

# **Flower Girl**

**A Screenplay**

**by**

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2006**

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**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, Stephe—

**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, Stephanie. 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, Stephie. 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, Stephie. 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 JACOBSEN**

(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)

Mums. Stock. Daisies.

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, Stephe.  
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)

You need to take a deep breath,  
Stephe. Then breathe out,  
slowly. Breathe in . . . Breathe  
out. Breathe in . . . Breathe  
out.

He takes several breaths to show her.

**JACK**

(continuing)

Breathe in, Stephe . . . Breathe  
out. Breathe in . . . Breathe  
out.

(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 were 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, Stephanie.

**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, Stephe?

Stephanie looks away. After a long pause:

**STEPHANIE**

Why did she have to die?

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

**JACK**

I don't know, Stephe.

Stephanie turns her head to stare out the window.

**JACK**

(continuing)

But she wanted you to be happy,  
Stephe. 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, Stephe . . . You'll never  
be happy if you keep wishing  
everything was different.

**STEPHANIE**

When I grow up--

Wiping her eyes, she hesitates.

**STEPHANIE**

(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, Stephe--

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**