she in or out? JENNY takes his hand. DAVID pulls her towards him, holds her around the waist and begins to dance with her. From the apartment balcony, HELEN and DANNY watch, laughing.

56 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

DAVID pulls up in the Bristol outside JENNY’S house, and they sit in the dark for a little while.
DAVID
I suppose you have homework to do.

JENNY
You have no idea how boring everything was before I met you. Action is character, our English teacher says. I think it means that if we never did anything, we wouldn’t be anybody. And I never did anything before I met you. And sometimes I think no one’s ever done anything in this stupid country, apart from you.

They look at each other. DAVID smiles. He is clearly smitten. He moves towards her. He wants to kiss her, but he doesn’t want to frighten her - in the end, JENNY makes it easy for him and moves towards him. They kiss gently and tenderly. JENNY breaks it off, gets out of the car, DAVID hands her her suitcase and she goes inside while he watches.

57 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

JACK, at the kitchen table, is examining JENNY’S copy of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

JACK
Look at this, Marjorie.

He hands it to her. She examines it reverently.

MARJORIE
‘Clive’ . . . Lucky girl.

JACK
Never a dull moment with David, eh? Bit different from that young man you brought home for tea, isn’t he?

MARJORIE
David’s a lot older than Graham.

JACK
Graham could live to be two hundred years old and still wouldn’t be swanning around with famous authors. Hasn’t got it in him.

JENNY
Graham might become a famous author, for all you know.

JACK
Becoming one isn’t the same as knowing one

... That shows you’re well connected. A very impressive young man, your David.

MARJORIE.
I must admit life’s a little brighter with him around.

JENNY smiles to herself.

58 EXTERIOR: PARK - DAY

A group of girls cross-country running. JENNY and her friends are at the back of the group, and the GYM TEACHER, jogging backwards, gesticulates at them to get a move on.

GYM TEACHER
Come on, girls. Get a move on.

They put on enough of a spurt to satisfy her, and then immediately stop when the teacher is no longer watching. Seeing a large tree, they loiter. From somewhere under a skirt, JENNY produces a packet of exotic-looking
cigarettes and offers them around.

HAT TIE
What the hell are those?

JENNY
Russian Sobranies.

HATTIE and TINA make snooty faces. JENNY takes a cigarette. The others follow suit. JENNY lights them, and they all grimace. The contrast between the sophisticated cigarettes, and the unsophisticated smokers and context is pronounced.

HAT TIE
Where did they come from?

TINA
She probably bought them from the Savoy, or Claridge’s, or the opera, or some fancy nightclub. Who knows, with Jenny.

JENNY
Paris. You can’t buy them here.

TINA
(suddenly looking at her suspiciously)
You never bought them yourself?

JENNY
(mimicking TINA’S grammar cruelly)
No. I never.

TINA
Shut up, you stuck-up cow.

JENNY
But I’ll bring you some back, if you want.

TINA
You’re joking.

JENNY
Non.

HAT TIE
He’s taking you to Paris?

JENNY
(smiling smugly)
Oui.

HAT TIE
This term?

JENNY
Peut-être.

TINA
Isn’t it your birthday next Thursday?
JENNY
Might be.

*The two friends shriek and jump up and down.*

HATTIE
Oh, my God! Your birthday!

TINA
I would not like to be you. All those suppers you’ve had off him. Ouch.

JENNY
You’ve such a Victorian attitude to sex, you two.

TINA
Oh, sorry, Dr Kinsey. We’re not all as experienced as you. I mean, you’ve done it . . . *(She counts on her fingers)* I make it never! Can that be right?

HATTIE
But your parents wouldn’t let you swan off like that, would they?

JENNY
We haven’t told them yet. But David will come up with some story. He usually does.

TINA
Yeah, I’ve noticed that.

Laughter. **JENNY glances off into the distance and spots the GYM TEACHER heading back in their direction. They stand up, grind their Sobranies into the mud and set off at a brisk trot. The Sobranie stubs come to rest near a pile of dog poo.**

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**59 INTERIOR: CLASSROOM - DAY**

HATTIE, TINA and JENNY are sitting on their desks, waiting for a lesson to start. HATTIE shows JENNY a piece of paper which apparently contains some kind of shopping list.

TINA
*(pointing at Hattie, then at herself)*
Chanel perfume, Chanel perfume. *(She repeats the gesture.)* Chanel lipstick, Chanel lipstick.

HATTIE
Those funny cigarettes you were smoking. Sobranies. Ten packets each.

A very SMALL GIRL, twelve or thirteen, comes in to the classroom and approaches JENNY. She’s clutching a ten-shilling note.

SMALL GIRL
How much is the Chanel perfume?

TINA, HATTIE and JENNY stare at her, nonplussed.

Well, are you the girl going to Paris or are you not, because . . .

MISS STUBBS comes into the classroom carrying books and essays. She sees the SMALL GIRL and shoos her out while the other girls follow. As JENNY comes past, she whispers discreetly into her ear.

MISS STUBBS
Jenny, the headmistress wants a word with you. The legend of Mr Rochester may have travelled further than you intended.
JENNY looks at her, startled and a little sick.

60 INTERIOR: HEADMISTRESS’S OFFICE/ CORRIDOR - DAY

The office is dark, wood-panelled, foreboding, apparently designed to put all visitors ill-at-ease. The HEADMISTRESS would probably choose to be wood-panelled if she could. She’s tweedy, bespectacled, severe. There is a knock at the door. She doesn’t look up from her paperwork.

HEADMISTRESS
Come.

JENNY enters, looking young and frightened.

Ah. Miss Mellor.

JENNY tries to look at her with all the courage she can muster.

We’re all very excited about your forthcoming trip to Paris. Our excitement, indeed, knows no bounds. Some of us can talk of little else.

JENNY looks at her feet.

An older man, I understand? A word of warning, Miss Mellor. There may well have been the odd sixth-form girl who has lost an important part of herself - perhaps the best part - while under our supervision. These things happen, regretfully. If, however, we are made aware of this loss, then of course the young lady in question would have to continue her studies elsewhere, if, that is, she still has any use for A-levels. Do I make myself clear?

JENNY
Can I go now?

HEADMISTRESS
If you would.

JENNY turns round and walks out without saying another word.

61 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - EVENING

GRAHAM, JENNY and her father are at the dinner table, sitting in the dark.

JACK
(shouting to MARJORIE)
What are you doing in there?

JENNY
Well, I imagine she’s lighting the candles on my cake.

JACK
You’re seventeen, not two hundred and fifty.

There is an awkward pause.

GRAHAM
Thanks for inviting me.

JACK
It was Marjorie’s idea, not mine. Not even Jenny’s, come to that.

GRAHAM looks stung.
JENNY
(appalled)
Dad!

MARJORIE kicks the door open with her foot and comes in holding a birthday cake with seventeen candles burning on it. She puts it down carefully on the table.

JACK
Blow them out, before the house burns down.

JENNY closes her eyes, blows out her candles, just as -

GRAHAM
Make a . . . oh, OK. Don’t worry . . .

Everyone applauds as JACK gets up to turn the lights on. We can see that by JENNY’S side is an unopened, carefully wrapped present - clearly a book.

MARJORIE
Who’d like a piece?

In truth, the cake is a rather sorry and unappetising specimen. There isn’t enough icing on the top. She cuts a couple of slices which immediately collapse.

GRAHAM
It doesn’t matter . . .

JACK
Come on. Presents.

Without any real enthusiasm, JENNY opens the present.

It’s a new Latin dictionary.

JENNY
Oh. Thank you. I needed a new one.

GRAHAM
(crestfallen)
Oh dear. Snap!

GRAHAM hands over a wrapped present exactly the same size and shape as the dictionary. The doorbell rings. JACK goes to answer it, and immediately the house is energised: it’s DAVID.

From the hallway:

JACK (out of sight)
Good grief. You should see this!

DAVID enters. You can hardly see him for all the parcels and flowers he’s carrying.

DAVID
It’s a special day.

JENNY, delighted, moves the dictionaries to make way for DAVID’S presents.

JACK
Makes your dictionary look a bit feeble, eh, Graham?

GRAHAM
Gosh!

GRAHAM looks pained. MARJORIE notices.

MARJORIE
And ours, too, come to that.
DAVID
And these are for you.

DAVID gives MARJORIE a basket of beautiful roses.

MARJORIE
Oh, David.

DAVID
(to GRAHAM)
Hello, young man.

JACK
David, would you like a drink?

DAVID
I’d love one.

GRAHAM
I’d best be going. I’ve got a stack of homework to do.

GRAHAM says his goodbyes. DAVID sits down in his place.

MARJORIE
Wonderful to see you, Graham.

GRAHAM
(to JENNY)
Goodbye, Jenny.

JENNY
(brightly, without looking up)
Bye, Graham.

GRAHAM makes to leave with a last attempt to catch JENNY’S eye, without success. MARJORIE shows him to the door.

JACK
A little something warming?

DAVID
You know me so well.

Hearty laughter from the two men.

JENNY
Can I open anything yet?

MARJORIE comes back into the room.

MARJORIE
Wait for me.

DAVID
Before you open that lot, I’ve got a surprise. Next weekend, we’re all going to Café de Flore to celebrate Jenny’s birthday.

JACK

(flatterly)
Lovely.
DAVID
Café de Flore is in the Boulevard St Germain. In Paris.

JENNY giggles her delight. JACK’S smile is a little more forced.

JACK
How d’you mean, Paris?

JENNY
You know the one, Dad.

JACK
(panic rising)
But . . . We don’t have any French money. And besides, it’s too . . . I don’t think it would agree with me.

JENNY
Dad!

JACK
The French don’t like us, Jenny, you know that. John Sutton from work, he went there last year. They were very rude to him.

JENNY understands DAVID’S ploy perfectly, and the role she must play. Her eyes fill with tears. JACK notices.

I don’t want to spoil anyone’s fun, but . . . It’s just not for me, Europe. You’ll have to go another time.

JENNY
(bitterly)
You’ve just said you don’t like Europe. What’s going to change? It’ll have to be Europe, won’t it? Because it certainly won’t be you.

MARJORIE
I’ll take her.

JACK
(genuinely indignant)
To the Continent? And leave me here on my own?

JENNY
Oh, for God’s sake.

JENNY gets up furiously and takes her presents to the other side of the sitting room.

JACK looks cornered. He needs to find a way out.

DAVID

He looks at JACK for a response.

JACK
(discomfited)
Of course I do.

DAVID
Sorry. Yes. It goes without saying. She’s your daughter. Jenny likes to joke about how you’re a stick-in-the-mud and all the rest of it, but I know that’s not who you are. Otherwise she wouldn’t be who she is.

JACK
(uncertainly)
No.
DAVID
But I can also see that I’ve acted out of turn, and I’m sorry.

JACK looks at JENNY. Even he can see that he can’t do this to her.

JACK
What about your Aunt Helen?

DAVID catches JENNY’S eye and she smiles. JACK smiles, too; he’s off the hook.

62 EXTERIOR: TWICKENHAM, STREET - NIGHT

The Bristol is speeding down the road.

JENNY
An hour late.

DAVID
We’ll make it, I promise.

63 INTERIOR: HEATHROW HOTEL BEDROOM - EVENING

DAVID and JENNY enter the room.

DAVID
OK, there’s a flight at eight in the morning.

JENNY
Good.

JENNY stares at the featureless sitting room.

There’s no bed.

DAVID
I pushed the boat out and got us a suite.

JENNY
A suite!

DAVID
If work stops us getting to Paris until tomorrow, then work can buy us a nice hotel room. Anyway, it’s a special occasion, isn’t it?

JENNY
I’d have thought that tonight of all nights we only need a bed.

Close on DAVID’S reaction - she hasn’t forgotten that tonight’s the night.

64 INTERIOR: HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

DAVID and JENNY in bed, in a dimly lit bedroom. They are kissing - DAVID more passionately than JENNY. He is making little whimpers of excitement, and JENNY is clearly trying hard to hide her nerves. We’re acutely aware of her age, and of her virginity. Suddenly DAVID breaks off.
DAVID
Hold on one second. I’ve got something.

Rather absurdly, he disappears into the other room to look for something. He comes back with a banana. JENNY stares at him.

I thought . . . I thought we might want to practice with this.

He brandishes the banana. JENNY shrieks with horror.

JENNY
With a banana?

DAVID
I thought we might get the messy bit over with first.

JENNY
David! I don’t want to lose my virginity to a piece of fruit.

DAVID
I’m sorry.

DAVID attempts to kiss her again. JENNY wriggles clear.

JENNY
I think the moment might have gone.
I think we should wait until Paris.

DAVID
I’m an idiot and I’m sorry.

JENNY doesn’t deny it.

JENNY
David . . . if tomorrow night does happen, it will only ever happen once.

DAVID
(alarmed)
Why will it only ever happen once?

JENNY
Because the first time can only ever happen once.

DAVID
(relieved)
Oh.

JENNY
So, no baby-talk. No Minnie. Just treat me like a grown-up.

DAVID looks chastened.

(brightly)
I know. Let’s go and sit in our sitting room.

DAVID
(cheered up)
All right! We’ll order up some champagne.

JENNY looks at him with what might, from one angle, be construed as fondness.
MONTAGE SEQUENCE - PARIS

Juliette Greco on the soundtrack. DAVID and JENNY take the trip down the Seine past the Eiffel Tower. They peruse the bookstalls along the river bank.

JENNY poses with the Seine and Notre Dame behind her. DAVID takes her picture. She looks fantastic in the clothes DAVID has given her for her birthday.

A handsome Parisian on a moped rides by and eyes up JENNY, to DAVID’s annoyance.

DAVID and JENNY dance by the banks of the river. They end up at sunset with wine and a picnic looking out across the Seine.
65 EXTERIOR: PARIS HOTEL - DAWN

JENNY is smoking on the second-floor balcony of a simple, pretty Parisian hotel, wearing a glamorous-looking slip and looking across at the Sacre Coeur.

66 INTERIOR: HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

The bedroom is simple and romantic - everything the airport hotel wasn’t. DAVID is lying amid rumpled sheets, smoking what is clearly a post-coital cigarette, and watching JENNY from behind.

DAVID
Do you still feel like a schoolgirl?

JENNY turns and steps in, smiles, shakes her head.

It wasn’t too uncomfortable?

JENNY
Not after the . . . first bit. It’s funny, though, isn’t it? All that poetry, and all those songs, about something that lasts no time at all?

DAVID looks at her. She isn’t being cruel. She just doesn’t know any different. She returns to the view. He smokes ruminatively.

67 INTERIOR: CLASSROOM - DAY

JENNY’S English class, including HATTIE and TINA, file past MISS STUBBS at the end of a lesson.

MISS STUBBS
And your exercise books on my desk in a pile, please.

MISS STUBBS clearly has something to say to JENNY, but is hesitant; JENNY wants to talk to her, too, but is equally shy. Eventually JENNY produces a bottle of perfume from her school bag.

JENNY
I bought this for you.

*She holds it out. MISS STUBBS doesn’t take it.*

MISS STUBBS
That’s very kind of you, but I can’t accept it.

JENNY
Why not?

MISS STUBBS
(gently)
It’s because of people like you that I plough through illiterate essays by Sandra Lovell about her pony. But I know where this came from, and if I took it, I’d feel I would be betraying both of us.

JENNY *puts the perfume back in her bag and starts to leave, but stops when MISS STUBBS speaks again.*

You can do anything you want. You know that. You’re clever and you’re pretty . . . Is your boyfriend interested in clever Jenny?

JENNY
(frustrated)
I’m not quite sure what you’re trying to tell me.

MISS STUBBS
I’m telling you to go to Oxford. No matter what. Because if you don’t, you’ll break my heart.

JENNY *looks at her.*

JENNY
(quietly)
Where did you go?

MISS STUBBS
Cambridge.

JENNY
Well, you’re clever. And you’re pretty. So presumably, Clever Miss Stubbs won. And here you are with your pony essays. I don’t know. These last few months, I’ve eaten in wonderful restaurants and been to jazz clubs and watched wonderful films, heard beautiful music . . .

MISS STUBBS
Jenny, are you taking precautions?

JENNY *stares at her angrily.*

JENNY
It’s nothing to do with that.

MISS STUBBS
Isn’t it?

JENNY
Maybe all our lives are going to end up with pony essays. Or housework. And yes, maybe we will go to Oxford. But if we’re all going to die the moment we graduate, isn’t it what we do before that counts?

MISS STUBBS
I’m sorry you think I’m dead.

JENNY
I don’t think you’re dead, I just don’t . . .
MISS STUBBS
(coldly)
I think you’d better get to your next class.

JENNY walks out of the room angrily.

68 EXTERIOR: DOG TRACKS - NIGHT

A dog-race is coming to its conclusion. DANNY, HELEN, DAVID and JENNY are watching in the crowd - the girls jump up and down. JENNY’S dog has won.

HELEN
Well done, Jenny!

JENNY
(beaming)
I’ve never won anything before. Not even at the Women’s Institute raffle.

HELEN
I always bet on the sweetest-looking dog. And he always comes last.

JENNY
Can we do it again? I’m feeling lucky.

DANNY
Come on, let’s go, I don’t want to miss him. Pick up your ten bob on the way out.

JENNY
(thrilled)
I won ten shillings?

They start to walk through the crowd.

Who is this man, anyway?

DAVID
Peter Rachman?

DANNY
A complete bastard.

The men laugh.

JENNY
Why do we have to see him here?

DANNY
Because he’s not the sort of chap with an office.

69 INTERIOR: DOG-TRACK CLUB - NIGHT

They enter a crowded, smoky bar with a dance floor and a small jukebox.

The bar is full of sharply dressed and dubious-looking men, and young, glamorous, dubious-looking women.

JENNY and HELEN look out of place - HELEN too ethereal, JENNY too innocent.

They find a table looking over the race track. A waiter comes over to their table.
DANNY
A bottle of your finest champagne, please. *(nodding to the bar)* There he is.

We see a nasty-looking man in his late thirties/early forties. He is wearing a white sharkskin suit and smoking a big cigar. *He’s talking to an even nastier-looking man in a dark suit*.

DAVID
Come on, Jenny. Tell them your good news. Don’t be bashful.

HELEN
No. Be Sneezy.

Everyone ignores her.

DAVID
Jenny got two As and a Bin her mock A-levels.

DANNY *(mock dismissive)*
Like everyone else in this sophisticated establishment.

Laughter.

Seriously, congratulations.

DAVID
The B was in Latin.

*Rachman is now standing on his own. DANNY nudges DAVID, and they go over to talk to him just as the champagne arrives. The waiter pops the bottle of champagne and pours two glasses. The girls smile and clink glasses.*

HELEN
Don’t worry too much.

JENNY
About what?

HELEN
Someone told me that in fifty years no one will speak Latin, probably. Not even Latin people. So you don’t worry about your B.

JENNY stares at her, trying to think of a response.

70 INTERIOR: CLUB - NIGHT

DANNY and DAVID are moving through the bar, having just finished talking to Rachman. DANNY puffs out his cheeks and shakes his head.

DAVID
He’s even more of a bastard than I thought.

DANNY
You wouldn’t want him to marry your sister. You wouldn’t want to talk to him in a club, come to that.

They both chuckle. *There is a silence for a moment.*

(gently)
You do know what you’re doing, old chap? With Jenny?
DAVID
This is the one, Danny.

They look over at JENNY and HELEN laughing.
You can see she’s different.

DANNY
I just don’t want to see her hurt.

They make their way back to their table.

71 INTERIOR: CLUB - NIGHT

While DAVID and HELEN watch, DANNY and JENNY dance. DANNY’S a good dancer; JENNY is nervous at first, but becomes more comfortable and more expressive, with DANNY’S help.

JENNY
(knowing that she should make conversation, as all the couples around her are doing)
Have you . . . Have you bought any more paintings recently?

DANNY
Have I? Oh yes, I picked up a little Piper. A good ’un, I think.

JENNY
I’m still trying to work out what makes good things good. It’s hard, isn’t it?

DANNY
The thing is, Jenny, you know, without necessarily being able to explain why. You’ve got taste. That’s not even half the battle. That’s the whole war.

JENNY smiles at him with gratitude. There is a sudden closeness between them. DAVID is watching them carefully. They return to their table.

DAVID
Jenny, we should go. It’s late.

JENNY
(disappointed)
Really?

DANNY
Alas. One day, school will be over forever, and we can talk about art all night.

DAVID
(to Danny)
You’re all right in a taxi, aren’t you?

He guides JENNY firmly out of the club.

72 EXTERIOR: CLUB - NIGHT

JENNY is about to open the passenger door of the Bristol, but DAVID stops her.

DAVID
Wait here.

*He runs to the back of the car, opens the boot and starts rummaging through it. It seems to be full of everything but the thing he's looking for.*

**JENNY**

What are you looking for? . . . What are you doing?

*He comes back empty-handed.*

**DAVID**

Will you marry me?

**JENNY**

*stares at him for a moment, then laughs.*

**JENNY**

What were you looking for?

**DAVID**

I thought I had a ring. It wouldn’t have been the right one. But it would have done for tonight.

**JENNY**

(eyes twinkling with amusement)

Oh, David.

**DAVID**

I’m serious.

**JENNY**

You’re very sweet.

**DAVID**

What do you think?

**JENNY**

(helplessly)

Take me home.

She gets into the car. We see the desperation in **DAVID’S** face, lit by the headlights of a passing taxi, as he slams the door on **JENNY** after she’s got in.

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**73 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM**

**JENNY** is at her desk in her bedroom, trying to work, but she can’t concentrate. Her hair is tied back in a ponytail. She gets up, pulls back the curtains, looks out of the window, smoking. We see what she sees: a sleepy suburban street at night; a couple walking away in the distance. She looks back at her desk. It looks even more boring than the street.

**74 INTERIOR: JENNY’S KITCHEN - EVENING**

**JENNY’S** mother and father are doing the washing-up and listening to the radio. They have their backs to the door. **JENNY** enters the room quietly and watches them for a moment.

**MAN ON THE RADIO**

They do need some looking after, but nothing that will require too much work. Just leave them in your potting
shed for a couple of weeks, and they’ll look after themselves.

JACK
Fine, the potting shed. Who does he think I am? Prince Rainier of Monaco?

JENNY
What if I got married instead of going to college?

JACK *and* MARJORIE *turn around.*

JACK
Married?

JENNY
Married.

JACK
It would depend who it was, surely?

JENNY
Would it? That’s interesting.

JACK
Well, of course it would. I wouldn’t want you married off just for the sake of it.

JENNY
Thanks.

MARJORIE
Has somebody asked you?

JENNY
Yes.

JACK
Who?

MARJORIE *rolls her eyes.*

David?

JENNY
No. A man I just met walking his dog.

MARJORIE
What did you tell him?

JENNY
Nothing yet.

MARJORIE
Do you have a choice? Or is it too late?

*She looks at her daughter knowingly. JACK merely looks confused.*

JACK
Of course she’s got a choice! An interesting one, too, eh?

JENNY
This is where you’re supposed to say, ‘But what about Oxford?’
JACK
Look at it another way, you wouldn’t really need to go now, would you?

JENNY
(quietly, turning the words over in her mouth)
I wouldn’t need to go. Would you like to expand on that?

JACK
You’d be looked after.

JENNY laughs bitterly. She can’t believe it.

JENNY
All that Latin! All those essays! What was the point? Why didn’t you just send me out prowling round nightclubs? It would have been less trouble. And I might have had more fun.

JACK
I don’t know about nightclubs. I know about education. Anyway, looks like it might have all turned out for the best.

JENNY
How?

JACK
He wouldn’t want you if you were thick, now would he?

JENNY stares at them.

75 INTERIOR: CLASSROOM - DAY

><p>English. MISS STUBBS is standing at the front of the class, holding a copy of King Lear, and listening as various members of the class massacre the text. Some are messing about by overacting; others read to the best of their ability, tonelessly and with no understanding of the words. Lear himself is being read by ANN, the bespectacled girl from the first scene. She’s no King Lear, and she’s one of the bad readers.</p>

GIRL
May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse? Sings whoop jug I love thee.

MISS STUBBS
When it says ‘sings’, it means you should sing the line.

GIRL looks at her blankly.

Never mind. Right. (gesturing to ANN) Lear . . .

ANN
Does any here know me. This is not Lear. Does Lear walk thus?

TINA
(sotto voce, to JENNY, in the seat next to her)
No.

JENNY starts to giggle.

ANN
Speak thus?

TINA shakes her head.
Where are his eyes?

TINA doesn’t need to say anything - she just looks at JENNY, makes a pair of spectacles with her fingers and squints.

JENNY’S giggling fit increases in intensity.

Ha! Waking? Who is it that can tell me who I am?

JENNY’S arm shoots up, as if to answer the question.

JENNY

Ooh. Miss. Me. I can.

MISS STUBBS looks at JENNY more in sorrow than in anger - JENNY’S behaviour now is something new in their relationship. JENNY stares back at her defiantly. Suddenly MISS STUBBS notices something glinting on her hand: an engagement ring.

MISS STUBBS

Oh, Jenny.

She is, as she promised she would be, heartbroken.

JENNY

What?

MISS STUBBS

Take it off.

HATTIE, who is sitting behind JENNY, notices the ring, too, for the first time.

HATTIE

Oh my God. Is that what I think it is? I’M GOING TO BE A BRIDESMAID!

There is an excited susurration in the classroom.

MISS STUBBS

You know the school rule on jewellery.

JENNY

Half the girls in this room are wearing jewellery.

MISS STUBBS

Yes. But none of it is going to ruin their lives.

JENNY

(coolly)

We have a difference of opinion about that.

MISS STUBBS stares at her. JENNY can only just steel herself to stare back.

76 INTERIOR: HEADMISTRESS’S OFFICE - DAY

HEADMISTRESS

How far advanced are these ridiculous plans?

Have you set a date? Have you decided on a church?

JENNY

We won’t be getting married in a church. David’s Jewish.

The HEADMISTRESS stares at her, dumbfounded.

HEADMISTRESS
Jewish? He’s a Jew? You’re aware, I take it, that the Jews killed our Lord?

JENNY
*(beginning to feel less intimidated by her surroundings)*
And you’re aware, I suppose, that our Lord was Jewish?

The HEADMISTRESS snorts scornfully.

HEADMISTRESS
I suppose he told you that. We’re all very sorry about what happened during the war. But that’s absolutely no excuse for that sort of malicious and untruthful propaganda.

JENNY smiles to herself.

Anyway, I can see you’re far more in need of responsible advice than I realised.

The HEADMISTRESS moves closer.

Nobody does anything worth doing without a degree.
JENNY
Nobody does anything worth doing with a degree. No woman, anyway.

HEADMISTRESS
So what do I do isn’t worth doing? Or what Miss Stubbs does, or Mrs Wilson, or any of us here?

JENNY doesn’t say anything.*The headmistress takes her silence as an admission of defeat.*

Because none of us would be here without our degrees, you realise that, don’t you? And yes, of course studying is hard, and boring, and . . .

JENNY can’t contain herself any longer.

JENNY
Boring!

HEADMISTRESS
I’m sorry?

JENNY
Studying is hard and boring. Teaching is hard and boring. So what you’re telling me is to be bored, and then bored, and then finally bored again, but this time for the rest of my life. This whole stupid country is bored. There’s no life in it, or colour, or fun. It’s probably just as well that the Russians are going to drop a nuclear bomb on us any day now. So my choice is to do something hard and boring, or to marry my . . . my Jew and go to Paris and Rome and listen to jazz and read and eat good food in nice restaurants and have fun. It’s not enough to educate us any more, Miss Walters. You’ve got to tell us why you’re doing it.

She has never had to answer this questions before.

HEADMISTRESS
It doesn’t have to be teaching, you know. There’s the Civil Service.

JENNY
I don’t wish to be impertinent, Miss Walters. But it is an argument worth rehearsing. You never know. Someone else might want to know the point of it all, one day.

JENNY leaves the office.

77 EXTERIOR: SCHOOL - DAY

JENNY is half-walking, half-running, towards the school gates. She’s scared, of course, but exhilarated, too. All that pressure, and all those years of education, suddenly over, unexpectedly, and certainly unceremoniously. She
looks neither left nor right, but other girls, younger girls, watch her through the windows as she leaves. JENNY doesn’t even look round when she goes through the school gates.

78 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - NIGHT

DANNY, HELEN, DAVID and JENNY are in DANNY’S flat. DANNY has a large stuffed armadillo on his lap, which he is using as a ventriloquist’s dummy. The armadillo is at his ear, and DANNY makes a squeaking sound. The others are laughing.

DANNY
(to JENNY)

DAVID
(suddenly, out of nowhere)
We’re engaged.

The atmosphere changes. JENNY looks embarrassed. HELEN and DANNY look at her, and she holds up her ring.

HELEN
That’s . . . Gosh. That’s fantastic news.

JENNY
Thank you.

DANNY isn’t so pleased.

DANNY
(cool)
Congratulations.

There is much clinking of glasses.

HELEN
I knew you’d see sense about university.
JENNY smiles.
You’ll stay pretty now.

Laughter from DAVID and JENNY.
JENNY
Can I still read?

HELEN
(firmly)
Yes, but it doesn’t have to be books, now does it? Magazines will do just as well. And you learn more from them anyway.

Laughter.
DAVID
Oh, Helen.

HELEN
You won’t be laughing, David, when she goes all speccy and spotty.

HELEN is bemused by their mirth. DANNY watches DAVID thoughtfully.

79 EXTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - NIGHT

DAVID and JENNY come out of DANNY’S flat and approach DAVID’S car.

JENNY
Danny didn’t seem very pleased about our engagement.

DAVID
I noticed that, too. I thought he might be a bit jealous.

JENNY
(trying not to be pleased)
Jealous?

DAVID
We’re going to keep him away from you.

They both smile. DAVID opens the door for JENNY and she gets into the car.

80 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - EVENING

JENNY and MARJORIE are in the hall, all dressed up and waiting for DAVID to come and pick them up. JENNY looks great, as usual; her mother looks smart, if somewhat old-fashioned.

JACK comes in from the sitting room, pulling at his tie, looking apprehensive. He appears to be wearing Brylcreem. He looks like a little boy who has been made to put on his Sunday best.

JACK
I mean, what is one supposed to order as a starter, anyway? And how will I know what is a starter and what isn’t?

JENNY
We’ve been through this, Dad. It’ll be quite clearly marked on the menu.

The doorbell rings. JACK stiffens. JENNY goes to answer the door.
JACK
Can’t the three of you go on your own and leave me here? I’d be perfectly happy with a tin of salmon.

DAVID enters the room. He is relaxed, happy. He has worn a tie, possibly because he knew that JACK would wear a tie. JACK and MARJORIE exchange greetings.

DAVID
Ready? I think you’ll like this place, Jack. Their wine list is as good as anything I’ve seen in London.

JACK
Yes, someone told me that.

JENNY
David, probably. Who else would it have been?

81 EXTERIOR: STREET/JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

JACK and MARJORIE approach DAVID’S Bristol.

DAVID
(holding the door for MARJORIE)
Madame.

JACK
I was hoping you’d take us in this.

DAVID
Oh, you won’t want to drive in anything else after tonight. Mind you, it drinks petrol. I’m afraid we’ll have to stop on the way in to town.

He opens the back door for his future father-in-law.

82 EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR - NIGHT

The Bristol drives away down JENNY’S street.

JACK
I feel like Eamonn Andrews.

DAVID
Is that a good thing?

MARJORIE
Eamonn Andrews is the poshest person that Jack can imagine being.

Everyone laughs.

83 INTERIOR/ EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ STREET - NIGHT

The Bristol cruises down a London road.

84 EXTERIOR: PETROL STATION - NIGHT

The Bristol pulls into the garage. DAVID gets out of the car as the attendant comes over.
ATTENDANT
How are you tonight, sir?

DAVID
Very well. Might as well fill her up.

DAVID leans in through the open car window.
I’m just going to make a quick call. I’ll be two ticks.

85 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ PETROL STATION - NIGHT

JENNY watches him walk towards the garage office.

JACK
Do you think I should offer to help pay for the petrol? Would he be insulted, do you think?

JENNY watches DAVID as he picks up the phone. He notices her and waves from behind the glass.
I know he said tonight was his treat, but does that apply to the petrol, do you think?

MARJORIE
I’m sure it does, Jack.

They lapse into silence. JACK starts to fiddle with the features in the car - a piece of the window handle snaps off in JACK’S hand, much to his alarm.

JACK
Oh, no.

MARJORIE
Jack!

JACK
It just came off.

JENNY opens the glove compartment, looking for the cigarettes that DAVID always keeps there. She finds the cigarettes and closes the glove compartment. But she has seen something in there, so she opens it again. She takes out some letters and papers and starts to look through them.

86 EXTERIOR: PETROL STATION - NIGHT

DAVID has finished his phone call and is walking towards the car.

DAVID
(to attendant)
Put it on my bill.

AT TENDANT
Thank you, sir.

He sees JENNY looking through letters and papers, sees the open glove compartment and leans in through the passenger window.

DAVID
(desperately)
Jenny!

It’s too late. We see JENNY’S stricken face, gleaming in someone else’s headlights.
87 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR: DAVID’S CAR/ PETROL STATION - NIGHT

DAVID gets into the car.

DAVID
Jenny, I . . .

JENNY
(as cold as ice)
Take us home.

JACK
What’s wrong?

DAVID
I’m afraid there’s been . . . Jenny’s had a bit of a shock.

JACK
What’s happened?

JENNY
It’s just another one of David’s little muddles and misunderstandings.

DAVID
I . . .

JENNY
I don’t want to hear another word from anybody. Take us home. NOW.

MARJORIE and JACK look at each other. DAVID swings the car round and they drive home in silence.

88 EXTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Bristol draws up outside JENNY’S house. Everyone gets out of the car. JACK starts to walk towards the house and then stops.

JACK
(desperately)
You can take care of this, can’t you, David?

JENNY
Go inside, Dad.

JENNY and DAVID watch JACK and MARJORIE go into the house. The moment the door is closed, JENNY turns towards DAVID. She’s holding a bunch of letters that she took out of the glove compartment. She starts to go through them, one by one.

Mr and Mrs David Goldman, Mr and Mrs David Goldman, Mr and Mrs David Goldman . . . (thrusting an envelope angrily at him) You’re MARRIED!

DAVID
Legally, yes, but . . .

JENNY is distraught and tearful.

JENNY
When were you going to tell me?
DAVID
Soon. It just never seemed like the right time. You seemed so happy, and I was happy . . .

JENNY
You were living with your wife all this time . . . round the corner. Byron Avenue! It’s no wonder we kept bumping into each other, then, is it? What number?

DAVID
Thirty-four.

JENNY picks out one of the envelopes and looks at it, as if to check he’s not lying again.
Don’t be like this. Come on.

JENNY
I have nothing. I didn’t take my exams. I - I left school. Where’s it all gone, now?

DAVID
I can get a divorce. Everything will turn out for the best.

We can see JACK and MARJORIE peering through the lace curtains anxiously.

JENNY
Go and tell them. Go and tell them, then go and tell your wife.

DAVID stands on the pavement, looking towards the house.

DAVID
They won’t listen now. I’ll come round tomorrow. When everyone’s feeling a bit calmer.

JENNY
(suddenly desperate)
Please don’t make me . . . Please don’t make me tell them on my own. You owe me that much. You owe them that much.

DAVID
(sadly)
I owe them much more than that.

He opens the boot. It’s full of cases of whisky. JENNY doesn’t even bother asking what they are doing there.

DAVID takes one of the bottles.

JENNY
Two minutes. And then I’ll come out and drag you in.

JENNY marches into the house and slams the door. The camera stays on DAVID. He gets back into the car, opens the bottle and takes a slug of whisky. Then his shoulders begin to shake, and he starts to cry.
89 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

JENNY stands in the hall, waiting, tears in her eyes. She walks into the sitting room. Her parents are sitting on the sofa looking at her anxiously. They haven’t put the lights on yet.

JACK
What’s going on?

JENNY
He’s helping himself to some Dutch courage before facing you. Stolen Dutch courage, from the look of it. He has something to tell you.

She sits down, pale and young-looking again, opposite her parents. Suddenly they are all three lit up by headlights. Shot from their point-of-view of the Bristol roaring off up the street.

JACK
He just drove off.

We close slowly in on JENNY’S face. But of course he’d drive off!

(pathetic)
Can you tell us? Jenny, please?

JENNY can’t deal with her own pain, let alone his. He already looks like a broken, foolish old man. They should hug. But they don’t.

90 INTERIOR: DANNY’S FLAT - DAY

JENNY is sitting on the sofa in DANNY’S flat. DANNY is in his dressing gown; there are newspapers strewn around. HELEN is sitting next to her, holding her hand.

HELEN
I wouldn’t worry about it too much. When I found out that . . .

DANNY
Not now, Helen.

HELEN shrugs and goes to get a drink.
I tried to tell him. I’m not speaking to him now, if that’s any consolation.

JENNY
(bitterly)
It’s a funny world you people live in. You both watched me . . . carrying on with a married man, but you didn’t think it was worth saying anything about it.

DANNY
Yes, well, if you want that conversation . . . You watched David and I help ourselves to a map, and you didn’t say much, either.

He holds JENNY’S gaze, HELEN joins him. JENNY looks down.

91 EXTERIOR: STREET/DAVID’S HOUSE - DAY

A suburban street, full of semi-detached houses, not far from JENNY’S house. JENNY walks down the road tentatively - she’s looking at the numbers on the houses. She looks young again - tired, no make-up, no elegant clothes. She can’t bring herself to wear anything that DAVID bought her.

She hesitates at the gate to the house, steels herself to walk up the path. But just at that moment the door opens; there’s a homely-looking woman, early thirties (SARAH). She is holding the hand of a four-year-old. JENNY is stunned. The woman holds the boy’s hand as they walk away from the house, then she stops in her tracks.

SARAH
Oh. Hello.

JENNY
(almost inaudible)
Hello. Sorry. I think I must have the wrong number.

The woman stares at her.

I was looking for my . . . cello lesson. I wanted . . .

She dries up and looks at the woman helplessly.

SARAH
Oh, no. Don’t tell me. Good God. You’re a child.

JENNY blushes. Beat.

You didn’t know about any of this. Presumably?

JENNY shakes her head.

No. They never do. You’re not in the family way, are you? Because that’s happened before.

JENNY shakes her head.

Thank God for that.

JENNY turns and walks away from the house.

(calling after her)
No, no. You stay here.

But JENNY heads off down the street.

92 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE - DAY

MARJORIE and JACK are in the kitchen. MARJORIE is smoking. Normal life has clearly been suspended during
this crisis. JENNY comes in the front door and they both rush to the hallway.

MARJORIE
Did you see her?
JENNY
Yes, I saw her. I didn’t talk to her. There wasn’t any need.

JACK
We have to have this out. Well, if you won’t do it, I will. I’m still your father.

He grabs his coat.

JENNY
You’re my father again, are you? What were you when you encouraged me to throw my life away? Silly schoolgirls are always getting seduced by glamorous older men. But what about you two?

JENNY, exasperated, disappears upstairs, leaving JACK and MARJORIE not knowing what to say. JACK storms into the sitting room and slams the door, leaving MARJORIE alone in the hall.

93 INTERIOR: UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

JACK stands outside JENNY’S bedroom door with a cup of tea. He knocks tentatively.

94 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Close-up of the floaty print dress that HELEN gave her. The dress is suddenly jerked out of shot, and we pull back to reveal a weeping JENNY stuffing it into an already full box of things she is throwing out. The contents represent her now-despised, DAVID-created adult self. We can see Juliette Greco albums, photos, expensive-looking jewellery boxes. She continues to stuff things into the box. There’s a knock on the door.

JACK (out of sight)
Jenny.

She continues to put her DAVID-life away into bags. She ignores him.

95 INTERIOR: UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

JACK is almost in tears.

JACK
Jenny. I’m sorry.

No answer.

I know I’ve made a mess of everything.

He waits for an answer - nothing.

All my life I’ve been scared, and I didn’t want you to be scared. That’s why I wanted you to go to Oxford. And then along came David, and he knew famous writers, he knew how to get to classical music concerts. But he wasn’t who he said he was. He wasn’t who you said he was, either.

96 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
JENNY is sitting on the bed, a tear rolls down her cheek and she closes her eyes.

97 INTERIOR: UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

JACK
The other day, your mother and I were listening to a programme about C. S. Lewis on the radio, and they said he’d moved to Cambridge in 1954. I said, Well, they’ve got that wrong. Our Jenny wouldn’t have his name in her book . . . if he’d moved to Cambridge.

98 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JENNY’S face crumples. She knows he’s right.

99 INTERIOR: UPPER HALLWAY - NIGHT

JACK
There’s a cup of tea and some biscuits out here.
He puts them down on the floor outside her door.

100 INTERIOR: JENNY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JENNY puts her head in her hands and sobs.

101 INTERIOR: HEADMISTRESS’S OFFICE - DAY

JENNY has dressed soberly in clothes not unlike a school uniform for this meeting: it completes a circle. She’s back where she started from, or would like to be, anyway. If she seems older than she did when we first met her, it’s because things have happened to her, and they’ve left a mark on her face. She’s worried and tired. The HEADMISTRESS, meanwhile, is delighted by her return - but only because of the opportunities for smugness and schadenfreude it provides.

HEADMISTRESS
How do you think we can help?
JENNY
I want to repeat my last year at school and take my exams.

HEADMISTRESS
I got the impression the last time we spoke that you didn’t see the point of school. Or of me, or of any of us here.

JENNY
I know. I was stupid . . . The life I want - there’s no shortcut. I know now that I need to go to university.

HEADMISTRESS
It gives me absolutely no pleasure whatsoever to see our schoolgirls throw their lives away. Although, of course, you are not one of our schoolgirls any more. Through your own volition.
JENNY
I suppose you think I’m a ruined woman.

HEADMISTRESS
You’re not a woman.

Beat. The HEADMISTRESS is pleased with her line.
No, I’m afraid I think that the offer of a place at this school would be wasted on you.

102 INTERIOR: BUS - DUSK

JENNY looking dejected. The bell goes and she suddenly gets up and heads off the bus.

103 INTERIOR: MISS STUBBS’S FLAT - DUSK.

It’s a proper Bohemian flat. There are books and papers and pictures covering every available surface. JENNY looks around. Finally, for the first time, we see her in somewhere she can feel at home.

MISS STUBBS
Come in. I didn’t expect to see you again.

JENNY looks around.

JENNY
This is lovely.

MISS STUBBS makes a face.

All your books and pictures and . . .

MISS STUBBS
Paperbacks and postcards, Jenny.

JENNY
(apparently understanding something)
That’s all you need, isn’t it? Just somewhere to . . . I’m sorry I said those silly things. I didn’t understand.

MISS STUBBS
Let’s forget about it.

A postcard catches JENNY’S eye.

JENNY
A Burne-Jones.

MISS STUBBS
Do you like him?

JENNY pauses.

JENNY
I do. Still.

MISS STUBBS
Still? Gosh, you sound very old and wise.

JENNY
(heartfelt)
I feel old. But not very wise. Miss Stubbs . . . I need your help.

MISS STUBBS
I was so hoping that’s what you were going to say.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

JENNY works hard, studying for her exams, the seasons pass . . .

104 INTERIOR: JENNY’S HOUSE, KITCHEN/HALLWAY - DAY

JENNY, JACK and MARJORIE are finishing breakfast. JACK gets up and puts his raincoat on.

   JACK
   Thank you, Marjorie.
   He goes into the hallway. JENNY, still in her pyjamas, hardly looks up from her Penguin book. JACK returns to the kitchen with a letter.
   It’s from Oxford.
   JENNY takes the letter, opens it, doesn’t give anything away, puts the letter on the table, gets up and goes into the hallway, closing the door to the kitchen. JACK nervously hands the letter to MARJORIE.

   MARJORIE
   (reading)
   ‘It is my pleasure to inform you that your application to read English at Oxford has been accepted . . .’
   In the hallway, we track in on JENNY, sitting at the bottom of the stairs, as she smiles.

105 EXTERIOR: STREET IN OXFORD - DAY

Eighteen months later. Swelling orchestral music. Wide shot of Oxford spires. Close on JENNY cycling, absorbed, happy. The camera pulls back to show her cycling through the streets of Oxford - a male student is cycling with her.

   JENNY (voice over)
   So, I went to read English books, and did my best to avoid the speccy, spotty fate that Helen had predicted for me. I probably looked as wide-eyed, fresh and artless as any other student . . . But I wasn’t. One of the boys I went out with, and they really were boys, once asked me to go to Paris with him. And I told him I’d love to, I was dying to see Paris . . . as if I’d never been.

   JENNY and her friend cycle away into the distance.
APPENDIX: ALTERNATIVE ENDING

105 EXTERIOR: STREET IN OXFORD - DAY

Eighteen months later. Swelling orchestral music. Close on JENNY cycling, absorbed, happy, the cello strapped to her precariously. The camera pulls back to show her cycling through the streets of Oxford - a male student is cycling with her. She’s done it. We follow her for a little while. She dismounts outside a church and leans the bike against a wall. Just as she’s about to leave it, she sees something and freezes. We follow her gaze: it’s the red Bristol, parked a little way down the road just in front of her. She scans the street to see if she can find DAVID. She can - he’s coming round a corner, a little further down the street, unwrapping a packet of cigarettes. JENNY moves into his eye-line. He sees her, stops, then walks towards her.

JENNY
Good God.

DAVID
Hello, Jenny.

JENNY
What are you doing here?

DAVID
I came to see you.

JENNY
I think in this case, better never than late.

DAVID
Please don’t be unkind. And you probably know that I’ve . . . Been away, so I couldn’t come before.

JENNY
Yes. My mother sent me the cutting from the local paper. ‘He asked for one hundred and ninety other offences to be taken into consideration. ’ A hundred and ninety! You must have ‘liberated’ most of the antiques in the Home Counties.

DAVID
I wanted to make a clean start. For a new life together. I came to tell you that I’m going to ask my wife for a divorce.

JENNY
laughs mirthlessly and disbelievingly.

JENNY
Don’t you understand what you did?

DAVID
Jenny . . . I can see my behaviour must have been . . . confusing. But we’ve never sat down and had a proper chat about it all. About the whys and wherefores. They can wait. The important thing is that you’re still my Minnie Mouse, and I love you, and you had fun. You know you had fun.

JENNY
Yes. I had fun. But I had fun with the wrong person, at all the wrong times. And I can’t ever get those times back, now. It was as if I got lost, and ended up in the middle of somebody else’s life. But I’ve got my own life back now. (beat) Look, David. I’m in Oxford.

She looks at him and shakes her head, as if awaking from a dream. The student stops behind her on his bike, dismounts, leans his bike against the wall next to hers, waits for her to finish. She turns her back on DAVID, and
the young man offers her his arm. They walk away together, and DAVID stares longingly after them.