

THE PORTRAITIST

a screenplay
by Fengar Gael

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OPEN ON:

A dazzling white screen. The mournful music of a FOGHORN is heard as the whiteness is revealed to be a canopy of clouds over a rippling gray sea.

EXT. MONKSHEAD BAY. MONKSHEAD ISLAND COAST LINE. DAY.

A FERRY emerges, shrouded in mist, headed for the jagged, rock-strewn coast of an island in the northeastern United States.

EXT. FERRY DECK. DAY.

Standing alone on the passenger deck of the ferry is FRANCINE AMBLER, aged fourteen, her hair whipped by the wind as she squints towards the shore. An ELDERLY WOMAN PASSENGER opens the door to the deck and approaches.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Merciful heavens, it's cold!
(beaming at Francine)
Is this your first visit?

FRANCINE

No, ma'am. I came here last summer.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh, you have friends on the island?

FRANCINE

My Aunt Fay lives there.

ELDERLY WOMAN

How lovely.
(shivering)
Brrr, it's too brisk for these old bones. Take care, dear.

The woman opens the door and returns to the interior of the ferry. Francine's eyes follow her, glancing towards the door, then a window, observing her own reflection. She moves closer to the window, staring inside.

INT. FERRY PASSENGER LOUNGE. DAY.

We see inside the ferry from Francine's point of view. There are long wooden benches holding SEVERAL ADULT PASSENGERS and FRANCINE as she was the previous summer, age thirteen, staring miserably ahead. She has shorter disheveled hair, wears faded jeans, and has a suitcase beside her.

Tears shimmer down her cheeks as the older Francine narrates the tale of her first summer on the island. It should be clear that the voice-overs throughout the film are spoken by the older Francine as she reflects on her younger self.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Last summer my parents sent me to Aunt Fay's to learn how to paint, but let's get factual-- they needed a place to dump me so they could go to parties and on trips and pretend they weren't stuck with a kid.

EXT. MONKSHEAD ISLAND FERRY DOCK, ONE YEAR EARLIER. DAY.

The sun is blazing as the ferry slowly approaches the docking area where a CLUSTER OF ISLANDERS and FAY LOCKE, a slender woman of thirty-five, are waiting for the passengers to disembark. Fay has wavy auburn hair clasped in a bun, and wears jeans and a paint-spattered shirt that billows in the wind. She is smiling and waving as the ferry draws closer.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

My mom said she was the only sister with talent, but she went round the bend and cried for six months running, then wound up a hermit on Monkshead Island. That's where they lived when they were kids and gramps ran the ferries off the coast.

The younger Francine, hauling her heavy suitcase, emerges from the ferry. Fay rushes to greet her, embracing her warmly. Her voice is soft and gentle, almost melodious.

FAY

Oh, Francine, how wonderful to see you! Did you enjoy the crossing? Please, let me help you with your luggage. Is this all?

Francine nods as Fay grasps the suitcase and carries it to a dusty black STATION WAGON that looks vaguely like a hearse.

EXT. MONKSHEAD ISLAND. COUNTRY ROADS. DAY.

Francine and Fay enter the station wagon, and bounce along bumpy roads. We see the island from Francine's point of view: the beaches, grassy hills, the pine, spruce, wild flowers, and occasional shingled houses.

There are large cloud formations moving to shield the sun and cast portentous shadows.

FRANCINE (V. O.)
 Monkshead Island wasn't exactly
 a happening place. No malls,
 no movies, no kids skimming
 frisbees, just a lot of grass
 and rocks and water.

INT. STATION WAGON. DAY.

Through the windshield, we see Fay driving, pointing out various landmarks. Francine is slouching next to her, looking gloomier than ever. As Fay turns her head, a wind blows through the car windows, unfurling her bun, lifting layers of her hair, exposing strands of bright green, orange, and purple entangled beneath the auburn. Francine's eyes widen with amazement, then FAY reclasps her hair.

EXT. FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

The station wagon approaches a rock-studded hill. On top stands a large, three story PITCHED-ROOF HOUSE with cedar shingles and black shutters. It is imposing but shabby, with peeling paint and untrimmed hedges. The beach is visible from the rear of the house.

The car stops on a gravel driveway. Fay steps out, lifts the luggage from the back of the station wagon, then walks towards the door, followed by Francine. The crunch of their steps on gravel is heard and the front door opens with a plaintive squeal.

INT. FAY'S HOUSE. DAY

They enter a foyer with white walls, creaky oak floors, an antique desk and chair, and several oval mirrors. Fay plants the suitcase on the bottom of a steep staircase.

FAY
 Welcome to my shanty by the sea.
 I'm afraid it's quite drafty and
 austere. I hope you brought flannel
 pajamas. It gets chilly at night.

Fay leads Francine into the living room furnished with a slip-covered sofa, wing chairs, a carved wooden coffee table, and an oriental carpet. Everything is tasteful but careworn and drab: the colors neutral, the walls chalky and bare except for several ornately framed mirrors. Francine surveys the room but is clearly unimpressed.

FRANCINE
Where's the TV?

FAY
Sorry, I don't have one.

FRANCINE
You're kidding, right?

FAY
No, but I have a library--
through here.

Fay leads Francine to a library filled with hundreds of volumes encased in glass-fronted bookcases.

FAY
There's plenty of good books,
and after we paint, we can go
hiking and swimming.

FRANCINE
You have a computer though, right?

FAY
No, but there's a typewriter in
that cabinet if you need it.

FRANCINE
That's okay. I brought my
laptop.
(with false cheer)
You do have a phone, right?

FAY
In the kitchen.
(smiling apologetically)
I guess it's pretty quiet
around here.

Francine is increasingly wretched as she scans the room.

FRANCINE (V. O.)
The thought of spending the rest
of the day there much less the
whole fucking summer made me want
to slit my throat.

Francine trails behind Fay who returns to the foyer.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY

Fay grasps the suitcase and starts up the narrow flight of stairs, followed by Francine. On the flanking walls are mirrors of all sizes and shapes, and Francine gazes at her multiple, fractured reflections.

INT. FRANCINE'S ROOM. DAY.

They reach the second floor hallway. Fay opens a door and enters a bedroom, relieving herself of the suitcase.

We see a mahogany four poster bed with a white comforter. The walls are bare and white, and there is a tall mahogany bureau with a mirror. The closet door is open, revealing a bare pole with hangars and an empty shelf. There are several canvases stored near the back, leaning against the closet walls.

FAY

This is your room. There's a view of the ocean. Isn't it lovely? And you can put your clothes in the closet and bureau. The bathroom's across the hall, and my room is two doors down. Now let me show you the studio.

Fay leads Francine down the corridor to another set of stairs leading to the third floor.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Fay and Francine enter the third floor studio, a spacious room with white walls, skylights, and a large picture window with an ocean view. There are four full-length mirrors, dozens of unpainted canvases of various sizes stacked against the walls, two easels, several chairs, and a table filled with paints, palettes and coffee cans. Francine looks impassively around the room.

FRANCINE

You sure have a lot of mirrors.

Fay walks to one of the easels, dusting it with her shirt.

FAY

This easel is for you.

FRANCINE

How come you don't have any of your pictures around?

FAY
I keep them in my gallery, in
the next room.

FRANCINE
Can I see them?

FAY
If you wish.

Fay walks to a mirror that is actually a door. She opens it slowly and enters the threshold, turning on the lights.

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

Francine follows Fay into an immense room in which every inch of wall space is covered with portraits in many colors and styles: from flat, fresco-like profiles to realistic frontal views. Some are framed, most are not; some are simple and amateurish, others are exquisitely detailed; some are flattering and others are grotesque distortions, but all depict the same woman: a striking creature with pale skin, an aquiline nose, full lips, and raven hair.

Francine's eyes are bright and brimming with wonderment. She stands in the middle of the gallery, turning in circles. We see the portraits from Francine's point of view, passing by slowly at first, then accelerating, their distinctions blurring, the pigments blending into whirlpools of radiant colors. Suddenly it seems as if the walls are moving, spinning of their own volition, and Francine, reeling, dashes from the room to the safety of the studio.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Francine runs to a window, opens it, and places her hand at her throat inhaling deeply. Fay has followed her, closing the door to her gallery.

FRANCINE
(gasping)
Jesus...

Fay gestures for Francine to sit in a chair.

FAY
Francine? Are you alright?
Here, sit down.

FRANCINE
(catching her breath)
Yeah...I guess I'm still nauseous
from the ferry...

FAY

You'll feel better after we've had some lunch, and then later we'll drive to the Greens.

FRANCINE

The Greens...?

FAY

I've been commissioned to paint a man and his daughter. We're going to meet them this evening.

EXT. NARROW ISLAND ROADS. EVENING. LIGHT RAIN.

Fay and Francine are in the station wagon, driving towards the Green's estate, the windshield wipers clicking with waltz-like rhythms. We see Francine through the window, staring forlornly at the rain.

FRANCINE (V.O.)

On our way to the Greens, I figured I'd been on the island four hours and already it felt like four years. I fucking hated it and was planning my escape. I kept thinking about those paintings and figured she was crazy alright. My parents had sent me here to drive me insane.

EXT. THE GREEN'S ESTATE. EVENING. LIGHT RAIN.

The station wagon glides down a long driveway lined with well-tended trees. Looming ahead is a proud, magisterial house made of stone. The station wagon stops at the entrance.

Francine follows Fay to a carved wooden door where Fay lifts a gargoyle shaped knocker, rapping three times. A MAID in uniform answers the door and leads them inside.

INT. THE GREEN ESTATE. EARLY EVENING.

The maid leads Francine and Fay through an elegant foyer, down luxuriously carpeted corridors. We catch glimpses through doors of rooms containing computers, television, and other technological amenities.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

The Greens had the perfect set up: T Vs, computers, sound systems. Unlike Fay, the Greens were living in the twenty-first century.

INT. CASSANDRA GREEN'S OFFICE. EVENING.

The maid leads Fay and Francine into a handsomely panelled office with enormous wing chairs, an ornately carved desk, and an immense flattened MAP OF THE WORLD covering an entire wall. The map is randomly marked with small colorful flags.

Behind the desk sits CASSANDRA GREEN wearing a black satin robe. She is in her mid-forties, somewhat frail, has a jaundiced complexion, watery bloodshot eyes, and a wild shock of graying hair. She addresses the maid with a deep, raspy voice.

CASSANDRA

Esa, dear, please bring us some tea. I'm Cassandra Green. Forgive me if I don't stand on ceremony. Please, sit down.

Fay and Francine sit engulfed in the wing chairs as Cassandra Green coughs hideously into her handkerchief. Francine's revulsion is visible which annoys Fay who glares at her sharply. Cassandra recovers herself and gazes directly at Fay.

CASSANDRA

I'd like you to paint my husband and daughter, and I'd like them completed as soon as possible, by August first to be exact. Two portraits in five weeks doesn't sound unreasonable, or does it?

Cassandra coughs again, then pauses to catch her breath.

CASSANDRA

Believe me, I appreciate that painting isn't a nine to five job, and I'm told one needs inspiration, but I'm hoping the fee will provide what the subjects may not.

FAY

By August first? Well, I...I'm sorry. I'm very honored that you've asked me, but I didn't realize your time constraints, and I'm afraid I've already agreed to...to illustrate some stories by mid-September.

CASSANDRA

I'll make it worth your while.

FAY

I know my limitations.

CASSANDRA

Will fifty thousand dollars be incentive enough to reassess them?

Francine raises her brows, impressed by the fee, but Fay remains calm, pausing before her response.

FAY

That's very generous.

CASSANDRA

You'll deserve it if the portraits are completed to my stipulations.

Cassandra reaches into a desk drawer, extracting a contract which Fay takes from her trembling hand.

CASSANDRA

They cannot be any larger than thirty by thirty-five inches, exclusive of their frames. They must be painted to an exact and agreeable likeness, and as I said, within the allotted time.

FAY

Why did you choose me?

CASSANDRA

Last March, Lucy and I were touring Merwin's Gallery and saw "The Everly's Eating Cheese," a wonderfully traditional portrait. Frankly, I was expecting an older woman. Your paintings are more literal than most young artists whose work I find abhorrent, but then I prefer Rembrandt to Picasso or anything post-Renoir.

Esa enters with tray laden with a silver tea service and cups, saucers, cakes, and a crystal decanter of scotch. She begins to serve Fay, speaking with a slight Swedish accent.

ESA

Tea or spirits, madam?

FAY

Tea please-- with lemon.

Esa pours the tea as Cassandra leans forward, glaring impatiently at Fay.

CASSANDRA

Well? Have you made a decision?
I haven't much time, you know.

Fay takes the teacup from Esa, then glances directly at Cassandra.

FAY

Yes. Yes, I'll do it.

CASSANDRA

Excellent!

Cassandra beams, revealing gleaming white teeth. She opens a desk drawer and brings forth a check and a sheet of paper.

CASSANDRA

Here's a check for half your fee
and I've prepared a schedule.
Please note whatever adjustments
need to be made. I can send Lucy
tomorrow. Would ten o'clock be
alright?

FAY

Fine.

Esa has served Francine a cup of tea and some cakes, and is pouring an ample glass of scotch. Cassandra turns to Francine as if noticing her for the first time.

CASSANDRA

And who are you?

Francine's mouth is so crammed with cake that Fay quickly answers on her behalf.

FAY

This is my niece, Francine Ambler.
I hope you won't mind if she
observes during our sittings.

CASSANDRA

I have no objections.

FAY

Are your husband and daughter here
now?

CASSANDRA

No. I wanted our meeting to be private. I'm afraid they're not very enthused about the portraits, but they've decided to humor me-- out of pity, I suppose.

FAY

Could you tell me a little about them?

Cassandra reaches across his desk for a framed black and white photograph of Phillip and Lucy. We see the faces of a handsome man of forty-three and a girl of twelve posed formally in profile. Cassandra hands the photograph to Fay.

CASSANDRA

Lucy's a beautiful girl.
(to Francine)
About your age, I imagine, maybe older, and a free spirit.

Fay nods appreciatively and passes the photograph to Francine.

CASSANDRA

I'm afraid she's an uninspired student and hopeless daydreamer-- which no doubt means she'll make an excellent model.

As Cassandra and Fay continue their conversation, we see the picture from Francine's point of view, with the profiles appearing to come to life, turning slightly and smiling mysteriously.

CASSANDRA

As for Phillip, he graduated from Princeton where he taught French and Italian, and now wastes his talents traipsing around the world, writing features for travel publications. He's too restless for domesticity, though it's quite comfortable here, don't you think?

FAY

Yes, your home is very...impressive.

CASSANDRA

My side of the family have had
their summer homes on Monkshead
Island for nearly a century.

In the photograph Phillip winks at Francine whose eyes widen with fright. She quickly turns the photograph around on the desk as Cassandra lifts her glass in a toast.

CASSANDRA

Well, here's to the portraits.
I'm sure you'll triumph!

Fay and Francine toast with their teacups, then watch with astonishment as Cassandra downs her scotch with one long lusty swallow. The amber liquid dribbles from the side of her mouth down her chin and neck. Francine, repulsed, lowers her gaze to the carpet. From beneath Cassandra's desk, she sees a darkening stain bleeding towards her feet. The stain resembles a perfect silhouette.

INT. FAY'S ART STUDIO. DAY.

Classical waltz music is heard as we see a paint brush dipped onto a palette of muted colors. The brush is held by Fay who is focused on a subject not yet visible. She is standing, facing the canvas, applying the paint in swift, accomplished sweeps that accompany the music and suggest a conductor wielding a baton.

Several feet away we see Francine dipping her brush into a palette of bright colors as the music changes to original discordant rock, and the brush dances wildly on the canvas. The focus shifts back and forth from Fay's confident flourishes to Francine's discordant tones.

Momentarily the music ceases as we focus on the subject, LUCY GREEN, wearing denim shorts and an incongruously formal white blouse and earbuds attached to her smart phone. She sits, staring at herself in one of the mirrors, her backpack beside her. Francine puts down her paint brush, shifting her gaze from Lucy to her own reflection.

FRANCINE (V.O.)

There were so damn many mirrors, you
couldn't help looking at yourself
looking at Lucy who couldn't tear her
eyes away. She was your first human
model, the first victim at the mercy
of your brush.

Fay puts down her palette, and approaches Lucy, touching her shoulder. Lucy removes her ear buds.

FAY
Lucy, your sitting's over.
You can go home now.

LUCY
Great.

Fay has walked to Francine's painting, smiling with genuine pleasure at a bizarre and original rendering of Lucy

FAY
It's wonderful, Francine!
Oh, Lucy, you must see this.
(to Francine)
Is it all right?

FRANCINE
Well,...okay.

Lucy saunters to the portrait, and stares, unable to hide her disdain.

LUCY
So how come my hair's purple?

FRANCINE
To match the tattoo on your neck.

LUCY
What tattoo?

FRANCINE
I haven't painted it yet.

FAY
Francine's a creator. She
strives for more than an exact
likeness.

LUCY
Yeah,...whatever.

Francine has moved to Fay's easel, and is bursting with admiration at a remarkable portrait of Lucy.

FRANCINE
Wow, that's incredible...

Lucy picks up her backpack from the floor and struts to observe Fay's portrait. She stands by Francine, but appears indifferent.

FAY

I'm just wondering if I've placed you in quite the right angle. You're so pretty from every side...

LUCY

It's fine. It won't make any difference anyway.

FAY

It will to me.

LUCY

Why? Nobody's going to see it.

FRANCINE

What...?

LUCY

Didn't she tell you?

FAY

Tell me what?

As Lucy speaks, she adjusts her backpack, preparing to leave.

LUCY

They're going to be buried-- in the family vault. She wants us immortalized before we croak.

FRANCINE

Why? Are you dying?

LUCY

Yeah, the whole family's sick, but don't worry, it's not contagious.

Francine exchanges a quizzical glance with Fay. Lucy starts for the door, but Fay calls after her, snatching a sheet of paper from the pocket of her shirt.

FAY

Wait, Lucy, I...I've made a few changes in the schedule, so I'll see you again on Saturday.

LUCY

What for? Just color me in and you're finished.

FAY

I'm glad you approve but I still need a few more sittings.

(handing Lucy the schedule)

They'll be short, I promise.

LUCY

They'd better be. My gums are starting to bleed. By Saturday my teeth could be gone. And be careful with Phil-- with him it's tumors on the brain.

FAY

I'm sorry.

LUCY

He wears a toupe, but he's very vain about it so don't let on you know.

Lucy exits the studio with a careless wave. Francine stares after her, waiting for the sounds of her clattering footfall.

FRANCINE

Do you really think she's dying?

FAY

I hope not.

(indicating the painting)

Oh, Francine, your work is so wonderfully original and free in a way that I envy.

FRANCINE

You're kidding, right?

FAY

Your gift is your freedom with colors. They're so vivid, so perfectly balanced-- like Matisse.

Fay reaches for a large sketch pad and props it beside Francine's portrait. She plucks a piece of charcoal from her pocket, demonstrating her technique as she speaks.

FAY

Let me show you a trick for starting the head. First, draw an oval, and inside: a triangle pointing down. The Egyptians used triangulation to calculate their distance from the stars...

A classical phrase of music is heard as Fay draws a perfect portrait of Cassandra Green.

FRANCINE
Wow! That's her!

FAY
Yes...

FRANCINE
And she wasn't even here.

FAY
If the Egyptians could find the stars, I can certainly find one woman's face.

FRANCINE
I could never do that, never.

FAY
(smiling gently)
Francine, would you like to see some portraits I painted when I was just starting?

FRANCINE
Sure.

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

Fay opens the door to her private gallery. Francine follows with trepidation. Once inside, Fay points to a section of the wall with a series of small but accomplished portraits.

FAY
There. That's Muriel.

FRANCINE
"Muriel?"

Fay lifts the portrait from the wall, her fingers gently caressing the canvas as we hear Francine's voice.

FRANCINE (V. O)
That was the first time she mentioned her, and after that she talked about her non-stop. Muriel was Aunt Fay's tutor and she made her paint her as an Egyptian, then a Greek goddess, and then all through history.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Fay carries the portrait back to her studio and props it on her easel, next to the portrait of Lucy.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Fay told me she was fourteen
when they first met.

Francine has followed Fay into the studio and watches her gazing at her image in the mirror. Slowly FAY'S YOUNGER SELF becomes superimposed onto her adult reflection, her hair long and flowing. We seem to step through the mirror into the same studio to witness the young Fay facing her tutor, MURIEL DAUBLER, a pale, lithe, English woman with dark hair in her mid-thirties. She resembles Fay's portraits and speaks with a haughty British accent while examining Fay's sketches.

MURIEL

The trouble with girls your age
is that the puberty has completely
destroyed your instinctive sense
of color and harmony. At best
you'll be a portraitist.

The young Fay looks devastated, swallowing before speaking.

YOUNG FAY

But isn't it too soon to tell?
I...I've only had one lesson.

MURIEL

Titian and Raphael were infant
prodigies; Miro showed promise at
the age of seven; Rousseau at eight.
How old are you-- fifteen? Nearly
sixteen?

YOUNG FAY

So why do you even bother with me?

MURIEL

Pity. And your parents pay me
very well.

YOUNG FAY

Why...why do you pity me?

MURIEL

Because you're only painting to
cover some vulgar panelling in a
house completely devoid of taste--
never mind a library. Beside that
you're spoiled. You couldn't
possibly make the necessary
sacrifices.

YOUNG FAY

But I...I'm just beginning.

MURIEL

The beginning is when you most need the courage to open those myopic little eyes. Later the aesthetic impulses will have atrophied and you'll only have a talent for mimicry.

YOUNG FAY

I...I don't know what you mean.

MURIEL

Artists master many styles -- not to imitate but assimilate -- beginning with the earliest, most primitive, on through abstract expressionism. All great painters learned from the traditions that preceded their time. In other words, that infinitesimal little brain of yours has to fathom the entire history of civilization.

YOUNG FAY

But I...I just want to paint.

MURIEL

Not enough! Even the first painters on earth knew that. When they drew bison on cave walls they captured the harmonies of their bison souls. That made them easier to kill. Their paintings weren't just paintings. They were prayers for survival, and their paints were made from bones, bones bound in oil.

YOUNG FAY

(appalled)

Human bones...?

Muriel smiles, then leads the YOUNG Fay to a large window, facing the sea.

EXT/INT. STUDIO WINDOW. OCEAN AND BEACH. DAY.

As Muriel and Fay speak, we see the view from outside the studio window of a sun drenched shore line studded with glimmering rocks and pebbles. There is a MAN with a LITTLE GIRL standing on the edge of the water, fishing.

MURIEL (O.S.)

Describe what you see.

YOUNG FAY (O.S.)

Well, there's the ocean, and the beach, and a man fishing with a little girl.

MURIEL (O.S.)

If you become an artist, you'll see more than that. You'll see a spectrum of colors and myriad forms in every living thing. You'll see beauty and death and eternity.

YOUNG FAY

Well, I see beauty alright, but...
(giggling)
where's death?

MURIEL

You want to see death? I'll show you death. Death is when a studio becomes a nursery, when an artist becomes a babysitter! Do you think I enjoy this?!

YOUNG FAY

No, ma'am, I...I'm sorry.

Pause as Muriel returns to the window, collecting herself as we focus again on the ocean.

MURIEL (O.S.)

Death is the dominant antithesis between the dark water and the light sky. The fisherman and the girl are bright vertical slashes on an endless horizontal line that will remain long after they're gone, after I'm gone, even after you're gone.

Slowly we see the Young Fay fade into the Adult Fay, and Muriel vanishes. The Adult Fay turns, gesturing to Francine, walking towards the studio window.

FAY

Francine, come here, describe what you see from the window.

Francine and Fay stare at the beach, but now the sky is cloudy, the ocean agitated.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

Well, I see the ocean, of course,
not at it's best for painting.

FAY (O.S.)

No...

FRANCINE (O.S.)

But I like it when it's gray and
angry and flashing its teeth.
Reminds me of rabies.

Fay smiles at Francine, and returns to her easel.

FAY

Have you ever wanted to paint
the sea?

FRANCINE

No, it's too big, and besides,
everybody paints it. Look, Aunt
Fay, don't expect too much from me.

FAY

It's too late. You've already
given me reason to expect a
great deal.

Francine sighs and returns her gaze to the window.

FRANCINE

Look, come here. Is that him?
Is that Phillip Green?

EXT. THE BACK OF FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

We see Lucy's father, PHILLIP GREEN, age forty-three, walking
on the beach towards the house. He has a proud, deliberate
stride and wears a fedora styled hat to shield his face.

As Phillip comes nearer, we focus on Francine and Fay backing
away from the window so as not to be seen. Fay retreats
completely but Francine remains, watching from the side.
Phillip tilts his face and we glimpse his handsome features.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY

We hear Fay leading Phillip up the stairs to her studio.
When Phillip enters, he walks with militant assurance, and
exudes an aura of elegance. FAY gestures for him to sit in
the chair.

FAY

Please, sit down and make yourself comfortable. May I present my niece, Francine. This is Lucy's father, Mister Green.

FRANCINE

Hi.

PHILLIP

How do you do? Please, call me Phillip.

Phillip extends his hand to Francine, then removes his hat. He places it on the table, and strokes his flattened hair before sitting stiffly in the chair.

PHILLIP

I'd appreciate it if you could make my sittings as brief as possible. I've always thought the compulsion to have one's portrait painted to be narcissistic, and frankly, I'm too busy to sit staring into space for a painting that's going to be buried.

A beat as Fay and Francine exchange astonished glances.

FRANCINE

You mean it's true?!

PHILLIP

I'm afraid so. Lucy said you didn't know. So typical of Cassandra not to explain, but I'm sure she didn't want to discourage you from taking us on.

FAY

I...I don't understand.

PHILLIP

Cassandra, like her namesake, is a catastrophist. She insists on leaving some tokens of our existence, some momentos of our mortality to be entombed in her mausoleum. You see, what you're doing is contributing to her time capsule. She's also instructed me to write a brief history, a kind of family tree to be buried with the portraits and various artifacts.

FAY

Oh...

PHILLIP

Cassandra's quite a collector. In her own inimitable way, she's come to the conclusion that art's the only thing worth salvaging.

Pause as Fay smiles her approval while squeezing orbs of paint onto her palette.

PHILLIP

Frankly, I'd prefer she spent her money more expediently or even more charitably. You can't feed paintings to the homeless or use them to cure disease.

FAY

(frowning)

Yes, and they don't inspire governments to end wars and pollution.

PHILLIP

My point exactly.

Fay continues preparing her palette and selecting her brushes while Francine listens, her eyes darting from Phillip to Fay.

FAY

Because they don't know anything about it. If they did, if they had any art in their lives, they'd have ideals, real ideals to live for-- instead of ideologies to kill for.

PHILLIP

(smugly)

"Real" ideals?

FAY

I mean values, what's good and true and...beautiful.

PHILLIP

Well, I've just been to Central Africa where I saw hundreds of people dying of disease and starvation. How could your paintings possibly help them? Really, I'd like to know.

FAY

Apparently, you don't think art's very important.

PHILLIP

Practically speaking, no. I mean, no matter how valuable you claim a painting to be, it's still one of the most trivial things in the world. And it's supercilious to claim there's some natural connection between virtue and art or that artists contribute some fundamental necessity.

Fay contains her emotions, selecting the proper canvas, and propping it on her easel.

FAY

For me art is the greatest fundamental necessity, the imagination the most sacred gift a human being has.

PHILLIP

Maybe-- if you're nourished enough to use it.

FAY

Without it, why be nourished at all? I'd rather be dead.

PHILLIP

You would be. You can't eat art; you can't drink it. Does it provide shelter? clothing?

FAY

Yes, yes it does.

PHILLIP

Really? How?

FRANCINE

How...?

Fay dips her brush in the dark umber paint of her palette.

FAY

I'm showing you. I'm making a dark umber line from your forehead to your ear to your chin. And from your chin it reaches to China, to India, to Africa.

Francine is standing behind Fay, and we see the painting through her eyes, the umber line finding the perfect contours of Phillip Green's face.

FAY

You can't see the line and it may take years to reach its destination, but it's there. It expresses how I see you, and your watching how I see you evokes in you some kind of thought that will be mixed with all the thoughts and images inside you since birth, all becoming part of your mind from which you make every decision you'll ever make. So you see, my painting does affect you, and through you it affects all your friends and your friends' friends, and on and on until the whole world and everyone in it is affected.

PHILLIP

so you believe in the inter-relationship of all things?

FAY

Even under microscopes, even at subatomic levels, a person observing an object affects that object-- so everything we do colors reality, everything we think has power over history.

PHILLIP

You paint my chin and someday somewhere destitute beggars will be fed and clothed?

FAY

It's possible.

PHILLIP

With one stroke of the brush, you could save or destroy the world!

FAY

Maybe...

PHILLIP

(amused)

What an awesome responsibility. Frankly, I think you're mad.

FAY

It's the world that's mad -- from us, from all that's dark inside us. At least if we look at the world, if we take it in and give it new form, if we make it into art...

PHILLIP

Then we save the world from madness?!

FAY

Yes! If we don't give the madness form -- in a poem or a painting or our work -- the madness slips back into the world and makes it even crazier -- so we have more hatred, more suffering, more wars...

PHILLIP

So now paintings can stop wars? What about my portrait? Which war is it stopping?

There is an awkward pause as Fay and Phillip regard each other: Phillip smiles, amused, while Fay appears flustered.

FAY

Please, could you...close your mouth and turn your head slightly to the right? Yes, that's perfect.

Fay resumes painting to classical melodies as Francine's voice is heard.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

It was in Fay's studio you learned a language that you'd never heard at home: the language of art and ideas, and it really was awesome how Fay could capture Phillip Green with only three strokes of her brush!

Fay makes several grandiose brush strokes as her adult hand becomes the young Fay's hand.

INT. MURIEL'S STUDIO. DAY.

Muriel is posing, perched atop a stool. The young Fay puts down her palette with a despondent sigh.

MURIEL

Don't stop now! Think of the canvas as a virgin who wants ravishing! Courage girl! Be brave! Be proud!

Muriel stands behind the young Fay's easel inspecting her work. We see a clear resemblance but the portrait is grotesque with Muriel appearing ashen, her mouth gaping, and her eyes lime green.

MURIEL

Well, well, finally. I actually sense a vague resemblance, but where are my ears? And why is my mouth open when I posed with it shut?

(pause, no response)

Why don't you say it? Because I'm always talking! Of course! This is the most presumptuous thing you've ever done, and the most imaginative! But really, Fay, you've forgotten everything I've told you about flesh tones, and why are my eyes the color of limes? You obviously haven't looked very closely. Go on now, let me see you mix the proper color.

The young Fay retrieves her brush and palette, then puts them down with an exasperated grunt.

YOUNG FAY

I...I can't...

MURIEL

Come on, now, dress your palette!

YOUNG FAY

But I've already tried...

MURIEL

Oh, for godssake, stop whining! It's revolting. Now, go ahead, look at my eyes. What color?

We now see Muriel from Fay's point of view: her irises changing color from blue to green.

YOUNG FAY

Blue.

MURIEL

Which blue?

YOUNG FAY

Cerulean...?

MURIEL

Try again.

YOUNG FAY

Maybe green...?

MURIEL

Don't be ridiculous! Look closely.

Fay squints and we see Muriel's eyes turning a dark, demonic red.

YOUNG FAY

I...I can't paint you or...or anyone!

MURIEL

You "can't?" Then it's just as I thought: the only colors you'll ever mix are matched socks!

(she sighs)

Oh, Lord, if I have to teach, where are the great Tintoretos who never say "can't?" Where are the impatient, impassioned Gauguins? The half-crazed Modiglianis who'd trade their last painting for a bottle of wine -- and do you know why?

The young Fay lowers her head, fighting back tears.

MURIEL

Because they know they can never be bought by this selfish, grasping, Philistine world! They know life is too short to waste in the company mediocre girls who'll never make anything but brats like themselves!

YOUNG FAY

Stop it! Stop! I made you all mouth and no ears because you always yell and never listen! And your eyes are limes 'cause they're small and sour and full of hate! Hate! Hate!

Fay starts for the studio door as Muriel grasps her wrist.

MURIEL

Don't you dare run away from me!
If what you say is true, then the
eyes are the best thing about this
painting.

YOUNG FAY

No! Your skin's gray 'cause you're
dying of plague! Isn't that what
they died of in the Middle Ages?
Let go of me!

The young Fay breaks free and dashes out of the studio.

INT. MURIEL'S STAIRWAY. DAY

The young Fay stumbles down the narrow steps with Muriel following in close pursuit, shouting down the staircase.

MURIEL

You really hate me?!

The young Fay turns at the last step, glaring up at Muriel.

YOUNG FAY

Yesssss.

She stomps out the front door, leaving it wide open.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

We see Fay marching out the front door down a slate-paved walkway and finally onto a dirt road lined with trees. Muriel follows, speaking between gasps.

MURIEL

Good! I'm glad you hate me! I
should have evoked some feelings
in you by now, and frankly, I
prefer belligerence and loathing
to your usual conciliatory mush.

(catching her breath)

Now stop! Stop running away and
get back to work.

YOUNG FAY

(quickenning her pace)

No! I'm sick of working with you.
I can't anymore!

MURIEL

You mean you haven't learned anything from me?

(pause, wheezing)

Come on, Fay, grow up and accept me as I am: a terrible fire breathing pedant, but devoted to you nevertheless.

YOUNG FAY

That's a lie! You hate me! You hate teaching me!

MURIEL

I did, that's true, but I don't anymore. In fact, I'm even contemplating painting your portrait.

YOUNG FAY

I don't believe you! You hate portraits!

MURIEL

Usually, yes, but that way I can give you thicker skin -- so you'll learn to tolerate my temperament.

Fay stops and turns in her tracks, confronting Muriel.

YOUNG FAY

And you'll have to tolerate me too, or else I'll...

MURIEL

What...?

YOUNG FAY

I'll tell my parents you're making me sick and you'll have to find someone else to torture!

MURIEL

And just how am I torturing you?

YOUNG FAY

My stomach's always nervous. You're probably giving me ulcers.

MURIEL

At least I'm not blackmailing you!
But if you do, I'll tell your mother
to start looking for eligible
bachelors with white canes because
that's your only hope.

YOUNG FAY

Liar! You told her I have talent!
She'd never believe you.

MURIEL

I'd make her believe me.

YOUNG FAY

Well, my father won't believe you.
He says you're strange, and he said
if you were any good, you'd be in
New York!

Muriel is visibly stung. Fay continues walking, with Muriel
keeping step beside her.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA. DAY.

They are heading towards a residential area with paved
streets and stately cape-styled homes.

MURIEL

(feigning confidence)
Well, I was in New York once. And
Paris and Vienna. And I was born
in London.

YOUNG FAY

Then go back!

MURIEL

Cities are too vertical; I need
longer horizons.

They approach an impressive home with a gated entrance. The
young Fay turns abruptly towards Muriel.

YOUNG FAY

You! You think you're God's gift!
But not considered an artist by
anyone but yourself!

MURIEL

Ohhhh, what a little shrew you
can be! So why don't you put
some of that rage into your art?

YOUNG FAY

And why don't you stop shouting
questions like I'm stupid? I'm
not! I do very well in school.

The young Fay starts to open the gate but Muriel stands her
ground, preventing Fay from entering.

MURIEL

Bully for you, but this isn't
school. This is the universe!
And right now you're standing
in a vast barren desert, a jungle
of pitch black ignorance and
mediocrity.

Muriel inadvertently steps back, and Fay pushes open the
gate, stepping within its boundaries, leaving Muriel on the
other side.

MURIEL

I'll be your Missionary!...

Young Fay locks the gate and marches down the walkway towards
her house. Muriel continues shouting ecstatically, looking
slightly demented.

MURIEL

...Your Apostle of Art! Conductor
of Radiance! Composer to the Great
Courts of Color that make Life a
Symphony!

Fay reaches the front door, enters, then slams it shut with a
furious bang!

INT. FAY'S HOUSE. THE ART STUDIO. DAY.

As the young Fay's front door reverberates in the past, we
see Phillip jolted from sleep in the present. He looks
around, surprised to find Fay and Francine still painting.

PHILLIP

Sorry. I...I must have dozed.
I hope I haven't changed my
position.

FRANCINE

It doesn't matter. Aunt Fay can
paint exact portraits from memory.

FAY

Your session is over for today.
Lucy is scheduled to come again
Saturday.

Fay sets aside her brushes and palette as Phillip dons his hat, preparing to leave. Francine inspects Fay's portrait.

PHILLIP

Good afternoon ladies.

FRANCINE

Don't you want to see your
portrait?

PHILLIP

I'll wait for the ceremonial
unveilings.

FAY has crossed the studio to observe Francine's portrait.

FAY

Oh, but you must see Francine's!

Phillip strolls to Francine's easel and stares, bewildered at the wildly colored and completely original painting.

PHILLIP

What's that? A dunce cap...?

FRANCINE

No, it's a monk's hood. On this
side I'm painting your past. When
that's finished, I'll paint your
future.

PHILLIP

You're very perceptive. I attended
Catholic boarding school and once
considered becoming a priest. But
what's my future?

FRANCINE

Death. Lucy says you're dying.

PHILLIP

Oh, Lucy, Lucy... Well, I'm not dying
and neither is she, not yet at least.
I'm afraid it's just her way of coping.
You see, her mother was a paleontologist,
well regarded in her field. So many
millions of species have become extinct,
she's convinced we'll be next.

FRANCINE

Really?

PHILLIP

(She nods)

She thinks she has the gift of prophecy, and maybe she does, but it's more likely she's losing her grip on the present. Well, you've met her. Perhaps you've observed that she's in constant pain, and her medicine of choice is scotch. She's been diagnosed with bone cancer, and I'm afraid it's advanced beyond curing, and it's very depressing for poor Lucy to witness her...decline.

FAY

I...I'm sorry.

PHILLIP

We're separated, and I've come for the summer, and to claim Lucy, to take her back to Boston with me.

FRANCINE

I knew you weren't dying.

Phillip crosses to leave, then turns, smiling.

PHILLIP

Believe me, if I were, I wouldn't waste so much time. I'd just tell you outright how incredibly lovely you are. And how incredibly naive.

Phillip exits and we focus on an indignant Francine.

FRANCINE

He called us naive.

FAY

He means we believe in art. He means our purpose in life is to enrich the world with paintings-- no matter who tries to belittle or ridicule us.

FRANCINE

He said you were lovely.

FAY

He meant both of us. Now let's evaluate your progress.

Fay stands beside Francine propping up her portraits of Lucy and Phillip side by side.

FAY

You have such a brave approach to color, combinations I haven't used since childhood. There's so much more of you in your paintings than there is of me in mine.

FRANCINE

But you can't tell who they are!

FAY

Oh, yes I can, and what's more, I can tell exactly what you think of them.

(gesturing to her portraits)
Can you tell what I think?

FRANCINE

Well, no, but they're so... perfect.

FAY

Perfect little deceptions, like perfectly round potato.

FRANCINE

Does it bother you that nobody'll see them?

FAY

No, they should still be as good as I can make them. After all, I'm preserving civilization through these portraits. Well, in a way-- I mean, if we're really threatened with extinction, we'd be preserving the memory of our culture in the only way we know. The Greens, you see, could represent the entire human race.

FRANCINE

Not me they wouldn't.

FAY

You could pretend. You could use this as an opportunity to paint in different styles.

FRANCINE

Like you did with Muriel?

FAY

Yes! You'll begin with the earliest, most primitive, then paint in the spirit of ancient Egypt, Classical Greece then on through the Middle Ages...

Suddenly we hear Muriel's voice overlapping Fay's. We see with Francine's eyes as she imagines familiar classical portraits appearing superimposed over Fay's canvas-- except that the original faces are replaced by those of Lucy and Phillip.

FAY (O.S.)

The Greens as frescoes!

MURIEL (O.S.)

The Romanesque and Gothic...

FAY (O.S.)

The Greens on horseback...

MURIEL (O.S.)

...Neoclassicism...

FAY (O.S.)

The Greens At Sea!

MURIEL (O.S.)

...Realism...

FAY (O.S.)

At sunrise! As elements! As fission! Fusion! Fantasy!

Francine covers her ears, unable to endure the onslaught of images.

FAY

You could combine all your sketches into an apocalyptic mural! I'll help you. We'll use a wall in the room next to yours.

FRANCINE

You mean just paint on the wall!?

FAY

Of course! It will be enormous! And this gives us a strategy for your lessons, a scheme, a mission.

We see Fay wielding her brush like a baton before a startled Francine. A rhapsodic melody is heard and a blaze of blue seems to flow from the brush, covering the screen.

EXT. MONKSHEAD ISLAND. AN ISOLATED BEACH. DAY

The bright blue of Fay's baton-sweep becomes the muted blue of the sea. Francine and Fay are emerging from the water, racing to their towels and sand-chairs. There are several other sun bathers and swimmers around: FAMILIES, COUPLES, TEENAGERS playing volleyball. Fay seats herself in a sand-chair observing the waves; Francine unfurls her towel and lies on her back. She dons a pair of ROSE-TINTED SUNGLASSES and we see the scene through her eyes, in shades of pink.

TWO MUSCULAR MEN are emerging from the water. They stare at Fay who seems oblivious.

FAY

Why don't you go play volleyball with those kids over there?

FRANCINE

No thanks.

FAY

Aren't you bored with me?

FRANCINE

Those guys are eyeballing you.

Fay laughs, then Francine turns on her side, addressing Fay.

FRANCINE

I thought I'd hate it here, but I'm getting used to it, and you're nothing like mom said.

FAY

Oh? And what did she say?

FRANCINE

That you're manic depressive. She says you don't eat and are wasting your life.

FAY

Really? Then why did she entrust me with you?

FRANCINE

She just wants to get rid of me. She says we're birds of a feather.

FAY
Oh? How's that?

FRANCINE
I'm precocious like you used to be.

Fay smiles with a hint of bitterness that is not lost on Francine.

FRANCINE
Do you like painting the Greens?

FAY
Yes.

FRANCINE
Did you do it for the money?

FAY
Well, the house needs a new roof.

FRANCINE
And paint. And maybe you could spring
for a T V?

FAY
(laughing)
Maybe.

FRANCINE
The Green's house is awesome.
I wish we could go there again.

FAY
We could drive by if you like.

FRANCINE
Would it be spying?

FAY
Muriel said it's a portraitist's
obligation to know everything
about her subjects-- their every
mole and pockmark, their habits
and habitats...

FRANCINE
Do you still see Muriel?

FAY
Not until you came. You keep
bringing her back.

FRANCINE

You mean I remind you of her?

FAY

No, you remind me of...myself.

FRANCINE

Maybe we should paint each other's portraits? And we could bring our sketchbooks out here.

FAY

(Distracted)

What...?

FRANCINE

We could sketch out here.

FAY

Ummm...

Fay's happiness seems to have faded, and a vague gloominess takes over as she gazes dreamily at the sea. Francine starts to cover Fay's feet with scoops of sand.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

That's how she was. One minute she'd be fine, and the next she drifted and I wondered if she'd ever beam back down. There's scars on her wrists which I was going to put in her portrait so she'd know I knew but didn't mind.

FAY

We won't have time -- for our portraits -- after we finish the Greens and your mural.

FRANCINE

How much time will we need?

FAY

It took four years to paint the Mona Lisa.

FRANCINE

Four years...

Now we see Fay from Francine's point of view: she is transformed into a sculpture of a reclining woman completely covered by sand. Francine's eyes glisten with wonderment.

INT. THE ART STUDIO. DAY.

A brief montage of Lucy alternately posing in different positions as Francine's voice is heard:

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Fay didn't have four years. She only had four weeks, and after two of them Lucy wiggled out. We figured she'd been fast tracked into being a psycho, and living with a doomsday mom was a total downer.

Lucy is sullen and slouched in a chair. Fay is adjusting her easel and Francine is sketching.

LUCY

I don't see why you keep changing my position.

FAY

You look less miserable when you're facing the window.

LUCY

It's going to be buried for chrissake!

FAY

I still want to do you justice.

LUCY

You're taking it too seriously. Just get me down the way Rembrandt would do it!

Fay laughs. Francine continues sketching, referring to a large pictorial history book.

LUCY

What's the book for?

FRANCINE

My mural.

FAY

Francine's is using her sketches to paint you through history.

FRANCINE

I'm starting with an Egyptian mummy.

LUCY

Look, it's my face, and you're not being paid to paint it.

(pause)

How long is this going to take?

FAY

I'm not sure.

LUCY

It figures Cassie would hire a flake.

FRANCINE

Screw you, bitch.

FAY

Francine!

LUCY

Look, I know what this is costing.

(pause)

Couldn't you at least get a fan?

Cool the place down.

FRANCINE

It's not that hot.

LUCY

What do you do here all day?

You can't always be painting.

FAY

Well, sometimes we read and swim and take walks, and yesterday we saw a movie.

LUCY

Whoa.

FAY

But mostly we paint. It may seem dull to you, but art can be useful. Artists use their art to break through to their deepest selves.

LUCY

Yeah, and what do they find?

FAY

More life that you ever dreamed of having.

FRANCINE

Jesus...

FAY

After all, you're usually glued to your gadgets when you come here, but don't worry, we'll continue to tolerate your presence, even if you're not worthy of our "Lucy Athena" or our "Odalisque in legging."

LUCY

Fuck you, lady!

FAY

Say what you like, Lucy. I know you think we're inferior, but at least we're not text-addicted hedonists who will never produce a single inferential thought much less a work of art!

Francine is stunned by Fay's cruelty, but is relishing the drama while Lucy stands, brimming with tears.

LUCY

You think it's easy sitting here day after day?!

FAY

Which extremity are you straining?

Francine gasps audibly, covering her mouth.

LUCY

Sitting here makes me think, and you don't know what it's like with mom getting crazier and crazier, waiting for Phil and me and the whole world to fuck off and die.

FRANCINE

Jesus...

Fay approaches Lucy, touching her shoulder. Lucy flinches, turning away, tears streaming down her cheeks. There is a long pause before Fay speaks.

FAY

Lucy, I...I'm sorry.

Pause as Fay looks remorsefully at Francine, then turns back to Lucy.

FAY

I don't really know what to say except that sometimes it helps to...to make something of your own that can never be taken away. That's what Francine and I are doing.

LUCY

(she sniffs)

I can't make anything.

FAY

Of course you can. Look, why don't you come early tomorrow? We could have a...picnic.

LUCY

I don't need you feeling sorry for me.

FAY

But I need you. I...I'm growing fond of you. So is Francine.

LUCY

That's bullshit. You just said I was nothing!

FAY

I regret that. Sometimes I'm angry and say things I don't mean. Don't you...?

LUCY rises, speaking as she leaves.

LUCY

Yeah, we're all so full of shit!

Lucy exits the studio, clambering down the stairs. The back door slams and Francine walks to the studio window.

EXT./INT. THE BEACH FROM THE STUDIO WINDOW. DAY.

From the window Francine and Fay watch Lucy leave the house. On reaching the beach she walks swiftly, her head bowed with misery.

FAY

Why don't you follow her?

FRANCINE
She wants to be alone.

FAY
I don't think so.

FRANCINE
Maybe you're the one who wants
to be alone.

FAY
If you don't hurry, you'll lose
her.

Francine starts out the studio door.

EXT. THE BEACH. DAY.

As Francine jogs towards Lucy, she takes a pair of green tinted glasses from her pocket and we see the beach in shades of green. Soon Francine catches up to Lucy, and the two girls stop but are soon walking together, dwindling in size down the long stretch of beach.

EXT./INT. THE BEACH FROM THE STUDIO WINDOW. DAY.

Fay is seen staring out the studio window. She spies someone running towards her. It is her younger self, dashing up to the house twenty years earlier. Soon the young Fay is knocking furiously at the back door.

INT. MURIEL'S HOUSE. DAY.

We see Muriel's bare feet swiftly descending the stairs. She opens the door and embraces the young Fay.

MURIEL
Oh, thank God. I thought I'd
lost you! I'm so glad you're
back.

The young Fay wiggles out of the embrace.

YOUNG FAY
I'm not back! I came to get
my paintings.

INT. MURIEL'S STAIRWAY. DAY.

Young Fay marches up the stairs; Muriel follows.

MURIEL
Did you tell your parents?

The young Fay refuses to respond, scampering up the stairs with Muriel at her heels.

INT. MURIEL'S STUDIO. DAY.

As they enter the studio, Muriel indicates a new abstract painting.

MURIEL

That's my new painting. It's nothing yet. Looks like a fat yellow pig under a piss green umbrella.

The young Fay glances at the painting, looks deliberately unimpressed, and starts to collect various canvases stacked against the walls. Muriel, undaunted, continues.

MURIEL

I'm preparing for a show at a gallery in Boston. The last time I had an exhibit there the local critic called my paintings "obscene little daubs." But another critic said I'd found an original visual correlative for my regressions. A pity he wasn't influential enough to keep me from teaching.

The young FAY has gathered her paintings and faces Muriel.

YOUNG FAY

I'm leaving.

MURIEL

Please don't. Just stay a minute. I...I want to explain. Please, sit down.

Fay sighs, but sits, staring at her feet, her expression sullen as Muriel sits across from her.

MURIEL

I came to Monkshead Island three years ago. Some friends and I decided to form a sort of colony, but I'm the only survivor. My father left me some money to pay the rent, but I still need to eat. I can't sustain myself on art, but I try...

YOUNG FAY

Can I go now?

MURIEL

Wait. I...I just want you to know I'm struggling and more than a little discouraged, but I...I shouldn't say such spiteful things. My other students don't take me so seriously. Of course they're older, full of unbreakable habits, and beyond redemption, but you -- you have possibilities.

Fay glances up, not quite believing what she's heard.

MURIEL

I know I should be more patient, but I'm only patient with students I pity. I think of you as a disciple. I know I scold you, but I don't mean to be cruel. You know, you do have talent.

YOUNG FAY

Really...?

MURIEL

None of my students is as gifted as you, and you really can capture an incredible likeness.

YOUNG FAY

I knew it! Why didn't you say so?

MURIEL

Oh, so you want flattery?

YOUNG FAY

Yes!

MURIEL

The trouble with flattery is it leads to sterility. You want sterility?

The young Fay looks puzzled.

MURIEL

You want to be secularized? Corrupted? Listen, Fay...
(grasping her shoulders)
...art isn't just a vocation; it's life itself! Just look at your paintings. They're all in the Grand Style and splendid, but someday you'll have to leave the 17th century.

YOUNG FAY

But...why?

MURIEL

Because an artist must break free, reflect her own time, become the sacred chalice of her own tabernacle! Don't you want to enter your canvas?

YOUNG FAY

I...

MURIEL

Cross the threshold to your own reality?

YOUNG FAY

But...

MURIEL

Otherwise you'll be a common copyist.

YOUNG FAY

But...

MURIEL

A common copyist.

(pause)

The trouble with you is you place the sentiments of your parents in place of your own. Find yourself. Please yourself! Do you understand what I'm saying?

The young Fay shakes her head, exasperated, as Muriel places one of Fay's portraits next to her own abstract work.

MURIEL

It's one thing to paint what's in front of your nose, but all your portraits only represent variations on the primal forms inherent in the entire universe. Those are what you have to find. In every face, in every tree, in every waterfall. And soon you won't need the face, the tree, the waterfall. Do you understand?

YOUNG FAY

I...I guess.

MURIEL
Am I being a bully again?

The young Fay nods, taking a deep, mournful breath

MURIEL
(pause)
Look, let's get out of the
portrait rut. Next week we'll
progress to nude studies.

YOUNG FAY
You mean get a model? My father
would have a fit.

MURIEL
He won't have to know. I'll be
your model.

YOUNG FAY
You?!

MURIEL
Why not?

YOUNG FAY
But...you mean you'd really do
it? Take off your clothes and
stand there -- naked.

MURIEL
"Nude" is the word.

YOUNG FAY
I...I don't think I could paint
like that. It wouldn't be right.

MURIEL
(she laughs)
Thank God Michelangelo didn't feel
that way! What a prudish little
frump you are.
(pause)
You have such lovely hair. May I
touch?

YOUNG FAY
I guess.

Muriel gathers Fay's hair, fluffing it over her head, then
letting it drop, gently stroking it down.

MURIEL

There! Now you're my own little Menina. When I paint you, I want the light beaming from all directions so your hair is like a bright fountain, trickling down your back to your thighs, to your knees, straight through to the core of the Earth. Oh, you're really such a sweet girl.

Muriel embraces Fay whose response is stiff and uneasy.

MURIEL

What's wrong? You're trembling.

YOUNG FAY

I don't know what...what you want.

MURIEL

(laughing)

Salvation! And so do you! And I can save you-- from becoming lazy and mediocre and dependent on bad habits. And do you know why? Because you're worth it. I didn't see it at first. I didn't even like you, but now that I know you have music! Music! Right now you're content to play monkey see, monkey do...

YOUNG FAY

You said I was exceptional!

MURIEL

You are: an exceptional mechanic, not an inventor. But when you're ready, when you break free, when you leave this flat terrain for Parnassus! Oh, God, the things you'll create!

Muriel is jubilant. She embraces Fay, laughing, spinning her in circles.

EXT. THE GREEN'S ESTATE. DAY.

Muriel and Fay's laughter turns into the laughter of Francine and Lucy. They are approaching the Green's estate which is seen through Francine's green tinted lenses.

FRANCINE

God, it's even bigger in the light.

LUCY

Yeah. My mom and I rattle around, but since Phil came, we've hired a nurse and a full-time maid. She even irons my jeans.

They amble towards the entrance of the house.

INT. CASSANDRA'S STUDY. DAY.

Lucy leads Francine into the study where she and Fay first met Cassandra Green. They approach her map of the world which is littered with more colorful flags.

As Lucy explains, Francine removes her sunglasses, tucking them into a pocket, and we see the study in its true colors.

LUCY

The green flags are the places she thinks will get wiped out by plagues and radiation; the black flags are death from wars; the blue ones from natural disasters -- like earthquakes, tsunamis, and asteroids.

FRANCINE

She doesn't spare many places.

Cassandra has entered unseen, dressed in her robe. She has heard Francine's remark and responds with enthusiasm.

CASSANDRA

Why should I? Why should anyone be spared? Believe me, I've seen a great deal of the so-called civilized world, and I'm afraid it may someday look like a frozen moon. Even your Aunt's paintings couldn't make it bearable.

FRANCINE

You really think the world's going to end?

CASSANDRA

If we don't annihilate each other with nuclear weapons, we'll do it through over-population, lethal viruses, or misguided chemistry.

Cassandra approaches the map, indicating the places she mentions.

CASSANDRA

Go to Somalia, go to Calcutta,
or fly over Japan -- there's
where you'll see the future.

There is an awkward pause as the girls exchange glances, but Cassandra is unruffled.

CASSANDRA

How are my portraits coming?

FRANCINE

Great.

CASSANDRA

Will they be worthy additions to
my collection? Would you like
to see my collection, Francine?

FRANCINE

Sure.

CASSANDRA

You show her, Lucy. You'll see
it's very eclectic, just some
of the things I find worth
preserving.

LUCY

Come on.

Lucy leads Francine through a dimly lit corridor, down steep stairs to what appears to be a wine cellar.

INT. WINE CELLAR. DAY

There are several rows of enormous wine racks well stocked with bottles. The girls approach a LARGE STEEL DOOR with an electronic push-button lock which Lucy presses.

INT. CASSANDRA'S TREASURE ROOM. DAY.

The door to Cassandra's tomb opens automatically, releasing clouds of cooled air as Lucy speaks.

LUCY

She's got the temperature
controlled to keep things from
rotting.

We hear music and see Cassandra's treasures through Francine's bedazzled eyes: There are carved oriental tables and shelves filled with crystal glassware catching the light through the billowing mist; there are antiquities: old vases, statuary, and jewels; there are stuffed tigers, foxes, birds; mounted moths, butterflies, and insects of many varieties; there are paintings, ornate china plates, rich embroidered fabrics, Persian carpets, a wooden carousel horse; boxes of stamps and coins, model cars and planes, pistols, and swords. A stuffed parrot perched on the highest shelf seems to flutter its wing. Other preserved animals seem to become animated, moving slightly as if they were drugged and half asleep. Sparks of light gleaming from the glassware also spring to life, darting across the ceiling like shooting stars.

Momentarily, Francine spies a series of LARGE GLASS JARS: one appears to be filled with a brain, another with a fetus. Francine is appalled and covers her mouth to keep from retching.

Suddenly Phillip's voice is heard as he comes up behind the girls.

PHILLIP

Cassie told me you were down here. Why don't you let me fix you some lemonade?

The door to the tomb closes. We see Francine, her eyes still glazed from her delirium as they depart from the cellar.

INT. THE GREEN'S KITCHEN. DAY

From Francine's point of view we enter an opulent modern kitchen. Phillip opens a refrigerator filled with cartons of milk, juices, and various meats and vegetables. There is a bowl of boiled eggs which appear to resemble eyes, and Francine turns away, repulsed.

PHILLIP

Now, Francine, what would you like? Lemonade or a sundae?

FRANCINE

Uh, just lemonade, thanks.

LUCY

A beer for me.

PHILLIP

Very funny.

Francine, still dazed, sits on a stool.

PHILLIP
Francine? Are you all right?

FRANCINE
Yeah.

Phillip brings forth a pitcher of lemonade and pours it into ornate crystal glasses.

PHILLIP
So are you enjoying your stay
with your aunt?

FRANCINE
Sure...I guess.

PHILLIP
She must keep you busy -- what
with all your projects.

FRANCINE
Yeah, but it's pretty quiet.

Phillip serves the girls their drinks and sits on a stool by the counter.

PHILLIP
Well, surely your aunt has some
sort of social life, some friends
she meets for dinner?

FRANCINE
I haven't met any.

PHILLIP
Really?

FRANCINE
She's an artist. It's her whole
life.

LUCY
(annoyed)
Stop pumping her. It's none of
our business.

PHILLIP
Why not? She's always asking
questions about us.

FRANCINE
Fay says it's a portraitist's
obligation to know her subjects
inside and out.

PHILLIP
So aren't the subjects entitled
to know the portraitist?

LUCY
Just chill, okay?

Phillip sighs, then stands to leave, smiling at Francine.

PHILLIP
Well, it's almost time for my
sitting-- so I'll leave you
girls alone.

After Phillip exits, Lucy opens a cabinet, removes a bottle
of bourbon and pours ample portions into their lemonades.

FRANCINE
You're really bad.

LUCY
How else can I take the shit
that goes on around here?

Lucy hands Francine her glass and they make a conspiratorial
toast.

EXT. THE BEACH BEHIND FAY'S HOUSE. DAY

A tipsy Francine enters Fay's house through the back door,
making certain she is not heard.

INT. FAY'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Francine enters the kitchen and hears Phillip's voice wafting
down from the studio, though not quite clearly enough to
comprehend.

FRANCINE (V. O.)
Phillip was still posing so I
decided to stay downstairs and
sober up. I had quite a buzz
going and I didn't mean to
eavesdrop, but ...

Francine creeps out of the kitchen towards the stairway.
INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Phillip is posed regally as Fay paints.

PHILLIP

Can you actually make a living
at this? I mean, can people
really afford or even want
their portraits painted?

FAY

Some do. It's a record of themselves,
of their having lived.

PHILLIP

Yes, but so are facebooks and
credit cards for that matter.

(pause)

Well, at least you're not one
of those postmodern dilettantes.
I mean, it seems that most artists
are competing to see how many ways
there are of saying absolutely
nothing.

FAY

But some paintings aren't supposed
to be intelligible in the usual
way. They say things beyond logic,
beyond words...

PHILLIP

Yes, I know, but it strikes me as
irresponsible. And what's the point?

FAY

The point is the painting-- the
colors, the lines. Why do you
always need to recognize things?

PHILLIP

Because I don't like riddles--
except for you.

Phillip stares directly at Fay who retreats behind her easel.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY

We see Francine crouched on the steps, listening to the
conversation.

FAY (O.S.)

If you don't know what something
means, you should just stand there
and let it affect you. And if you
have to judge it, then judge it only
by reference to itself because there's
nothing like it in the entire world.

Francine smiles, biting her lip.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

As Phillip responds, he is posed, holding his head at an angle.

PHILLIP

Judge a mustard yellow smudge in a black blot? Then I judge it to be grotesque, besides being a waste of time -- for me and the charlatan who painted it. Now you! You have talent; you're an artist.

FAY

You're wrong. I...I'm only a painter. I'm tied to my...my reputation, my portraits, but at least I can earn a living, at least I can do that.

PHILLIP

Well, that's economics: the fruits of your labor for their cash value. But first we must accept the fruits.

FAY

As long as they're apples and oranges. But you have to have the stamina and imagination to be reached by symbols.

PHILLIP

I want to be reached by you.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY

There is a lull in the conversation as we see Francine has crept to the top stairs.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY

Phillip is now flirting openly, staring directly at Fay who continues painting.

PHILLIP

You're quite exciting, you know -- even when you're pompous and condescending.

FAY

I don't mean to be. It's just that for me, art is sacred.

PHILLIP

"Sacred?" But didn't you just say you're "only a painter?"

FAY

Yes, but at least I know the difference. I pity people who don't.

PHILLIP

And I pity you. What you need is to fall in love. You'd be a happier woman.

FAY

(thrusting down her palette)

How dare you!? You know nothing about my happiness! My life! Nothing!

PHILLIP

I know how lovely you are, how intense. Don't you know I come here for the sheer joy of talking with someone still willing to believe in the human race?

Francine has tiptoed into the corridor so she can watch as well as listen, and we see the scene from her point of view.

FAY

Your session is over for now.

Phillip rises from his chair, smiling gently, speaking calmly to conceal the passion behind his words.

PHILLIP

You know what you are? A champion of the irrational. The trouble is you're not irrational enough. Kiss me.

FAY

What?

PHILLIP

You tell me to let things affect me, to go beyond logic, but when I do, where do I find myself?

FAY
(backing away)
Please stop.

PHILLIP
At the door to my heart.

FAY
Please leave!

PHILLIP
What do you find in your heart?

FAY
Nothing! Believe me, nothing!
Now leave.

Phillip picks up his hat, then turns to Fay, smiling gently.

PHILLIP
Won't you please say my name?
Just once.

Pause as Fay, completely flummoxed, decides to comply.

FAY
Phillip. Phillip Green.
Now go!

Phillip smiles and departs with an aura of undefeated dignity.
Fay stands trembling.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY.

We see Phillip moving briskly down the corridor past Francine who is backed against the wall, unseen, her mouth agape. We watch Phillip descend the stairs and hear the front door close behind him.

Fay follows down the steps, then suddenly glances up and catches Francine who gasps, mortified at being caught. There is an awkward pause.

FAY
Francine, how long have you been
standing there?

FRANCINE
Long enough.

Fay frowns, then continues descending the stairs as she speaks.

FAY

From now on I want you present
at every sitting!

EXT. THE BEACH. DAY

Francine is wearing blue-tinted sunglasses, and we see the shoreline through her eyes in shades of blue. A few cackling gulls are swooping down. They are completely alone on the beach, with Francine sitting on a towel sketching Fay who is seated in a sand chair.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

My favorite times were sketching
on the beach. When a woman's features
are as perfect as Fay's I'm usually
filled with hatred-- until I find her
weakness. That's why I added daggers
dripping blood in the pupils of her
eyes. Of course she wasn't really
there for me. She was posing in
the present, but she was dreaming of
Muriel. I know because she told me.

Francine's sketch of the adult Fay's profile becomes the young Fay's profile, as she sits posed in a bathing suit, her hair hanging long and free.

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

The blue tint has been replaced by natural colors, and where Francine was sketching Fay, Muriel is now sketching.

YOUNG FAY

Muriel, make me into a masterpiece!

MURIEL

Anything else is irreverent.
Now relax, dear heart, I'm not
sketching the Cavalier Courts,
just a very beautiful girl.

YOUNG FAY

Am I?

MURIEL

Yours is a beauty that will break
hearts. Be grateful you live by
the sea.

YOUNG FAY

Why?

MURIEL

Because the sea makes you hungry
and wild and strong, especially
your calves. They're wonderfully
curved, just like Victorine
Meurend's when she posed as a
bullfighter for Manet.

YOUNG FAY

I can't wait to see what you've
done!

MURIEL

No one sees my work until it's
finished, until the last
instrument is tuned and ready
to play.

YOUNG FAY

But it's just a sketch.

MURIEL

(frowning)
"Just a sketch?" You think
Raphael said "just a sketch"
when he drew Saint Placidus?

YOUNG FAY

No.

MURIEL

Did Ingres say "Just a sketch"
when he drew Paganini?

YOUNG FAY

No.

MURIEL

I'm turning this into a painting,
you know. If I'm lucky, I'll sell
it to your parents. Just one of
my paintings in the house and their
whole lives would change.

Muriel strokes Fay's cheek, delighted.

MURIEL

Ohhh, what delicate cheek bones.
You see, my little Fay, by painting
you, I'm able to explore every nuance
of your body. This way I don't just
know you, I experience you; I fathom
and divine you.

YOUNG FAY
Are you painting me full figured?

MURIEL
Yes.

YOUNG FAY
In the Grand Style?

MURIEL
In my style.

YOUNG FAY
Show me! I want to see!

Muriel puts the sketch aside.

MURIEL
Not yet. Maybe tomorrow. You
can relax now.

Fay drops onto the towel, rolling onto her stomach, edging
closer to Muriel.

YOUNG FAY
Oh, Muriel, will you teach me
next summer?

MURIEL
We'll see.

YOUNG FAY
And next summer and the summer
after that. Forever!

MURIEL
You can't expect me to teach you
for the rest of my life.

YOUNG FAY
Why not? Please, Muriel, can't we
always be close? Always!

Fay nestles next to Muriel who lies down, draping her arm
around her.

MURIEL
Of course. But you'll grow up
someday-- or one can only hope.

YOUNG FAY
I wish this summer would never end.
Never! Never! Never!

MURIEL

"I wish, I wish, but I wish in vain.
That I could once be a child again."

They kiss, then embrace. We see the scene through Francine's imagination, and Muriel and Fay begin sinking deeper and deeper into the sand until they vanish. Ceaseless waves roll over the surface of the beach, leaving no sign of their existence, and the sun blazes overhead.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. NIGHT.

The sun becomes the bright lamp illuminating Fay's studio. The Adult Fay is alone, wearing a nightgown, painting furiously to the sound of a new music, completely unlike the classical waltzes associated with her usual painting. Fay seems possessed, even manic, and after a few moments, the door of the studio opens. Francine, wearing pajamas, stands on the threshold, hesitant to enter.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

(whispering)

Sometimes she was scary. She'd lose control and wave her brush like some wiggled out conductor. She was definitely mad, all right. She had some kind of turmoil inside her that made her paint Phillip Green in sixty shades of blue.

Francine enters the studio, approaching cautiously.

FRANCINE

Aunt Fay...?

FAY

I...I just want to paint exactly what I feel.

Now we focus on the painting emerging as Fay explains it to Francine.

FAY

These are his blue eyes on fire with animal greed. And his hands are vultures claws, and lock, his mouth: an open purse with a tongue rolled out like a register receipt! He's proclaiming what we're worth per stroke, per color. And there's Lucy, a frail angry bird who pecks at his ear.

FRANCINE
Make her yellow! A canary!

FAY
Yes!

FRANCINE
Put Phillip on a throne!

FAY
Yes! The King! The King of
Fundamental Necessities!

Now vibrant clangorous music is heard as Fay cross-hatches in a frenzy. A wild collage of images flashes across the canvas as Phillip appears in exaggerated poses. Soon Lucy joins Phillip, and finally Muriel's voice is heard, whispering seductively.

MURIEL
Fathom and divine you, fathom
and divine...

As Fay continues her painting frenzy, we see Muriel's face fade onto the canvas. Then she seems to drift out of the painting and become a tangible substance, holding a brush and conducting the music.

INT. MURIEL'S STUDIO. DAY.

The frenzied music becomes rhapsodic as Muriel approaches the young Fay, waving her brush-baton.

MURIEL
Dip your brush into the colors
you hear! Spread them into pure
forms, then feel the corresponding
vibrations in your soul. They'll
make you desperate to create!

The young Fay looks towards Muriel, confused and embarrassed.

MURIEL
That my dear is joy! Is ecstasy!
Is delirium!

YOUNG FAY
I...I'm not sure I can...

MURIEL
We are the color musicians. We
hold our brush batons!

Muriel grasps Fay's hands, whisking her around in circles.

MURIEL

Fuchsia! Feel fuchsia, feeeeeel...

They dance, waltzing to the music.

MURIEL

Oh, let's paint everything in
fuchsia. Let's dispense with
canvases and boundaries altogether!
Let's paint the world in never
ending spans of fuchsia! Fuchsia!
Fuchsia!

They dance a few moments until Muriel kisses Fay passionately
and they vanish in a whirl of fuchsia.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. NIGHT.

Fay is left spinning in the middle of the studio while
Francine stares baffled. Fay emerges from her dance-trance,
aware of how strange she must appear, but still laughing,

FAY

Francine, do you ever feel such...

MURIEL'S ECHO

Fuchsia!

FAY

...freedom, such exhilaration,
you could paint the world in..

MURIEL'S ECHO

Fuchsia...

FAY

...an entirely different way
than its ever been painted
before?

FRANCINE

No.

The music ceases and Fay stops dancing. She stares numbly
at Francine.

FRANCINE

Are you okay?

FAY

Shhhh, Francine, go to bed.

Fay escorts Francine to the studio door, and whispers.

FAY

Silence has a color too.

Fay locks the door. Francine hears the clicking of the lock and frowns.

INT. THE MURAL ROOM. NIGHT

Francine approaches the room where her mural is being composed. She turns on the light and we see the mural is only partly sketched and painted, revealing a colorful progression of Lucy and Phillip from Ancient Egypt to the Middle Ages. Francine stares at the mural with frustration, and is about to turn off the light when she notices several paintings stacked behind an old sofa. She bends down to look at them, but we can only glimpse her back and her soft mumbling.

FRANCINE

Jesus...

INT. THE ART STUDIO. MORNING.

Francine and Fay are staring, perplexed, at Fay's new portrait of Phillip. It's grotesque, but original.

FAY

There aren't enough words for all these blues. And for once you can see my brush strokes. Usually I smooth away all my tracks, my tricks. Do you like it?

FRANCINE

Sure, I mean, I guess. He'd croak if he saw it. Are you going to show him?

FAY

No! Yes. I don't know. If only Muriel could see it!

FRANCINE

I'll take a picture. You can send it to her.

FAY

(slowly, musing)
Why not? I read that she's having an exhibition in New York. I could... I could call the gallery. No, I'll write a letter -- yes, a note!

FRANCINE

Will she come here?

FAY

I doubt it. It's been -- oh, God --
twenty years, and yet...there she
is. Maybe she put herself there.
I mean, sometimes there's something
I can't quite control...

FRANCINE

Were you in love with her?

Pause. Fay is startled that Francine has spoken so
forthrightly.

FRANCINE

Look, I know it's none of my
business. It's just that there's
a painting behind the couch...

FAY

What...what painting?

INT. FRANCINE'S MURAL ROOM. DAY.

Fay has followed Francine to the room where the painting is
propped against the wall. We see Fay's eyes brighten as she
picks it up.

FAY

Nymphs of the Vernal Palette...

FRANCINE

It's you and Muriel, right?

Now we catch a glimpse of the painting which depicts Muriel
and Fay nude and embracing in a secluded GARDEN. As we move
closer, we enter the world of the painting.

EXT. MURIEL'S GARDEN. DAY.

A fanciful garden of summer flowers is seen from a distance
as Francine speaks.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Fay father, my grandfather, found
another job and had to move. But
Fay wanted to stay with Muriel...

We see Muriel seated at her easel, and the young Fay, posing
nude amidst the flowers.

YOUNG FAY

If I stay with you, we could start a gallery of our own. We could work together.

MURIEL

Don't be silly. A new environment, a new school, they'll inspire you.

YOUNG FAY

But no one can teach me what you have! I've already made three commissions! Oh, Muriel, look at me! How can we ever leave each other? Please let's live together, here in your house.

MURIEL

Your parents wouldn't approve. Now get dressed.

Muriel hands Fay her clothes, and she dresses as she speaks.

YOUNG FAY

Who cares what they think?! Remember when you said artists have to make sacrifices so they can live under whatever conditions will make them grow?

MURIEL

Yes, and I have to live alone.

YOUNG FAY

But why?

MURIEL

Because I do. It's my way. I need my space-- for my paintings, my pacings, my moods. And Fay, darling, I'm afraid you've become too dependent on me. It's not at all uncommon in young girls. I didn't discourage you, of course, but it's time to move on. These are crucial growing years.

Fay is now dressed. She looks imploringly at Muriel who is gathering her paints, placing them into a box.

YOUNG FAY

But don't you want to watch me?

MURIEL

No, no I don't. I want to watch myself. Besides, I've seen how you've grown. You seem bent on continuing the academic traditions...

YOUNG FAY

Which you taught me! You taught but I sell!

MURIEL

(smiling coolly)

Yes, who'd have thought I'd produce a commercial commodity?

YOUNG FAY

But you loved my paintings! I was painting in the Grand Style when you said you adored me. You said it! You did! Adored, adored, adored!

MURIEL

Oh, so it's my fault you're fixated there? What rubbish! Your problem is you love flattery.

(mimicking Fay's mother)

"Oh, thank you Miss Daubler. Everyone's so impressed with Fay's technique."

YOUNG FAY

It's better than yours! My father says I could earn my own living.

Muriel snaps shut her paint box, picks up her painting, and heads for the house, followed by Francine.

MURIEL

Frankly, your earlier work was much better. At least it wasn't so vain, so...competent.

YOUNG FAY

You think I'm nothing!

Muriel stops, turning towards Fay.

MURIEL

To be an artist, a real artist, it's not enough to fill garish walls with other people's expectations. You have to be selfish...

YOUNG FAY

Like you!

MURIEL

We both have a duty to fulfill our
promise-- which means going away
and becoming women of the world.

Muriel has reached the door of her house and enters, followed
by Fay.

INT. MURIEL'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Muriel leans the painting against the wall, places her paint
box on the kitchen counter, then moves towards the sink to
wash her brushes.

MURIEL

Look, Fay, I admit you've been an...
an educational experiment, and
perhaps I...I've gone too far, but
I feel...Well, if you don't change,
then I've failed.

Fay rushes towards Muriel embracing her impetuously.

YOUNG FAY

Then give me another chance! I
still need you. Please!

Muriel succumbs to the embrace, then pulls back, annoyed.

MURIEL

I don't want to be needed! It's
too much responsibility. I...I
can't handle it; you're too...too
passionate.

YOUNG FAY

Yes! As passionate as Tintoretto!
As passionate as Gauguin!

Fay pulls Muriel closer, desperately kissing her face and
hands.

YOUNG FAY

Love me, Muriel, love me. I'll
never leave you, never! Never!
Never!

MURIEL

(pulling away)

Oh, darling, I...I can't.

(she sighs)

Look, I just want to stay here and paint without accounting to anyone for anything. You're too young to want to begin all over again, but I'm not. You want me to give you a chance, well, give me a chance.

Fay takes a tentative step towards Muriel, speaking with a trembling voice.

YOUNG FAY

Is there someone else?

MURIEL

No, no, please stop it! Now leave me alone, please.

Muriel continues fussing about the kitchen, washing her brushes, aligning them on the counter.

Fay stands stock still. She swallows before speaking, attempting to repress her anguish.

YOUNG FAY

If...if that's how you feel.

MURIEL

Yes.

YOUNG FAY

Would you...would you give me something? A present before I go?

MURIEL

Of course, anything.

YOUNG FAY

"Anything!" Listen to you! You're so glad to get rid of me you can't even hide it!

Muriel stops tidying and faces her.

MURIEL

Don't be silly. You can have whatever you want, Fay, you know that.

YOUNG FAY
 (she pauses)
 Anything?

MURIEL
 I just told you, yes. What is it?

Fay picks up Muriel's painting, "Nymph of the Vernal Palette." At this point we see that only Fay is depicted in the painting.

YOUNG FAY
 This! I want this!

MURIEL
 (incredulous)
 But I...I'm not finished. I mean,
 it's my mock Reubens...

Fay stares belligerently, challenging Muriel to deny her the painting.

MURIEL
 Well, it's...it's very precious
 to me, but if you want it, it's
 yours.
 (whispering)
 You can be its secret guardian.

YOUNG FAY
 Yes, we wouldn't want anyone to see
 it, would we? But don't worry, I
 know just where to hang it.

MURIEL
 Where?

YOUNG FAY
 On the stake in my heart!

INT. FRANCINE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

The painting held in young Fay's hand is now held by the adult Fay. She speaks sorrowfully, softly to Francine.

FAY
 Can you tell it was painted by
 two different people? Muriel
 painted me and I painted Muriel.

Francine approaches Fay, gently putting her hand on her shoulder. Fay covers Francine's hand with her own and smiles. They freeze into a kind of memory etching in sepia tones as we hear Francine speak.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

If my parents had a clue who Fay really is, they'd never have sent me here. But I really admired her for feeling what she felt, and to hell with everyone else. I even started to understand because that morning when she put her hand over mine, I felt my chest swell with a weird kind of happiness.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Lucy is reading her text messages and chewing gum while Francine and Fay stand at their easels, painting.

LUCY

You've only got eight more days.

FAY

Lucy, could you please remove the gum and put away the phone.

Lucy spits the gum into a wrapper and places it in her shirt pocket along with her phone.

LUCY

I'll bet you'll be glad to get rid of us.

FAY

Not at all. We'll miss your company. How's your mother?

LUCY

Either sleeping or half in the bag.

FAY

I...I'm sorry.

LUCY

Sometimes I'm afraid she'll croak before seeing the paintings.

FAY

Just another twenty minutes and you can go home.

LUCY

When Cassie goes, all I'll have left is Phil, and all Phil wants is you.

Francine stops, stunned, then glances at Fay who continues painting to the strains of a classical waltz.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Francine and Fay are standing in their same positions, but now it is Phillip who is posing.

PHILLIP

Only seven more days until the unveiling.

FRANCINE

Will they be going in the freezer?

PHILLIP

I assume. Cassie always has a little ceremony for her new additions. Well, at least we can't be reproached for ignoring her wishes.

(wearily)

When we leave the island, I keep wondering how I'll ever replace her. Cassie may appear unbalanced, but she...she really adores Lucy.

FAY

Lucy's already in mourning, casting shadows.

PHILLIP

Yes, you're very...perceptive.

FAY

I'm her portraitist. Every face emits light, mirrors reflections.

PHILLIP

So are you painting our misery?

FAY

No. If I tried, it would probably turn out romantic and sentimental. I can only try for accuracy, like Caravaggio's fruit -- it's always bruised.

Phillip breathes deeply, mustering the courage to ask a question. We see Francine watching, intrigued.

PHILLIP

When you spoke of shadows, I
thought how you've become one
of ours -- Lucy's and mine.

(pause)

I wish we could cast a similar
one on you. Tell me, has anyone?

FRANCINE

Yes!

Fay glares at Francine, stunned that she has answered on her
behalf. Fay pauses then manages to speak for herself

FAY

Yes.

PHILLIP

Still?

FAY

Sometimes.

PHILLIP

That can be very...

FAY

Oppressive.

PHILLIP

I was going to say sad.

There is an unsettling silence which Phillip attempts to
relieve.

PHILLIP

Did I tell you that Cassie's
declared me the family archivist?
I'm writing a history of the Greens.

FRANCINE

Really?

PHILLIP

Oh, yes. You artists don't have
a monopoly on creativity. I'm also
filming our quotidian lives, all the
things we do in a typical day. I'd
like to include our two portraitists.

FRANCINE

Cool.

FAY
I'd rather you didn't.

PHILLIP
Why not? I might capture your intensity, that fierce look you both have when you're squeezing the tubes, liberating the paint, then how you stir and mash the colors.
(to Francine)
You seem to drink them in because they leap to your eyes and make them sparkle.

FRANCINE
Yeah?

FAY
I'm afraid it's not possible.

PHILLIP
Well, could I at least film the house?

FAY
I...I suppose.

PHILLIP
Have you lived here long?

FAY
Eight years. I used to come here for art lessons when I was Francine's age.

FRANCINE
(stunned)
You never told me that! This house belongs to Muriel?

FAY
She rented it, but it's mine now.

FRANCINE
Jesus! This is Muriel's house!

PHILLIP
Who's Muriel?

FRANCINE
Fay's tutor. She had to paint her through history -- like I'm doing with you and Lucy -- for my mural.

PHILLIP

So I've heard.

FRANCINE

Fay has a room full of Muriels,
right behind that mirror.

Fay glares at Francine.

PHILLIP

I wondered where you kept all
your paintings. I'd love to
see them.

FAY

Sorry, but it's...it's a private
gallery. They're all very dated
and derivative.

FRANCINE

But Fay's painted you in our
time -- for us! Naked!

FAY

(furiously)
Francine!

PHILLIP

(brimming with delight)
Really? May I see it?

Fay and Francine answer simultaneously.

FAY
No!

FRANCINE
Yes!

FAY

It's not finished, and it's
a...a complicated piece, not
in my usual style.

PHILLIP

According to my taste there's
only one style and you've already
mastered it.

FAY

Which isn't saying much for either
of us.

PHILLIP

Well, I wouldn't judge a work
I haven't seen.

FRANCINE
 (to Fay)
 Should I get it?

FAY
 Francine, I thought we agreed
 that Phillip wouldn't care
 for it.

PHILLIP
 Why not give me the privilege
 of deciding for myself?

FAY
 I'd rather not.

PHILLIP
 Why?

FAY
 Because it's none of the things
 you like. It requires a more
 open, a more...unorthodox mind.

PHILLIP
 Oh, I can be pretty unorthodox,
 and I don't take my prejudices
 too seriously -- certainly not
 as seriously as you. Please,
 Fay, let me see it.

FAY
 No.

Francine watches with the greedy eyes of a voyeur as Fay
 retreats behind her easel again, painting.

PHILLIP
 Afraid?

FAY
 No.

PHILLIP
 Why then? Does it show you
 actually harbor some feelings?

FAY
 None that you'd appreciate.

PHILLIP
 I'm desperate; I'll take anything.

Pause. There is a cold uncomfortable silence.

PHILLIP

Coward.

Fay scowls, arching her back as if struck.

FAY

Alright Francine, go ahead,
show him!

Francine retrieves the painting which is now leaning against the wall behind others. She brings it forth with the canvas front hidden against her breast, then turns it around with a dramatic flourish. There is a long pause as Phillip stares, stunned. Fay takes the painting from Francine and props it on her easel.

FAY

It's only an interpretation.
Look, You don't understand it
and neither do I really, but
it seemed to...to paint itself.

There is another pause, then Phillip speaks with an icy monotone.

PHILLIP

I find it...repulsive.

FAY

This is the first thing I've
ever painted anything that
anyone's ever -- even Francine
hates it.

FRANCINE

I do not!

PHILLIP

You feel proud -- that we hate it?

FAY

Yes! Don't you see? Everyone's
always loved my gilded American
nobility, my flawless faced manne-
quins. But this! This has the
chords of color in your voice...

PHILLIP

I'm grotesque! A naked gargoyle
with a greedy sneer. Is this what
you think of me?

FAY

Yes! No, no. I mean, I was just trying to...to defy your opinion of art and of...me

PHILLIP

You thought I was being vindictive?

FAY

Well...

PHILLIP

You were mistaken. And you've obscured me with something inside you, not me. How paradoxical that you've had the opposite affect on Lucy and me. Haven't I told you how magnificent you are? -- both of you. It may be true that I find your paintings irrelevant, but don't you see? They can be wonderful for that very reason.

FAY

They're not irrelevant! My paintings...

As Fay responds Muriel's image is conjured in the mirror behind her.

MURIEL

...feed God's eyes with the beauty of his image.

Fay echoes Muriel's words, overlapping them.

FAY

...feed God's eyes with the beauty of his image.

PHILLIP

(indicating the painting)
What beauty is there in this?

MURIEL

You'll see a spectrum of colors and myriad forms in every living thing.

FAY

(overlapping Muriel)
You'll see a spectrum of colors and myriad forms in every living thing.
(pause)
You'll see beauty and death and eternity.

PHILLIP

If you see so much how is it you
missed seeing me? How is it that
you only see ugly, twisted things?

FAY

I...I don't know. Maybe I have
to see them before I see...

The image of Muriel is now standing directly in front of
Fay.

MURIEL

Every nuance, every symmetry...

FAY

Before I see...

MURIEL

Primal geometric forms...

FAY

I see...

MURIEL

...inherent in the structure of...

FAY and MURIEL

...the entire universe!

Muriel's image vanishes as Phillip gestures to the painting

PHILLIP

If this is the universe, then
perhaps it deserves annihilation.

FAY

No, no, there are...you can find
forms in every face, every waterfall,
and soon you won't need the face...

Phillip picks up his hat and starts out the door.

PHILLIP

Apparently not. Apparently you
don't need anyone.

Phillip's footsteps are heard clattering down the stairs. Fay
follows to the door, feebly calling after him.

FAY

Wait! Please, don't...

The door is heard closing like a loud slap. Francine approaches Fay, speaking with a small, penitent voice.

FRANCINE

I...I'm sorry, Fay.

FAY

No you're not.

Fay sits in a chair staring at her painting, tears streaming down her face.

FAY

I finally paint something unlike
unlike anything ever painted, and
look at it.

Francine and Fay stand, focused on the painting as Fay brushes more pain on its surface.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

It started out blue, but by the
time she'd finished all we saw
was red...

FAY

(whispering)
Devils are red; fever is red...

FRANCINE (V. O.)

...Fay's burning for Muriel was red.
She burned for her all day, wherever
she went, whatever she did. A heat
rose up from her that made the hair
on your skin stand up and march! It
was contagious. We all felt the
heat, especially Phillip. Phillip
was in flames.

A light flashes as Francine photographs the finished painting, then Fay picks it up from the easel and leans it against the wall.

FAY

Paintings can be dangerous,
Francine. They can hurt people;
they can destroy lives.

EXT. THE YOUNG FAY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

An exterior view of the young Fay's house reveals a lighted living room window. Beyond the sheer curtains stand Muriel and FAY'S PARENTS: Her father, EDWIN, a graying man of forty-three and her mother, DIANE, an attractive woman of forty.

There is a sense of mounting agitation with Edwin pacing back and forth. He grasps the nude painting and thrusts it at Muriel who accepts it grudgingly. We see Muriel dashing from the house, furious, the painting in hand. She slams the front door and storms down the walkway.

INT. THE YOUNG FAY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

The young Fay stares down from her bedroom window, watching Muriel depart. She stands in darkness, tears streaming down her face. We hear the sound of Edwin's footfall as Fay scampers into bed, pulling the covers to her chin. There is a short knock and the bedroom door opens.

EDWIN

I know you're awake.

YOUNG FAY

Leave me alone.

EDWIN

I've instructed Miss Daubler to leave the island or your mother and I will file a formal complaint. I'm giving her one week to pack up, and I forbid you to see her ever again, understood?!

Fay sniffs and nods. Her father leaves, his foot-steps echoing. Fay waits a moment, then leaps out of bed, fully clothed.

EXT. MONKSHEAD ISLAND. RESIDENTIAL STREETS. NIGHT.

We see Fay quietly exiting from the back door of her house and running down the neighborhood streets.

EXT. SEASHORE BEHIND MURIEL'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

We see Fay running from the beach into Muriel's backyard to the door, and knocking.

INT. MURIEL'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Fay doesn't wait for a response. She enters the kitchen and glances towards the living room where she sees Muriel slumped on her sofa.

YOUNG FAY

Muriel...?

MURIEL

Go away!

Fay edges into the room and stops frozen with emotion.

MURIEL

You've ruined my career here which should no doubt satisfy you. That was your intention, wasn't it? Do you really think I deserve that?

(pause)

Well, do you?

Fay stares at Muriel with palpable anxiety, then finds the courage to answer.

YOUNG FAY

Yes! Yes I do.

MURIEL

I took your talents and molded them to perfection!

YOUNG FAY

Perfection?! You said I was vain! Competent!

MURIEL

You are! Nevertheless, hardly anyone can do what you do. I can't even do what you do.

Muriel rises from the chair, and walks wearily to the kitchen.

INT. MURIEL'S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Muriel opens the refrigerator, grasps a bottle of wine and pours herself a full glass. Fay has followed her, but keeps her distance. Muriel sits at the kitchen table and drinks.

YOUNG FAY

I...I admit you've give me a direction...

MURIEL

A livelihood, a career!

Fay picks up the "Nymphs" painting from the kitchen counter, thrusting it towards Muriel.

YOUNG FAY

And a perversion. A perversion! Everyone who sees it says so.

MURIEL

You think you're so damn clever
putting me in my own painting, but
you've ruined the composition.

YOUNG FAY

It's more honest this way.

MURIEL

Bullshit!

YOUNG FAY

This is truth, Muriel, truth
revealed by art!

MURIEL

Oh, shut up and sit down before
I slap your insolent face!

Fay obeys, seating herself across the table from Muriel.

MURIEL

Your bigoted father's truth isn't
the same as mine. Oh, stop looking
so wounded. You've got the last laugh.
I'm high tailing it to New York before
they tar and feather me here.

YOUNG FAY

That shouldn't bother you. You're
always bragging about how you'll
die in disgrace -- all that good
company in the gutter. You're so
full of shit!

MURIEL

I'm warning you, Fay...

YOUNG FAY

You've ruined my life! They're
making me go to a psychiatrist!

MURIEL

Good! I'm glad! You need one!

YOUNG FAY

You raped me.

MURIEL

What?

YOUNG FAY

You made me paint you so much, I...
I can't get you out of my mind! I
can't, I can't...

Fay weeps, convulsed with the pain of her longing, her head buried in her hands. Muriel takes a long swallow of wine and rises from her chair, her hardness melting as she touches Fay's shoulder.

MURIEL

Oh, Fay, oh, dear darling Fay.
Please, come here.

Fay surrenders, sobbing helplessly into her arms.

MURIEL

Come on, let's take a walk on
the beach.

We see them rise from their chairs and walk out the door arm in arm.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Muriel and Fay are holding hands, walking slowly on the beach behind the house. It's a warm moonlit night and a breeze gently caresses their hair.

MURIEL

Listen, Fay, maybe I was too...
affectionate, too forceful, maybe
I gave you more of myself than I
should have. I certainly gave you
everything I know about painting.

YOUNG FAY

I can't...I can't believe you're...
leaving.

MURIEL

You'll get over it. Someday --
sooner than you think -- you'll
look back on me as your first
adolescent crush. You'll change...

YOUNG FAY

(gazing imploringly)
I don't want to change; I only want...

MURIEL

I know, I know. In fact, it's quite conceivable that I'll never be loved as much as you love me now.

YOUNG FAY

When are you...?

MURIEL

Your father says if I'm not off the island by Tuesday, he'll put me behind bars! Hah! To think a painting can still cause a scandal! In a way it's quite wonderful. Yes, we artists aren't so powerless, after all, are we?

(pause)

Well, who knows? Maybe after this bloodletting, you'll learn to take the giant leap -- to abstraction or wherever Fay Locke is meant to go.

YOUNG FAY

But what if I'm already there?

Muriel releases the YOUNG Fay's hand and faces her.

MURIEL

You're not. I know you're not. You're still renting your palette. An artist, a real artist, doesn't just paint; she is her art. She works very very hard, then one day -- miracle of miracles!-- her own private deus flashes forth! And there, in the light, she finds bright new images!

YOUNG FAY

When? How will I know?!

MURIEL

You'll feel it -- like colors bleeding upwards through layers and layers, embodying your very soul. But you'll pay a price: Van Gogh paid with his life, so did Utrillo, Lautrec, Munch, Pollock, and Rothko slashed his arms and bled to death.

YOUNG FAY

Nooooo....

Fay covers her ears, edging closer to the water. Muriel follows, taking her hands from her ears.

MURIEL

It's a terrible freedom, all
this subjectivity. The trouble
with you is you want order!
Standards! Common sense!

Fay embraces Muriel, weeping.

YOUNG FAY

You! I want you!

Muriel removes Fay's clinging arms. She finds a stick and draws a triangle in the sand.

MURIEL

Stop it! Now listen! Remember
triangulation? One point is the
subject, one the artist, and the
third is the art. But you can't
have the art unless you have the
courage to intervene, and you
can't intervene unless you face
up to the world and realize it
can be horrible and full of despair.
There's only your experience, and
you can't be afraid to live it,
suffer the consequences, and paint
it! Paint it!

YOUNG FAY

Even when it hurts other people?

MURIEL

That depends on how selfish you
are.

YOUNG FAY

How cruel you are!

MURIEL

Yes.

YOUNG FAY

(sobbing)

Then do it! Paint how I can't stop
crying! Paint how my heart's racing
so fast I can't breathe; paint how
it hurts so much I wish I were dead!

Fay races into the ocean followed by Muriel. Once in the water, they seem to move in slow motion, gradually disappearing beneath the dark waves as if the weight of their hearts has made them sink into oblivion.

INT. ART STUDIO. DAY

Phillip and Lucy are posed in their chairs, seated side by side. Fay and Francine are standing at their easels, painting, as Fay speaks.

FAY

The reason I asked you to pose together for the final sitting is that there might be some harmony that joins the paintings in ways I might not have noticed in separate sittings.

Fay starts to paint to her usual classical strains which are now mingled with original modern music.

We see Phillip and Lucy from Francine's point of view, as they seem to freeze in time and are crystallized into stone statues.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

There they were: Green and Greener, and it sucked knowing they'd walk out of our lives -- as if they had somewhere to go. I wished they'd take Fay and me with them. Then we could all live together -- on the edge of the greenest Green.

The music ceases as Fay puts down her brush and palette, emerging from behind her easel.

FAY

Well, I'm finished. Now I'll varnish and prepare them for delivery or should we have a formal unveiling?

FRANCINE

An unveiling!

LUCY

Yeah.

PHILLIP

By all means.

FAY

Do you think Cassandra is well enough to come here or should I bring the paintings to your home?

PHILLIP

Actually, I was surprised, but she wants to come here. She's curious to see where we've been posing all these weeks.

FAY

Good. Are you sure you don't want to see them before.

PHILLIP

I'm glad you asked because I've decided I would.

LUCY

Me too.

FAY

You're sure?

PHILLIP

Yes.

LUCY

Yeah.

Francine takes the lead, walking to Fay's easel, followed by Phillip and Lucy.

Music as lights focus on the COMMISSIONED PORTRAITS. They are realistically and elegantly rendered. Phillip and Lucy view the portraits with genuine admiration. Finally, Lucy speaks softly, in a reverent whisper.

LUCY

We're just...ourselves.

PHILLIP

Better, they're...magnificent!

While Fay is pleased with their response, she feels compelled to express her own reservations.

FAY

Well, they're still not quite...

Phillip interrupts, holding up his hand to silence Fay.

PHILLIP

Please don't! Don't apologize for something I admire. I don't care what you say, there's nothing wrong with these portraits. You don't have to resort to abstraction to paint us. I mean, this is how we look. It's so...truthful. Maybe not for you, but for me.

LUCY

Mom will love them.

FRANCINE

What a bummer you have to bury them.

LUCY

No shit. I wish she'd hate them, then give them to us.

Pause. Phillip studies the portraits more intensely, then turns to Fay.

PHILLIP

I was wondering...would you consider painting us again? Both of us together, on the same canvas.

Francine is delighted at the idea, and glances eagerly at Fay.

PHILLIP

You could start as soon as these are entombed.

FRANCINE

Great!

FAY

Aren't you afraid I'll turn you into gargoyles?

PHILLIP

I'll accept whatever you do, and I don't care how long it takes.

LUCY

He hopes it takes forever.

PHILLIP

Well? Will you at least consider it...?

FAY

You're very generous, but I...I don't think so.

PHILLIP

Why do I feel I'm lost on you?

FAY

Maybe because I'm lost on myself.

PHILLIP

That could be quite a treasure hunt.

Lucy exchanges glances with Francine, rolling her eyes.

PHILLIP

So when are we going to see your mural, Francine?

FRANCINE

When it's finished, I guess. In about ten years.

Phillip collects his hat, then approaches Fay.

PHILLIP

I'll really miss our sessions, and I would have loved to have seen your private gallery.

FRANCINE

It's awesome. I freaked when I first saw it.

PHILLIP

So only people with strong constitutions are allowed to enter?

Fay smiles and nods.

PHILLIP

Well, I'm strong as an ox! So is Lucy.

Pause as Phillip, Lucy, and Francine gaze imploringly at Fay who sighs with resignation. She walks to the mirror-door, opens it, and gestures for them to enter.

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

Francine enters the gallery followed by Phillip and Lucy. They view the portraits with astonishment as the "Muriels" seem to glimmer with life. Fay furrows her brow, regretting that she has revealed so much.

LUCY

Holy shit...who is she?

FRANCINE

Fay's tutor-- from when she was my age.

Phillip stares at the paintings, comprehending their importance. Then he glances at Fay who looks away. Then we see Lucy studying the most grotesque of the paintings.

LUCY

God... What a freak show.

FRANCINE

She's coming to visit -- tomorrow.

LUCY

On a broomstick?

Francine and Lucy laugh.

EXT. THE STREET TO FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

A golden Mercedes glides up the hill to Fay's house and stops as Francine's voice is heard.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

I was supposed to get lost but I wouldn't have missed their reunion for the whole fucking world.

A tall, striking woman with a short, sleek bob steps out of the Mercedes. It is MURIEL TWENTY YEARS OLDER, radiant as ever, and carrying a small painting.

INT/EXT. FRANCINE'S WINDOW. DAY.

Francine is lurking by her bedroom window watching Muriel who we see through her eyes. She is pale, almost vampiric, and moves with an unearthly grace towards the front door. She rings the bell and looks up as Francine quickly backs away.

INT. FAY'S FOYER/STAIRCASE. DAY.

As the bell rings, Fay dashes down the steps. She wears a long, flowing dress and has her hair pinned behind her ears.

Francine peeks out her bedroom door and tip toes into the hall. We see her glancing down the stairwell, watching the two women embrace. Then Muriel presents her gift.

MURIEL

Here, I've brought you a present.
I call it "Seagull Through a
Shark's Eye in Fuchsia."

Fay accepts the painting, scanning it with delight. It is a mangle of pinks and reds with slashes of black and gray.

FAY

Oh, thank you. It's wonderful,
so...vivid.

We see Francine craning her neck to view the painting.

INT. FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Fay leads Muriel on a brief tour of the first floor, their voices wafting up the stairs.

MURIEL

Well. The old place is looking
very...tidy.

FAY

Would you like a drink? I have
some wine.

MURIEL

How sweet. Thank you.

The women move to the kitchen.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Francine scurries into the studio, secreting herself in the closet, with the door slightly ajar. From Francine's vantage point, we hear the two women climbing the stairs, chatting pleasantly.

FAY (O.S.)

Do still take students?

MURIEL (O.S.)

Never. You?

FAY (O.S.)

No, but my niece, Francine, is with me this summer. She's gone to the beach.

Fay and Muriel have entered the studio. They carry their wine glasses, and Fay has brought the bottle. They sit facing each other, Fay nervously tapping the stem of her glass.

FAY

I've painted hundreds of portraits since you left. I have quite a reputation.

Muriel stares at the Greens' portraits. She views them critically, sipping her wine.

MURIEL

Your style hasn't changed much. Quite a handsome pair. Father and daughter?

FAY

Yes. They're going to be entombed.

MURIEL

Good! Now where's the painting in the photograph? That's the one I came to see.

Fay pauses, reluctant to retrieve the painting.

FAY

Could...could it wait. Couldn't we talk first?

MURIEL

Of course.

FAY

I...I missed you. I wish you'd written.

MURIEL

Your parents would have confiscated the letters. The fact is, I'm grateful to you for getting me out of this dreary place.

FAY

What did you do when you left?

Muriel paces as she speaks.

MURIEL

Well, let's see, first I succumbed to what I called my Hysterical Heliotrope Phase. Then I reached out towards the Catharsis of Crimson. Finally, I developed an entirely new style, and now -- ha, ha! -- I've given up theorizing altogether! Dear God what an insufferable bore! What propaganda you had shoved down your throat!

FAY

Oh, no, no, I loved it! I'm always quoting you.

MURIEL

Oh, don't! Don't! I think, I've been responsible for corrupting more innocent minds than I care to remember. I'm sure to go to hell for it.

FAY

(pause, timidly)
Are you...happy?

Muriel leans back against a wall and laughs.

MURIEL

Oh, Christ, no. I finally fessed up: my gift is rather limited. I use it very discreetly, very cautiously, with only a few variations. The result, as you know, is a very profitable reputation. I'm also seeing someone.

FAY

Who...? I'm sorry. I mean, it's none of my business.

MURIEL

It's no one you'd know. What about you?

FAY

No. There's no one. Not since...

Pause as Muriel stares, amazed.

MURIEL

Fay? You're not serious...?

Pause as Fay stares directly at Muriel.

MURIEL
 God...incredible. But how?
 I mean, how could you have
 sustained...

FAY
 How could I not?

Fay rises and opens the mirror-door to her gallery of
 "Muriels".

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

Muriel follows Fay and is stunned into silence as she sees
 the portraits of her younger self covering every wall.

FAY
 The paintings. The ones
 you made me paint...

Muriel stares with horror at Fay's gallery, as the walls and
 ceiling seem to contract, threatening to close in like a
 shrinking tomb.

FAY
 Four walls. Three closets.
 Filled with paintings.

MURIEL
 My God...

They stare at the portraits in silence as the walls and
 ceiling move ever-nearer, causing Muriel to flee.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Muriel returns to her seat in the studio and takes a long
 swallow of wine before speaking. Fay has followed her,
 closing the gallery door.

MURIEL
 Oh, Fay. You're still so...
 sensitive, so fragile. Believe
 me, I would have burned those
 paintings if I thought they'd
 hurt you.

FAY

I...I thought I'd grow tired of them, see their flaws and forget. But they haven't any flaws. I mean it's their flaws that make them beautiful -- because they're so rough, so failed, yet full of hope, like Francine's.

Fay finds Francine's first portraits of Lucy and Phillip leaning against a wall, and displays them for Muriel.

We see Francine eavesdropping from inside the closet.

FAY

Look, aren't they wonderful?

Muriel nods, smiling.

FAY

They're better than mine. I use up all my lines and colors in the subject; there's nothing of myself, not a single visible brush stroke.

MURIEL

A shame your art doesn't feed on self-pity. At least Mondrian employed his neurosis and created neoplasticism. You stop in your tracks and make forgeries.

FAY

Until now.

MURIEL

Show me.

Fay walks to the easel and retrieves her modern portrait of Phillip, propping it on the chair facing Muriel.

FAY

I...I could hear it. I mean, I could feel all those things you told me to feel: the colors, the vibrations in my...

MURIEL

Oh, stop! Stop! Don't cheapen your work with rhetoric. You got it on canvas. That's what counts.

Fay gestures towards her realistic portrait of Phillip.

FAY

That's the same man, and that face on his shoulder is his daughter, Lucy.

MURIEL

Ah, yes, I see it now. Oh, yes, there's something exquisite, almost alive...

(indicating the modern portrait)

Now this, you see, is real portraiture. You either love him or hate him, and you put it in the painting. Now tell me, Fay, in the shadow there -- that's me, isn't it?

Fay nods.

MURIEL

Blacken me out! Otherwise, it's the most remarkable work I've seen in years. Maybe now you'll stop acting like the hand of fate is holding you down, and take some of that pity and passion and put it into the subject.

FAY

But you said put it into the art.

MURIEL

But I didn't, did I? I put it into you.

FAY

And I...I loved it. Didn't you?

Muriel sighs and walks to the window, staring briefly at the view of the ocean. Fay follows and stands beside her.

FAY

I...I can't. I can't seem to feel for anyone what I felt for... Could you...could you ever...?

Muriel turns and stares directly at Fay.

MURIEL

No. Sorry.

Muriel turns away from the window and moves towards Fay's modern painting.

MURIEL

So tell me about him. What's his name?

FAY

Phillip Green. He's so... persistent. And I find I'm thinking about him, but it's... Well, it's not the same...

MURIEL

You're just afraid. Don't be. Don't cheat yourself of everything important.

FAY

You said only art was important.

MURIEL

Did I? I'm full of contradictions! Besides, I'm older now, a little jaded perhaps, and you've made me more than a little depressed. I've never made anything this original, so indelibly my own. I'm very proud of you, Fay. Maybe someday you'll go as far as your talent can take you.

Muriel struts boldly to the mirror-door of Fay's gallery. She opens it and walks inside.

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

MURIEL

Now! These paintings. It seems to me they're too painful for you to hoard in your little gallery. So why don't you give them to me?

FAY

(horrified at the idea)
No! No,...I can't.

MURIEL

Why not? Afraid I'll trash them?

FAY

Yes! No! I...I mean...

MURIEL

Send me a few at least. Here's
my card with my home address.
They'll look wonderful in my new
brownstone.

FAY

No, they're mine. I...I need
them.

MURIEL

No, you don't.

Pause as Fay stares at Muriel. Then Muriel marches out of the
gallery through the studio, turning at the door.

MURIEL

Grow up, Fay!

Muriel starts down the steps.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY.

Fay clambers behind Muriel, calling.

FAY

Wait! Please, don't go. I...
I'd like to write.

MURIEL

Don't!

FAY

Please...?

Muriel reaches the bottom step and heads straight out the
front door with Fay at her heels.

EXT. FRONT OF FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

A light rain has started. Muriel is tramping down the
walkway with Fay still in pursuit, a look of desperation
on her tear-stained face. Muriel turns abruptly, glaring
at her.

MURIEL

Oh, for godssake!

Fay stands frozen with grief as Muriel steps inside her
Mercedes. We see the facade of Fay's house and the window
from which Francine is staring. From Francine's point of
view, we see Muriel driving slowly down the street, the
windshield wipers clearing the streams of rain.

Fay is left standing at the curb, drenched and trembling as the rain gains momentum in pitiless torrents.

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DAY.

Fay, dripping wet, swiftly ascends the stairs to her studio.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY

Fay rushes to a table, grasps a tube of black paint, and squeezes it onto her palette. She picks up a brush and approaches her modern painting, obliterating Muriel's face with six violent strokes.

Francine has entered the studio and watches with trepidation.

FRANCINE
Aunt Fay? How was Muriel?

FAY
I'm rubbing her out!

FRANCINE
What...?

FAY
Of the painting. She's out!
Out! Muriel's gone. She had
other commitments.

Fay throws down her palette, walks to the mirror-door, and enters her gallery.

INT. FAY'S GALLERY. DAY.

Francine follows Fay who is flushed with fever. She starts to take down the portraits, releasing them from their hooks, and dropping them to the floor.

FRANCINE
Jesus! What are you doing?!

FAY
I'm going to make a tomb of my
own. Yes, with hundreds of
paintings, hundreds of Muriels,
my Muriels...

Fay falls to her knees, sobbing.

FRANCINE
Fay? Are you...?

FAY
Don't look. They'll burn your
eyes and scorch your heart.

Francine kneels beside Fay who appears in a trance, though
aware of Francine's presence.

FRANCINE
You should get out of those wet
clothes.

FAY
(indicating the
paintings)
I'm going to burn them...

FRANCINE
Burn them...!?

FAY
Yes! Then bury the ashes.

FRANCINE
No! Christ, you're crazy.

Fay lifts one of the portraits, her fingers slowly tracing
its features.

FAY
Oh, Francine, there's so much
that gets lost in life, so many
canvases that are never quite
finished enough to sign. Maybe
it's better to send them back
to the source of their inspiration--
even if they've become a part
of you.

Fay seems to be emerging from her trance, and touches
Francine's shoulder.

FAY
Do you...do you know what I mean?

FRANCINE
I guess...

FAY
How could you? You're so young.
You have so many paintings ahead
of you.

FRANCINE
So do you.

FAY
 (smiling gratefully)
 Yes, yes I do...
 (embracing Francine)
 Oh, thank you, thank you for
 saying that!

Fay attempts to stand but is wobbly and sinks to the floor. She stares up at Francine, wiping perspiration from her forehead.

FAY
 Oh, God, I feel so terrible.
 I...I never had a talent for
 anger or...hating.

FRANCINE
 I do; it's great. Hate the bitch.

FAY
 I...I want to hurt her almost as
 much now as I did when she left.

Fay stares with enmity at the Egyptian portrait of Muriel, and speaks slowly.

FAY
 Francine don't ever believe that
 art redeems you. The devil's
 always there...

We see the portrait of Muriel through Francine's eyes: it is radiant with heat, the eyes smoldering and red.

EXT. THE BACK OF FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Francine's voice is heard as Fay and Francine, in shorts and tee-shirts, are seen bubble-wrapping the paintings, packing them in boxes and crates.

FRANCINE (V. O.)
 So I helped wrap the paintings
 which was a total downer. But she
 gave me six of my favorites which
 I plan to give to a museum someday --
 after she's famous. Imagine the
 guide explaining how the first
 paintings of Fay Locke's career
 were portraits of a cold-blooded
 bitch named Muriel. It was only
 later that she began to find her
 true self -- when her apprentice,
 Francine, came to save her.

Fay approaches Francine, as she holds the "Nymphs" painting, preparing to pack it. They study it together, then freeze into blue-tones as Francine's voice is heard.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Thanks to Fay, I knew there were paintings so powerful you could only hang them in sealed rooms -- because when you stared at them they made you want to do things you shouldn't...

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DUSK.

Francine and Lucy are clambering up the stairs to the studio. Francine is carrying a bundle of towels.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DUSK.

When they enter the studio, the girls approach the two finished portraits sitting on easels, covered with black velvet cloths. Francine removes the cloths and for a moment they stand, gazing with admiration.

LUCY

(whispering)

Cassie will have a fucking fit!

Francine snatches the paintings off the easels and wraps them in towels.

FRANCINE

Shut up and keep watch. She just went shopping so she could be back any second.

Francine is replacing the portraits with blank canvases of the same size.

LUCY

What are you going to say when they find out?

FRANCINE

They were stolen. Some freak thief broke into the house and stole them.

LUCY

Right. So who's going to steal a couple of portraits?!

Francine arranges the velvet cloths over the blank canvases, and turns to Lucy.

FRANCINE
Someone who knows they're totally
awesome! Now, move it!

INT. FAY'S STAIRCASE. DUSK

The girls start down the hall, then creep down the stairs
with Francine holding the paintings.

LUCY
Where are we going?

FRANCINE
There's a cellar with some old
trunks. We can hide them there
till we think of someplace better.

Francine enters the kitchen and opens the cellar door.

EXT. FAY'S CELLAR STAIRS. DUSK.

Francine and Lucy are scampering down the stairs with
Francine clutching the paintings. They stop in front of an
old wooden trunk with a rusted lock. Francine opens the lock
and trunk lid, revealing old bolts of fabric and dusty boxes
filled with photographs and documents.

LUCY
Yuk. It smells like mold.

Francine places the wrapped paintings inside the trunk,
thrusting the lid back.

LUCY
Does she come down here much?

FRANCINE
No, never.

LUCY
You're sure we're doing the
right thing?

FRANCINE
We're saving a work of art!
Trust me. They'll thank us
someday.

The girls exit the cellar, closing the door with a clang.

EXT. FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

A black Lexus pulls up in front of Fay's house. Phillip emerges from the driver's side dressed in a beige linen suit, and opens the door for Cassandra. She is very frail, wielding a cane, wearing a blue blazer, tan slacks and a straw hat. Lucy is dressed in a summer dress.

Fay has opened the front door and is welcoming them with a broad smile. She and Francine have also dressed for the occasion, wearing cotton dresses. Francine stands behind Fay, avoiding eye contact with Lucy.

As the Greens enter the threshold of Fay's house, Cassandra smiles.

CASSANDRA

Hello, ladies. Exciting, isn't it?

LUCY

(rolling her eyes)

Yeah.

INT. FAY'S FOYER/STAIRCASE. DAY.

They all stand in silence, filling the foyer with an aura of anticipation. Fay starts up the steps, gesturing for the Greens to follow.

FAY

Since we painted the portraits in the studio, I thought it would be appropriate to have the unveilings there.

They ascend the stairs to the studio, with Cassandra stopping to wheeze and stare at herself in the mirrors. Lucy glances back at Francine with a grimace of foreboding.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

The studio is tidy with the two easels holding the canvases covered with green velvet. Chairs are arranged for viewing, and on the table are fluted glasses and an ice bucket filled with champagne.

Cassandra seats herself next to Phillip. Lucy and Francine sit stiffly in palpable agony, as Cassandra turns toward Fay.

CASSANDRA

Well, my dear, I'm certainly eager to see what you've done.

Fay stands in front of the easels and speaks with respectful formality.

FAY

Perhaps I shouldn't preface the unveilings with a speech, but these paintings have meant a lot to me. They're my last tribute to the Grand Style, yet in some small places, in their color, in their music, they're a new beginning.

(pause)

I'd like to unveil them both simultaneously, so I'll take the portrait of Phillip, and Francine, would you do the honors on Lucy's portrait?

Francine shoots a panicky glance at Lucy.

FRANCINE

Well, okay...

FAY

Please.

Formal presentational music is heard. Cassandra and Phillip sit with eager smiles of anticipation. Fay signals Francine with a nod and they remove the velvet cloths.

The faces of Phillip and Cassanrda fall simultaneously. Fay observes them, then turns quickly towards the blank canvases, and gasps.

CASSANDRA

Is this your idea of a joke?

FAY

No! Of course not! They... they were here just yesterday! I put them there myself!

Fay glares at Francine who is staring at her shoes.

FAY

Francine! Where are the portraits?!

Francine swallows, unable to answer.

FAY

You heard me, where are they!?

FRANCINE
Stolen...?

FAY
By whom?!

FRANCINE
Don't look at me.

FAY
Well, who else would it be?!
Lucy...?!

PHILLIP
Lucy?!

LUCY
Hey, leave me out of this.

CASSANDRA
What the devil's going on here?

Francine has backed away towards the studio door, but Fay grasps her arm.

FAY
You're staying right here,
young lady! Now, where are
the portraits?!

FRANCINE
I...I can't say.

FAY
What's gotten into you? How
could you do this?!

Francine stays stubbornly silent, leveling a glance at Lucy who stares at her feet.

FAY
Listen, girls, I was contracted
to produce two portraits. If I
don't honor that contract, I
won't get paid. Now, please,
where did you hide them?

FRANCINE
I...I'm not talking.

Cassandra stands, approaching Francine.

CASSANDRA

Well, I must say this is a very distressing situation.

(to Francine)

And damn inconvenient. As the patroness of the portraits, I feel I have the right to an explanation.

Pause. Francine remains silent.

PHILLIP

Now girls, if you won't tell us where you hid them, for heaven's sake tell us why.

There is a long pause which is finally broken by Lucy's anguish.

LUCY

Oh, shit, tell them!

FRANCINE

I...I took them because they're too...beautiful to keep in some stupid tomb where no one will ever ever see them!

Pause. Fay smiles, placing her hand on Francine's shoulder.

FAY

Francine, I...I'm deeply touched that you think the portraits are beautiful, but it's wrong for you to take them. They don't belong to us.

CASSANDRA

She's right, you know. They're mine.

FRANCINE

Because you're rich!

CASSANDRA

Because I commissioned them. You might say I inspired their creation.

FAY

Francine, I'm losing patience. Now tell us where they are!

Pause as Francine is clearly unwilling to reveal her hiding place.

CASSANDRA
(to Fay)
Would you mind if I spoke
with the girls alone?

Fay looks uncertain and glances towards Phillip who nods his approval.

FAY
Well,...alright.

PHILLIP
Why don't we take a walk?

Phillip and Fay leave the studio. Lucy stands beside Francine, indicating a loyal willingness to defend their scheme.

CASSANDRA
Well, ladies, I'm actually rather
impressed with your ingenuity. Not
many people are willing to risk
prison to salvage a work of art.

FRANCINE
Prison...?

CASSANDRA
Well, you are thieves, aren't
you?

LUCY
Look, we just don't want them
buried. Why can't you get a camera
and bury pictures instead?

CASSANDRA
Because pictures fade and only
capture an instant. I wanted
something artful, something
that...endures.

FRANCINE
But you won't even see them;
you'll be dead!

Francine instantly regrets her remark.

CASSANDRA
What do you know about death?
You're only a child.

LUCY
 (sighs, exasperated)
 It's hopeless...

CASSANDRA
 (to Francine, gently)
 Lucy and my husband were my most
 precious companions -- so I need
 something precious to remind me.
 Is that asking too much?

FRANCINE
 But won't you be in heaven?
 I mean, what difference does
 it make?

Cassandra walks towards the studio window.

EXT./INT. THE BEACH FROM THE STUDIO WINDOW. DAY

Cassandra gazes out at the sea, speaking mournfully to the future.

CASSANDRA (O.S.)
 A few years from now, when we've
 utterly destroyed the earth's
 oceans and atmosphere, my tomb and
 others like it will hold some of
 the beauty of the world, and it
 will also hold me -- preserved
 for the study of our species.

FRANCINE
 You mean like King Tut?

Cassandra nods as Francine stares incredulously.

FRANCINE
 But if we're "utterly destroyed",
 who will be left to find you?

Cassandra returns to the center of the studio, staring at the empty canvases.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY

Francine approaches her.

FRANCINE
 Will Lucy and her dad be buried
 with you?

CASSANDRA

No. That's why I need the paintings.

FRANCINE

When you die, you'll have the paintings, but what will they have?

CASSANDRA

A great deal of money.

FRANCINE

They won't have a painting to remember you. Fay should be painting your portrait.

LUCY

Yeah.

CASSANDRA

(warming to the idea.)

Well, I'm not at my best, and my demise may be imminent so...she'd have to begin soon. And frankly, I don't even know if I'd want a portrait since I haven't had the privilege of seeing the ones she's already painted!

Cassandra stares imploringly at Francine and Lucy.

CASSANDRA

Oh, come on, girls, give me a break. Are they here in the house?

Francine shoots Lucy a conspiratorial glance.

FRANCINE

We'll get them if you promise not to bury them -- at least not till you...

Cassandra pauses to consider this, her brows furrowed. When she speaks, it is with a measured deliberation.

CASSANDRA

Alright. But you have to agree to guarantee their delivery -- now! Then we'll hang them in the house until I pass on. Oh, I know you all think I'm mad as a March hare, but I have good reasons, and a right to some assurances.

Lucy stares piteously at her mother, then nods.

FRANCINE
All right, I'll get them.

Francine leaves the studio.

EXT. BEACH BEHIND FAY'S HOUSE. DAY.

In the distance, we see Fay and Phillip strolling on the beach. They stop and stand still, staring at the sea. Then Phillip turns to Fay.

PHILLIP
We'll miss our sittings. Maybe
someday you'll agree to paint us
again.

FAY
Maybe.

PHILLIP
Even if you don't, I hope
you'll stay in our lives --
in mine anyway.

Fay smiles and stares at Phillip.

FAY
Then you've forgiven me?

PHILLIP
Of course.

In the distance we see Francine waving, and Fay and Phillip walk to join her. We then returning to the house as Francine's voice is heard.

FRANCINE (V. O.)
So everyone agreed that the
portraits could stay on the
walls of the Green's mansion
for awhile at least. So Aunt Fay
finally had her unveiling...

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Cassandra is beaming with pleasure, lifting her glass of champagne and admiring the paintings from every conceivable angle. Phillip, Lucy, Fay, and Francine are also drinking champagne.

Francine steps aside and we see the scene from her point of view: a Renoir-like painting of celebration in brilliant pastels. As we hear Francine's voice, the Greens vanish from the painting, leaving only Fay in a radiant aura of light.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

FAY agreed to paint Cassandra's portrait, and we were all really happy, so happy that Fay kissed me, and it's no big deal, but for the first time in my miserable life I felt really close to someone. But I had to go back to Boston in three days, so we decided to paint our self-portraits.

INT. FAY'S STUDIO. DAY.

Fay and Francine are standing before their easels, holding their palettes, beginning their self-portraits. Francine is staring at her face in the mirror.

FRANCINE

Should I paint myself like this?

FAY

Not if you don't want to. That's the advantage of being both the artist and the subject.

FRANCINE

But if I look in a mirror, that's not really me. It's my face reversed. Who are you going to be?

FAY

(smiling)

Just myself...

Fay begins to sweep her brush-baton in time to an original phrase of music. Francine watches, intrigued, as Fay speaks with a new enthusiasm.

FAY

I'll need lots of colors.
Which one should I start with?
You choose.

Francine steps up to Fay's palette and points to a gleaming globe of blue.

FRANCINE

Blue. Azure blue.

FAY

Violas: my serenity.

FRANCINE

Then green. Viridian.

FAY

Spinets: my childhood. No,
my childhood was organs: dark,
gloomy, unsettled.

Francine takes a tube of cadmium red and squeezes it onto
Fay's palette.

FRANCINE

You'll need trumpets!

FAY

My passions. Too ambiguous,
too many shades, hidden shades.

Fay's self-portrait is quickly coming into being as a
frenzied juggler. Francine watches with fascination.

FRANCINE

God, Fay, you look like a...a
clown. Who are they? Are
those faces you're juggling?

FAY

(pointing to a face)
Yes. That's you of course.

FRANCINE

Really? And is that Muriel?

Fay nods and we see other faces trapped on the juggler's
balls.

FAY

And here's Lucy and Phillip.
You're all part of me, part
of my past, maybe my future.

We stay focused on Fay's self-portrait emerging as Francine
speaks, pretending to be a museum guide of the future.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Early in the second phase of Fay Locke's career is a self-portrait given to her apprentice, Francine. You have to wear sunglasses when you look at it because the eyes are piercing to the core of every human heart. Two perfectly formed ears hear all laughter, all sorrow, and the flaming fuchsia lips liquefy your body in all the right places. There's something insane about fuchsia. It's so dazzling that if you stare long enough you'll go blind with burning...

Francine turns from the painting wearing dark sunglasses. As we move closer, the screen fills with darkness.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN. A FERRY NEAR MONKSHEAD ISLAND. DAY.

The sun emerges from behind the clouds; a foghorn blows.

Francine is seen at the railing of the ferry as she was in the beginning of the film, only now she is wearing the sunglasses of the previous scene. She is looking towards the docking area, waving at Fay in the distance.

We hear Francine's eager voice in the present.

FRANCINE (V. O.)

Fay's invited me back to finish my mural. She says when Phillip isn't visiting, he's with Cassandra, cataloging her collections. Lucy's taking voice lessons to prepare for a career as a singer, and as for me, well, I'm still drifting...

As Francine waves to Fay, a wind caresses her hair, revealing several strands of vibrant color.

THE END

