

# When Lightning Strikes

by

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"Words are, in my not so humble opinion,  
our most inexhaustible source of magic, capable  
of both inflicting injury, or remedying it."

-Albus Dumbledore, *Harry Potter & The Deathly Hallows*

EXT. THE TRAIN - ENGLAND - NIGHT

Black stratus clouds sprawl across a soot-stained sky, blanketing a STALLED PASSENGER TRAIN in nebulous film.

A FALLEN PINE TREE blocks the train tracks, uprooted by A BABY BLUE FORD ANGLIA 105E DELUXE smashed into the base of the tree. It steams in curled spirals towards the sky.

THREE RAILROAD WORKERS rush towards the chaos in the storm.

The CRACKLE of thunder rolls against the top of the caravan. Fat raindrops pound the train's window, blurring the image of-

INT. THE TRAIN - ENGLAND - NIGHT

JOANNE ROWLING, 25, who gazes out onto the obliterated English countryside, mind elsewhere.

The thunderstorm builds, GROWLS into the train, causing a SLEEPING ELDERLY WOMAN to stir in the seat next to her.

TWO BROTHERS, a BESPECTACLED GRADE-SCHOOLER and a PIMPLE-FACED MIDDLE SCHOOLER, play with twigs in seats across the aisle.

They hit their sticks together like sparring swords.

A SNACK CART pushed by a petite, ELFISH MAN, with large ears and bushy eyebrows, rolls by, exploding with treats-

Chocolate clusters, candy canes, multi-colored jelly beans, lollipops, rock cakes, marshmallows...

Spotting a potential sale, the Elfish Man yanks the cart to a halt in front of the boys, now salivating.

ELFISH MAN  
Any sweeties, gents?

The boys whip their heads towards their MOTHER. The littler brother tugs on her sleeve.

BROTHERS  
(in unison)  
Mum. Mum. *Mummmmmmmmm*.

MOTHER  
No.

The boys huff.

ELFISH MAN  
Better luck next time, eh?

The Elfish Man heaves the cart down the aisle.

The little brother picks up his stick, slashes it against his big brother's arm.

LITTLE BROTHER  
Got you!

The big brother grips his bicep.

BIG BROTHER  
You cheated.

LITTLE BROTHER  
Never let your guard down, big brother.

BIG BROTHER  
Fine, but mine isn't a sword anymore... it's a light saber.

He hums the lightsaber's VRUMMMMM! as he clashes his stick against his sibling's.

BIG BROTHER (CONT'D)  
And I just sliced through your sword.

The little boy frowns.

LITTLE BROTHER  
This isn't a sword.

BIG BROTHER  
What is it, then?

A mischievous grin lights up the boy's face.

LITTLE BROTHER  
A wand.

Joanne's head pivots towards the children.

BIG BROTHER  
A wand?

LITTLE BROTHER  
AVADA KEDAVRA!

He swishes his stick at his big brother.

The older boy drops his stick and CLUTCHES HIS THROAT. He CHOKES loudly.

The little brother holds steady, his eyes narrow as his wand trembles ever so slightly in his hand.

The big brother fights for breath. His face balloons up, turns purple. He takes a final, choppy breath, then—

Joanne blinks, SNAPS OUT OF IT.

The kids are fine.

BACK TO:

LITTLE BROTHER (CONT'D)

This isn't a sword.

BIG BROTHER

What is it, then?

The same mischievous grin lights up the little boy's face.

LITTLE BROTHER

It's a Red-Ryder-carbine-action-air-rifle. PEW PEW PEW PEW!

Joanne sighs, turns towards the wet window.

EXT. THE TRAIN — ENGLAND — NIGHT

Through the glass we see Joanne, who stares down towards the ashen-cloaked ground, watching rain bounce off the metal tracks.

But her daydream is interrupted by A LITERAL BOLT OF LIGHTENING that strikes outside, the reflection of which SLICES DOWN HER FOREHEAD.

Joanne's eyes dart upwards.

INT. THE TRAIN — ENGLAND — NIGHT

She yanks a large bag up from under her seat, tears through it. She pulls out books, hair ties, chapstick, tissues, empty food wrappers...

She GROANS, throws the bag to the ground.

Her eyes move around the train, scanning the VARIOUS PASSENGERS.

She eyes the elderly woman next to her – still asleep.

She spins around in her chair. TWO GOTH TEENAGERS make out and grope each other aggressively.

JOANNE

Um.

They continue to consume one another.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Nada.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

(louder)

So sorry to bother you—

The couple pulls apart, the girl's lips BRIGHT RED from snogging.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Do either of you happen to have a pen?

The boy READJUSTS his shorts. Joanne looks down, immediately looks back up.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Oh! ...Never mind.

She spins back around, gnaws at her lip.

She stands, pushes past the elderly woman, who finally wakes up as she squeezes by.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Joanne steps into the aisle.

She approaches TWO MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN sharing a paper bag of chips (that's french fries, you Yankee wanker).

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Hi there, hello. Do either of you have a pen I could borrow?

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Oh, a pen. Hmmm. I don't think so. Milly, you got a pen?

MILLY  
No pen, love. Would you like a  
chip?

She extends the greasy bag.

JOANNE  
That's alright, thanks.

Joanne advances down the aisle.

She stops in front of a YOUNG MOTHER, who rocks her NEWBORN  
to sleep in her lap.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Hi. Do you have a pen?

MOTHER  
What?

JOANNE  
(louder)  
A PEN!

The sleeping baby wakes, cries.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Ooh, so sorry!

She rushes further down the train car, spots a BUSINESS MAN  
with a trendy '90s haircut and spray-tan. He stares at his  
BLINKING PAGER.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Hi there—

BUSINESS MAN  
(without looking up)  
Not interested.

Joanne startles.

JOANNE  
No, I—

BUSINESS MAN  
I'm married.

JOANNE  
Uh... Right.

She turns towards the entire train.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
(loudly)  
Hello, everyone. Sorry to bother  
you. Does anyone have a pen?

A few people look up.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
It would be a huge help if I could  
borrow one. I'm a writer – aspiring  
writer – and I've just had an idea  
for my first book. But if I don't  
write it down I'll lose it!

No one cares.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
A pencil would do. Or a marker,  
even a crayon, really. An eyeliner  
pencil?!

She laughs nervously.

The passengers resume reading, stare at their laps, look out  
the window.

She huffs, squints further down the aisle.

There, a dozen rows back, is a UNIVERSITY STUDENT in a  
Cambridge sweatshirt doing a crossword... with a PEN!

Joanne's eyes light up, she makes a run for it.

She stops, composes herself.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Sorry to bother, but may I borrow  
your pen, just for a moment? It is  
*unimaginably* important.

The student looks to his pen, frowns.

STUDENT  
I'm in the middle of a life-  
changing crossword. Sorry lass.

Joanne tries not to explode.

JOANNE  
Right, of course. Sorry to bother  
you then.

But she doesn't leave. She just stands there, eyes huge.





INT. ROWLING DINING ROOM, TUTSHILL, ENGLAND – NIGHT

Outdated furniture. An ornate rug. Rosebud wallpaper covered in family photographs: two little girls and their adoring parents – on holiday, birthdays, and most recently, at Joanne's graduation from University. Ornamented green garlands drape across the wall.

It's a quaint, sweet home – if not a little sad.

Joanne, wearing a bright red paper crown, sits at the dining room table next to her sister DIANNE, two years younger and in a similarly vibrant headdress.

Adjacent to the girls is their father, PETER, a clinically serious and no-nonsense man. No Christmas hat for this Grinch.

A meat pie, potatoes, carrots, a jug of wine, and four plates adorn the table. The fourth plate, situated across from Peter, sits above an empty wooden chair.

DIANNE

It's about a magical boy?

JOANNE

A wizard, yeah.

DIANNE

And it's a children's book?

JOANNE

Seven children's books. For his seven years at Hogwarts.

DIANNE

Hogwarts?!

JOANNE

I know it sounds mental Di, but the school, the professors, the spells... it was less of an idea than a real place.

Peter kneads his forehead in his hand.

DIANNE

Wow. Jo. It sounds... ambitious. I can't wait to read it.

PETER

Please don't talk about this in front of your mother.

DIANNE

Dad—

PETER

She doesn't need to hear it. Not on Christmas.

JOANNE

Mom's always supported my writing.

PETER

When you were a child, yes, but where has it gotten you since? We don't want you to end up penniless, Jo. You graduated from college with a degree, something you can use. But you want to waste it by penning fantastical stories? She doesn't need to hear it.

Joanne bites down on her lip, fights a response.

ANNE, 45, skin and bones, in the final stages of multiple sclerosis, unsteadily hobbles towards the table.

Dianne rises, helps her mother to her seat. She hands her a green paper crown.

The silence between Peter and Jo is uncomfortable, bitter.

ANNE

Thank you, love. What did I miss?

Peter shoots Joanne a stern glare.

JOANNE

Nothing, mum. I was just telling Dad I got promoted at Amnesty.

A smile fills in Anne's hollow features.

ANNE

Did you now?

JOANNE

Mmm.

ANNE

Well that's something to celebrate.

Anne reaches for the wine jug. She picks it up, but her hand trembles uncontrollably.

PETER

Here.

Peter takes the jug from his wife and pours the wine into their glasses.

Anne sighs – she didn't ask for help, but won't make a fuss in front of her girls.

Anne picks up her glass, wine splashing from side to side.

ANNE

To Jo.

Dianne and Peter raise their glasses, too.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Our working girl.

INT. ROWLING RESIDENCE – MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Jo walks into her parents' plain bedroom, a patchwork quilt under her arm.

Anne reclines in bed, two pillows propped under her head. Her hair is spread out in curls on the cotton. She's angelic.

Jo drapes the quilt over her mother, tucks the edges around her shoulders.

ANNE

Do you remember when you were in secondary, and you'd crawl into my bed and tell me outlandish lies about what you did in school that day?

Jo smirks.

JOANNE

They weren't all lies.

ANNE

You said Angus Colley had a horn growing between his eyes and that he chased you 'round the yard with it.

JOANNE

I think that was a metaphor for his stiffy.

Anne bursts out laughing, playfully smacks her daughter.

ANNE

You had quite the imagination.

She glances towards the wall. The framed pages of "RABBIT, by Joanne Rowling, age 6" are mounted proudly.

Anne's eyes immediately well with tears.

ANNE (CONT'D)

I hope you still do.

JOANNE

Oh, mum.

She rubs her mother's hand.

ANNE

You're so special. My Jo. My writer.

She puts her hand over her heart.

ANNE (CONT'D)

My *chridhe*. (heart)

Joanne is on the verge of tears now, too.

ANNE (CONT'D)

I've got something for you.

She pulls a brown paper-wrapped package covered in ink drawings – little girls, a Christmas tree, stars, etc. out from under the bed. She hands it to Jo.

JOANNE

Aw, thanks mum.

Joanne admires the drawings for a beat, then carefully peels it open –

A hand-knitted red sweater with the letter "J" in messy, gold writing.

Joanne examines the gift, the letter "J" is almost unreadable.

ANNE

Wouldn't be Christmas without a new jumper. If only my hands were steady enough to make it legible.

Joanne swallows, fights tears she doesn't dare let her mother see.

She squeeze's her mother's hand.

JOANNE  
It's your best yet.

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HALLWAY – DAY

A MAIL CART, overflowing with a multitude of poorly wrapped packages and letters haphazardly taped together, rolls across a nondescript gray carpet.

All of the envelopes are internationally post-marked from SOUTH AFRICA.

The office is loud, cluttered, phones ringing and people yelling – a space too small for the employees it holds.

The brick walls are covered in tribal artifacts, maps of South Africa marked up in ink, and the organization's mission statement–

*"We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion. Our vision is a world in which every person enjoys all human rights."*

The Mail Cart, pushed by a BEARDED EMPLOYEE, passes MEN and WOMEN hard at work – answering phones, delivering paperwork.

The cart arrives at a door marked REFUGEE AFFAIRS. The door opens and a hefty stack of envelopes is hurled from the cart, landing at the feet of–

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, REFUGEE AFFAIRS – LONDON – DAY

Joanne, who sits on the floor, sorting through a debris of weathered, hand-written notes and dog-eared photographs of AFRICAN MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

Legs crossed, she studies the mess of memories in front of her. She plucks a letter from the disarray, her eyes move over the words–

*"My name is Baako. I am 8. My mom and dad are dead and I am in detention for 27 months. I feel so sad. Scared. I cut my hand twice, but no one knows. I want to be free."*

Joanne lowers the letter, picks up a photograph of BAAKO – wide-set eyes, dimples, and a picket-fence grin of white teeth.

MASON  
(O.S.)  
Joanne Rowling.

Joanne looks up and sees MASON, 30, with horribly bleached-blond hair and a sneer from ear-to-ear.

JOANNE  
What do you need, Mason?

He walks into the room, STEPS on one of her letters.

MASON  
Nothing, really. Why aren't you at  
the desk?

JOANNE  
I'm on lunch.

Mason glances at his non-existent watch.

MASON  
Awfully long lunch.

Joanne swallows, gathers up the letters from the floor.

Mason looks out the doorway.

MASON (CONT'D)  
(yelling out the door)  
Hey Alistair, found her.

Mason turns back to Joanne, gives her a malicious grin.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Have fun.

He SLITHERS out of the office.

ALASTAIR, 40s, pale as a sheet with greasy, slicked-back onyx hair and a hooked nose, comes to the doorway.

ALASTAIR  
What are you doing?

JOANNE  
Sorry Alastair, I was taking lunch.

ALASTAIR  
Your lunch ended 20 minutes ago. We  
need you at the phones.

JOANNE  
Right. Won't happen again.





ALASTAIR

Joanne! What did we just talk about?!

JOANNE

I'm so sorry.

ALISTAIR

I'm in meetings all day. I can't answer the phones, that's what we pay you for!

JOANNE

I know. I-

ALISTAIR

I don't want to hear it. We need to talk.

JOANNE

OK.

ALASTAIR

In my office.

Joanne's COWORKERS look up from their work with wide eyes - like classmates ogling a student sent to the headmaster's office.

Mason WINKS at her.

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - ALASTAIR'S OFFICE - DAY

Alistair closes the door behind him.

The room, like the rest of the office, is too small, stuffed to the gills with unopened packages.

He circles around to his wooden desk, also piled with third-world pleas, and lowers himself to a creaking chair.

He speaks with a HISS, almost like a snake.

ALISTAIR

Sit.

She takes the seat across from him.

JOANNE

I can't apologize enough.

Alistair exhales deeply, tries not to explode.

ALISTAIR

Joanne, I do believe you want to help these people... but this is not the place for you.

JOANNE

Alistair.

ALISTAIR

We missed a call from our refugee representative in Sassou. There's no telling when he'll be able to call again. This is a huge set back.

Joanne's mouth drops.

ALISTAIR (CONT'D)

And this isn't an isolated incident. You are rarely where you're supposed to be. And when you are at the desk your mind is somewhere else entirely.

JOANNE

I swear I will answer every phone call. I'll eat lunch at my desk, I won't take breaks—

ALISTAIR

We have to let you go.

JOANNE

Please.

ALISTAR

We need someone who's committed, and you've disappointed me too many times.

Joanne's spine stiffens.

INT. KING'S CROSS STATION – NIGHT

Joanne trudges through the train station.

She carries a box of her office belongings: books, notebooks, a stack of her drawings. The half-finished illustration of David Beckham's transformed football rests on top. The famed footballer seems to frown.

INT. THE TRAIN - NIGHT

A mostly empty train. Old and worn. The lights flicker.

Joanne slumps down into a graffiti-covered seat.

She pulls her drawings from the box, apathetically looks through them: A three-headed dog, a deteriorating wizard's hat with a quizzical face, a nearly-beheaded ghost.

FATHER

(O.S.)

I told you not to touch it.

Joanne glances across the aisle. A FATHER yanks a glass ornament out of his FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON's hand.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It's to look at. Not to touch.

He sets it down on the seat beside them, buries his head in a newspaper.

The little boy swings his legs back and forth from the train seat. He gazes at the ornament, mesmerized.

The boy reaches out a hand, strokes it gently.

His father turns the page of his paper, bump's his son's arm.

The ornament crashes to the ground, breaks in half.

FATHER (CONT'D)

For God's sake Charlie, what did I say?!

His father reaches down, picks up the pieces.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, daddy.

The little boy hangs his head.

FATHER

This was for your mother. She'll be so disappointed.

His father shakes his head, resumes reading his paper.

Charlie's brown eyes brim with tears.

JOANNE

(O.S.)

Psst!



The sound of an ARGUING COUPLE YELLING echoes down the hall.

She stops in front of her door, number 7, pulls off an EVICTION NOTICE stuck with tape. She secures it between her teeth, fumbles to stick the key in the door.

INT. JOANNE'S STUDIO - DAY

A shoe-box. Outdated and dirty. Minimalist - not by choice.

A mattress with a comforter, a single pillow. A few piles of clothes, and books - loads of them - lining the walls and scattered in small stacks.

Joanne drops the box of her things to the floor, kicks it to the side.

She sets the EVICTION NOTICE on the kitchen counter next to a handful of other UNOPENED BILLS.

She cracks open the fridge: half a loaf of bread, a block of cheese, random condiments.

She pulls out the bread, cheese, and a bottle of mustard.

The cheese is camouflaged in mold. She carefully cuts the fuzzy green bits off, is left with a small, edible chunk.

She abandons it, spreads mustard on a piece of bread.

She looks out her kitchen window onto the London street - smoky, littered with trash, gray on gray on gray. A HOMELESS MAN pushes a cart down the road.

She takes a bite of her bread.

INT. JOANNE'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Joanne lies upside down on the cot, her feet on the pillow.

She stares up at the ceiling. A WATER STAIN looks vaguely like AN OWL.

She twists her head, examines it.

Her hand extends beyond her head to the floor. She grabs at a book, a worn paperback of HONS & REBELS, by Jessica Mitford.

She pulls out a pencil tucked in the back, flips through it, finds a rare margin that hasn't been written in.

She writes: "Harry... Owl. Ron..."

She looks out of the corner of her eye and sees A MOUSE scurry across the kitchen floor into a hole in the wall.

"Ron... rat."

She groans, puts the book down.

INT. JOANNE'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Joanne is asleep, right where we left her. Still upside down, though the comforter is pulled around her torso.

INT. JOANNE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT - DREAM

A CHILD'S MOBILE twists above a BLUE-EYED BABY GIRL.

The infant gapes up at the toy, which creates a kaleidoscope of dancing shadows on the wall.

She blinks at the sound of a DOOR CREAKING OPEN.

A MASSIVE SHADOW sweeps across the wall, falling across the baby in her crib.

The child gapes up at whatever is above her.

A distant, blood-curdling SHRIEK.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS rush into the room.

MOTHER

(O.S.)

Get away from her!

The baby's face contorts at the sound of her worried mum.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Get back! Don't touch her!

The woman's BREATH CATCHES.

The shadow moves rapidly across the baby's face.

The woman CHOKES, SUFFOCATES.

The baby's eyes dart around the ceiling: the shadow dancing, her mother's hair, and a flailing hand.

Another moment of struggle, then SILENCE.

The THUD of a body hitting the floor.

The shadow moves over the little girl again. It gets closer, and closer, enveloping the baby in darkness until her eyes seem to turn black.

MATCH TO:

INT. JOANNE'S STUDIO - BEDROOM - DAY

Joanne's blue eyes open, blonde tendrils plastered to her forehead with sweat.

Her landline RINGS.

She falls out of bed, grabs the phone corded to the wall.

JOANNA  
(into the phone)  
Hello?

Her expression shifts, hardens. The blood seems to drain from her face.

EXT. TUTSHILL, CHURCH - DAY

Joanne sits against an ancient, twisted oak tree in a lush garden. In a black dress and black Mary Janes she is the only dark thing blooming in a garden of pastel roses.

She looks out onto a PATCH OF GRAVESTONES, a tiny CHAPEL to her right.

A CROWD OF MOURNERS, all sheathed in ebony, gather outside the church.

Dianne steps across the gravestones towards her sister.

She joins Jo, lowers herself to the dirt.

DIANNE  
Well that was horrible.

JOANNE  
Beyond. Do you think mum would have cared that the priest's fly was undone?

Dianne guffaws.

DIANNE  
Was it?!

JOANNE

Mmm. And he called her Anna.

DIANNE

Bloody brilliant. He had one job to do.

They sit in uncomfortable silence for a beat.

JOANNE

What are we going to do with her ashes?

DIANNE

Dad wants to hide them away. Out of sight, out of mind.

JOANNE

Sounds like dad.

DIANNE

What do you think she'd want us to do with her holy remains?

JOANNE

Flush them down the toilet, probably.

DIANNE

You're right. Good riddance, she'd say. Get me the hell out of here.

Joanne smiles halfheartedly.

JOANNE

Di... I'm leaving. I got a job in Portugal, teaching English.

DIANNE

Portugal? What about Amnesty?

Joanne offers a knowing look.

JOANNE

I've been fired from every job in London. Mum's gone. I need something to change.

DIANNE

But Portugal? You don't speak Portuguese.



JOANNE

Not a lick. But it'll be a distraction. I don't know anyone. Plenty of time to write. Besides, I leave tomorrow.

DIANNE

Tomorrow?

JOANNE

Why wait?

DIANNE

Well, can I visit?

JOANNE

You'd better, you little shit.

DIANNE

Good. I'll get a nice tan.

The girls spot Peter standing across the graveyard, frowning.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

I'd better go help dad. See you after, yeah?

Joanne nods.

JOANNE

Would you say bye for me?

Dianne's eyebrows raise in shock.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Please?

DIANNE

OK.

Jo smiles at her sister. Dianne walks across the grass.

Joanne and Peter's eyes meet. They stare at each other for a tension-filled beat.

INT. JOANNE'S STUDIO - DAY

The bed is stripped, her comforter and sheets balled up on the mattress.

She throws clothes and shoes haphazardly into a suitcase. She sits on the case, squishes everything down.

She examines her many piles of books, pulls out a select few from the stacks – *BLACK BEAUTY*, *EMMA*, and a well-thumbed copy of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*.

With novels in one hand and her suitcase in the other, Rowling takes a final look at her sad abode.

She eyes *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* in her arm.

JOANNE

(sotto)

"It's dangerous bussiness, Frodo –  
going out your door."

She swallows, then slams the door shut behind her.

EXT. PORTO, PORTUGAL, OLD QUARTER, STREET – DAY

An ELDERLY SAILOR ties his small boat, LUNA, to a weathered dock in the harbor of the DOURO RIVER.

Joanne, with a deep tan and sun-kissed tendrils, walks along a cobblestone street by the water. Her sundress sways in the salty ocean air.

Brightly colored shops spill into the road. MEN AND WOMEN in linen shirts and swimsuits meander towards fruit stands and cafes, in absolutely no hurry at all.

It's a vibrant, lively contrast to the cinereal and bustling streets of London.

EXT. COLLEGIATE HALL – DAY

An aqua-colored, colonial-style building. A FEW STUDENTS eat lunch on the crumbling steps.

Joanne stretches past them towards the canary yellow entrance.

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

The classroom is filled with TWO DOZEN PORTUGUESE STUDENTS, ranging in age from eight to sixty-eight.

They sit in mismatched chairs, hunch over papers, scribble with pencils.

Joanne sits at the front of the class, glances at her watch.

JOANNE

OK. *Terminar*. Turn in your papers.

The students set down pencils, pack up their things.

Papers form a pile on top her wooden desk as students exit the class.

One pupil, a 12-year-old Portuguese girl, HARRIET, with a long frizzy braid, hands her paper to Joanne directly.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Thank you, Harriet.

HARRIET

Will we be graded on a curve?

JOANNE

It's a pass or no pass test. It's only to determine if you're ready to move on to the next class.

Harriet frowns.

HARRIET

Would you grade mine fully, please?

JOANNE

Well, I have a lot of papers to get through...

HARRIET

I am paying hard-earned babysitting dollars for this course, miss Joanne, and I'd like to know my full potential.

JOANNE

Are you studying to become a lawyer, Harriet?

HARRIET

No, I'm not. I'm hoping to do some good in the world.

Joanne grins.

JOANNE

Alright then. A full letter grade coming your way.

HARRIET

Thank you.

Harriet adjusts her backpack, marches out of class.

Joanne reaches into her teacher's desk, pulls out a pad of paper. She writes—

"I'm hoping to do some good in the world."

EXT. PORTO STREET — NIGHT

The street overflows with nightlife. People eat at sidewalk cafes, a man plays a harmonica in front of a fedora filled with tips, a drunk couple kisses against a stone, vine-covered wall.

Joanne saunters down the narrow road.

She passes a YOUNG COUPLE who slow dance in front of a street-side BAND playing traditional FADO music. They bend to the beat of the humming string instruments.

INT. JOANNE'S APARTMENT — NIGHT

Joanne opens the door to her three-bedroom apartment. She quietly steps inside, leaves her shoes at the door.

The house is festively decorated but modest. Still, it's a huge step up from her deteriorating London flat.

Her roommates, AINE, Irish, 20s, and JILL, British, 20s, gossip over dinner in the living room.

Joanne tip-toes past them.

She reaches her door, creaks it open.

INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

A twin bed, a writing desk, a lamp, a bookshelf for her many paperbacks. Some of her drawings and scribbled notes are pinned to the walls.

Joanne sets her bag down, pulls her hair up into a ponytail, plops down at her desk.

She opens a drawer full of notebooks, pulls one out.

She flips to a page titled, "Hagrid's Beasts" with various half-finished drawings of fantastical creatures, accompanied by their names —

Buckbeak, Fang, Mosag, Norbert, etc.

She turns the page. The drawing of the THREE-HEADED-DOG is taped inside.

She thinks, writes- "Flu-"

But a knock on the door interrupts her.

AINE  
(O.S.)  
Jo? You home?

Joanne presses her notebook closed.

JOANNE  
What is it, Aine?

Aine creaks open the door. Jill's right behind her.

JILL  
We were thinking we'd go out  
tonight.

JOANNE  
You go out every night.

The young women burst into her room. Aine flings herself on Joanne's bed.

Jill grabs the notebook from Joanne's desk, joins Aine on the bed.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
That's... private.

AINE  
And you stay in and write, or draw,  
or whatever it is you do, every  
night.

They flip the notebook open.

JOANNE  
I had a long day teaching. I'm just  
tired.

JILL  
We all had a long day teaching. But  
it doesn't stop us from engaging  
with the world.

AINE  
...Especially on a Friday night.

Jill flips to the page of Hagrid's Beasts.

JILL

I think a night away from...  
Norbert... couldn't hurt.

JOANNE

This is the only time I can write.  
Can I have my book back?

AINE

How are you supposed to have  
anything worth writing about if you  
stay in your room? You're young,  
Jo. You're in a gorgeous city.  
Experience the world!

JOANNE

I've experienced plenty.

AINE

I don't buy it. *Vamos Jo*, we're  
going out. We're going to get  
smashed and I for one am getting  
laid. I suggest you acquire  
similarly shallow goals.

The girls stand from the bed, Jill hands the book back.

JILL

We're leaving in 20. Find something  
slutty to wear.

With a grin, they shut the door behind them.

Jo opens the notebook again, stares at the page.

She taps her pencil against the table, looks towards the  
door.

INT. MEIA CAVA JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

A trumpet's horn SHOUTS from a stage overlooking a dense,  
energetic, and dimly-lit jazz club.

Wall to wall patrons. A diverse, young, spirited CROWD swing  
their hips to the band's bright bravado.

Aine leads the way through the throng. She drags a train of  
Jill and Joanne, glued together with clasped hands, behind  
her.

The female trio is an eye-catching spectacle, as proven by  
the heads that turn as they pass.

Aine spots a FEMALE FRIEND, breaks the chain to say hello, kiss her cheek.

Joanne looks around the club, takes in the revelry – So this is what she's been missing.

INT. MEIA CAVA BAR – NIGHT

The women sit on three stools against the bar, overcrowded with empty glasses.

They clutch shot glasses of clear liquid.

JILL  
Um, dois, três!

They clink their shot glasses together, down them.

The BARTENDER pours them a second round. And a third.

Joanne spills some of her shot on the floor, laughs, shots the rest.

INT. MEIA CAVA DANCE FLOOR – NIGHT

The women are three specs in a sea of VIBRATING BODIES. They grasp sloshing drinks as their limbs whirl to the frenetic jazz beat.

Jill chugs her gin and tonic as her feet tap to the rhythm.

JILL  
I'm gonna grab another. Anyone?

JOANNE  
I'm good.

Anie has her eyes glued to a young PORTUGUESE MAN nearby.

ANIE  
Me too.

Anie gives him a seductive grin, beckons him with twirling arms. He dances towards her.

She takes his hands, and the two attempt a very drunken version of a swing dance.

A similarly sloshed Joanne takes another chug of her drink.

She tilts her head upwards, watches the gleam from a disco ball splatter the ceiling in a disarray of light.

The jazz intensifies, the instruments build towards a rumbling climax.

She closes her eyes. Soaks it in. The specks of light dance across her face.

A smile rounds her cheeks... the music reaches apex...

DANCING MAN

(O.S.)

Want to dance, darling?

Jo's eyes open. She returns her gaze to the dance floor to see—

An overweight, middle-aged DANCING MAN, nearly salivating.

JOANNE

I'm sorry?

He rocks back and forth on his feet, extends a hand.

DANCING MAN

Indulge an old cocker with a dance?

JOANNE

I...

Joanne looks to Aine, now grinding up against her prospect.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

...have to piss, actually.

She spins away from the man, hurriedly pushes past GYRATING BODIES towards the loo.

INT. MEIA CAVA HALLYWAY — NIGHT

Joanne joins the end of a line, A DOZEN WOMEN waiting to use the loo in front of her.

She sizes up the tedious line, walks to the front.

She peaks inside the bathroom. There's a SINGLE STALL and a row of women fixing their makeup in a elongated mirror.

She grimaces, abandons the bathroom. She walks towards the opposite end of the hall towards the men's bathroom.

There are FOUR MEN waiting. She joins the end of the line behind a BALD MAN who gives her an odd look.



JOANNE  
How many stalls are in there?

BALD MAN  
Uh, two I think. Are you a...?

JOANNE  
Man?

Joanne shrugs.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
I am many things.

The Bald Man nods, confused.

She looks down the hall and a Portuguese man, JORGE ARANTES, 24, bookish but cocky, catches her eye.

He strolls towards her, steps behind her in line.

They stand in silence for a beat.

He checks her out, clears his throat.

JORGE  
You do know this is the line for  
the men's bathroom?

JOANNE  
Was that a statement or a question?

JORGE  
Um, both?

JOANNE  
To answer your question, yes, I do  
realize the stick figure on the  
door isn't wearing a triangle  
skirt. To your statement, you  
guessed correctly.

JORGE  
Guessed what?

JOANNE  
That I realize this is the men's  
room.

He scratches his head.

JORGE  
Well, we're off to a smashing  
start. I'm Jorge. What's your name?

He extends a hand.

She hesitates, doesn't take it.

JOANNE

Jo. Joanne.

He lowers his hand.

JORGE

Lovely to meet you, Joanne. But,  
it's a bit unfair that you, who is  
*clearly* not a man...

(eyes her up and down)  
gets to cut me in line.

JOANNE

Have you seen the queue for the  
women's loo? We have one stall, and  
you boys have two, plus, a load of  
urinals. That's what isn't fair.

JORGE

Still, the rules are the rules.

JOANNE

Alright. If rules are rules, and  
boys and girls must be separated to  
urinate... then I'll just change my  
name.

His brow furrows.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

What if my name was Joseph, not  
Joanne. Could I stay then?

Jorge laughs nervously.

JORGE

It would certainly make things more  
complicated for me.

JOANNE

Why's that?

The Bald Man walks out of the stall. He passes Jo-

MUSTACHED MAN

You're up, Mister.

Joanne raises an eyebrow at Jorge.



JILL  
Hey, slag.

JOANNE  
I think I'm gonna take off...

JILL  
Oh, no. Stay! It's barely midnight.  
Want a smoke?

Jill brings the cigarette to Joanne's mouth. She waves it away.

JOANNE  
No, I'm OK. It's late. I'm sober.  
The magic is fading.

JILL  
Well... alright. Back to your book  
of beasts then.

She gives her a playful shove.

JOANNE  
(shouting back)  
Use a condom, eh?

Jill waves her away.

EXT. PORTO STREET - NIGHT

Joanne walks past the jazz club, a handful of booze-filled night owls topple to the street.

JORGE (O.S.)  
Hey, Joseph.

Joanne turns.

Jorge sits on the curb, his collared-shirt a few more buttons undone. He screws the cap onto a SILVER FLASK, and moseys towards her.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
Leaving so soon?

He pockets the flask.

Joanne keeps walking, Jorge follows a few feet behind.

JOANNE  
It's past my bedtime.

JORGE  
Past your bed time?

JOANNE  
I have work in the morning.

Jorge cocks his head, looks at her sideways.

JORGE  
And here I fancied you a Marianne  
Dashwood, but you've been Elinor  
all along.

Joanne stops dead in her tracks, spins 180 towards him.

JOANNE  
Excuse me?

JORGE  
It's from a book—

JOANNE  
Yes, I get the reference. *You've*  
read *Sense and Sensibility*?

Jorge grins like a goddamn idiot.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Bloody hell, is that your party  
trick? Is that how you get laid?

Jorge shrugs.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
How very Mr. Willoughby of you.

Jorge laughs.

JORGE  
Is it working?

JOANNE  
Hardly. I'm just surprised.

JORGE  
Because...

JOANNE  
You're just... you don't seem the  
type to appreciate Austen.

JORGE

Because I'm not a white woman of a certain age? Look at you, being as *prejudice* as can be.

JOANNE

You've certainly got the *pride* covered. And you know what, I resent being called Elinor, or Marianne. I'm not the virgin or the whore.

She steps away from the club.

Jorge skips to catch up with her.

JORGE

OK, who are you then? What do you do? Enlighten me.

JOANNE

I teach. And I write.

JORGE

You write, eh? Now that's irony. What do you write?

Joanne cocks her head, doesn't understand his comment.

JOANNE

Nothing much. Yet. I'm working on a children's series. But I can't talk about it.

JORGE

How come? Is your publisher keeping it a secret?

JOANNE

Publisher? Ha. Oh, no. I don't have a publisher, or an agent, or even a completed first chapter. I'm just... musing... at the moment.

Jorge raises an eyebrow.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I sound mad, I know.

JORGE

No, you sound like a writer. Only an idiot puts pen to paper without thinking.

JOANNE

I could stand to be a bit more  
idiotic. What do you do then,  
Casanova?

Jorge pulls out the FLASK from his back pocket. He takes a  
swig.

JORGE

I'm a writer, too. A journalist.

JOANNE

Oh?

He extends the flask to her.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

No thanks.

He shrugs, takes another gulp.

JORGE

Yep. Freelance. So I get the whole  
not-writing thing.

JOANNE

I see...

Jorge leans forward, as if it's a secret—

JORGE

But it gives me plenty of time to  
read...

Joanne cracks.

EXT. PORTO SHORE, THE ATLANTIC OCEAN — NIGHT

The deep blue tide caresses the shore, inhales glassy water  
and exhales it back out again.

EXT. PORTO SEASIDE STREET — NIGHT

Joanne and Jorge stroll down a path by the water. Less lit.  
Less people. Calm and quiet.

They pause, admire the lulling tide.

JOANNE

She died of multiple sclerosis, a  
year ago. She never knew I was  
writing again.

JORGE  
You didn't tell her?

JOANNE  
What was there to tell? My dad... I didn't want her to think I was wasting my time.

JORGE  
How would your time be better spent? Chained to a desk? Working thankless hours for peanuts at a vocation you hate?

JOANNE  
I guess. But I regret it now. Mum would have loved Harry.

JORGE  
Harry is the magician?

JOANNE  
Wizard.

JORGE  
What's the difference?

Joanne squints at him.

JOANNE  
You know for someone who can recite Austen—

JORGE  
"It is a truth universally acknowledged—"

JOANNE  
Stop. Oh dear god, please stop.

He fights laughter.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
You don't know some fairly common words.

JORGE  
Well, English is not my first language, Joanne. And I do not possess your — how do you say — *acute stubbornness*. So, what is the difference?

She studies the water, considers the question.



JOANNE

A magician is someone who fakes magic, with smoke and mirrors and tricks. A wizard has magic within him, he must only learn to conjure it.

Jorge's eyes move from the water to her face.

JORGE

I like this Harry fellow. I'm excited to meet him.

JOANNE

Me too.

EXT. JOANNE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The sun's orange rays ache to emerge over the city.

Joanne and Jorge approach Jo's doorstep.

A predictable, awkward silence ensues.

JOANNE

Well, thanks for walking me home.

JORGE

Oh. I wasn't walking you home.

JOANNE

No?

JORGE

No. I'm walking you to your bed, where I will lay you down and make sweet, sweet love to you all night - morning - long.

JOANNE

You must still be drunk.

He shrugs.

JORGE

Maybe. But isn't it the Willoughby thing to do?

She smirks.

He grabs her hand, kisses it sweetly.

JORGE (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

And without a word, he turns, walks away from her.

Joanne is speechless. Her mouth tries to form words—

JOANNE

Wait!

Jorge spins on his heels.

She steps to him.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Will I see you again?

Jorge shrugs.

JORGE

I've got a very long library queue  
to get through.

Joanne reaches up and grabs his face, pulls him towards her,  
plants a sultry kiss on his lips.

Her hands move from his face to his chest.

He wraps his hands around her waist, pulls her closer. It's  
steamy, passionate, red-hot—

But he pulls away.

JORGE (CONT'D)

*Boa noite, Joseph.*

He flashes her a smoldering smile, and vanishes towards the  
sunrise.

INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM — DAY

Joanne lies in bed. Her eyes creak open. She glances at the  
clock: 1 pm.

She scans the various novels on her bookshelf, halting at  
*Sense and Sensibility*.

She smirks, buries her face in her pillow.

INT. JOANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jill, in sweatpants and a T-shirt, stretches her leg against the kitchen counter. Anie pours herself a cup of coffee.

Joanne saunters in.

ANIE  
Well, well, well.

JILL  
Is there a boy in your bed?

ANIE  
Does he want some café?

Joanne tries to hide her smile.

JOANNE  
No boy.

JILL  
Oh really? So who was that tall,  
tanned thing you were snogging at  
sunrise?

The girls look at her expectantly. Jo feigns outrage.

JOANNE  
You were spying on me?

ANIE  
Yeah, so, what's his name then?

The landline RINGS.

All three women LEAP towards the wall to get it.

Anie gets to it first, then Jill rips it away, then finally Jo gets a hold of it.

JOANNE  
(breathlessly)  
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH-

Jorge, curled over the balcony of his apartment. He stretches a hand into the afternoon air.

JORGE  
"You pierce my soul. I am half  
agony, half hope. I have loved none  
but you..."



Anie hangs up the phone and the three women explode with laughter.

MONTAGE – VARIOUS

-INT. CAFE – DAY – Joanne sits across the table from Jorge. They talk, laugh, eat, drink. They drain a bottle of wine. Then another.

-INT. BOOK STORE – DAY – Joanne and Jorge scan isles of books, pull some out, flip through them, steal kisses.

-INT. THE SHORE – DAY – Joanne rides on Jorge's back as he wades into the water. She's scared. He drops her, she splashes under the tide. He quickly dives under the waves, hides, holds his breath. She emerges, furious, looks for him. He comes up for air. She tackles him.

-INT. THE CLASSROOM – DAY – Joanne lectures at the front of the class. Jorge pokes his head into the door, waves slyly.

-INT. DISCOTHEQUE – NIGHT – A mess of bodies. Joanne and Jorge drip with sweat, grind up against one another, kiss passionately.

-INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT – Jo and Jorge fall onto her bed. She crawls on top of him. They kiss. Undress.

-INT. JOANNE'S LIVING ROOM – DAY – Jo writes in a notebook. Jorge reads nearby. Jo stops, puts the pen between her teeth. She hands the notebook to Jorge. He reads the pages intently.

-INT. JOANNE'S ROOM – DAY – Everything in boxes. Jo stuffs clothes and books into cardboard containers.

END MONTAGE.

INT. APARTMENT ENTRYWAY – DAY

Joanne stands in front of the open front door.

Anie has her arm supportively draped around Jill as they watch her leave.

Joanne picks up a cardboard box resting at her feet.

JOANNE

Am I mad? It's only been a month.

ANIE

Romeo and Juliet fell in love in one night.

JILL

And then... they killed themselves.

ANIE

Yes, well, we've already subletted your room, so there's no turning back now is there?

JOANNE

Suppose not.

JILL

Cheer up, chum. You love him, don't you?

Jo smiles, almost convincingly.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Brightly colored buildings stacked on top of each other are a festive backdrop for pavement cafes and narrow alleyways below.

Jo and Jorge, arm in arm, stroll down a picturesque passageway towards the sound of a PORTUGUESE PIMBA band.

EXT. STREET FESTIVAL - NIGHT

They emerge from the bottleneck opening of the alley and spill into a STREET FESTIVAL -

Throngs of people eating, laughing, DANCING.

A MEAT VENDOR haggles a tourist. A MIDDLE AGED COUPLE share a plate of peppered cod. A LITTLE BOY dodges kisses from a LITTLE GIRL behind his mother's skirt.

Jorge pulls his SILVER FLASK from his back pocket. He takes a long pull.

He pockets it, pulls Jo confidently towards the PIMPA band, complete with string instruments and a lavishly dressed ACCORDION PLAYER, who waxes and wanes with utter zeal.

Jorge drops her hand, and waltzes backwards onto the cobblestones in front of the band, joining a FEW COUPLES half-heartily swaying back and forth.

JORGE

A dance, m'lady?

Joanne raises her eyebrows.

JOANNE

Hell no.

Jorge rolls his eyes, his feet tap to the music.

JORGE

(louder)

Dance with me, darling!

Joanne looks around, embarrassed.

JOANNE

(quietly)

Stop it.

His hips sway. His arms move in fluid motion to the sound. He's *feeling* it.

Joanne smirks, shakes her head.

He raises his hands in the air, becoming more animated. He draws a crowd.

JORGE

(shouting)

My sweet Joanne! Joanne Rowling!

The crowd gapes at her – will she indulge him?

JOANNE

Jorge.

She's bright red.

A WOMAN from the crowd engages her.

WOMAN

Go to him! He needs you. Dança!

JOANNE

I... no.

The Accordion Player rises from his seat. He walks to Joanne, still playing his instrument, and stops in front of her. He opens his mouth, and begins TO SING.

ACCORDION PLAYER

(singing)

*Assista as ondas do oceano, e o céu  
tão azul...*

She tries to hide her face.

He walks behind her, pushes her forward.

ACCORDION PLAYER (CONT'D)  
*...sente a brisa do mar, é o que eu  
 desejo fazer!*

Jorge awaits her with an extended hand.

She reluctantly takes his hand, and he SPINS HER AROUND IN A CIRCLE.

The crowd CHEERS in delight.

The band strums their instruments with even more fervor. Jo's frown softens.

Jorge grabs Jo's waist, and they twirl and sway and vibrate to the rhythm.

Joanne's bashfulness facade is all but gone. She grins from ear to ear in Jorge's arms.

The song comes to a close, and Jorge DIPS JO BACKWARDS dramatically.

The crowd erupts in APPLAUSE.

Her blue eyes meet his, and for a moment, all is well.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bachelor pad. Scarce and unorganized. Walls of books. A few pieces of mid-century modern furniture. Impersonal and uninspired.

Jorge stirs a pot of pasta next to the stove. He picks up a bottle of port, tips it into his mouth.

Joanne sits with her back against the foot of the bed, scribbling in a notebook.

JORGE  
 Do you want marinara or pesto?

JOANNE  
 We have pesto?

He shrugs.

JORGE  
 I can make some.

JOANNE  
 Alright.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)



JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Which house do you think you'd  
belong to? At Hogwarts.

He takes another swig from the bottle.

JORGE  
Well Gryffindor, of course. Home of  
the chivalrous and the brave?

JOANNE  
No true Gryffindor would say  
they're a Griffindor. You're  
probably a Hufflepuff.

She eyes him up and down.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Maybe a Slytherin.

JORGE  
Isn't that the bad one?

JOANNE  
There are no bad houses, only badly  
behaved students.

Jorge perks up.

JORGE  
Hmm.

He saunters over, kneels in front of her on the floor.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
In that case... I've been quite  
bad.

He gives her a kiss. She pulls away.

JOANNE  
God, you reek of port. Did you  
drink the whole bottle?

Jorge smiles, kisses her again.

She pushes him away, again.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
I need to work. And there's water  
on the stove.

JORGE  
C'mon, love. Just one kiss.



She sits up in bed, plucks it from the pillow.

She looks around the empty room, but then—

Jorge comes out of the bathroom.

She holds the ring up.

JOANNE

What is this?

He smiles sheepishly, sits on the edge of the bed.

JORGE

I'm sorry about last night,  
darling. I shouldn't have tried to  
force it.

JOANNE

Jorge, what is this?

JORGE

An apology. An offering.

JOANNE

A ring?

JORGE

A promise — I'll never be so stupid  
again. I'll spend a lifetime being  
worthy of your love. An engagement  
ring.

Joanne runs a hand through her hair.

JOANNE

We can't get engaged.

JORGE

Why? I love you.

JOANNE

I love you, too. But it's too soon.  
We're young.

JORGE

We're not that young.

JOANNE

I have plans. I'm going to write,  
and travel. I can't marry you. Not  
yet.

JORGE

I want to do those things, too.  
Let's do them together.

JOANNE

But why do we need to be married?

JORGE

I just... I want to be fully  
committed to you. No other  
distractions.

Joanne's brow furrows: *What does that mean?*

JOANNE

I need to get ready for class.

She leans towards him, kisses his cheek.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I'll think about it.

She pushes the ring into his palm.

EXT. COLLEGIATE HALL - DAY

Joanne sits on the well-trodden steps, the lofty bell tower  
of the Clérigos Church casts a shadow over her legs.

She pulls the back of her hair up with a free hand, waves it  
up and down, cools herself.

Harriet runs up the steps towards her.

HARRIET

Miss Joanne.

JOANNE

Harriet. How are you?

HARRIET

Fine. Um. Can I sit with you?

JOANNE

Yeah. Here.

Jo moves her bag, Harriet sits.

HARRIET

My mum, my foster mum, wants me to  
stop taking your class.

JOANNE

I didn't know you were in foster care.

Harriet nods.

HARRIET

She says any money I make babysitting has to go to the house, for supplies and rent.

JOANNE

Hmm. That doesn't seem fair. But, your English is excellent, Harriet. I'm not sure you need to be in my class. And besides, there are more important things than school and cleverness.

Harriet squints at Jo.

HARRIET

Like what?

JOANNE

Like... friendship. Bravery. Love.

HARRIET

But I need to be in school. I need to speak like you.

JOANNE

Why?

HARRIET

To go to college. Get far away from here. Have my own life.

JOANNE

I get that. You know I wanted to leave London so I came here to teach. I wanted change, just like you. But there are some things you just can't control. Who your parents are, who you love... but you can control who you love. Finding people who support you, who love you... that's the most important thing. More than anything else.

Harriet picks at her fingernail, thinks about it.

HARRIET  
I still want to leave.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Joanne comes through the front door. She drops her bags, kicks off her shoes.

Jorge reads a book on the bed. Jo climbs next to him.

She curls up on his chest, hugs him.

JOANNE  
Why do you want to marry me?

He sets his book down, brushes her hair with his hand.

JORGE  
Well, you make me smile, laugh.  
Your imagination is... I'm jealous  
of everything you come up with.  
You're opinionated and stubborn as  
hell, but I'm not sure I can live  
without you. It's selfish, really.

Jo smiles.

JOANNE  
OK.

She looks up at him.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Let's bloody do it then.

He looks down at her.

He kisses her, she kisses him back, but her eyes well with tears.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Jorge is asleep next to Jo, his arms sprawled over her. Her eyes are open.

She turns from side to side, restless.

INT. KING'S CROSS STATION, 1964 – DAY – FLASHBACK/DREAM

A CROWD OF PASSENGERS in vintage winter coats stained with snow crowd the platform.

A YOUNG BRUNETTE WOMAN, 18, with a short, fringed haircut, and in a '60s style dress, stands on the platform at King's Cross Station, SHIVERING.

She rubs her bare arms with her hands.

The TRAIN comes to a halt in front of the passengers. She exhales in relief.

INT. THE TRAIN - NIGHT

The young woman finds her way to an empty seat, still shaking.

AN 18-YEAR-OLD MAN WITH SUNKEN EYES does a double-take as she sits down.

He leaps out of his seat and slides into the seat RIGHT NEXT TO HERS.

YOUNG MAN

Well you're shaking up a storm.

The young woman is taken aback.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah? So? Left my coat on the last train.

The young man peels his own jacket from his shoulders.

YOUNG MAN

Lucky for you, I don't need this.

He hands it to her.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm... fine. Really.

He points to her arms.

YOUNG MAN

Look at those goose pimples! Your arms are about to fall off and I'm not about to sit here and talk to some freak with no arms. Put on the jumper.

She reluctantly drapes the coat over her torso.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Good. You want to hear something wild?

YOUNG WOMAN

I fear you're going to tell me regardless.

YOUNG MAN

Right you are. Alright, listen to this gem: There's a tomb buried beneath King's Cross Station. And it's not just any 'ol tomb - it's Boudica's tomb.

YOUNG WOMAN

Boo-dick-a?

YOUNG MAN

Oh, you don't know Boudica?! She was an ancient British queen who led a rebellion against the Romans.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh?

YOUNG MAN

Very cool chick. Flaming red hair... a real fox. Total badass.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hmm. Where's she buried?

YOUNG MAN

No one knows for sure. But it's supposedly between platforms 9 and 10. A little closer to 10, I think.

YOUNG WOMAN

How do you know all this?

YOUNG MAN

I know many things. Except... your name.

The train SLOWS. A handful of passengers rise from their seats, gather their things.

The young woman hands the coat back to the young man. She stands up.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm Anne.

The young man takes her hand, kisses it.



YOUNG MAN

Anne. I'm Peter. Peter Rowling.  
When will I see you again?

She shrugs.

YOUNG WOMAN

Soon. Maybe.

She steps into the isle.

YOUNG MAN

Where?

ANNE

At the platform.

She heads for the door.

PETER

Which platform?

ANNE

Boudicca's tomb.

Peter cocks his head.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Platform 9 and 3/4.

And with that, Joanne's would-be-mother flashes her would-be-father a smile, and vanishes from the train.

INT. THE BATHROOM - DAY

Joanne, in her pajamas, brushes her teeth over the sink at a rapid pace. Then suddenly, she stops, clutches her stomach.

She pulls the toothbrush from her mouth, looks at her reflection.

She grimaces, spits the toothpaste out.

She rubs her abdomen - something's not right.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joanne grabs her bag from a hook on the door, looks to Jorge, sitting at the kitchen table.

He pours liquid from a DARK BOTTLE into a coffee cup.



She's green.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Jo darts out of the classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM - HALLWAY

The hall is empty - thank god - because Jo just barely makes it to a DRINKING FOUNTAIN before her body curls over it and she VOMITS into the basin.

She stands, dizzy, wipes her mouth.

INT. DRUG STORE BATHROOM - DAY

Tight on Jo as she concentrates intensely. She bites her lip, closes her eyes for a beat - then opens them.

She's staring at a POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST, denoted with a PINK PLUS SIGN on the white plastic tip.

She exhales, drops the stick to the floor next to TWO OTHER IDENTICAL PICK-TIPPED TESTS.

She shakes her head back and forth.

JOANNE

(sotto)

Bollocks.

INT. RESTAURANT PATIO - NIGHT

A candle-lit table holding empty plates of food and two bottles of wine.

Jorge fills his glass with more port.

He tips the bottle towards her glass, but she covers the opening with her palm.

JORGE

You don't want any?

JOANNE

Probably shouldn't.

JORGE

You haven't had a drink all night.  
You can't live in Porto and not  
drink port with dinner.

JOANNE

You can if you're pregnant.

He nearly drops the bottle.

JORGE

What?

He sets it down, grabs her hand.

JORGE (CONT'D)

Pregnant?

JOANNE

Yeah. I took a test today. Three  
tests.

JORGE

Darling... that's wonderful.

He leans in to kiss her. She turns head away.

JOANNE

We can't have a child, Jorge. We  
have no money. We aren't ready.

JORGE

We have plenty of money... Er,  
we'll get more money. I'll get a  
steady job. Your book will sell.

JOANNE

My book?! My book is a box of  
scraps that may never see the light  
of day. Jorge. I'm serious. We  
can't have a kid.

He strokes her hand.

JORGE

Don't you want it? Our own little  
family? Think of how lovely it  
would be.

Joanne tries to fight the tears swelling in her eyes.

JOANNE

I don't want our child to come into  
this world in poverty...



There's one empty seat at the table.

They smile and laugh in general merriment.

GUALTER  
*Onde está o anel?*

Jorge laughs.

JORGE  
(to Joanne)  
He wants to know where your  
engagement ring is.

Anie grabs Jo's hand.

ANIE  
Yeah, where's the sparkler?

Joanne smirks at Jorge.

JOANNE  
I never got one. He proposed with a  
wedding band, so we're saving it  
for tomorrow.

JORGE  
(to Gualter)  
I am...  
(he points to himself)  
*Idiota.*

JILL  
No ring? And no Honeymoon either?  
How'd you get away with that?

JORGE  
I have no money. Diamonds and  
islands cannot be bought on a  
journalist's salary.

ANIE  
But all this wine can?

Everyone chuckles, except for Joanne - Clearly this is a  
point of contention.

A KNOCK at the door. Joanne leaps up, runs to the entryway.

She swings the door open. Dianne beams in the hallway.

The women shriek with delight, embrace one another.

Jorge is right behind Jo. He grabs Dianne a bit too forcefully and gives her a handsy, drunk hug.

JORGE  
My beautiful sister!

JOANNE  
I can't believe you actually came.

DIANNE  
And miss this? Not a chance.

Jo leads Dianne to the table.

ANIE  
She made it!

The table perks up at the sight of Dianne.

JOANNE  
This is my sister, Dianne. In from Scotland.

The table cheers, pounds their fists against the table.

DIANNE  
Hello!

Jorge pulls her seat out.

JORGE  
Here. Have a seat. Have some wine!

He pours her a glass. Then he pours himself one, too.

JOANNE  
Don't you think we should slow down a bit?

JORGE  
We are celebrating! Tomorrow *mi bonita amor* becomes Joanne Arantes.

DIANNE  
(to Joanne)  
You're taking his name?

JOANNE  
(to Dianne)  
I... I don't know. We haven't even talked about it.

JORGE  
Where did I put that extra bottle?

Jorge stands from the table, nearly trips.

JOANNE

Jorge, I think we've had enough.

DIANNE

Yeah. It's a big day tomorrow.  
Let's take it easy.

Jorge SCOFFS loudly.

JORGE

We are just beginning to have fun!  
Emilio, pass me that bottle.

Emilio hands Jorge a bottle of port.

Jorge flips it upside down. Nothing comes out.

JORGE (CONT'D)

And our fun is nearly gone.

JOANNE

(quietly)

Jorge, it's too late for this. I'm  
tired. Dianne's had a long day of  
travel...

JORGE

My love, my love! You need to  
relax. Enjoy this.

Joanne gives him a stern look.

JOANNE

Please.

Jorge flounders towards Joanne's chair.

He wraps his arms around her from behind.

JORGE

Of course. Anything for you.

He kisses her cheek. Then her neck. Then her collarbone. It's  
getting inappropriate.

Anie tries to hold back laughter.

JOANNE

Jorge, stop.

He doesn't stop.



JOANNE (CONT'D)

STOP.

He nibbles at her neck. She pushes him away.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

You're DRUNK.

Jorge stands, recoils at the word.

He puffs his chest out, slicks his hair back with a hand.

JORGE

I'm sorry, everyone. I'll just...  
excuse me.

He stumbles towards the front door, leaving his guests alone in his home.

Their guests gape at Joanne. She's bright red – furious, embarrassed.

JOANNE

I'd better go after him.

ANIE

Of course. We'll be fine.

Anie shoves Jill.

JILL

Yeah, please, go.

Dianne grabs Joanne's arm. Her eyes scream with concern.

JOANNE

(to Dianne)

It's OK.

(to the table)

I'll be back.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Jorge is hunched over on the curb. He stares at the ground, takes a long drag from a cigarette.

Joanne's sandals step in front him.

He grimaces, waits to be reprimanded.

Joanne squats, lowers herself to his level.

JOANNE

You have to stop drinking.

Jorge digs his foot against a cobblestone.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

And I don't mean drink less. I mean stop. Forever.

Jorge's face contorts, he fights tears.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

It's out of control. I'm not going to marry an alcoholic.

His eyes shoot upwards.

JORGE

I'm not an...

His pupils find the pavement again.

JOANNE

I love you, Jorge, but every ounce of me despises you right now. I won't stay if you drink, but I won't beg you to stop.

Jorge chokes down his tears, his face hardens.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Do you understand?

He brings himself to look at her, unsteadily nods.

EXT. PORTO SHORE - DAY

Rare rain-filled clouds cast shadows over the ocean. The sun's amber glow fights to break through the leaden sky.

A YOUNG BAREFOOT BOY throws a fishing line into the tide.

INT. PAY PHONE - DAY

Joanne stares at the receiver inside the rusty phone booth.

She rubs her slightly more swollen belly, swallows.

She reaches towards the phone, only to draw her hand back again.

She gnaws on her lip, then picks up the phone. She quickly deposits coins into the slot and hits the keys before she can reconsider.

RING. RING. RING.

No one answers.

RING.

She pulls the phone from her ear as she hears—

PETER  
(though the phone)  
Hello?

Joanne brings the receiver back to her ear.

JOANNE  
Dad. It's me.

PETER  
Joanne?

An awkward, silent beat. Joanne fights to get words out.

PETER (CONT'D)  
Are you OK? What's wrong?

JOANNE  
I just wanted to call to tell  
you... to tell you that, um... I'm  
getting married.

The sound of a WOMAN'S VOICE mumbles on the other end of the line.

Jo startles.

PETER  
Huh? What did you say?

More of the woman's voice.

JOANNE  
...Nothing. I shouldn't have  
called. This was a mistake.

She slams the receiver down.

INT. REGISTRAR'S OFFICE BATHROOM – DAY

A bright blue eye. A mascara wand passes over it, coating blonde eyelashes in black.

Joanne, wearing a clinical black blazer and a strand of pearls, tilts over a ceramic sink, switches the wand to her other eye. She's dressed for a wake, not a wedding.

DIANNE

I always thought you'd wear mum's dress.

Jo turns towards her sister.

JOANNE

Well... now you can.

DIANNE

I wish she was here to see you. And dad. Did you invite him?

JOANNE

I tried. He's busy with whats-her-face.

Dianne crosses her arms, stares at Jo's reflection. She swallows, musters the courage to say—

DIANNE

You know you don't have to do this.

Joanne stops, sets the brush down.

JOANNE

What?

DIANNE

He's a drunk, Jo. He's not going to change.

JOANNE

He will. He is.

DIANNE

Come home with me. Stay with me and Roger in Edinburgh. You can marry Jorge if you want to but just take some time to think about it first.

Joanne steadies herself on the sink.

JOANNE

I don't have time.

DIANNE

What? Why?

A heavy beat.

JOANNE

I'm pregnant.

DIANNE

Oh, Jo.

Dianne moves towards her, puts her arms around her.

JOANNE

I don't want my kid to grow up without a father. And I love him... usually. I have to give it a fair shot.

DIANNE

What if he doesn't stop? What if he drinks around the baby?

JOANNE

He wouldn't.

Dianne pulls away, studies her big sister.

DIANNE

How can you know that?

Joanne pivots from Dianne, examines at her own somber reflection.

INT. REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Filing cabinets, a creaking ceiling fan, a Portuguese flag, and generic landscape paintings weigh down beige walls. No little girl would ever dream of getting married here.

A BALDING MAN in a sweater rummages through a heavy wooden desk in front of him.

BALDING MAN

Ah.

He pulls out a few creased pieces of paper from a drawer, looks up towards—

Joanne and Jorge, who stand in front of the desk wearing nervous smiles.

Dianne sits in a chair in a corner of the room.

BALDING MAN (CONT'D)  
Shall we begin?

Jorge pulls Joanne's hands into his, turns her towards him.

He smiles.

She doesn't.

INT. JORGE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Darkness. Joanne and Jorge are curled towards one another under the covers. Their hands touch. A sweet, serene moment.

But their slumber is interrupted by a CRYING BABY.

Joanne's eyes open. Jorge groans, rolls over away from Jo.

She sighs, pulls the covers from her body.

She walks to the baby's crib in the corner of the room, picks up her newborn daughter, JESSICA.

She swaddles her in a blanket, carries her to the window.

The BRIGHT ORANGE MOON glows into the room. Jessica is mesmerized by it. Her crying ceases.

Jo kisses her baby's forehead, looks to Jorge – sound asleep.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – DAY

An overturned bottle of baby formula leaks onto the kitchen counter. A fly lands in it.

Joanne, with bags under her eyes and uncombed hair, clutches JESSICA, now five-months-old, in one arm.

She pounds on the bedroom door with her free fist.

JOANNE  
Jorge.

She waits, raps on the door again.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Jorge!

A CLATTER of dishes falling, the THUD of footsteps from within.

Joanne tugs on the locked door handle, rattles it.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Jorge, please! You need to watch  
her. I have to write.

She waits for a beat, holds her breath – nothing.

She GROANS loudly, kicks the door.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Joanne sits on the edge of a kitchen chair in front of the table. Jessica is balanced in her arm, breast-feeding under her shirt.

She clutches a pen with her free hand, scribbles on the bottom of a piece of paper covered in notes.

Her breath catches.

JOANNE  
OW!

She pulls Jessica up from under her shirt.

Jessica coughs, spits up milk all over Joanne's pages.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
Dammit.

With the baby pressed to her chest, she uses the edge of her T-shirt to soak up the mess, but the ink BLEEDS and the cotton SMEARS it across the page. Her work is ruined.

The sound of the BEDROOM DOOR OPENING. Footsteps.

Joanne abandons her pages, rushes out of the room.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT, DOORWAY – DAY

Jorge reaches towards the front door handle, but Jo steps in front of him, blocks the way.

JOANNE  
What are you doing?

He looks down, avoids her eyes.

JORGE  
I need to go.





JORGE

I'm fine. Just need some rest.

JOANNE

You're fucking sloshed. You can't even stand up straight.

JORGE

Silence, woman. Leave me be.

Joanne shakes her head.

JOANNE

(interrupting)

Do you think I want to be this person?...Worried about you, nagging you...I hate who I've become because of you.

JORGE

Because of me?!

JOANNE

I work twice as hard because you don't have a job. You never take care of Jessica and I don't have any time to write. I have lost all semblance of myself.

He looks at her sympathetically. A bit of blood drops down his eyebrow.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

It's killing me, Jorge.

Unsteadily, he steps towards her. Puts his hands on her shoulders. Looks her in the eyes.

They stare at each other for a beat, a look of understanding, empathy...

JORGE

Get. Out.

Or not.

JOANNE

What?

JORGE

Leave.

He takes her shoulders and SHOVES her towards the door.

Jo hesitates, looks towards the bedroom where Jessica sleeps.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

JOANNE  
Jorge. Calm down.

JORGE  
GO!

JOANNE  
OK. I'll go. Let me get Jessica.

Jorge sneers, points to the door.

JORGE  
Out.

JOANNE  
I'm not leaving without her.

JORGE  
You stupid bitch, go!

She holds her ground, jaw clenched.

Jorge sighs, grabs her arms, and PICKS HER UP.

She kicks and flails her limbs, but his muscled arms are too strong to fight.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRS – NIGHT

Jorge propels her down the stairs as she SCREAMS OUT, tries to break free.

EXT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

His blood-speckled hands heave Joanne into the street.

She turns back around to face him. Her lip quivers.

JOANNE  
I need Jess.

His body barricades the stairway.

She ducks her head downwards, pulls her arms to her chest, and thrusts all of her weight at him.

He holds her back, but she keeps coming.

She grits her teeth, hurls herself at him again.

JORGE  
STOP IT!

He winds his arm back, brings his hand down hard, HITS HER ACROSS THE FACE.

The blow sends her flying back. She lands on all fours on the cobblestones.

She reaches up to her lip, fingers blood.

Her eyes close, she swallows, musters all the strength she has left, and rises to her feet. She faces Jorge.

His eyes widen at the sight of her bloody face, his mouth drops.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
Oh, Jo...

She doesn't blink, races past him back.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
Jo, WAIT!

INT. APARTMENT STAIRS – NIGHT

Jo sprints as fast as she can up the stairs.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

She bursts through the front door, slams it shut, fumbles to lock it behind her.

She heads straight for the bedroom.

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM – NIGHT

The mobile spins faster above sleeping Jessica.

Joanne rushes to the baby, she reaches to pick her up, then hesitates.

She looks over her shoulder towards the closet.

She runs to open the closet door, reaches up towards the top shelf on her tip-toes.

Her face strains, she struggles. Her fingers finds the edge of a box. She wills it down, but the box falls open and the papers cascade to the floor in a mess.

She scrambles on her hands and knees to collect them, shoves them back in the box.

She secures the box under her arm, moves towards the crib.

She softly picks up the baby, swaddles her tightly in the blanket that covers her.

EXT. JORGE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Joanne emerges from the stairs into the street. Jorge is waiting for her.

JORGE

I'm sorry.

Joanne avoids eye contact, pushes past him. But he reaches out and GRABS HER ARM.

She whips towards him.

JOANNE

Let us go.

JORGE

No, darling, you must stay.

In one swift movement, Joanne rips her arm free.

She clutches Jessica tightly to her chest, SPRINTS down the middle of the empty street.

JORGE (CONT'D)

STOP!

Thunder clouds RUMBLE above them.

She runs faster.

JORGE (CONT'D)

(yelling)

You can't leave me!

Her eyes start to water. The blood on her cheek mixes with salty tears.

JORGE (CONT'D)

JOANNE!

She runs. The thunder GROWLS louder.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
GET BACK HERE!

And runs.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
YOU ARE MY WIFE. COME BACK!

And runs – towards God knows where – into the thunderous, pitch-black night.

INT. THE TRAIN – NIGHT

Rain PELTS the top of the tin canopy. Thunder BOOMS into the train.

The edge of Jessica's baby blanket sweeps under Joanne's eye, collecting blood. She tucks the tainted edge back into the bundle that holds her daughter.

She sheepishly looks around the train – A MIDDLE AGED MAN holding a construction hat, already up for work, and TWO TEENAGE BOYS still wired from a night at the club, ride the otherwise empty train.

She looks down at Jessica, who cracks open a sleepy eye, then looks to the tattered box of writing scraps.

Another BOOM of thunder. A piercing strike of LIGHTNING lights up the train car.

But this time, the bolt of light that once inspired her makes her tremble. She grits her teeth, tightens her grip on the two things she cares about most.

EXT. EDINBURGH COUNTRYSIDE – DAY

A handful of sheep in desperate need of a sheer huddle under an Oak tree as overhead clouds start to rumble.

EXT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT – DAY

Sleek, modern, with every luxury but none of the charm of their childhood home.

Dianne opens the front door, her mouth drops.

Joanne stands in front of her, with a bruised face and a crying baby.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT, OFFICE - DAY

A cluttered storage room. A desk and a chair, and tons of boxes marked in ink: "Books", "kitchen", "bedroom".

Joanne, with wet hair and a towel over her shoulder, lays Jessica down on a small cot in a corner of the messy room.

Dianne hands her a pillow and a blanket.

DIANNE

It's not a real bed, but it'll do for now.

JOANNE

I feel horrible crashing, Di. Roger must hate me. Newlyweds and already the extended family has come to stay.

DIANNE

Nonsense. We want you here.

JOANNE

Only for a little while. I'll find a job, my own place.

DIANNE

Shh. Get some sleep.

She heads to the door.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

And I'm right across the hall if you need me, alright?

She nods.

Dianne closes the door behind her.

Joanne exhales. She climbs onto the cot next to Jessica, tugs the blanket around them both.

She picks up a box of photographs on the floor, fingers through them -

Dianne and ROGER, Dianne's husband, on their wedding day; Dianne and Joanne as little girls; Peter's black and white high school graduation portrait, and a photo of Anne on the beach, about 30, feet stuck in the sand and a killer smile decorating her sun-kissed features.

She holds up the picture, admires it in her hand. But her smile fades as she catches sight of her wedding band.

She twists it off, sets it down next to the photograph of her mother. Look how far she's come.

She clicks off the lamp next to her.

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HALLWAY – FLASHBACK/DREAM

The same familiar MAIL CART, overflowing with a multitude of packages and letters, rolls across a familiar gray carpet.

It rolls past offices and a CONFERENCE ROOM, where we see—

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, CONFERENCE ROOM – FLASHBACK/DREAM

Joanne sitting in the empty room. She adjusts a stationary video camera pointed at an empty seat in front of her.

A RAPPING on the open wooden door.

JOANNE

Come in.

A WOMAN in a blazer and slacks ushers in a 20-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN MAN who TREMBLES.

WOMAN

Take a seat here.

The man LIMPS across the room, finds his seat with great effort.

The woman sits next to Joanne.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask you a few questions, and we're going to do it on camera, alright?

The man says nothing.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(to Joanne)

Ready?

Joanne nods, clicks the video camera ON.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Please say your name and age.

The man looks to the camera, hesitates.

Joanne watches him through the camera lense.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

When you're ready.

AFRICAN MAN

My name is Thato.

WOMAN

And your age?

THATO

I am 19.

WOMAN

Where did you grow up, Thato?

THATO

I lived in Harare with my father, but we had no money, so I moved to Cape Town for a job herding cattle. It was good. The work was hard but I had a bed. I never slept in a bed before.

WOMAN

Why did you leave?

THATO

My boss was suspicious. He thought I was stealing cows. He was always drunk. He stopped paying me. I had no money to send to my father, to feed myself. So I asked him for my money. He went to a back room. I thought he was getting my payment. But he brought out a gun. I ran.

WOMAN

Where did you run?

Joanne zooms in on Thato with the video camera.

THATO

Into the trees.

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FARM - NIGHT

THATO, sweat pouring down his face, eyes frantic, races across a CATTLE FIELD.

FARMER

(O.S.)

THATO!



Thato's eyes are huge, wild – he doesn't dare turn back.

The farmer SHOUTS after him as he hurls himself across the field.

But he sees something, his BARE FEET skid forward in the muddied dirt–

He's trapped. A tall barbed-wire fence separates the farm from the forest.

FARMER (CONT'D)  
I'm going to kill you, THIEF!

Thato turns around to see–

A TOWERING, MIDDLE-AGED FARMER plodding through the mud towards him, pistol raised.

Thato inhales, LEAPS onto the barbed wire fence.

He climbs it, struggles. His hands grip the thorny knots. He SCREAMS OUT in pain.

With every step upwards, another grimace. BLOOD trickles down his wrists.

But he's close – inches from the top.

He swings a leg over the fence, the wire ripping into his leg. He grits his teeth, pulls the other leg over when–

A GUN SHOT RINGS OUT.

Thato WAILS.

His thigh eats the pistol's bullet, blood leaks towards the forest floor.

Thato FALLS a dozen feet down, THUDS to the ground.

But the farmer doesn't stop shooting.

BANG! he misses. BANG! BANG! He's closing in.

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FOREST – NIGHT

Thato drags himself into the woods, pulling the weight of his dead leg behind him.

Lush green trees twist towards the sky, blanketing the forest in a dark emerald canopy.

Thato heaves his body forward into the darkness.

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FARM – NIGHT

FARMER  
YOU BASTARD!

BANG! BANG! BANG! The farmer fires round after round into the darkness.

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FOREST – NIGHT

Thato's eyes are heavy, he's losing consciousness.

He musters all his remaining strength, pulls himself towards a dead, fallen tree.

He collapses behind it, examines his leg. Blood pours out from the bullet wound, soaking the leaves around him a sinister crimson.

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FARM – NIGHT

The farmer's face is bright red. He fires blindly into the forest, his pupils ignite with the blaze of the gun.

But then, his pistol clicks – no bullet comes out.

He pulls the trigger again, but his ammo is gone.

He GROWLS, the sound echoing to—

EXT. CAPE TOWN, FOREST – NIGHT

Thato, who lies behind the tree. He pulls the leaves around his body and buries himself in dirt and fallen branches.

He SHAKES beneath the brush. His breath is choppy, uneven.

He looks up towards the ebony sky, and we look down at him – dying, hopeless, buried alive.

BACK TO—

INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

Joanne looks up from the camera at Thato, who VIOLENTLY SHAKES in his chair. His voice trembles, barely able to form words.

THATO

I was terrified he would find me.  
That I would die hiding.

As he speaks, an EBONY MIST floods the ceiling. From it, THREE FACELESS FIGURES cloaked in black float down from the fog.

THATO (CONT'D)

I felt the blood seeping from my leg. I knew no one was coming for me. I knew I was going to die.

The figures ascend towards Thato, surround him, shroud him in darkness.

THATO (CONT'D)

I feared for my father. I wanted to tell him where I was. I wanted him to know that I am sorry.

The figures tilt their shadowed faces towards Thato, they inhale deeply, and they suck the life from his body.

Joanne watches in horror, unable to aid the man dying before her eyes.

The SOUND OF THE CREATURES' SOUL-SUCKING becomes louder. Thato's face drains of color.

One of the creatures reaches a skeletal hand out from under his cloak. He winds his boned fingers around Thato's neck and KISSES HIM deeply.

Thato takes a final, pained breath. His eyes go dead.

WOMAN

(O.S.)

Joanne.

Joanne's eyes hold heavy tears.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(O.S.)

Joanne!

Joanne snaps to. The tears leak down her cheeks.

But the creatures are gone. The room is brightly lit. Thato is alive.

Joanne clicks the recorder off.

JOANNE  
I'm sorry, I just...

WOMAN  
Can you walk Thato to the train?

Joanne looks at Thato, who continues to shake in his chair.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Joanne shades in the cloak of a SKELETAL CREATURE onto the corner of a EDINBURGH newspaper, dated 2/13/1994.

She sits in a cluttered office space, brown walls and brown carpet, in a row of identical metal chairs filled with women and men of all races and ages. Jessica sleeps in a stroller next to her.

Two toddlers play with Legos on the floor near her feet.

The sound of babies crying drains out the sound of-

SECRETARY  
Rowling. John, Rowling?

Joanne perks up.

JOANNE  
Joanne?

SECRETARY  
Oh, yes. Joanne Rowling.

Joanne nods, stands.

INT. SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Joanne sits in front of a desk piled with stacks of papers. NANCY, a middle-aged woman with a tightly pulled back bun, flips through a clipboard of forms.

Joanne taps her foot, waits to be addressed.

NANCY  
Hmmm.

JOANNE  
Yes?

NANCY

It says you quit your job in  
Portos?

JOANNE

That's correct.

NANCY

Why did you quit?

JOANNE

I had to leave.

NANCY

Why?

JOANNE

I needed to return to Edinburgh.

Nancy sits back in her chair, studies Joanne.

NANCY

Ms. Rowling, I can't award you any  
aid if you continue to be coy. Why  
should we give you state support if  
you willingly left a paying job?  
Please, help me out.

Joanne looks at Jessica, swallows.

JOANNE

My husband is abusive. I feared for  
my life and my daughter's life.

Nancy doesn't even blink.

NANCY

How did he abuse you?

JOANNE

He drank. He hit me.

NANCY

Where did he hit you?

JOANNE

He slapped me across the face.  
Pushed me.

Nancy writes on her clipboard, doesn't look up.

NANCY

Did it leave a mark?

JOANNE

Yes. I bruised and bled.

NANCY

Did you take any photographs?

JOANNE

No. I didn't.

Nancy looks up.

NANCY

You have to take photos. Did you report it?

JOANNE

No, I fled. I had to leave immediately.

Nancy shakes her head.

NANCY

You're not making things very easy for me. Did you file for a restraining order? For divorce?

JOANNE

No. I just left! We had to get away from him. I wasn't thinking about any of that.

NANCY

Well does he know where you are? Where his daughter is?

JOANNE

Did you hear what I said? He hit me. He could hurt her. There's no way in hell I'm telling him where I am. Ever.

Nancy sighs.

NANCY

Well, from the state's point of view, nothing criminal happened. The only thing I can tell is that you quit your occupation in Portugal and moved to Scotland.

JOANNE

But I had to leave! He's dangerous. He would have—

Nancy lifts up her hand, silences her.

NANCY

This is what I can do for you.  
Eighty pounds a week – with weekly  
check-ins and on the condition that  
you actively look for employment.

JOANNE

Eighty pounds a week?! That's not  
even enough to put Jess in daycare.  
No job will let me bring a baby to  
work.

Nancy shrugs.

NANCY

Eighty pounds. Take it or leave it.

INT. THE TRAIN – DAY

Joanne stares out the fogged-over train window onto the vibrant green landscape. A stony castle on a hill is surrounded by a dozen cottages, miniature in comparison.

Joanne lifts her hand to the window, draws a MOAT around the castle with her finger on the foggy glass. She adds FLAGS sticking up from the top.

Jess STIRS, whimpers in Jo's lap.

Joanne reaches into a bag and pulls out a RED AND GOLD KNITTED SCARF. She swaddles it around the baby, who coos in contentment.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT – DAY

A bowl of untouched oatmeal steams on the kitchen counter, resting next to Joanne's arm, wrapped in the cord of a landline phone.

JOANNE

(into the phone)

I don't have that certification,  
no, but I have experience teaching  
English in Portugal. I can manage  
without a- yes, I understand. I  
know. Fine. Thank you.

She hangs up.

She picks up a folded over newspaper, the classified section is marked up in highlighter. She draws an "X" through one of the highlighted listings.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The untouched oatmeal has turned into hardened slush.

JOANNE  
 (into the phone)  
 Just meet with me, please! I'm  
 extremely qualified for this  
 position. Sir-

She GROANS. Slams the phone down.

Picks up a pen, marks off the final highlighted item in a sea of "X"s.

She stares at the obliterated newspaper. But then, the phone rings.

Her eyes light up, she picks it up.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
 (into the phone)  
 Moore and Rowling residence.

MAN  
 (muffled through the  
 phone)  
 Jo?

Joanne's face turns stark-white.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JORGE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jorge sits on the edge of his bed, an empty bottle of tequila next to his pillow.

JORGE  
 Joanne.

Jo's breath quickens. She's paralyzed.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
 I miss you. I need you to come  
 home.

She slams the receiver down. Exhales.



She looks to the floor. Jessica plays with a her white owl on a blanket.

Her jaw trembles.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY

Dianne and ROGER; 30s, a business-minded suit, sit across from Joanne, who wears an oversized pajama top. Her hair is a mess, her face is oily, unwashed.

She stares down at a plate of meat and vegetables.

DIANNE  
(O.S.)  
Joanne.

She looks up. Dianne and Roger stare at her with the faces of concerned parents.

DIANNE (CONT'D)  
I'm - we're - worried about you.

Jo's brow furrows.

DIANNE (CONT'D)  
You've lost weight. You're hardly speaking. You're not taking care of yourself.

Roger grabs his wife's hand, squeezes it.

DIANNE (CONT'D)  
I know you're upset, but he hasn't tried to call again.

JOANNE  
What if he comes here? What if he breaks in? He sounded drunk.

DIANNE  
We will never let him near you or Jessica. I swear it, Jo.

ROGER  
Look. I have a friend. A psychiatrist. We think you should see him.

DIANNE  
It could help. Talking to someone who isn't us.

JOANNE  
I can't afford a shrink.

DIANNE  
It's taken care of. And I'll watch  
Jess, OK? Do it for her. She needs  
her mum back.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A baby blue couch. An aquarium. A sheepskin rug.

Joanne slumps further down into the couch.

A PSYCHIATRIST, Patrick, 40s, with round spectacles and jet-black hair, stares blankly at Jo.

PATRICK  
So. What brings you here?

JOANNE  
My sister wanted me to come.

PATRICK  
Why?

JOANNE  
Because I'm a mess, apparently.

PATRICK  
In what way?

JOANNE  
I don't know. I moved to Edinburgh  
about a month ago. I don't know  
anyone. I don't have a job. I'm a  
single mother. My husband is  
abusive. I haven't been eating. Or  
sleeping. But sometimes all I can  
do is sleep. I feel like a mass of  
flesh and bones just... taking up  
space.

Patrick jots down some notes.

PATRICK  
Do you ever think of hurting  
yourself?

Joanne picks at her nails.

JOANNE  
Doesn't everyone?

PATRICK

No. They don't. Do you ever think of harming your daughter?

Joanne's eyes shoot up.

JOANNE

Never. I would never. Jessica is the only thing getting me through this. She is everything to me.

PATRICK

So what hurts most?

JOANNE

I don't know... Everything... I don't know.

Patrick studies her, watches her fingers dig aggressively into her nail beds.

PATRICK

If you were to look into a mirror and see what you desire most, what would you see?

Joanne's lip quivers.

JOANNE

My mother. I would see my mum.

Her eyes flood with tears.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

She would tell me what to do. She would make everything better.

Patrick says nothing, lets her cry.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Sometimes I feel like there's something sucking the life out of me. Like every happy moment and memory I've ever had is being bled from my body.

Patrick jots some more, rips a note from his prescription pad.

PATRICK

This is a prescription for fluoxetine. It's a medication for depression, it should help you.

He extends the paper to Jo.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
And, Joanne?

She grabs the other end, but he doesn't let go yet.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
You are not a waste of space.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

Joanne approaches the pharmacy counter with a bundle of diapers under her arm. A frizzy-haired PHARMACIST types on a hefty grey computer.

PHARMACIST  
Picking up?

JOANNE  
Yeah, Joanne Rowling.

PHARMACIST  
Birthday?

JOANNE  
July 31, 1965.

PHARMACIST  
One moment.

The pharmacist grabs a bottle behind the desk, sets it on the counter.

JOANNE  
Oh, and these.

She sets the diapers on the counter.

The pharmacist scans the items.

PHARMACIST  
That'll be 147 pounds.

JOANNE  
I'm sorry... 147 pounds?!

PHARMACIST  
That's right. Do you have insurance? It might cover the cost of the medication.

JOANNE

No.

PHARMACIST

Then I'm afraid that's what it costs.

Joanne looks to the pills, then the diapers.

JOANNE

Fine. Just the nappies then.

INT. TRAIN – NIGHT

Joanne rests her head against the window, watches the landscape blur by.

But then her gaze changes focus, she concentrates on the glass itself.

She sits up straight, her eye caught by something in the reflection.

And then we see it – Jo's mother, Anne, appears to sit in the seat behind her.

Jo spins around. But of course – there's no one there.

She shakes her head, slumps down in the seat, tries to hide her tears.

Her eyes close, and the sound of Patrick's voice floats over her–

PATRICK

(O.S.)

If you were to look into a mirror  
and see what you desire most, what  
would you see?

Her eyes open. A CRUMPLED UP PIECE OF LIME GREEN PAPER sticking out under her seat grabs her attention.

She reaches down, smooths it out – a band flyer for "CORNISH PIXIES, Live at the Liquid Room, one night only!"

She turns it over, flattens it. She grabs a pen from her bag, writes– "D E S I R E"

She studies the word. Then writes the letters in reverse underneath: "E R I S E D"

She folds the paper in half, pockets it.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joanne closes the front door behind her. Dianne and Jessica wait for her in the entryway.

DIANNE  
Hey. How did it go?

Jo takes her baby from her sister's arms, gives Jess a kiss.

JOANNE  
It was good. Thank you, Di.

DIANNE  
Did he give you anything to take?

JOANNE  
Yeah. Anti-depressants. I think they're helping already.

Dianne smiles.

From behind her, THEIR FATHER, Peter, steps into the hallway.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
...Dad?

PETER  
Jo.

They don't embrace, or even smile, really.

DIANNE  
I thought we could all have dinner.  
It's been so long.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dianne and Roger sit across from Joanne and Peter. Jessica is in her high seat next to her mom, playing with a few bright green peas on a tray.

Joanne hasn't touched her food.

She grimaces at the sound of her father's utensils dragging across his plate. He stuffs a fork-full of meat into his mouth.

Dianne clears her throat.

DIANNE  
So. Dad. How's Jan?

Joanne flinches at the name.

PETER

She's good. We're going on vacation to Stratford. Got a little cottage.

ROGER

Ooh, catch some Shakespeare? My mate is an extra in Hamlet there. I don't have the palette for it, really.

DIANNE

Neither does Dad. He hates it.

PETER

All that wordy nonsense. Seems self-important. Not for me.

Roger chuckles.

ROGER

Cheers to that.

They clink glasses.

JOANNE

Mum loved Shakespeare.

She turns to her father.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

It's a shame you couldn't have taken her.

Roger sets down his glass.

ROGER

I did take her. When you were a baby. We saw Much Ado About Something.

Dianne laughs.

DIANNE

Nothing, Dad.

JOANNE

I was seven, and it wasn't Stratford. I remember.

ROGER

Really? Mmm.

DIANNE  
Jo, you're not eating. Are you  
feeling alright?

JOANNE  
No. I'd better get some air.

She pulls Jessica from her seat, swiftly leaves the room.

EXT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joanne sits on the cement curb, rocks a swaddled Jessica in  
her arms.

She looks up towards the night sky, a single star is visible.  
It's huge, vibrant, glorious.

But then- it moves. It's an airplane, not a star.

CLOSE ON: The sound of the front door opening.

Peter walks outside, squats down on the curb next to Jo.

They sit for a moment in silence.

PETER  
She's pretty, isn't she?

JOANNE  
She's strong.

PETER  
How'd you think of the name?

Joanne strokes Jessica's cheek.

JOANNE  
Jessica Mitford. She's an author. A  
Civil Rights' advocate. An  
investigative journalist. She was  
ballsy. Stubborn, but tough.

PETER  
Perhaps the name would be better  
suited for her mother.

Jo looks up, frowns. And then it comes-

PETER (CONT'D)  
Jo, you know I loved your mum very  
much.

Joanne squints sharply up at her father.



JOANNE

She's your secretary. The wedding was right after mom died. How could you do that?

PETER

I needed to move on. There's no harm in that. You need to move on, too.

JOANNE

What, and forget her? Replace her? She is my mother. Your wife.

PETER

I haven't forgotten her.

Joanne kneads her foot into the ground.

JOANNE

You were gone when she was sick. You didn't help her. You forgot her before she was dead.

It hits him, hard. His empathetic eyes turn cold.

PETER

How dare you.

He stands up.

PETER (CONT'D)

What would she think if she saw you now? Penniless, alone, a single mother... still pretending to write. It kills me she never saw her eldest succeed.

Looks down at her.

PETER (CONT'D)

And it could have killed her, too.

Joanne CHOKES on her breath, her eyes flood with tears.

Her father stomps inside the house.

INT. DIANNE'S APARTMENT, OFFICE - NIGHT

Joanne sits up in her cot, her eyes bloodshot from crying.

DIANNE

(O.S.)

I don't know how much longer. A few months, maybe?

Joanne looks towards the door.

ROGER

(O.S.)

A few months?! Di, I love your sister. But I need my office back. And we need to start building our life together - alone.

DIANNE

She is my sister! She's not well, Roger. She'll stay as long as she needs.

The floorboards inside the office CREAK.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

We can't talk about this here. C'mon.

FOOTSTEPS shuffle down the hall.

Joanne looks to Jess, whose miniature fingers wrap around her stuffed white owl.

INT. EMPTY FLAT - DAY

Moldy carpet. A leaking ceiling. A real hell hole.

A REALTOR in a T-shirt and flip flops scratches his head.

REALTOR

So it's 250 pounds a month. First and last.

Joanne looks around the deteriorating cube.

CLOSE ON the sound of a million tiny nails SCRATCHING on the walls. Joanne JUMPS.

JOANNE

What is that?

REALTOR

You don't wanna know, love.

She sees a pile of mice droppings in the corner - she gets it.

JOANNE  
I'll give you 250 for the first  
month, no last.

REALTOR  
You got yourself a deal, little  
lady!

He extends a hairy hand to shake on it.

REALTOR (CONT'D)  
Welcome home.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BEDROOM – NIGHT

Joanne throws a shirt, a pair of slacks, and a dress into the closet.

She puts a few books on the top shelf, next to her BOX OF WRITING SCRAPS.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM – DAY

Joanne heaves an ancient typewriter, with the letters "JR" engraved on its metal face, onto the table in front of a window.

She runs a hand over the dusty keys. She steps back. Stares at it. Paces.

EXT. ROWLING BACKYARD – DAY – FLASHBACK

Anne, Peter, Dianne (14), and Joanne (16), sit around a wooden picnic table, paper plates of half-eaten birthday cake around them.

ANNE  
Alright, present time. Close your  
eyes dear, I couldn't wrap this  
one.

Joanne covers eyes face with her hands.

JOANNE  
(joking)  
Ooh, is it a car?!

Peter SCOFFS.

ANNE  
Keep them closed.

Anne rolls THE TYPEWRITER, festooned with a big yellow bow, next to Jo on a rolling cart.

ANNE (CONT'D)  
OK love, open 'em.

Joanne's eyes pop open and she sees it – the carriage holding a piece of paper with the words "Happy sweet 16, Joanne!" typed in black ink.

JOANNE jumps up, elated.

JOANNE  
Oh, mum.

ANNE  
For my writer. My *chridhe*. (*heart*)

She runs to her mother, picks her up, spins her around.

ANNE (CONT'D)  
Put me down, child!

Anne playfully hits her daughter.

Jo gives her mother a big kiss on the cheek.

PETER  
You can only use it when you've finished your homework. And only on weekends. Do you understand?

DIANNE  
It's gorgeous, mum. Well done!

PETER  
Jo. Did you hear?

ANNE  
Oh, hush. If she's going to be a bread-winning novelist she must practice.

Joanne beams.

ANNE (CONT'D)  
It's a bit old, but it'll do the trick. For now.

JOANNE  
It's perfect mum. Thank you.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM – DAY

Jo stares at the piece of ancient machinery. She approaches it, reaches her hands out, then steps back.

She tries to approach it again, fails. She sighs.

She wraps her arms around it, picks it up.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BEDROOM – NIGHT

Joanne hauls the typewriter into her closet.

She throws her knitted Christmas sweater, adorned with the lopsided letter "J", over the machine, shuts the closet door closed.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BEDROOM – DAY

Joanne's eyes open to the sound of MICE SCRATCHING inside the walls.

She sighs, rolls over towards Jessica.

She runs a hand over her daughter's wispy blonde baby hair.

JOANNE

We've got to get out of here, Jess.

EXT. LONDON STREET – DAY

Jessica is strapped to Joanne's chest in a sling. They amble down the busy London street. SUITS and WOMEN in high heels and blazers push past them.

The vibrant awning of PICKLED PEPPER BOOKS catches Jo's eye. She pauses in front of the beckoning storefront.

INT. PICKLED PEPPER BOOKS – DAY

BELLS JINGLE as Joanne pushes the glass door open into the irresistible children's book store.

Paper cutouts of stars hang from the ceiling, twinkly lights drape over windows, stuffed animals embellish every available nook. And of course, walls and walls of beloved books.

Joanne's eyes ignite at the sight of it all.

She walks down an aisle, runs her hands over the bindings of *Good Night Moon, Where The Wild Things Are, Alice in Wonderland, The Chronicles of Narnia.*

She extracts a copy of *LITTLE WOMEN*, settles into a kid-sized chair.

She opens the book, her eyes wander over a random passage:

"And Jo said, 'I may be strong-minded, but no one can say I'm out of my sphere now, for woman's special mission is supposed to be drying tears and bearing burdens...'"

WOMAN

(O.S.)

One of the greatest heroines in all of literature, Jo.

Jo looks up. A WOMAN WITH FLAMING RED HAIR, clutching a stack of books, stands behind her.

JOANNE

I'm sorry?

WOMAN

Jo March, from Little Women. So bold. Daring. Outspoken. She never gave up. I heard Louisa May Alcott based the character on herself.

Joanne smiles.

JOANNE

I'm not surprised.

WOMAN

Wouldn't it be magical, to have a brain that could produce something that brilliant?

JOANNE

It would be.

Joanne closes the book. Her smile fades.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Another life, maybe.

She pushes the novel back into the shelf.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Familiar grey stratus clouds congregate above the populous street. Thunder booms. Rain drips from the sky. Passing PEDESTRIANS huddle under umbrellas.

Joanne darts across the sidewalk, her sweater and Jessica's sling entirely soaked.

She ducks into the closest shop.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Joanne rings her hair out onto the linoleum floor.

A MAN IN A SUIT hits her leg with his shopping cart as he heads for the exit.

JOANNE

Oy! Watch where you're going, eh?

MAN

Sorry, didn't see yo- Joanne?  
Joanne Rowling?

Joanne eyes the man up and down - well-kempt, handsome, but with horribly bleached blonde hair - It's Mason, the fucker.

Her face drops.

MASON

Woah! I hardly recognized you. It's  
Mason... from Amnesty.

Joanne flushes a bright red.

JOANNE

Mason, hi.

MASON

God, are you alright? You look...  
different. So... thin. Is that a  
baby?

Joanne quickly wipes rainwater from Jessica's forehead.

JOANNE

This is Jessica.

MASON

So, you married then?

JOANNE

Um, yeah. No. Not really. I mean I am, but... no.

Mason cocks his head.

MASON

OK. Well, where are you working these days? I remember when you got the boot from Amnesty. That was *grim*.

He laughs stupidly – still a dick.

Joanne bites her bottom lip, tries to puff herself up.

JOANNE

I'm... writing. Books.

He raises an eyebrow in disbelief.

She swallows her pride.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

And how are you?

Mason brushes a piece of lint off his suit.

MASON

Meh. Told myself I'd never be a business wanker in a fancy suit, but here I am. Working for my father of all people.

He slicks back his blonde hair, chuckles obnoxiously.

MASON (CONT'D)

It certainly pays the bills – more than reading letters from refugees, that's for sure. The old man's company just sold, actually. So I'm bloody rich!

Jo tries to smile.

MASON (CONT'D)

Oh, and I'm engaged – to Laura – you remember Laura.

Jessica, still soaking wet in her sling, cries out.

MASON (CONT'D)

You know. She worked in PR. Blonde. With the tits.



JOANNE  
Yeah, Laura. Right.

Mason ignores the crying baby.

MASON  
She's a weather girl now at Channel  
4. Have you seen her? She just got  
her own segment – she's bloody  
viral now.

JOANNE  
Mmm.

MASON  
Are you sure you're alright? You  
look... I mean if you need money,  
or...

Jessica cries louder.

JOANNE  
Look, I gotta go.

Joanne hoists Jess close to her chest, rushes out of the  
grocery store.

Mason guffaws to himself.

MASON  
Uh, bye...?

EXT. LONDON STREET – DAY

Joanne holds Jessica tight to her bosom as she speed-walks  
through the rain. She chokes down tears. Her walk turns into  
a run.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BATHROOM – NIGHT

Water from the shower's faucet beats down the back of  
Joanne's neck and scalp. She stands motionless, letting the  
water cascade around her.

She pushes the hair from her face, then rests her forehead  
against the crumbling tile. Closes her eyes. Mascara spirals  
down her cheeks towards the drain.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The storm rages outside, pounding down on the roof with vigor.

Jessica bobs around in her high-seat at the kitchen table.

With wet hair and in a bathrobe, Jo pours a can of soup into a pot.

She lights a gas burner with a match, sets the pot on the stove.

A robust POUNDING on the door is muffled by the storm. Another THUD THUD THUD.

Joanne perks up. She goes to the door, looks through the peep hole, sees nothing.

She unlocks the bolt, cracks the door open. Looks to her left, to her right-

And GASPS, attempts to push the door closed, but AN ARM reaches in and thrusts it wide open, sending her flying back into the house.

There he is, in a drunken stupor, hair wild and wet - JORGE.

The rain pounds the ground outside him, framing his bulky stature.

JORGE

My Joanne.

He falters towards to her.

Rising from the carpet, she throws her arms up to stop him.

JOANNE

Don't come near me!

He steps closer.

JORGE

I came all this way. For you.

Joanne's eyes dart around the room.

JORGE (CONT'D)

For Jessica. Where is my baby?

JOANNE

GET OUT.

JORGE

I feel terrible about what I did.  
But I've changed. I can be a good  
husband. A father.

Joanne backs into the kitchen, grabs the phone off the wall.

JORGE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JOANNE

Leave.

JORGE

What are you—

JORGE rushes at her. She quickly dials 9 9—

But he grabs the receiver from her hands. They struggle, a  
tug of war. She hits the final "9" before letting go, and he  
trips backwards, dropping the phone. It dangles from the  
cord.

Jorge crawls towards her on the carpet, sweat and rain  
greasing his hair and face.

JORGE (CONT'D)

You horrible woman. I gave you  
everything and you took my only  
daughter from me?!

He stands.

Jessica cries.

Joanne opens the kitchen drawer, fumbles for something —  
anything. Her hand finds a BOX CUTTER.

She thrusts it out in front of her.

JOANNE

GO!

But the tool doesn't scare him. He sneers at her.

JORGE

No one will ever love you. You're  
worthless. A slut.

He spots Jessica, stumbles towards her.

JORGE (CONT'D)

You were never a good writer. You will never be anything. You're just a DUMB BITCH.

Joanne bites her lip down hard, the razor shakes back and forth in her hand.

He steps closer to Jessica.

JOANNE

DON'T TOUCH HER.

JORGE

You don't deserve her. I'm taking her with me.

Joanne LUNGES at Jorge with the box cutter, but he grabs her wrist and pulls the blade from her grasp. It topples to the floor.

Joanne SCREAMS OUT. He slaps a hand on her mouth and pushes her against the wall.

She kicks at him with all her might.

Jessica watches her mother's struggle, her father's hand squeezing Jo's face hard.

She kicks him again, hard, and he screams, drunkenly loses his balance. He collapses backwards.

Jo grabs Jessica from her high-seat, runs straight out the door into the rain.

Jorge growls, rises to his feet, chases after her.

He reaches the door and sees A POLICE CAR pull up in front of the apartment building.

AN OFFICER on the passenger side of the car leaps out, draws his gun, points it at Jorge.

OFFICER

Don't move.

Jorge slowly raises his hands into the air.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The rain has slowed to a sprinkle. A police car pulls up to a local police station. The car's lights turn off.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Dianne, sitting next to a shaken Jo, swaddles Jessica in the waiting room.

Roger talks to a POLICE OFFICER at the counter.

Jo signs the bottom of a piece of paper on a clipboard. She hands it to an OFFICER in front of her.

OFFICER

This will go into effect immediately. He's not allowed anywhere near you or your child.

The Officer walks off with the papers.

DIANNE

I'm so sorry you had to endure that. But he's gone. He's not allowed to come near you.

JOANNE

Do you think a piece of paper will stop him?

DIANNE

Roger is making sure you're protected. Jorge is in police custody tonight, and then... we'll see. But we will make sure you and Jessica are safe. I promise.

Joanne unsteadily nods.

JOANNE

Can you watch Jess tonight?

DIANNE

Aren't you staying over?

JOANNE

I think I'd like some time alone. Just a night. It would be a huge help, Di.

Dianne wears a look of protest.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I will be fine. Really. I just need a night to myself. Please?

DIANNE

Of course. Whatever you need.

## JOANNE

Thanks.

Dianne kisses her big sister on the forehead.

## INT. JOANNE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Jo opens the door into her decaying apartment. The soup is still on the stove. The box cutter lies open on the floor.

She closes the door behind her and immediately COLLAPSES on the run-down rug.

She digs her fingernails into the carpet and SCREAMS. She pounds the floor with her fists.

She CRIES OUT over and over. Sobs - big, guttural wails.

But then, her screams turn into a whimper.

She curls her feet up near her chest, tears soaking the floor.

She lies there, a hollow shell, eyes squeezed shut, expelling every emotion kept bottled up inside.

Her eyes open and she looks across the rug. The razor glimmers across the carpet.

## INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Water from the bath's faucet floods the tub.

Joanne reaches down to crank the knob off.

Her robe drops to the floor. She steps into the water.

Her frail, bony body submerges in the liquid.

Her face is hollow, her eyes vacant. She's worlds away from the woman who had a brilliant idea on the train.

We expand to see the edges of the ceramic tub - on the edge rests the BOX CUTTER.

Joanne pulls her arm from the tub, turns her wrist over in her palm, fingers the blue veins glowing through pale skin.

She picks up the blade, grips it tightly in a trembling hand.

Her head hits the back of the ceramic tub.

She closes her eyes.

INT. TRAIN STATION – DAY – FLASHBACK

Joanne steps next to a limping Thato.

There is an awkward distance between them. Jo can't find the words to follow his heartbreaking confessional.

They stop in front of Platform 3.

Joanne bites her lip, inhales, turns to him.

JOANNE

Thato. How did you survive?

Thato looks at her with utter earnestness.

THATO

I chose to live.

JOANNE

What do you mean? You were shot,  
lost in the woods...

THATO

I decided to survive.

JOANNE

I don't understand.

THATO

To live is a choice. I chose to see  
my father again. To come here. To  
tell my story. There is light and  
darkness in each of us. I did not  
let the darkness win.

This hits Jo like a bullet to the chest.

JOANNE

Will you be OK?

THATO

I will be good. I am free.

(beat)

Will you be OK?

Joanne is taken aback, struck by the question.

She stares at him, cannot find the words to answer truthfully.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BATHROOM – NIGHT

Joanne opens her eyes. Her hand, still gripping the box cutter, retracts the blade.

She sets it on the edge of the tub and lifts herself from the water.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, BEDROOM – NIGHT

Wrapped in her robe, she heads for the closet.

The rain has picked up again. Thunder GROWLS outside.

She digs through her closet until the dusty typewriter emerges.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, DINING ROOM – NIGHT

She heaves the typewriter onto the dining room table next to her BOX OF WRITING SCRAPS and a PILE OF UNOPENED MAIL— credit card bills, heating bills, second and third notices – and a letter addressed to Joanne in childish font.

A Portuguese stamp sticks out of the corner. Joanne grabs it. Turns it over, hurriedly rips it open. But she unfolds it with caution.

"Miss Joanne. I've decided that you are right. I won't focus on the things I can't change. It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live. Love, Harriet"

Jo swallows.

She sits in front of her typewriter facing the window. Rain beats down on the glass.

She opens the lid to her box and peers inside—

Scribbled on napkins, candy wrappers, a BARF BAG with the names of the Hogwarts houses, the band flyer... everything that would collectively become Harry Potter.

And, of course, the toilet paper roll from the train car. She picks it up, and we finally see what it says. It reads, simply: "You're a wizard, Harry."

Jo picks up the letter from Harriet and places it INSIDE THE BOX.



RAIN assails the window harder.

She turns to the typewriter, admires the piece of ancient machinery. She luxuriates over each and every key.

She winds the ribbon, threads a piece of paper into the carriage.

A deep breath, and she sets her hands onto the keys.

She types: "Chapter One".

MONTAGE – VARIOUS – FLASH FORWARDS TO REAL LIFE EVENTS

EXT. MAIL BOX – DAY – Joanne unlocks her mailbox with a key, pulls out a letter from CHRISTOPHER LITTLE AGENCY. She yanks it open, eyes huge, a massive grin envelops her face.

INT. HOUSE – DAY – Joanne holds Jessica's hand, now a TODDLER, as they walk into their new home. Modern, stylish, warm. Movers haul boxes of books into the living room.

Joanne kneels, points down the hall. Jessica lights up, runs to find her room.

INT. PICKLED PEPPER BOOK STORE – DAY – Joanne sits in a chair in front of a CROWD OF CHILDREN gathered on the floor of the familiar book store.

She reads a passage from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Jessica is in the front row, beaming up at her mom.

INT. PICKLED PEPPER BOOK STORE – DAY – Jo signs a copy of Harry Potter, not as Jo, but as "JK ROWLING" in cursive scrawl. She hands the book to a little boy.

INT. CHAPEL – DAY – Joanne's hands clutch those of NEIL MURRAY, a man with kind eyes and a warm smile.

They are standing in a church – getting married. Dianne, Roger, Peter, Anie, and Jill are all in attendance.

INT. HOSPITAL – DAY – Joanne lies in a hospital bed clutching a BABY BOY, DAVID, with 10-year-old Jessica and Neil on either side of her.

INT. FILM SET – DAY – Joanne steps onto the film set of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

She walks through Diagon Alley, which has sprung to vivid life in front of her, as boom mics and craned cameras pass overhead.

EXT. RED CARPET – DAY – Joanne's high-heeled foot steps out of a limousine onto a red carpet.

Paparazzi cameras flash incessantly. She pulls a silk shall around her shoulders, walks next to hoards of screaming fans pushed up against a metal railing.

A LITTLE GIRL, with a scar covering half of her face, falls in the chaos, is nearly trampled by screaming fans.

Joanne stops in front of her, extends her hand forward, and pulls the child back to her feet. She pulls the shall from her shoulders and hands it to the child.

Joanne continues down the carpet. The paparazzi cameras flash faster, brighter.

They catch in Jo's eyes, reflecting like fireworks, exploding one after another in her ice blue pupils.

END MONTAGE.

INT. JOANNE'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

MATCH CUT TO: Joanne's eyes, dark and hollow, unaware of the real life magic yet to come.

The rain and thunder continue to HOWL. It builds, intensifies, shakes the glass of the window.

She takes a deep breath.

Then Jo, alone and penniless, rests her wet fingers on the keys.

A BOLT OF LIGHTNING strikes outside, lighting up her worn-out features, igniting her golden hair like a halo.

She holds steady, poised and deliberate.

Then, she types–

"The boy who lived."

FADE OUT:

THE END.

Did You Catch the Snitch?

# Check Off References

- Pg 1.** The baby blue Ford Anglia 105E deluxe is the Weasley family's flying car that Ron crashes into the Whomping Willow in *The Chamber of Secrets*.
- Pg. 1** The snack cart pushed by the Elfish Looking Man is a reference to the snack cart that appears on the train to Hogwarts, carrying a variety of treats, including Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans.
- Pg 2.** "AVADA KEDAVRA" is the killing curse, and one of the three unforgivable curses used in the Dark Arts.
- Pg 3.** When lightning strikes across Joanne's face it is a reference to Harry's lightning bolt shaped scar.
- Pg 11.** Anne's Christmas gift to Joanne is one of Molly Weasley's hand-knitted Christmas sweaters.
- Pg. 12** Joanne's Amnesty International colleague Mason is meant to have inspired Draco Malfoy.
- Pg. 12** Similarly, her boss, Alistair, inspired Professor Severus Snape.
- Pg. 14** Joanne transforms David Beckham's football into a snitch.
- Pg. 18** Joanne's London apartment, #7, is a reoccurring, significant number in the Harry Potter universe. There are seven books in the series, seven Weasley children, seven players in a Quidditch team, seven years spent at Hogwarts, seven horcruxes, etc.
- Pg. 19** The owl and rat Joanne sees in her apartment – on the ceiling and floor, respectively – are Harry and Ron's Hogwarts family pets.
- Pg. 20** The dream Joanne has is a reference to how Harry's mother was killed, and how Harry got his scar from Voldemort.
- Pg. 24** The boat "Luna" is named for Luna Lovegood, one of Harry's allies at Hogwarts and a member of Dumbledore's Army.
- Pg. 25** Harriet's line about doing good in the world is a line of Hermione's dialogue in *The Sorcerer's Stone*.

# Check Off References

- Pg. 26** Joanne's drawings are of Hagrid's fantastic beasts.
- Pg. 51** Joanne's line to Harriett about there being more important things than school and cleverness is something Hermione says to Harry in *The Sorcerer's Stone*.
- Pg. 55** The place Joanne's parents met is Platform 9 3/4, the same spot where students board the train for Hogwarts.
- Pg. 69** Jessica has a stuffed white owl that resembles Harry's owl, Hedwig.
- Pg. 80** During Thato's testimonial he is surrounded by Death Eaters.
- Pg. 85** Joanne's train window drawing resembles Hogwarts.
- Pg. 85** Joanne wraps Jess in a red and gold scarf – Gryffindor colors.
- Pg. 91** Jo sees her mother in the train window's reflection, just as Harry sees his family in the mirror of Erised in *The Sorcerer's Stone*.
- Pg. 91** The flyer Joanne finds on the train is for the band Cornish Pixies. Cornish Pixies are mischief-making creatures in the Harry Potter universe
- Pg. 110** In the letter from Harriet, she writes: "It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live." This is a line delivered by Dumbledore in *The Sorcerer's Stone*.
- Pg. 110** The toilet paper roll says, "Your a wizard, Harry" which is what Hagrid says to Harry during their meeting on Harry's 11th birthday.