

WOLF AND FOX HUNT

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*Peter Paul Rubens, Wolf and Fox Hunt (c. 1615-21)*

WOLF AND FOX HUNT is a contained story. All the interior and exterior action occurs at a single location: a Victorian-style manor that sits alone on acres of land somewhere in New England.

Additionally, the paintings and painting styles mentioned in the story will be included in an appendix at the end of the document.

EXT. MANOR - DAWN

The late 1800s. The Gilded Age. A Victorian-style manor alone on acres of New England terrain. Peeling. Cracked. It was glorious in its youth. Inside, the sound of hammering.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

JOSEPH FARMER nails a posting to a wall at the end of the hallway. He's a thick, weathered man in his late 60s. Hands like stones. The hammer seems pointless.

The house's four other residents emerge from their bedrooms, bleary-eyed but curious. They are: BRAM VANDENBERG (a conceited malcontent in his early 30s); GERT ZIELINSKI (a daughter of Polish immigrants in her early 20s); JULIAN DOUGLAS (a bookish African-American in his late 20s); QUINN SCOTT (a cognitively impaired prodigy in his late 30s).

They approach the posting, parting as Farmer passes. It bears the logo of R.J. HACKMEISTER & SONS. PURVEYORS OF LUXURY. It's about an atelier (**pronounced ad-lee-yay**).

We see what it declares in bold letters as Julian reads:

JULIAN (O.S.)  
 Congratulations! Mrs. Mabel  
 Hackmeister will select one of you to  
 become a resident artist in her new  
 Manhattan atelier where you will  
 produce original works for exhibit in  
 her annual salon. Good luck!

They regard it like a passport to a better life.

BRAM  
 The Hackmeister salon.

GERT  
 An atelier.

JULIAN  
 (to Quinn)  
 It's a studio of a master.

BRAM  
 When is she coming?

JULIAN  
 It doesn't say.

BRAM  
 I can see that.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuuv!

He flaps his hands rapidly as if shaking off water. His body is always in motion.

BRAM

Farmer! When?

Farmer stops at the top of the stairs.

BRAM (cont'd)

When does she arrive?

FARMER

You've got eyes.

Bram rips the posting off the wall and advances his lanky body toward Farmer. Gert follows, trying to retrieve it as he waves it around like a spastic conductor.

BRAM

I do have eyes you grizzly bear. And they do not see a date, day or month of her arrival.

Gert snatches the posting then quickly works with the others to re-affix it to the wall.

BRAM (cont'd)

Who are the other artists in the salon? Anyone I know from the academy?

Farmer stares holes into him, then through gritted teeth:

FARMER

It doesn't say.

(announces)

Breakfast!

He stomps down the stairs.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Seating for six. Farmer serves hash and coffee to Julian and Quinn, who sit on one side of the table, but not to Bram, who fumes on the other side next to Gert's empty chair. Punishment for his petulance.

BRAM

How do you expect me to work without nourishment?



Julian shakes his head, irritated. The man has no idea.  
Farmer sits. Pays no attention. Quinn tips back his chair.  
One of his many compulsive behaviors.

FARMER

Quinn.

He quickly stops, leans forward and eats.

BRAM

Well, I'm sure the food at the  
atelier will be better than this.

JULIAN

You assume you'll be the one.

BRAM

It's a forgone conclusion. A  
Manhattan atelier will be a place of  
refinement and appearances. Like it  
or not, that eliminates the two of  
you. And Gert?  
(smirks)

FARMER

That's enough Bram.

JULIAN

(challenges)

And what if she bases her decision  
solely on talent?

BRAM

Then you can have my room when I'm  
gone.

Farmer shakes his head. Cocky SOB.

JULIAN

I didn't know Mrs. Hackmeister was a  
master artist.

FARMER

She's not an artist at all.

JULIAN

Then how can she have an atelier?

FARMER

Mabel Hackmeister is a great patron  
of the arts. She can have whatever  
she wants.

BRAM

It's just something more to put her name on. It's the salon that matters. It's not the Royal Academy, but tongues still wag. The world will finally get to witness original Vandenberg's. Not the slop I make for her profiteering husband.

FARMER

And just where do you think he earns the profits to pay for her little vanity project? Hm?

Farmer's expression: look around. Bram follows. Oh.

Gert floats in wearing one of her finest dresses. Quinn smiles and flaps his hands with approval.

GERT

(as she sits)

Thank you Quinn.

JULIAN

A little formal for morning hash, isn't it?

GERT

You read the posting. She could walk through that door at any moment.

Bram and Julian look at each other, still in pajamas, then bolt from their chairs. Julian leads Quinn by the hand.

QUINN

(confused)

Breakfast...

JULIAN

After we dress.

Gert smiles at Farmer. He winks back. Smart girl. She pauses for Grace. Shoots him a look. He sets down his fork. Prays.

EXT. MANOR - LATER

It's sunny. Still. Farmer chops wood in the yard.

## INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert sits on a stool in front of a canvas and easel, applying finishing details to a perfect copy of da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine*. Off to the side and behind it is another perfect copy that she uses as her subject.

Nearby on the floor are four finished copies. All museum quality. She hums "Shoo-Fly Don't Bother Me" as she cheerfully performs her task.

## INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian sits on a chair, also detailing a copy of an exact copy. His painting: Rembrandt's *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer*.

His movements are precise as he adds shading and shadows. His eyes dart from subject to canvas. His work, like the four copies that lean against a wall, is perfection.

## INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM

Quinn stands, finalizing copies like the others. His painting: *The Mona Lisa*. It's exquisite.

His feet rock side to side. His eyes are laser focused on her face. He never glances at the subject copy. There are six finished copies on the floor. All could pass for the real thing.

## INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

Bram moves back and forth between three canvases, all with copies of Vermeer's *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher*. He's in the shaping phase, applying brushstrokes to fill in various shapes, forms, and objects. All are on their way to becoming perfect matches of the subject copy.

He works quickly. Impatiently. This simple piece is beneath him. He's made detachment an art form.

## EXT./INT. MANOR - YARD - KITCHEN - DINING ROOM - LAVATORY

Farmer performs more chores. Laundry. Meal prep. Lunch service. Scrubbing porcelain. Tedious and unending.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bram still paints. From somewhere near: *DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.*  
Tries to ignore it. *DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.* Frowns. Not again.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LAVATORY

A leaky faucet. *DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.*

INT./EXT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

He thrusts his window open and yells:

BRAM  
Farmer! Drip! Drip! Drip!

He slams it shut. Farmer is below, looking at the window.  
Sighs. Not again.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LAVATORY - LATER

Farmer attempts to fix the faucet. Does the best he can.  
Clearly not a plumber.

He catches his reflection in the mirror. Studies his face.  
Pulls the slack of his skin. Traces every line with his  
fingers like he's mapping it.

He looks at his hands. Calloused and aching. He was glorious  
when he was young. What has he become?

INT. PARLOR - EVENING

It's off the foyer and adjacent to the library. All the  
furnishings are frayed. Julian reads *Moby Dick*. Gert and  
Quinn dance as she la-la's Chopin's "Waltz in A Minor".

Bram enters rolling his shoulders. They're sore and he wants  
everyone to know it. He plops in a chair.

BRAM  
Gert, be a dear and rub my shoulders.

She frowns, repulsed.

BRAM (cont'd)  
I'll clean your brushes.

GERT  
I've already cleaned them.

BRAM  
I'll clean them *properly*.

Quinn sneaks behind the chair and begins to massage Bram's traps and shoulders. Bram closes his eyes. It feels good.

Gert tiptoes to a chair across the room. Exchanges smirks with Julian and Quinn.

BRAM (cont'd)  
You have mighty hands for a little thing. It's that Polish stock.

GERT  
I get it from my mother.

Bram realizes her voice did not come from behind him. He opens his eyes. Sees Gert. Looks up. Sees Quinn. Springs from the chair. They laugh at his expense.

BRAM  
That's not funny!

QUINN  
(like a child asking)  
Rub shoulders please Bram.

BRAM  
Don't touch me. Move away.

Quinn does as ordered.

GERT  
You can have my seat Quinn.

She rises. Quinn barely sits then bounds out of the chair like it's spring loaded. Always in motion. Gert dances out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN

Farmer is doing the dishes. Gert flutters in, still smiling. She picks up a towel and begins drying dishes.

FARMER  
You don't have to do that.

GERT  
I don't mind. Anything to get away from Bram.

FARMER  
The mighty blowhard.

GERT

Yes. Blowhard.

FARMER

How would they say that in Warsaw?

GERT

Zarlok.

FARMER

Zarlok. I like that.

His affection is paternal. They work in tandem, then:

GERT

Do you think I have a chance?

FARMER

The atelier? I'm not the right person to ask.

GERT

You've seen my work.

(teases)

"You have eyes."

FARMER

(hates to tell her)

Mrs. Hackmeister is very fond of her sons. She favors boys. She's likely to choose one of ours.

GERT

...Bram.

FARMER

I would expect, yes.

GERT

Always men. da Vinci. Rembrandt. Vermeer. Michelangelo. I was taught by a man to paint like a man. I even dance to the music of a man. People look at a painting and immediately think a man did it. Why couldn't it be a woman? Good is good.

FARMER

Gentileschi.

GERT

What?

FARMER

Artemisia Gentileschi. Italian. She was one of the most accomplished painters of the seventeenth-century. There's a book in the library. She's mentioned in it.

GERT

I never heard of her.

FARMER

That's because most historians are also men.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE - LATER

Bedtime. Farmer's the last one up. He approaches the room, which is just off the kitchen. He unlocks the door, quickly enters, closes it, then locks it from inside. Moments later light emits from beneath the door.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

The four artists look toward the foyer as COURIERS carry their wrapped and bundled paintings out the door under Farmer's supervision.

FARMER

Careful with those.

He closes the door after the last bundle is gone, then addresses the team:

FARMER (cont'd)

(as always)

Your wages will be distributed per your instructions. Enjoy the rest of the day as you wish. Then back to work tomorrow.

They race past him and up the stairs the way children rush down them on Christmas.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuuv!

FARMER

(reminds them)

Mr. Cabot will arrive with an important client at week's end!

Four doors shut, one by one.

## INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bram sets all evidence of Vermeer aside and places a blank canvas on the easel. He dips his widest brush in blue paint and begins to slash away. He's not painting the canvas. He's punishing it. And he loves the freedom.

## INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian also paints an original work. He's adding more texture and color to a sweeping portrayal of a tropical landscape overlooking the sea.

It's like Robert S. Duncanson's work. Like something out of a fantasy.

## INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert reads an art history book in bed. The one Farmer mentioned. It fills her with inspiration.

Nearby on an easel is an unfinished original of a woman and baby by a lake, very much in the style of da Vinci.

## INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM

Quinn applies the fine details to a painting of Bram reacting to the prank in the parlor. A petulant man aghast.

It's extremely accurate. The work of a gifted man painting from memory -- a photographic one.

## INT. FOYER - DAY

Farmer stands with the MAILMAN, holding letters.

FARMER  
Correspondence!

Julian and Quinn hurry in from the library. They hand outgoing mail to the Mailman as Farmer hands them their incoming mail.

FARMER (cont'd)  
Julian... Quinn...  
(calls up)  
Gert!



## INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert quickly inserts a letter into an envelope addressed to A.B. WHEATLEY of Boston, MA. She sprays it with perfume then dashes out of the room.

## INT. FOYER

She races down the stairs and hands it to the Mailman. The men immediately smell it and smile. Sweet as always.

She takes her incoming mail from Farmer. He hands her another letter.

FARMER

Bram.

She sprints up the stairs.

## INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

The letter slides under his door. Bram is on his bed, anticipating it. He picks it up and promptly drops it in a waste pail.

## INT. LIBRARY

The largest room in the manor. Worn furniture. Shelves half-full with books. Julian helps Quinn read a letter from his parents with the patience of a teacher.

BOTH

Dear, Quinn. We ho--

JULIAN

(instructs)

Sound it out.

BOTH

--hope you are well.

QUINN

(childlike)

Aww. I love you.

JULIAN

I love you too. Focus.

BOTH

We will be coming to visit on the  
twenty-first of the month next, and  
have news to share with you. Love,  
Mother.

Julian turns over the letter, looking for more. But that's  
it. On the bright side:

JULIAN

Your family is coming. That's good  
news.

QUINN

Mommy...

Julian smiles. Quinn looks at Julian's mail.

JULIAN

Right.

He opens it. Five pages. Awkward.

JULIAN (cont'd)

It's from my mother.

(reads)

My dearest Julian.

He pauses. It already sounds so much better than Quinn's. He  
presses on:

JULIAN (cont'd)

Greetings from Greenwich. It is  
cloudy here today, but all I see is  
sunshine as I write this, for you are  
the light in my eyes.

(stops)

It's a touch excessive, don't you  
think?

(folds it)

We'll pick this up another time.

QUINN

Mommy come back.

JULIAN

...Later.

INT. PARLOR - LIBRARY - FOYER - DINING ROOM - LATER

Farmer cleans and polishes every wood, glass and metal  
surface. He's fastidious. Works well into the night.

INT. FOYER - MORNING

Gert and Bram are feet from the front door. A dismayed look on her face.

GERT

Farmer! Come quick! There's a dead rabbit on the porch.

BRAM

It looks like something really had its way with it.

Farmer arrives. Sighs. Gert and Bram back away, leaving him to deal with it.

INT. 1ST FLOOR LAVATORY - LATER

Farmer is out of work clothes and in a suit. Combs his hair in the mirror. He's tense.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

MR. THATCHER, a bespectacled Brit in his 60s, carefully studies *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer*. His nose is inches away. He's in awe.

THATCHER

Remarkable. Simply remarkable.

Also in the room is Farmer, and MR. CABOT, a gangly man in his 50s who carries a walking stick merely for effect. He is a Hackmeister employee, and in his mind the most important.

CABOT

As if there were any doubt.

Thatcher steps back and we now see one of each painting displayed on easels. The parlor is doubling as a showroom.

THATCHER

Well done.

CABOT

(smells a sale)

Museum quality. As impeccable as the reproductions Mr. Hackmeister purchased in Europe and I do not hesitate to say, even better.

Thatcher continues his inspection.

## IN THE LIBRARY

The four artists listen intently behind closed pocket doors.

CABOT (cont'd)

These are the finest reproductions in the world, painted by American artists on American soil. Each one could pass for the real thing.

THATCHER

Don't tempt me dear boy.

CABOT

I wouldn't presume Mr. Thatcher.

THATCHER

One of the Vanderbilt boys is constructing a summer 'cottage' in Newport. Beaux-art design. It's said to mimic the Petit Trianon at Versailles. Five-hundred thousand cubic feet of marble. I could see any one of these hanging there.

CABOT

I hear his brother is planning something even grander. And now with the railroads connecting us to the west...

THATCHER

(sees dollar signs)

I see your point. I'll commission ten of each. A dozen of the Mona Lisa.

In the LIBRARY, mixed reactions. More of the same.

CABOT

Excellent. Mr. Farmer will see to it that you receive them promptly.

THATCHER

(jests)

As long as your artist doesn't take twelve years to paint Mona's lips like Leonardo did.

CABOT

(chuckles)

We would be out of business my good man.

(motions to the door)

Shall we?

Thatcher smiles at Farmer as he exits. Means it:

THATCHER

Well done.

FARMER

Thank you Mr. Thatcher.

CABOT

(curt)

Good day Farmer.

Farmer stops him, reluctant to ask:

FARMER

About the atelier. Any idea when Mrs. Hackmeister will arrive to make her selection?

CABOT

Whenever she wishes.

FARMER

They have a right to know.

CABOT

The Hackmeisters are traveling the west indies. Perhaps when they return, but certainly not until *after* this latest commission.

He turns to go, but:

FARMER

One more thing.

CABOT

What is it?

FARMER

There's a leaky faucet in the second floor lavatory that I can't repair. Could you please send someone?

CABOT

I'll look into it. Is that all?

FARMER

(meekly)

Yes.

Cabot looks toward the library door. Quietly creeps to it and SMACKS it with his stick, startling the eavesdropping artists on the other side.

GERT

AHHHHHH!

He passes Farmer with a devilish grin. The front door slams.

The artists slowly emerge. Rattled. *BAM!* Quinn rams his head into the wall to no one's surprise.

FARMER

Quinn.

BRAM

Did you ask?

FARMER

Yes.

BRAM

Well?

FARMER

After the commission.

Their faces drop. Pause.

FARMER (cont'd)

We'll have lunch. Then back to work.

INT. PARLOR - LIBRARY - FOYER - LATER

The rooms are empty. Quiet. Only the sound of pots being washed in the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian gets on with the task: a new commission of the same old painting. This is the job. Always the job. Better than museum quality. Perfection without passion. He looks at Aristotle and quips:

JULIAN

We are what we repeatedly do, huh?

INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

GERT stays upbeat. Sing-hums a folk song as she paints:

GERT

*Hej, hej, hej, sokoly  
Z vysky hladia na to vsetko, co nas  
boli...*

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

BRAM steps back from the three canvases before him. He's only begun to sketch. Just stares at them. Unblinking.

INT. PARLOR - EVENING - DAYDREAM

A swanky black tie reception. New England's elite. Tycoons and their bejeweled wives. The room looks grand. Gilded.

They turn to greet someone they revere.

TYCOON

Ah! The man of the hour.

Applause.

INT. KITCHEN

Farmer cleans up from lunch. Always the job. He trudges toward his bedroom. Unlocks. Enters. Locks.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Farmer opens a letter from Hackmeister & Sons as the Mailman departs. He reads it. Frowns. Re-reads it. Reacts as if it's a hostage letter.

BRAM (O.S.)

Farmer! Drip! Drip! Drip!

He looks toward the second floor. Folds the letter.

INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert finishes reading a letter from A.B. Wheatley. Beams. Best news ever. She sniffs it.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian sits by the window reading a letter from his mother. Pinches the bridge of his nose. Continues reading. Squints.

INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

Farmer moves all the furniture to one side. Making space for something big.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Gert and Quinn play a joyful game of chase. She pursues him.

QUINN  
(giddy)  
Chase me please Gert!

They run laps through the manor. Julian and Bram play cards off to the side.

QUINN (cont'd)  
(squeals)  
Run, run, run!

We follow the chasers through the hallway, into the kitchen, into the library, into the parlor and nearly into A WOLF BEING SPEARED IN THE MOUTH.

It stops them cold. Gert gasps. Quinn stares, imprinting it to memory. Julian and Bram are on their feet.

Before them is a copy of Peter Paul Rubens' *Wolf and Fox Hunt*. A beast of a painting. Eight feet by twelve feet. As the title suggests, it's an action-packed snapshot of 1600s nobility doing what they did best: kill.

NOTE: WE COULD USE A SLIGHTLY SMALLER VERSION TO ACCOMMODATE THE SHOOTING LOCATION.

Two AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN carry it in under Farmer's supervision. A third MAN carries supplies.

FARMER  
...In the library.

One of the men sees Julian. Knows him. Julian blanches. Mortified. Looks away.

They move it into the library. Julian wants to escape but his feet won't let him.

The delivery men step out of the library moments later.

FARMER (cont'd)  
I'll be sure to let Mr. Cabot know  
how well you handled it.

DELIVERY MAN 1  
Much appreciated.

He stops in front of Julian. Waiting. Julian's look: You don't know me. The man moves on. Ashamed. As they go:



DELIVERY MAN 2  
Hey, wasn't that Buck?

DELIVERY MAN 1  
Hush.

The door closes. Bram witnessed it. All of it.  
Everyone moves into the library for a better look.

INT. LIBRARY

They take in the full scene. Hunters on horses. A bloody fox. A dog gnashing its teeth into a wolf. Vicious.

GERT  
(disgusted)  
What is it?

FARMER  
Special commission. Single order.

JULIAN  
(quick to explain)  
It's Rubens' Wolf and Fox Hunt.

GERT  
It's cruel.

JULIAN  
It's taking up the library.

BRAM  
Then look away little girl.

FARMER  
Boys.

QUINN  
Fox.

GERT  
How could anybody want one?

BRAM  
Who cares? I finally have something *I can sink my teeth into.*

He takes a step. Farmer blocks him with his arm.

FARMER  
Not you.

Bram is shocked. As are the others. Julian steps forward.  
Blocked.

FARMER (cont'd)

Or you.

The artists look at each other. Then who?

INT. PARLOR - EVENING

The artists watch Farmer welcome a YOUNG WOMAN carrying two suitcases into the manor. Mid 20s. Dark hair. Porcelain skin. Feminist spirit. This is RUBY.

FARMER

Everyone, this is Ruby Merrywether.

RUBY

Hello.

They nod hello.

FARMER

This is Gertrude Zielinski. Julian Douglas. Quinn Scott. And Bram Vandenberg.

Gert smiles. Quinn flaps. Bram and Julian are stupefied.

FARMER (cont'd)

I'll show you to your room.

He leads her upstairs.

BRAM

What the hell is this?

INT. RUBY'S BEDROOM

Farmer shows her in, uneasy about this. He explains the rules as she sets down her bags:

FARMER

Breakfast is at dawn, then you paint until lunch. After that, you paint until sundown. That's when we have dinner. The remainder of the day is yours, as are Sundays. The other artists use that time to focus on their own works. But might I suggest you use that time to focus on why you're here.

RUBY

I understand.

FARMER

Your studio is in the library. It's the only room big enough.

RUBY

Of course.

FARMER

Dinner will be ready shortly.

RUBY

What are we having?

FARMER

(caught off guard)

Beef stew and Welsh rarebit.

He looks at her guardedly then leaves her to unpack.

INT. FOYER

Farmer skulks down the stairs. Turns toward the kitchen. Gert darts up the stairs. Bram and Julian move into the

LIBRARY

They study *Wolf and Fox Hunt*.

BRAM

That *girl* is going to copy *this*?

JULIAN

I doubt the copiest who took credit for this one did it alone.

BRAM

Stop calling us that.

JULIAN

It's what we are.

BRAM

It's what you are. I'm an original.

Quinn paces in and out of the room, glimpsing the painting.

BRAM (cont'd)

Why do you say he had help?

JULIAN

(baiting)

Why who had had help?

Bram shoots him a look.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
Rubens had a studio swarming with assistants. Scholars have debated whether or not he even laid a hand on the original. It's his style. But they question its authenticity.

BRAM  
How do you know this?

JULIAN  
*I read.*

They step closer to it, searching for inconsistencies.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
What if she succeeds?

BRAM  
Impossible.

JULIAN  
(yes, but)  
What if she does?

Bram's expression: oh no.

INT. RUBY'S BEDROOM

Ruby unpacks. Gert appears at the doorway, anxious to make a friend.

GERT  
Hi.

RUBY  
Hello.

GERT  
I'm Gertrude. But you can call me Gert.

RUBY  
Okay. Gert.

GERT  
Would you like help?

RUBY  
I can do it myself, thank you.

GERT

I'm glad you're here. It's so nice to finally have another girl in the house.

RUBY

I hate to disappoint you Gert, but I am not a girl. I'm a lady. We both are.

Gert nods like a chastised schoolgirl.

GERT

I'm sorry. I--

RUBY

Don't apologize. Ever. Especially to them. I suppose they treat you like a girl.

GERT

No. Not really. I mean, Bram has strong opinions.

RUBY

Mostly about himself I suspect.

GERT

(cautiously enters)

He thinks he's better than everyone. But he's not. My work is just as good as his.

RUBY

Yes it is.

GERT

But you haven't seen my work.

RUBY

That's irrelevant. If you say it's better, than it is.

Gert smiles. A comrade. Strong and inspirational.

GERT

Are you really going to copy Wolf and Fox Hunt?

RUBY

Absolutely.

GERT

It's savage.

RUBY

The world is savage Gert. You're  
either the hunter or the hunted.  
Which one are you?

Gert stiffens. Feels like a doe in the crosshairs.

INT. KITCHEN

Bram and Julian crowd Farmer as he prepares stew.

BRAM

This is ludicrous.

JULIAN

It's blocking the books.

BRAM

Who's idiot idea is this?

FARMER

The idiots who pay your wages.

BRAM

They can't be serious. That will take  
a master to complete.

FARMER

Like you?

JULIAN

Couldn't it go in the parlor?

FARMER

Boys!

They freeze.

FARMER (cont'd)

They'll both be gone when she's  
finished. That's all I know. If you  
have a grievance take it up with Mr.  
Cabot.

They back down. No one wants to confront Cabot.

FARMER (cont'd)

(to Julian)

I'm sorry about the books. Just do  
the best you can.

(realizes)

Who's watching Quinn?

They turn their heads like panicky parents.

INT. DINING ROOM

Quinn is alone and standing on his chair.

QUINN  
...Climbing to the top...

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Everyone is seated in their usual seats, which means Ruby is sitting at the other head of the table. They eat in awkward silence until:

RUBY  
This is very good Mr. Farmer. Thank you. Where did you learn to cook?

Farmer looks up, surprised. No one ever asks him about his life. Everyone waits for an answer.

FARMER  
I...would watch my mother.

Ruby looks at him sharply. You're forgetting something.

FARMER (cont'd)  
Oh. You're welcome. And, thank you.

JULIAN  
(making conversation)  
My mother is an excellent cook. She's a maid in Greenwich. Cooks for the family.

RUBY  
She's not a "maid." She's a "caretaker." I'm sure she takes excellent care of that family. They're lucky to have her.

JULIAN  
(stumbles)  
Well, yes. Of course... I mean she... takes care... Took care of me. Very good care. It's why I made it here.

He sags in his chair.

BRAM  
 (wants conflict)  
 So, Ruby, where did you study?

RUBY  
 (bring it pal)  
 University of the Arts.

BRAM  
 That's in Philadelphia, isn't it?

RUBY  
 Yes. But you don't really care, do you? You're only asking so you can tell me you attended somewhere better. Knock me down a notch?

BRAM  
 Royal Academy in London.

GERT  
 (snips)  
 No one cares Bram.

He looks at Gert. What's with you?

GERT (cont'd)  
 (mocks)  
 "Royal Academy. Piccadilly London."  
 Blah, blah, blah. You're still here.  
 A copiest like the rest of us.

BRAM  
 Shut up you Warsaw wench!

GERT  
 I was born in America you pig!

Quinn gets agitated. *BAM!* Rams his head into the table.

FARMER  
 Enough!

*BAM!*

Farmer looks daggers at Ruby. You started this.

FARMER (cont'd)  
 Finish in silence. Then back to your rooms.  
 (desperate)  
 Quinn. Please son. You have to stop that.



The others exchange looks of frustration.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE - LATER

Ruby approaches the door.

FARMER (O.S.)  
You can't go in there.

She turns. Farmer advances toward her.

FARMER  
That's my room. No one's allowed.

RUBY  
I was going to knock.

FARMER  
You're supposed to be in your room.

RUBY  
I came to bring you fresh cardamom.

She offers him a small glass jar with green cardamom pods.

FARMER  
You said you enjoyed my cooking.

RUBY  
I'll enjoy it more with a pinch of  
cardamom.

He stares at the jar, then at her. He takes it. Warns:

FARMER  
You're here to work. Not tussle with  
Bram. And please don't go putting  
ideas into Gert's head.

RUBY  
Like telling her she has no chance at  
the atelier?

Farmer is surprised Gert confided in her.

RUBY (cont'd)  
Take all hope away from that young  
woman and she'll never find reason to  
have any at all.

She's right and it embarrasses him.

FARMER

Just focus on the job you're here to do.

RUBY

Aye, aye, captain.

(taps the jar)

Keep them stored in their pods. They lose their flavor once they're exposed.

She marches away. He holds his tongue.

INT. RUBY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Ruby is in her nightgown, brushing her hair. There's a knock. She opens the door. Bram strides in like he owns the place. Brandy bottle in one hand. Snifter in the other.

BRAM

I only have one snifter so we'll need to share.

She smirks. Predictable.

RUBY

I've yet to sleep in my bed and here you are expecting to command it.

BRAM

You think highly of yourself.

RUBY

And you must think I'm one of your academy girls.

(mimics)

*"Oh, Bram. Stroke me with your brush."*

She flops back on the bed. Continues to mock:

RUBY (cont'd)

Are you a missionary man? Or would you prefer I get on top and do all the work?

He pours brandy into the snifter, unamused.

RUBY (cont'd)

Maybe we should muffle my screams of ecstasy with a paint rag.

(bites her hand)

Oh Bram! Bram! Braaaaaam!

He sips the brandy, utterly foiled.

She sashays toward him. Takes the snifter. Sips. Excellent.

BRAM  
Private reserve.

RUBY  
So what did you come to see me about  
Mr. Vandenberg?

BRAM  
(quickly pivots)  
Consolation.

RUBY  
For...?

BRAM  
The spot in the atelier is mine.

RUBY  
You think highly of yourself.

BRAM  
I'm the only one here suited for the  
position. Unless of course, you  
somehow manage to reproduce that  
masterwork. But I think beneath all  
your conceit, you just don't have it  
in you.

She stares at him coolly. Takes another sip.

RUBY  
I think I'll keep this.  
(off his look)  
For when I come to console you.

She opens the door. Tilts her head. Out.

BRAM  
(as he leaves)  
I mount from the rear.

She closes the door. Jerk.

INT. LIBRARY - MORNING

Ruby closes the doors. Turns to face *Wolf and Fox Hunt* and a  
blank canvas equal its size. They dominate the room.

This is her challenge. She asked for this. No turning back.

RUBY  
(deep breath)  
Let's begin.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

Bram continues work on his new copies. Background phase. He stops. Considers their simplicity. There's no challenge. It angers him.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian sits in front of a new copy. Shaping phase. He's bothered. Glances at a book on his dresser. He rises.

INT. KITCHEN

Farmer stands at the sink looking out the window, lost in thought.

INT. PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Julian approaches the library doors. Book in hand. Knocks.

Ruby slides the doors open just a crack.

JULIAN  
Sorry to disturb you, but I need to  
exchange books.

She hesitates a moment.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
I promise not to look.

She allows him to enter. He adverts his eyes from the canvases. She's begun to sketch an outline of the composition with a charcoal pencil.

She sees the book.

RUBY  
Walden.

JULIAN  
Yes.

RUBY

(recites)

"Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations."

JULIAN

(smiles, volleys back)

"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."

They exchange smiles. A spark. He navigates around the canvases to the bookshelves. Out of sight.

RUBY

You enjoy reading.

JULIAN (O.S.)

Very much so. Some days I think if I didn't paint I would write.

RUBY

So why not do both?

Pause. She waits for an answer. He finally reappears carrying *Gulliver's Travels* and searching for an answer.

RUBY (cont'd)

If you have thoughts you wish to set to paper then why not do it?

He rises to her challenge.

JULIAN

I express my thoughts through my paintings. My *original* paintings. What's *your* other passion?

RUBY

Debate.

JULIAN

...Of which you are already a master.

More smiles.

RUBY

Swift.

JULIAN

I like to think so.

RUBY  
I was talking about the book.

He looks at the book. Ah.

RUBY (cont'd)  
Do you also like to read women Mr.  
Douglas?

A loaded question. Pause. He backs off.

JULIAN  
I'll leave you to your work.

He steals a quick peek as he exits. She smiles.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Lunch. Cheese sandwiches on the table. Bram sits alone at the other head with no intention of moving. Gert, Julian and Quinn enter. Exchange looks. Oh Bram.

Farmer enters with a pot of lentil soup. Sees Bram. Really?

Ruby breezes in. Sees Bram. Stops behind him and whispers:

RUBY  
I pass wind when I eat.

She sits in the seat next to him. He looks uncomfortable. Am I sitting in fermented fart? No one knows what she said, but they enjoy how it's making him feel.

They take sandwiches. Farmer serves soup. Quinn tips in his chair. Julian blocks him. Gert says a quiet Grace. They eat. Gert takes a spoon of soup. Something's different.

GERT  
What's in this?

FARMER  
(deadpan)  
Cardamom.

Curious looks are exchanged. Ruby can barely hide her satisfaction.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Julian is detailing the original work we saw earlier. There's a knock at the door. He opens it a crack. It's Ruby. She thrusts a book through the opening.

RUBY

Frankenstein. Mary Shelley. It's wildly absurd. Everyone naturally assumed a man wrote it.

JULIAN

I never saw it in the library.

RUBY

It's my personal copy. I'm lending it to you.

He takes it. Has no choice at this point.

JULIAN

Thank you.

She uses it as an opportunity to muscle her way in.

JULIAN (cont'd)

You can't--

It's too late. He quickly closes the door. She sees the painting. Makes a beeline to it. She's overwhelmed.

RUBY

Is this yours?

JULIAN

Yes.

RUBY

It's incredible. Have you been there?

JULIAN

No. This is how it was described to me. How I imagine it to be.

RUBY

I just want to kick off my shoes and run into that water.

He looks at her appreciatively. Best compliment ever.

JULIAN

I hope to exhibit it at the salon. If I win, of course.

RUBY

And if you don't?

JULIAN

I've been saving my wages so one day  
my mother and I can move to Chicago  
and open a gallery of our own.  
Showing in the Hackmeister salon  
would certainly help to enhance my  
reputation.

She sees a photo of his mother on his dresser. Picks it up.

RUBY

Is this her?

JULIAN

Yes.

RUBY

She's beautiful.  
(with intent)  
I see the resemblance.

He picks up her vibe. Makes him uneasy.

JULIAN

Thank you again for the book. I think  
you should go now.

She sashays to his bed. Reclines.

RUBY

Why? Because of what *they* might think  
if they knew I was in here? You're a  
free man. I'm a free woman.

He rushes toward her. Forcing her to lean back further. He's  
nearly on top of her.

JULIAN

(calls her bluff)  
And what if I were to come upon you?  
Hm? A big black beast. How free would  
you feel then?

RUBY

(unblinking)  
You're not so big.

She pulls him in for a kiss. He pushes away. Wags his  
finger. I'm in control.

JULIAN

I'm much bigger than you give me  
credit for.



He opens the door. Tilts his head. Out.

She smiles. Gets up and as she passes:

RUBY  
I would have taken off more than my  
shoes before I hit the water.

He closes the door. Smiles. Game on.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Farmer scrubs pots in the sink.

BRAM (O.S.)  
ARRRGHHH!

FARMER  
(mutters)  
Sweet Jesus.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Bram stands outside his room, enraged. Farmer arrives.

FARMER  
(I told you)  
I asked Cabot about the faucet.

BRAM  
It's not the faucet. It's *her*!

FARMER  
Who?

He looks in Bram's room, expecting trouble.

BRAM  
Young Woman with a Water Pitcher. She  
mocks me with her profound drabness.

Julian has arrived and wants to mock Bram as well.

JULIAN  
Only you would say that about a  
classic.

BRAM  
Go sit on a book.

Julian enters, and like a museum docent:

JULIAN

Look at the way Vermeer represents light as if it were tangible. That soft blur. The sun spilling in through the open window. And this "drab" young woman you so detest? He uses her to bridge the space between the light and everything it lights. What's *profound* here is the state of grace he creates.

BRAM

Then you paint it. I've done it so many times I could do it by memory.

RUBY (O.S.)

I'd like to see you try.

Ruby is at the doorway, arms crossed. Well?

BRAM

Oh, little lady.

He quickly begins to remove all finished copies into the hallway.

FARMER

What are you doing?

BRAM

Exactly what it looks like.

FARMER

Don't be a fool. You're not Quinn.

BRAM

No, I'm better.

He sets a blank canvas on the easel.

FARMER

Squander materials and it will come out of your wages.

Bram grabs a charcoal pencil, waves it like a magic wand:

BRAM

Care to watch?

Ruby and Julian roll their eyes and leave. Bram turns and begins. Farmer observes a moment, thinks, then walks out.

INT. STAIRCASE

Ruby and Julian go down and pass Gert and Quinn going up.

GERT  
What's happening?

JULIAN  
Ruby challenged Bram to paint the  
Vermeer from memory and he accepted.

Gert and Quinn quickly dart up the stairs.

Ruby and Julian continue down and pass through the parlor  
toward the library. She stops at the closed doors. Teases:

RUBY  
You can't come in.

JULIAN  
I thought I might have a closer look  
this time.

RUBY  
You'd like that, wouldn't you?

She wags her finger. He smiles. Touché.

She opens the doors, quickly slips inside then shuts them  
just as quickly, leaving him wanting more.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

Bram makes quick work of the sketch as Gert and Quinn watch.  
His scale and aspect ratio are extremely precise. He vamps  
for his audience.

BRAM  
Vermeer. What an absolute bore. A  
master of the mundane. The loon was  
infatuated with grisaille--I don't  
care how much ultramarine he used.  
And look at his choice of subjects.  
Woman with pitcher. Woman with  
letter. Woman with jug. The milkmaid.  
Have you ever seen anyone so fixated  
with women standing near windows? If  
you ask me, the man was a peeping  
Tom.

GERT  
We didn't.

He dips a brush in water and flicks it at her.

BRAM

Get out. You used to be fun.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuuv!

Gert and Quinn exit and enter the

HALLWAY

GERT

Let's put these in my room so he  
can't cheat.

She picks up Bram's evicted copies. Quinn does the same.  
They carry them to her room.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian has returned. Ruby's in his head. He's infatuated.  
Needs to do something. Anything.

He approaches his latest *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer*.  
Begins to paint. Pauses to refocus his eyes. Continues.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Ruby stands on a chair. Still sketching. Still trying to  
capture the scale and ratio. She's frustrated. Concerned.  
She accidentally drops the pencil.

RUBY

(mutters)

Son of a bitch.

She hears a sound. Turns her head. It's Quinn peeping  
through the doors.

The midday sun creeping through the window illuminates her  
bashful expression. He blinks like a camera shutters.

RUBY (cont'd)

(invites)

It's okay.

He shuffles in. Gently touches the dead fox in the subject  
copy.

RUBY (cont'd)

You could paint this couldn't you?

QUINN

Fox.

They stare at the colossus.

RUBY

I will do this. I have to.

QUINN

Fox.

She nods. Looks at the slain animal. Am I next?

RUBY

Right. Fox.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE - EVENING

Gert knocks hesitantly.

GERT

Mr. Farmer, it's Gert.

FARMER (O.S.)

What is it?

GERT

I wanted to remind you that I'm expecting a guest this weekend.

FARMER (O.S.)

I remember. From Boston.

Pause.

GERT

Okay then. Thank you.

She leaves.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - LATER

Julian exits the lavatory freshly bathed. Ruby approaches ready for her turn. No words are exchanged. Their eyes say everything.

EXT. MANOR - LATER

Middle of the night. Silent and black.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM

Farmer is awakened by a light knock at the door.

FARMER  
(groggy)  
Quinn?

QUINN (O.S.)  
(whimpers)  
Mess.

FARMER  
(knows the drill)  
Alright.

INT. 1ST FLOOR LAVATORY

Quinn ejaculated in his sleep. Farmer helps him clean up.

QUINN  
(parrots)  
It's okay Quinn.

FARMER  
That's right son. It's okay. Stay  
here. I'll get a fresh union suit.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bram adds textures and color to his from-memory Vermeer. It's impressive. He steps away a moment to roll his sore neck. Looks out the window. His eyes go wide. Oh no.

INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert is in front of the mirror holding up a pretty blue dress. Bram barges in.

GERT  
Hey!

BRAM  
My skin is glossy. I need your witch  
hazel.

He picks up a bottle from her dresser. Pours witch hazel on his hands and cleanses his face.

GERT  
You like her, don't you?

BRAM

This isn't for her. And for your  
information she wants me.

Gert's look: in your dreams. Before he goes:

GERT

(demands)

Tell me what you think of this dress.

He's in her face in two paces. Leans in.

BRAM

If I were your man you wouldn't have  
it on long enough for me to notice.

He flashes a sly grin then exits as quickly as he entered.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

Bram sits across from his PARENTS, both in their late 50s.  
They look stressed. Their finely tailored clothing hangs on  
them. They fit better when they were living high on the hog.

The meeting has the mood of a loan application.

MR. VANDENBERG

You're looking well.

BRAM

You too.

MRS. VANDENBERG

How is your painting coming along?

BRAM

Vermeer. All day every day. I can do  
it from memory now.

MRS. VANDENBERG

What about your own work?

BRAM

It's brilliant. Mabel Hackmeister is  
opening an atelier in Manhattan. It  
comes with inclusion to her annual  
salon. My chances are good.

MRS. VANDENBERG

Manhattan. That's wonderful. We'll  
get to see you more often.

MR. VANDENBERG

He said his chances are good. Not firm. Don't get ahead of yourself.

A tense pause.

MR. VANDENBERG (cont'd)

Hackmeister & Sons opened a furrier on Fifth Avenue. Did you know that?

BRAM

No. But I'm not surprised.

MR. VANDENBERG

(envious)

He has the Midas touch that man.

BRAM

(assumes, but)

And how are your prospects?

MR. VANDENBERG

Well...I...have a few things in the hopper. But you know how these matters take time, the market being as fickle as it is.

Bram nods. Knows he's lying. Embarrassed by his downfall.

BRAM

I could ask Mr. Cabot if--

MR. VANDENBERG

(quickly)

No. Never.

Another pause. There's something else. The real reason they're here.

BRAM

What?

MR. VANDENBERG

Your brother died. We felt it was better to inform you in person.

MRS. VANDENBERG

(breaking up)

The doctors did all they could. But his poor body just couldn't take anymore.

MR. VANDENBERG

He went peacefully.



MRS. VANDENBERG

If it wasn't for the money you sent  
he would have passed sooner. It was a  
godsend. We can't thank you enough.

Bram is steady. Emotionless.

MR. VANDENBERG

We spread his ashes under the elm  
tree at the old house. The new owner  
was very accommodating. I'm going to  
get it back. As God as my witness...

He looks at his wife. She looks back: ask him.

MR. VANDENBERG (cont'd)

(reluctantly)

We were wondering...hoping...you  
would be able to continue sending  
wages. Just a little longer until  
something lands. Which it will. I--

MRS. VANDENBERG

It's not for us. It's for Ophelia.

BRAM

Ophelia?

MRS. VANDENBERG

Your niece. Your brother and his wife  
had a baby last year. She's a  
miracle. Didn't you get the letter?

BRAM

(long pause)

No.

He looks away. Now they know he's the one who is lying. He's  
had enough.

BRAM (cont'd)

I'm sorry for your loss.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bram watches from the window as his parents leave. He steps  
away and lets out the loudest silent scream ever. Walls  
would shake if he allowed sound to escape his body.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Ruby is on the chair. She's allowed Gert to watch. She's still working on the sketch. It's slow going.

GERT  
I'm changing my original style.

RUBY  
To what?

GERT  
I haven't decided yet. Do you know Artemisia Gentileschi?

RUBY  
You're not going to emulate her are you?

GERT  
(was, but not now)  
No...but she was a famous painter.

RUBY  
So was Louise Moillon. And she mostly painted fruit. You're better than a melon.

GERT  
Well, what's your style? *This*?

RUBY  
Maybe. Or maybe I'll create one the world has never seen before.

GERT  
Maybe that's what I'll do.

Ruby hops down from the chair.

RUBY  
Good. And when you do, wealthy women will pay great sums of money for it.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dinner. Chicken and braised red cabbage.

JULIAN  
This is delicious. Thank you.

GERT  
Yes, thank you.

Farmer nods a "you're welcome," still unaccustomed to the recent politeness. Quinn tips back.

FARMER

Quinn.

RUBY

Was there ever a Mrs. Farmer?

Everyone looks up. She went there.

FARMER

That's none of your business.

JULIAN

I've always wondered about that as well.

FARMER

Wonder about something else.

He shoots Ruby a stern look: Don't.

JULIAN

She was just making conversation.

FARMER

Then she can make it with you after supper. No more talking.

Cabbage falls from Gert's fork and lands on her dress.

GERT

Darn.

QUINN

Sonabitch.

Everyone stops.

FARMER

What did he just say?

JULIAN

I--

FARMER

(incensed)

Who taught him that?

He glares at Bram.

BRAM

Why are you looking at me?

RUBY

He overheard me. I didn't know he was there.

He looks daggers at Ruby. Points a quivering finger. Wants so badly to --

QUINN

Sonabitch.

Silence. Gert snorts trying to suppress a laugh.

FARMER

It's not funny.  
(points at Quinn)  
Bad.

The others hold in their giggles. It sounds so cute when he says it.

QUINN

(this is fun)  
Sonabitch.

Everyone is giggling now. Farmer grits his teeth, holding back anger.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Ruby tidies up. The sketch is nearly complete. Farmer opens the doors with purpose. Surprises her. Eyes the canvas.

FARMER

You're taking too long.

RUBY

It's a complicated piece.

FARMER

Then you shouldn't have taken it on.

RUBY

I will not be rushed.

FARMER

You're disruptive.

RUBY

I told you, it was an accident.

FARMER

This place is all they have. Don't jeopardize it for them.

RUBY  
No, this is not all they have. Maybe  
it is for you.

This stuns him. He glares.

FARMER  
I want you and this thing gone.

Silence. A tense stare down.

RUBY  
Aye, aye, captain.

FARMER  
Stop that.

He storms out.

EXT. MANOR - DAY

A pleasant day. The birds chirp happy love songs.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE

Farmer exits and locks the door. Gert and a WOMAN in her mid 20s approach. This is A.B. WHEATLEY. Gert is in the pretty blue dress she was considering. She hopes this goes well.

GERT  
Mr. Farmer, I'd like you to meet my  
friend.

ANNABETH  
(extends her hand)  
Hello, Mr. Farmer. Annabeth Wheatley.

FARMER  
(shakes her hand)  
Hello, Annabeth. Joseph Farmer.

He connects the dots. The perfumed letters.

FARMER (cont'd)  
Oh, Annabeth. A.B.

He looks at Gert. She looks back: Please accept this. He does.

FARMER (cont'd)  
It's a pleasure to meet you. You must  
be hungry. I'll fix you something to  
eat.

He motions for them to enter the kitchen. Places a  
supportive hand on Gert's shoulder as they do.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Gert and Annabeth are seated at the table. Farmer serves  
iced tea and pot roast sandwiches.

FARMER  
...Nursing school. That's an  
honorable pursuit.

ANNABETH  
I hope to secure a position in Boston  
where I study.

GERT  
I think she could go on to be a fine  
doctor one day.

FARMER  
(dad jokes)  
Well, if you become a doctor then  
I'll become a hypochondriac.

Awkward chuckles. It didn't come out the way he intended. He  
moves to the sink to clean up.

Annabeth inches her hand near Gert's. Yearns to touch her.  
Gert pulls away.

Farmer catches it from the corner of his eye. The old man  
recognizes young love.

FARMER (cont'd)  
(looks out the window)  
Would you look at that sky. That's a  
painter's sky. Yes indeed. Julian  
would appreciate a sky like that. Be  
a shame to waste it. Yes it would.  
This calls for an outing.  
(turns)  
The two of you should stay here of  
course. I'm sure you have a lot of  
catching up to do.

He and Gert share a look of great affection.

EXT. MANOR - FIELD - LATER

Farmer and the others are many yards away. Julian and Ruby sketch the sky. Quinn paces in circles. Bram swats at flies.

BRAM

How long are we going to be out here?

FARMER

Until I say.

He looks toward the manor. Ruby shifts her eyes that way. They see a second floor curtain close. They exchange looks. She gets it. Conspires.

She puts down her sketch book and slips off her shoes.

RUBY

Okay Vandenberg. Let's see if your feet move as fast as your mouth. I'll race you to that tree.

He sees a tree a long distance away.

BRAM

What will you give me when I win?

RUBY

My respect.

BRAM

(removes his shoes)

I'll give you a head start. Just to be sporting.

JULIAN

Can anyone join in? Or do you want this to be a fair contest?

Ruby grins, then dashes off. The boys quickly take off after her. Quinn looks at Farmer. Me too?

FARMER

Go on.

He chases after them. Farmer turns toward the manor. Smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Farmer washes dishes. Ruby enters. Pours a glass of water. A brief moment of solidarity:

FARMER

Thank you.

She smiles. Nods. Exits.

INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert is alone. Kneeling at her bedside. Praying hard.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nearly everyone is assembled. Bram's completed from-memory Vermeer sits on an easel.

Gert enters with the original subject copy. Sets it on another easel.

GERT

This is the original reproduction.

She, Julian, Ruby and Quinn move in to compare. They search for inconsistencies. Hope for them. But none exist.

JULIAN

(squints)

Are you sure this is the original and not one of his?

GERT

Positive.

Ruby notices his struggle to focus.

JULIAN

I don't know. Gert, what do you think?

He steps away.

BRAM

No. No. I want to know what you think.

JULIAN

I think there are inconsistencies.

BRAM

Like hell there are.



RUBY  
(hates to admit)  
He's right Julian. He did it. It's a perfect match.

BRAM  
Ha! I win the bet.

RUBY  
We never wagered.

His reaction: damn.

Julian excuses himself from the room. Ruby and Gert follow.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian enters. Ruby and Gert soon after.

RUBY  
What's wrong with your eyes?

JULIAN  
Nothing.

RUBY  
I will not be lied to.

JULIAN  
My eyes are strong. They're just tired.

She inspects his latest reproduction. Uh-oh.

RUBY  
Gert.

Gert joins the inspection. He watches. Knows what they see.

GERT  
(alarmed)  
You can't send this.

RUBY  
When did this start?

JULIAN  
Recently. Appears to be getting worse.

BRAM (O.S.)  
It's from reading!

Bram marches in like a triumphant sleuth.

BRAM

All those books have ruined your eyes. It's why I don't read.

Farmer and Quinn also enter.

FARMER

He needs spectacles.

BRAM

Blind as a bat. I'm sure you'll make a fine valet one day.

FARMER/RUBY/GERT

Shut up Bram!

JULIAN

Are they expensive?

RUBY

I'll help pay for them.

GERT

Me too.

They shoot Bram a look: Chip in.

BRAM

No.

GERT

He would do it for you.

BRAM

No he wouldn't.

JULIAN

He's right. I wouldn't.

FARMER

I'll contact Cabot. The company will pay for it. They can't risk anything less than perfection. In the meantime, inspect his other copies. Anything substandard goes to the trash. Quinn, I'll need you to help Julian with his commission.

Quinn looks at the painting.

QUINN  
(agrees)  
Rembrandt.

FARMER  
Thank you son. Everyone else, back to  
work. Museum quality. Nothing less.

He exits with authority.

Bram begins to walk out. Mimes like he's blind.

BRAM  
Is this the library?

Gert swats him in the back as she follows him out. Ruby  
takes Gert by the wrist and quickly escorts her into

GERT'S BEDROOM

Ruby closes the door. She's thirsting to know:

RUBY  
What is it like?

GERT  
What is what like?

RUBY  
You know.

She makes a face. *You know.*

GERT  
(scandalized)  
That's none of your business.

RUBY  
I've never met a lesbian before.  
There were wild rumors about a few  
girls at the university, but nothing  
was ever confirmed.

GERT  
You're worse than Bram. Please leave.

RUBY  
Who are you going to confide in if  
you don't tell me?

GERT  
I've already spoken to God.

RUBY  
Really? What did he say? Word for word.

Gert pauses. Gets the point.

RUBY (cont'd)  
Pleeeeeease.

GERT  
It's soft. Lovely.  
(pauses)

RUBY  
And?

GERT  
That's enough. I don't--

RUBY  
Oh come on.

GERT  
It's not about the physical part.  
That was wonderful in ways I can't explain, but it's more than that.  
When I close my eyes and think about being old I see her there with me.  
I've never been able to see a boy in that way. I've tried, but my heart always leads me to her. Why is that a sin?

Ruby stops crowding her. She expected titillation, but received something richer.

RUBY  
It's not. Not in my eyes.

GERT  
I wish I could tell the world. I would shout it from every rooftop.

Her heart is leaping from her chest. Ruby grabs a blank canvas and places it on an easel.

RUBY  
Paint *that* feeling. Show the world what true love looks like.

It inspires Gert. She approaches the canvas and gets to work. Ruby backs out of the room, all smiles.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LAVATORY - LATER

Farmer shaves Quinn's face. Helps comb his hair. Makes him fit to be seen.

INT. FOYER - LATER

Farmer welcomes QUINN'S MOTHER and FATHER (late 50s), and his trashy BROTHER and SISTER-IN-LAW (late 20s) into the manor. They enter slowly, like the place is haunted.

They see Quinn standing in the middle of the parlor. His heart pounding with anxiety.

MR. SCOTT

Hello boy.

INT. PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Quinn and his Mother sit together on the loveseat. She holds his hand tightly. He strokes her cheek with the back of his other hand, then touches her arm. She attempts to block him, discomfited by his compulsive displays of affection.

His Father stands next to them. His Brother sits in a nearby chair. His wife stands behind him. Farmer sits facing them all, uneasy by their presence.

MR. SCOTT

(a touch envious)

He eats well.

FARMER

Three square a day. Enjoys his potatoes.

MR. SCOTT

Like his mom.

QUINN'S BROTHER

(snide, as if Quinn  
were deaf)

How's your girlfriend Mona?

QUINN

Mona Lee-seeya...

FARMER

His Mona Lisa's are Hackmeister & Sons' best-selling reproductions. They hang in some of the finest homes in America.

MR. SCOTT  
(to his family)  
Ya see? What did I tell ya?

MRS. SCOTT  
He's not causing you any grief, is he  
Mr. Farmer?

FARMER  
No, no. He's a good boy. And a hard  
worker. Though, he does bang his head  
from time to time when he's cross. I  
wish he would stop that. It can't be  
good for him.

MR. SCOTT  
(to Quinn)  
Hey, stop banging your head.

His Mother looks at Quinn's forehead. He touches her cheek.

QUINN  
Aw, I love you.

MRS. SCOTT  
(awkwardly)  
I love you too.

MR. SCOTT  
I wrote to Mr. Cabot about having his  
wages increased, but he never wrote  
back. But if he's the best as you say  
he is then I think he oughta be paid  
more. Am I right?

Farmer's put himself in an awkward position.

FARMER  
I don't negotiate wages. I'm just the  
house manager. You'll have to follow  
up with Mr. Cabot.

MR. SCOTT  
I sure as heck will.

QUINN'S BROTHER  
(mocks)  
Our golden goose. *Honk. Honk.*

He and his wife chuckle.

MRS. SCOTT  
Stop it.  
(MORE)

MRS. SCOTT (cont'd)  
(to Farmer)  
Is there anything my son needs Mr.  
Farmer? Anything at all?

Farmer stares at her. Knows she's the answer, but:

FARMER  
No. I see to it that his needs are  
met.

MR. SCOTT  
Ya see? He's gonna be okay.

Farmer looks at him. Something telling in the way he said  
it.

FARMER  
Why wouldn't he be?

MR. SCOTT  
We've movin'. Ontario. To work the  
oil fields.

Farmer understands immediately. Quinn processes it slowly.

MR. SCOTT (cont'd)  
The money's good.

QUINN'S BROTHER  
Real good.

QUINN'S SISTER-IN-LAW  
We're gonna start a family.

Quinn's Mother begins to cry.

MR. SCOTT  
Hey, none of that now. He's gonna be  
okay. Huh? Isn't that right Mr.  
Farmer?  
(a beat)  
Yeah. He's got a job. A nice house.  
Someone lookin' after him. It's  
better than we thought he'd have.  
Better than a damned nut house.

He digs a piece of paper out of his pants pocket and stuffs  
it in Quinn's jacket pocket.

MR. SCOTT (cont'd)  
This is the address in Canada for  
letters and such.

QUINN'S BROTHER

And don't forget to send his wages.

MR. SCOTT

Oh yeah, right. You can arrange that,  
can't you Mr. Farmer?

Farmer looks at him a beat. Here to abandon his son. Quinn's better off.

FARMER

I'll see to it.

MR. SCOTT

(pats Quinn's  
shoulder)

You're gonna have a good life Quinny.

His Mother fights back tears. His brother smiles.

QUINN'S SISTER-IN-LAW

(to Farmer)

Ya got any food?

INT. FOYER - LATER

Quinn's Mother hugs him before she departs. His Father shakes Farmer's hand.

MR. SCOTT

Thanks again Mr. Farmer. You're a  
good man.

(to Quinn)

See ya boy.

And just like that. They're gone. The door closes.

QUINN

Mommy come back...

FARMER

They're not coming back son.

Quinn moves to bang his head on the wall. Farmer blocks him.

FARMER (cont'd)

We'll have no more of that, you hear?

He looks into Quinn's eyes. Trying to get through to him.  
It's not easy. It never will be.

FARMER (cont'd)

Come on. I'll fix us some coffee.



They move toward the kitchen.

INT. PARLOR/LIBRARY - LATER

Ruby walks toward the library. Opens the doors. Catches Bram painting large areas of blue sky on *Wolf and Fox Hunt*.

RUBY  
Put that down!

She grabs the brush from his hand.

RUBY (cont'd)  
How dare you.

BRAM  
I'm only trying to help.

RUBY  
I don't need your help.

BRAM  
Rubens had a team of assistants that helped him with the original. Everybody knows that.

RUBY  
I'm not Rubens.

Bram smirks. She instantly regrets saying it.

RUBY (cont'd)  
I don't sneak into your room and touch your things.

BRAM  
(suggestive)  
You can if you want to.

RUBY  
Get out.

He tries a different tact:

BRAM  
You'll never finish this alone. We'll all be dead and buried at the pace you're going.

RUBY  
I'm meticulous.

BRAM

You're in over your head. The copiest who completed this one probably had help. Not my words. Julian's.

The mention of Julian pacifies her. He presses on:

BRAM (cont'd)

You've done an excellent job with the sketch. Your proportions are good. It's all very precise. So what does it matter if I paint some of the basic elements and maybe a form or three to help speed things along? It's not like my name will be on it.

RUBY

(realizes)

You don't want to help. You want to take credit for the atelier. You're such a cad.

She begins to push him out.

BRAM

Wait, no. You have me all wrong. I don't want the credit. *I just want to feel what it's like.*

She stops.

BRAM (cont'd)

(pleading)

You have no idea what I'm going through. Day after day, drowning in mediocrity. Just so my parents can eat.

(a beat)

If it earns you the atelier, so be it. But I don't think it will. My original works are revolutionary. They'll be the talk of Manhattan.

He can see her beginning to turn in his favor.

BRAM (cont'd)

No one would have to know.

RUBY

You so much as attempt a texture, or lay a finger on a fine detail, and I will gut you.

Her ferocity arouses him.

BRAM

Why is it that we haven't had sex  
already?

RUBY

Because you were too easy to catch,  
and I get more pleasure from the  
pursuit.

His eyes shift to *Wolf and Fox Hunt*. Now he gets it. Damn.

INT. FOYER - DAY

It's a busy day. COURIERS carry the wrapped and bundled  
commissions out of the manor. In the

PARLOR

The artists, Farmer and an OPTICIAN watches as Julian tries  
on a pair of Pince-nez glasses. He looks around the room,  
then looks at them.

JULIAN

(feigns surprise)  
You're white.

A brief hesitation, then laughter from everyone but the  
Optician.

OPTICIAN

(to Farmer)  
Mr. Cabot will receive my invoice in  
due course. Good day.

He hurries past a Courier who approaches Farmer.

COURIER

We're all loaded up.

FARMER

Good.

Farmer follows him to the door. The Courier hands Farmer a  
note from Hackmeister & Sons.

COURIER

Oh, this is for you.

Farmer reads it. Terrible news.

COURIER (cont'd)

We'll be back in two days.

He exits. Farmer hides the note, puts on his best poker face and walks into the

PARLOR

BRAM

So, that's it. We finished the commission. When is Mrs. Hackmeister arriving?

FARMER

When she pleases.

BRAM

Can you be more specific?

FARMER

No. Everyone to your rooms. Clean your work spaces. Then the remainder of the day is yours. Tomorrow as well.

Gert takes Quinn by the hand and rushes past Farmer. Julian exits a little slower, followed by a very suspicious Bram.

It's now just Farmer and Ruby. They exchange an uneasy look before she retreats to the library.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

Julian is about to climb the stairs.

FARMER (O.S.)

Julian.

He stops and sees Farmer standing in front of his bedroom. Farmer motions him over, secretive. Julian approaches, wary.

EXT. MANOR - DAY

Farmer marches out followed by Quinn, Gert, Ruby and Bram, who carry sketch books. Julian stays behind.

BRAM

Why does he get to stay?

They follow Farmer into the field like ducklings.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

They are far enough away so the manor is out of sight. The artists sketch trees. Gert and Ruby are suspicious. They know a rouse. Bram is miffed.

BRAM  
This is ridiculous.

INT. FOYER

Julian supervises as the same COURIERS from two days earlier carry wrapped artworks into the house. One of them hands him an inventory list.

JULIAN  
This way.

He leads them up the stairs.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

He directs them into bedrooms as he reads the list:

JULIAN  
Scott...Vandenberg...Zielinski...  
Douglas.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

A Courier enters with an artwork, unwraps it and sets it on an easel. We can only see the back of it. He exits.

Julian stops at the doorway. Sees it. Oh shit.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

Julian approaches. Walks up to Farmer. Nods. It's done.

EXT. MANOR - LATER

Everyone returns and removes their dirty shoes. Bram rushes in, fueled by mistrust. We hear him rush upstairs.

Quinn arrives last. Takes off his shoes and neatly lines them up on the porch with the others. A moment passes and:

BRAM (O.S.)  
FARMER!

## INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM

We see it now. Monet's *Poppies Near Argenteuil*. Beautiful, but simple. It's no *Wolf and Fox Hunt*. Bram is fuming.

Everyone appears at his doorway. Farmer enters.

BRAM

Explain this...this...atrocidity.

FARMER

New commissions.

(to all)

Mr. Thatcher is very impressed by your talents.

The others race to their rooms.

## INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert stares at her new commission. da Vinci's portrait of *Ginevra de' Benci*. She frowns.

GERT

da Vinci.

## INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM

Quinn studies his new commission. da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*.

QUINN

(what about?)

Mona Lee-seeya...

## INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian and Ruby look at his new commission.

JULIAN

A slave.

We see it. Diego Velázquez's portrait of *Juan de Pareja*, his former slave and assistant.

RUBY

(offended)

This isn't right.

She turns to protest. He stops her.

JULIAN

No. I'll do it.

RUBY

It's an outrage.

JULIAN

That's Diego Velázquez's portrait of Juan de Pareja. It's monumental. Painters around the world point to this work and say, "This is the truth. Everything else is just painting." It had the power to free Pareja from bondage and he became a great painter in his own right. It will be my honor to copy it.

His passion fills the room. She turns as if to leave. Closes the door. Comes back for a kiss.

RUBY

If you don't do it now I will.

He moves in close and kisses her. Passionate and true.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Bram storms down the stairs, followed by Farmer.

BRAM

She's broken her promise!

FARMER

Stop yelling! You'll upset Quinn.

They enter the

PARLOR

BRAM

We were told she would arrive after the commission.

FARMER

Yes, and she could arrive at any time.

BRAM

I will not pick up another brush until Mabel Hackmeister walks through that door and keeps her word. I held up my end of the bargain. Now she has to hold up hers.

FARMER

Bargain? This is your job. You paint reproductions. No one owes you anything. Not a damn thing.

Bram sits in a chair. Crosses his arms.

BRAM

I'm not painting.

FARMER

Then get out. Earn the reputation of a petulant quitter. See where that gets you. Art circle gossip moves around faster than a cyclone.

BRAM

(huffs)

How would you know?

Gert and Quinn arrive. Ruby and Julian shortly after.

GERT

I don't understand.

FARMER

Cabot's orders. Five copies each.

GERT

Five?

FARMER

(terse)

It's your job. Be thankful you have it.

GERT

But the atelier...

BRAM

See? Even she's upset and she doesn't stand a chance in hell.

GERT

(whines)

I got another da Vinci.

BRAM

Oh really? I have to waste my talent on women walking through a field of poppies.

(points at Quinn)

What did he get?



RUBY

Jesus.

Bram springs from the chair. About to burst a vein.

BRAM

I'm on strike.

GERT

Can we do that?

FARMER

No!

JULIAN

(rubs it in)

I like my commission. I'm happy to do it.

FARMER

Stay out of this!

(to Bram)

Strike and you'll be sacked.

BRAM

Let Cabot try.

He storms out of the room and up the stairs.

FARMER

Anyone else have a problem being employed?

Everyone shakes their head no. He marches out.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

A confrontation. Vandenberg versus Cabot. The others are just spectators.

CABOT

(for the last time)

You *will* complete the new commission or you will be replaced.

BRAM

(scoffs)

By who?

CABOT

Mr. Scott.

Everyone looks at Quinn, who is as surprised as they are.

CABOT (cont'd)  
 One look at Poppies Near Argenteuil  
 and he'll have perfect copies in a  
 week. The man is a machine.

JULIAN  
 He can understand you.

CABOT  
 Bully for him.

BRAM  
 We were given a promise.

CABOT  
 No such promise was given. It was  
 merely a possibility.

BRAM  
 This is not right! I have original  
 Vandenbergs!

CABOT  
 And I'm sure you're very good at  
 painting "Vandenbergs." But like it  
 or not, the *market* decides what  
 sells. Not the artists. And right now  
 the market doesn't want Vandenbergs.  
 It wants Monet's Poppies Near  
 Argenteuil.

BRAM  
 Oh, the market doesn't know--

CABOT  
 (snaps)  
 THE MARKET KNOWS EVERYTHING!

Silence. Everyone is on edge.

FARMER  
 Let's all just settle down.

CABOT  
 You have no idea how fortunate you  
 are Mr. Vandenberg. None at all. You  
 get to paint *masterpieces*. In  
 exchange you receive room, board and  
 a very fair wage while the indigent  
 beg for scraps. This is a workshop.  
 An *atelier* you ignorant twat. And Mr.  
 R.J. Hackmeister is your master.

This hits all of them. Especially Julian. If it wasn't clear to them before, it is now.

A MAN slowly strides in. Well tailored. Well groomed. Well everything. He's DORIAN VANCE.

VANCE

Mr. Cabot?

CABOT

(mortified)

I was just about to leave.

Vance looks at him. Introduce me?

CABOT (cont'd)

(very well)

Everyone, this is Dorian Vance. We're en route to a salon on Block Island.

They know who he is. Stunned to be in his presence.

JULIAN

(to Quinn, hushed)

He's a famous critic.

Bram steps forward. Farmer's look: oh no.

BRAM

Mr. Vance, my name is Bram Vandenberg. I'm an artist. I want to show you something. Please wait here.

He bounds up the stairs, two at a time.

CABOT

(at wits end)

Farmer, learn to control him or else.

Farmer can only nod. It's just getting worse.

Bram returns with an original portrait. Very avant-garde. Shades of cubism. Like Kazimir Malevich's 1912 self portrait. A style that wouldn't be appreciated for decades.

BRAM

This is a portrait of my brother. He died of drink a short time ago. This is *my* original work. Please tell me what you think of it.

CABOT

Mr. Vandenberg--

BRAM

No! *This man* actually knows greatness. I want to know what he thinks.

(to Vance)

Please.

Vance hasn't taken his eyes off it. In his honest opinion:

VANCE

It's a touch infantile.

Bram feels like someone just squeezed his heart.

VANCE (cont'd)

It's crude and lacks grace. As do you. But that's just my opinion.

(he's had enough)

Cabot?

CABOT

Yes. In a moment.

VANCE

(to Bram)

I'm sorry for your loss.

(to all)

Good day.

He exits the manor. Damage done.

Bram sits in a chair. Mourns his career.

CABOT

I want to see the progress on Wolf and Fox Hunt. Where is it?

Ruby steps in front of him.

RUBY

It's not ready.

He tries to step around her.

CABOT

Young lady--

RUBY

I *said*, it's not ready.

He stops. Backs down. Everyone is wide-eyed. No one stops Cabot. But her courage did.

He hesitates, then darts toward the foyer. Attempts an end-around.

Quinn steps in his way. Cabot trips and falls. Bloodies his nose. He rises, furious as he wipes the blood.

CABOT  
You stupid bastard!

QUINN  
Sonabitch.

CABOT  
Congratulations Mr. Scott. You have just eliminated yourself from contention for the atelier. Be thankful if that's the only penalty you receive. Mr. Hackmeister will hear about this.  
(looks at the blood)  
Damn you Farmer!

He storms out leaving everyone shattered.

EXT. MANOR - LATER

It's quiet. Farmer exits the back. Goes for a long walk.

INT. MANOR - ARTISTS' BEDROOMS

From room to room we see Julian, Quinn, Gert and Bram studying their new assignments. The anxiety of starting from scratch.

Bram and Gert don't want to begin at all.

INT. LIBRARY

Ruby paints alone. Unnerved like the others.

INT. PARLOR - EVENING - DAYDREAM

Same black tie reception. Same tycoons and their wives turning to greet someone.

TYCOON  
Ah! The man of the hour.

Applause.

INT. BRAM'S BEDROOM - EVENING

It's late. Bram is awoken by a sound. Someone sobbing. Rises to investigate.

INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM

Bram cracks open the door.

BRAM  
(whispers)  
Quinn?

Quinn is sitting in bed, bawling. It's heartbreaking to see.

Bram slips in with a lit gas lamp and closes the door. Sits next to Quinn.

QUINN  
Crying.

BRAM  
I heard.

QUINN  
Mommy come back.

This strikes a nerve with Bram. The pain of loss. Of being disconnected. It finally comes flooding out. He openly sobs.

QUINN (cont'd)  
(parrots)  
Awww. It's okay.

BRAM  
No. It's not.

They continue to weep. Bram sees Quinn's originals against the wall. The painting of him aghast. One of Gert dancing in her blue dress. And...

a stunning portrait of Ruby the day he saw her in the library; head turned, her blushing skin lit by the sun. Vermeer would weep.

BRAM (cont'd)  
(full admiration)  
You're so lucky.

INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Quinn and Bram are asleep in bed, curled like puppies.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Farmer is at the doorway counting a delivery of supplies from a NEW COURIER. The Courier peeps past him into the manor. Farmer notices.

FARMER  
Where's Harlan?

NEW COURIER  
Wha-? Oh, he uh, left for Missourah.

FARMER  
Who are you?

NEW COURIER  
Ned.

Farmer narrows his eyes. Weird vibe from Ned. He signs for the packages.

NED  
Have a nice day now.

Farmer closes the door.

INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert works on her *Ginevra de' Benci* copy. Adds the first coat of background color. She shifts her eyes toward the new in-progress original Ruby inspired her to paint.

It's a liberated young woman on a rooftop, shouting to the heavens, full of life and love. It's akin to Ellen Thesleff's work, *Echo*, and nothing at all like da Vinci.

She would rather be working on that.

INT. PARLOR

Julian crosses toward the closed library doors. He knocks.

INT./EXT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Ruby and Bram freeze. Both holding wet brushes. She's on a chair. He's standing. They've made good progress.

RUBY  
Yes?

JULIAN (O.S.)  
It's me. I finished Frankenstein. I  
thought we might discuss it.

RUBY  
Could we do it after dinner? My brush  
is wet.

She winces. That sounded lewd. Bram smirks.

JULIAN  
Of course. After dinner then. I look  
forward to it.

RUBY  
As do I.

JULIAN (O.S.)  
Have you seen Bram? Farmer was  
looking for him.

RUBY  
(stares right at Bram)  
That malodorous swine? Thankfully no.  
He's probably out rolling in the mud.

JULIAN  
(affectionately)  
You're funny. I like that about you.

Bram shoots Ruby a disapproving look. It's so evident now.  
She doesn't reply.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
'Bye.

He leaves.

She looks at Bram. Regretful. Unacquainted with the feeling.  
Stuns him with:

RUBY  
We can't do this anymore.

EXT. MANOR

Farmer hangs laundry to dry in the sun. Quinn sits nearby.  
Never takes his eyes off the man.

FARMER  
Don't worry. I'm not going anywhere.



INT. PARLOR - LATER

Bram shows off his first *Poppies Near Argenteuil*. It sits on an easel next to the subject copy. Perfection as always.

The other artists step in for a closer look, beginning with the one on the right.

FARMER

That was fast.

BRAM

A child could do it.

FARMER

(threatens)

Maybe I should inform Cabot. He'll double the order.

Bram's look: you wouldn't.

GERT

It's good. It's very good.

JULIAN

They match.

(motions to the one  
on the right)

But...I think the copy from Europe is slightly better. It has a quality that yours lacks.

BRAM

Oh really?

JULIAN

Really.

BRAM

Mine is the one on the right. I switched them.

Stunned faces. Bram sneers at Julian. Enjoys embarrassing him now more than ever.

Gert steps behind the easels. Verifies:

GERT

It's true.

BRAM

I don't know what you have planned for dinner Mr. Farmer, but I believe *somebody* just ordered crow.

He strides out of the room. Gloating.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

Bedtime. Farmer walks through. Steps around the two *Poppies*. Opens the library doors for a peek.

She's made progress. It satisfies him. Then he sees Ruby asleep in a chair. She's been working hard.

He steps out then returns moments later with a blanket. Covers her. Closes the doors as he leaves.

EXT. MANOR - LATER

It's quiet. Eerily so.

INT. PARLOR

Ned the Courier has broken in. Has both *Poppies* in his hands.

FARMER (O.S.)  
Drop the Monets.

Farmer steps in. Has a Henry rifle pointed at Ned.

NED  
Is that what these are?

FARMER  
(cocks the rifle)  
Put them down.

NED  
C'mon friend. Help a fella out. You  
can make more. It's whatcha do here,  
ain't it?

Farmer doesn't respond.

NED (cont'd)  
Are these really worth a life?

Farmer knows they aren't. He begins to lower the rifle.

Ruby enters from the library. Still a little sleepy.

RUBY  
Farmer?

Ned drops the paintings. Grabs Ruby in a flash. Whips out a knife from behind his back. Holds it to her neck.

NED  
I'll slit her.

FARMER  
(points the rifle)  
Take the paintings. Just let her go.

NED  
Think I'm stupid mister? You'll shoot me the second I do.

FARMER  
I won't shoot you. You have my word.

NED  
Hand over that Henry rifle. Show me how good your word is.

Ruby locks eyes with Farmer: Don't.

NED (cont'd)  
I swear. I'll slit her.

He's more desperate now. Touches the blade to her skin.

IN THE 2ND FLOOR LAVATORY

The leaky faucet. A single drop falls ever so slowly. *DRIP!*

BRAM (O.S.)  
Farmer!

Bram's yelling distracts Ned. Ruby stomps on his foot, causing him to loosen his grip just long enough to escape.

He lunges at her. Farmer fires. *BAM!* Hits Ned. His body falls into a chair. Dead. Farmer and Ruby are shocked.

The others race down the stairs. Julian rushes to Ruby. They embrace. It's out in the open now.

JULIAN  
What happened?

RUBY  
He was going to kill me. He would have killed us all.  
(to Farmer)  
Right?

Everyone looks at Farmer. Still stricken by his actions.  
Still holding the Henry.

BRAM  
You have a rifle?

Farmer finds his bearings. Sets down the rifle.

Quinn slowly approaches Ned's body like a kid who finds a  
dead animal.

FARMER  
Quinn! Get away from him.

Quinn springs away. Begins pacing about the room in a panic.

QUINN  
Rub a dub duuub!

FARMER  
Back to your rooms. Gert, please look  
after Quinn 'til I return.

She nods. Attempts to wrangle Quinn. It's not easy.

FARMER (cont'd)  
(to Julian and Ruby)  
Don't just stand there. Help her.

They manage to get Quinn under control. The four head toward  
the stairs. Followed by Bram. Farmer grabs him.

FARMER (cont'd)  
Not you.

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

Farmer and Bram carry Ned's covered body away from the  
manor.

FARMER  
Set him here.

They set the corpse down next to a stack of firewood. Farmer  
sees a horse tied to a tree several yards away.

FARMER (cont'd)  
That must be his horse. I'll take it  
into town and return with the police.  
Let's cover his body with this wood  
to protect it from the animals.

BRAM

You sound like you've done this before.

Farmer silences him with a glare.

They begin to cover the body. Bram pauses to look toward the manor's second floor. Farmer sees this.

FARMER

Forget her boy.

BRAM

You're giving *me* love advice? That's rich.

FARMER

I wouldn't be so foolish to think you loved her. No, you want to *conquer* her. It's more your style.

BRAM

And exactly what do you think she's doing with him? It's all a game to her. And the damned fool is going to get himself killed.

FARMER

When have you ever cared about Julian? Or anyone?

BRAM

I don't have to listen to an old hermit like you. Who have you ever cared about? *What* have you ever cared about? Who would you be if you weren't Cabot's piss boy?

Farmer slaps Bram in the head then grabs his hands. Squeezes them hard.

BRAM (cont'd)

Ow!

FARMER

Feel my hands. What do you feel?

BRAM

That hurt!

FARMER

(squeezes harder)  
What do you feel?!

BRAM

They're coarse. Like stone.

FARMER

Listen to me boy. Keep down the road  
you're on and you'll be a pariah. An  
outcast. It won't matter how talented  
you are. No one will show your works.  
No one will buy your works. You hear  
me? No one!

Bram's eyes begin to water.

FARMER (cont'd)

(re: Ned)

You'll end up just like this man. Or  
worse, you'll wish you were.

BRAM

You heard Dorian Vance. I'm already  
dead.

Farmer releases his grip. Bram slowly backs away then walks  
to the manor.

INT. MANOR - STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Bram ascends the stairs. Stops short of the top. Sees Ruby  
and Julian enter Ruby's room then close the door.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Julian, Gert and Quinn watch through the windows as Farmer  
and Ruby talk outside with POLICE OFFICERS.

The Officers leave moments later. Farmer and Ruby enter the  
manor. He marches past the parlor without a word. His door  
slams soon after. No one says anything until:

JULIAN

Back to work.

Ruby starts for the library. The others head for the stairs.

INT. QUINN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Quinn adds finishing touches to his first *Salvator Mundi*.  
Jesus looking right at him with an expression that says  
everything will be okay.

## INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian also nears completion of his first *Juan de Pareja*. There is a cool confidence in Pareja's eyes. Julian does all he can to muster the same inner strength.

## INT. GERT'S BEDROOM

Gert cries in front of her completed *Ginevra de' Benci*. The mournful expression on the Florentine aristocrat's face matches the mood in the room.

## INT. PARLOR

Ruby stares at the blood-stained chair where Ned's body landed. Haunted by how close she came to dying.

## EXT. MANOR - LATER

Julian and Ruby carry the chair out of the manor and dispose of it near a tree.

## INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Lunchtime. Gert, Quinn, Julian and Ruby are at the table waiting. No Bram. No Farmer. No food.

JULIAN

(offers)

My mother taught me some recipes.

## INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE - LATER

The same four stand outside Farmer's bedroom, worried.

GERT

Mr. Farmer? Please open the door. Mr. Farmer?

JULIAN

Maybe he's sleeping.

GERT

He has a rifle. He shouldn't be alone.

RUBY

(knocks)

Mr. Farmer? Are you in there?

Quinn becomes agitated. Bangs his head into the wall.

JULIAN  
(calms Quinn)  
It's alright. He's fine. He's fine.  
(to Ruby)  
What do we do?

RUBY  
(thinks, then)  
We paint.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bram is alone. Holding one of Julian's originals in his hands. It's exquisite. Deepens his insecurities. He turns his head. Plots.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Bram sneaks out of Julian's room and back into his own room.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Ruby, Julian, Quinn and Gert work on *Wolf and Fox Hunt* together, adding texture and depth to the canvas.

Gert begins to laugh as she works on the backside of the most prominent horse in the scene.

RUBY  
What's so funny?

GERT  
This reminds me of Bram. A horses  
ass.

Ruby and Julian laugh. Quinn stays focused on the hunting dog he paints.

GERT (cont'd)  
He'll be mad as a hornet if he found  
out about this.

JULIAN  
He's never to know. It will be our  
secret.

He looks at Ruby for affirmation. She masks the guilt of her duplicity.



INT. PARLOR - DUSK

The four artists rest their tired shoulders and arms. Ruby and Julian sit near each other.

Bram storms down the stairs. They sit up. Exchange looks. Keep the secret.

BRAM

Which one of you vagrants took my brandy?

(to Ruby and Julian)

Was it the two of you? Need a little something to loosen the mood?

Julian is quick to his feet and in Bram's face.

JULIAN

I don't appreciate what you're suggesting.

BRAM

She spun a web and you're just a fly.

Ruby gets between them.

RUBY

Stop it. We didn't steal your cheap brandy.

BRAM

It's not cheap and you know it. Remember? In your room?

He looks directly at Julian. Wants him to feel jealous.

RUBY

(off Julian's look)

Don't let him trouble your mind.

GERT

No one took your stupid brandy, you horse's ass.

BRAM

Then where is it?!

They hear footsteps on the roof. Then, from outside:

FARMER (O.S.)

(drunk and shouting)

There was a poor smith lived in a poor town, That had a loving wife bonny and brown!

QUINN

Santa...

They exchange looks then race to the front door.

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

They exit. Farmer is on the roof. Near-empty bottle in hand.  
Reciting the drinking song, *There Was a Poor Smith*.

FARMER

He told his sweet wife what he  
intended to do, Quoth he, sweet wife,  
if I can prevail, I will shoe horses,  
and thou shalt sell ale.

GERT

Oh god.

QUINN

...Climbing to the top...

JULIAN

Farmer, get down from there.

BRAM

That was private reserve!

FARMER

I see by my labour but little I  
thrive. And that against the stream I  
do strive; By selling of Ale some  
money is got, If every man honestly  
pays for his pot: By this we may keep  
the *wolf* from the door, And live in  
good fashion though now we live poor.

He takes an off-balance bow. Quinn claps.

RUBY

Mr. Farmer, please come down.

FARMER

(points at her)

It's the wolf!

JULIAN

She's not a wolf.

FARMER

And you're not a sheep. *Or are you?*

GERT

Mr. Farmer, please. You're scaring us.

FARMER

There's nothing to be scared of my dear, for Joseph Farmer will take care of everything! Look everyone! *It's the artists!* But only one will receive the coveted spot *in the atelier. Wheeee!* Who will it be? The brat? The bookworm? *The wolf?* Who cares?! I sure as hell don't. Cook for them. Clean for them. *Kill for them.* I've given you my sweat. And now you have my soul.

He finishes the bottle. Throws it as far as he can. Then unbuttons his pants.

FARMER (cont'd)

Hey, Bram! Drip! Drip! Drip!

He begins to pee off the roof. Everyone but Bram and Quinn turn their eyes away.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - LATER

The artists' are on the other side of the door.

GERT (O.S.)

Watch his head.

JULIAN (O.S.)

It's locked.

GERT (O.S.)

You need the key.

BRAM (O.S.)

It's in his pants.

GERT (O.S.)

Get it.

BRAM (O.S.)

I'm not reaching in there.

JULIAN (O.S.)

Don't look at me.

RUBY (O.S.)

Oh for god's sake.

A brief moment and the door unlocks and Ruby opens it. Bram and Julian carry a blacked-out Farmer into the

BEDROOM

JULIAN

He's heavier than he looks.

BRAM

You should feel his hands.

They place him on his bed. Ruby covers him with a blanket. The others look around. No one has ever been in here.

There's an easel. Paint. Brushes. He's an artist?

BRAM (cont'd)

Somebody's been keeping a secret.

He sees canvases facing the wall. He reaches for one.

GERT

Don't...

Too late. He picks it up. Turns it, expecting to laugh. Freezes.

It's a self portrait. A despaired expression on his face. The anguish of Gustave Courbet's *Les Desespere* in the ultra-realistic style of Chuck Close's *John*. It. Is. Amazing.

They gather around it. It's masterful. Ahead of its time. The kind of work that makes you question everything you've ever done.

Julian picks up another. It's of a woman. Beautiful but sad; as if watching someone walk away for the last time.

RUBY

A past love?

Julian carefully returns it. Bram looks at Farmer. He gets it now. He's awed. Humbled. The man is a master.

BRAM

Everybody out. He's not to be disturbed.

Gert takes the rifle. They slowly file out. Gently close the door.

OUTSIDE THE DOOR

No words. It's still sinking in. One more look at the door. They slowly walk away.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julian and Ruby sit in bed, holding each other. He has to know:

JULIAN  
Why did Farmer call me a sheep? And  
why are you a wolf?

RUBY  
Because of the painting. Why else?

JULIAN  
Why doesn't he care for you?

RUBY  
If he didn't care for me I would be  
dead.

He holds her tighter, tormented by the thought.

She looks at one of his tropical landscapes.

RUBY (cont'd)  
Let's go there. No one would care  
about us.

JULIAN  
When?

RUBY  
How soon is tomorrow?

JULIAN  
It doesn't really exist. I just  
imagined it.

RUBY  
That's all that matters.

JULIAN  
Maybe it's time I added people to  
them.

They look at each other. Kiss.

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - ENTRANCE - MORNING

Quinn paces in circles.

QUINN  
Farmer come back...

Farmer opens the door. Hungover. Quinn smiles. Flaps.

Farmer shuffles into the

KITCHEN

Pots and pans on the stove. Mixing bowls on the counter.  
Someone's been cooking. And making a mess.

INT. DINING ROOM

Farmer lumbers in. Followed by Quinn who circles the table.  
Julian, Ruby and Gert are there. It's a king-sized banquet.

FARMER  
What is all this?

JULIAN  
Breakfast. I made biscuits and gravy.  
Ruby made a Dutch Baby. And Gert made  
(mispronounces)  
Jajecznica?

GERT  
Jajecznica. We knew you'd be hungry.

FARMER  
Did you ration anything for the rest  
of the day?

The three artists exchange looks. Uh-oh.

Farmer plops in the chair. Julian loads up a plate for him.

FARMER (cont'd)  
You didn't have to do this.

RUBY  
We know.

Bram saunters in from the kitchen with a pot of coffee.

BRAM  
(brightly)  
Who wants chicory coffee?  
(pours Farmer a cup)  
You'll need this. I would add a shot  
of brandy but, you know...

Farmer frowns.

GERT

Bram.

Everyone sits. They stare at Farmer. A master painter. They revere him now. He stares back.

JULIAN

After you.

He hesitates. Shovels in a fork-full of Dutch Baby. Not great.

RUBY

Is it missing something?

FARMER

Flavor.

Damn. They load up their plates. Begin to eat. He's right. They eat in silence. Exchange looks. Who's going to ask?

JULIAN

About yesterday--

From upstairs: *Clank. Clank.*

Everyone stops. Curious looks.

FARMER

What is that?

BRAM

(forgot to mention)

Someone finally arrived to fix the faucet. I showed him upstairs.

FARMER

(you fool)

You allowed a stranger in the house?

BRAM

He said Cabot sent him.

Farmer seethes. Everything he just went through. He starts to rise. HENRY, a Plumber in his 50s appears at the entry.

HENRY

Ah, there you are. All finished. No trouble at all.

Ruby blanches. Quickly tries to duck under the table. Too late.

HENRY (cont'd)  
Hey there Miss Ruby! I didn't know  
you'd be here.

RUBY  
Hello Henry.

Ruby and Farmer lock eyes. Shit.

JULIAN  
You know each other?

HENRY  
I'd know Ruby Hackmeister anywhere.  
I've been doing work for her family  
for years.

Everyone is stunned.

HENRY (cont'd)  
I remember when she was just a little  
thing and running around this place  
in the summers. Boy time flies.  
(notices the spread)  
Are those biscuits?

Ruby nods.

HENRY (cont'd)  
You mind?

She shakes her head. He takes one. Bites it. Frowns.

HENRY (cont'd)  
Well, enjoy your breakfast. It was  
good to see you Miss Ruby.

He leaves. The dropped bombshell still hitting them.

JULIAN  
You're a Hackmeister.

RUBY  
Merrywether is my middle name.

JULIAN  
(to Farmer)  
You knew.

FARMER  
I was ordered to keep it a secret.

BRAM  
You and your secrets.



Julian's had enough. Leaves the room. The front door slams moments later. It agitates Quinn.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuub!

Farmer quickly approaches.

FARMER

Come. We'll finish eating in the kitchen.

GERT

I'll help.

She and Farmer gather the men's plates. Walk to the kitchen.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuub!

Bram has not taken his eyes off of Ruby. Gert re-enters. Angry. Ready to interrogate.

GERT

Why did you come here?

RUBY

I don't think this is the time--

GERT

Shut your lying mouth! I asked you a question. Why are you here?

Gert's intensity startles Ruby. It also impresses her.

RUBY

I came here to copy Wolf and Fox Hunt so I could earn a place in the atelier without favoritism. I wanted to prove to my mother that I'm deserving and I didn't want her to pry.

Bram slams his napkin on the table.

BRAM

We've been double-crossed.

RUBY

No, it's not like that at all. She's still going to select one of you. I swear. I just want to earn it on my own.

GERT

Why would you need to earn it? You went to the university--

RUBY

My father---!

(pause)

My father is a benefactor of the university. He's the reason I was accepted.

Bram's already figured it out, but:

BRAM

When is your mother coming?

RUBY

Not until I finish.

BRAM

That's why you let me help you.

GERT

You let him help you too?

BRAM

(to Ruby)

You bitch.

He storms out. Gert scowls at Ruby.

RUBY

Go ahead, say it. In Polish if you wouldn't mind.

GERT

You should have been honest. I still would have been your friend.

As she heads into the kitchen:

GERT (cont'd)

Szmata.

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

Bram marches out. Julian is already there.

JULIAN

What are you doing out here?

BRAM

What does it look like I'm doing? I'm fuming.

JULIAN

Do it somewhere else.

Ruby appears on the porch.

RUBY

Julian--

JULIAN

Leave me alone!

Bram seizes the opportunity to pour salt.

BRAM

She had you bamboozled from the start.

JULIAN

Shut up!

BRAM

You spend so much time with your face buried in fiction that you couldn't see the truth that was right in front of you.

JULIAN

You're just jealous.

BRAM

And you're a blind fool. So blind, you're not even aware that I switch your paintings.

Julian is shocked.

BRAM (cont'd)

(smirks)

You always think you're smarter than me. But you've been copying your own copies and don't even know it.

Now Julian is pissed.

BRAM (cont'd)

Buck up old man. That is your real name, isn't it? Buck?

Julian tackles Bram to the ground. They roll and throw punches.

RUBY

Stop it!

She rushes to the fight. The combatants wrestle and punch, bloodying each other.

Gert appears at the door.

GERT

Mr. Farmer!

Bram is on his feet. Julian is hunched. Bram grabs him by the back of his shirt in an attempt to toss him. The shirt rips off. The men freeze.

Julian's back is scarred from lashings. He's mortified. Bram is horrified. Ruby's heart breaks for Julian.

Farmer and Quinn rush out. Witness it all.

Julian rushes past them into the manor. The others glare at Bram.

BRAM

How was I to know?

RUBY

How could you not?

She rushes inside. Gert and Farmer approach Bram. He takes a step back. Fears more punishment.

GERT

You're bleeding.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Julian wears a new shirt. He's packing. Ruby appears at the door.

RUBY

Julian...

JULIAN

Haven't you heard? My name is Buck.

RUBY

(entering)

Stop that.

JULIAN

My master's daughter, in my master's house.

RUBY

My father is not your master. No one is.

JULIAN

Usually it was the men who had their way with the women. The plantation bosses did whatever they pleased.

RUBY

I don't want to hear about that.

He turns to her. Grabs her shoulders.

JULIAN

You treated me like your property because I am your property!

RUBY

No! That's not true!

JULIAN

Ruby Merrywether wasn't true!

He releases her. Packs faster. She finally says it:

RUBY

I'm so sorry.

(long pause)

I only see you as an artist. A brilliant one. It makes me so jealous. I wish I had your talent.

JULIAN

The little rich girl is jealous. Poor baby.

She doesn't push back. She deserved it.

RUBY

All I ever wanted to do is paint. I feel the desire like a fire in my body. Then somewhere along the way I wanted to be celebrated for it, so that when people heard the name Hackmeister they would forever think of me and what I created. But I'll never know if I have the talent because the people who say I do were paid to say it. I feel like an imposter every time I pick up a brush.

He's finished packing. Faces her.

JULIAN

(quotes)

"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth."

He walks out on her. She follows.

RUBY

You wouldn't have loved me if you knew who I was.

JULIAN

I hope you and Bram will be very happy together. You deserve each other.

INT. MANOR - STAIRCASE

She follows him down to the foyer. Farmer passes them toward the library. Trailed by Quinn.

He opens the doors and marches inside.

RUBY

What is he doing?

She leaves Julian to investigate. He starts for the door, is seized by curiosity and follows her.

INT. LIBRARY

Farmer is painting Wolf and Fox Hunt. Picking up where she left off.

RUBY

What are you doing?

FARMER

No more lies. No more deception. I want this out of our lives. The both of you.

They stand mesmerized, watching a master at work. Bram and Gert arrive. Awestruck at the sight.

FARMER (cont'd)

(like a master)

You have to pay attention when you're painting fur. Drag an old bristle brush through the wet paint...gives the indication of fur catching the light.

Quinn steps in. Begins to mix paint.

QUINN

Fox.

FARMER

Yeah, good boy. Take the fox.

They work together like father and son.

Julian watches a moment longer then leaves the manor.

GERT

I'll help too.

FARMER

No. Complete your Thatcher  
commission. Then you can help.

(to Bram)

You too.

BRAM

Yes sir.

They quickly head to the stairs.

RUBY

What can I do?

FARMER

You've done enough.

She frowns. Has an idea. Starts for the stairs.

Farmer stops. Looks toward the front door.

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

Julian treks away from the manor. Spots the chair under the  
tree. Slows his pace. Speeds up again. Then stops. He stairs  
at the chair.

FARMER (O.S.)

I never thanked you for putting it  
there. So, thank you.

Farmer is several feet behind him.

JULIAN

It wasn't my idea.

FARMER

I know.

He approaches and arrives at Julian's side.

JULIAN  
Is this what freedom is supposed to  
feel like?

FARMER  
Man will never be free from his  
insecurities son. Never.

JULIAN  
Is that what happened to you?

He turns to face Farmer.

FARMER  
I made a lot of bad choices. Hurt  
people who just wanted the best for  
me. I didn't want to hear what they  
had to say, because I was afraid they  
were right.

A long pause.

JULIAN  
I've been exposed.

FARMER  
That's the biggest fear of all for  
men like us.

Julian looks at him. "Men like us." He's viewed as an equal.

FARMER (cont'd)  
I'm sorry I lied to you. All of you.  
But you kids and this house...you're  
all I have.

JULIAN  
You've been a good caretaker.

His eyes shift to the manor. Farmer reads him.

FARMER  
I should have stopped it..the two of  
you..she's--

JULIAN  
I would have been angry if you did.

Farmer is surprised.



JULIAN (cont'd)  
I knew it was dangerous. But that's  
why I liked it.

Farmer smiles. The bookworm shows his daring side.

FARMER  
You don't have to go back in there.

JULIAN  
(decides)  
I'm not going to let what they did  
run me off. It's my house too.

FARMER  
(quotes)  
"However mean your life is, meet it  
and live it."

Julian raises his eyebrows. Impressed.

FARMER (cont'd)  
I've been here a lot longer than you  
son. I've read Walden cover to cover.

He places his arm around Julian as they walk to the manor.

FARMER (cont'd)  
It feels good to hit Bram, doesn't  
it?

JULIAN  
(smiles)  
It was like punching a pillow.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Farmer and Julian return. Step into the

PARLOR

Gert and Bram have moved their work into the room. They want  
to be near the action and near Farmer. They see Julian.

GERT  
Julian.

Quinn steps out of the library. Hurries to hug Julian.

GERT (cont'd)  
I'm glad you're back.

BRAM

Me too.

JULIAN

Fuck off.

BRAM

(meekly)

Right.

JULIAN

(looks around)

Is this a private party? Or can  
anyone join?

FARMER

Get your things. We'll make room.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Julian enters. Ruby is working on his latest copy. She  
turns.

RUBY

I'm using your first copy as the  
subject.

She motions to one leaning against the wall.

RUBY (cont'd)

That's the copy my father purchased  
in Europe. But yours is better.

(points)

See? You raised his chin ever so  
slightly. Velázquez wouldn't have  
known to do that. But you could. You  
give Pareja more than dignity. You  
give him strength.

Julian looks at the three copies. She's right. Pareja holds  
his head a little higher.

She rises and moves close to him.

RUBY (cont'd)

I will never keep a secret from you  
again.

JULIAN

That's easy for you to promise  
because we'll never see each other  
when this is over. You'll be back  
home in Manhattan. I'll be here.

RUBY  
Or we'll be in Chicago, running our  
gallery. Together.

JULIAN  
Our gallery?

RUBY  
I'll find my muse eventually.  
(teases)  
We'll just have to sail by with your  
work until then.

JULIAN  
(gets serious)  
The world will never allow it.

RUBY  
I don't care what the world thinks. I  
have money, which means I have power.

JULIAN  
Not that kind of power.

She wraps herself tightly around him. Frustrated.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
(a sudden thought)  
Was this your room in the summertime?

RUBY  
My parents'.

JULIAN  
(oh great)  
Lovely.

INT. PARLOR AND LIBRARY - LATER

All four artists are now crammed together, working on their commissions as a group. Farmer continues to work on *Wolf and Fox Hunt* in the library. The manor is now an atelier.

Ruby sits off to the side in the parlor, pretending to read *Frankenstein* like a child in timeout. Farmer glances at her from time to time. She quickly looks away when he does.

INT. PARLOR AND LIBRARY - LATER

They work during lunch. Ruby weaves through the parlor serving sandwiches. She enters the library and sets one down for Farmer.

FARMER  
What's this?

RUBY  
Leftover squab.

FARMER  
(quickly inspects it)  
Thank you.

She looks at the painting. Wants so badly to join him. He points at faces on the subject copy as she turns to go:

FARMER (cont'd)  
These two were done by different hands.

She stops. Draws closer.

FARMER (cont'd)  
I'm almost certain the copiest who did this one was left-handed. See? You can learn a lot by the way a person applies pressure.

Their eyes meet. Message sent and received. He looks at a brush sitting idle. He nods: take it.

FARMER (cont'd)  
I won't tell your parents we helped.

She smiles appreciatively, picks up the brush and approaches the canvas.

RUBY  
What do you want me to take?

FARMER  
(what else?)  
The wolf.

RUBY  
Aye, aye, captain.

He rolls his eyes. She smiles. Their teamwork begins.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Dusk. Approaching dinnertime. Julian enters. A pot of stew cooking on the stove. Bram is at the sink wearing an apron and pouring the cardamom seeds down the drain. Julian approaches.

JULIAN  
Is that the cardamom?

BRAM  
Yes.

JULIAN  
(conspiratorial)  
I didn't see that.

He walks to the stove. Opens the pot for a whiff. Smells bad. Turns to face Bram, who is now washing a bowl.

JULIAN (cont'd)  
I never knew you had a brother.

BRAM  
I may have failed to mention him.

He turns. They're face to face now. The two rams.

BRAM (cont'd)  
Why did they do that to you?

JULIAN  
They caught me reading.

Bram swallows hard. Tries to hold back his emotions.

BRAM  
Your talent frightens me.

JULIAN  
Only my talent?

BRAM  
I wouldn't want to run into that right hand again.

JULIAN  
Then don't touch my things.

BRAM  
(smiles slyly)  
Yes sir.

They look at each other. The ground beneath them leveling.

INT. PARLOR AND LIBRARY - DAY

A new day. The entire team is back to work. Ruby, Bram and Quinn are detailing *Wolf and Fox Hunt*. Making the canvas sing. Gert finishes her last commission copy.

GERT  
(eagerly)  
Finished! Make room!

She hurries into the library to help. Julian realizes he's the last one left. He's so close to completion.

JULIAN  
What? Oh...

IN THE FOYER

Farmer hands the Mailman a letter.

FARMER  
This is for Mr. Cabot. As fast as you can.

MAILMAN  
It's quite the little workshop you got here.

FARMER  
(proud for once)  
Yes it is.

RUBY (O.S.)  
(to Julian)  
Hurry up, slow poke!

JULIAN (O.S.)  
I'm coming! Save me a body part.

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Mailman exits. We can hear the family's banter inside.

FARMER (O.S.)  
Easy with the burnt umber Gert.

JULIAN (O.S.)  
I'm done!

BRAM (O.S.)  
You can take my spot. I'll prepare lunch.

FARMER/RUBY/GERT/JULIAN (O.S.)  
No!

They laugh at their shared reaction.

QUINN (O.S.)  
Laughing!

EXT. MANOR - EVENING

The day is complete. The moon shines bright. It's peaceful.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

The team retires to their bedrooms. The mood is light. Gert exits the lavatory and do-si-dos with Quinn before he enters.

GERT  
Sweet dreams!

She dances into her room and closes the door.

Ruby and Julian stop at their doors and share a 'maybe' look before entering. Bram smiles. Good for them. He enters his

BEDROOM

Things feel different now. Better. He stares at his brother's portrait.

INT. PARLOR - EVENING - DAYDREAM

Same daydream. The tycoons and their wives turn to greet someone.

TYCOON  
Ah! The man of the hour.

Applause.

We see him now. It's Farmer. Black tie and tails. Clean shaven. Hair cut and combed. Looks famous. Looks happy.

The applause grows louder. Becomes the sound of

RAIN

INT. FARMER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Farmer is alone, looking out the window. Lost in his daydream. Raindrops bouncing off the glass.

INT. LIBRARY AND PARLOR - LATER

The entire team watches Ruby lightly apply the very last stroke of paint to *Wolf and Fox Hunt*. She exhales. It's finished.

Quinn flaps his hands and begins to joyfully pace around the parlor.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuv!

Ruby steps back to join the others. Their eyes move from subject copy to their copy. It's perfect. And it's over.

FARMER

I wish I didn't drink all the brandy.

GERT

I have vodka.

Everyone is surprised.

GERT (cont'd)

Annabeth smuggled it in for me.

FARMER

I really like that girl.

BRAM

I'm going to miss this painting.

FARMER

(quickly glances at  
Ruby)

Me too.

He suddenly realizes:

FARMER (cont'd)

Where's Quinn?

From outside:

QUINN (O.S.)

Splashing!

EXT. MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

They step onto the porch. Quinn is playing in a mud puddle with unbridled joy.



FARMER

Quinn!

QUINN

(come play)

Splashing.

FARMER

You're going to help me wash those clothes.

Gert thinks it's wonderful -- and time to cut loose. She bounds off the porch and into the mud with Quinn.

RUBY

(laughs)

I've always wanted to do that.

She leaps off the porch and joins the merriment.

BRAM

(repulsed)

Like sows in a sty.

Farmer and Julian look at each other and size up Bram. Let's do it. They pick him up --

BRAM (cont'd)

What? NO!

-- carry him to the mud and toss him in. The entire team is now mud wrestling, and they couldn't be happier as all the tension of the past months exits their bodies.

Moments later, from around the trees, come THREE HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGES. Their approach brings playtime to a halt.

The carriages pull to a stop. Gawking out their windows are Cabot, R.J. HACKMEISTER and MABLE HACKMEISTER (both early 50s) and their sons ROBERT JR. and RICHARD (both late 20s).

CABOT

Stop that at once! You look like swine!

BRAM

Then you'll fit right in.

R.J.

(amused)

That must be Bram.

The passengers get out. R.J. is a gregarious, self-made man. Mabel is a no-nonsense philanthropist with a mind of her own. Their boys are matching scions, eager to catch their father's next pearl of wisdom.

R.J. (cont'd)  
Having a bit of fun Joseph?

FARMER  
(mortified)  
Yes sir. My apologies.

R.J. looks at Ruby. Pretends he doesn't know her.

R.J.  
Well hello there young miss.

RUBY  
They know father.

R.J.  
Oh, good. Not a fan of skullduggery.

MABEL  
Hello dear.

RUBY  
Hello mother.

Two strong wills. Too much alike for their own good.

MABEL  
We heard about what happened Joseph.  
We can't thank you enough.

R.J.  
Yes, yes. Terrible to have to go through that Joseph. Boggles the mind that a man would stoop to so low when there's so much opportunity in the world.

FARMER  
Yes sir. Thank you. May I introduce--

R.J.  
Wait. I like this game.  
(points as he goes)  
Scott. Zielinski. Douglas.  
Vandenberg.

FARMER  
Correct.

MABEL  
(oh geez)  
How could he have gotten it wrong?

R.J. shoots her a look. To Farmer:

R.J.  
Well, are you going to invite me into  
my own home or do I have to do it  
myself?

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

R.J. bursts in with one thing on his mind.

R.J.  
Where is it?

He instinctively heads for the library. His boys are on his heels. The rest of the group files into the parlor. Quinn paces around the room, excited by the guests.

R.J. (O.S.)  
HO HO! She did it! Mabel! She did it!

He returns and swoops Ruby up in a bear hug.

R.J.  
Oh my girl! You did it! I knew that  
schooling would pay off. Mabel, you  
have to see it. It's tremendous!

Mabel and Cabot quickly walk into the

LIBRARY

They are overwhelmed by the finished work.

CABOT  
Oh my.

Mabel is a mixture of disbelief and pride.

MABEL  
Which is the copy we bought?

Cabot opens his mouth, but has no answer.

R.J.  
(to his sons)  
What do I always say boys? You can do  
anything once you have industry. And  
your sister finally has it.

QUINN

Rub a dub duuv!

R.J.

What's this all about?

FARMER

He's just a happy boy.

Mabel and Cabot return.

MABEL

Congratulations.

RUBY

(filling with guilt)

Thank you.

R.J.

Cabot, inform our buyers that R.J. Hackmeister and Sons can now offer reproductions of Peter Paul Rubens' Wolf and Fox Hunt.

CABOT

(obedient)

Yes sir.

R.J.

(to Ruby)

You're going to be a very busy girl.

RUBY

What?

R.J.

You're going to copy Wolf and Fox Hunt. You're coming to work for me.

She's dumbfounded and disheartened. She's an employee now.

RUBY

But the atelier.

R.J.

Yes, yes, of course. Copy it there. Boys, help your sister collect her things.

RICHARD

(turning to leave)

Welcome to the company.

RUBY

No! Wait. I had help. Everyone helped. I didn't do it alone.

Silence. Everyone looks at Ruby for uniquely different reasons.

R.J.

(always the optimist)

Well, that shows leadership. You delegated and got the job done. Why, even Rubens had help. Everyone knows that. Cabot, contact the university and tell them we want their brightest graduates to assist my daughter in Manhattan.

CABOT

(coldly)

Consider it done.

RUBY

No.

R.J.

No?

RUBY

I want to stay here.

MABEL

Ruby don't be silly.

RUBY

I'm staying here mother. This place inspires me. Always has. This is where I'll find my muse.

MABEL

(pause)

Very well.

Ruby and Julian exchange a quick smile.

R.J.

Well she can't be living here with it in this condition. Cabot, see to it the manor is properly restored. Furniture and fixtures and all the like.

CABOT

(it's getting old)

At once.

MABEL

Now that that's settled, I do believe  
I have a selection to make.

The artists are suddenly on their toes.

MABEL (cont'd)

I want to see your original works.

Bram, Gert and Julian start for the stairs. She stops them.

MABEL (cont'd)

...Without campaigning or commentary.  
Cabot.

She and Cabot exit the room and ascend the stairs, leaving  
everyone in awkward silence until R.J. makes conversation.

R.J.

So, Douglas, the Mrs. and I met your  
mother at a party in Greenwich not  
long ago. Fine, fine woman. Thinks  
the world of you.

JULIAN

Thank you sir.

R.J.

You bear a strong resemblance.  
Uncanny.

Julian and Ruby smirk.

R.J. (cont'd)

How have things been here? Getting on  
well?

JULIAN

It hasn't been without its challenges  
to be honest. But I think better days  
are ahead.

R.J.

(grunts)

Well, good. You're a talented young  
man. Keep your chin up.

JULIAN

(proudly)

Always.

R.J.

Joseph how are you fixed for food? I  
have a bit of a grumbling.

FARMER  
There's chicken...

R.J.  
Boys, go to the kitchen and fix me something.

The boys brighten. A project. They rush to the kitchen.

A door closes upstairs. Mabel and Cabot descend and enter the parlor. Cabot has Quinn's portrait of Ruby.

MABEL  
Mr. Scott this will hang in my private collection. I will pay you five-hundred dollars for it.

Everyone is stunned. Quinn cycles through expressions.

FARMER  
(whispers)  
Say yes.

JULIAN  
(whispers)  
Just nod.

Quinn nods. She approaches Bram.

MABEL  
Congratulations Mr. Vandenberg. I choose you.

Gert and Julian look at Bram. No surprise, but still, disappointment.

CABOT  
Him? But Dorian Vance said his work is infantile.

MABEL  
Oh what does Dorian Vance know. I think his work is brash...like him. Get your things Bram, you're coming with me to Manhattan.

BRAM  
(blurts)  
Farmer has works.

Everyone stops. Looks at Farmer.

BRAM (cont'd)  
He has originals. They're as good as anything you'll ever see.

RUBY  
They're masterpieces.

MABEL  
Is this true Joseph?

FARMER  
I--

BRAM  
See them before I change my mind.

Mabel and Cabot slowly turn to leave.

RUBY  
Wait!

She invades Farmer's pants pocket. Digs out the key.

RUBY (cont'd)  
You'll need this.

She hands Cabot the key. He leaves with Mabel.

R.J.  
Well this is an exciting turn of  
events.

FARMER  
(to Bram)  
You're a fool.

BRAM  
Better a fool than a pariah.

FARMER  
I never liked this part. Why should  
anyone's opinion matter?

BRAM  
Ask da Vinci.

Robert Jr. and Richard return from the kitchen with an  
overstuffed chicken sandwich.

ROBERT JR.  
Here you go father. Chicken sandwich.

R.J.  
Thank you Junior.

He begins to devour it.

R.J. (cont'd)  
Mmmm. Good.  
(to everyone)  
Don't mind me. Carry on.



Ruby's brothers smirk at her. She's covered in mud.

RUBY

Shut up.

Mabel and Cabot return. They look like they've seen the face of God. She walks right up to Farmer.

MABEL

You lied to me Joseph. You said you didn't paint.

FARMER

I made a lot of mistakes when I was young. I figured it was over for me.

MABEL

Then I arrived just in time.

(a beat)

Boys, help Mr. Farmer with his things.

CABOT

Who will oversee the operation?

RUBY

We will.

CABOT

You?

RUBY

(with authority)

Yes.

CABOT

(but)

Mr. Thatcher's commission--

BRAM

Completed. And dare I say even better than the last one. We'll have them wrapped and ready before you depart.

FARMER

Thank you. All of you. But I can't leave Quinn.

R.J.

Doesn't anybody want this damned thing?

MABEL

Very well. Mr. Scott, how would you like to come live with Mr. Farmer in Manhattan?

Quinn flaps. Touches foreheads with Farmer.

QUINN

Aw, I love you.

FARMER

I love you too son.

R.J.

Is that a yes?

RUBY

Yes.

MABEL

Cabot help them.

CABOT

(rolls his eyes)

Of course.

Cabot, Robert Jr. and Richard split up to help Farmer and Quinn. Mabel approaches Gert.

MABEL

I love the direction you're heading.  
I look forward to seeing what happens  
when you get there.

GERT

(blushes)

Thank you.

She approaches Julian.

MABEL

Landscapes never caught my eye.

JULIAN

I understand.

MABEL

But yours are special.  
(leans in, whispers)  
Your mother told me about Chicago.  
Contact me if you're willing to  
accept investors.

She pulls back. Winks.

MABEL (cont'd)  
Now will all of you please bathe.  
This dirt...

The artists leave to get clean. She sees her husband stuffing his face.

MABEL (cont'd)  
You couldn't wait?

EXT. MANOR - LATER

Robert Jr., Richard and the CARRIAGE DRIVERS load the last of the paintings with Farmer's and Quinn's belongings.

Quinn is hopping around joyfully, excited for the trip.

QUINN  
Hopping!

Farmer, Bram, Julian and Gert exit the manor and approach the carriages. He rambles like a nervous father leaving for a long vacation:

FARMER  
Don't wait too long to chop the wood.  
Winter will sneak up on you. And  
clean the flue and stovepipe  
regularly or you'll have a mess on  
your hands. And mind your rations!  
There are fewer of you now, so you  
should be able to stretch them a  
little longer.

BRAM  
Not with Gert's appetite.

GERT  
Hey!

Ruby is talking with her parents.

R.J.  
We'll expedite supplies as quickly as  
possible and have a whole team of  
apprentices for you in short order.  
We'll shake the market with Wolf and  
Fox Hunt!

RUBY  
(amusing him)  
Yes father.

He gives her a big bear hug then turns.

R.J.

Cabot!

He marches off.

MABEL

Take care dear. You've made your  
father very proud.

RUBY

Only father?

MABEL

(softens)

It seems like you shot straight from  
being a schoolgirl to here. And now  
you're a working woman. I feel like I  
missed so much of you.

RUBY

Well, I do get a vacation.

(unsure)

Don't I?

MABEL

We'll institute one.

She winks, hugs Ruby then calls to Bram:

MABEL (cont'd)

Mr. Vandenberg.

He approaches.

MABEL (cont'd)

There will be another opening next  
year.

BRAM

I'll be ready.

MABEL

You'll have some stiff competition.

Her eyes shift toward Gert. His eyes follow. Damn.

R.J. (O.S.)

HA HA HA!

They turn to see R.J. with Quinn's "Bram Aghast."

R.J.  
I'll buy this one for my office!  
(to Bram)  
That look on your face! Priceless!

Everyone gets a laugh at Bram's expense. Ruby and Bram join Farmer and the others for a final goodbye. There are hugs, kisses and tears.

GERT  
I love you.

FARMER  
I love you too.

GERT  
I'm keeping the rifle.

FARMER  
'Bye boys.

JULIAN  
Congratulations.

BRAM  
Save room in the Louvre for the rest  
of us.

Gert, Bram and Julian give Quinn hugs and back slaps, then guide him into a carriage.

Farmer comes face to face with Ruby. His thorn is now a rose.

RUBY  
I owe you my life.

FARMER  
I'd say we're even.

RUBY  
You deserve their respect. Accept  
nothing less.

FARMER  
Aye, aye, captain.

They share a quick hug then he boards the carriage with Quinn. He sticks his head out the door and takes one last look at the manor that served as his hideaway. There was no time to prepare for this moment -- and no way he's turning down this second chance.

R.J.

Onward!

The convoy starts off.

CABOT

I'll have new commissions for you  
sooner than you think!

Bram, Gert, Julian and Ruby wave as the carriages get  
further and further away.

BRAM

(to Gert)

About that vodka...

They walk back to the manor. Julian and Ruby hold hands.

BRAM (cont'd)

How do they say vodka in Poland?

GERT

Zarlok.

BRAM

Zarlok. I like that.

THE END

## APPENDIX



Vermeer's *Young Woman With a Water Pitcher*





da Vinci's *Lady With an Ermine*





Rembrandt's *Aristotle With a Bust of Homer*



da Vinci's *The Mona Lisa*



Julian's style is like Robert S. Duncanson



Bram's style is like Kazimir Malevich



Gert's style is like Thesleff





da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*



Monet's *Poppies Near Argenteuil*



da Vinci's *Ginevra de' Benci*





Velazquez's *Juan de Pareja*



Farmer's style is like Chuck Close





Farmer's style is like Gustave Courbet