FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

MATTIE, 45, overweight and heavy with fatigue, is washing a stack of dishes, obviously accumulated over several meals. She is in street clothes, but she has kicked her shoes off. The kitchen is cramped and untidy, with its only window looking out onto another building. JACK, a handsome boy of fourteen, is sitting at a small table, school papers and books spread out before him. STEPHANIE, ten, unkempt and nervous, enters carrying a bunch of flowers. Jack and Stephanie exchange glances. Stephanie approaches Mattie with the flowers.

STEPHANIE
Mother--

MATTIE
(eyeing the flowers)
What's this, then?

STEPHANIE
Flowers. Wildfl--

MATTIE
I can see that. So what are they for?

STEPHANIE
Nothing.
(Pause)
Just to look at--

MATTIE
Are you in some sort of trouble?

STEPHANIE
Why would I be in trouble?

MATTIE
I'm asking you--

STEPHANIE
No.
(Sad. Angry)
No. I'm not.

MATTIE
Well, go ahead then . . . Take them to your room.

Stephanie lays the flowers on the kitchen counter.

STEPHANIE
They're for you.

MATTIE
They'll all be dead by morning.

As Stephanie leaves the room, she hears the click of her mother's foot raising the trash can lid. She glances back to see her mother toss the flowers into the garbage.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STEPHANIE'S ROOM - DUSK

The bedroom is furnished with a small bed and bureau. There are no pictures on the wall or other decorations. Stephanie is sitting on the floor next to a window, absentmindedly tracing her finger along the tendril of a vine that has snaked its way across the outside of the window pane. Jack appears in the doorway carrying his books and papers. Sensing his presence, Stephanie looks up just as he turns to leave.

STEPHANIE
Jack--

He turns back.

JACK
What?
(Pause)
Well--?

STEPHANIE
Why doesn't mother like me?

After an uncomfortable silence, Jack shrugs.
STEPHANIE 
(continuing) 
You have to tell me, Jack. Please--

JACK 
I've told you before--

STEPHANIE 
You haven't--!

JACK 
I have. I told you I don't know.

Stephanie's eyes are pleading.

JACK 
(continuing) 
Really I don't-- 
(not unkindly) 
All I know is . . . Daddy left 
just before you were born, and 
then we moved.

STEPHANIE 
Was it my fault?

JACK 
Of course not. You weren't even 
born.

STEPHANIE 
But maybe she didn't want me to be 
born.

Jack doesn't say anything, but the answer is in his eyes.

JACK 
She was sad when Daddy left. 
(Pause) 
And mad, I guess. 
(Pause) 
And she's been different ever 
since.
STEPHANIE
Do you remember him?

JACK
A little.

STEPHANIE
Where did we live?

JACK
Why do you keep asking the same things?

STEPHANIE
Please--

JACK
We lived in a house. A two story house, with a lawn--

STEPHANIE
Where did he go?

JACK
I don't know.

STEPHANIE
People don't just disappear. Do they?

JACK
If they want to.

STEPHANIE
Does he live with someone?

JACK
How would I know . . . If I don't even know where he is?

STEPHANIE
What did he look like?

JACK
I don't remember.
STEPHANIE
You must have a picture--

JACK
No.
(pause)
If there were any . . . They're
gone.

STEPHANIE
What was his name?

JACK
John.

STEPHANIE
Oh. Like yours. Why did she name me Stephanie?

Jack shrugs.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
She knew the kids would call me
Steve, didn't she?

Jack shrugs again.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
She did it to be mean--

JACK
She's not really mean, Stephie—

STEPHANIE
Not to you.
(pause)
If I was like you--

JACK
You are like me. You have blue
eyes like me. And our hair is
almost the same color.
STEPHANIE
You know what I mean. Maybe if I was smart and everybody liked me--

JACK
You don't have to be smart, Stephie. You just have to--

STEPHANIE
What?

JACK
I don't know. Just be yourself.
(Stephanie turns away)
Don't try so hard to make everybody like you.

STEPHANIE
I don't.
(again tracing the tendril with her finger)
Not any more. I mostly just stay to myself.

JACK
Well, maybe if you--
(Pause)
I don't know--

Stephanie looks up, expectantly, but also with a tinge of anxiety.

JACK
(continuing)
Maybe if you--
(pause)
Combed your hair better. And--

STEPHANIE
And what?

JACK
Maybe if you--
(Pause)
Took a bath more often. Kept your
clothes neater--

STEPHANIE
Oh! Just go away--!

She gets up, meaning to close the door on him.

JACK
Don't get mad, Stepie. You asked me.
(shaking his head)
You're getting to be an awful lot like mother--

Stephanie stops.

JACK
(continuing)
You're either sad or mad all the time. Sometimes both.

STEPHANIE
Wouldn't you be?

JACK
Just try to be happy, Stepie. Can't you?

STEPHANIE
(holding back tears)
I don't know how--

JACK
Think of good things. That's what I do.

As if defeated by the absurdity of the suggestion, she sits on the bed.

JACK
(continuing)
You're good at softball.
(pause)
And you got a "B" last week in spelling.
STEPHANIE
Only because you helped me.

JACK
You took the test.
(pause)
And you've got the nicest teacher
in the school.

STEPHANIE
I don't have any friends.

JACK
You will.

STEPHANIE
How can I . . . When I'm like
mother. You said so yourself.

After a brief sigh and hesitation, Jack disappears from the
doorway.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - MORNING

Stephanie is sitting on the ground, her back against a low
wall. The sounds of children playing can be heard. As LISA
approaches, Stephanie looks up.

STEPHANIE
Oh, Lisa. Hi--

LISA
I wanted to tell you--

Stephanie appears wary.

LISA
(continuing)
Don't hold a seat on the bus for
me any more.

Stephanie's face hardens.

STEPHANIE
Why?
LISA
Just because--

STEPHANIE
Because why?

LISA
I'll be sitting with other kids.

STEPHANIE
(angry)
I thought you were nicer than the others. I thought we could be friends.

LISA
What a weird idea--

STEPHANIE
You didn't think it was so weird when I gave you the answers last week.

LISA
(defensive)
What answers?

STEPHANIE
The fractions.

LISA
You did not--

STEPHANIE
I did!

LISA
So what if you did. You got them from your brother. Who's not weird like you.

STEPHANIE
I'm not weird!
LISA
And grungy--

STEPHANIE
Stop it!

LISA
Weirdo! Weirdo!

VOICES (O.S.)
Lisa! C'mon!

Stephanie turns her face to hide her angry tears.

LISA
(subdued)
They won't like me if--

STEPHANIE
If what? If you talk to me? If you sit next to me on the stupid bus?

Walking away, Lisa nods, then begins to run.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Stephanie, wearing a school backpack, stops at the entrance to a cemetery. CARL, a gardener, is at work inside. Nearby, an old man in a wheelchair stares vacantly into space. Carl, in his 40s, wears earrings, and his graying hair is fashioned in a ponytail. Stephanie enters the cemetery and approaches Carl.

STEPHANIE
I like this place.

CARL
It's a cemetery.

STEPHANIE
I know.

CARL
On your way to school?
Stephanie nods.

    CARL
    (continuing)
    Where's that?

    STEPHANIE
    Greenbrae Elementary.

    CARL
    (surprised)
    A long way.

    STEPHANIE
    I used to take the bus--
    (pause)
    But I like to walk.

Carl stops his work, picks up an opened can of peaches, and begins spooning the fruit into the old man's mouth.

    STEPHANIE
    (continuing; looking at a pile of trimmings)
    Are you throwing these out?

Carl turns and nods.

    STEPHANIE
    (continuing)
    Could I pick some of the flowers--
    (pause)
    I mean . . . From the pile--

    CARL
    Go ahead.

Putting down her backpack, Stephanie takes a small pair of scissors from a side pocket and begins snipping flower stems.

    STEPHANIE
    (to flowers, quietly)
    Oh, you're so pretty. Look how you've got bits of yellow at the end of your petals. How smart you
are to do that. I'll bet not everyone notices.

    CARL
    (motioning with the spoon)
Use my shears. Over there.

    STEPHANIE
    (shaking her head, still talking to the flowers)
I'm sure you're thirsty, so as soon as we get to school, I'll give you a good drink.

    CARL
I talk to them, too. Especially when I'm pruning. It's important to tell the plants what you're planning--

Stephanie looks up quizzically.

    CARL
    (continuing)
    And apologize for any pain you might cause. Prepare them ... explain why--

Stephanie stands up, examining the small bunch of flowers in her hand.

    CARL
    (continuing; holds out the now-empty can)
Here. You can have this. There's a water faucet behind the camellia bush--
    (pointing)
Over there.

    STEPHANIE
    (accepting the can)
"Camellia--"
(looking in the
direction where he's
pointing)
What a pretty name.

CARL
You should learn the names of
plants, so you can address them
properly.

STEPHANIE
They don't teach us plant names.

CARL
No. They can't teach everything,
can they?
(as Stephanie walks
toward the faucet)
But you can get books from the
library. You can ask the
librarian for help.

Stephanie turns to look at him.

CARL
(continuing)
You know about libraries--?

Stephanie nods.

CARL
(continuing)
They like people asking questions.
(smiling)
That's what they're there for.

Stephanie returns with the flowers in the can of water. She
holds the flowers to her nose.

STEPHANIE
(shyly to Carl)
Thank you.

CARL
My pleasure.
Stephanie takes a few flowers from the can and places them on the old man's lap. He brushes them off.

   CARL
   (continuing; picking up the flowers)
   He wishes he could do for himself.
   You know . . . Pick flowers--

Carl hands the flowers back to Stephanie.

   CARL
   (continuing)
   Walk. Feed himself--

Stephanie nods, returning the flowers to her bouquet.

INT. FIFTH GRADE SCHOOLROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

MISS JACOBSEN is writing on the blackboard behind her desk. Stephanie comes in, trying to carry the can of flowers inconspicuously, and goes to her desk at the rear, placing the flowers on the floor. Several children are already seated. One of the boys, at a desk near Stephanie's, reaches over and pulls one of the flowers from the can. When Stephanie cries out, he laughs at her distress. The teacher looks around briefly, then turns back to the blackboard. Stephanie moves the flowers as far from the boy as she can. Miss Jacobsen finishes her work at the blackboard and turns to face the class. She directs her attention to Stephanie.

   MISS JACOBSEN
   Stephanie . . . Bring the flowers here, please.

The boy with the flower and several other children giggle as Stephanie trudges to the front of the room.

   MISS JACOBSEN
   (continuing)
   I think I should keep the flowers until class is over.

Stephanie hands her the can of flowers. Miss Jacobsen places them on her desk, rearranging them slightly.
MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing; to the
boy who had taken
the flower)
And Jeff . . . let's put the one
you have with the others, shall we?

No longer smiling, he starts walking to the front of the room.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Stephanie has again stopped on her way to school to talk to the gardener.

STEPHANIE
My teacher liked the flowers. She kept them on her desk until class was over.

CARL
Pick more if you like.

STEPHANIE
Oh--

Stephanie looks at his pile of flowerless trimmings.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
There aren't any--

CARL
Not there. On the bushes.

STEPHANIE
Oh. I couldn't.

CARL
It doesn't hurt them, you know. They'll just be encouraged to grow more flowers.
(waving his shears)
So . . . What will it be?
STEPHANIE
(looking around shyly)
The white ones, please.

CARL
Lilies.

STEPHANIE
"Lilies." There's a girl in my class called Lily. But I think her real name is Lillian.

CARL
(cutting flowers from the bush)
Daisy's a nice name, too. And Rose. I even knew a girl once with the name Pansy.

STEPHANIE
My name's Stephanie. But I'd like to change it because kids call me Steve.

CARL
You could change it to Annie. Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
(smiling)
I could, couldn't it? Maybe I will . . . someday.

CARL
My name is Carlos. But I tell everyone to call me Carl.

STEPHANIE
And do they?

CARL
Everyone but--
(looking at the old man)
My dad.
STEPHANIE
My mother wouldn't like me to change my name. She doesn't like anything I do.

CARL
Maybe if you took her some flowers--

STEPHANIE
(shaking her head)
I did--
(accepting the flowers)
Thank you.

Carl returns to his work.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
Are you here every day?

CARL
Except when they're having a funeral.

STEPHANIE
Where do you go then?

CARL
To work in people's gardens.

STEPHANIE
Do they pay you?

CARL
Sometimes.

STEPHANIE
I'd like to have a garden. I'd grow every kind of flower there is--

CARL
If you wish hard enough, you will. Some day.
STEPHANIE
Wishing doesn't work very well--
(pause)
Not for me, anyway.

Carl looks up to see a delivery truck driving into the cemetery.

CARL
They're getting ready for a
funeral. The flowers are arriving.

Carl begins gathering up his tools in a sack.

STEPHANIE
Maybe I could stay . . .? Just to
see the flowers.

Carl slings the sack over his shoulder.

CARL
Better not. You can see the
flowers this afternoon or
tomorrow. They'll still be here.

They begin to leave, Carl pushing his father's wheelchair.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Alone in the cemetery, Stephanie is gazing at floral
arrangements near the grave site of yesterday's funeral.

INT. FIFTH GRADE SCHOOLROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Stephanie walks into the schoolroom with a beautifully
arranged basket of flowers, which she takes to the teacher's desk.

MISS JACOBSSEN
(raising her eyebrows)
Aren't they beautiful--

About to ask a question, she changes her mind.
MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
So many different kinds.
(to Stephanie)
Do you know what they are?
(Stephanie shakes her head)
Carnations. And look here--
(pointing)
Anthurium . . . Very exotic.

STEPHANIE
I got a book from the library yesterday. I'm learning their names, and I--

An ELDERLY WOMAN, agitated and angry, bursts into the room.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(pointing to Stephanie)
Thief!

Miss Jacobsen, startled, looks from the woman to Stephanie.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(continuing)
You're a thief! A common little--
MISS JACOBSEN
(interrupting)
Please! Don't shout--

ELDERLY WOMAN
(shouting)
Why shouldn't I shout?!

MISS JACOBSEN
This is a classroom.

ELDERLY WOMAN
So teach them not to steal!

As the woman grabs up the basket of flowers, Miss Jacobsen gently turns her toward the door.
MISS JACOBSEN
Let's go outside and talk.

She propels the woman toward the door, beckoning to Stephanie, who follows them out of the room.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The PRINCIPAL is seated at his desk. The elderly woman, now weeping, is sitting in a chair facing him. To the side are seated Miss Jacobsen and Stephanie.

PRINCIPAL
I'm sorry . . . Very sorry, Mrs.--

ELDERLY WOMAN
Bartucci.
(stopping to wipe her eyes)
My cousin's grave. It was only yesterday that we--

She is too emotional to continue.

PRINCIPAL
(turning to Stephanie)
Stephanie--

STEPHANIE
But they were left there.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Of course they were left there! That's what you do in cemeteries! You leave flowers!

INT. STEPHANIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Stephanie is crying, almost hysterical, as Mattie drags her into the room.

MATTIE
How could you--! How could you--!

STEPHANIE
(falling to the floor)
I just wanted--

MATTIE
Wretched . . . Wretched child--!

Mattie grabs Stephanie by the arm, starts pulling her across the room.

STEPHANIE
You're hurting me--!

Mattie pulls Stephanie to the closet, opens the door, forces her inside, slams the door shut, holding it closed.

STEPHANIE
(continuing; muffled)
No!
(screaming)
Let me out! Please--! I'll die!!

Jack appears in the doorway.

JACK
Mother--

MATTIE
Get me a kitchen chair--

As Jack hesitates:

MATTIE
(continuing)
Do you hear me--!

STEPHANIE
(crying hysterically)
I don't want to die!
(pounding on the door)
Please! I don't want to die!

Jack reappears carrying a chair, with which Mattie props the door closed.

JACK
Mother--
MATTIE
She'll get out when I let her out--

Mattie maneuvers Jack to the door, which she closes after them, leaving Stephanie locked in the closet, crying hysterically.

INT. STEPHANIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The room is quiet. Mattie enters and brusquely opens the closet door. Slowly Stephanie crawls out, curling herself into a tight ball. After Mattie has left the room, Jack enters and places a pillow under Stephanie's head. Sitting down cross legged next to her, he begins talking in a low, quiet voice.

JACK
You'll be all right, Stephie.
Really you will. I promise--

He glances up briefly when Mattie reappears in the doorway, arms folded across her chest, mouth pursed angrily. When she has left, he continues talking to Stephanie in a quiet, even voice.

JACK
(continuing)

He takes several breaths to show her.

JACK
(continuing)
(pause)
Good.
(pause)
And while you're breathing like that . . . Nice, even breaths . . . think of the day we took the
bus, you and me, just the two of us, to the park across town and sat by the creek. We tossed leaves in the creek and watched them float away. Think of yourself on one of those leaves, floating, floating, down the creek . . . Carried along . . . Just floating. The air is really warm. And the water is almost as warm. (pause)
You float and float a long way. Hands dangling in the clear, clean water . . . And you look up at the trees, and every now and then the sun pokes through the trees and lights on your face. You float and float . . . And then the trees start to thin out, and there's a pond you drift into. (pause)
And beyond the pond, you see a meadow, all full of sunlight, with thousands . . . Millions . . . Of flowers . . . All colors of the rainbow. You climb off your leaf and leave the pond. You start walking in the flowers. There's every color you can imagine . . . And every size and shape. (pause)
It's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen . . . All those millions of flowers. And the smells . . . It makes you want to laugh, it's so wonderful. You breathe in the smells, breathe in . . . Breathe out. (pause)
And the smells seep in through your skin and seem to float through your whole body, until-- (pause)
You feel like a beautiful flower yourself, waving in the breeze. You feel so happy . . . So
colorful. Everyone loves you and
thanks you for being who you are
. . . Just like a flower . . . A
beautiful flower.

Realizing that Stephanie is asleep, he slowly gets up and
tiptoes from the room.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - MORNING

Stephanie is standing with Jack, apart from a line of
children waiting to board a school bus. She avoids looking
at the other children.

    JACK
    Stephie . . . You've got to get in
    line--

    STEPHANIE
    I can't go to school, Jack. I'm
    sick.

    JACK
    You're not sick.

    STEPHANIE
    They'll all be laughing at me.
    And making faces--

    JACK
    Stephie, I'm going to miss my bus--

    STEPHANIE
    Just let me walk, then--

    JACK
    No, Stephie! You know what mother
    said--
    (pause)
    I have to see you get on the bus.

Holding back tears, Stephie turns and walks toward the line
of children.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - AFTERNOON
Stephanie is sitting on the ground, her back again to the schoolyard wall, staring into the distance, away from the sounds of children playing. Miss Jacobsen walks up to her.

MISS JACOBSEN
Stephanie . . . I wonder if you might like to help me with something.

Stephanie does not look up.

MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
Every Saturday I go to a flower market and buy bunches of leftover flowers.
(pause)
I could use some help.

Stephanie looks up, then looks away again.

MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
But it would mean getting up very early, because the market is across town, and there are other people wanting leftover flowers.

Still Stephanie does not respond.

MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
Well, you think about it--

Miss Jacobsen begins walking away.

STEPHANIE
(quietly)
What do you do with the flowers?

MISS JACOBSEN
(turning)
I take them to shut ins. It lifts their spirits.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - MORNING
In a windowless hallway illuminated by artificial light, a door opens. Miss Jacobsen comes out of an apartment, followed by Stephanie.

    MRS. MILLER (O.S.)
    I wish you could stay longer--

    STEPHANIE
    (at the partly closed door)
    Next week we will.

    MRS. MILLER (O.S.)
    Promise--?

    STEPHANIE
    Yes. I promise.

    MRS. MILLER (O.S.)
    You're a good girl, Stephanie, to give up your Saturdays.

    STEPHANIE
    I like it, Mrs. Miller.

    MRS. MILLER (O.S.)
    (as Stephanie is closing the door)
    Tell Mrs. Hobart "hello" for me--

    STEPHANIE
    (as the door closes, to Miss Jacobsen)
    Mrs. Hobart--?

Miss Jacobsen reaches down into a bucket of flowers.

    MISS JACOBSEN
    She's one floor down. You haven't met her . . . She's been in the hospital.
    (arranging a bouquet)
    Do you think the mums and lilies--?
    (pause)
    Maybe lilies and daisies.
STEPHANIE
Yes. Lilies and daisies . . . The
colors are pretty.

They work together arranging the flowers.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
Saturday used to be the worst day
of the week. Now it's the best--

MISS JACOBSEN
Is it?

STEPHANIE
I never had anything to do.

MISS JACOBSEN
Well, now you're busy from early
till late.
(pause)
Does your mother mind?

STEPHANIE
No. She's glad.
(pause)
I mean, that I'm not underfoot.

MISS JACOBSEN
What about your father?

STEPHANIE
(shaking her head)
He left before I was born.
(pause)
Some day I'm going to look for
him. I'm going to ask him if it
was my fault--

MISS JACOBSEN
Sometimes people don't want to be
found.

She picks up the bucket, handing the prepared bouquet to
Stephanie.
MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
Sometimes they feel they've made such a mess of things, they just want to forget it ever happened.

Stephanie is trying hard to absorb this information.

MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
Like when you've made a lot of mistakes on your homework . . . So you just take the paper, wad it up, and toss it away.

STEPHANIE
I don't like being tossed away.

MISS JACOBSEN
No. Of course you don't. But when you toss things away, sometimes good gets tossed out with bad. Right answers with wrong ones--

STEPHANIE
You think maybe I was part of the good?

MISS JACOBSEN
I think definitely you were part of the good.

She begins walking down the hallway.

MISS JACOBSEN
(continuing)
Well, let's go see Mrs. Hobart, shall we?

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Stephanie glances into the cemetery as she walks by. She hears someone calling her name.
CARL
Stephanie--!

STEPHANIE
Oh . . . Carl--

CARL
Where've you been? I haven't seen you in weeks--

STEPHANIE
No.

CARL
Not taking flowers to school any more?

STEPHANIE
No.

CARL
Is something wrong?

STEPHANIE
Why would anything be wrong?

CARL
Just asking.
(pause)
I thought maybe you moved . . .
Maybe we're going to a different school.

STEPHANIE
No. I've been riding the bus.
With the other kids.

CARL
Ah.

STEPHANIE
But my brother's sick today.

Carl is clearly puzzled, but he doesn't question her.
STEPHANIE
(continuing)
Where's your father?

CARL
He had to go to a nursing home.
He needed to be in bed all the
time.

STEPHANIE
Oh.

CARL
He can't sit up any more.

INT. NURSING HOME - AFTERNOON

Carl is sitting at the bedside of his father, who is staring
at the ceiling. A bouquet of flowers is on the bedside
table. Stephanie and Miss Jacobsen are preparing to leave.

CARL
Thank you for coming. And for the
flowers. He does appreciate it--

MISS JACOBSEN
Of course.

CARL
It was hard for him, even when he
could talk--

MISS JACOBSEN
We understand.

STEPHANIE
We'll see you next Saturday, Carl.

About to speak, Miss Jacobsen hesitates.

MISS JACOBSEN
Stephanie--

STEPHANIE
What--?
MISS JACOBSEN
Not next Saturday, I'm afraid.

STEPHANIE
Another day, you mean. Now that school's out--?

CARL
Whenever you can--

MISS JACOBSEN
No. It's that--
(pause)
I have to go away for a few weeks.

STEPHANIE
(disappointed)
Oh--

MISS JACOBSEN
(to Stephanie)
Then we'll pick right up where we left off... Maybe even add a few days.
(smiling)
I promise.

INT. STEPHANIE'S ROOM - DUSK

Stephanie is sitting on her bed, staring out the window. Sensing someone standing in the doorway, she turns to see her mother.

MATTIE
Your teacher has died.

Disbelieving, Stephanie stares at her mother.

MATTIE
(continuing)
She had an operation and died in the hospital.

As her mother leaves, Stephanie continues to stare at the doorway. Then she buries her face in her hands, trying to suppress the sounds of her heavy sobs. Jack comes in and
stands quietly beside her.

JACK
It's all right, Stephie.

STEPHANIE
(through her sobs)
No! It's not all right!

JACK
I just meant--

She looks up, her face contorted with grief.

STEPHANIE
If I'd known, I could have taken her flowers!

JACK
She didn't want you to worry, Stephie. I'm sure that's why she didn't tell you.
(pause)
I'm really sorry--
(pause)
And I'm sure mother's sorry, too.

STEPHANIE
She's glad! You didn't see the look on her face--
(pause)
She was glad to tell me--

Stephanie slumps to the floor.

STEPHANIE
(continuing; her voice muffled through her sobs)
Nothing good will ever happen!

INT. LAWYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Bookcases, filled with large reference books, line the walls of the room. A LAWYER is seated at the head of an oval conference table, papers spread out around him. Sitting to
his right is Stephanie's mother; next to her is Stephanie. Carl is sitting on the lawyer's left.

MATTIE
Are you sure? She must have had relatives, who--

LAWYER
No. There's no one.

MATTIE
But such a large amount . . . On a teacher's salary.

LAWYER
She lived modestly. And she made some very clever investments.

MATTIE
But leaving it all to a child--

LAWYER
Until Stephanie is twenty-one, by the terms of the trust, there will only be the interest.

MATTIE
A sizeable amount, I would imagine.

LAWYER
For now, she won't even get that . . . Not directly.

MATTIE
What's that supposed to mean?

LAWYER
It means--
(pause)
As trustee, I will give Carl, here,
(looking at Carl)
an interest check every month, which is to reimburse him for taking Stephanie to the flower market every Saturday, for paying for the flowers, then taking her
to visit various people to whom they will distribute the flowers.

MATTIE
And if Carl--

LAWYER
In the event that Carl can't or won't be available for this, I'm to find someone else.

MATTIE
It all seems a bit frivolous to me--

LAWYER
As Stephanie's parent you can, of course, forbid her--

MATTIE
(tartly)
Why would I forbid her?

LAWYER
(shrugging)
I wouldn't know, would I?

INT. STEPHANIE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Stephanie is sitting on her bed, staring into space, dejected. She is wearing the same clothes she wore in the lawyer's office. Jack appears in the doorway.

JACK
Is it true, then?

Stephanie nods, not looking at him.

JACK
(continuing; smiling)
So something good has happened.

Stephanie turns to him, bewilderment turning to anger.

STEPHANIE
Good?
JACK
What's the matter, Stephie?

Stephanie looks away. After a long pause:

STEPPANIE
Why did she have to die?

Jack enters the room and sits beside her on the bed.

JACK
I don't know, Stephie.

Stephanie turns her head to stare out the window.

JACK
(continuing)
But she wanted you to be happy,
Stephie. That's why she left you
all that money. She wanted to
make up for the bad things.

Seeing tears well up in her eyes, he puts a handkerchief in
her hand.

JACK
(continuing)
Listen, Stephie . . . You'll never
be happy if you keep wishing
everything was different.

STEPPANIE
When I grow up--

Wiping her eyes, she hesitates.

STEPPANIE
(continuing)
When I grow up . . . I'm going to
name my flower shop--

Stifling a soft hiccup, for a moment she holds Jack's
handkerchief to her mouth.
STEPHANIE
(continuing)
I'm going to name it "The Frieda Mary Jacobsen Flower Shop." And 
I won't have to buy flowers, 
because I'll have this big huge 
yard full of my own flowers.

Nodding, Jack smiles.

STEPHANIE
(continuing)
Every kind there is.

JACK
And not only that, Stephie--

She looks at him inquiringly, hiccoughing muted as she again 
holds Jack's handkerchief over her mouth.

JACK
(continuing; smiling)
With all those flowers and a 
flower shop and tons of money, you 
can hire your big brother. Right? 
Maybe even lend him some money 
when he's broke.

As she slowly lowers the handkerchief from her mouth, a smile 
begins to soften her face.

FADE OUT