

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

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EXT.LACROSSE FIELD, DAY

Searing blue sky from POV of someone laying on their back looking up. The sun is as bright as the overhead lights in an airport lavatory. Person on their back uses palm of their upstretched hand, adjusting it precisely, to block out the sun.

A lunch time lacrosse match is being played on the playing field of an elite girls school. At the fringes, girls cheer the players on.

MR.SLATTERY, thirty, good looking within the context of an all girl's school, patrols the perimeter of the field, pausing to make small talk from time to time, introducing himself to students. At the very far corner, tucked beneath a tree, he notices a sleeping student - Nina, owner of the sun blocking hand, sixteen years old, almost beautiful, but not quite - using a book as a pillow. He taps her. She opens her eyes.

MR.SLATTERY  
Excuse me, but are you okay?

She pulls aside her headphones.

NINA  
Fine.

He tips his head to see the book.

MR.SLATTERY  
You fell asleep on top of Balzac.

NINA  
I find him tiresome.

MR.SLATTERY  
You often use great novelists of  
the 18th century as pillows?

NINA  
Only the French. Fuck'em.

He takes a step back, thrown.

MR.SLATTERY  
What are you listening to?

NINA  
Bowie.

MR.SLATTERY  
No kidding? Why?

NINA

Because he expresses my 21st century malaise and 'life after irony' ennui.

MR.SLATTERY

Bowie does?

NINA

Perfectly.

MR.SLATTERY

Bowie was the first concert I ever went to.

NINA

Honestly?

MR.SLATTERY

Me and my brother drove to New York, saw him play at the Garden.

NINA

My brother and I.

MR.SLATTERY

Pardon?

NINA

It's 'My brother and I'. You wouldn't say 'Me drove to New York' so 'Me and my brother' would be grammatically incorrect. But you know that, you're a teacher...

MR.SLATTERY

Yes...

NINA

I mean, I'm sorry, I don't mean to be a bitch. Just, my father would have a fit.

She sits upright and lights a cigarette. He looks flustered.

MR.SLATTERY

I don't think you're supposed to do that.

NINA

Small fry. We've got junkies here. Half the twelfth grade are dying of anorexia . This is the aristocracy you're dealing with.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

I wouldn't bother with the cigarettes. Anyway, go on with what you were saying about Bowie. You saw him at the Garden...that would be Madison Square Garden, not someone's back yard?

MR.SLATTERY

Put it out.

NINA

Because seeing Bowie in someone's backyard would be hard to beat.

MR.SLATTERY

Put it out.

She looks at the cat hair on his crappy suit. Feels a pang of sorrow for him. She takes a drag and puts it out.

NINA

You're the new English teacher.

MR.SLATTERY

Do I look like an English teacher?

NINA

You could pass for an avant-garde geography teacher maybe. I just happen to know that Mrs.Lamb had a nervous breakdown over the holiday. I saw her talking to herself in Shaws. They fired her and hired you.

He looks at his shoes.

NINA (CONT'D)

Don't feel bad. She was a cunt.

MR.SLATTERY

Don't say that word! What are you thinking?

NINA

No, it's okay, fine olde English word, found in Chaucer, in fact. Women are allowed to use it. Germaine Greer says so.

MR.SLATTERY

That's ridiculous. If Germaine Greer told you to jump off a bridge, would you?

NINA

Maybe, although I don't really  
see how that would serve the  
cause.

MR.SLATTERY

So, you're a feminist?

NINA

Uh, yeah, I have a vagina and I'm  
not retarded. This isn't Kansas  
you know. Where are you from?

MR.SLATTERY

Kansas.

NINA

Good. That's perfect. I'll see  
you in class.

But she makes no move to leave. He realizes he has been dismissed. To his greater surprise, he walks away, stealing glances behind him as she resumes napping.

INT.STAFF ROOM, LUNCHTIME

Mr.Slattery is chatting, over coffee, with Miss Bloom, an art teacher in her late fifties and his first ally at the school. She is going through a student's sketch book as he talks.

MISS BLOOM

I've been here twenty-two years.

MR.SLATTERY

Oh. You're much older than I  
thought.

He rushes to cover his rudeness.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Sorry. Age is horribly on my  
mind. I'm about to turn thirty. I  
say, sometimes the wrong...I'm  
better at expressing myself  
through my writing.

She sounds wary.

MISS BLOOM

You write?

MR.SLATTERY

I'm finishing a novel.

MISS BLOOM

Uh-huh.

MR. SLATTERY

It's sort of an allegory about  
the way we've allowed bereavement  
and love to...It's hard to  
explain.

MISS BLOOM

*Uh-huh.* I'd not mention the novel  
writing ambitions to anyone here.

MR. SLATTERY

You think they're going to spit  
me out.

MISS BLOOM

I hope for your sake they spit  
you out. I hope they don't just  
hold you on their tongue and wait  
for you to dissolve, as they have  
done me.

MR. SLATTERY

You seem pretty together.

MISS BLOOM

I have more leeway than you. I'm  
an art teacher. No right or wrong  
answer with art.

MR. SLATTERY

But there's no right or wrong  
answer in literature either.

She laughs. It's a tinkly laugh. First he enjoys the chime  
like peal of it, and then he realizes it's making him  
nervous.

MISS BLOOM

They're going to spit you out.

He thinks on this. She stops at a page in the sketch book.  
An immaculately rendered sketch of a young woman giving a  
man head.

MR. SLATTERY

Um. Who did that?

MISS BLOOM

It's rather good, don't you  
think?

He grimaces. Looks at his shoes. He doesn't remember ever  
having purchased these shoes.

MISS BLOOM (CONT'D)

Nina. Sweet kid. One of the few students I don't feel the urge to trip with an out stretched foot as they race out of my class.

MR.SLATTERY

Ah, I used to be that kid.

MISS BLOOM

What happened?

MR.SLATTERY

I fell in love with a book.

MISS BLOOM

What book?

MR.SLATTERY

'Everything Must Go' by Leon Gross.

She laughs hard. There is a nasty edge to it now. He's feeling more than a little befuddled. She rips out the porno sketch.

MISS BLOOM

Here. This is for you.

He takes it, bemused.

MR.SLATTERY

But...

She packs up her stuff.

MISS BLOOM

Good luck.

He takes the picture and quickly folds it into his bag, feeling a criminal.

INT.CLASSROOM, AFTERNOON

Mr Slattery's name is written on the board. They are all reading copies of 'Jane Eyre'. The girls look rapt in attention, apart from Nina who sits in the back of the class, carving triangles on the desk with a pen-knife.

MR SLATTERY

So, whilst "Jane Eyre" conjures

"air" "Bertha" conjures "earth".

There is a post-Colonialist

school of thought, by the way,

that has Bertha as a black woman.

(MORE)

MR SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
Can you point to a description of  
her in the text that might back  
up this notion?

He looks to Nina for a response. Nina looks daggers at him.

NINA  
No.

He clears his throat.

The bell rings and the class snap out of their rapture and  
rush out the door. He calls after them:

MR.SLATTERY  
Well think on it over the weekend  
and we'll try to figure it out on  
Monday.

As Nina tries to leave he stops her.

MR SLATTERY  
Do you ever speak in class?

NINA  
I spoke.

MR.SLATTERY  
One word. You were giving me a  
tough time in there.

NINA  
I aspire to be tough. In any  
situation, I always try to  
imagine what Lauren Bacall would  
do.

MR SLATTERY  
Lauren Bacall wouldn't be carving  
her school desk with a pen knife.

NINA  
Right, she'd be out of school and  
fucking Humphrey Bogart.

MR.SLATTERY  
No, that's not what I mean  
and...you really can't talk like  
that in my class.

NINA  
Class is over.

MR.SLATTERY  
Class is over when I say it is.  
You are my student and you will  
accord me the proper respect.

NINA

Okay! That sounds fun!

A part of him is thrilled that she pays him enough notice to mock him.

INT.STAFF ROOM, END OF DAY

MISS BLOOM

How'd it go?

MR.SLATTERY

It went alright. Listen, I have a question, don't laugh at me. Is it okay for the kids to smoke on school premises?

MISS BLOOM

Of course not. Who told you that?

MR.SLATTERY

A girl who was smoking.

MISS BLOOM

Right.

MR.SLATTERY

First she was asleep under a tree, then she was awake and had a lit cigarette in her mouth.

MISS BLOOM

Nina. That's Nina Gross.

MISS BLOOM (CONT'D)

Poor girl.

MR.SLATTERY

Why poor girl?

MISS BLOOM

Because she's Gross as in Gross

He looks blank.

MISS BLOOM (CONT'D)

As in Linda and Leon Gross.

MR SLATTERY

You're joking me!

MISS BLOOM

No.

MR.SLATTERY

Oh, poor kid. I had no idea they even had children.

MISS BLOOM

He never writes about them, does he?

MR.SLATTERY

She looks like her mother.

MISS BLOOM

Spitting image.

He can't help himself:

MR SLATTERY

Have you ever met him? Leon?

MISS BLOOM

Him and his new wife.

MR SLATTERY

He waited, what, a year?

MISS BLOOM

Ten months.

MR.SLATTERY

So he...so he comes to school sometimes?

MISS BLOOM

Never. He doesn't care how she does here. Seems like he doesn't care about her at all.

MR SLATTERY

I don't believe that. A great man like him? That's so sad.

What he doesn't say is he is sad both for Nina and for himself, at his diminished chance of meeting Leon.

MISS BLOOM

Yes. It's awful. She'll be free of him soon enough. She'll graduate high school and leave him behind. [beat] Let her sleep when she wants. But she's not allowed to smoke.

He nods.

INT.NINA'S HOUSE, AFTERNOON

The house is incredibly grand with an imposing white staircase. LEON GROSS, a grizzled old guy, is asleep on the sofa in the living room.

AMELIA, a strikingly slim mid thirties woman with glossily blown out hair as shiny as her black patent stilettos, is arranging flowers in the kitchen.

JOEL, her four year old son, is buzzing around her legs. Nina is opening and closing the fridge, looking for something that takes her fancy.

JOEL

Why did they kill The Jeeze?

AMELIA

The Jeeze?

Her voice is soft and sultry, as valuable an enhancement as the lips from which it tumbles.

JOEL

Yes, up on the cross. Why did they kill him?

AMELIA

Because he was a magician

NINA

That's a bad answer. He's asking you about Christ not David Blaine.

The doorbell rings. Amelia answers it and sees Asia, a teenage Naomi Campbell lookalike.

AMELIA

Hello Asia. Are you coming to dinner? Experience a little of our culture?

ASIA

No thank you. Just here to study.

Asia and Nina go silently up to Nina's room hand in hand. When they get there, Nina shuts the door tight and screams

NINA

'Experience Some of our culture'!  
She converted. Nobody asked her to convert. She's a fucking shiksa for fucks sake. We never did Shabbat before she came along.

ASIA

Breathe.

NINA

No. Because the more I think  
about breathing, the more I worry  
I'm doing it wrong.

ASIA

You can't breathe wrong.

NINA

I can.

Cut to

INT.KITCHEN.

Amelia is polishing surfaces. Nina has Joel in her arms.

NINA

Consuela did that already.

AMELIA

And I'm doing it again.

NINA

You had your hair highlighted  
again. You put streaks at the  
front.

AMELIA

They're not streaks. They're  
*buttery chunks.*

NINA

We're taking Joel out for a  
milkshake.

AMELIA

Be back in forty-five minutes.

INT.DINER, AFTERNOON

The diner is a 24 hr grease spot, populated by regulars and tired drivers passing through. Everyone is at least twenty years older than Nina and Asia and the waitresses are twenty years older on top of that. The girls sit up by the counter, balancing Joel between them.

NINA

Chocolate shake and two coffees  
please.

ASIA  
And a side of fries.

Joel looks at Asia slyly

JOEL  
You're black.

ASIA  
Yes I am.

JOEL  
But that doesn't make you a bad person.

ASIA  
Why, thank you Joel.

Asia turns to Nina.

ASIA (CONT'D)  
Are you going to ask me how it went?

NINA  
How was it?

ASIA  
I got the job.

NINA  
Well, of course you did.

ASIA  
Did I miss anything in school?  
Anything incredibly fascinating?

NINA  
No. Nothing. Well, the new English teacher.

ASIA  
Is she a bitch?

NINA  
He. And, yeah, he's kind of a bitch.

ASIA  
Is he revolting?

NINA  
Not that revolting. Just highly strung.

ASIA

Another one whose gonna have a nervous breakdown...

NINA

I'm working on it. Are they paying you a lot? Remember, you have to take me with you when you escape. Get me away from my father and his Shiksa whore.

Two nuns walking out of the diner whip their heads when they hear "whore".

NINA (CONT'D)

Not you.

She waits for them to get further away, then whispers:

NINA (CONT'D)

*Whores.*

Joel is still spellbound as they disappear. He stares at the swinging crucifixes around their necks.

JOEL

You know what I want for Hanukkah?

NINA

What?

JOEL

A Nun's necklace.

NINA

Tell Amelia. Be very certain to tell Amelia that.

The fries arrive and Asia tears through them, dipping them in an improvised dip of ketchup and mayo. Nina looks on with a combination of disgust and awe.

NINA (CONT'D)

The thing is, if I were as thin as you, I'd develop an eating disorder just for the hell of it. I mean if you're really that thin, you might as well upset your loved ones.

Joel plays with a sugar shaker.

NINA (CONT'D)

Give me a sip of your shake.

JOEL

No.

NINA

Go on.

JOEL

No thank you.

NINA

Jesus would have given me a sip  
of his shake.

He hands it over instantly. Between slurps:

NINA (CONT'D)

I wasted that on a sip of  
chocolate shake. You can only  
invoke Christ once, maybe twice  
to make a four year old do what  
you want. Wasted.

Joel tugs at her leg.

JOEL

You know The Jeeze?

She hands back his shake.

NINA

Yes.

JOEL

Was his other name 'The Lamb of  
God'?

NINA

Let's go. P.S: You're awful.

She takes another sip of his shake. He looks like he might  
have a fit, then he calms down, narrows his eyes and says

JOEL

Amelia says you eat too much.  
Amelia says you're going to be a  
fatty, and then who will love  
you?

Bent elbowed, he raises his arms at his sides in query.

INT.NINA'S HOUSE, EVE

The family is at the dinner table. Leon seems disconnected  
from everyone. A maid hovers in the background.

JOEL

Nina told me I was awful.

AMELIA

Nina! Leon?

LEON

He's pretty awful.

AMELIA

He's your son!

LEON

That's what I said.

NINA

Asia is going to be in the new  
Gap campaign.

AMELIA

Using such young girls, it's  
immoral. When I was a model...

NINA

But you were just an underwear  
model, right? Cos you were too  
short to do high fashion.

AMELIA

I was modeling *high fashion*  
underwear. Hand sewn pieces  
from...

NINA

Nobody cares.

Leon looks up.

LEON

They don't.

He goes back to peppering his dinner.

LEON (CONT'D)

That Asia is a knockout. Phew!

AMELIA

It seems a little off to be named  
Asia when you're not Asian.

NINA

It is. It is really off. Where do  
those shvartzes get the nerve?

Leon laughs

AMELIA

I won't be mocked at my own  
Shabbat with food that I cooked.

NINA

Consuela cooked it.

AMELIA

It was very nice, Consuela.

Leon pushes away his food, stands up and grumbles

LEON

I'm going to bed.

INT.SLATTERY'S APT, NIGHT.

A tiny apartment given life by a huge pile of books, vast mountains of New York Times and a huge cat.

He feeds his cat and watches Charlie Rose. He remembers the sketch in his bag, unfolds it, looks at it, looks at the bottom: it is signed Nina Gross. He flattens it out carefully and tacks it above his desk amongst his multitude of bills.

INT.NINA'S ROOM, NIGHT.

Pyjama'd, she brushes her hair at the vanity mirror at her desk. Her eye falls on a note tacked up on the mirror, something she scrawled many, many years earlier:

"DEAR DADY,

I AM MAD AT YOU. GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE.

YOURS HOPEFULLY

NINA"

INT.APARTMENT, NIGHT

Mr.Slattery is preparing school work for the next day, laying out clothes and trying to organize - though he is in fact just moving piles of mess from one corner of the room to another. He looks at his Casio watch. It's 1 a.m.

From under a pile of newspapers is a flashing pink light. Pulling them aside, he finds a light-up plastic ring. It stops him dead, as though he's just found out he was being bugged the whole time he was working. He backs away from the ring as if it's kryptonite. He finds a brown envelope and scoops it up like a dead mouse.

INT.CAR, NIGHT

Slattery drives a car in equal disarray to his home. When he breaks hard at a light, he puts his hand instinctively to the passenger seat. But there is no one there. Just the brown envelope.

EXT.HOUSE, NIGHT

A far nicer place than his, both vintage and expensive looking. He creeps up to the door, leaves the envelope on the Welcome mat and starts to slink away. But the door opens before he can escape.

JULIET

Dennis?

We see his grimace before he turns to face JULIET, the most self-assured 23 year old who ever lived. She is a bare footed, bare faced, bra-less beauty, sort of a funny looking beauty, a Lily Cole type, but she has total faith in it, gloriously unaware that the her youthful good looks are not a passport, but a visa. It will run out. But for now she has all the power.

MR.SLATTERY

Oh, hey.

He is so bummed about being caught. He does not want to see her.

JULIET

What are you doing?

MR.SLATTERY

I thought you might need this.

He stoops to pick up the envelope.

JULIET

What is it?

He opens the envelope.

MR.SLATTERY

Your ring. I won it for you?

JULIET

At the funfair. I wore it for the afternoon and then I took it off. Why would I need it?

MR.SLATTERY

You've come back three times to get your stuff.

(MORE)

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

I didn't want you to have to make the trip again. That's it. That really is everything. So we agree, all the i's have been dotted now?

JULIET

What do you want? To make me feel worse? To make sure I'm not over it?

He steps forward and hands her the ring.

MR.SLATTERY

Okay. So that really should be everything. Take care of yourself, Juliet.

She looks at it in astonishment. Another ring was, for a time, promised to a different hand.

She throws the ring as far as it will go, her pretty mouth a snarl. Then she slams the door.

He just stands there and nods to himself.

EXT.CAR, NIGHT

The slam of the door behind him in the dark, he shuffles back to his car. The ring, re-activated by her throw, is flashing on and off by the wheel of his car. It's lined up perfectly. He could crush it. When he drives away, he crushes it.

INT.GROSS HOUSE, MORNING

Nina creeps into Leon and Amelia's bedroom, after making sure there's nobody in there.

She eyes the bed with distaste. She puts a gentle hand on both indents on both pillows. Then, in a swift move to Amelia's side she shakes out her pillow so the indent is gone.

The drawer is ajar and she picks through Amelia's knickers, which are little more than tiny, silken ass-trinkets.

She replaces them, and moves towards her dad's walk in closet.

Above all of her father's hanging clothes, on a top shelf she steps on tiptoe to reach, she pulls down a box of her mother's clothes. Amongst the dresses, she picks out a bra. It still has the fake rubber breast in the left cup.

She looks at the bra with it's terrible contents, carefully folds it back, and darts back to her room, shaken with horror.

INT.BOOKSHOP, SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

Nina and Leon are browsing together in an independent bookstore. She moves as if her skin shrunk in the wash, Leon as if his got all stretched from loaning it out. She follows as he critiques the books on display one by one, looking down over half moon glasses.

LEON

Hack.

He picks up a book then throws it scornfully back in place.

LEON (CONT'D)

Drug addict.

NINA

Saul Bellow is a drug addict?

LEON

He could be.

He rearranges his own books, making them more prominent on the display.

NINA

Dad, why do women buy books by men but men don't buy books by women? I mean, why do half the books by women have pink covers, or shoes on the cover, or lipstick? Yours doesn't have a blue cover.

A male student who has been following them round the store plucks up the courage to say something.

STUDENT

Excuse me...

LEON

You're excused.

The boy hangs back, crushed, as they move swiftly to the checkout. She deliberately buys a bunch of Jackie Collins and makes Leon wait with her on line.

NINA

Dad, I forgot my wallet in the car.

Leon grudgingly pulls out his credit card. The teller looks at the books then at him.

TELLER

We have an author's discount.

LEON

I don't want it.

He pays and on the way out picks up Zadie Smith's latest.

LEON (CONT'D)

Child!

NINA

You were younger than her when  
you had your first book  
published.

LEON

I was never young. That's why I'm  
still relevant.

At this exact moment, a pretty college student, who has been following Leon with her eyes steps forward.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT

Mr. Gross, I'm so sorry to intrude  
but I had to say: I hope you  
realise how important you are.

NINA

He realises.

LEON

Thank you SO much. That's such a  
wonderful thing for an old man to  
hear. If my hair weren't so  
silver I'd invite you to tea.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT

But your silver hair is my  
favourite thing about you.

LEON

Would you care to join us then?  
It's so important for me to stay  
in touch with my readers.

Nina looks on in horror. Cut to:

INT.AU BON PAIN, AFTERNOON

Excruciating tea with the three of them. The student is only a few years older than Nina, but self-possessed and refined in a way that makes Nina want to punch things.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT  
I studied in Paris for a  
semester, at the Sorbonne...

NINA  
Ah, bon...

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT  
...and it's so gratifying to see  
the esteem in which they hold you  
in Europe. I was there the year  
you received the medal d'arts et  
lettres.

LEON  
Such an honour I can still barely  
believe it.

NINA  
Paris. I remember that. That was  
the hotel with the porn on every  
channel...

LEON  
My daughter's going to Harvard  
too.

The Student, who has barely looked at Nina, nods at him.  
Nina raises her hand.

NINA  
That's me. Hi. Maybe Harvard.  
Maybe Brandeis.

LEON  
Ugh. Full of Jews.

The student tries not to look put out by this comment.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT  
Didn't you go there?

NINA  
He didn't finish. He was doing  
drama. He was going to be an  
actor. He wanted to be famous.  
Very, very badly.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT  
But Mr. Gross, If you don't mind,  
I'm confused by what you said a  
moment ago since you write so  
beautifully about the Jewish  
experience in America.

NINA  
He hates when people say that.

LEON

You know, I really don't see  
myself as a Jewish writer.

PRETTY COLLEGE STUDENT

You don't?

LEON

No. I don't think many people do.

The student nods. Nina stifles a giggle.

INT.GROSS HOME, EVENING.

A young-ish male interviewer is in their home - he is just wrapping up a conversation with Leon and is still shaking with nerves.

INTERVIEWER

It's been a pleasure Mr.Gross.  
I'm sure you hear this every day,  
but...

LEON

Thank you very much for your  
time.

In a flash Leon is back in his office. Amelia makes small talk with the interviewer, flirting a little.

AMELIA

I hope you'll excuse the mess.  
Having a four year child leaves  
the concept of 'house proud' out  
the window.

He's still too spooked to flirt back.

INTERVIEWER

Not to mention living with an  
artist.

Amelia bristles.

AMELIA

It's not that bad. I tidied  
yesterday.

Joel cries off screen

JOEL

Mooooooooommy!

AMELIA

Excuse me.

INTERVIEWER

Of course.

Left alone, he loiters momentarily. Nina, who has been watching from behind a bookcase, steps out of the shadows and without a word kisses the startled writer. Leon, in turn, startles the interviewer by reappearing. Nina is unruffled.

INT.SCHOOL COPY ROOM, MONDAY LUNCHTIME

Mr.Slattery copies pages for class. Nina watches him from the doorway, the din of students echoing from the halls. Slattery look up and sees her.

MR.SLATTERY

What's up, Bacall? Have a good weekend?

She comes in with a very grave look on her face as though she's about to announce something tragic.

NINA

Mr Slattery, does it ever worry you that your name sounds like "slatternly"?

He stops copying for a second.

MR.SLATTERY

You really think that's the first thing people think of?

He looks up at her.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

You don't count.

He gets back to work.

NINA

But how about out in the world?

MR.SLATTERY

What makes you think this isn't my world?

She leans against the copy machine.

NINA

This isn't anyone's whole world.

(sigh)

I wish my name were Tamla.

Distracted, he repeats her sentence back.

MR.SLATTERY

You wish your name were Tamla...

NINA

Right, like Tamla Motown.

She stacks copied pages to one side for him.

Or Stevie.

MR.SLATTERY

Like Stevie Wonder.

NINA

It could be a girls name. Y'know,  
Stevie Nicks...

MR.SLATTERY

Sure. I dated a Stevie.

NINA

You dated?

MR.SLATTERY

Yes, I dated. I'm a young man. I  
date. That's what we young folk  
do.

NINA

I blocked it. How can I learn  
about Jane Eyre if I'm thinking  
about your love life?

MR.SLATTERY

I would have thought the two were  
perfect parallels.

NINA

Repuggo.

MR.SLATTERY

Repuggo? Is that Italian?

NINA

I don't know, I just made it up  
right now.

MR.SLATTERY

I am totally repuggo. That's the  
word on the street.

EXT. SIDEWALK, AFTERNOON

Nina and Asia chat as they exit school together and walk up the street, arms linked.

NINA

I'd like to be a lesbian. But one who only holds hands.

ASIA

I'd like to be a high class hooker who only holds hands.

NINA

That does sound classy.

ASIA

I heard that no woman gives a good blow job until she's twenty-seven. So I'm just going to wait.

NINA

Oh, Asia, you're so pretty, you'll never have to give a blow job. Only unattractive people have to be good at sex. Why do you think Serge Gainsbourg is always going on about it?

Asia looks blank

NINA (CONT'D)

Serge Gainsbourg...oh, never mind.

They part ways at the end of the street and we follow Nina home to the strains of 'Bonnie and Clyde' by Serge Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot.

Cut to

INT. NINA'S HOUSE, AFTERNOON

Nina undoes her blouse as though stripping the school day away and throws it on the bannister. She walks into Leon's cluttered office. He is typing and they don't acknowledge each other. Aside from his library of books, Leon also has an enormous record collection. Nina starts going through it, looking for something.

She finds what she is looking for - Serge Gainsbourg's greatest hits - and goes to leave the room with it. Leon stops her, checks what album she took, lets her go with it, but as she reaches the door calls out:

LEON  
Stop stealing my culture.

NINA  
Look after it better.

She leaves the room and goes to hers, where she plays the record on a vintage player. Soon enough there is a knock on her door. She opens it and Leon comes in to continue the conversation.

LEON  
What do you want with it?

NINA  
I find it comforting.

LEON  
You can't feel nostalgic for things you never experienced in the first place.

NINA  
Yes you can.

He thinks about this, nods.

LEON  
You're still going to the shrink, right? I'm still paying for it, aren't I?

NINA  
Yes and yes.

LEON  
Good.

He goes back to work in an office so plush it smells like velvet, if velvet had a smell.

INT.MR. SLATTERY'S APARTMENT, AFTERNOON

What a shithole. Working on his novel at an old typewriter, when the phone rings.

MR.SLATTERY  
Hello?

JULIET.  
I left my diaphragm at your place. I'm coming over after dinner.

MR.SLATTERY  
Excuse me?

JULIET

You brought me the ridiculous  
ring, but you didn't give me back  
my diaphragm.

MR.SLATTERY

And you only just noticed that?

JULIET

Yes. I haven't needed it until  
now.

Appalled, he drops the phone back down onto the receiver with force. It knocks over his mug of coffee. Slattery is mopping up spilled coffee from the typed pages, the newspaper and, when he sees it on the grey tabby, to whom he apologizes.

MR.SLATTERY

I'm sorry. Fuck. I was really  
concentrating.

He puts the mess away and sits back down to focus again, staring at the page in the typewriter, fingers hovering over the keys. He looks at the cat.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

That's upset me. Can you do the  
thing again, the pendulum thing?

On cue the cat starts to purr deeply. Slattery starts to type. But as he does he says, with the clicks:

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Crap. Crap. Crap.

INT.SHRINK'S OFFICE

A garden apartment with the sound of kids playing through the open sliding doors. Beside his diploma's, the shrink also has old, now banned, over the counter medicines framed in maple and glass boxes. Nina looks at them. The shrink, prematurely middle aged with his pants belted too high on his torso, looks at her.

SHRINK

You don't like being here, do  
you?

NINA

If I wanted to talk about myself  
I would go see a psychic. Or I  
would write a novel.

SHRINK

Your father is a novelist.

NINA  
Get the fuck out.

SHRINK  
Do you think your father's so  
successfully encapsulating a  
generation has made it hard to...

NINA  
I don't read his books.

SHRINK  
Never?

NINA  
I started one. His first book he  
wrote when he was twenty-five.  
But it was full of sex and  
jerking off. I mean there was no  
story except my dad trying to  
fuck blonde women.

SHRINK  
You say 'your father' but it's a  
character to which you refer.  
It's just writing.

NINA  
It's never just writing. I  
thought it was disgusting.

SHRINK  
Does sex disgust you?

She stares out the window.

SHRINK (CONT'D)  
You don't want to talk about  
yourself?

NINA  
Of course I do. I just don't want  
anyone to listen.

SHRINK  
That makes no sense. You think we  
should stop these sessions?

NINA  
It makes my father feel better.

SHRINK  
You care what your father thinks?

She eyes the clock on the wall. Time up.

NINA

Yes. I do.

She gets up to leave. The door closes behind her. Sitting in the waiting room she sees ZACH. He is a pale and wan teenage boy with cuts on his arms. His face is beautiful, Bambi with sleep deprivation, a baby Ian Curtis. Hard as he tries not to make eye contact, she forces him to.

NINA (CONT'D)

You cut yourself?

ZACH

Yes.

NINA

You shouldn't do that.

ZACH

Okay.

INT. MR. SLATTERY'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

Slattery opens his front door, as Juliet pushes past him.

JULIET

You smell of weed.

He nods, inhales deeply as she storms up the hallway.

MR. SLATTERY

You smell of honey, still. [beat]

Why am I not attracted to you?

She ignores him, as she rifles through the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. He arrives at the bathroom just in time to experience the pain of watching her pluck the case she needs from the top shelf.

INT. BATHROOM

Juliet opens the case before moving on.

MR. SLATTERY

What was that? Were you checking

I didn't steal your diaphragm?

That I didn't re-gift it to my  
sister? Or sell it for parts?

She ignores him again, his childishness, as she sees it, beneath her.

JULIET

You're stoned.

MR.SLATTERY

I was writing.

She makes it back to the door, is about to leave.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Why do you need your vintage  
theme birth control all of a  
sudden.

JULIET

I've been seeing a guy I met on  
the tennis court.

MR.SLATTERY

A sleeping hobo?

JULIET

A fellow Harvard grad...

MR.SLATTERY

I don't want to know. Just go.

She passes him.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

God, you're beautiful.

She pauses, a flicker of hope. He looks her in the eyes.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Why don't I want to be with you?

She leaves, slamming the door.

INT.STAFF ROOM

MISS BLOOM

Can you help me out on the 23rd?

MR.SLATTERY

With what?

MISS BLOOM

A trip to New York. To the  
Guggenheim. I can't control the  
She-wolves by myself.

MR.SLATTERY

It's my thirtieth birthday.

MISS BLOOM

You don't work on your day of  
birth?

MR.SLATTERY

Sure, of course, I'll go if the Principal approves it. I'd love to go to New York.

MISS BLOOM

It's an over nighter, obviously.

He frowns.

MR.SLATTERY

It's my birthday.

MISS BLOOM

You said that.

MR.SLATTERY

I have to get someone to feed my cat.

MISS BLOOM

It's only a night. Just leave her some extra food. She'll be fine.

MR.SLATTERY

It doesn't really work like that.  
[He thinks a moment before admitting this next part]: She prefers to be petted whilst she eats.

MISS BLOOM

Well obviously. That's perfectly understandable.

He detects the sarcasm in her voice.

MR.SLATTERY

She's been good to me.

MISS BLOOM

Do you have a lot of friends?

MR.SLATTERY

I sort of get lost in my girlfriends.

He smiles, weakly.

INT.CAFETERIA, LUNCH

Nina is following Mr.Slattery around as he does lunch duty, watching over a packed dining hall as the school chows and chats.

NINA

Willy Nelson or Johnny Cash?

MR.SLATTERY

Cash. Are you going on this art trip to The Guggenheim?

NINA

Yes. Willy Nelson, Johnny Cash or Merle Haggard?

MR.SLATTERY

Cash. You know it's an over-nighter?

NINA

I know. Nick Cave or Tom Waits?

MR.SLATTERY

Oh, that's a tough one.

NINA

It's not a tough one, it's easy.  
Tom Waits...

MR.SLATTERY

It's not that easy...

NINA

Tom Waits. Clash or Sex Pistols?

MR.SLATTERY

Your parents are okay with it?  
The Clash, of course!

NINA

Just checking. Only one of them is my parents, the other is a pain in my cunt. Favorite Clash song?

MR.SLATTERY

*You can't talk like that, remember?* [beat] 'Know Your Rights'.

NINA

Off 'Combat Rock'?

MR.SLATTERY

No, off 'The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan'. Yes off 'Combat Rock'.

NINA

Of course I like Bob Dylan, but you know who I really love? Joan Baez.

MR.SLATTERY

Joan Baez is a moaning old cow.

She stops in her tracks.

NINA

You hate women.

MR.SLATTERY

Says the person who peppers her conversation with the 'C' word.

NINA

Chrysanthenum.

Two eleven year olds come up to them. One of them tugs at Mr.Slattery's sleeve and he looks down. They are tiny, but wearing lipgloss and have cell phones slung around their shoulders like guns in holsters.

ELEVEN YEAR OLD

Excuse me. My friend thinks you're sexy!

They shriek with laughter and run away. Slattery looks shell-shocked.

NINA

What do you expect? You're a moderately good looking man in an all girls prep school.

MR.SLATTERY

Moderately good looking?

NINA

Yeah and you got that geek chic thing going.

MR.SLATTERY

What?!

NINA

The cardigans. The bad haircut.

MR.SLATTERY

That's a cheap haircut

NINA

You're a grown-up. Why don't you have money?

MR.SLATTERY

I'm not even thirty yet!

Not a good enough answer. She knows it. He knows it. He tries again.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
Because grown-ups don't have  
money.

She's embarrassed.

NINA  
Oh. Right.

INT.NAIL SALON

Amelia is getting a manicure as Joel waits at her feet. She eyes her nails critically.

AMELIA  
I wouldn't call that lilac.  
That's mauve.

The manicurist answers back in Spanish to one of her co-workers.

MANICURIST  
Para mi, se ven como el mismo  
color.

AMELIA  
No. They aren't the same colour.  
Come on. Take it off. Let's start  
again.

Joel sits there bored out of his mind.

Amelia looks at her out stretched hand.

INT.SCHOOL, END OF DAY

The bell is ringing and the students are rushing in and out of the locker room to retrieve their belongings. Nina is zooming out the huge swinging doors when she passes Mr.Slattery. He nods at her and she waves at him, and something makes him turn back and grab her hand. It's the first time they've ever touched.

MR.SLATTERY  
What's that on your wrist?

The whole school is swirling around them.

NINA  
This? I read it in Miss Bloom's  
history of art class this  
afternoon.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

This is from Vincent Van Gogh's  
suicide note. I thought it was  
amazing.

Slattery tips her wrist so he can read it. He reads aloud:

MR.SLATTERY

"The sadness will never go away".

He lets go of her wrist and walks off.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

That's retarded.

She is left standing there. He goes to his own corner, around the corner and just stands there. He covers his eyes with his hands. Gets it together. Moves to his next classrooom.

INT.LOCKER ROOM

Asia, frustrated by her padlocked locker with a combination she can't remember, is kicking at it. Nina leans over her and clicks the padlock back and forth until it opens. Asia hugs her. Disturbed by the confrontation with Mr.Slattery, Nina gratefully shudders in her embrace. The girls in the locker room pause their lip-glossing to watch.

GIRL 1

Lezzers.

Nina un-peels herself from Asia, walks up to the girl and ever so slowly licks her face. The girl is rooted to the spot with horror, then screams. Asia and Nina hurry off in hysterics.

INT.GROSS HOME, LEON'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON

Amelia brings Leon his scotch as he works. As she places it in front of him, aware he is not to be disturbed, he grabs at her hand and touches her perfectly painted nails.

LEON

"When Lilac's Last In The Doorway  
Bloomed..."

She looks at him, quizzical.

LEON (CONT'D)

It's a Walt Whitman poem.

AMELIA

It's beautiful.

LEON

You made me remember it. Well done.

AMELIA

Thank you.

Her face morphs as she is, in a single moment, intensely grateful at being recognized for her efforts and instantly aware of how pathetic they are.

INT. STAFF ROOM, AFTERNOON

Slattery is packing up his things for the day and making to get out of there. He cringes as Miss Bloom pulls up beside him.

MISS BLOOM

So, I'm curious. What's your type?

MR. SLATTERY

In women?

MISS BLOOM

In women.

MR. SLATTERY

I like smart women. Partial to brunettes. Older woman.

MISS BLOOM

Older?

MR. SLATTERY

Older than me. But then I got older...ended up with this girl who was too young. [he stubs out the cigarette] We were engaged.

MISS BLOOM

And then?

MR. SLATTERY

And then we got...dis-engaged. It never would have worked.

MISS BLOOM

Did you try? When things got rough?

MR. SLATTERY

She tried. I didn't want to. [He has no intention of admitting this, so is surprised to hear himself] *Things never got rough.*

(MORE)

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
As soon as I gave her the ring,  
there didn't seem any point  
anymore.

EXT.LACROSSE FIELD, DAY

A game is going on. Nina and Asia are skipping class, hiding behind an oak tree at the back of the field. They lean against it and smoke.

ASIA  
You LIKE Mr.Slattery.

NINA  
He's a dork.

ASIA  
Yeah, and you LIKE him.

NINA  
Well it's not as if there are any other men around here to like. What am I going to do, fantasize about some seventeen year old from St.Michaels? Get drunk and let him finger me in the bathroom of some depressing party, Fallout Boy playing in the background?

ASIA  
I didn't say you were wrong to like him. Everyone else does. It wouldn't have to be Fallout Boy...

NINA  
He doesn't like me. I scare him.

Asia kisses her cheek.

NINA (CONT'D)  
See, you're not scared of me.  
What's his problem?

ASIA  
His problem is you're sixteen.

NINA  
So?

ASIA  
So, you're officially jailbait.

NINA  
That's good, isn't it?

ASIA

That's bad. That means he could go to jail.

NINA

You know it's such a ridiculous thing Americans have about young women's sexuality. That's why they went after Monica Lewinsky so hard. They always suspected that little girl's lust had the power to bring down men, bring down the president, bring down the free world. And then they tried to make it come true.

ASIA

Wait. Wait...you honestly relate to Monica?

NINA

A zaftig Jewish girl who made a fool of herself over a powerful older man who didn't care about her? Fuck, yeah.

They watch the game for a moment, though both are glazed over with their own thoughts.

ASIA

I guess it's good to know you can make a fool of yourself and bring down the leader of the free world at the same time.

Nina flicks ash.

ASIA (CONT'D)

You still think about Andy?

NINA

Yes. Sometimes.

She takes a big last drag.

NINA (CONT'D)

I like Slattery. I do. There's something oddly touching about him. He's kinda pathetic. I get him.

ASIA

So what if you get him? Don't you want someone to get you?

Nina shrugs, brushing it off.

ASIA (CONT'D)

I get you.

Nina stubs out her cigarette and packs up her book bag.

NINA

I have to go to class. I feel bad  
about ditching.

ASIA

That's new. What have you got?

NINA

English.

She tries to make this sound breezy.

INT.ENGLISH CLASS, AFTERNOON

Nina peers through the pane of glass on the door. She sees the class rowdy, looking like they're enjoying themselves. Mr.Slattery is laughing. She takes a breath and slinks in. As she passes his desk, she sees his open briefcase, and inside, peeking out, one of her dad's books. She doesn't like that.

NINA

I had to go to the dentist.

They don't hear her, so she gingerly takes a seat.  
Mr.Slattery suddenly snaps up

MR.SLATTERY

You had to go to the dentist?

NINA

Yes.

MR.SLATTERY

Nothing wrong I hope?

NINA

I had a toothache.

The class laughs at her or they could be laughing at a private joke from before she walked in because Mr.Slattery collapses into laughter too. Nina angrily stands up and grabs the Jane Eyre of the nearest girl on the page to which she's opened it.

NINA (CONT'D)

Hilarious.

She turns to face the class.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Fuck you for laughing.

MR.SLATTERY  
No cursing!

NINA  
And fuck you for letting them  
laugh!

They laugh even harder now. She throws the book on the ground and storms out. He follows after her.

EXT.HALLWAY

In hushed tones:

MR.SLATTERY  
Do you want me to send you to the Principal's office? Because you are driving me insane.

She takes a bottle of zoloft out of her bag, opens the bottle and dumps the pills on the hall way floor.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
What are you doing that for?

NINA  
I already am insane so don't talk to me about being driven insane.

She starts grinding them with her heel.

MR.SLATTERY  
There are needy maniacs out there who we can donate these pills to if you don't want them. Some of them are even my friends.  
Imaginary, obviously, I have no friends.

She laughs and bends to pick them up. He helps her, picks up the bottle, which is prescribed to Amelia.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
These aren't even yours.

She smiles meekly.

NINA  
Props.

They are still on their knees when he asks

MR.SLATTERY  
So, who drove you mad then?

NINA  
The world.

MR.SLATTERY  
The world did? The world has a  
conspiracy against you?

NINA  
Yes.

He stands up.

MR.SLATTERY  
You must be a very important  
person, then.

She pulls herself up.

He sighs.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
I know you know the answers to  
everything...

NINA  
I didn't say that.

MR.SLATTERY  
...but if you don't write them  
down, you're going to fail this  
class.

NINA  
I'll be okay. I'm going to get an  
A in Philosophy.

MR.SLATTERY  
Be hard not to, with your father.

Her heart sinks.

NINA  
Right, my father.

He sneaks a glance through the classroom window, see the  
girls amusing themselves, figures he has a few seconds  
more.

MR.SLATTERY

I didn't want to say, I know you  
must hear this all the time...

NINA

I do...

MR.SLATTERY

...but I'm such a huge fan of his  
work. I write...myself...because  
of him. He changed my life.

NINA

From what?

MR.SLATTERY

From?

NINA

*This is a life saved?*

It knocks the wind right out of him.

NINA (CONT'D)

You should get back to class.

MR.SLATTERY

Okay.

He has his hand on the classroom door, turns to face her  
before he pulls the handle.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Please don't screw this up for  
me.

NINA

How could I...

MR.SLATTERY

You know what I mean. Just don't.  
Please?

Something clicks in her. She laughs and walks back into  
class with him. She sits down at her desk and the lesson  
resumes.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

So to get back to the question I  
posed friday: what proof are the  
post-colonialist essayists using  
to suggest Bertha is black? Let's  
refer to the text...

INT.CLASSROOM.

Class ends with the bell. Idling, Nina stops at his desk on her way out.

NINA

I like you.

MR.SLATTERY

I'm glad.

NINA

I don't like people.

MR.SLATTERY

You gotta get over that.

NINA

Fuck, have you read my father's books or not?

MR.SLATTERY

Maybe we interpret them differently. Isn't that the joy of literature?

She cocks her head.

NINA

Would you like me to read your writing one day?

MR.SLATTERY

My novel? It's not finished. It's not even a first draft yet. But, sure. Yes. I'd like that.

He's searching her eyes. Is it something she would then show to her father if she thought it good enough? She gives nothing away.

NINA

Okay. Give it to me before we go to New York.

INT.CAFETERIA, LUNCH.

Nina and Asia are huddled together over a shared tuna casserole.

NINA

What does he mean 'Please don't screw this up for me'?

ASIA

He means he likes you too.

NINA

Disgusting!

She looks thrilled.

INT.NINA'S HOUSE, EVE

Nina walks in to find Amelia and Joel fussing over a box of books that have just been delivered: preview copies of Leon's new novel.

LEON

It's just another book for chrissakes. Seventeen before it.

AMELIA

Eighteen.

She looks excitedly at the jacket photo.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Oh, but this is really elegant!

Joel lays on his stomach with a book open in front of him and pretends to be reading intently. As he flips the pages he occasionally shrieks "No way!" and "Oh, that was a good one!"

The only disinterested parties are Leon, who is laying on his back on the sofa, and Nina, who marches straight up to her room.

INT.COPY ROOM, LUNCHTIME

Mr.Slattery is copying pages for class when Nina pops her head round the door.

NINA

I have something to send you.  
Give me your address.

MR.SLATTERY

You can't just bring it to school?

NINA

It's my father's new novel. He's very secretive. Doesn't want me to bring it here.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)  
Stupid I know, but...it's my  
early birthday present to you.

MR.SLATTERY  
Oh, wow. Of course. I understand.

He grabs a piece of paper and writes it down.

MR.SLATTERY  
How did you know it was my  
birthday?

NINA  
I know everything.

He looks at her and realizes: he's quite scared of her.

EXT.CINEMA LOBBY,AFTERNOON

Leon and Joel are lining up to buy tickets for the new Pixar movie, standing behind scores of other parents holding the hands of their children. Leon is unashamedly reading a piece about himself in the New York Times, ignoring his son. Suddenly Joel pipes up, at maximum volume:

JOEL  
From now on, I'm going to call  
you 'Shitter'.

LEON  
What?!

JOEL  
Because whenever you drop  
something you say "shit".  
Sometimes you stop yourself from  
saying it but I know it's what  
you were going to say. So I'm  
calling you 'shitter' from now  
on.

LEON  
Fine. Fine. Nothing I haven't  
heard from The New Yorker.

He returns to his paper. The other parents are staring.  
Joel waves at them.

INT.HOUSE EVENING

Joel and Leon return from the cinema, Joel repeating his favorite lines from the film.

Amelia is watching Tom Brokaw read the news. On seeing

this, Joel exclaims

JOEL

Oh God, I hate piggy eyes. He's  
always ruining everything.

He bursts into tears and starts kicking the floor. Amelia takes him out as Nina comes downstairs from her bedroom

NINA

Hey Dad. I read the piece in The Times.

LEON

Nice piece.

NINA

Yeah, dad, except they made a  
mistake. You didn't see it?

LEON

What?

She holds the paper in front of her and reads from the story:

NINA

"Gross, father of one son"

LEON

I am the father of one son. And  
one daughter. They just didn't  
put that part in.

NINA

Dad...

LEON

Big deal. It's a mistake. Stupid  
bastards. Come on, you know what  
they're like.

Nina is holding back tears.

LEON (CONT'D)

What? Now you're going to start  
crying? What are you, Joel?

NINA

Joel is four. Joel is in his room  
crying over Tom Brokaw.

LEON

Tom Brokaw's in his room crying  
over Tom Brokaw! Come on!

Amelia walks in.

AMELIA

What's wrong? What's going on?

LEON

The New York Times made her cry.

AMELIA

What are you talking about? What do you mean?

NINA

Forget it!

She's really crying now. He can't stand it.

LEON

Okay. Okay.

He backs slowly out of the room as though menaced by a shark.

Nina grabs her coat and her bag and storms out into the rain.

EXT.MR.SLATTERY'S DOORSTEP, EVENING

Nina rings the doorbell. She's soaking wet, holding a copy of her father's book in her hand. No answer. She rings it again. Mr.Slattery opens it, bleary eyed.

NINA

I have this for you.

MR.SLATTERY

Um, thanks.

NINA

It's raining

MR.SLATTERY

Right. Do you want to...come in?

NINA

Thank you. A vampire has to be invited in.

He looks bemused.

NINA (CONT'D)

I'm joking.

They stand in the hallway.

NINA (CONT'D)

Can I come in further?

He lets her in.

She sees the small apartment, typewriter set up, the cat staring at her.

NINA (CONT'D)  
You have a cat.

MR.SLATTERY  
I do.

NINA  
That's kind of old lady-ish.  
Isn't that what women have when  
they live alone?

MR.SLATTERY  
Nina, you need to learn how the  
concept of conversation works.

NINA  
I heard your last girlfriend was  
really pretty.

MR.SLATTERY  
You see, that's not how it works.

NINA  
Can I look at your records?

MR.SLATTERY  
No.

NINA  
No, your girlfriend wasn't pretty  
or no I can't look at your  
records?  
Ooh, look, you have the original  
British 12 inch of 'White Man In  
The Hammersmith Palais'. Amazing!  
Where did you get this?

MR.SLATTERY  
Right. Can you stop looking at my  
records?

She hands him The Clash single.

NINA  
Put this on.

MR.SLATTERY  
No.

She sighs and puts it on herself.

NINA

It smells of weed in here. Were  
you smoking weed?

She notices the typewriter has been left mid-sentence.

NINA (CONT'D)

Is that your novel?

Mr.Slattery seems to resign himself to the fact that she's not going to leave.

MR.SLATTERY

Yes. It is.

NINA

Would you like me to read it?

She sits down at the desk. Looking into the ashtray she finds the remnant of a joint and lights it up. The lighter sparks a few times and just as it flares into flame she spots, above his desk, her blowjob sketch, with her signature. She inhales the whole joint in a few puffs. He dives towards her, ripping it from her lips.

MR.SLATTERY

Okay, I'm driving you home now.

NINA

You are?

MR.SLATTERY

Yep. Get up.

She doesn't get up. She can hardly sit up.

NINA

How will I read your novel?

MR.SLATTERY

Here. Take it with you.

He'd do anything at this point to get her out.  
Unfortunately she is wasted.

He puts her on his back and carries her to his car. He turns on the radio and drives. 'Can't Get You Out Of My head' by Kylie Minogue comes on and he turns it up. Nina wakes up a bit.

NINA

Ugh, Kylie Minogue. Revolting.  
Change it.

MR.SLATTERY

On the contrary. I think the song  
has an undercurrent of tremendous  
darkness.

She grimaces.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

What, it's not old enough for  
you? You know what Nina? You're  
too cool for school. Just because  
a singer is currently popular  
doesn't mean they're terrible.  
Sometimes the people are right.  
You believe in the people?

NINA

Of course not.

MR.SLATTERY

You're missing out.

He turns up the song even louder. They arrive at her home  
and he waits until the song finishes then turns down the  
volume.

NINA

How did you know where I live?

MR.SLATTERY

Everyone knows where you live.

Thinking she will be too stoned to remember this he tells  
her.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

When I was at college, I stood  
outside, hoping for a glimpse of  
your father.

NINA

You can come in and meet him if  
you want.

MR.SLATTERY

Not tonight. Out you get. Here's  
the manuscript. Don't lose it.  
Stoner.

She stares at him as though waiting to be kissed.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Go on. Hop out. I've got a lot of  
work. So I can take that day off  
to come with you guys to the  
Guggenheim.

NINA

Have I done something wrong?

MR.SLATTERY

No you haven't. But please get out of the car. I don't like being made to feel like [he sings a snatch of Don't Stand So Close To Me by The Police] "the old man in the book by Nabokov".

She looks miserable.

NINA

You're not the first you know. Andy was older than you...he was thirty three...

MR.SLATTERY

I don't want to know. Go on, get out. I'll see you tomorrow.

She steps out. He starts to rev the engine. As he's pulling away she calls out

NINA

Mr.Slattery!

MR.SLATTERY

Yes?

NINA

It's not NA-bo-kov. The correct Russian pronounciation is Na-BOK-ov. Sting got it wrong.

MR.SLATTERY

Sting always gets it wrong.

INT.NINA'S ROOM, NIGHT

As she reads his pages, the manuscript fanned out across her chest, she smiles to herself, to the tune of the aforementioned Police song.

EXT.STREET, NIGHT

After he's let her out, Mr.Slattery drives around for a while, listening to the radio, aimless. He looks at the Leon Gross book on the seat where Nina had been. Then he pulls up to the kerb under a street light, parks and starts reading.

INT. SCHOOL

Slattery passes Nina in the hallway.

MR. SLATTERY

Nina! Nina!

Nina flushes with happiness.

NINA

Yes?

MR. SLATTERY

I loved your father's book. It  
kept me up all night. Please  
thank him from me.

Her face barely hides her disappointment.

NINA

It kept you up all night. Sounds  
like a quote for the jacket.

He smiles and starts to walk away. She calls after him:

NINA (CONT'D)

I don't know that I want a  
teacher whose been up all night.

MR. SLATTERY

You know that I...

NINA

Oh. Yeah. Okay.

He walks back to her.

MR. SLATTERY

I know you won't have had a  
chance to read my pages.

NINA

I have actually.

MR. SLATTERY

And?

NINA

It's a longer conversation for  
another time.

MR. SLATTERY

Right.

Crushed, he goes to class.

INT.NINA'S HOUSE, EVE

They are at dinner, Consuela hovering in the background. Amelia is trying to make Joel eat. Leon is reading the paper.

NINA

I hate having dinner on time, the same time every night.

LEON

What's to hate?

NINA

The certainty.

LEON

If you'd lived a writer's life, had years of struggle, years of uncertainty, not knowing where your next meal was coming from, let alone what time it was coming, you might be more appreciative.

NINA

But that's exactly what I do want.

Amelia's diamond rings sparkle in the candle light.

AMELIA

Your father struggled...

NINA

So that you wouldn't have to.

AMELIA

Exactly. So that you wouldn't have to.

NINA

No he didn't. That's not why he wanted to write, not so he could send his daughter to private school. If that was the reason, he would have been a horrible writer. It would show in his work. He did it because he loved writing.

Leon folds his paper and puts it aside.

NINA (CONT'D)

I just want to love something so  
much it puts my future in  
jeopardy.

AMELIA

That's a very stupid thing to  
say.

LEON

No it's not.

Amelia looks chagrined. Dinner continues in silence.

NINA

Dad, I have a new English  
teacher.

LEON

Mmm-hmmm.

NINA

He's a huge fan of yours.

LEON

Yeah? And?

NINA

I gave him a copy of the book. He  
loved it.

AMELIA

What? You did what?

NINA

I gave him 'The Trees'. He used  
to stand outside the house when  
he was at college hoping for a  
glimpse of you, dad.

LEON

Yeauch.

AMELIA

You gave him the book? What are  
you talking about? It isn't in  
stores yet. He could leak it.

NINA

He won't do that...

AMELIA

You'll have to get it back.

NINA

Oh, chill out.

AMELIA

Immediately. Tonight. This is  
extremely serious. We'll have to  
find out where he lives.

NINA

I know where he lives.

Leon looks interested.

LEON

How do you know where he lives?

NINA

I just know. Everyone at school  
does.

LEON

Oh yeah?

AMELIA

We're getting it back right now.

LEON

Ah, who cares?

AMELIA

I care, Leon. And so should you.  
This is your work. It isn't out  
for another ten days. We don't  
know this man.

NINA

I know him. He won't...

AMELIA

If you won't protect your work,  
Leon, I will.

EXT.MR.SLATTERY'S, NIGHT

Amelia rings the bell. No answer. She rings it again.  
Slattery comes to the door.

MR.SLATTERY

Yes? Can I help you?

He is so taken by Amelia's beauty that it takes a moment  
for him to notice Nina standing behind her.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Nina? Um, what's up?

AMELIA

You're the English teacher?

MR.SLATTERY  
I'm Dennis Slattery.

He puts out his hand to shake hers, but she ignores it.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
Is there a problem?

He looks at Nina for help.

AMELIA  
Wait in the car.

As soon as Nina hangs back, Amelia's tone changes.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
I'm terribly, terribly sorry to  
trouble you so late at night.

MR.SLATTERY  
It's okay, I wasn't doing  
anything.

She peers past him and notices the cats, Charlie Rose again playing in the background TV.

AMELIA  
Well, this is very embarrassing,  
but I'm afraid Nina made a  
mistake. I believe she gave you a  
copy of 'The Trees', my husband's  
new book.

MR.SLATTERY  
You're Mrs.Gross. Oh! Hello. Nice  
to meet you. God, I loved it. I'm  
a huge, huge fan.

He puts out his hand to shake.

AMELIA  
Right, well I'm afraid I have to  
get it back. It isn't available  
to the public yet and Mr.Gross is  
going out of his mind...

MR.SLATTERY  
I thought it came from Mr.Gross  
himself.

AMELIA  
No. It came from his office but  
he had no idea that Nina took  
it...he's terribly upset. You  
know how writers are. Very  
protective of their work.

MR.SLATTERY

I had no idea. How embarrassing.  
I feel really bad. I'll go get  
it.

AMELIA

Thank you.

She flutters her eyelashes. Nina sits in the front seat of the car, her feet on the dashboard, fiddling with the radio. Slattery watches Amelia walk back to the car. She gets in and slaps Nina's hand off the dial.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

That was a very stupid thing you did. Thankfully he is a reasonable man. He understood and asked me not to punish you.

NINA

Punish me? Every day with you is punishing.

AMELIA

That's enough.

NINA

"That's enough". You think you're Mary Poppins? You think I'm a kid?

AMELIA

You're sixteen.

Nina eyes her slyly.

NINA

You miss it don't you?

AMELIA

What do you mean?

NINA

Had you hooked your first rich old man by sixteen?

AMELIA

I went to convent school. I was a virgin. Not that that's any of your business.

NINA

I bet you had hooked 'em. I bet the thrill is never quite the same...the older you get. It's not the same for them either. And you know it.

Amelia stares at her, blinking back something. Is it the possibility of tears? Of rage? Of a smile?

NINA (CONT'D)  
Your "buttery chunks" can't help  
you now.

Amelia pulls the car over, turns off the ignition, calmly turns to Nina and slaps her hard across the face. Nina doesn't react at all. Amelia turns her head back to the steering wheel, starts the car and they drive home in silence.

INT.NINA'S HOUSE, NIGHT.

Leon and Amelia's bedroom. The room is dark save the light from Amelia's walk in closet, the door ajar, rows of exquisite shoes visible.

Amelia approaches Leon in bed. He is snoring on his side. He opens one eye. She peels off her clothes slowly and climbs in beside him. She straddles him and thrusts her cleavage in his face.

LEON  
Aw, leave off.

She shakes her head in disbelief and climbs off him.

AMELIA  
Am I...just not your thing?  
Sexually?

LEON  
That is true. I don't know why.  
Nothing specific. Just chemistry.

AMELIA  
Then why did you marry me?

He smiles.

LEON  
You have a very beautiful voice.

He rolls over and closes his eyes, absent mindedly patting her side with one hand, like he's trying to get a puppy to go to sleep.

She goes into her walk in closet and sits down among the array of beautiful stilettos. Sobs echo through the door. Leon sighs and goes back to sleep.

INT.NINA'S ROOM, NIGHT

Nina is laying on her back on the floor, looking at her poster of Joe Strummer. She has her headphones on full blast so that we can hear the music almost as loud as she can.

INT.SCHOOL, MORNING

Slattery and Nina pass in the crowded hallway, the bell ringing and kids rushing back and forth to class. They both stop and think about turning back but neither does.

INT.STAFF ROOM, LUNCHTIME

Mr.Slattery And Miss Bloom are lunching together.

MISS BLOOM

You look distracted.

MR.SLATTERY

I am a little distracted. Nina Gross. She just...smart kid. Head fuck, excuse my language.

MISS BLOOM

You're excused.

She takes a sip of coffee, holding it in her mouth to stop herself from saying what she says next.

MISS BLOOM (CONT'D)

You know, you must know, there are rumours. All those meetings you seem to take in the photocopying room...

He looks up sharply.

MISS BLOOM (CONT'D)

But I would never presume to ask...

MR.SLATTERY

Ask what?

She gapes a little and opts to stay silent.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

If what?

MISS BLOOM

Forget it. It's not my place.

But he won't let it lie.

MR.SLATTERY  
You're gay, right?

MISS BLOOM  
My partner and I...

MR.SLATTERY  
Your girlfriend.

MISS BLOOM  
My girlfriend. Yes. I'm gay.

MR.SLATTERY  
And you teach at an all girls  
school. Is that a problem for  
you?

MISS BLOOM  
I haven't actually told anyone.  
It's completely unnecessary. For  
those who assume such things...

He is curt

MR.SLATTERY  
I have to get ready for third  
period. Excuse me.

INT.COPY ROOM, LUNCHTIME

NINA  
Hey.

She bounces merrily in and leans against the photocopier.  
He doesn't say anything

NINA (CONT'D)  
This is our room, right. This is  
our assigned spot.

MR.SLATTERY  
There is no assigned spot. What  
would we need an assigned spot  
for?

NINA  
Why are you being weird?

MR.SLATTERY  
I'm busy.

NINA  
I'm sixteen. I'm busy.

Under his breath but loud enough for her to hear

MR.SLATTERY

You're crazy.

NINA

Do you want to know what I  
thought of your book?

He can't help himself.

MR.SLATTERY

Yes. Of course.

NINA

Fuck you!

Unbeknownst to them, the principal, passing in the corridor, overhears. A short, stout forty-something, she bursts in on them and their expressions are more appropriate to people caught having sex than fighting.

PRINCIPAL

I want you both in my office.  
Now.

They follow her. They both look like kids. They sit down in her spartan office, apart but side by side on wooden chairs as she faces them in her leather swivel chair.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

What is going on? This is highly  
inappropriate. From both of you.

She's just talking about their language but they both know there's something else under the surface.

MR.SLATTERY

It's okay.

NINA

It's not okay. He's a fucking  
lousy teacher.

PRINCIPAL

Nina!

MR.SLATTERY

Principal Moore, I am so sorry.

PRINCIPAL

Can you control her, or not?

MR.SLATTERY

I don't know.

PRINCIPAL

What do you mean, you don't know?  
You're the teacher, she's the  
student.

He doubts this. Nina sees it in his face.

NINA

You're right. I've been very  
disrespectful. God! How could I  
have said that?

She shakes her head exaggeratedly.

NINA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Principal Moore.  
I've been going through a rough  
time...

PRINCIPAL

I know, dear, and you should know  
we're rooting for you.

NINA

But it's no excuse. I fully  
apologize Mr.Slattery. I don't  
know what got into me.

MR.SLATTERY

It's okay...

NINA

No it's not. It absolutely won't  
happen again. Never.

This frightens him.

MR.SLATTERY

Nina...

NINA

It won't happen again. If you'll  
excuse me, Principal Moore, I'm  
going to the bathroom to get  
myself together.

She stands up. Slattery half stands up, but Nina is already  
out the door. He sits down again. It is clear the Principal  
has more to say to him, although we don't hear it, as we  
follow Nina outside to the other side of the closed door,  
where she leans against it, catching her breath.

INT.SHRINK'S

Nina and the shrink stare at each other in silence. This  
appears to be a stand off. Nina is winning.

SHRINK

Time's up.

She stands and leaves without saying a word. Outside the door, she sees Zach waiting in a chair, reading a magazine. His scars are healing. She is almost out the second door, when she turns to him.

NINA

Hey.

He puts down his magazine.

ZACH

Yes?

NINA

You wanna get out of here?

He looks momentarily nervous before the sound of the shrink moving behind the other door inspires him to answer:

ZACH

Sure.

CUT TO:

Nina and Zach hailing a cab.

CUT TO:

Inside the cab, they sit on other sides, suddenly awkward like Elaine and Benjamin at the end of The Graduate. Nina breaks the silence.

NINA

So. How old are you?

ZACH

Nineteen.

NINA

Wow, you look a lot younger.

ZACH

Yeah, that's my problem.

NINA

That's it? That your whole problem?

ZACH

No. I mean, I guess that's maybe part of it.

NINA

Don't get me wrong. That's actually a good problem.

ZACH

Why? What's your problem?

NINA

My mom got breast cancer and died.

ZACH

That's a good problem. I mean, not good but...

NINA

She was a really cool chick, you know?

He doesn't, but he answers very sweetly

ZACH

I know.

NINA

She was just really, really awesome.

Zach reaches over and puts his hand on hers. It is a gesture simultaneously kind and creepy. She looks at his scarred arm. Seeing her stare, he offers, by way of explanation:

ZACH

She's older than me. I love her.

NINA

And she doesn't love you?  
[sarcastic] What's not to love?

She gestures at his wrists.

NINA (CONT'D)

Does it work?

He shakes his head

ZACH

She won't see me anymore.

NINA

Well, a word of advice. Grown ups want vitality and enthusiasm to feed off in their young. No interesting adult picked the sixteen year old Morrissey to hang about with.

ZACH  
I'm gonna get out here.

NINA  
You don't want to do something?

ZACH  
This was enough.

NINA  
Okay. Bye.

INT.ASIA'S PHOTO SHOOT, AFTERNOON

Nina drops by. She sees from afar Asia being primped and fussed over by a make-up artist. She wanders over to the catering table and picks up a bagel.

MEAN STYLIST  
Hey! Can I help you?

NINA  
No. I'm good.

MEAN STYLIST  
What are you doing here? This is  
a fashion shoot.

NINA  
I know, asshole, I was invited...

Asia sees her and comes bounding over. She falls into a hug on her and clutches her close as Nina tries to get her breath. Eventually she pulls away.

ASIA  
You came!

ASIA (CONT'D)  
Raphael, this is my best friend  
Nina. Nina this is Raphael.

Nina stretches out her hand.

NINA  
So nice to meet you.

He shakes her hand wanly and wanders away.

ASIA  
What's doing?

NINA  
Actually, I just met this really  
interesting freak.

ASIA

The only freak worth knowing this  
season...

NINA

Beautiful little boy...

ASIA

How old?

NINA

Nineteen.

ASIA

Nina! He's older than you. Little  
boy my...

NINA

He looks fourteen. Anyway.  
Beautiful little boy. Waiting at  
the shrink's when I came out.  
Cuts all over his arms. I mean  
they really stand out, this  
beautiful pale skin.

ASIA

You said he was beautiful  
already. You like him?

NINA

Oh God no. Far too mopey. But  
sort of fascinating. I was  
thinking perhaps we might adopt  
him.

ASIA

Does he want to be adopted?

NINA

EVERYBODY wants to be adopted.  
Everybody wants to believe their  
parents are really someone  
fabulous and important. We're  
fabulous and important.

Asia stares at her a beat too long because of course Leon Gross is fabulous and important. Nina knows what she's thinking and glosses over.

NINA (CONT'D)

Don't you think?

MEAN STYLIST

Asia, we need you.

ASIA

I'm needed.

NINA  
Truly you are.

She kisses her on the mouth out of love. But for Asia we see in her eyes: hope.

INT.BLOOM HOUSE, EVENING

Amelia walks in, laden with designer shopping bags. The sound of typing echoing from Leon's office stops and he calls out

LEON  
Where have you been?

She tiptoes into his office.

AMELIA  
Out shopping.

LEON  
Come here.

She walks towards him.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Sit on my knee.

She happily complies.

LEON (CONT'D)  
I've been writing more today.  
It's just flowing.

AMELIA  
I'm so glad, my love.

LEON  
You want to hear something?

AMELIA  
Always.

LEON  
Always she wants to hear. Well, I think you'll like this one. It's a story about what happens to trophy wives once they get past the age of thirty-five...listen...

She interrupts.

AMELIA  
Were you this cruel to her?

LEON

Sometimes. Not often. I've become far crueler since I've been with you. Or maybe it's just the ageing process. Mine and yours.

She smiles small and gets off him.

INT.GROSS HOUSE, SATURDAY MORNING

AMELIA

Nina are you coming swimming with us or not?

Nina shouts from the top of the stairs

NINA

NO! I said no already!

INT.SWIMMING POOL DRESSING ROOM

The changing room is full of girls changing after swimming. Old, be-capped ladies barely mask their irritation as clusters of teenage girls hoot and holler. Amelia is changing as Joel watches her intensely. He looks from the teenage girls to her. She looks at him as if to say "what?" He points at her.

JOEL

Why are they saggy?

Amelia hurriedly finishes changing. Her hair is still wet as she walks towards her car. They pass Mr.Slattery, who has a gym bag over his shoulder.

MR.SLATTERY

Hey!

She keeps walking.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Mrs.Gross!

She turns. She doesn't register.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Dennis Slattery? English teacher?

She wears an expression like he's trying to sell her something.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Nina's English teacher?

AMELIA

Ah yes. The book thief.

She keeps walking.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Do you need a ride?

He scurries to catch up with her.

MR.SLATTERY

I was going to walk. But...

AMELIA

Get in.

She secures Joel into the back of her Porsche as Slattery straps himself into the passenger seat.

MR.SLATTERY

Your hair's wet.

AMELIA

I've been swimming.

She starts to pull out of the parking lot, silent until they hit the main road.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

How old are you, Mr.Slattery?

MR.SLATTERY

Funny you should ask. I'm nearly thirty.

AMELIA

I'm thirty-five.

MR.SLATTERY

How's it going for you?

She doesn't speak until she makes her turn.

AMELIA

I used to be seventeen.

He is confused. More silence.

MR.SLATTERY

Didn't that suck!

AMELIA

No. It was wonderful.

Silence.

MR.SLATTERY  
I'm over here on the right.

AMELIA  
I remember.

She pulls over outside his house. She looks back at Joel who has fallen asleep.

MR.SLATTERY  
It's not going to be fun to wake him.

AMELIA  
Have you ever felt like your life was becoming a landslide?

MR.SLATTERY  
Yes.

She just nods her head. Then she turns to face him directly for the first time and stares at him. She is weighing something up. He is nervous. Looks like she might be about to kiss him. She doesn't.

AMELIA  
I made a mistake.

MR.SLATTERY  
Just one?

AMELIA  
A big one.

MR.SLATTERY  
What did you do?

AMELIA  
I got involved with someone with a big age difference. It shouldn't have happened.

Slattery looks back nervously at sleeping Joel.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
I need to be with someone my own age. I need to. I need to be made love to. You know the kind of sex that rearranges the chemistry of your body?

He stares at her. Then at his shoes. Then at her again.

She opens the door and lets him out.

INT.BAR, EVENING

Asia and Nina sneak in with fake ID's and a ridiculous amount of make-up. They find Zach is by himself at the bar, drinking.

NINA

That's him.

They walk over.

NINA (CONT'D)

You came.

ZACH

You tracked me down.

NINA

It wasn't hard.

He has clearly already had quite a lot to drink. The white lines on his arms are bubbling up.

ASIA

Oh my God! What is that?

ZACH

Just a reaction with the alcohol.  
It happens sometimes.

NINA

That's awesome!

ZACH

It isn't.

NINA

Pretty good party trick.

She shrugs.

NINA (CONT'D)

You want us to leave you alone?

He pays for his drink.

ZACH

No.

INT.ASIA'S BEETLE

They're parked at the back of an empty lot. Asia's in the front seat, like a chauffeur. Nina and Zach are in the back.

NINA

This is Asia's car.

ZACH

It's nice.

NINA

It's her actual car that she bought with her money. No-one else paid for it.

ZACH

Why would they?

ASIA

I'm doing modelling right now. It's stupid, but it will pay for college.

ZACH

I don't think it's stupid at all. I collect photos of models.

NINA

Oh my god, that's so sad!

ASIA

Thanks a lot!

NINA

No, but come on...

ZACH

My favourite right now is Daria Werbowy, but historically my favourite is Jerry Hall. She looks like she would overwhelm you.

At this, Nina kisses Zach hard on the mouth. His response is dead. She takes his hand and puts it on her breast. Nothing. Asia looks away, intently staring out at the sky.

NINA

Are you gay? That's okay you know. But save me the wasted time.

ZACH

You don't strike me as much of a time waster.

ASIA

Excuse her. She has ADD. Can I go?

ZACH  
What do you have?

NINA  
Attention deficit disorder. ADD  
just takes less time to say.  
Don't go Asia!

He turns to face Asia, flashing his Bambi eyes.

ZACH  
Don't go, Asia.

Watching in the rear view mirror, she notices Zach stealing glances at Asia. Although Nina is not attracted to him, she is jealous.

NINA  
I told you, right, Zach and I  
have the same shrink?

ASIA  
Uh-huh. I'm waiting for the day I  
can afford to go too.

NINA  
I gotta say, there is something  
worthwhile about employing  
someone whose job is to listen to  
your problems.

ZACH  
That something the shrink told  
you?

NINA  
Yes it is, actually.

ZACH  
I shut it all out. I answer all  
his questions but in my head, I  
just hum the whole time.

NINA  
And that's why you're doing so  
well.

ZACH  
You don't know how I'm doing. You  
didn't know me before and you  
don't know me now. You sure as  
hell won't know me after.

ASIA  
After what?

NINA  
Let me out of here.

She fiddles with the door. Zach leans across, physically close to her, it's sexy, and lets her out.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Do you have scars on the rest of you?

He lifts his shirt ever so slowly. Pure beautiful virgin white. She slams the door. He sits there for a while and as she walks away he climbs over the seat next to Asia. They start driving, opposite way from Nina.

INT. ZACH'S DORM ROOM.

Asia has no idea why she agreed to come here. It isn't what she wants. There are photos of models everywhere. To her horror, amongst the Marie Helvin's and Kate Moss's, Asia sees a photo of the young Amelia in her underwear at her model heyday. Then she notices it is signed. To Zach. Zach sees her notice it. He kisses her. She has her eyes open, looking at it, as she's being kissed.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA, MORNING

MR.SLATTERY  
I didn't know you ate breakfast here.

NINA  
Sometimes.

MR.SLATTERY  
I'm on morning duty.

NINA  
What are your duties?

MR.SLATTERY  
Got to make sure no-one throws food at anyone else and that no-one throws up food.

NINA  
How's it going for ya?

MR.SLATTERY  
You sound more and more teenage every day.

NINA  
You say that. I don't know how to take it.

MR.SLATTERY

It's good. It's a good thing. It makes me happy. Because I worry about you and your brilliant mind.

NINA

You do?

MR.SLATTERY

Of course I think you are. Brilliant.

NINA

No. I mean: you worry about me?

By this she means "You think about me?" He knows it.

Beat

MR.SLATTERY

You ready for the trip to the city?

NINA

Super excited. I've not been to the Guggenheim since I was a little girl.

MR.SLATTERY

That surprises me.

NINA

Don't be surprised. I'm really a philistine.

Beat

NINA (CONT'D)

So's Leon.

NINA (CONT'D)

Where will we be staying?

MR.SLATTERY

I guess we'll stay the night in some delightful inn befitting you fine young ladies.

NINA

Again Howard Johnson's. Just like the trip to the opera last year.

He looks blank.

NINA (CONT'D)  
You hadn't been invented yet.

He chooses to ignore this.

MR.SLATTERY  
I saw your stepmother yesterday.  
Did she say anything?

NINA  
I didn't see her. Why would she  
say anything?

MR.SLATTERY  
She wouldn't say anything if you  
didn't see her.

NINA  
She talks to herself.

MR.SLATTERY  
Being married to your father, she  
would have to talk to herself.

NINA  
What do you mean?

MR.SLATTERY  
I mean, to get a word in  
edgeways.

NINA  
You don't know anything about my  
father. You've read all his  
books, right?

Slattery nods.

NINA (CONT'D)  
You know nothing.

INT.LEON'S OFFICE, MORNING

Voice off screen of Amelia

AMELIA  
Timothy Seifert is on the phone.

LEON  
I don't know any Timothy Seifert.

Amelia walks in holding coffee for him.

AMELIA  
Your daughter's psychiatrist.  
We've visited him several times?

LEON  
Put him through.

She walks out feeling like a secretary.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Hello Mr.Seifer. Excuse me,  
Seifert. What can I do you for?

He holds the phone away from him.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Well that's good to hear. Uh-huh.  
Uh-huh. Of course. If you think  
it would help her work through  
the...uh...grief.

He yells

LEON (CONT'D)  
Amelia, are we free this friday  
at 4.30? We're free. Good enough.

He hangs up.

INT.BOOKSTORE

Slattery browses the art section, picking up a book on the Guggenheim collection.

INT.SLATTERY'S APT, EVE

Book in hand, he walks in to find ansaphone blinking. One message. He presses play and hears Juliet's voice.

JULIET  
I got your letter. Um...Why? Why  
would I want to be friends? You  
don't want to marry me. You don't  
want to be my boyfriend. You  
don't even want to fuck me. I'm  
over this Dennis. I'm over it.  
Jesus Christ, I can smell the pot  
through the ansaphone. I'm over  
this and I'm over you. You need  
to get help. Get help, Dennis.  
Look in the mirror.

He looks in the mirror, which, as it so happens, is hung over the telephone. Eyes bloodshot. Skin sallow. He can't tear himself away. Then he starts to sneeze. At first an "achoo". And soon something quite uncontrollable, all the while watching his reflection in horror and confusion.

INT.NINA'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Leon walks in as Nina is falling asleep.

NINA

Have you ever heard of knocking?

LEON

No. Is it like dadaism?

NINA

What do you want?

LEON

If I knew the answer to that I wouldn't have to keep writing.

NINA

(under her breath) You don't have to keep writing.

LEON

Hmm?

NINA

You don't HAVE to keep writing.  
You just keep writing the same book anyway.

LEON

You're probably right.

NINA

Why are you being so nice?

LEON

I feel bad that I never talked about your mother's passing.

NINA

You did talk about it. In the novel.

LEON

But not to you.

NINA

No.

LEON

Can I...can I try to make recompense?

NINA

No.

He nods, leaves, and closes the door. She cries herself to sleep.

INT.COACH

Bus full of girls chattering on their way from Boston to New York. Nina and Asia are near the back, sharing an ipod, one earphone per person, listening and singing aloud to 'Umbrella' by Rihanna.

ASIA AND NINA  
"ella-ella-ella!"

At the head of the bus, Slattery allows himself a small smile. Now and then he locks eyes with Nina.

INT. LEON AND AMELIA'S BEDROOM, DAY

Amelia is in her walk in closet.

AMELIA  
It's time. Leon let's go.

LEON  
Why are you getting all worried about what to wear? You think he cares?

AMELIA  
Patent heels or maryjanes?

LEON  
What are we going in to talk about your foot fetish? Or are we going in to talk about Nina?

AMELIA  
Useless fucking Nina!

She straightens herself.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
We're going in to talk about Nina.

INT.SHRINK'S

They are seated on a cosy couch, too cosy. Leon looks ridiculous sunk down into the cushions. He tries to re-arrange himself.

LEON  
Wonderful business, psychiatry.  
What's the great Tolstoy quote?  
(MORE)

LEON (CONT'D)

"I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me and yet assure myself and others that I am very very sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all means possible. Except by getting off his back".

SHRINK

I'll take your word for it. If ever there were anyone's word to take.

LEON

Good.

SHRINK

Have you had therapy Mr. Gross?

LEON

Fourty years of it.

SHRINK

So you had therapy when Mrs Gross passed away.

Amelia shifts uncomfortably.

LEON

No. No. I white knuckled it.

He looks at his hands.

SHRINK

Well, Nina seems to be white knuckling it, as you say, and she isn't doing quite as well as I'd like. She's not opening up to me. Of course it could be I'm the wrong person.

LEON

Of course.

SHRINK

But I felt before we came to that conclusion it would be worth my time talking to you.

AMELIA

About her.

SHRINK

No. That would, obviously, breach the doctor/patient confidentiality agreement. About you. Both of you.

Amelia shifts again.

CUT TO:

Amelia emerges from the office teary eyed. Leon follows behind, his face red with rage. On the way out they see Zach in the waiting room. He looks horrified when he sees her with Leon. Zach opens his mouth as if to talk to her. She brushes past him. Leon stares at him, his pale, cut arms. When they get outside he whispers

LEON  
Poor little freak.

INT. OUTER NEW YORK COFFEE SHOP, LUNCH TIME.

The girls are spread out, so it's hard for the two teachers to keep an eye on all of them. Slattery looks incredibly nervous.

INT.GUGGENHEIM

As the groups of girls descend the curling ramp of the museum, Nina hangs back so that she is always looking over the balcony one floor at Slattery's head. He senses he is being looked at. He keeps looking at the painting in front of him. Finally, he has to look up. She does not look away. Calls down to him, so everyone hears and he blushes:

NINA  
Happy birthday.

EXT.GUGGENHEIM

Nina is outside smoking. She waits for the rest of the girls to emerge. Asia sees how Nina looks at Slattery and she can't bear it. She has to loudly dress her down in front of him.

ASIA  
Your tits look bigger. Are you stuffing your bra?

Nina doesn't answer, just stubs out her cigarette and slowly moves her gaze from him to her. Asia instantly looks ashamed.

INT.HOWARD JOHNSON'S

Nina and Asia pick a room together. Dressing for bed, Nina looks at herself in the mirror as though psyching herself up.

Asia falls asleep with her arms around Nina.

ASIA

I love you.

NINA

I love you too.

But when Asia is asleep, she creeps out from under her arms and out into the hall, picking up her ipod on the way. She opens the door of Mr.Slattery's room.

He is half asleep and wakes with a start.

MR.SLATTERY

What are you doing?

NINA

I can't sleep.

MR.SLATTERY

Well, I can.

She climbs onto the bed. He is under the covers, she over them.

NINA

Listen.

He is pretty much frozen with fear. She puts one ear piece in his ear and one in hers and they listen to Steely Dan. He enjoys it then takes it out. Setting himself up he says

MR.SLATTERY

This isn't going to help you get to sleep.

NINA

You got any pot?

MR.SLATTERY

No!

NINA

I think you do.

MR.SLATTERY

I think you need to go back to your room.

NINA

I think, you need to not celebrate your thirtieth birthday alone.

MR.SLATTERY

How did you know?

NINA  
I know everything.

He blinks.

MR.SLATTERY  
It's not a big deal.

NINA  
Okay.

MR.SLATTERY  
I've never been so afraid in my  
life.

She puts her hand on his.

NINA  
What are you afraid of?

MR.SLATTERY  
That I'll never...

NINA  
I mean, I know thirty is the  
oldest you've ever been.

She opens the bedside drawer, pulls out a bible and a half smoked joint. She lights it up. Takes a drag.

NINA (CONT'D)  
I'll stay with you tonight so you  
don't get scared.

MR.SLATTERY  
NO.

She looks at him, straight in the eyes.

NINA  
I've nothing much to offer.

She waits a beat. He is so freaked out by her, he can barely hear properly, let alone speak.

NINA (CONT'D)  
There's nothing much to take.

She smiles.

NINA (CONT'D)  
But I absolutely love you.

He grimaces. She touches his hand.

NINA (CONT'D)  
With eyes completely open. But  
nervous all the same.

With her words, he is just floored by her. And as she gets what she wants, as he moves towards her with a kiss, he comes into sharp focus. Too sharp. To her own surprise, and to his horror, she does not respond as he kisses her on the mouth.

She pulls away and kisses him on the cheek.

MR.SLATTERY  
I'm so sorry. I'm confused. I'm  
so sorry I did that. What you  
said...

NINA  
Forget it.

MR.SLATTERY  
Okay.

She hops out of bed, goes back to her room, without looking over her shoulder.

INT.NINA'S HOTEL ROOM

Nina falls asleep in Asia's arms.

INT.SLATTERY'S HOTEL ROOM

He is up all night.

INT.NINA'S HOTEL ROOM

When she and Asia wake up, Nina is rolled towards the wall. Asia is spooning her. Without turning to face Asia the first words out of her mouth are

NINA  
Did you make out with Zach after  
I left?

Silence.

ASIA  
Yes.

NINA  
Was it fun?

ASIA  
No. It was sad.

Asia starts to cry.

ASIA (CONT'D)  
Don't be mad, Nina. The whole  
time I wished...I wished that he  
was...

She turns to face Asia.

NINA  
Shhh. Shhh, don't say it. You  
don't need to say it.

She strokes her hair.

NINA (CONT'D)  
I love you as much as I can love  
you. And beyond that, there will  
be someone, someone very soon,  
who...

ASIA  
Let's just go back to sleep.

NINA  
Okay, baby. Okay.

INT.SLATTERY'S APT.

He walks in, blood drained from face, and all but falls into the "arms" of his cat at the door. He picks her up and holds her tight to him. Almost immediately he starts sneezing. He holds her away from him, aghast, searching her whiskered face for clues. In his peripheral vision, he sees, stacked in the corner, his vinyl collection. Something makes him put down the cat, walk to the records, and start flicking though. He flicks and flicks until he gets to one (we don't see yet what it is).

He puts it on the turntable. First we hear the needle in the grooves. Then we hear the start of the song, no words yet. He picks up the needle, moves it forward, a look of fear in his eyes. Then we hear it:

"I've nothing much to offer/There's nothing much to take/I  
absolutely love you/With eyes completely open/But nervous  
all the same"....

It's exactly what Nina said to him in the hotel room.

We see the album cover in his hand: 'Absolute Beginners' by David Bowie.

He has to laugh out loud.

MR. SLATTERY  
Little bitch!

He sneezes.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Slattery is slumped at the doctor's desk as the doctor goes over a set of results.

MR. SLATTERY  
How, all of a sudden is it possible to be allergic to the cat that I've had for twelve years? It doesn't make sense.

DOCTOR  
Well, the only sense it, it's just to do with ageing. Happens sometimes as you get older.

He can't quite take this in.

MR. SLATTERY  
As my cat is ageing?

DOCTOR  
No [confused by his confusion].  
You. As you age.

MR. SLATTERY  
What can I do about it?

DOCTOR  
I can give you these pills to get you through as best as possible. But, honestly, I'd start looking for a good home for her. I love 'em, I'd take her myself if we didn't already have three.

MR. SLATTERY  
I can't give her away.

DOCTOR  
You don't want her if you can't, you know, engage with her.

INT. COFFEE SHOP, LUNCHTIME

Stricken, Slattery pops a pill from his prescription whilst he waits for his coffee to be handed over. Amelia is at the back. They see each other. Amelia has clearly been crying.

He doesn't want to see her but she wants to talk to him. She walks towards him as he swallows his pill, and clutches his arms as if she's going to faint. Just managing not to gag, he is polite as he can be but very much wants to get away, especially when he hears her opening line.

AMELIA

How was the New York trip?

MR.SLATTERY

[nervous...what has she heard?]  
It was good.

AMELIA

I fucked that kid up.

MR.SLATTERY

[relieved it's not about him] I  
don't think she's that fucked up.  
I really don't. And if she is, it  
isn't because of you.

AMELIA

You don't understand.

MR.SLATTERY

I don't understand.

He sneezes.

AMELIA

Go, now.

MR.SLATTERY

Okay.

The paper coffee cup is handed to him and he backs away. She is alone. Camera pans down and we see that Joel clings silently to her knee, calm for the first time. She closes her eyes, momentarily soothed. Then the din of the coffee shop comes back to her, and she gulps back tears.

INT.MR SLATTERY'S APT, LATE NIGHT

He is sadly posting a notice on a cat web forum, with the offender curled adoringly in his lap, as his eyes burn:

LOVING HOME WANTED FOR WORLD'S BEST CAT

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, LATE NIGHT

Nina, hair in braids, in cherry print pyjamas, on her princess phone, laying on the floor of her bedroom. As young as she's ever looked.

Slattery's phone rings as he looks sadly at his cat notice.

NINA  
Mr. Slattery? It's Nina.

MR. SLATTERY  
It's late.

In every sense.

NINA  
I know. Are you working on your book?

He looks at the forum page and lies, such tenderness for her, so eager to say "yes" to anything she wants.

MR. SLATTERY  
Yes.

NINA  
Mr. Slattery. The version I've read...as it stands...is not good.

Knife. Through. His. Heart.

MR. SLATTERY  
Not good?

NINA  
No. It's quite bad.

MR. SLATTERY  
Why?

NINA  
It's shallow, and rather unfocused.

MR. SLATTERY  
No. Why? Why are you telling me this now?

NINA  
Because you asked me and...

MR. SLATTERY  
It's not because of the kiss?

NINA  
...and, I'm ready to tell you now. It just reads as insane. Do you know what the definition of insanity is?

MR.SLATTERY

I think so.

NINA

It's the inability to connect to another human being and the inability to love another human being. Have you loved another human? Not fallen in love, but loved them? They're different, Mr.Slattery. From the book, it seems as if you never have. I don't mean to be unkind.

He is silent.

NINA (CONT'D)

Have you ever lost someone close to you?

MR.SLATTERY

Not in my immediate family...

NINA

That's not what bereavement feels like either. I don't know why you wrote about it.

She puts the phone to her chest a moment as a tear rolls down her cheek. The other end of the wire, he knows that tear is there and he wants so badly to hold her, it erases his own hurt. Instead he says:

MR.SLATTERY

Juliet thought I was a brilliant writer.

Nina sucks back her tears, wipes her face with her sleeve.

NINA

With all due respect, Mr.Slattery, Juliet is only twenty-three. What the fuck does she know?

He smiles. He has to. She's so mad. And so lost. And so lovely.

MR.SLATTERY

Thank you for reading it.

A thought occurs...

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

You'll definitely not show it to your father?

NINA

Why would I do that? I don't tell  
him anything.

He never would have met him, anyway.

MR.SLATTERY

Okay.

NINA

Okay, Mr.Slattery. Good night.

MR.SLATTERY

Night....

He hangs up the receiver gently before finishing his sentence:

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

...love.

INT.SLATTERY'S APT.

An incredibly kind looking middle aged woman coaxes the cat into a carrier case as Slattery watches from the edge of the doorway.

KIND WOMAN

There you are my angel, off to  
your new house. Daddy can visit  
any time he likes.

MR.SLATTERY

I can't bear it. I just have to  
walk away.

KIND WOMAN

But...

He calls from the other room:

MR.SLATTERY

Please just take her.

INT.SLATTERY'S APT.

He drinks a glass of whisky as he dangles a scratched cat toy from his other hand. Something crosses his face. He puts down the toy, and the drink. He goes to his desk drawer and rummages to the bottom. And there, beneath his college thesis, he finds his first edition, original and well thumbed copy of 'Everything Must Go' by Leon Gross.

EXT, GROSS HOME, LUNCH TIME

Slattery walks up the winding path, step in front of step, letting his eyes close from time to time as though meditating on what he's about to do, 'Everything Must Go' in hand. He stands on the doorstep for a very long time before ringing the bell. No-one answers and he is about to walk away when Leon opens the door looking as though he's been awoken.

MR.SLATTERY

Mr.Gross?

He sees the book in his hand and eyes the stranger warily.

LEON

Yes?

MR.SLATTERY

I'm Nina's teacher.

LEON

Uh-huh.

MR.SLATTERY

Have I woken you?

LEON

Yes you did.

MR.SLATTERY

I'm very sorry.

LEON

You don't sound very sorry.

MR.SLATTERY

Well, I'm quite sorry. May I come in?

LEON

You may.

He leads him through the grand entrance and opulent living room in to his office. Slattery has dreamed of seeing this since he was a teenager. He looks like he's in Disney world. Leon's computer is on and this he eyes as though it were kryptonite.

MR.SLATTERY

Oh my God. Were you writing?

LEON

Yes. I'm a writer.

Slattery tries to compose himself.

MR.SLATTERY

I'm the one she gave the book to.

No response.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

It was a great book.

LEON

The New Yorker doesn't seem to think so.

MR.SLATTERY

The New Yorker can go fuck itself.

Nerves. But it makes Leon smile.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

You write every day?

LEON

As I said, I'm a writer. This is a good time to do it. My wife is out with my son and my daughter is out with her anger. I assume that's what you've come to talk about.

MR.SLATTERY

Actually, she's in Philosophy right now. At which she excels. Unlike English. She could be brilliant at it. But the shadow, I imagine, is very hard to escape. So she doesn't try at all.

He notices, on the shelves, Leon's dozens of books, printed in every conceivable language. His facade collapses.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

I used to stand outside your house when I was in college, hoping to see you. You're the last great American writer.

LEON

Oh dear. What will happen when I die?

MR.SLATTERY

I don't know. I don't know. I've wondered that. I jerked off to your first novel.

Nerves again. He wants to kick himself.

LEON

I don't know how to take that.

He frowns.

LEON (CONT'D)

Perhaps we'd better sit down.

He motions to the couch which is really more of a love seat. They sit uncomfortably close as though one is a teenager summoning up the courage to make a move on the other. Silence and twiddled thumbs as Leon waits for Slattery to speak.

MR.SLATTERY

Do you think an artist has to be a good person? I mean do you think it matters that James Brown was a wife beater?

LEON

An artist creates their own moral universe.

MR.SLATTERY

But what if you're not an artist? What if you're just an ordinary person?

LEON

Are you an ordinary person? You don't seem like one.

MR.SLATTERY

And if I'm not an ordinary person? And our two worlds collide? And your ambiguous moral universe over-laps with mine? Say I was connected to your daughter?

LEON

You are sleeping with my daughter?

MR.SLATTERY

God no! No! She's a young girl! I'm an old man.

Leon raises his bushy eyebrows. The camera sees Leon's age, the pores in his skin, his grey whiskers, his shaking hands. And it picks up Slattery's vibrance in a way it hasn't before.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

No. I said "connected". Your second book, 'Reckonings', weirdly enough it kind of parallels my feelings. When I say "connected", I speak, of course, of love.

LEON

Of course.

MR.SLATTERY

I don't know what to do. Can you help me?

LEON

This is a most unusual request, you understand?

MR.SLATTERY

I understand.

LEON

Are you drunk?

MR.SLATTERY

Yes, yes I am.

LEON

Are you a drunkard?

MR.SLATTERY

No sir, not at all. I'm actually a stoner. My girlfriend thinks so.

Leon raises his eyebrows.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

My ex-girlfriend. [awkward beat]  
Sign my book?

Leon signs without looking at it.

LEON

Mr.Slattery, I understand you are enamoured of my work. Did you ever want to be a writer?

Slattery looks at the signature.

MR.SLATTERY

Wow. Scribbly.

He looks up.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Yes. I write. I am a writer. I wrote a book. Your daughter thinks it's bad. So I'm going to stop now. I wouldn't want to be anything other than a great writer. But I would also like to be a good person.

LEON

Not all of them are like me.

MR.SLATTERY

You know what you are?

LEON

I've read the books. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I creep down here and read them translated into French.

Slattery nods, as though taking tea with a vicar.

LEON (CONT'D)

In French and Spanish. In Spanish I'm really quite sympathetic.

MR.SLATTERY

Nina's very gifted.

LEON

She's troubled. It's different. These qualities are easily confused in our culture.

MR.SLATTERY

She is not so troubled. And she is very gifted. She's extraordinarily compassionate. But you read that as troubled?

LEON

She makes her life harder than it need be.

MR.SLATTERY

Sir, her life has not been easy.

LEON

I went through it too.

MR.SLATTERY

You wrote through it. All she could do was live through it.

LEON

That was my wife.

MR.SLATTERY

That was her *mother*. God, what's wrong with you?

A key is heard in the door. It is Nina home early from school. Slattery, bounces up off the sofa gets and makes his way out as fast as possible, turning abruptly like a negligent party guest.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

Uh, yeah: thanks for having me.

NINA

What are you doing here?

MR.SLATTERY

I was just leaving.

He is out the door in a trice. Nina storms into her father's office, where he sits looking a little dazed.

NINA

What did he want?

Leon lies.

LEON

He thinks you're very gifted. He wants you to apply for the creative writing program at Yale. He says, in fact, you can go anywhere you want.

NINA

Really?

She sinks down into the place Slattery just vacated.

LEON

Yes. Really. I'm very proud of you.

A thought crosses her mind.

NINA

Dad. He was drunk. I could smell it.

LEON

So what are ya gonna do?

He holds his arms out to her, pulls her onto his lap and they hug.

INT.SLATTERY'S

He goes into his bedroom and flops onto the bed in his clothes. The cat litter tray makes him squeeze his eyes to keep from crying. But that's not what he's really crying about.

INT.LEON'S BEDROOM, NIGHT.

Amelia lays beside Leon, staring at the ceiling.

AMELIA

I've got to go.

LEON

I know.

AMELIA

I'm taking Joel.

He nods.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

You'll let me go?

He nods. They kiss.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Sleep tight.

When she wakes up the next morning the bed is empty. He is already in his study. The door is closed. She goes and stands next to it with a cup of coffee and listens to the clacking of his typewriter. She lays a hand on the door, and decides to leave him be. Unbeknownst to her it is in fact Nina behind the door clacking away. Then she notices the car and Joel are gone. She runs back to the room.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

NINA

I'm...

AMELIA

Where's Joel?

NINA

Dad took him out for breakfast.

AMELIA

Where did they go?

NINA

Where do they always go?

AMELIA  
WHERE do they always go?!

NINA  
The Ritz downtown.

INT.RESTAURANT

Joel and Leon being seated by fawning maitre di

WAITER  
Pour l'enfant. Du poissons? Du  
haricot vert?

JOEL (YELLS)  
I want sausages!

Amelia jumps into her car, her hair wet and races there. She walks in to find them paying the check. She's huffing and puffing.

AMELIA  
What's going on?

LEON  
We had breakfast. And I explained  
the situation.

Joel is snuggled against him.

JOEL  
Daddy's an asshole.

AMELIA  
No he's not. He's insecure and he  
married too soon. He never got  
over his first and greatest love.  
Nor should he.

JOEL  
He's an asshole. He said so.

She gives up.

AMELIA  
Then it must be true.

INT.AU BON PAIN, AFTERNOON

The scene of their excruciating tea with Harvard girl. Now it is just Nina and Leon, silent, comfortable.

NINA  
Daddy, did you have a muse?

LEON

Your mother. For a time.

NINA

What happened?

LEON

I grew to love her. You don't write about people you love. As Muriel Spark said "Love is not the opposite of hate. The opposite of hate is indifference."

NINA

Where did she write that?

LEON

Oh, no she said it. To me.

NINA

Oh.

Pause.

NINA (CONT'D)

That's bullshit.

LEON

Well, it is and it isn't.

NINA

How? How can it be both?

LEON

Because life is full of grey areas.

She stares intently at her croissant.

NINA

Well, it is and it isn't.

LEON

Are you having an affair with your English teacher?

Girlish outrage.

NINA

No!

He is non-plussed.

LEON

But you thought about it.

NINA

No! I mean, no. For a minute there, perhaps. Yes I did. I think about him. But I'm not going to *do* anything.

LEON

He seems to care about you very much. Besides...you're going to be seventeen in two weeks. He's not old enough to be your father.

NINA

When you told me what he said, that I was good enough to apply for that writing program...

LEON

But I could have told you that...

NINA

But it doesn't *mean* anything from you.

Irony not lost on them.

LEON

I see.

NINA

You do?

LEON

Sort of.

NINA

I mean...you're my dad. And besides...your novels, dad, they're just not my kind of thing.

She looks up nervously from where she has been ripping a napkin to shreds.

NINA (CONT'D)

Is that okay?

LEON

Of course it's okay.

Silent tea drinking as each reflects on what has been said.

LEON (CONT'D)

So what about this Slattery? He's got himself pretty fucked up over you. You have to let old men down gently.

NINA

Don't worry, dad. He's a gentleman. I'll figure it out.

LEON

You could always just graduate and see where it goes.

She raises her eyebrows. He raises them back.

LEON (CONT'D)

Life is very...fucking...sad...and you have seen more than most your age. If he would distract you from that, for a long time, or a little while, then he's okay by me.

It's the closest Leon will ever come to talking about his wife's death.

INT.SCHOOL, MORNING

Nina walks trepidously into the photocopying room. Slattery looks up, a mess.

NINA

Mr. Slattery. Would it be possible for you to meet me on the lacrosse field tonight, at 9pm?

Terrified, he chokes out the answer.

MR.SLATTERY

Yes.

EXT.LACROSSE FIELD, NIGHT.

Slattery and Nina are laying side by side on the lacrosse field at night. Stars in the sky. Moon bountiful and bright. He has his head on Leon Gross' novel.

NINA

My father says it's okay. You and me.

MR.SLATTERY

But it's not okay. Not with me. It's totally inappropriate. It's wrong. I would never do it and it's driving me crazy.

She kisses him. She isn't scared this time. He's terrified.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

I don't know what you want from  
me?

NINA

Really? You really don't know?  
It's easy. I wanted to be  
admired. By someone I admire.

MR.SLATTERY

But it doesn't make sense...I'm  
nothing. I'm a shitty English  
teacher in a shitty all girl's  
prep school and I wrote half a  
book you think is shit. You have  
your father...

NINA

It's not the same. For you, but  
not for me. The other half of the  
book may come out brilliant,  
anyway. Old Juliet might be right  
about your talent.

He sits upright.

MR.SLATTERY

I admire you. I mean, you want me  
to tell you you're pretty? You're  
pretty. You didn't have to try  
and sleep with me for that.

NINA

Did I try and sleep with you?

MR.SLATTERY

I don't know. I think so. I'm not  
sure.

NINA

I think that I did.

MR.SLATTERY

Yeah. You did.

NINA

Did you want to?

MR.SLATTERY

Yeah. I did. Does that make me a  
bad person?

NINA

I'm not sure.

Breath.

NINA (CONT'D)

Mr.Slattery, I think you should try and smoke less pot. I think it's screwing up any writing skill you do have. I think it's why your book is so unfocused.

MR.SLATTERY

I know.

NINA

I think that you're a really good teacher.

He laser focuses on her.

MR.SLATTERY

You do?

He seems excited by this, as if he'd never thought of it before.

NINA

Yeah. You're good at it. Not just with the popular ones. You see us all. That's all I was waiting for. Was to be seen. Not every teacher is like that. You've been a gift. Why? Don't you like teaching?

MR.SLATTERY

Yeah. I do. But it's not what I meant to be.

NINA

I don't think we get to pick what it is that we're good at. The teacher you replaced, by the way, was awful.

MR.SLATTERY

I like teaching. That's weird. I never thought of it before you said it.

A thought clouds his face.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)

And...you know I really *don't* like teenage girls. Juliet was twenty-three.

NINA

You said.

MR.SLATTERY  
And she was all wrong for me.

NINA  
Not many women would be right for  
you. If I leave when I graduate  
and never come back to you, will  
you get over it?

He laughs. Not mean. Just feeling utterly ridiculous, out  
on a lacrosse field with a sixteen year old girl, baring  
his soul.

MR.SLATTERY  
I'd like to think so.

NINA  
Good. I want you to. I want you  
to be happy.

She rolls over onto her stomach. He looks at the Hebrew  
tattoo he had asked about before.

MR.SLATTERY  
It's for your mother, you said?  
What does it say?

NINA  
It isn't for my mother. It's to  
piss off my father. I did it  
after she died but it doesn't say  
anything. I mean, it may say  
something. I just wanted someone  
to put needles in me. I found the  
writing on the back of a box of  
stale matzoh.

He puts his hand on her back.

MR.SLATTERY  
This has been declared kosher.

He looks at her.

MR.SLATTERY (CONT'D)  
Come here to me.

She snuggles up against him. He puts his arm around her,  
totally true in affection, lack of sleaze and real  
friendship, whatever else becomes of them. He holds Leon's  
book in other hand and starts to read the back copy.

NINA  
I have a secret.

MR.SLATTERY  
Mmm-hmm.

NINA

You know Andy? The older guy I told you about? I never slept with him. I got scared.

They stare at the moon.

MR.SLATTERY

I have a secret.

NINA

Yes.

MR.SLATTERY

Your father's new book...it wasn't that good. Not as bad as mine. But it wasn't good.

NINA

It wasn't?

MR.SLATTERY

No.

She smiles.

NINA

You're not just saying that?

He shakes his head.

MR.SLATTERY

But, you know, when I met him, when I finally met him, I liked him. I thought he would disappoint me, that he would have to. The old man surprised me.

NINA

He's really not a bad guy.

Slattery puts the book aside, takes a deep breath and says

MR.SLATTERY

You know what's great about your father?

Without missing a beat...

NINA

Yes.

She draws her hand around in front of her and blocks out the moon with her palm. Screen falls dark.

THE END