"Damsels in Distress"

By

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REVISED PINK

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Steeplechase Webisodes Inc.
At the edge of the registration hall three well-dressed young women -- stylish, black ROSE; cute, insipid HEATHER and pretty VIOLET -- spot a lonely-looking new student.

    ROSE
    Look.

    VIOLET
    Where?

    ROSE
    There.

    VIOLET
    Yes. I think so.

Violet approaches the lithe, pretty but sad-looking LILY.

    VIOLET (CONT’D)
    Hello. Are you a new student?

    LILY
    Yes.

    VIOLET
    Good -- we thought so. We’d like to help you.

    LILY
    Help me? What do you mean?

The four walk across the green, leafy quadrangle formed by the university’s handsome old brick buildings.

INSERT TITLE: “The Quadrangle, Seven Oaks University”

    VIOLET
    As a freshman, it can be very tough. You finally get to college, it’s supposed to be so great but, generally -- it’s not. University life can be pretty bad.

    HEATHER
    There are a lot of suicides.

    ROSE
    Well, attempted ones.

    LILY
    I’m not actually a freshman. I’m a transfer student.
VIOLET
Oh... An “entering Sophomore?”

LILY
Yes.

VIOLET
So you were unhappy at your old school and are looking to recover here? Well, I think you will!

Violet encourages her with a huge smile.

HEATHER
Yes!

VIOLET
Would you welcome that? Would our help and guidance be something you’d appreciate, or would you rather sink or swim on your own? Either way’s fine, we’d still be friends.

HEATHER
Yes, whichever you’d prefer.

A pause.

LILY
Yes. Sure.

VIOLET
Great! Well, let’s start immediately.

She gives Lily a very quick looking over.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Clothes can be critical for confidence -- and an overall sense of well-being.

LILY
You don’t like my clothes?

VIOLET
It’s not about liking or not liking...

LILY
What’s it about?

VIOLET
How you look when you put them on.
HEATHER
The right clothes don’t have to be expensive.

ROSE
No, all you need are friends of about the same size.

A grungy pack of male students approaches, inconsiderately hogging the path, obliging the girls to step aside. Suddenly Rose looks like she’s smelled something foul; Violet gags.

VIOLET
Phew!

Rose bends over, hyperventilating -- it’s a bit scary.

LILY
What’s wrong?

VIOLET
You didn’t notice that?!

LILY
No, what?

VIOLET
Those guys! That smell! That awful acrid odor.

Rose’s hyperventilating gets a little less. [Film full speech in both locations:]

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Rose has a very sensitive nose....

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Rose lies in her bunk, a handkerchief to her nose.

VIOLET
...Have you heard of “nasal shock syndrome?” Any harsh, acrid, or just “disgusting” odor sends Rose into nasal shock--

ROSE
(very nasally)
This wasn’t true nasal shock. Had it been, I’d’ve lost consciousness entirely.

LILY
(smiles)
Just from some b.o.?
VIOLET
“Just some b.o.?!” Omigod, Lily, you must have a very high threshold for pain! That’ll serve you well here at Seven Oaks!

LILY
What do you mean?

VIOLET
Seven Oaks is notorious for it’s b.o. It was the last of the “Select Seven” to go co-ed.

(looks around, combative)
An atmosphere of male barbarism predominates -- but we’re going to change all that!

HEATHER
Yes!

Lily heads toward the door.

VIOLET
Where’re you going?

LILY
I’ve got to get to the housing department -- it seems they lost my rooming assignment.

VIOLET
That’s terrible. You’ve no place to stay?

Lily shakes her head, her eyes watering a little.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
They lost your housing assignment?

ROSE
How could they lose it?

HEATHER
Was it just mislaid?

LILY
No, there were more acceptances than they anticipated and not enough rooms to go around.

Violet exchanges quick looks with Rose and Heather.

VIOLET
Why don’t you stay with us?

LILY
Really?
INT. DORM BATHROOM-- NIGHT

Considerable movement in front of the mirrors as the girls prepare for a night out.

VIOLET
You mustn’t think of this in the old fashioned sense of going to a party to “find someone” or “not find someone.” That’s not the dynamic we’re talking about.

LILY
What dynamic are you talking about?

VIOLET
I’m glad you asked that. Our going to a party of this kind is more a form of... “youth outreach”--

LILY
Of what?

VIOLET
“Youth outreach.” It’s not just some moronic frat house social function--

ROSE
Though it will be that.

VIOLET
Yes, of course, but what we’ve got to keep in mind is -- these guys are very young, they’re “young people”--

Violet opens the door and goes halfway out, with one parting comment.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
They’re essentially immature, crying out for help and guidance.

She leaves.

ROSE
Though they don’t know that.

HEATHER
No. They don’t, but we do.

LILY
But aren’t they the same age as we are?
ROSE
Only numerically.

Violet returns, carrying a beautiful dress.

VIOLET
I’m a lot fatter than you are but I think we could pin it.

LILY
Omigosh it’s beautiful.

ROSE
Stunning.

Lily puts the dress up to see how it looks in the mirror.

TITLE CARD
Saturday Evening “Youth Outreach”

EXT. UNIVERSITY WALK -- NIGHT

Possible POV shot of a wooden frat clubhouse from which party music and crowd spills. Girls could walk into POV, or we just see them heading that way.

VIOLET
Take Frank, my friend -- he’s not some cool, handsome, “studly” macho-type. No, not at all -- I can’t stand guys like that! He’s more of a sad-sack really, wouldn’t you say?

Rose and Heather nod.

ROSE
Definitely.

LILY
What’s a “sad-sack?”

ROSE
(forcefully)
A loo-ser!

LILY
(to Violet)
You like losers?

VIOLET
Very much so. Do you know what’s the major problem in contemporary social life?
LILY
What?

VIOLET
The tendency, very widespread, to always seek someone “cooler” than yourself -- it’s always a stretch, often a big stretch. Why not find someone who’s frankly inferior?

HEATHER
Someone like Frank.

VIOLET
Yes. It’s more rewarding and in fact quite reassuring.

LILY
You mean, someone you can really help? Not just thinking of yourself?

VIOLET
Yes! That’s it. Precisely! But without the goody-goody implications -- our aspirations are pretty basic: Take a guy who hasn’t realized his full potential, or doesn’t even have much and then help him realize it -- or find more. There’s enough material here for a lifetime of social work.

Looking ahead, they see the front verandah of the D U where a drunken frat member walks toward its balustrade and dramatically falls, front-flipping, over it and disappears from view. He then stands and walks calmly back into the club.

ON the girls: Lily’s shocked expression, the others’ equanimity:

VIOLET (CONT’D)
What’s really worrisome is that --
(she makes a face)
-- was intentional.

The girls pass through the frame toward the clubhouse.

INT. D.U. CLUBHOUSE -- NIGHT

Entering it’s instantly clear the girls greatly outclass the D.U. guys, a “meatloaf crowd” that includes Violet’s FRANK.
VIOLET
Frank, this is Lily, she’s just come to Seven Oaks as a transfer student. Isn’t she great?

FRANK
Uh...

VIOLET
Lily failed or was unhappy at her last school but we’re sure is going to adapt beautifully here. In fact she already has!!

FRANK
Oh. Good.

A good, quite recent (circa-2002/6) dance hit starts to play.

VIOLET
Omigod -- a “golden oldie.” I love these!

Violet starts the dancing; they all join in.

INT. D.U. CLUBHOUSE PARTY SPACE -- NIGHT

The four pair off and dance enthusiastically with klutzy DU partners -- Violet with Frank, etc. Later women arrivals look on jealously. Violet tries out new, cool dance steps -- the others follow suit. The dancing gets better. Even the DU guys -- most sad-sacks but one, THOR, dumb and handsome -- rise to the occasion.

INT. D.U. CLUBHOUSE REFRESHMENT AREA -- NIGHT

Breaking from the dancing Violet leads them into the refreshment area.

VIOLET
Omigosh! Wasn’t that great?

LILY
That was really fun.

FRANK
Yeah.

VIOLET
I know that people can have useful careers in many areas: Government. Law. Finance. --

ROSE
--Education--
VIOLET
Yes, even education! But I’d like
to do something especially
significant in my lifetime, the
sort of thing that could change the
course of human history -- such as
starting a new dance craze.

LILY
Really?

VIOLET
Yes. Something that could improve
the lives of every person -- and
every couple.

Frank looks at Violet with pride, which Violet rewards with a
quick kiss before sampling the punch.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
My gosh that’s good! What’s in it?

The young bartender gets flustered with an “uh...” “duh...”
reaction -- he doesn’t know.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
No, don’t tell. It’s better a
mystery!

INT. DINING HALL -- DAY

At breakfast the four are in pretty good shape considering
the night before.

VIOLET
I’m so proud of what you
accomplished last night. You
showed those guys a really good
time without anything really bad
happening. You could see their
confidence and enjoyment increase
by the minute, while not letting
them turn into animals. That’s
good.

ROSE
Still, I hate it when they puke.

Violet thinks about this.

VIOLET
That’s okay. It’s part of growing
up -- “they’re learning their
limits.”
ROSE
But are they learning? It’s like a puking festival.

VIOLET
Well, their aim’s improving!
They’re getting more directional!

HEATHER
Yuck. I hate when it gets on your clothes.

VIOLET
Dar-fur.

LILY
What?

VIOLET
Dar-fur. There are horrible injustices in the world and we shouldn’t obsess over the adolescent misdemeanors of friends.

LILY
The guys you know, are they all Greeks?

VIOLET
What?

LILY
Are all the guys you know Greeks?

VIOLET
Excuse me? I don’t understand.

LILY
(more slowly)

Violet looks to the others.

VIOLET
I don’t think we know any Greeks.

ROSE
Professor Papadapoulos?

LILY
“Greeks” -- frat boys.

Blank looks all around.

VIOLET
Oh! Oh Yes! Fraternities! You mean members of Greek-letter
fraternities -- American college slang: “Greeks.”

LILY
Like last night.

A pause.

VIOLET
Actually last night we were at the “D” “U” house: “D”, “U,” Roman letters, not Greek. Seven Oaks doesn’t have a Greek letter fraternity system -- it’s always been a Roman letter system here.

HEATHER
It’s very different.

LILY
How?

VIOLET
Well, I think you’ll see.

EXT. BRICK BUILDING -- DAY

They approach another Georgian brick building. Rose and Heather carry a large box of donuts and “jug o’ joe.”

LILY
What house is this?

VIOLET
Oh, this isn’t a fraternity -- at least not one anyone should want to join!

The sign reads: “Suicide Center.”

Violet picks up the “Prevention” from the Center’s sign from the floor.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
(to Lily)
You probably think we’re frivolous, empty-headed, perfume-obsessed college coeds. You’re probably right. I often feel empty headed--

Violet puts the “Prevention” sign back up.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
But we’re also trying to make a difference in people’s lives. And one way to do that is to stop them from killing themselves.
Violet and Lily climb the Center steps.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Have you ever heard the expression, “Prevention is nine-tenths the cure?” Well, in the case of suicide, it’s actually ten-tenths the cure.

LILY
Those are cliches, aren’t they?

INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY

While Heather and Rose set up the coffee and donuts for the center, including the sign explaining their restricted use.

VIOLET
[Yes, they are.] It’s interesting that you say that. I love cliches and hackneyed expressions of every kind. Do you know why?

Lily shakes her head “no.”

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Because they’re largely true: The hundreds, perhaps thousands of such cliches and hackneyed expressions our language has bequeathed to us are, in fact, a treasure-trove of human insight and understanding.

LILY
Really?

VIOLET
Yes. Oh, come sit with us. During these formative college years we should try to learn as many hackneyed thoughts and expressions as possible -- furthermore, I think we will!

HEATHER
(to Lily)
Speaking of suicide prevention, do you have a boyfriend, Lily?

Lily is a bit amazed.

ROSE
Are you dating anyone?

LILY
I don’t see the connection.
HEATHER
You don’t?

VIOLET
Boyfriends are a primary suicide risk.

HEATHER
You don’t have any particular friend? No one at all?

Lily is put on the spot.

LILY
No... Well, there’s this grad student whom I met over the summer — Xavier [pronounce Zav-ee-yay]. We became pretty good pals.

VIOLET
“Good pals?” What’s that?

LILY
Well, he has a girlfriend whom I met — she’s very nice.

Violet looks around to the others.

VIOLET
What’s the point of that?

LILY
Of what?

VIOLET
Xavier with the girlfriend.

LILY
What do you mean?

HEATHER
“Zavier” with a “Z”?

LILY
No, I think it’s with an “X.”

HEATHER
No, I’m certain it’s a “Z.” “Zavier” Like “Zorro.” It’s the same sound. (does a Zorro move) Zorro marked his name with a “Z.”

LILY
It’s an “X.”
HEATHER
But Zorro’s with a “Z.” It’s the same.

VIOLET
Okay, let’s see if we can figure this out. Used at the beginning of a name, “Z” and “X” have the same pronunciation.

HEATHER
But it’s Zorro— with a “Z.”

VIOLET
Actually there were two “Zorros.” One spelt his name with a “Z” and made a “Z” mark for Zorro, the other one spelled him name with an “X” and with his sword he’d make an “X” mark. What was really unfair was that, because he marked his name with an “X”, everybody assumed he was illiterate, when actually he was spelling correctly.

A frantic seeming young male student bursts into the Center -- they all stop what they’re doing.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Hello.

ROSE
Can we help you?

VIOLET
Of course we can! No case is too hard or challenging -- would you like a donut?

Heather springs into action.

ROSE
Please sit down.

HEATHER
Here, have some coffee.

Violet sits at the desk and takes out a form.

VIOLET
What’s your name?
JIMBO

VIOLET
Why?

JIMBO
What?

VIOLET
Why do your friends call you “Jimbo?”

JIMBO
I suppose it’s a contraction of “Jim” and the first part of my last name, “Bose.”

VIOLET
Yah. I got that. But, why bother.

JIMBO
What do you mean?

VIOLET
Why bother: “Jim” is already a lovely name -- short, simple, evocative -- shouldn’t a nickname simplify the name that it’s replacing? Jimbo’ doesn’t simplify anything.

JIMBO
I don’t know.

VIOLET
Well, maybe you should ask your friends what they had in mind.

(reading from form)
Where do you live or reside?

JIMBO
Doar Dorm.

ROSE
Ouf.

HEATHER
Omigod. Yuck.

JIMBO
What?

VIOLET
The smell. It’s notorious.
JIMBO
What smell?

VIOLET
You’re right, it’s more like a “stink.” Unclean clothing, I’d say, mostly.

ROSE
Vomit.

HEATHER
Stale beer.

ROSE
Pot, cheap deodorant -- there might be a vermin infestation.

Heather and Lily place the coffee and donut next to him.

VIOLET
No wonder you’re depressed, living there. Did you know that a good smelling environment is crucial to our well-being? Have you thought of moving and finding a place that smells better?--

JIMBO
(getting frantic)
Wait, wait, wait-- It’s not me -- I’m not depressed!

VIOLET
Are you sure? Because you kind of seem on edge.

JIMBO
No -- I’m fine.

ROSE
That’s a terrible expression -- “fine.”
(a funny voice)
“I’m fine.”
(normal voice)
Anyone who says they’re fine definitely isn’t. It’s kind of conceited. Something smug about it.

VIOLET
Why do you say you’re “fine?”

JIMBO
I mean I’m not depressed! I’m not suicidal!
Violet snatches the donut from his mouth.

ROSE
Why are you here then? Are you a con man, a confidence trickster?

JIMBO
No, there’s a girl on my floor! Her boyfriend dumped her! She’s been crying for days but now’s silent--

VIOLET
Omigod! Why didn’t you say so!

Violet jumps up.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
We have to go!
(to the others)
Call the cops -- a suicide might be in progress!

Violet heads off.

HEATHER
The campus cops?

ROSE
Yes of course the campus cops.

They head quickly along the walk. Violet still holds the partially eaten donut carefully and sanitarily with a thin tissue.

VIOLET
Take this. I’m sorry--

Violet gives Jimbo his donut back.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
It’s just that we get a lot of students coming to the center pretending to be depressed to get the donuts.

ROSE
Confidence tricksters!

VIOLET
Yes, it’s really bad, really cynical. And we made a pledge the donut company that we would only give the donuts to students who were depressed, suicidal or
otherwise nutty. We’re a non-profit -- so the rules are pretty strict.

Jimbo nods as he jogs, his mouth full.

ROSE
This man could still be a trickster.

VIOLET
We’ll soon find out... I’m surprised we haven’t had more cases from Doar Dorm -- living in such squalor must be terribly destabilizing psychologically.

JIMBO
It’s not so bad.

VIOLET
You poor guy!... Tell me about this girl.

JIMBO
Her name’s “Priss.” She’s very pretty--

VIOLET
Oh, yeah--
(to the other girls) --it’s very hard for beautiful women to experience rejection.

INT. DOAR DORM CORRIDOR -- DAY

They are outside the girl’s room. Violet tests the door handle. It’s locked. She shakes it.

VIOLET
Priss? Priss? Are you okay?

They listen but can hear nothing.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Priss! Say something!

Meanwhile each reacts to the Doar Dorm odor: most gasping but Rose spraying perfume on her pashmina and trying to breath through that.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Priss! Open up -- please! Priss!

She listens but there’s no sound from within. Rose approaches Violet, looking unwell.
ROSE
(in terrible shape)
Could I wait outside?

VIOLET
Yes! It’s best to get as far away as possible!

Rose, who looks shaken, nods.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Take care of yourself, Rose.

HEATHER
Yes, take care of yourself.

Rose leaves, protecting her face with the pashmina.

VIOLET
Priss say something! Please!—

Campus cops arrive.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Oh thank God, we’re going to have to force this door.

INT. DORM ROOM -- DAY.

The campus cops burst into the room -- followed by Violet and the others. PRISS bolts up from her dorm cot, where she’d been lying teary-eyed, head under a pillow, headphones in her ears. She’s delicate-looking and very pretty.

VIOLET
Priss?! Are you okay?!

Priss takes the headphones out of her ears.

PRISS
What?

VIOLET
Please don’t-- Please, please--
Come with us.

INT. COFFEE COTTAGE -- DAY.

Violet & Jimbo sit with Priss who nurses a hot chocolate.

VIOLET
But you had contemplated suicide?

PRISS
What?
VIOLET
Had you resolved to kill yourself?

PRISS
No... Not really.

She stops, looks down and freezes. Silently, tears start streaming down her face. Violet turns to Jimbo:

VIOLET
Could you excuse us?

Jimbo nods and goes. Violet turns back to Priss.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Do you want to talk about it? What was his name?

PRISS
J-josh.

Priss’s voice breaks; another wave of tears rolls down her cheeks.

VIOLET
If you’d rather not talk about it, we don’t have to --

Priss nods, but the tears don’t stop.

PRISS
No it’s Okay, I just... I keep thinking how... he used to gaze at me with such love in his eyes -- you know what I mean?

VIOLET
No, I’ve never actually seen that.

PRISS
Yes, just days ago he’d gaze at me -- with his eyes so blue.

She stops; the tears roll some more.

VIOLET
He had blue eyes?

Priss nods.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
So does Frank -- Frank’s the guy that I go out with. Otherwise he’s not conventionally good-looking -- which I actually prefer. Would you describe “Josh” as handsome?
Priss nods, too overwhelmed to talk further.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
That’s a problem.

Lily comes by with a cup of tea.

LILY
Could I join you guys?

VIOLET
Yes, please. Priss and I were just talking -- in my view, handsome men are to be avoided. I don’t even consider good looks to be flattering in a man. Do you know what I mean?

LILY
Uh, no.

VIOLET
Cookie-cutter “good-looking guys” with their “chiseled features,” running around, full of themselves, getting everything they want, never suffering or experiencing any--

LILY
Have we suffered?

VIOLET
We’re not under discussion-- That’s irrelevant, beside the point.
(to Priss)
Is this making you feel any better?

Priss has stopped crying.

PRISS
Yes. I think so.

VIOLET
Good! I hoped it would.
(checks her phone)
Okay, it’s nearly four and the Daily Complainer’s orientation meeting is about to start. I think we should go. The editor, Rick DeWolfe, he’s terrible, a real jerk.

EXT. QUADRANGLE - DAY

The Fab Four plus Priss walk toward the “Daily Complainer” building.
LILY
Why do you think he’s such a jerk?

VIOLET
Environment? Genetics?

LILY
I mean what’s he done that’s so jerky?

VIOLET
Oh. You’ll see. He’s one of those I was talking about -- tall, probably considering himself very smart and handsome -- and a "journalist" -- so you can just imagine the mind-boggling arrogance and conceit.

LILY
But, Violet, don’t you think...

VIOLET
What?

LILY
Well, don’t you think that the way you talk be considered arrogant too?

They walk in silence for a moment.

LILY (CONT’D)
I mean, a little...

VIOLET
Yes, of course, but what’s your point?

LILY
Well...wouldn’t that be hypocritical, criticizing Rick DeWolfe for something you could be criticized for yourself?

Violet considers this with complete equanimity.

VIOLET
No, I don’t see why... We’re all flawed. Must that render us mute to the flaws of others? Must we tether ourselves from comment because our natures are human too? (very happy)
We’ve got a rebel amongst us! That’s good, I think. It’s good to be challenged and criticized.
LILY
I’m sorry, I know your intentions are good--

VIOLET
You’ve put your finger on something important. That’s it, precisely: Our intentions are good. We’re seeking to help people rescue their lives from terrible sadness and failure -- which is a worthy goal, don’t you think?

LILY
Yes, but not exactly a humble one.

VIOLET
No, I agree with you there, you’re right absolutely. I’d like to thank you for this chastisement.

LILY
I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to--

VIOLET
No, I think you did and I think it’s good. It’s good to have a friend to put one in one’s place when that’s what one needs and now I see that I have that kind of friend in you. I think that’s great!

INT. DAILY COMPLAINER NEWSROOM -- DAY.

Tall, insufferable RICK DeWOLFE jumps up on a steel desk to address the young freshman and sophomore crowd.

RICK DE WOLFE
Hello, people. Listen up... People! Quiet... Quiet, people... Shut up!... Okay, that's better! Ha, ha. I'm Rick DeWolfe, editor of the Complainer. Over the next weeks and months I'm the person you'll learn to hate most in the world. At least, I hope so! (laughs)
You're going hate me because I'm going to work you relentlessly, point out your stupidity and incompetence, do everything in my power to turn you into journalists -- albeit barely literate ones.

Nervous laughter from the crowd.
VIOLET
Oh brother!

LILY
What?

Violet just shakes her head but Rick looks and sees Violet’s contemptuous stare. A Ceausescu moment. Then he recovers.

RICK DE WOLFE
Any questions?... No?

Stupid titters. Violet rolls her eyes.

MALE STUDENT
Uh, yes -- how did the “Daily Complainer” get its name?

RICK DE WOLFE
Isn’t that pretty obvious?

The student, embarrassed, shakes his head; nervous titters from the crowd.

RICK DE WOLFE (CONT’D)
It comes out every day and it’s the university daily-- So, the Daily. Complainer. Daily--

Stupid laughter, from Rick and others.

MALE STUDENT
No, I meant--

RICK DE WOLFE
You mean why the “Complainer?” The name dates from Seven Oak’s earliest days as a divinity school. The reference is to the Book of Job -- Job’s “complaint” with the world. The Complainer started as a theological journal but evolved into the university weekly, finally going daily after World War Two. I like the name -- before justice can be achieved, a complaint must be made. That’s what we do and people don’t like it a bit. Right now that means extirpating Seven Oak’s elitist roman-letter clubs that are like a cancer on the university community--

VIOLET
Oh what nonsense!

RICK DE WOLFE
What?
VIOLET
They’re not “elitist” in the least.

Dead silence in the room.

RICK
Of course they are.

VIOLET
Have you met any of their members? The guys from the DU, for example? They’re morons, barely competent for the tasks of everyday life. They have to drink something like a quart of beer just to talk to a woman--

ROSE
Two quarts.

VIOLET
Yet you salivate at the idea of taking the roof off these poor guys’ heads, and throwing them brutally into the street where who knows what harm might come to them. And you consider yourself a Christian?

RICK
No, I don’t.

VIOLET
What unkindness and cruelty -- and yet you’re proud of that. This is the darkness in human nature, in the very Heart of Man -- which the British novelist Joseph Conrad wrote about most eloquently.

RICK
He was actually Polish.

VIOLET
Omigod! Pedantic too! Unkind, self-righteous and pedantic -- in short, a model journalist!

Rick looks around and appeals to the crowd.

RICK
You should know something about these girls -- they run the “Suicide Center” where their preferred therapy for seriously depressed and suicidal people is...tap dancing. I kid you not.
VIOLET
Tap is a highly effective therapy as well as a dazzlingly expressive dance form that has been sadly neglected for too many years.

RICK
It’s moronic and barbaric. You seriously expect tap dancing to solve these people’s problems?

VIOLET
No, we don’t -- we’re using the whole range of musical dance numbers which over many years have proven themselves to be effective therapies for the suicidal and hopelessly depressed.

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- NIGHT
Violet lies on her bunk, looking discouraged, while the others relax or go about their business.

VIOLET
That really got me down.

LILY
I thought you handled it well.

VIOLET
You did? Thanks. No, it’s all this aggression and hostility that gets me down -- not just his, but also my own. It leaves you feeling unclean.

HEATHER
Have you thought of taking a shower maybe you’d feel better.

VIOLET
You’re probably right but there’s something else... What Lily was saying about me being conceited and arrogant--

LILY
I’m sorry--

VIOLET
No, I think you’re right. It’s bad. I feel terrible.

ROSE
You’re joking--
VIOLET
No, I’m serious. It’s terrible how I’ve acted. I’m embarrassed....
We’re all Christians -- Or, I should say “Judeo-Christians:”
humility should be our watchword,
the essence of being a good person.
The question is, how do you become humble if you’re essentially arrogant and... evil by nature?

The room falls into silence.

INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY

A gangly, oddly-dressed male student awkwardly leads sad-seeming students, including Priss, in a tap dance number as if from a 30s musical. [Look for music.]

VIOLET
Very good, Freak!

GANGLY STUDENT
You really think so?

VIOLET
Yes! Certainly.

Lily takes Violet aside.

LILY
(whispering)
Is it really such a good idea to call him “freak”?

VIOLET
What?

LILY
He’s already depressed; constantly calling him “freak”--

VIOLET
(whispers back)
That’s his name, “Freak” -- “Freak Astaire,” that’s how he wants to be called.

“FREAK ASTAIRE” -- the gangly student -- notices them talking.

FREAK
(a bit paranoid)
What’s all the whispering? What are you talking about?
VIOLET
Lily was just saying that she likes your dancing.

Freak nods. Next to them DEBBIE, a chorus member, seems catatonic.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Are you okay?

DEBBIE
(suspiciously)
What do you mean?

VIOLET
I just noticed that you looked a little sad and I was wondering if there’s anything we could do.

DEBBIE
What could you do? Oh, I know: you think I’m suicidal -- that I’m going to kill myself and make you look bad.

VIOLET
No, I’m worried you’ll kill yourself and make yourself look bad.

DEBBIE
Do you have any idea how demoralizing it is to be constantly questioned about whether you’re suicidal or not?

VIOLET
No.

DEBBIE
Well, the first few times, you might brush it aside by saying “No” or “Not now...”
(Increasingly angry)
...But, after a while, you begin to wonder -- why is everyone asking me this? Is it because they want me to be suicidal? Or is it just the unintended consequence of their utter absurdity?

Debbie turns and walks away; Violet follows her.

VIOLET
Excuse me, what scent are you wearing?
DEBBIE
What are you talking about?

VIOLET
The perfume that you’re wearing.

DEBBIE
I’m not wearing any perfume!

VIOLET
You see, that could be the problem.

INT XAVIER’S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- EVENING

The kitchen in the ground floor apartment in a private house. Lily’s grad student friend XAVIER and his girlfriend ALICE in the midst of preparing a healthy-looking meal.

LILY
I’ve become friends with this really nice group...

XAVIER
Reall?

Yeah -- though they’re somewhat perfume-obsessed.

XAVIER
Oh them -- those girls? The ones who volunteer at the Suicide Center?

LILY
Yeah.

XAVIER
But they’re terrible! The blonde one -- she’s notorious.

LILY
What do you mean?

XAVIER
Such a bitch, terrible, isn’t she?

ALICE
(preparing the salad)
Would balsamic be okay?

LILY
What?

ALICE
Balsamic vinegar, for the dressing?
LILY
Oh, yeah, sure.

Lily follows their movements as they prepare the meal. Xavier lifts a lid revealing three artichokes in a cloud of steam.

LILY (CONT’D)
What’s that?!

XAVIER
What?

LILY
Those.

XAVIER
Artichokes?

LILY
Is that what they look like?

ALICE
Oh come on, Lily. You’ve seen an artichoke before...

Lily is embarrassed for a moment.

ALICE (CONT’D)
You haven’t?

LILY
They look so weird! Like little Martian space vehicles.

Xavier laughs.

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

The girls leaving the Suicide Center with Priss.

VIOLET
You know, I’m not convinced that having a “Suicide Prevention Center” prevents any suicides.

ROSE
Well, the coffee’s good.

LILY
If someone were really determined to destroy themselves, I don’t think they’d stop for coffee.
HEATHER
I suppose it depends on what it tastes like.

LILY
Where are we going?

VIOLET
I thought I’d take Priss over to the D.U.

LILY
Why?

VIOLET
Well, it might be helpful for her to meet some of the guys.

LILY
How would that be helpful? They’re morons.

VIOLET
Come on, Lily.

LILY
No, they are. They’re morons.

VIOLET
No. Not medically... I like them. They’re in that sympathetic range of being not good-looking, and yet not smart. There’s something likeable about that. Spending time with them, you get the sense that you’re really making a difference in their lives. For somebody suicidal, like Priss, that could be a real boost.

PRISS
I’m not suicidal.

VIOLET
Oh. That's good. It's better not to have the identity as a suicidal person, don’t you think?

Lily heads down a divergent path.

LILY
Bye.

VIOLET
(worried)
Where’re you going?
LILY
Over to Xavier’s.

VIOLET
Is that a good idea?

LILY
Why wouldn’t it be?

VIOLET
Is his girlfriend going to be there?

LILY
Of course -- gosh you’re nosy.

VIOLET
No -- no nose. Just a general foreboding.

LILY
“Foreboding?”

Violet reconsiders.

VIOLET
You know, you’re absolutely right! I was being nosy, terribly so. I’ve got to watch that. Please forgive me. I want to become a better person. Can one? Can one change one’s nature? I don’t know. But I feel we must try.

HEATHER
Yes, we must improve ourselves.

LILY
Bye.

DAMSELS
Bye.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- DAY

In the golden light of the day’s end Lily approaches Xavier’s house. A guy on a bike passes her.

XAVIER
Lily!

Xavier stops.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
You were coming over?
Lily, surprised, nods. Xavier gets off his bike.

LILY
Yeah, is Alice home?

XAVIER
Alice is working.

LILY
Oh, she is?

XAVIER
But it’s not a problem -- it’s good you came. Let’s go to the Oak Bar; I’ll buy you a beer.

Lily hesitates.

LILY
I thought Alice would be back.

XAVIER
I’ll call her. She’ll join us there.

Lily hesitates further.

23
INT. THE CORNER BAR - DAY

Xavier and Lily, installed at a booth, talk as the tavern starts to fill up with local and student crowds.

LILY
She’s actually quite a good person. I mean, her entire identity revolves around helping people.

XAVIER
You really think that’s true? For instance, what’s she have against the Complainer? That’s bizarre.

LILY
Well, she thinks the editor, Rick DeWolfe, is completely egotistical.

XAVIER
And your friend isn’t?

ALICE
Hi!

Xavier stands to let Alice by him into the booth.

LILY
Hey!
ALICE
Hi Lily!

XAVIER
Hi! Great! You got the message.

ALICE
Yeah, thanks. So, who’s egotistical?

XAVIER
Lily’s roommate. She sounds unbearable. She’s on a rampage against the Complainer.

ALICE
Really? Why?

LILY
She thinks the editor, Rick DeWolfe, is conceited and, in fact, quite mean.

ALICE
Mean?

LILY
Yes, he wants to close Seven Oaks’ Roman-letter clubs.

ALICE
That’s good isn’t it? I thought everyone was against them.

LILY
No.

XAVIER
Come on. There’s no possible justification for those places. They’re exclusive and elitist.

LILY
The point that Violet makes is that they can’t be elitist, they’re morons.

XAVIER
Yeah -- elitist morons.

Confounded for a second, Lily regroups.

LILY
But you’ll grant that they’re morons and that’s a handicap -- such people should be helped, not hounded and persecuted.
XAVIER
(with a laugh)
Persecuted?

LILY
Yes. Losing the roof over your head, being thrown out into the street, that’s about the worst thing that can happen to anyone.

Xavier shrugs, cruelly indifferent.

LILY (CONT’D)
Violet thinks that there could be some risk of... suicide.

XAVIER
Oh, because some moronic frat boy might kill himself, Seven Oaks can’t do what’s right?

LILY
It’s a factor to be taken into consideration.

ALICE
Yeah.

XAVIER
No it isn’t. You can’t set policy that way.

The barman arrives with a new round of drinks.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
Excuse me, we didn’t order these--

BARMAN
Compliments of the guy at the bar.

They look to the bar, where a well-dressed fairly young guy nods to them. Lily looks at him intently -- while he’s not handsome, there’s something appealing about him.

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Lily paces as the girls lounge in the room.

ROSE
That’s a playboy or oper-a-tor move. Oper-a-tors like that are to be avoided.

VIOLET
Why? It seems very generous to me -- sending a round of drinks over to
people he didn’t know? Drinks are expensive.

ROSE
Sending drinks to two gorgeous girls? His intention was to seduce -- and he assumed he could.

HEATHER
(shocked)
Both?

VIOLET
Isn’t that a bit harsh? He was probably just yearning for some intelligent discourse.

ROSE
I doubt that was the course he was seeking.

VIOLET
Was he alone?

LILY
Yes.

VIOLET
You see -- he was alone and probably lonely. He could see that Alice and Lily are college students. College students are well known for their intelligent conversation. After all they can always talk about their courses. That was probably what attracted him--

ROSE
Nonsense.

VIOLET
Perhaps his view was even loftier -- to court Lily, with a view to matrimony. We’re in the North but occasionally a Southern gentleman can wander into these parts.

ROSE
Rubbish.

VIOLET
Why not? Seeing Lily across a crowded bar, filled with the usual undergraduate slobs, why wouldn’t a thoughtful young man seek her out? She’s lovely. Isn’t it incumbent on men and women to find ways to meet each other? Buying drinks for
a person you don’t know seems to me
to be a particularly generous one.

HEATHER
Yes, most guys won’t even pay for
the women they do know.

ROSE
What you’ve described is a playboy
or oper-a-tor move.

VIOLET
I’ll grant you it’s a tactic, or
perhaps even a ruse. But without
some of that, would our species
even survive? The Lord said, “Be
fruitful and multiply--”

LILY
Omigosh--

VIOLET
No, this is how the world works --
“seeing someone across a room” --
this could be a great romantic
story to tell your grandchildren.

Violet imagines this.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
And if you do marry and have
children then he’ll learn how to
really squander cash. Isn’t it
good to know he’s basically
generous from the start.

HEATHER
Where’s Priss?

INT. BAR LOUNGE, D.U. CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Priss sits with Frank as a D.U brother, THOR, makes drinks.

PRISS
Your eyes are so striking, so blue.

FRANK
Really? They’re blue?

PRISS
Yes. The most piercing blue.

FRANK
Huhn.

PRISS
You must know that your eyes are
blue?
FRANK

No.

PRISS

(laughs)
What do you mean?

FRANK

What?

PRISS

You must know what color your eyes are.

Frank remains silent and impassive.

PRISS (CONT’D)
Come on, your eyes are very blue, you know that.

FRANK

I’m not going to go around “checking” what color my eyes are!...

At the bar Thor cocks his head, listening.

PRISS

Yes, but-- When you look in a mirror, you must see your eyes are blue.

FRANK

Oh come on!

PRISS

What?

FRANK

I’m not homo-phobic, but I’m not going to go looking in mirrors, checking to see what color my eyes are!... I don’t think my eyes have a color. If they were so blue, looking out, wouldn’t everything be kind of blue? Like, have a blue tinge or something? (looks around) Doesn’t. Just looks normal.

Thor, handing them drinks, takes a look at Frank’s eyes.

THOR

That’s blue? That color?

PRISS

Yes. Of course.
THOR
Then, what color is that?

He points to a leather chair that’s clearly green.

PRISS
Green.

THOR
You’re saying that chair’s green, but Frank’s eyes are blue?

PRISS
Yes.

THOR
And was color are the walls?

PRISS
Also, green.

THOR
Huhn.

PRISS
You don’t know that?

THOR
No.

PRISS
How is that possible?

THOR
You really think knowing the colors is so, so important?

PRISS
You’re in college and you don’t know colors?... Doesn’t that embarrass you?

THOR
No. Why should it? That’s why the ‘rents are paying big bucks to send me here -- you know, to learn stuff.

Thor toasts them, taking a sip from his drink.

THOR (CONT’D)
Thanks. Well, gotta go hit the books.

Thor heads off, then stops.
THOR (CONT’D)
I don’t know about you but I don’t think anyone should feel embarrassed about not knowing stuff. What’s embarrassing is pretending to know what you don’t -- or putting other people down just because you think they don’t know as much as you. I’m happy to admit I’m completely ignorant. That’s why I’m here and plan to really hit the books. So, the next time you see me, I’ll know more than I do now. I’ll be older, but also wiser -- or at least know more stuff. For me, that’s education.

Thor salutes them with his drink.

THOR (CONT’D)
Cheers.

Thor takes a long draught before leaving. Priss and Frank watch Thor go.

FRANK
Thor’s great. He’s very clear about his objectives: he really wants to learn things -- that’s why he’s here. Like, you always see him with a book and yet he’s not pretentious in the least...

INT. ELSEWHERE, D.U. HOUSE -- NIGHT

The lights are low. Some cool music is on. The camera swoops up the stairs, passes through a doorway and enters the club “nest” area -- finding Priss and Frank in passionate embrace. Their kiss goes on and on.

Reverse angle: Violet, Rose, Heather and Lily at the doorway, shocked. Violet turns and flees, the others follow.

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- NIGHT

The girls walk silently and somberly, Violet’s face turned down, in a state of shock.

HEATHER
I can’t believe it.

ROSE
What a jerk.

LILY
He’s a monster.
HEATHER
Omigosh, Violet. You did everything for them! They’re nothing without you!

Tears have started rolling down Violet’s face.

ROSE
What a rat.

LILY
Moron.

ROSE
Don’t waste a single tear on that creep.

HEATHER
Don’t waste a single breath.

LILY
Jerk.

VIOLET
Stop- Please...

ROSE
What?

VIOLET
(a quiet voice)
I love him.

(a strange, intense voice)
I love him.

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

The next day they’re still talking -- Violet prostrate abed.

LILY
Come on, Violet, Frank’s a moron. You’re well rid of him.

VIOLET
Don’t say that.

LILY
What, Frank’s not a moron?

VIOLET
You know, Lily, you’re a bit harsh. This obsession with “intelligence” — do you think it has some magical quality, transforming everything? The intelligence line is not an... immutable barrier; love can cross it. You can love someone whose
mental capacity is not large... I know; I have.

LILY
Well, there’s a mutable barrier then.

ROSE
Frank’s stupid, we knew. That he was a rat jerk playboy op-er-a-tor I hadn’t realized.

VIOLET
I don’t want to turn bitter. I worry for Frank -- I care about him.

LILY
Well, I’d stop.

VIOLET
No. I love Frank -- I always will.

HEATHER
If that’s the case, why not fight for him?

VIOLET
What do you mean?

HEATHER
Get him back.

LILY
No! He’s worthless!

VIOLET
Against Priss? I’d never win.

HEATHER
Sure you would.

VIOLET
Priss, who’s so pretty and sweet?

ROSE
Priss is a rat. A bitch. A rat-bitch.

VIOLET
Don’t blame Priss. She was crushed when her blue-eyed Josh left her.

(smiles a little crazily)
I should have known. Of course she’d fall for Frank. Josh and Frank are both blue-eyed heartbreakers.

Lily looks at Violet as if she were completely delusional.
HEATHER
I wonder if people with blue eyes are in fact less kind than other people. Blue eyes could represent an icy nature.

LILY
Your eyes are blue.

HEATHER
I know, and I’m often shocked at how cold I am. I’m like an icicle inside. I don’t feel a thing.

TITLE CARD
The Algebra of Love

EXT. TOWN STREET -- TWILIGHT

Lily walks with the guy who sent the drinks over to them at the bar, CHARLIE WALKER.

LILY
Poor Violet.

CHARLIE
She’s the roommate who’s so self-confident and constructive?

LILY
Yeah -- but now she’s a wreck... But there’s no logic to the algebra of love.

CHARLIE
“The Algebra of Love?”
(smiles)
That sounds like the title to some lame book.

LILY
Well, it’s a title, but the book’s not lame at all.

CHARLIE
Love’s “algebra?” I always thought it was more geometry.

LILY
Okay, the title’s not good, but the book is.

CHARLIE
What’s it say?
LILY
Well, that while we’re all...
perverse in our romantic
preferences, there’s actually this
logic, or algebra, to our
perversity. It has something to do
with how the species has evolved.

CHARLIE
The survival of the species?

LILY
Yes, and whether it will continue
to do so...

30  INT. THE CORNER BAR -- NIGHT

Lily drains a martini glass and puts it down next to an empty one.

LILY
Just to find the nearest package
store you had to drive forty miles.
(sips)
These aren’t so strong--

CHARLIE
No, they’re really strong.

Lily looks a little woozy.

LILY
I think I’d like another.

CHARLIE
That wouldn’t be a good idea.

LILY
Why not?

CHARLIE
Well...

LILY
Are you trying to stifle me?

CHARLIE
Yes.

XAVIER (O.S.)
Lily?

LILY
Oh, hi!
XAVIER
Listen, we’re going to get something to eat, why don’t you come with us?

LILY
I’m with Charlie.

XAVIER
I can see that. But you really should come.

LILY
Why?

XAVIER
I just think it would be a good idea.

LILY
But why?

XAVIER
You really must come. I insist.

EXT. TOWN STREET -- NIGHT
Lily walks slightly ahead and separate from Xavier and Alice, silent and angry. She might be a little tipsy.

XAVIER
Lily?
She just keeps walking.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
Lily, are you angry?
Lily passes the front of a restaurant.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
Lily! This is it. We’re here.
She returns, as if reluctantly.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
What’s the matter?

LILY
That was so rude. He’s a nice guy and you embarrassed him.

XAVIER
He’s not nice at all. He was trying to get you drunk.
LILY
No, he wasn’t.

XAVIER
Plying you with martinis? What a sleaze-ball.

LILY
I was plying myself with martinis--

XAVIER
Come on, the guy’s a total sleaze, a creep.

LILY
You don’t know anything about him--

XAVIER
The way he sent drinks over to our table?

Alice, fed up, turns and walks quickly away. Xavier chases her.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
Alice! Alice! What’s wrong?!

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Tight on Violet’s face, as she lies on her bed, her face lightly angled toward the wall.

LILY
I just had no idea Xavier could be so mean.

While the chat centers on Lily, the camera also observes Violet’s post-jilt pain.

ROSE
Are you sure he was mean?

HEATHER
Sounds as if he was just trying to protect you.

ROSE
This Charlie Walker sounds like an oper-a-tor, a “playboy” type.

LILY
He’s not like that at all, he’s actually a really nice guy.
ROSE
I thought he was a slick businessman.

LILY
No, he dresses well but he works in strategic development.

ROSE
What?

LILY
“Strategic Development” -- he works at “S.D.A.” -- Strategic Development Associates. He’s an associate there.

ROSE
What he is is a “strategic operator.”

Lily notices Violet, turned to the wall.

LILY
Violet? Are you okay?

For a while Violet says nothing.

33
EXT. LOWER SPORTS FIELDS, SEVEN OAKS -- DAY

Violet strides between sports fields, heading toward the open countryside as the sky darkens ominously. A maintenance man riding a small grass-cutter calls to her:

GROUND KEEPER
Hey! Miss! Rain’s comin’ -- better go back.

Violet nods but keeps on walking. Thunder sounds. Violet continues; the sound of rain.

34
INT/EXT SEARCH FOR VIOLET MONTAGE -- NIGHT

Lily and Rose pass their neighbor POSITIVE POLLY in the stairwell.

ROSE
Polly! Have you seen Violet?

POLLY
No, is something wrong?

ROSE
I’m not sure.
Outside, Lily and Rose look for Violet, calling, and enter a wood.

LILY & ROSE
(alternating)
Violet!

EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT
Violet walks back from the wood; Lily and Rose find her.

LILY
Violet omigosh-- what happened?!

INT. DORM SHOWERS -- DAY
The girls wait as steam pours out of a shower stall.

ROSE
I don’t understand, what were you doing?

There is no response -- just the sound of water.

LILY
How long were you gone for?

Violet is still slow to reply.

VIOLET
I’m sorry, I don’t know -- I lost track of time.

The girls exchange concerned looks. Violet gets out of the shower, wrapped in a towel.

HEATHER
But you feel better now?

Violet, listless in her movements, is slow to reply.

VIOLET
Well... cleaner...

INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY
Debbie and Freak practice dance; Jimbo quizzes Violet for the questionnaire.

DEBBIE
She’ll say anything to get in the show. I suppose now she’ll want the donuts, too--
You don’t have to be suicidal to get the donuts, just “severely depressed.”

No, “clinically depressed” -- from a clinic.

(to Violet)
Would you say that you’re depressed?

I don’t like the term “depressed” -- I prefer to say that I’m in a tailspin.

Omigod! A “tail spin!” She can’t even say she’s “depressed” like everyone else -- she’s got to say something “special.” Priss was honest, she was really depressed and she had a right to be in the show. Now every silly tail-spinner is trying to get in!

The show’s for everyone.

No, it isn’t, Freak! To be included in the Center’s programs you have to be “clinically depressed.” That means that you’ve been to a clinic -- and they’ve said that you’re depressed. Have you been to a clinic?

Violet doesn’t reply.

Have you been to a clinic?

Violet shakes her head “no.”

Then you’re not “clinically depressed.”

Heather arrives with a large tray of donuts and cardboard coffee jug as Violet leaves the building.
HEATHER
Violet, Violet? What is it, where are you going?

Violet stops but doesn’t respond.

VIOLET
(in a leaden monotone)
All I wanted was to make Frank happy... I’d all these plans, things we could’ve done together. I never even got to tell him...

Violet goes off, leaving Heather watching after her.

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Violet looks in the mirror then goes to her desk to write a note. She looks around for a good spot to place it, finally leaving it at the foot of her bed. But as she opens the door, a breeze ruffles the window curtain and lifts the note, which flutters under the bed.

EXT. TOWN BRIDGE -- DAY

Violet walks across the low bridge, stops halfway across and gazes into the water below. The water swirls and eddies.

ROSE
Polly, have you seen Violet?

POLLY
No, she left the dorm at four and I haven’t seen her since.

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- NIGHT

The boorish shouts of moronic male students on a walkway give the otherwise deserted Quadrangle a forlorn air.

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- NIGHT

Lily looks down onto the scene, then turns to the others.

LILY
I can’t imagine where she could have gone? Wherever she went, she should be back by now.

Rose turns to Heather.
ROSE
How did she seem when you last saw her?

HEATHER
Really sad about Frank.

LILY
Still?

Heather nods.

HEATHER
Yeah.

LILY
I’m beginning to wonder about Violet. How can someone so smart continue mooning over a dope like that.

ROSE
From what I’ve observed in my admittedly brief span on earth, people generally don’t jump for joy after being dumped by the moronic jerk in whom they’ve invested all their hopes and dreams.

LILY
But Violet’s so great, how could she go berserk over an idiot like that?

ROSE
People aren’t exactly as you assume. The Violet you know bears little resemblance to the girl I met Seventh Grade year--

LILY
You met Violet in Seventh Grade?

ROSE
Well, her name wasn’t “Violet” then.

A “wavy” memory dissolve begins as Rose thinks back...

INT. SEVENTH GRADE CLASSROOM -- DAY

Shyly entering, timid 11 year old EMILY TWEETER resembles the character we know as “Violet” physically but in no other way.

YOUNG ROSE
What’s your name?
Emily doesn’t immediately respond.

GIRL #1
You can tell us your name. We won’t bite.

GIRL #1 laughs.

GIRL #2
What’s your name? Tell us.

GIRL #1
Are you retarded? Tell us your name? Speak!

EMILY
Emily... Tweeter.

GIRL #1
“Tweeter?” Like a bird?

GIRL #2
That’s ridiculous!

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- NIGHT

Present day.

LILY
“Tweeter?” Like a bird?

ROSE
Yes -- not an easy name to have at that age.

LILY
Not at any age. What was she like?

ROSE
Timid, bookish... classic scholarship student -- her parents were writers. They didn’t have a dime. Finances were the least of her worries.

LILY
What do you mean?

ROSE
Well, she was crazy -- I got stuck rooming with her on the class trip when no one else would. Ouf, it was awful.

HEATHER
She smelled bad?
ROSE
No. Obsessive cleanliness was part of her insanity.

HEATHER
But you were nice to her.

ROSE
No, not really -- the idea of being nice to weird and unpopular kids hadn’t arrived then.

LILY
Why was she so unpopular?

ROSE
She was very strange -- constantly setting herself odd, repetitive tasks--

LILY
Tasks?

ROSE
For example on that trip she had with her a little square suitcase. The idea came into her head she had to move it in a precise pattern, over and over again...

Images of young “Emily” attempting this as a young “Rose” watches, expression agape.

ROSE (CONT’D)
If she didn’t execute this exact movement, flawlessly, ten times -- she’d start over from scratch.

Looks from the others.

ROSE (CONT’D)
Another was to slide her hand across her forehead, trying not to touch her hair or her eyebrows on either side --
(Rose demonstrates)
-- also repeating it ten times. Any niggling thought she touched a hair on either side, she’d start over.

LILY
My God that’s insane!

HEATHER
Why would she do that?

ROSE
Well, it was a compulsion.
LILY
What compelled her?

ROSE
She had the superstitious
conviction that if she didn’t
complete these tasks flawlessly --
her parents would die.

HEATHER
Was she Catholic?

ROSE
No. But what made the whole thing
really sad was that her parents did
die.

LILY
Omigod.

(48B) INT./EXT MONTAGE:
Heather riding with the campus cops, looking all over; the
lacrosse and girls hockey teams searching along the marsh
near the playing fields, using their sticks to push aside the
reeds.

INT. MOTEL SHOWER -- DAY
Violet showering [PG-acceptable], letting the water wash over
her head. She notices the scent of the soap and, shutting
off the water, inhales of it deeply.

INT. SMALL MOTEL ROOM -- DAY
Violet in a towel, her hair moist but combed, goes about the
room getting dressed. Before leaving she retrieves the soap,
inhales its scent again, and carefully packs it in plastic.

INT. DINER -- DAY
At the counter CAROLINA ANTONUCCI, a sympathetic but rather
thin-skinned waitress, fills Violet’s coffee.

   CAROLINA
   Something’s wrong, isn’t it, dear?

Violet, surprised, looks up.

   CAROLINA (CONT’D)
   Do you mind my asking?
VIOLET
Well... I do mind, a little.

CAROLINA
Oh well! Excuse me, your Highness!

Carolina stalks to the other end of the counter, refilling the coffees of two highway groundsmen there on their break.

VIOLET
I’m sorry -- it’s just that it’s kind of awkward to talk about.

CAROLINA
No matter... I just hope you haven’t come down here to get run over on the highway.

Carolina rolls her eyes at the highway groundsmen.

VIOLET
What do you mean?

HIGHWAY WORKER 1
Suicides. They come down from the university. Jump out in the road to get hit by the blind curve--

HIGHWAY WORKER 2
Hope you’re not one of them.

VIOLET
Do I look like one of them?

HIGHWAY WORKER 2
I don’t know. Maybe.

HIGHWAY WORKER 1
Messy people, suicides. Think only of themselves and their own deaths -- not what comes after.

HIGHWAY WORKER 2
They make quite a mess, but don’t stick around to clean it up.

CAROLINA
So you’re not one of those depressed students down from the university?

VIOLET
Well, I don’t really like the word “depressed;” I prefer to say that I’m in a tailspin.

CAROLINA
A Tail Spin?
SHARISE, a young black waitress, coming on duty, takes an interest.

SHARISE

Does this Tail Spin involve a Man?

VIOLET

Yes. It does. But I’m not as crazy as I was up to yesterday. Partly that’s due to the salutary effect of scent on the human psyche. It’s importance is, I believe, almost incalculable. At the motel this morning I happened to use this bar of soap--

Violet shows the soap in a see-through plastic zip-lock bag.

VIOLET (CONT’D)

It was provided me as a courtesy as one of its guests -- that an economical motel would provide such good soap is quite unusual. The scent is very precise.

SHARISE

Really?

Sharise leans forward. Violet cradles the soap in the palm of her hand.

VIOLET

Tell me if it provokes any particular reaction in your psyche -- a state of mind.

Sharise and Carolina, then the highway workers, all inhale its scent -- then look thoughtful.

INT./EXT MONTAGE:

the Daily Complainer rolls off the press, the headline “Sophomore Missing!” -- with a picture of Violet

RICK

I always knew she was unstable. They’re going to have her photo at the registrar.

EXT./INT. COMMUTER TRAIN STATION - DAY

Violet gets off a mid-morning commuter train.
EXT. MAIN GATE/QUADRANGLE -- DAY

Violet enters at the main gate -- a MALE STUDENT reading the Complainer looks up at her, surprised. Shrieks sound from across the quad.

HEATHER
Violet! Violet!

Heather runs toward her.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
You’re back! You’re okay!

VIOLET
Not really.

A campus police Mini pulls up and a cop jumps out.

HEATHER
Omigosh, Violet -- we were so worried, why didn’t you tell us or at least leave a note?

VIOLET
I did leave a note.

CAMPUS COP
Would that be a suicide note?

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Violet looks under the desk and beds, finds the note and hands it to Heather.

VIOLET
I wouldn’t have left without leaving a note.

HEATHER
But where did you go?

VIOLET
I took the commuter train to Villafranca and checked into a cheap motel there.

ROSE
The Motel 6?

VIOLET
No, the Motel 4, it’s even less expensive.
ROSE
The Motel 4 in Villafranca - oh my
god, you really were suicidal!

HEATHER
But why’d you go?

VIOLET
I had to do something.

LILY
You really thought you were going
to find the answer to whatever you
were looking for in Villafranca?

VIOLET
I’m not sure what I expected but I
think I might have found it.

HEATHER
What?

Violet looks in her bag and pulls out something which she
holds cupped in her hands.

LILY
Soap?

Violet bends over her cupped hands and inhales deeply.

VIOLET
This scent -- and this soap -- is
what gives me hope.

LILY
How?

VIOLET
I’ll tell you.

EXT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- DAY

Very late afternoon: Lily, with shopping bag, rings, then
knocks. No one answers. She knocks again. Then tests the
door. It’s open and she hesitantly enters.

INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- DAY

LILY
Hello?... Hello?... Is anyone
here?...

Lily walks through the house -- it seems spare, as if
furnishings have been removed. A rhythmic sound comes from
somewhere in the apartment. Passing the washer-dryer she sees
it’s the agitated spin cycle. She gets to the kitchen and puts the bag down on the counter.

    XAVIER (O.S.)
    Hello!

    LILY
    Omigosh, I couldn’t understand where everyone was!

    XAVIER
    Sorry, I just went out to get some things.

He puts another bag of groceries on the counter.

    LILY
    Where’s Alice?

    XAVIER
    Gone.

    LILY
    What do you mean?

    XAVIER
    Left. We broke up.

    LILY
    But when you called you said--

    XAVIER
    I know, I’m sorry. I thought it better to tell you in person.

INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- EVENING

Later, cut to close on: Vegetables saute in a pan.

Xavier cooks, Lily helps.

    XAVIER
    Alice couldn’t control her jealousy -- it completely overwhelmed her.

    LILY
    Really? What was she jealous of?

    XAVIER
    Oh come on.

    LILY
    No... what?
XAVIER
You. After a while I just couldn’t handle it -- things became impossible.

LILY
She was jealous of me?

XAVIER
Of course.

INT. LIVING ROOM, XAVIER’S HOUSE -- EVENING
The coffee table has been set with two places and low candles. Lily brings in their plates as Xavier looks through some dvds.

XAVIER
Would it be okay if we watch a film?

LILY
Yes, what would you like to see?

XAVIER
I thought, maybe, Truffaut’s “Baisers Voles”, “Stolen Kisses.” Do you know it?

LILY
No, is it new?

Xavier shakes his head.

XAVIER
It’s a classic of French New Wave cinema -- I think you’ll like it.

Xavier puts the dvd on and reaches for the wine.

LILY
But, it’s in color?

XAVIER
Yeah.

Xavier pours them two glasses of wine -- Lily watches.

TIGHT ON: red wine pouring into a glass.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
You don’t know Truffaut?

LILY
No.
XAVIER
Do you know Godard? “A Bout Souffle?”

56 EXT./INT. LIVING ROOM, XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Travelling pan of room as closing music of Truffaut film plays. Slouched back on the sofa, Xavier and Lily kiss.

57 INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Heather paces, Lily and Rose study, Violet examining the contents of a small case.

HEATHER
Why was Alice so jealous?

Lily just looks thoughtful, continuing studying.

ROSE
What do you think -- she was jealous because Lily’s absolutely lovely.

LILY
I don’t know -- apparently they had a lot of problems.

ROSE
Of course! You wouldn’t break up a happy couple.

Violet is studying a piece of paper she’s taken from the box.

HEATHER
What’s that?

VIOLET
A note Frank left.

HEATHER
Really? Recently?

VIOLET
No -- when we were together. Now that most correspondence is electronic, it’s very rare to be left with anything written by hand.

ROSE
Frank can write by hand? What is it?
VIOLET
It’s not very important but -- it’s just all I have.

LILY
What’s it say?

Heather, taking a look, reads it:

HEATHER
“Out for brewskis -- back in a... gif.”

LILY
What’s a “gif”?

HEATHER
It’s one of those little motor scooters, isn’t it?

VIOLET
I’m sure he meant to write “jiff,” with a “j” -- “back in a jiff.”

LILY
But he wrote “gif.”

HEATHER
Could Frank be dyslexic?

ROSE
No. Dyslexics are intelligent.

Violet handles a little leather-covered ball from the box.

HEATHER
What’s that?

VIOLET
Frank’s bean-ball.

HEATHER
He gave you his bean-ball?

VIOLET
Not exactly. This is an extra -- he thought he’d leave it here just in case he lost his other one.

LILY
How thoughtful.

ROSE
That’s all Frank gave you, a bean-ball?
VIOLET
Relationships aren’t about presents.

ROSE
They aren’t?

LILY
Gosh, Violet, you’ve really got to stop thinking about Frank.

VIOLET
Why? I don’t want to stop thinking about him. Recently I had a thought that cheered me up a lot: ...Life is like a long flowing river and, as a long flowing river, some debris you never expect to see again is almost certain to reappear, floating to the surface... Frank and I may very well be together again one day. Maybe it’ll take many years but somewhere, down the line, he is very likely to pop up again -- and I’ll be there to catch him.

INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT
Great music plays; lots of candles providing flickering illumination. The camera snoops down the hallway to the kitchen, where there are a few dishes left from a dinner a deux, to the living room where Lily and Xavier smooch on the couch, their clothes undone. Xavier slightly disentangles himself, enough to talk.

XAVIER
There’s something I wanna...

He stops.

LILY
I’m ready.

Xavier smiles.

XAVIER
I don’t think we’ve spoken about this--

LILY
What?

XAVIER
It’s nothing bad. Have you ever been to the South of France -- for
example, to the walled city of Carcassonne.

LILY
I’ve never been anywhere.

XAVIER
But you’ve seen pictures of it?

LILY
Uh... No, I don’t think so.

He shows her a postcard of Carcassonne.

LILY (CONT’D)
It’s fascinating, I’d like to visit it.

XAVIER
So you never studied the Cathars?

Lily shakes her head.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
They were a religious movement, very idealistic, located mostly in the south of France, that the Catholic Church and the royal authorities cruelly repressed. The “crusades” were not directed solely against the Moslems, there was also one against the Cathars.

LILY
Really? Why?

XAVIER
Cathar beliefs and way of life threatened the Catholic Church and the political authorities of that time. Catharism was branded a heresy and brutally repressed.

LILY
Omigod, the Catholic Church is, like, always bad.

Xavier nods.

XAVIER
Ideas can’t be killed as easily as people -- especially such enlightened ones as the Cathars held. In recent years more and more people have returned to their beliefs.

LILY
So, you’re a Cathar?
XAVIER
Yes. I aspire to be. I’m trying to follow the path the Cathars marked out.

LILY
That’s so impressive. I can tell you -- we didn’t have any Cathars back home.

XAVIER
I think you’d be surprised.

59 INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT
Lily washing her hands, checking herself in the mirror.

60 INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT
Xavier goes between the bedroom and living room lighting candles and rearranging things, placing a lotion near the bed, adjusting the music. Lily, coming out, walks into Xavier’s arms. Xavier leads her to the bed where they continue kissing, finally coming up for air.

XAVIER
Cathars dissent radically from Catholic teaching regarding procreative sex--

LILY
I should hope so!

XAVIER
In the Cathar view the highest form of love-making avoids procreation entirely.

Lily laughs, a little embarrassed:

LILY
Sure -- condoms, right?

XAVIER
Well, according to Cathar ideas, sex with condoms is just a parody of the procreative act.

A pause.

LILY
What do you mean?
The standard, cliche, form of sexual intercourse is for the man to... approach the woman... from “the front.” In Cathar love-making -- which, I think you’ll find very fulfilling -- it’s from the other side.

LILY
From the other side?

XAVIER
Yes.

Xavier kisses her tenderly and continues in a near whisper.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
I’ll be very careful, we’ll go slowly. It’ll be a new experience for you but one which I think you’ll find brings an inexpressible closeness...

They continue kissing.

EXT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT TO DAY.

Time lapse of the turning from night to morning, when Xavier lets Lily out, giving a last kiss.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- DAY

Lily walks down the street, pensive, looking somewhat uncomfortable, her gait odd.

INT. THE CORNER BAR -- NIGHT

TITLE CARD
Girls’ Night Out

The girls having weekend-style cocktails -- drinks that are pink. Violet looks around the bar.

VIOLET
Might your drinks-buying friend be here? It would be great to get some complimentary cocktails.

LILY
Charlie? No.

Lily, looking around, shakes her head.
HEATHER
Do you still see him at all?

LILY
Yeah, he calls from time to time.

HEATHER
He does? Why don’t you invite him over and introduce us?

Lily smiles.

LILY
Why should I introduce you?

HEATHER
Well, because you know him -- and we don’t.

LILY
So?

VIOLET
“So?” “So” is probably the unkindest word in the English language. I can’t bear it. It should be outlawed: “So.”

LILY
You’re crazy.

HEATHER
Come on, Lily, you have Xavier. You can't keep two guys for yourself.

LILY
Guys do that all the time.

ROSE
We’re not “guys,” fortunately...

HEATHER
It’s unconscionable for you not to bring him around and introduce us.

LILY
Charlie’s a friend. He’s a nice guy.

ROSE
What do you mean?

LILY
I just hate to think what would happen if one of you got her claws into him.
ROSE
That’s outrageous!... We’re perfectly nice people. We’ve met a lot of pathetic guys and nothing very bad’s happened.

LILY
Charlie’s not pathetic.

VIOLET
Well all the better then!

64  EXT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- EVENING

Lily approaches the house.

65  INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- EVENING

Xavier comes to the door and walks with her inside.

XAVIER
Where were you? Gosh -- it’s late.

LILY
I was getting drinks at the Oak Bar.

XAVIER
With whom?

LILY
Just my roommates -- I’ve hardly seen them lately.

XAVIER
You could have called.

LILY
I’m sorry.

XAVIER
It’s not like you. At all. I got takeout. I suppose I’d better heat it up.

He grabs her and they kiss.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
I’m sorry. I was just feeling so... Well, you know.

He smiles. He picks up a bag and slips out a small amber cannister.
XAVIER (CONT’D)
I got this -- it’s supposed to be
great.

He hands Lily the elegant bottle.

LILY
What is it?

XAVIER
A great lotion -- everyone swears
by it. Would you prefer dinner
first?

Lily nods.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
I haven’t been hurting you, have I?

Lily shakes her head.

EXT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- DAWN

Lily lets herself out and walks down the path and then the
sidewalk, her gait careful and pretty awkward.

TITLE CARD
The Ides of March -- Beware

INT. COFFEE COTTAGE -- DAY

From watching Violet turns back to the others.

HEATHER
The “Roman Holidays” will be coming
soon.

Rose groans.

LILY
What’s that?

HEATHER
A festival Seven Oaks’ Roman-letter
clubs put on.

ROSE
A kind of moron jamboree.

VIOLET
I wish I could say the Roman
Holidays were a celebration of the
best in classical learning,
education, architecture, philosophy -- with poems in the style of Juvenal and recreations of historic events such as Cato’s defense at the bridge. But, alas, it’s --

ROSE
A moron jamboree.

VIOLET
The only Roman elements will be worship of Bacchus, Beerus and Blotto and it’s such a shame because it could all have been so uplifting and improving.

Charlie Walker, not wearing a suit, enters the cafe. Lily spots him.

LILY

Charlie! Charlie!

Charlie stops in his tracks and turns to her.

LILY (CONT’D)
Hey! What are you doing here?

Charlie pauses for thought.

LILY (CONT’D)
Have you the day off?

CHARLIE
Uh, yes.

LILY
This is my friend -- Charlie -- whom I think I’ve mentioned. Charlie, these are my roommates -- this is Rose, this is Heather and Violet. Charlie works at Strategic Development Associates -- he’s an Associate there.

VIOLET
You work in Strategic Development?

CHARLIE
You’ve heard of it?

VIOLET
Of course, yes. My cousin Jay in Philadelphia works in Strategic Development.

ROSE
“Stra-te-gic Devel-op-ment?” What is that?
CHARLIE
Well, in contradistinction to short-term or "tactical development" -- "strategic development" is planning for the long term.

HEATHER
Oh.

ROSE
Something bus-i-ness related?

CHARLIE
Mostly business, but any kind of organization.

LILY
But only businesses pay the big bucks.

CHARLIE
Actually, non-profits and government pay well too.

ROSE
I suppose that’s how they keep from having profits -- by paying lots of money to companies like yours.

VIOLET
Excuse me -- aren’t you in Professor Ryan’s course at the Ed School?

CHARLIE
Uh, no.

VIOLET
You’re not in Professor Ryan’s “Flit Lit” course?

CHARLIE
No.

LILY
"Flit Lit?"

VIOLET
The Dandy Tradition in Literature--
(to Charlie)
I’m sure I’ve seen you there.

CHARLIE
I’m sorry -- I’m not in any courses at the Ed School.
(to the group)
Well, it was good to meet you.
(to Lily)
Great to see you.

Charlie heads off.

LILY
Bye!... God, Violet, what was that about?

VIOLET
That guy’s definitely in Professor Ryan’s class.

LILY
That’s not possible -- he’s got a full-time job at Strategic Development Associates.

ROSE
He never got his coffee.

The girls consider this significant detail.

LILY
Why would he lie about something like that?

VIOLET
He’s lying. I find that... very attractive.

Violet keeps looking intently in Charlie’s direction.

HEATHER
What are you going to do?

VIOLET
I’m going to stop cutting Professor Ryan’s class.

CLOSE ON: A GIRL’S HAND WRITING COURSE NOTES--

INT. LECTURE HALL -- DAY

Violet listening intently to Prof. Ryan, taking notes:

PROF. RYAN
It can be argued that Firbank was too little disciplined, too unserious in his unseriousness to create works of enduring value. But as a liberating influence on later writers such as Waugh, his importance should not be discounted. It’s not Firbank’s work itself but the idea of his work that so helped later writers --
as Thomas Love Peacock did in the previous century.

While Prof. Ryan speaks Violet, perched high in the amphitheater, looks around. She catches a glimpse of someone resembling Charlie, but in drab campus wear, slouched down among friends, his face not visible.

EXT. LECTURE HALL -- DAY

The Charlie-type hurries off with his friends as if oblivious to Violet’s presence.

FRIEND #2
So did you finish it?

FRED
Firbank just isn’t good..

FRIEND #2
I think he’s funny.

VIOLET
Charlie! Charlie!

Charlie looks back; so do his friends.

“Charlie?”

VIOLET
Charlie! You are taking the course.

Charlie looks awkward. FRIEND #2 laughs.

FRIEND #2
“Charlie?” Who’s “Charlie?”

FRIEND #1
Uh, Fred, what’s going on?

VIOLET
Fred?

FRIEND #2
Uh-oh Fred, sounds like you’ve got some ‘splainin’ to do.

INT. COFFEE COTTAGE - DAY

Violet and Charlie sit at a table.
VIOLET
Well, you were lying.

CHARLIE/FRED
I wasn’t lying. I was making it up.

VIOLET
Why were you making it up?

CHARLIE
(looks around, whispers)
If you were an eighth year Ed School student, would you advertise that?

VIOLET
Eighth year, impressive. But your whole life was a lie -- dressing up in suits, buying people drinks?

CHARLIE
No, the suits -- were real. The drinks -- real. And I wasn’t just buying drinks for “people” -- they were for cute girls: there was a perfectly rational, logical, easily-explainable agenda.

VIOLET
So it was a playboy or oper-a-tor move?

CHARLIE
Of course. Transparently so.

VIOLET
I admire that -- drinks are expensive. But “Strategic Development” -- that was made up too?

CHARLIE
I thought you said your cousin Jay was working in it.

VIOLET
What cousin Jay?

CHARLIE
Cousin Jay in Philadelphia.

VIOLET
Oh. I don’t have any cousin in Philadelphia.
CHARLIE
You said your Cousin Jay in Philadelphia was working in Strategic Development.

VIOLET
I was just saying that to be friendly -- to make a kind of link... So your name’s Fred something?

CHARLIE
Yes, Fred something.

VIOLET
What’s your name?

CHARLIE
You really want to know?

Violet nods.

CHARLIE (CONT’D)
Why?

INT. GIRLS ROOM -- NIGHT
Violet with the others, studying but also talking.

ROSE
Packenstacker?

LILY
Omigod, how crazy. He’s completely insane -- and I almost dated him.

HEATHER
You can say that about a lot of guys.

VIOLET
I don’t think he’s crazy.

LILY
Making up an entirely fictitious identity? That’s not crazy? It’s insane, psycho, weird...

HEATHER
Violet’s identity is made up. I don’t think she’s crazy.

VIOLET
No, I am.
LILY
This is different. It’s pathetic... All that about “strategic development” he just made up -- don’t tell me that’s not weird.

HEATHER
I’m sure I’ve heard of “Strategic development” -- I think it’s something pretty important.

LILY
Omigod, Violet you’re not going to start going out with him? (watching her face) You’re not, are you?

VIOLET
Well, we had planned to go to the library...

LILY
Not to the stacks, I hope.

Violet nods.

VIOLET
Yes.

LILY
Omigosh, do you realize how dangerous that is?

VIOLET
Dangerous?

LILY
Yes. The stacks -- they’re dark and deserted. Anything could happen.

ROSE
It’s true. With the study habits prevailing at Seven Oaks, your body might not be found until spring.

LILY
Promise you won’t go with him into the stacks. Please.

VIOLET
Okay, I’ll suggest the Randall Room.

ROSE
Don’t suggest. Insist.
LILY
And please not at night.

VIOLET
Okay.

73 INT. RANDALL READING ROOM, LIBRARY -- DAY
At a table in the elegant “Randall Reading Room.”

VIOLET (O.S.)
What are you reading?

Fred shows her - a book of Walter Pater’s.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Have you chosen a topic for your final paper?

FRED
Uh, “The Decline of Decadence.”

VIOLET
You think decadence has declined?

FRED
Definitely. Big time. Major, major decline.

VIOLET
How?

FRED
“How” or “in what ways?”

Violet shrugs and shakes her head.

VIOLET
Either.

FRED
Okay, take the flit movement in literature, or homosexuality: It’s gone completely downhill. Right down the tubes.

He makes the sound: “Whchht.”

VIOLET
What do you mean?

FRED
Before, homosexuality was something refined, hidden, sublimated, aspiring to the highest levels of creativity and expression and often
achieving them. Now it just seems to be a lot of muscle-bound morons running around in T-shirts.

Violet looks a little shocked.

    FRED (CONT’D)
    It’s pretty disillusioning.

Violet pauses in thought for a long moment

    VIOLET
    Are you gay?

    FRED
    Not especially but in another era, it might of had some appeal. Now, I just don’t see the point.

    VIOLET
    I think you might be romanticizing the past.

    FRED
    We’ll never know. The past is... gone -- so we might as well romanticize it.

    VIOLET
    Hunh. You could be right.

    FRED
    I wanted to ask, how’s Lily?

    VIOLET
    Lily?

    FRED
    Yeah.

    VIOLET
    She’s okay.

74  EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY
Lily walking looking thoughtful.

75  EXT. TOWN STREET -- DAY
Just off campus a tall, thin fresh-faced California-type PAMPHLET GUY stands in the sidewalk as Lily approaches.

    PAMPHLET GUY
    Here, check it out A.L.A. No?.. Hello! Good afternoon!
LILY

Hi.

PAMPHLET GUY
Check it out. The A.L.A., have you heard of it? We have a meeting on Tuesday - you should come by.

Lily politely takes the brochure he hands her.

LILY
What’s the “A.L.A.”?

She examines the text more closely.

LILY (CONT’D)
Oh!

PAMPHLET GUY
Just join us -- come Tuesday. I think you’ll really like it...
A.L.A!

76 INT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Xavier, with Lily that evening, puts the brochure down, his tone exasperated.

LILY
So, a fellow was passing these out on the street and invited us to a meeting on Tuesday.

XAVIER
The “A.L.A.” -- oh my God.

LILY
I thought it was something related.

XAVIER
You’re kidding.

Lily, small voice, intimidated:

LILY
No.

XAVIER
"The A.L.A.?" “The Anal Love Association?” What do we have to do with that?

Lily looks down at the brochure again.
XAVIER (CONT’D)
You haven’t understood any of what we’ve talked about?

LILY
Talked about?...

XAVIER
The A.L.A. has nothing to do with us. Can’t you see that?

Xavier sighs heavily and walks away, then returns.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
The way we express love has meaning, it’s in the context of something beautiful. We’re following our Creator’s teaching, aspiring to an ideal -- a beautiful one that brings an inexpressible closeness, not just to each other, but to--

He grabs the brochure.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
For the A.L.A. and those like them, the love-act is just hedonistic pleasure-seeking, of a perverted nature -- there are words for people like that...! I can’t believe you’d think we had anything in common with them. We don’t, nothing, not an iota.

Lily stares back at him.

EXT. XAVIER’S HOUSE -- NIGHT
Lily is out the door and heading down the walkway, Xavier comes out after her.

XAVIER
Lily! Lily! Come back! Please, don’t be that way!

EXT. TOWN STREET -- NIGHT
Later, beyond Xavier’s neighborhood, on Lily as she walks.

TITLE CARD
The Lone Star -- Saloon & Dance Hall
INT. LONE STAR - NIGHT

Close on: feet during a line dance, lots of boots and heavy footwear -- just a couple pairs of light “Repetto” slippers amidst all the clomping. A wider view -- Violet, Rose, Heather, Jimbo, Fred amidst more “Western” dancers: Jimbo keen on a reserved Rose, Violet with Fred. Across the room, Lily enters looking sad. From the sidelines she watches the dancers. After a bit, the others notice her, Violet waving for her to join them. Lily shakes her head and dodges their looks. Finally, Violet breaks away from the line.

VIOLET
Omigosh, Lily, are you okay?

Lily shakes her head.

VIOLET
You don’t want to talk about it?

Lily, still silent, nods.

INT. LONE STAR, BAR AREA - NIGHT

The group is clustered at the far end of the bar as a less dance-able, sad and poignant Western ballad plays.

JIMBO
But... I don’t understand.

ROSE
You don’t understand what?

JIMBO
What is ‘non-procreative love-making’?

VIOLET
Well, it could be a lot of things.

JIMBO
Uh, yeah -- but in this case?

FRED
We don’t have to talk about this--

LILY
No, I don’t mind.

JIMBO
Could somebody just explain to me what this is all about?
VIOLET
Well, what it is is...uh--

LILY
Because Cathars don’t believe in procreative sex, they don’t have intercourse the usual way.

JIMBO
The usual way?

A brief, awkward pause.

FRED
You don’t have to talk about this.

LILY
No, it’s okay. Yes, the normal way, from the front -- where you can have procreation -- not from the other side... where you can’t.

A light goes on in Jimbo’s head.

JIMBO
The other side... That’s their religion?

LILY
Not exactly but that’s the direction their beliefs head in -- when they want to express love, that’s what they do.

JIMBO
And you liked that?

FRED
Come on.

LILY
It got pretty uncomfortable.

JIMBO
So, it started out comfortable and got uncomfortable later?

FRED
Man! Do we have to talk about this.

LILY
I don’t know.

JIMBO
How horrible. You poor girl.
HEATHER
What?

JIMBO
That’s terrible. What he obliged Lily to do.

ROSE
You know, some people like that.

81   INT. LONE STAR - NIGHT
Frank with Thor and others from the D.U. stand with brewskies watching the dancers and looking clueless. Frank catches sight of Violet and walks toward her.

82   INT. LONE STAR, BAR AREA - NIGHT
Frank comes up behind Violet.

FRANK
Violet. Can we talk?

Violet turns -- they all do.

83   INT. LONE STAR, BOOTH AREA - NIGHT
A group vacates a booth and Violet and Frank slip in. Rose, at the bar, looks critically in their direction. For a time Frank is tongue-tied, mostly looking down.

FRANK
You must be pretty mad at me.

VIOLET
No.

FRANK
You’re not?

Violet shakes her head.

VIOLET
Not really.

FRANK
But it was so terrible, how everything happened -- your walking in on us.

Violet shrugs.

VIOLET
Maybe it’s easier that way.
Frank looks down and goes silent.

FRANK
That bitch!

He looks down again. Violet waits for elaboration but there is none.

FRANK (CONT’D)
I can’t believe it. What a bitch. That bitch!

VIOLET
Priss?

FRANK
Of course Priss! What a bitch. Oh, man... That whole thing --
(imitates Priss)
“I’m so stressed, sad, depressed. I’m so tired. ‘I’m fatigued.’”
That’s what she said. She couldn’t sleep or something. She was so
depressed she had to get everything her own way--
(mimicking her)
"I’m so stressed -- frantic!" Man! What. A. Bitch!

VIOLET
Priss dumped you?

FRANK
No. It was mutual.

Frank goes silent again, then remembers something.

FRANK (CONT’D)
Listen, I have a question, do you remember that bean ball I left in your room?

Violet nods.

VIOLET
Yeah.

FRANK
Do you still have it?

VIOLET
Yeah.

FRANK
Do you think I could get it back? I lost the other one and with everything that’s happened, I’d really like to have it.
VIOLET
(cheerfully)
Nothing like some bean ball after a break up!

FRANK
Yeah. God you’re smart. You always get it. Whatever I say, you understand. Man!

INT. LONE STAR, DANCE FLOOR -- SHORTLY LATER

Violet walks back to the dance floor and rejoins the dancers. Fred and Lily already seem uncomfortably close.

INT. LONE STAR, BAR AREA - NIGHT

Thor, holding a brewski, approaches Heather.

THOR
Hey, Heather.

HEATHER
Hey.

THOR
Hey.

HEATHER
Hey.

THOR
Hey.

HEATHER
(with a flirting lilt)
Hey.

THOR
Hey.

Thor smiles and makes a fist, lightly touching it to Heather’s shoulder.

INT. LONE STAR, DANCE FLOOR -- SHORTLY AFTER

The dancing group continues to dance, Violet somewhat isolated. The flirting and closeness between Fred and Lily becomes difficult for her to bear. Violet abruptly leaves the line and heads for the door. Fred, seeing her go, stops.
EXT. LONE STAR -- NIGHT

Violet stalks out and heads at a fast pace towards the university. Fred comes out and catches up to her.

FRED
Violet, what’s wrong?

She won’t say anything and just keeps walking.

FRED (CONT’D)
Violet, please, stop!

VIOLET
I’m sorry... Lily is lovely. I can understand why you would be attracted to her. Now she’s free. Go. I understand.

Violet turns and runs off; Fred remains looking after her. Fade to black.

TITLE CARD
Roman Holidays

OMINOUS, SENTENTIOUS MUSIC SUCH AS ‘THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA.’

EXT. D.U. CLUBHOUSE GARDEN -- DAY

Late afternoon Roman Holidays party scene at the D.U. -- toga, towel and sheet-clad “Romans” booze it up while bad rock blares. The courtyard has been set up as a coliseum -- an inebriated, semi-dressed gladiator with a rubber sword staggers forward and, spouting idiot Latin, charges a Golden Lab disguised as a lion:

GLADIATOR
Aunque utque! Latin! Et... cetera!

Charging, the Gladiator falls on his face before reaching the dog who licks his face.

ROSE (O.S.)
This is what comes from not teaching Latin in the schools!

EXT. ADJACENT LAWN -- DAY

The girls (minus Lily), elegantly dressed in plausibly Roman style, watch. Violet, though still sad, comments indulgently.

VIOLET
Yah, it’s moronic and boorish, but also kind of fun, don’t you think?
They look back as a roar rises from the D.U. crowd.

A chariot race has begun, predominantly razor scooters and skate boards. As the course extends outside the courtyard, the “lion” takes off.

ROSE (ON & OFF)
The art and thought of the classical age were the glory of civilization. These are nothing but moronic fraternity high jinx -- not improving or uplifting in the least.

There are some smash-ups as the race descends into a spectacle of drunkenness and hopeless chaos.

Suddenly Rose looks faint and gasps, placing her hand over her face.

ROSE
Oh no -- what’s that... stench?!

Rose gags as if about to wretch. From the girls’ right comes another roar; they turn to see:

A horde of “barbarians” charges from Doar Dorm with animalistic shouts and calls, their dress and demeanor filthy and frightening, like something out of BRAVEHEART though in college wear. The barbarians rush the short distance to the DU grounds. Immediately a full melee breaks out.

VIOLET
I suppose this is what happens when decadence rots society from within--

HEATHER
And from with out.
VIOLET
And not the interesting decadence
of former times but the moronic
kind you get today.

She nods toward the on-going melee.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Such a society is, I fear, destined
to fail and be overrun.

Rose, hands over her nose, winces from the barbarian smell:

ROSE
Maybe that’s good.

They watch more melee as the scene fades, the fighting sounds
and wails of wounded Romans continuing over BLACK.

FADE UP ON GRAPHIC:
“Complainer” Headline: FRATERNITIES BANNED!

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94A  EXT. ALLEY ADJACENT COMPLAINER OFFICE -- DAY

Rick strides with his posse.

RICK
Finally! It’s about time those cesspools were drained!

---

95  EXT. D.U. CLUBHOUSE - DAY

A subdued Thor, Frank and their D.U. brothers bring out
furniture including a strange hippie beanbag armchair which
could be violet, lavender, mauve or purple in color.

THOR
What color would you say that chair is?

FRANK
That’s a chair? I have no idea.

---

96  INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- DAY

Rose and Heather study; Violet fretfully looks over Lily’s
well-made bed and ordered desk.

VIOLET
Guys have their preferences.
HEATHER
You’re just going to accept that?
You’re not going to do anything?

VIOLET
There’s nothing to be done. Fred
must know his own mind.

ROSE
Oh really? I seriously doubt that.

VIOLET
Come on, Lily’s got that slender,
delicately swelling, blossoming
beauty no man can resist.

ROSE
Okay, you’re probably right.

VIOLET
Poor Lily. Think of all Xavier put
her through.

A pause for thought.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
He just used her body -- and not
even the right side.

HEATHER
Have you ever noticed that good and
moral people tend to have large
posteriors. Not everyone, by any
means -- and I know it’s not
logical -- but it does seem to me
ture.

ROSE
The genetic link between morality
and large posteriors? Yes, I think
that’s well known.

HEATHER
You and Violet have that build --
it’s nice, you’re still very
attractive -- but are also sensible
and moralistic. I don’t. I have
narrow hips, but also no very
strong principles.

There’s a knock on the door.

VIOLET
Yes?

Violet goes to the door, glancing through the peephole before
opening it.
VIOLET (CONT’D)

Oh, hi.

Frank strolls in.

HEATHER
Hi, Frank.

FRANK
Hi, Heather -- wow.
(to Lily)
I guess you guys all heard -- the university is closing all the Roman-letter houses.

VIOLET
I’m sorry -- it’s terrible. This year’s Roman Holidays did seem like the end of civilization -- but even when civilization ends, people are going to need a place to stay.

FRANK
Man, it’s bad. It’s that bastard from the Complainer. Apparently someone from the administration has been reading it -- hard to believe. Bastard! Listen, we were wondering, if you thought it’d be okay if we stayed at the Suicide Center until we find somewhere else to go?

Violet looks to the others.

VIOLET
Okay, sure -- that sounds like a good stopgap measure.

FRANK
Thank you, thank you.... There was, uh, one more thing -- you remember that bean ball we talked about?

VIOLET
Yes.

FRANK
Do you think I could pick that up? After everything that’s happened, I could really use it right now.

VIOLET
Yes.

Violet goes to find it, Frank following. As she opens the box, he notices the note in his handwriting.
FRANK
What’s that?

VIOLET
What?

FRANK
That note.

VIOLET
Oh. One gets so few things written by hand anymore, I guess I kept it...

FRANK
Hunh.

Frank picks up the note and reads it aloud.

FRANK (CONT’D)
“Out for brewskies - back in a Gif” [hard “g”]. What’s a “Gif?” The scooter, like a Vespa, right?

HEATHER
That’s what I thought.

FRANK
I was thinking of getting one.

Frank looks to Heather with appreciation.

VIOLET
You must have meant “jiff.” “Back in a jiff” and then misspelled it, or spelled it in a non-standard way.

FRANK
Oh, yeah. Not a good speller.

Frank throws the bean ball up in the air and catches it rather skillfully.

FRANK (CONT’D)
Thanks! You’re great. Priss was such a bitch... Damn! Damn!
(leaving)
Hey, Heather -- Bye.
(to Rose)
Bye.

HEATHER & ROSE
Bye.

Violet steps out in the hall with Frank who corners her.
FRANK
Wow, Heather is really cute. She’s like, really attractive. Is she, uh, going out with anyone?

VIOLET
I think there might be something between her and Thor.

FRANK

TITLE CARD
The Ed School -- “Robertson Hall”

96A 102 EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

Rose walks with Violet who’s obviously quite upset and overwrought.

VIOLET
I can’t bear this tension with Lily. It’s terrible to have the group divided this way.

Rose looks up and guides Violet away from the path alongside Robertson Hall.

ROSE
Better not next to Robertson.

VIOLET
What?

ROSE
Didn’t you hear? Suicidal Ed School students have been going up to the roof and throwing themselves off.

VIOLET
But, it’s only two stories--

ROSE
Yes, I know, it’s terrible -- not high enough to kill but high enough to maim, and particularly dangerous for anyone below.

They head down the central path -- a safe distance away.

VIOLET
I’ve got to forget about Fred.

ROSE
But you really liked him.
VIOLET
This whole thing of a person meeting someone else first: it’s so arbitrary, it’s terrible and cruel - -

She looks to Rose for support but only gets a blank look.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
-- especially when that selection by “priority” is the opposite of how things ought to be.

ROSE
I have to say, I was wrong about Fred. I thought he was a playboy or oper-a-tor type. In fact, he’s just another guy rendered helpless by the attentions of a pretty girl.

They are interrupted by a commotion, shouts, from nearby Robertson Hall and a young woman following a young man across its roof.

ED SCHOOL GIRL
Cary! Cary! No! Don’t! I love you!

The young man looks over the balustrade and as the girl approaches, jumps -- out of frame. Close on Rose and Violet watching: the sound of a slight “thud” in the distance, then a sharp squeal of pain.

ED SCHOOL GUY (O.S.)
Owwww! Owwwwww!

ED SCHOOL GIRL
Why did you do that? Carry, I love you!

Rose and Violet resume walking.

ROSE
Isn’t the Ed School essentially a teachers’ college?

VIOLET
Yeah.

ROSE
What concerns me is, if they can’t even destroy themselves, how are they going to teach America’s Youth?
INT. GIRLS’ ROOM -- NIGHT

It’s quiet, the lights off: Violet, Rose and Heather in their bunks.

HEATHER
I’m really worried about Thor...
It’s hard for us to imagine how upsetting it is not knowing what the colors are.

ROSE
In fact it’s impossible for me to imagine.

HEATHER
When Thor sees a rainbow -- it’s only so much gibberish to him.
There was one this afternoon: omigosh he took it hard. Recently there was a parade in the city where the marchers carried rainbow-colored flags and banners --- Thor was so upset: he said he’d no idea what it meant --

ROSE
What kind of retard is he?

HEATHER
See, that’s the conclusion people immediately jump to.

VIOLET
Well, it’s somewhat understandable.

HEATHER
Not if you knew the full story.

ROSE
What’s the full story?

HEATHER
You know how parents love bragging about how precocious their children are? Thor’s parents had become precocity-addicts: constantly needing an ever-greater precocity “fix.” When he should have entered kindergarten, they instead pushed him into First Grade. “Oh, Thor skipped a grade,” they could tell their friends, most of whom were terrible precocity-addicts too.
ROSE
(suddenly alarmed)
What’s this all about?

HEATHER
What Thor’s parents failed to consider was the enormously important academic work done in nursery school -- key being the study of colors, which in Thor’s case were -- a complete blank. Can you imagine?... I don’t want to be too critical of Thor’s parents. I suppose they just assumed that colors are the sort of knowledge people pick up along the way -- like, for example not stepping on sidewalk cracks.

There’s an odd sound.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
What’s that?

VIOLET
(whispers)
I think Rose’s sleeping.

A silence, except for the sound of Rose’s breathing.

HEATHER
Am I boring?

VIOLET
No, not at all. When you’ve problems yourself, it’s great to hear someone else’s truly idiotic ones. Please go on.

A shocked pause.

HEATHER
Wow.

VIOLET
What?

HEATHER
When you said that about depressed people being mean, you weren’t joking.

VIOLET
I’m sorry -- you’re right. Please go on.

HEATHER
No.
VIOLET
I’m sorry. You know how I am.
Please continue.

On Heather’s face as she struggles with her resentment.

HEATHER
Thor decided he absolutely had to
learn all the colors, both primary
and mixed. He’s been hitting the
books really hard and thought he
had finally mastered them. Then in
town today he said “that traffic
light’s blue.” I had to say, no,
it’s green. He was really upset.
He’d been so sure it was blue.

VIOLET
The traffic lights in town are sort
of blue.

HEATHER
This was a green light --“cross at
the green, not in-between.”

VIOLET
Yah, we call them “green” but
they’re actually more bluish.

HEATHER
“Bluish” but still green.

VIOLET
No, they can be blue. I know it
sounds strange but--

HEATHER
Huhn. I don’t know about that.
Frankly, it’s hard to believe.
Anyway, we continued walking and a
naval officer passed us. Thor
blurted out, a bit aggressively,
“his uniform’s black.” I had to
correct him. Navy uniforms are
blue, “navy blue” -- that’s why
they’re called that way. Omigosh,
he was upset! It was as if he were
going to cry.

Rose awakes, a little alarmed.

VIOLET
You know, actually, that’s true:
navy uniforms are black.

HEATHER
They’re navy blue. That’s the
color’s name.
VIOLET
No, by mistake the Navy received a huge shipment of fabric that was black, not blue. So as not to waste it they decided to sew gold braid on and use it -- and found that everyone assumed it was blue, navy blue, when it was in fact black.

HEATHER
Still? Navy uniforms are still black?

VIOLET
Yes -- I believe so.

In the dark Heather gets out of bed and starts looking around for her clothes and dressing.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
What’s wrong?

HEATHER
I’ve got to tell Thor! There’s no telling what he might do!

The door opens and someone enters from outside.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
Who’s that?

LILY
It’s me.

VIOLET
Oh, hi, Lily.

LILY
Hi.

VIOLET
We were worried about you.

LILY
Why?

INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY

Violet, Rose, Heather and other volunteers pack bars of the “wonder” soap in oval cardboard packets. Behind them displaced DU members, sleeping bags lying around, lounge, play with bean balls, etc.
HEATHER
It’s getting to look like a homeless shelter in here.

VIOLET
These guys are not really “homeless” -- they lost their fraternity house. It’d be better to call them “house-less.”

HEATHER
Okay. It’s getting to look like a house-less shelter then.

Violet turns to some of the D.U. refugees.

VIOLET
Hey, could you guys help?!

Frank and another approach. (Thor, in the background, climbs back in his sleeping bag, depressed and dejected.)

FRANK
Sure, what’s up?

VIOLET
We need help packing this soap which we’ll then distribute to Doar Dorm residents.

FRANK
Cool.

VIOLET
What would you say are the most effective means to fight depression?

Frank is completely stumped. His D.U. brothers listen in, making faces.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Maybe some of your D.U. brothers have an idea.

The D.U. guys think.

DU GUY
Uh, beer?

FRANK
No -- beer’s a downer. Cocktails -- hard liquor, “spirits” -- is what really gives you a lift.

VIOLET
It’s interesting what you say. My Cousin Jay’s a medical officer
Philadelphia: he says alcoholism -- by which I mean chronic, excessive consumption of alcohol -- is the primary self-administered treatment for depression.

DU GUY
Cool.

VIOLET
No. Ultimately it leaves you much worse off than before.

DU GUY
Oh no, not me. I just boot, and then feel fine.

VIOLET
By “boot,” do you mean “vomit?”

DU GUY
Yes.

VIOLET
No, none of the effective anti-suicide treatments involve vomiting.

D.U. guy thinks.

DU GUY
Huh... a treatment for depression that doesn’t involve vomiting...

FRANK
Uh -- hygiene?

VIOLET
Exactly. It’s very important. That’s why we have such hope in the wonder bar. Do you know its scent?

They shake their heads. Violet cups in the palms of her hands and offers it up to them. They inhale deeply -- and are (somewhat) transported.

FRANK
Wow.

DU GUY
It’s guu--uud.

VIOLET
Transformative, we think.

HEATHER
This is so exciting. -- it’s really great, isn’t it.
On Rose’s skeptical visage as she listens:

HEATHER (CONT’D)
I can just see those guys opening the packages, taking out the soap, smelling it and then excitedly going to wash themselves. For them finally to be clean, free from that horrible acrid smell, how different the world might look to them.

VIOLET
Yes.

Violet, looking around, notices Thor lying prostrate in his sleeping bag, his head buried in his arms.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
What’s wrong with Thor?

FRANK
I don’t know -- he asked me about the weather. When I told him it looked “very gray,” he looked around -- and seemed really upset.

Thor lies with his head buried under his arm.

HEATHER
I better go to him.

Heather heads toward where Thor is.

FRANK
Thor’s gotten so worked up over this color business. My God, it’s weird! Didn’t we all learn that stuff in kindergarten?!

INT. GIRLS’ ROOM/HALL -- NIGHT

Violet studies at her desk, then gets up as if taking a break. As she walks there’s a distinct clack sound. She’s wearing tap shoes, walking delicately so as not to make too much noise. But the “clacks” are still pretty notable. She heads down the hall toward the bathroom -- suddenly a hall door swings open and MAD MADGE leans out.

MAD MADGE
What do you think you’re doing?!

VIOLET
Going to the bathroom.

MAD MADGE
Making a racket like that?
VIOLET
I’m sorry, did I disturb you?

MAD MADGE
What do you think? Why are you wearing tap shoes -- are you out of your mind?

VIOLET
Yes, I think that’s clear.

Quite a few others stick their heads out.

MAD MADGE
Oh, I’m so sick of that.

POSITIVE POLLY
Oh, really? I think it’s cute.

Madge gives Polly a dirty look.

MAD MADGE
Since you won’t be treating us to one of your hilariously incompetent tap routines, why don’t you take those things off?

VIOLET
No, we’ll do the routine... Rose!

Violet hurries back toward the room, no longer trying to soften her clacks:

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Madge wants to see the routine!

MAD MADGE
No --

Rose retreats within the room to put the music on.

MAD MADGE (CONT’D)
--I don’t want to see your absurd routine -- I asked you to take those things off!

POSITIVE POLLY
Please Madge, please, we need a break--

VIOLET
Just briefly, please, it’s helpful to have an audience-- Rose, the music.

MADGE
I’m going to report you!
“Things Are Looking Up” blasts from the stereo. Violet begins her dance down the hall -- it’s joyous and amazing. Rose appears, with taps on, and joins in. Mad Madge slams her door. As Violet and Rose tap up and down the hall and stairs, their hall mates enjoy the spectacle.

INT. MR. BLACK’S SEMINAR - DAY

The seminar classroom of the wise and elegant CHARLES BLACK -- the students respond to one of his questions.

MR. BLACK
Susanne?

COED
For me it’d be, Madame Curie, Simone de Beauvoir and, Margaret Sanger.

MR. BLACK
Good. Violet?

VIOLET
I would say: Richard Straus, Roderick Charleston and... Chubbert Checker.

MR. BLACK
(pronouncing)
“Rickard” Straus, the composer?

VIOLET
Yes -- that was one of his posts.

MR. BLACK
I’m not familiar with the others -- could you tell us who they are and what links them?

VIOLET
Yes.

Violet swivels slightly to include the other students, speaking slowly for their benefit.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
Each one of these men started an international dance craze -- “Rickard” Straus, the Waltz; Roderick Charleston, the Charleston, and Chubbert Checker, better known as “Chubby”, the dance we know as the Twist.
MR. BLACK  
(smilin)
Why do you consider starting a dance craze so important?

VIOLET  
(surprised)
Dance crazes enhance and elevate the human experience, bringing together millions of people in a joyous celebration of our God-given faculties and passing these delightful modes of physical expression down through the generations -- though not so much any more.

A pause.

MR. BLACK
I thought -- well, I guess I assumed that “the Charleston” was named after the city of Charleston, South Carolina.

Violet maintains a studied and level expression.

VIOLET
No... Though that misconception is quite widely held. It was Roderick Charleston. Usually behind some great creative phenomenon is a person, not a town.

INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY

Freak and Violet practice a song and dance version of “Things are Looking Up,” the chorus dancing behind:

VIOLET  
(singing)
Oh things are looking up,  
Since love looked up at me!

Priss pops into the room and stands by observing. Debbie, in the chorus, notices Priss and stops, as do others.

DEBBIE
Priss!

PRISS
Hi Debs.

FREAK
Break!

Freak stalks off; Priss approaches Violet hesitantly.
PRISS
Violet, I am so sorry... You must hate me. I know what I did was wrong -- but, if things ended so easily between you and Frank, isn’t it best that they did so? Isn’t it better to break with someone so unreliable?

VIOLET
What?

PRISS
What I’m saying is, I know now I should never have gotten involved with anyone. I was still on the rebound from Josh. But, inadvertently, I did something that you must acknowledge as positive. Aren’t you much better off being rid of a... numbskull like that?

DEBBIE
Priss, come on -- don’t apologize to her! Of course what you did was right.

PRISS
I know it sounds crazy, but if I did help you disentangle from Frank, isn’t that for the best? Frank was unworthy of you, Violet -- you must know that. Let’s be honest, he’s an idiot, a moron. How would it have been, your whole life attached to a dope like that?

FRANK (O.S.)
Priss?

Priss turns. Frank, with some DU guys behind him, stands with a crushed look on his face.

FRANK (CONT’D)
How can you say something like that, Priss? I’m not a... moron. I... loved you.

PRISS
Well that wasn’t very bright of you, was it? I was clearly on the rebound.

104 INT. DINING HALL -- DAY

Tight on Lily eating, widen on the whole group having breakfast. Violet seems somewhat sad, Heather a bit high.
HEATHER
This is so exciting -- when should we go over there?

ROSE
I don’t think there’s any rush.

HEATHER
No, I’d like to go as soon as possible. Doar Dorm has the university’s highest fatality rate, as well as the worst hygiene. This could really change things.

LILY
The highest suicide rate?

VIOLET
No, the highest fatality rate -- it’s not certain what percentage were intentional and how many just due to a temporary unawareness of gravity’s laws.

HEATHER
I can just see those guys getting the little gold packages, opening them and finding the terrifically good-smelling soap inside. Despite their habitual reticence toward hygiene, the wonderful scent and cute packaging should prove irresistible. And, once clean, they’ll start to see the world with new eyes. The change could be dramatic. Doar Dorm could soon become -- “Dior Dorm.”

ROSE
I doubt that, to be perfectly, absolutely honest.

VIOLET
No, I love the idea -- Dior Dorm. I adore optimism, even when completely absurd, perhaps especially then.

HEATHER
Great! Ready? Let’s go.

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

The girls walk in the direction of Doar Dorm, Heather slightly ahead.
HEATHER
Let’s hurry.

She starts to jog -- Violet catches up to her.

VIOLET
Let’s not let our hopes up get too high, Heather.

HEATHER
No, you said yourself -- the Wonder Bar is transformative.

Fred, walking the other way, spots them.

FRED
Hey, Violet!

Fred falls in with them.

FRED (CONT’D)
Hi. Where are you going?

Violet is a little nervous and tongue-tied.

VIOLET
Doar Dorm.

LILY
Fred! Hi!

Lily runs up to fall in by Fred just as they turn the corner and see: Outside Doar Dorm and pouring out of its doors Doar Dorm guys and a few Doar Dorm “women” throw small oval discs back and forth in an enormous frisbee-like free for all. One of the discs falls at Violet’s feet: it’s the oval package they used for the Wonder Bar, never opened. The girls look to each other, appalled. Two guys jump for the same disc, bashing into each other, one dropping like a stone as if dead.

HEATHER
Oh, no.

VIOLET
Omigod.

106

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

The group walks back from Doar Dorm, Heather upset.

LILY
I guess it wasn’t realistic to expect Doar Dorm to turn into “Dior Dorm” overnight.
HEATHER
They wouldn’t even open them: they said without the soap, the discs wouldn’t fly properly.

Rose turns to Fred.

ROSE
Are you coming Friday? Violet is launching her dance craze at the Lone Star.

Fred’s impressed.

FRED
Really? That’s great. What’s the dance?

ROSE
The “Sambola” -- the Devil’s Dance.

FRED
Cool.
(to Lily)
We’ll go, right?

LILY
Yes, I’d like to but I have several papers to finish. But I’d like to...

INT. DORM BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Violet and Rose beginning their evening ablutions.

ROSE
I’m beginning to learn things about myself. I’m actually a really poor judge of character--

VIOLET
No--

ROSE
No, I am. A terrible excess of opinion distorts my judgement. I was completely wrong about him, he’s not a playboy or oper-a-tor type at all. He’s a loser.

VIOLET
I’m the biggest loser of anyone...
First semester, "Forget Frank."
Second semester, "Forget Fred."

ROSE
Have you forgotten him?
Violet, eyes watering, shakes her head “no.”

ROSE (CONT’D)
I don’t think you should give up on him.

Rose spits the toothpaste into the sink.

ROSE (CONT’D)
One thought reassures me: Our stupidity must be part of God’s Divine Plan. He must have made us stupid for a reason.

VIOLET
Because He wants us to have kids? “Be fruitful and multiply.”

ROSE
Yes. Probably.

TITLE CARD
The Lone Star -- Debut of the “Samboloa” Dance Craze

INT. LONE STAR -- NIGHT

Violet, sharply dressed, completes a music check with the manager GUS near the dance area, then goes to Rose at the bar where cocktails have just been served. Violet gives a worried look around the sparsely populated bar.

VIOLET
It’s great! Thanks, Gus. (to Rose) I don’t see how we’re going to start a dance craze if no guys show up.

ROSE
Most guys aren’t very good at the dance craze thing anyway.

VIOLET
Yeah, but still...

Heather enters, out of breath, dressed for the dance but otherwise preoccupied.

HEATHER
Very good news! I was just at my procrastination seminar and the two guys from Doar Dorm -- had showered. It was pretty clear they’d used soap -- Omigosh, what a
difference! It seems they’d been throwing the packages so energetically a soap bar fell out -- the unfamiliar, ivory-like object intrigued them. One thing led to another and -- well, it was just as you said. Isn’t that great?

Violet and Rose nod. Violet takes a few steps, looking around.

VIOLET
Oh look, here’s Jimbo.

JIMBO
Where is everybody?

VIOLET
This is pretty bad.

INT. THE OAK BAR -- NIGHT

Lily and Fred study and talk at one of the bar’s corner booths. Fred checks his watch.

FRED
Aren’t we going to be late for Violet’s dance craze?

LILY
You want to go to that?

FRED
Yeah.

LILY
You’re kidding.

FRED
No. I love dance crazes.

LILY
Gosh, you’re strange...

FRED
Aren’t we already late?

LILY
No, it’s later on, like 10 I think... I have to confess I’ve started losing patience with Violet. Depression calls for serious treatment -- medication, psycho-pharmaceuticals, talk therapy--
FRED
But are those approaches really so effective? Despite all the medication and therapy, Ed School students are still throwing themselves off Robertson Hall. Violet’s ideas might seem a little off-beat--

LILY
A little off-beat! Omigod. I don’t know how much you know about Violet but there’s some pretty weird stuff. “Violet,” “Violet Wister” is not even her real name.

FRED
It isn’t?

LILY
No. It’s “Emily Tweeter.” Apparently when she was eleven years old she went completely crazy and has had several relapses since, so it’s a little worrisome to have her counsel nearly suicidal individuals--

FRED
I can’t believe it.

LILY
What?

FRED
“Emily Tweeter” -- in First Grade I had an enormous crush on a girl with that name.

LILY
You remember that?

FRED
Yeah. It was pretty huge, Dr. Zhivago stuff. Any idea or even mention of her filled me with emotion. Admittedly I had a very strange perspective on the world then; I don’t think my brain was fully formed or functioning properly -- everything was a bit of a dream. Then a bizarre thing happened. I was torn about whether to shout my passion from the rooftops or keep it secret. In a sort of compromise I wrote Emily’s name, in crayon, on a scrap of paper, then carefully hid it in my
bookcase where no one else could possibly find it. So, my secret was expressed but, ostensibly, safe -- I’d no idea of the weird and inexplicable events that would follow.

Lily looks a little worried.

LILY
What?

FRED
Two years afterwards I was walking up the street a couple of blocks from my house when I spotted a slip of paper lying, face up, on the sidewalk near someone’s trash -- the name “Emily Tweeter” written on it in crayon in my own child-like handwriting.

He stares into Lily’s eyes with an expression of total bafflement and candor.

FRED (CONT’D)
It was completely, utterly weird. How could my secret, so well hidden, come to land on the sidewalk of Henderson Drive?

Lily tries to help him.

LILY
Could, uh--

FRED
No. I’ve thought long and hard about it -- there’s no rational explanation. This was my first encounter with the bizarre and inexplicable. When I later learned about the Bermuda Triangle and other such mysterious phenomena, I knew it was probably all true as I’d had this early brush with the uncanny. From a very young age it became clear to me that rationalism cannot explain life’s deepest mysteries.

LILY
And you think this girl was Violet?

FRED
I have to say I didn’t recognize her. She was very young then. Do you have any idea if Violet might
have attended Willamette Montessori?

LILY
In Portland?

Fred nods. The barman arrives with a tray of cocktails -- much to their surprise.

FRED
We didn’t order these.

BARMAN
Compliments of the guy at the bar.

Lily and Fred look toward the bar -- Xavier, wearing a suit, nods to them.

INT. THE CORNER BAR -- NIGHT

Shortly after, Xavier is with them in the booth.

XAVIER
...It was so brutal how it ended between us. I know I was too angry and a bit, crazy but I thought what we had was stronger than that. That you would not just walk away after one disagreement. With all we had been through, couldn’t you have just forgiven me...

Lily says nothing for a few moments.

LILY
It wasn’t just that...

XAVIER
Oh, you mean, my Cathar beliefs?

Lily nods. Xavier is a little emotional.

XAVIER (CONT’D)
Well, I am no longer a Cathar.

LILY
How’s that possible?

XAVIER
It’s been very difficult.

FRED
You’ve entirely dropped your adherence to the Cathar faith?

XAVIER
Yes. I have.
FRED
Good. Normally I’d be reluctant to comment on anyone’s religion...

XAVIER
What?

FRED
I’m sorry, I guess I’m a bit of a bigot -- I could never take seriously a religion that worships on Tuesdays. All the major religions require worship on the weekend -- Friday, Saturday or Sunday. I find it really laudatory that people should sacrifice their weekend time to Worship God...

He checks his watch.

XAVIER
Having sabbath on Tuesday always seemed very bizarre to me. It is not right.

FRED
We’d better get to the Lone Star--

LILY
Why are you so concerned about that?

FRED
It’s not as if international dance crazes start every day.

EXT. TOWN STREET -- NIGHT
Fred, Lily and Xavier hurry down the sidewalk -- semi-jogging.

FRED
We better hurry.

They pick up the pace. Lily seems a little less keen on getting to their destination --

EXT. LONE STAR -- NIGHT
The three approach the Lone Star, just as Rose, Heather, Violet and Jimbo come out looking downcast.

FRED
What’s wrong?
VIOLET
Another fiasco.

114  INT. GIRLS ROOM -- NIGHT

All four are in bed in the dark.

VIOLET
Sometimes our struggle reminds me of the Myth of Sisyphus.

HEATHER
Who?

VIOLET
The myth about the guy who pushes an enormous rock up a hill, only to have it keep rolling back down again.

HEATHER
Oh yeah. What a knucklehead. The important thing to remember is that he was mythical -- he never really existed.

LILY
Violet, did you spend any part of your education at a school called Willamette Montessori?

VIOLET
In Oregon? Why?

115  INT.  COFFEE COTTAGE -- DAY

Thor, Jimbo, and the girls huddled inside on a drab day; they glance at Fred who speaks on his phone on the Coffee Cottage’s porch -- a drizzle falls outside.

THOR
Would you say that today is “very gray?”

Jimbo looks around.

JIMBO
I’d say so. Maybe “blue-gray.”

Thor looks around, trying to factor this in. Fred finishes the call and comes in.

FRED
I’m sorry, her name wasn’t “Emily Tweeter” but “Lucy Wurlitzer.” I
know they’re not very similar: I’m beginning to realize that the human memory is not the foolproof instrument we sometimes imagine. What’s worse it seems everyone knew all about my obsession, including my parents and siblings -- precisely those from whom I most wanted it kept.

ROSE
So from your earliest years you were already a playboy or opera-tor type.

FRED
Yes. I suppose that’s why secrecy seemed so desirable.

LILY
Violet, can I talk to you?

Lily, having silently followed all this, stands and nods to Violet, who gets up too. As they walk to the coffee counter, Lily whispers to her confidentially.

LILY (CONT’D)
What’s the plural of doufus?

VIOLET
Doufi.

LILY
Not doufuses?

VIOLET
You can say either: “doufi” respects the Latin root and so is preferred. “Doufuses” is also correct, although a bit inelegant.

LILY
You’ve thought a lot about this.

VIOLET
Yes. I’ve had to.

LILY
Hmmm.

VIOLET
What? What is it?

LILY
I like Fred -- he’s a nice guy and I can see why you like him... Any mass of people, such as you might find in a large university or high school, divides into many different
groups. Normally there’s a “cool
crowd,” and then variously less
cool crowds. When I first met you
and Rose, I thought you were the
“cool crowd” -- and, in many ways,
you are. I find your perfume and
fashion sense excellent.

VIOLET
Thank you!

LILY
But...there’s a reason, I think,
why you are so strongly attracted
to doufi. And it’s not an
accident. How different groups
divide up...

While Lily speaks Violet notices something.

HEATHER (O.S.)
Thor! No!

116  EXT. COFFEE COTTAGE -- DAY

They turn in time to see Thor run into the street followed by
Heather. The sun is out and its rays, bouncing off the dark
clouds still hanging in the sky, create an exquisite lighting
effect. Everyone follows them into the street. In the
distance a rainbow has formed -- this is what panicked
Heather. Thor runs hell for leather toward the beautiful
arc, Heather after him.

HEATHER
Thor! No! Stop! Please, stop!

TIGHT ON: Thor’s face as he runs, torn with emotion.

VIOLET
He’s headed for Robertson Hall!

117  EXT. ROBERTSON HALL -- DAY

Thor disappears inside.

118  INT. ROBERTSON HALL -- DAY

Thor runs up the stairs, Heather behind.

119  EXT. ROBERTSON ROOF -- DAY

Thor runs toward the balustrade, Heather comes up from the
stairs, almost too winded to call:
At the balustrade Thor stops for a moment and gazes at the rainbow in its terrifying splendor. He points first to the topmost band of color, then each succeeding one:

THOR
Red!... Orange!... Yellow!... Green!  
Blue! Indigo! Violet!...  
Hallelujah, Lord God, thank you!

Heather reaches him and they embrace, gazing at the rainbow together, Thor’s face wet with tears of joy.

THOR (CONT’D)  
Education! We can learn the subjects we set out to master, no matter how hard or impossible they may seem. Thank you! Thank you -- I wasn’t sure I was going to make it!

Together they look to the rainbow horizon. Thor studies and nods his head again toward it, proud of his new competence.

THOR (CONT’D)  
Magenta... Pink... Mauve...

119A EXT. SEVEN OAKS -- DAY  
Rose and Violet, thoughtful, study together on benches.

VIOLET  
I miss my nice American friend.

ROSE  
No, you’re mistaken.

VIOLET  
Oh come on, you go to London for four weeks--

ROSE  
Six.

VIOLET  
It’s very dangerous, parents letting their children travel. They see them off at the airport and don’t know what they’ll be getting back.

Rose reflects on this.

ROSE  
I don’t know what you’re referring to.
VIOLET
You’re not from London.

ROSE
I’m from London. I was there, and now I’m here. I’m “from” London.

VIOLET
I just miss my nice American friend.

ROSE
Nice.
(caricatures a nasal American accent)
(reverts to type)
Those are not adjectives I like to use. God gave us abilities -- he requires that we use them: “Good. Better. Best.” “Excelsior! Higher!” Only excellence can glorify the Lord. Vulgarity is, in essence, blasphemous.

TITLE CARD
In the Matter of the Doufi

120  EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

Lily and Violet come down a path, both in frilly “Damsels” costumes.

LILY
I’m sorry what I was saying before -- of course you’re not irretrievably linked to the doufi or even that such distinctions are valid--

VIOLET
No, don’t apologize -- I probably do have a “doufi” orientation. But behind “coolness” isn’t there a certain repressing, squashing down or at lack of cultivation of one’s humanity?

LILY
Oh, so you think cool people have less humanity?

VIOLET
No, of course not, I don’t think cool people are entirely inhuman -- just enough to be cool.
LILY
In our society there’s all this propaganda in favor of uniqueness, eccentricity, etc, but does the world really want or need more of such traits? Aren’t such people usually terrible pains in the neck? What the world needs to work properly is a large mass of normal people -- I’d like to be one of those -- sorry.

VIOLET
But you will still do the part?

LILY
Yeah. Of course.

TITLE CARD
Dress Rehearsal

121 INT. SUICIDE CENTER -- DAY
In the long dance mirror first Lily then Violet appear, in their extravagant costumes for the musical.

LILY
Omigod we look ridiculous.

VIOLET looks at their reflection, serene.

VIOLET
Yes. I think that’s good.

They disappear from frame. Cut to Freak cueing the music on the Suicide Center stereo system. The first notes of the “Damsels” overture begin.

VIOLET (CONT’D)
So do you know every number from every Fred Astaire movie?

FRED
No, there were two in our school musical. I know those.

VIOLET
But did performing those two numbers help you overcome adolescent feelings of discouragement and despair?

FRED
Absolutely.
VIOLET
(calls)
Freak!

Freak responds to her signal, pressing "play" on the stereo boombox. The song starts -- Fred begins the quiet lyric:

FRED
If I should suddenly start to sing,
Or stand on my head or anything,
Don't think that I've lost my senses,
It's just that my happiness finally commences.

Fred takes Violet's hand and leads her out of the building.

FRED (CONT'D)
The long, long ages of dull despair
Are turning into thin air
And it seems that suddenly I've
Become the happiest guy alive--

EXT. QUADRANGLE -- DAY

Fred and Violet emerge from the drab building into the more glorious world of a Seven Oaks version movie musical -- Violet joins him in song.

VIOLET & FRED
Things are looking up
I've been looking the landscape over
And it's covered with 4 leaf clover
Oh things are looking up
Since love looked up at me!

Bitter was my cup
But no more will I be the mourner
For I've certainly turned the corner
Oh things are looking up Since love looked up at me

Others from the cast move in behind them, with some pairing off -- Lily with Xavier, Thor with Heather, Frank and Freak with Rose, Jimbo with Priss:

ENSEMBLE
See the sunbeams
Every one beams
Just because of you
Love's in session
And my depression
Is unmistakably through

They pass Doar Dorm, now a paradise of decorous Dior-ness.
DOAR DORM CHORUS
Things are looking up
It’s a great little world we live in
Oh we’re happy as pups
Since love looked up at us.

The song continues, then as the music fades an “iris” fade out of the image -- then partially re-opens:

CLOSE UP of a smiling Violet -- lighting, location and costume are dark and atmospheric. The music to a future hit dance song starts:

VIOLET
(a big smile)
Hey, everybody! Let’s--

INT. THE LONE STAR/DANCE LOCALE -- NIGHT

The music goes full blast, the iris opens fully: Violet is in a dance locale, perhaps the Lone Star with better lighting:

VIOLET
do the -- “Sam-bo-la!”

To the dance hit’s irresistible beat, Violet does the “Sambola” -- soon joined by the others, except Rose -- the camera moves among the dancers a la “American Bandstand.” Rose sits, watching critically. Jimbo goes to her.

JIMBO
You’re not dancing?

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE
Looks to me like just another... Devil Dance. I’m waiting for a dance of truth, and beauty, and righteousness. A dance that glorifies, not the body, but the Lord.

JIMBO
Wow. You might have a long wait...

Credits roll: Subsequently Freak’s partner tires -- he invites Rose to dance; she drops her resistance and joins in with great skill.