

A THOUSAND ACRES

screenplay by Laura Jones

based on the novel by Jane Smiley

Third draft

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1.

GINNY

(VO)

Every story when we were children
revealed a lesson,

A sweep of fertile farmland, so immense that we question if it isn't infinite,
lies undeniably flat under its dome of sky in dawn's early light.

We move to take in the figure of a man working in a field: a large man in his
seventies. LARRY COOK works at his early morning chores as naturally as a
fish swims in water, in his element.

GINNY

(VO cont)

"work hard"; "respect your elders";
"don't tell your neighbours your
business"; "luck is something you make
for yourself". Each acre

•

2.

GINNY

(VO cont)

was something to covet,

The same dawn light shows GINNY COOK as she comes into a large, old spic-
and-span, four-square kitchen. She does her chores as naturally as her father
does his: taking her apron from behind door, tying it on, and starting Daddy's
breakfast:

GINNY

(VO cont)

something hard to get, and that you
couldn't get enough of. The soil was the
treasure, thicker, richer than any soil
anywhere. A farm

•

3.

We walk with Ginny down between two tall shelves of library books

GINNY

(VO cont)

is full of poisons. Arsenic in old rat-
poison, kerosene and diesel fuel, paint
thinner, atrazine, insecticides...

Her hand along spines. She stops, skims shelves, hunkers down and pulls out
a book, the title page only glimpsed: POISONOUS COMMON PLANTS. Pages
turn: we briefly glimpse botanical illustrations:

GINNY

(VO cont)

...mistletoe...horse-nettle...
English ivy...

4.

In a secluded dip, where the Scenic River spreads out into a little marsh:
under willows and silver maples, amongst a rich tangle of marsh plants and
river grasses:

Ginny's hands, in yellow dish-washing gloves, pull on a tall erect plant:

GINNY

(VO cont)

...and the most poisonous of all...

It comes up, satisfyingly whole, by the roots.

Ginny disappears from the river bank, leaving it in perfect peace of golden
late-afternoon light.

GINNY

(VO)

I have to admit, I relished the secrecy of
it.

5.

Dawn's early light.

Ginny picks two heavy, cool cabbages. She stands, one held in either hand.

6.

Briefly, we see various stages:

A fork holds down the hemlock root on a piece of paper, a paring knife mincing the root.

Minced root tipped from paper into bowl of pork-liver and onions and herbs.

Sausage casings, filled with the poisoned liver, being tied every six inches, thick as a man's thumb.

Preserving jar, of sausages packed in cabbage and brine, lifted into sterilizing pan on stove.

Farm bounty: on the kitchen table, glowing yellows of peaches, greens of pickles, reds of tomatoes. Amongst them, the jar of poisoned sausages.

GINNY

(VO)

Since then, I've often thought that I "wasn't myself", was "out of my mind", but at the time, it did, it felt like the "real me".

7.

GINNY

(VO)

A few months earlier, it would have been unthinkable.

Light of Spring day in Rose's kitchen, as Rose ladles swiss steak into serving dish. She wears a loose shirt but, if we care to notice, she hasn't yet put the prosthetic into her bra.

GINNY

(VO)

I've gone over every moment of that time,

8.

Briefly, in bathroom, we see Rose pick up her prosthetic and tuck it into her bra:

cont

8 cont

GINNY
(VO cont)
over and over again,

9.

Rose, now in a dress and carrying the casserole dish, coming out of her house. Directly opposite, over the road is Daddy's big house. They are the only two houses visible in the vast landscape, except for Ginny's house, further up the road, a toy house from here.

GINNY
(VO)
looking for ways of knowing how
to do things differently from the
way they got done.

Rose into Ginny's car. The easy intimacy of sisters:

ROSE
Swiss steak for the prodigal son.

GINNY
You look good.

ROSE
Nothing like a scandal to make me feel
better.

GINNY
Scandal?

ROSE
What would you call it? Who else but
Jess Clark has ever left here without a
word, disappeared off the face of the
earth, and then popped up out of the
blue thirteen years later?

The only sign of the car is its distant disappearing plume of dirt, leaving the enormous, silent sweep of land, as we pull up, away, taking the measure on this kingdom of a thousand acres.

10.

We move through a crowd, of all ages, around Harold Clark's farmhouse, where most of the district is gathered to welcome back Jess Clark, although many won't quickly lose their suspicions of him: why he went, why he's returned.

A pig roasting.

A knot of admiring men, mostly farmers. around a brand-new, enclosed, air-conditioned International Harvester tractor includes JESS CLARK, his brother LOREN, local banker MARV CARSON, and a farmer BOB STANLEY:

MARV

Your dad can't wait to see Larry Cook's face when he sees this.

JESS

Are those two still at it?

At the same time, EILEEN DAHL, a woman in her mid-thirties, has come up to Jess, almost flirtatious:

EILEEN

Well, look at you, Jess Clark. None of us knew what to expect. Eileen Dahl, don't you remember? I'm hurt.

At the same time, Loren entertains the group:

LOREN

I notice Jess waited till Dad and me busted our butts finishing up planting before he staged his resurrection.

Laughter as:

BOB

You bring any family with you, Jess?

JESS

No, Bob. No wife, no kids.

HAROLD CLARK, second in importance to Larry Cook in the district hierarchy, has joined the group:

LOREN

Lots of good looking girls out West.

10 cont

HAROLD

And no plans to go back, neither.

And Harold's arm goes around Jess's shoulders for a brief embrace. But Jess's gaze has gone out of the group to:

Ginny and Rose, carrying their casserole dishes, walking through the crowd, side by side.

Rose sees Jess leaving the group around the tractor, coming towards them:

ROSE

Hunh. Look at that.

Ginny follows her look.

Jess, who looks like nobody else here: an envoy from the outside world, dangerous yet familiar.

Their two casseroles go down, side by side, on the big trestle table.

JESS

Hey, it's the big girls.

He hugs Ginny, then Rose.

ROSE

Hey, it's the pest.

JESS

Caroline liked me. Did she come?

GINNY

Caroline's down in Des Moines now, Jess, she's a lawyer. She's getting married in the fall, to another lawyer, she's...

Ginny stops, conscious of sounding serious, dull.

JESS

Caroline, married?

ROSE

She's not a baby, Jess. According to Daddy, it's almost too late to breed her. You know, sows and heifers and empty chambers? It's a whole theoretical system.

cont

10 cont

JESS

He's still like that?

ROSE

You shouldn't think anything's changed just because you haven't seen it for thirteen years.

Jess looks at Rose, but Rose is never embarrassed.

GINNY

I guess you remember Rose always says what she thinks.

ROSE

And I remember that Jess used to like his Mom's swiss steak.

Rose lifts lid on her dish. Jess looks in:

JESS

I haven't eaten meat in seven years.

ROSE

And you've come back? There's Eileen Dahl, Ginny. I have to go say hello. You'll starve to death around here.

Instead of watching Rose leave, Jess lifts the lid on Ginny's dish: cheese garbanzo enchiladas.

JESS

I guess I won't.

Ginny can't help feeling pleased that she got it right: Jess will eat the food she made.

GINNY

Here's Caroline now.

They look over to see CAROLINE, TY and PETE getting out of Daddy's car, with the two girls, PAMMY and LINDA.

Ginny and Jess walk through the crowd towards Daddy's car, as:

GINNY

And my husband Ty, you remember Ty? And Pete, Rose's husband.

10 cont

JESS

The girls? Yours?

GINNY

Rose's. They're home for the weekend, they go to boarding school down in West Branch.

JESS

And your kids?

Daddy now out of the car:

GINNY

We don't have any. And there's Daddy, of course.

As Daddy sees Jess and Ginny coming towards him, he lowers his head for a moment like an old bull as he eyes Jess. Then he straightens and gives a nod of recognition: his version of a greeting to this wayward son.

As Daddy moves into the party, being greeted on all sides, it is clear he is king of the district:

GINNY

(VO)

When I was little I thought it right that we owned the great circle of land spreading out from the intersection at Cabot Road.

11.

Briefly, we see - from eight year old Ginny's point of view - part of the 360 degree view of the thrillingly flat landscape as she turns, at the heart of the kingdom, taking it in:

GINNY

(VO cont)

A thousand acres. Daddy was the biggest farmer on the biggest farm in the district. It was that simple.

12.

Almost dusk now in Harold Clark's yard.

A few little children impromptu dancing as someone plays a harmonica. The party thinning out. Goodbyes as people continue to leave.

In the fading light, a small group sitting on Harold's back porch: Daddy holding court in the centre with Ty and Pete, Caroline and Rose in semi-circle around him.

DADDY

- and when prices are up, people always
act like they're going to live forever -

A group of girls, including Pammy and Linda, are placing their hands on the long hair of a seated girl, in charged silence.

Ginny, moving around picking up used plates and forks, passes the girls, then notices the little group on the back porch:

Rose, turning, looking for Ginny.

Caroline smiles, waves Ginny over.

Ginny goes to the porch steps, to hear:

DADDY

So there you have it. That's the plan.

GINNY

What plan, Daddy?

Daddy glances down at Ginny, then at Caroline and, keeping his eyes on Caroline:

DADDY

We're going to form a corporation, and
you girls are all going to have shares.

Now he looks at Ginny, who comes up on to the porch, perplexed by this plan: does the sun go round the earth?

DADDY

You girls and Ty and Pete and Frank are
going to run the show. You'll each have
a third.

He looks around at his little court, expansive:

12 cont

DADDY
Well? What do you say?

He slowly looks in turn at each of his daughters.

And one by one:

GINNY
It's a good idea, Daddy.

ROSE
It's a great idea.

CAROLINE
I don't know.

Daddy turns to look fully at Caroline next to him: slow and startled, a big movement of his whole body.

Caroline looks away, out to the darkening horizon, mute, stubborn.

Daddy stands:

DADDY
You don't want it, my girl, you're out.
Simple as that.

Daddy leaves the circle, lumbers past Ginny and down the porch steps, into the thickening dusk.

13.

Daddy, his empty house silent behind him, stands at his big living room windows. He stares out, full of hurt resentment, across the road to:

Rose's house: a few lit windows. As a downstairs light goes off:

14.

Caroline's hand leaves the light-switch, the room lit only by a lamp beside the sofa.

Sound from upstairs of Pammy practising her flute, Pete and Linda moving around, their voices, Pete's wordless singing briefly to the flute.

14 cont.

Rose comes through the room on her way upstairs as Caroline gets into bed made up on sofa.

ROSE

Sleeping here's only going to make
Daddy madder.

CAROLINE

Daddy changes his whole life overnight?

ROSE

Take it while it's on offer.

But Caroline sets her mouth.

ROSE

Do you remember - I was just
remembering - before Mommy died,
you were about five I guess and you
said "When I grow up I'm not going
to be a farm wife", and Mommy was
cooking and she laughed and asked
you what you were going to be and
you said "A farmer".

CAROLINE

I don't remember Mommy, you know
that.

Rose laughs at Caroline's self-righteous tone. Caroline turns off the lamp.

Rose's voice dry in the dark:

ROSE

Sweet dreams.

15.

Ginny and Ty getting ready for bed, moving between bedroom and bathroom:
at times together, or passing each other, or talking from room to room.
Intimate but not particularly sexual. Ty mild, without rancour:

TY

Caroline didn't need to get on her high
horse.

cont

15 cont

GINNY

She just said she didn't know.

TY

And she said it like she did know, the way she always does.

Ginny enjoys Ty's hopeful enthusiasm for his dream-about-to-come-true.

TY

I can't believe it. Who'd have ever thought Larry'd do something like this? Those Slurrystores, Ginny, if this all happens, I'd like one of those. And a hog confinement building. Air conditioned. I want one of them, too. And let's see, how about a couple of champion boars, breeding so pure they can sit up to dinner with you and not spill a drop on the cloth. Sweet old pink boys named Rockefeller and Vanderbilt.

Ty now lying on the bed, his strong arms up behind his head, sunburn lines clear on upper arms and neck:

TY

This is it, Ginny, this is where we stop working for your dad and start working for ourselves. It'll be our place, our way of doing things.

Ginny in the bathroom, running water, cleaning teeth, half-hears Ty's voice from the bedroom:

TY
(OS)

We get a good breeding line going and we can put those babies up for adoption. We can say "Okay Jake, but you got to feed him with your own spoon and let him sleep on your side of the bed".

Ginny, now in nightgown, leans into window-seat and opens the window wider.

Ty now asleep on bed under old quilt.

Ginny sits in window-seat, looks out, down to: Rose's house, Daddy's house, both now dark. The pearly peace of moonlight.

cont

15 cont

She feels the spring breeze: souging like water in the pine-break. Sound of hogs clanking their feeders in the barn. As she looks out over the peaceful kingdom:

16.

Larger-than-life Christ - illuminated by a ray of light from the sky, praying in a big landscape - painted with naive boldness, dominates the church behind the altar

Ginny and Caroline almost the last to leave after Sunday service. Ginny has set herself the task of reconciliation.

GINNY

Come along, come out and give him a kiss and a hug and just say "Sorry, Daddy". You can do that.

CAROLINE

It's too late. I already spent the night at Rose's.

GINNY

Ignore that.

CAROLINE

He won't.

GINNY

If he mentions it, say "I was afraid you were mad at me, Daddy".

CAROLINE

I hate that little girl stuff.

Ginny makes herself wheedle:

GINNY

Just this once. *

Ginny conscious suddenly that her feet are apart, that she is leaning over Caroline. She tries to relax.

CAROLINE

I'll try, okay?

cont

16 cont

Caroline takes Ginny's arm and turns her to walk down the aisle. With Caroline's arm in hers, Ginny suddenly feels hopeful, that her task has been well done.

17.

Stacks of papers with little red markers staggered down their pages, lie in neat fans on Daddy's dark dining room table.

Jess appears in the doorway, glances in at the legal papers, then out through the window to:

Far out in the fields, we see a little concourse of cars and pick-ups.

18.

Ginny, still in her church clothes, prepares coffee in Daddy's kitchen.

Jess appears silently behind her.

Unconscious of him, she turns to the table with a stack of cups.

Startled, very close, almost face to face, she bumps into him. He grips her upper arm to give her balance. She rescues the cups.

His face is familiar and exotic at the same time, friendly and interested, but strange, promising knowledge.

GINNY

Where did you spring from?

JESS

(over)

Hey, I didn't mean to scare you.

He lets go her arm and, unsettled by the sudden intimacy, she continues to prepare coffee:

GINNY

So why did you come back, after all this time?

JESS

You want to know my secrets, huh?

cont

18 cont

Jess looks at Ginny until she feels herself blushing, then he smiles.

JESS

Harold acts like I've been in prison or something. He hasn't even asked me what I've been doing. All he cares is, I'm back. And Loren just said, "You buy any land out there?" and when I said I didn't, he said, "Huh, too bad".

Rattle of gravel outside as cars drive up. Ginny looks out of window: sound of car doors slamming, men's voices. Jess stands behind Ginny, gently squeezes the back of her neck:

JESS

It's going to be fine.

Ginny surprised to feel his hand, to hear his words, answering her anxious, hopeful thoughts.

19.

Pammy and Linda take around plates of cake to everyone gathered in Daddy's living room.

Ty and Ginny, Rose and Pete, Jess, Daddy. The two witnesses: Harold and Loren. MARV CARSON from the bank and their lawyer KEN LA SALLE. Only Caroline is missing.

Smiles, laughter, the words "hog operation" like an incantation.

Rose pauses, low to Ginny, in passing:

ROSE

Can you believe this?

GINNY

Where's Caroline?

ROSE

Over at our place, taking the high ground.

Ginny's spirits lift with Daddy's high-spirited good mood, as his arm goes around Ty:

19 cont

DADDY

I'll be sitting here watching other people do the work.

Daddy downs his coffee.

DADDY

Okay, Kenny, let's go to it. Now's the time. Let's do the deed.

But Ken La Salle is looking out through the front screen-door.

KEN

Just a moment, Larry.

Ginny also looks out the door, to see: Caroline crossing the road from Rose's house.

Ginny gives up her last reservations, feels confidence take over.

Ginny, smiling, goes to the door.

Caroline steps up on to the porch.

But Daddy steps around Ginny, taking the front door in his hand and slams it shut in Caroline's face.

20.

Caroline blinking at slammed front door: all her stubbornness returns in a flood of anger.

21.

Daddy whirls back to the room, a hand on Ken's arm:

DADDY

Now!

And he leads the way with Ken into the dining room and the waiting legal papers, followed by his retinue.

22.

Caroline, in her red Honda, driving along the road through the fields. A plume of dirt clouds up behind her, as she leaves the kingdom.

23.

Ginny, in doctor's surgery, watches:

The DOCTOR, a cancer specialist, testing Rose's arm for improvement in strength and movement. Rose sits, her back to us, while he moves her arm into various positions, feeling the muscle strength of pectoral and upper arm.

He is pleased with her progress. Rose's X-rays, lit, on wall behind him.

ROSE

I still feel lop-sided.

DOCTOR

You will for a while, Rose, that's par for the course.

ROSE

Maybe I should have the other one off, for symmetry.

Rose stands, face to wall, stretching her 'good' arm up to a marker on the wall. Attempts to reach the same marker with her 'bad' arm: almost there.

DOCTOR

(OS)

That's very good, much better. Go to the top of the class.

Rose's face, pleased, as she turns:

24.

Rose transformed: we almost see the strength flowing into her as she and Ginny walk through the shadowy entrance lobby of the doctor's old Mason City building:

ROSE

I want to go shopping, I want to buy things, I want to do stuff I've stopped myself doing. You know, Mommy dying of exactly this same thing, I thought I didn't have a chance. I thought it'd get me, for sure. I know it's only the three-month check, and there's the six-month and the one-year and *blah, blah*, but I believe him, Ginny. I'm going to be okay!

As they go out into the bright day and city noise of the crowded sidewalk:

25.

Rose doesn't know which way to go, as people move around them:

ROSE

I want to buy clothes, I want to eat out,
I want - I want -

Ginny laughs, as Rose searches for what she wants:

GINNY

What?

ROSE

I want to do something that'll shock
Daddy.

GINNY

Well, that's easy.

Rose laughs, takes Ginny's arm, and they become part of the crowd.

•

26.

Rose quickly flicks down rack of tops in fashionable clothes-shop. She already holds two tops. She pulls out a third, holds it up against herself, turns to Ginny and vamps.

Reflected in the changing-room mirror: Rose's back, as she pulls on a top. She turns to the mirror, her face changing from anticipation to distress. Her hand flutters up to the missing muscles and breast. But she continues to look at herself, taking in the full measure of what she can and can't do. Then she turns away from the mirror, as:

•

27.

Daddy sitting bolt upright in his La-Z-Boy recliner, staring out of his big window. He sees:

Ginny's car stop outside Rose's house. Rose gets out, goes into her house, as Ginny drives off. Then Ginny's car appears again, stops, Ginny looking up at him.

•

28.

Ginny, in car, staring up at Daddy in window. He doesn't move, even blink. He could be dead.

28 cont

Dumped beside Daddy's driveway is a full set of new, oak kitchen cabinets, a sink and a length of baby-blue laminated countertop.

Ginny looks at this bizarre sight. Then back up to Daddy who hasn't moved.

29.

Daddy in his La-Z-Boy. Ginny comes into room behind him.

DADDY

What's the matter?

GINNY

Nothing.

DADDY

You drove by and then you drove back.

GINNY

I drove back to see what you were doing.

DADDY

I was reading a magazine.

Ginny looks around: no magazines near his chair or on the table beside him.

DADDY

I was looking out the window.

GINNY

That's fine.

DADDY

You bet it's fine.

GINNY

What's all that stuff out front?

Daddy doesn't answer.

GINNY

You've got a perfectly good kitchen already, Daddy.

Still no answer:

GINNY

Do you want Ty to bring it in?

29 cont

DADDY

You leave it there.

GINNY

They're solid oak, Daddy. They'll warp.

DADDY

I said, leave it.

Daddy shifts in his chair.

Ginny follows his gaze.

Far off to the west a tractor moves back and forth. In the silence, the tractor's faintest buzz carries to them.

Ginny's eye caught by Jess, in running gear, passing by on the road below the house. Daddy's focus doesn't shift:

DADDY

Why's he cultivating that field? They done planting the beans?

GINNY

Almost, I think.

As the distant tractor crawls from one side of the big window to the other, Daddy's look follows it like the barrel of a rifle.

GINNY

Daddy? Come up to our place for supper.
You can ask Ty then.

Daddy's face reddening, staring.

GINNY

Daddy?

Daddy doesn't glance at Ginny or respond. Ginny is nervous, impatient to leave, as if there is something here to flee.

GINNY

Daddy? You want anything before
I leave?

Ginny crosses the room, pauses at the kitchen door.

29 cont

GINNY

I'm leaving.

She looks across to: the unyielding back of Daddy's head.

30.

Rose picks up the phone, starts to dial. Evening light.

31.

Ginny on phone:

GINNY

Is he still at it?

32.

Rose on phone:

ROSE

He was there when I went to Cabot for bread and there when I got back. And what's all that stuff in his driveway?

33.

Ginny on phone, listening:

GINNY

(VO)

I had to smile

34.

In late afternoon light, Rose stands beside her car - driver's door open - fists on hips, staring up at Daddy framed in his big window, his stare roaring down to meet hers, neither acknowledging the other:

cont

34 cont

GINNY
(VO cont)

at the thought of her stopping the car and watching him. They were two of a kind, that was for sure.

35.

Rose on phone:

ROSE

Perfecting that death's-head stare will be his lifework from now on, so we'd better get used to it.

36.

Early morning and Ginny is putting in tomato plants: a ritualized procedure. She is on her twentieth plant. She is showing Jess - hunkered down beside her in running gear - the method she uses. As she spreads sheets of the *Des Moines Register* around the tin can protecting the plant:

GINNY

- and then the newspaper, like this, about four sheets. And then grass-cuttings over that, half-decayed is best, just spread like this. And that's it.

JESS

You should get Ty to farm like that.

Ginny laughs, pushes her hair back, wipes her forehead with her sleeve:

GINNY

On a thousand acres?

Jess sits back on the grass and watches for a second as Ginny starts on the next plant:

JESS

I want you to tell me something else.

Ginny turns at his change of tone:

cont

36 cont

JESS

About my mother. All Harold's told me is, it was cancer. But not how it was, how she was. Go on planting, it's easier.

As Ginny plants:

GINNY

Well, Jess, all your mother talked about at the end was you. According to Loren, she was convinced that at the last moment you would come back.

JESS

No one told me anything.

GINNY

They didn't know where you were, how could they?

Ginny plants, but Jess is silent.

Then Ginny turns and sees a terrible look on Jess's face, of pain and anger. She goes to him as he stands:

JESS

Oh, Jesus.

GINNY

Jess? Are you okay?

Ginny feels she has never seen such a marvellously expressive face. She is drawn intimately into his willingness to reveal his pain and anger to her.

JESS

I wrote to her twice in that first year. She knew where I was.

Ginny dismayed, but wants to defend Jess's mother:

GINNY

She was in pain, and so sad, she -

Jess interrupts her, stares her down.

JESS

No, Ginny.

cont

36 cont

Then softly, as if telling a secret:

JESS

Can you believe how they've fucked us over? Maybe to you it looked like I just vanished, but I was out there. She could've told me. Of course she was sad, but why didn't she give me a chance? Why keep that from me? To punish me?

GINNY

I don't know, Jess.

And Ginny is shaken and afraid. As she turns back to planting and takes out the next plant, her hands are shaking and she snaps the stem in half.

The only constant in the following sequence of 'good times' is Ginny's house. Clothes change, as does the time of late day or night, and over a couple of weeks the weather becomes hotter.

37.

Rose's hands, made into fists, held out, knuckles up. Jess's finger taps one fist.

Rose's fist turns and opens out to show, held in her palm, a little metal horseman.

Briefly, we are in the middle of an animated game of Monopoly: coloured play-money changes hands, scores kept, metal motorbike, horseman, shoe and so on moved around the board, dice shaken and rolled.

Pete an aggressive strategist who plays to win. Rose, Ginny and Ty play like farmers, guarding their backs. Jess, like Pete, looks for the payoff not the pitfall.

37a

Pammy and Linda lie head-to-toe on the sofa. Linda asleep, Pammy reading one of Ginny's old girlhood books.

In one of those lulls where play is suspended and talk takes over, Jess is telling a story:

cont

37a cont

JESS

...then, in the middle of the night,
the door opens, they come in -

ROSE

All of them?

JESS

Yup, all four of them. They wake me
up, they have these flashlights, shining
them in my eyes, and they hold me
down and...shave off my beard and all
my hair.

Whoops, laughter.

JESS

(cont)

I've never figured out why they didn't
turn on the lights. The next day I hitch
a lift into Vancouver and when I get
out,

Rose watches Jess lean over and touch Ginny's arm:

JESS

(cont)

the guy leans across to me and whispers
"I hope your chemotherapy's a success".

Laughter, as Jess, realising, looks at Rose:

JESS

Rose, I'm sorry.

ROSE

Don't be. I didn't have chemo. I had it
lopped off. I didn't have -

Ty ducks his head, embarrassed, counts his Monopoly money as:

PETE

(OVER)

He doesn't want to know, Rose.

JESS

It's okay.

cont

37a cont

ROSE

I got to keep the other one. Now I -

Pete, angry with Rose, and wanting to regain the good mood, launches into:

PETE

(over)

Tell you my weirdest experience,
hitching. Back in my bad-boy days -

ROSE

"Back in"?

PETE

(over)

- I used to hitch most weeks between
Davenport and Muscatine, to rehearse
with my band, and -

JESS

You had a band? What'd you play?

PETE

(mimes briefly)

Guitar, acoustic.

ROSE

(OVER)

He was good.

PETE

Anyway, this night I got a lift with a guy
and his wife (driving a VW van) -

The group settles back into camaraderie.

37b

Another night, the sound of Ginny and Rose in the kitchen, as the men talk around the Monopoly table, enjoying each other's company, overlapping talk. Pete is playing chords on Linda's ukelelee, with an occasional wordless sung riff, Linda bending over her father from behind him as he sits on the sofa. Pammy carrying around a bowl of freshly-popped corn:

TY

Organic farming?

cont

37b cont

JESS

Hey, you make it sound like I offered to shoot your dog.

PETE

You serious about sticking around?

TY

Harold and organic farming?

JESS

I don't know. He listens. I could maybe start with an acre or two.

TY

You could farm my father's land. I've got Michael Rakosi renting it now, but he's looking to buy for himself. If you're serious.

JESS

Your land's probably had the shit worked out of it.

Ty offended by Jess's joking aggressiveness.

TY

It's good land. He likes clean fields, is all.

Jess smiles, realising Ty is offended.

37c

The same night. Ginny and Rose making coffee in the kitchen. Sound of men's voices from the living room, of Pete playing the ukelelee, of the girls:

GINNY

It's a long time since I realised what fun Pete is.

ROSE

Put another spoon in.

GINNY

It's too strong.

cont

37c cont

ROSE

No, it's not. It's been a long time since
he's been fun. Or had fun, actually.

37d

Twilight. Heat.

An impromptu baseball game in a field of long grass behind Ginny's house.

Voices calling, cheers, barracking, as we see a brief moment of the game.

38.

Daddy, out the back of his house, staring up at the distant activity in the field behind Ginny's house. His burden of resentment grows daily, and the shouts and laughter of the baseball game carrying to him on the still air, helps to fuel it.

He moves his head in an odd gesture, as if trying to free it from a too-tight collar. As he turns to go back inside:

39.

Caroline, in the apartment she shares with Frank in Des Moines, on the phone, waiting for it to be answered. Morning light.

CAROLINE

Daddy?

40.

Daddy hangs up phone.

41.

Caroline dialling again. Listens to ringing. No answer. Stubborn, she waits.

42.

Daddy moving away from ringing phone. He picks up a farming magazine and sits in his La-Z-Boy and opens the magazine. The phone doesn't stop ringing.

43.

A blazing hot, windy day at Pike swimming pool. Pool crowded with bodies, including Pammy and Linda in and out of the shallow end.

In the crowd around the pool, lying and sitting on towels, with the hot wind whipping and flicking at magazines, towels, hats, MARY LIVINGSTONE, a woman in her early seventies, has lowered herself down next to Ginny:

MARY

How's your dad, Ginny?

Ginny feels Mary's look is unusually piercing:

GINNY

He's fine, thanks Mary.

MARY

We might not see you before we go down to Florida. Dad isn't much for going around and saying goodbye and I'm not either.

GINNY

I'm sure we'll see (you before) -

MARY

I want to tell you something, Ginny.

Ginny halted by Mary's tone.

MARY

This thing with Rose reminds me. You girls were about their (she nods across to Pammy and Linda) age when your mom was sick. She was so afraid she'd die.

Ginny doesn't know what to say.

MARY

I told her I would help.

GINNY

Pardon me?

43 cont

MARY

She wasn't afraid for herself. She had true faith. She was afraid for you. For the life you would live after she died.

Pammy and Linda have come, dripping, up to Ginny, to ask for money for popsicles. Ginny gives it to them and they run off.

MARY

She knew what your father was like, even though I think she loved him.

A long silence. Ginny watches the life of the pool: its clarity and ordinariness, as Mary's gaze moves across Ginny's face.

MARY

Lord, Ginny, I shouldn't have brought this up. But I promised your mom, and then Jimmy had his accident, and, well, I let it go. She wanted you to have more choices.

GINNY

I don't know that I would have had a different life if mom had lived. Daddy didn't make me marry Ty. I wanted to.

MARY

There was another thing, too -

GINNY

What's that?

Their gazes lock.

MARY

Oh. Nothing, really.

Ginny disconcerted.

GINNY

Rose went to college. She had the choices Mom wanted, and she chose the farm. Caroline chose the city, and she's been everywhere now, New York, Washington. So, in a way, Mom got what she wanted.

cont

43 cont

MARY

Maybe so, dear. She was most worried about you. She used to say, "Ginny won't stand up to him", but if you're happy, then it's all worked out. I'll say one thing, and that is that you're a good girl, Ginny, and unselfish, and you'll be rewarded.

44.

Rose leaves Pete, Ty and Jess gathered around the bbq in Ginny's backyard. Sound of the men's voices, laughter. A warm evening wind in the late dusky light. Rose crossing to:

Pammy and Linda, in swimming costumes, washing their hair under Ginny's outside tap. Ginny shampooing Pammy's hair, while Linda rinses hers, . squatting under the water. Cold water, laughter.

GINNY

Isn't it your turn to have Daddy for dinner?

ROSE

I already fed him.

Sound of phone ringing from inside house.

45.

Shadows from a plane tree flicker, in hot late-afternoon wind, across Caroline's windscreen. She is in her car parked under trees in Pike's Main Street, talking on her mobile phone:

CAROLINE

Is Daddy okay? (pause) No, I'm here, in Pike. (pause) You never called me, Ginny. Why didn't you call? (beat) For six weeks?

46.

Ginny on her kitchen phone. Sound of voices calling and laughter from outside. The girls run through the kitchen, hair dripping water, giggling, as Ty calls out to Ginny from outside.

cont

46 cont

GINNY

It's a madhouse here, Caroline, I
can't - (pause) No, you come out here -
(pause) I - (beat) Okay, alright.

47.

Caroline and Ginny walking on the banks of the Scenic River, which we
recognise from Scene 3. They find a shady spot, but even here the wind is hot,
the evening light glaring beyond the shadowy trees.

CAROLINE

Do you know where Daddy was
yesterday?

GINNY

No, why?

CAROLINE

He was in Des Moines -

GINNY

He never goes to Des Moines.

CAROLINE

Well, he did. He came to my office.
I wasn't there, I was in New York.
They said he was acting weird.

GINNY

Weird, how?

CAROLINE

Gawking at everyone, throwing his
head around in a weird kind of way,
I don't know.

GINNY

He'd probably been to a bar and then,
you know, down there in a strange
place, he -

CAROLINE

He was drinking and driving?

GINNY

Sounds like it.

cont

47 cont

CAROLINE

You can't let him do that.

GINNY

I can't stop him.

CAROLINE

Take away his keys.

Ginny laughs.

CAROLINE

It's not funny.

GINNY

The idea of us taking away his keys is funny. Anyway, what's he supposed to do all day?

CAROLINE

Why isn't he working?

GINNY

He doesn't want to work. He's tired of farming. He's taking the only vacation he knows how to take. He did what he wanted.

CAROLINE

So you and Rose signed the papers?

Ginny puzzled for a second.

CAROLINE

The corporation papers, the transfer papers.

Ginny falters under Caroline's cool exasperation:

GINNY

Well, of course we did. We didn't have any choice.

Caroline silent, then she stands and takes out her car keys:

CAROLINE

I think you did. All I know is, Daddy's lost everything, he's acting crazy, and you don't care enough to do anything about it. What's happened to you?

cont

47 cont

Ginny is shaking. It feels like a fury, but it also feels like a panic, as if Caroline's criticisms are simultaneously just and unjust. Before she can say anything, Caroline is walking away:

GINNY

Caroline?

The sound of Caroline's car door banging, car starting and driving off.

•

48.

The kitchen cabinets have taken on a look of permanence: the oak weathered, the baby-blue laminex faded in summer heat. The pantry cabinet lies on its back, shelves exposed.

As Pammy and Linda, coming across from their house to Daddy's house, approach the cabinets, Linda - as if her usual routine now - runs to the pantry cabinet and steps on each shelf, balancing as she walks the length of the cabinet. Pammy wears sunglasses and walks below her sister:

The sound of Rose calling them, from Daddy's house: "Girls! Lunch!"

•

49.

Daddy is not having a good time at his annual Father's Day lunch. On the white tablecloth in his dining room: a crown pork roast and farm bounty. Daddy at the head of the table, Pammy and Linda squabbling. Ginny notices Daddy's odd gesture, of lifting his head out of the too-tight collar. Tension in the air.

GINNY

Daddy, what were you doing down
in Des Moines?

Daddy turns his glare on to Ginny.

GINNY

Caroline was wondering, that's all.

ROSE

Is that where you got those cabinets?

Rose's eye on Pete, who joins the table with yet another beer.

cont

49 cont

Ty anxious for the peace to be kept and, like a warning:

TY

Ginny? Peas?

GINNY

She was worried about it.

DADDY

Did I say I went to Des Moines?

GINNY

No.

Daddy's glare doesn't falter until Ginny drops her gaze and helps herself to peas, vanquished. Ty tries for equilibrium:

TY

Hey, this is Larry's Father's Day lunch.
Happy Father's Day, Larry.

Led by Ty, they all raise their drinks, Pete the only one with beer:

ALL

(together)

Happy Father's Day, Larry, /Daddy, /
Grandpa.

PETE

I got an idea for those cabinets out front.

DADDY

Mind your own business, Pete.

And as they start to eat again:

GINNY

(VO)

I saw that we were failing, all of us, and
the hallmark of our failure was the way
we ate, heads down, shovelling the food
in, because there was nothing else to do.

50.

That night, Ginny and Ty getting ready for bed. Ty has unrolled the architectural blueprints for the new farm buildings out on the bed, held down with a couple of magazines. As he undresses, he leans over them, glancing at the plans as he advises Ginny:

TY

You have to handle your father better, Ginny. You don't always have to take issue. You should just let things slide, you and Rose, just let them blow over. You don't give Larry his due.

GINNY

You know, that's funny, I did this afternoon. After that awful lunch, I don't know why, but I remembered when I was about eight, I guess and Harold had an accident with his truck. Daddy took me with him and Harold was on the ground, under the truck. The back wheel was on top of him, sort of cutting him in half. I was frightened, I remember screaming, but Daddy didn't get angry with me, for once. He took a board out of Harold's truck

•

51.

A board laid down in oozy mud, by a partly-seen young Daddy. Ginny, eight, is handed a whiskey bottle. One foot steps on to the board, then the other, and she is making her careful way on the board across the mud to Harold under the truck. We can frighteningly see only Harold's workboots and legs as if he has been cut in half.

GINNY

(VO cont)

and laid it down. He set me on one end of it and put a whiskey bottle in my hand and told me to tiptoe over to Harold and give him something to drink. Daddy and some other farmers pulled Harold's truck off him,

•

52.

Ginny and Ty now in bed, lying side by side, close down their length:

GINNY

(cont)

but I felt the real moment was mine,
you know? Hearing Daddy say, "That's a
girl. Just a ways longer. Good girl. That's
a good girl."

Ty puts an arm out for Ginny to lie on his shoulder, and as she turns to him:

TY

Well, you are a good girl.

GINNY

Mostly.

53.

The day begins to lighten. Ginny walks down the road towards Daddy's house.

Daddy standing at his big front window, looking out at her. Ginny senses him
looking, but won't look up.

The weather-affected kitchen cabinets, beside the driveway, have taken on the
look of a natural formation, of permanence.

54.

Daddy is in the kitchen, accusing, as Ginny opens the door:

DADDY

It's bright day.

GINNY

I had a few things to do.

DADDY

At six o'clock in the morning?

GINNY

I picked up the house a little.

Daddy grunts.

GINNY

Sorry.

54 cont

He backs away from the door. Ginny takes apron from behind door, ties it on.

DADDY

There's no eggs.

GINNY

Damn. I bought some for you yesterday,
but I forgot them.

Ginny looks Daddy squarely in the eye. Her choice: to keep him waiting, or fail to give him his eggs.

Daddy's gaze flat, brassily reflective, a test of wills.

Ginny smiles foolishly:

GINNY

I'll be right back.

Ginny runs out the door.

55.

Ginny, in apron, runs up the road, taking Daddy's test.

She is conscious of Daddy watching her from behind, from his big window.

GINNY

(VO)

It seemed like my father could just look
out of his window and see me naked.

Ginny conscious of her body: graceless and hurrying, panting, ridiculous in its very femininity.

56.

In the vast flatness of the land, there are only a few, almost imperceptible rises and falls. In one of them: a shallow gully, in the hot shade of aspens and honey locusts, behind a wild rose thicket, is a little dump.

Plants grow thickly around and through an assortment of junk: a rusted-out auto chassis, a few steel drums, a bedstead, dribs and drabs of discarded rubbish, a truck bed with broken-backed vinyl seat.

cont

56 cont

We discover Ginny and Jess, in a mood of daring privacy, have walked here in mid-day heat. Jess swishes with stick amongst plants:

JESS
Know what these are?

GINNY
...pea-flower? no, they're on longer stalks.

JESS
Prairie indigo. Poisonous.

GINNY
What are these?

Ginny touches a plant with purple-pink flowers, waits.

JESS
I know these. Locoweed?

GINNY
Yup.

JESS
And you were makin out like you didn't know nothin.

Ginny and Jess both smiling, grinning, though the brightness of their grinning doesn't seem in keeping with their talk, it is in keeping with the mood of sexual tension.

Ginny, afraid, climbs into the truck bed, sits on shabby seat. Her breathing difficult. Over the wild roses she can see the distant green of her roof. Faint breeze carries the sound of a tractor starting up.

JESS
Who's your father's favourite child?

GINNY
Caroline. Who's Harold's favourite?

JESS
Me.

GINNY
Even now?

56 cont

JESS

Yep.

GINNY

But he and Loren are like twins.
They see eye to eye about everything.

JESS

Not really. Harold's always accusing
him of trying to take over.

GINNY

That's new.

JESS

It's you guys. I know you didn't initiate
the transfer, and I think Harold knows
it, but people are getting suspicious and
wondering how you and Rose got Larry
to give you the place, when the whole
thing is driving him crazy -

Ginny has jumped down from the truck seat:

GINNY

What're people saying?

JESS

"There's more to that than meets the
eye".

GINNY

Shit. But Harold was there. It was at
your party. He knows how it happened.

JESS

The talk'll die down, it always does.
That's not Harold's main problem.

GINNY

What is?

JESS

That I'm here. He wants to keep me
here.

Ginny's hopes rise at this thought.

56 cont

GINNY

Does he?

JESS

The thing is Harold loves me. He loves me like a lover. I've been gone so long that he's not used to me any more, and he wants to win me, and he thinks he can win me with the farm, even though he knows I wouldn't farm the way he does. Harold wants to fix me right here in Zebulon County.

Ginny laughs at the horror in Jess's voice:

GINNY

Is that so bad?

JESS

When I think of myself ten years down the road, I wonder if it'll be Loren and me, the Clark brothers, Frick and Frack.

GINNY

We're here.

JESS

Yes, you're here. You've made your families and your lives, and they're yours.

Ginny struck, pierced, by Jess's deep, unselfconscious envy. Jess holds Ginny's arms and pulls her towards him:

GINNY

You've changed us. You've come along and just turned things upside down.

As they kiss:

57.

Linda, draping a length of fabric against herself, with Pammy, her attendant, holding the bolt of cloth.

Rose, waiting at the counter of Roberta's fabric and clothing store, idly flicking through the Pike Journal Weekly.

cont

57 cont

ROBERTA

I see Caroline got married. Nice photo.

Rose is startled, but covers:

ROSE

Caroli(ne)? Yes. They just had a, a - ceremony that - a small one.

ROBERTA

Those are nice too.

LINDA

(OS calls over)

Mom?

But Rose has found the photo of Caroline and Frank: smiling out at her.

58.

Rose's fury with Caroline dominates the Monopoly game. As Ty finishes his turn:

ROSE

She didn't mention a word of this when she talked to you, did she?

GINNY

We should call her.

PETE

Come on, Rose, let's play, it's your turn.

ROSE

For what? This is for us. This is how she's letting us know.

Pammy and Linda go through to kitchen to make popcorn, as Rose carelessly takes her turn, still talking:

ROSE

We raised her. We got her away from here.

PETE

I've heard enough about this goddam wedding to last me the rest of my life.

58 cont

GINNY

(over)

I can't believe she wouldn't -

TY

Ginny, settle down.

Ginny blazes a look at Ty. Then she and Rose lock eyes as:

TY

If we all just concentrate on the game we'll have a better time.

PETE

My turn, pass Go, collect two hundred, yeah!

ROSE

(mock sweet)

Aren't you having a good time, Ty?

TY

Well, I think if we're going to play, (we should) -

Ginny infuriated with Ty's obtuse misreading of Rose's tone:

GINNY

My god, Ty!

Ginny's voice shrill, angry. She sees, with shock, Jess's expression of irritation, fleeting but clear.

TY

Settle down.

PETE

Take your turn, Jess. You are looking straight at Boardwalk, brother.

ROSE

I'm tired of this game.

Rose calmly picks up the table by the legs and tilts it, dumping the board, the play-money, everything in a sliding heap onto Pete's lap, including his drink, which spreads in a dark stain over his trousers.

Rose goes to the kitchen where the girls are popping corn.

cont

58 cont

Pete follows her into the kitchen. The girls watchful, as if making themselves invisible in this atmosphere of tension. Rose turns, reflexively crooking an arm as if to defend herself:

ROSE

Pete, don't.

And as Pete reaches past her for the dishcloth:

PETE

As if I would.

And starts to wipe his trousers. And as Rose leaves the kitchen:

ROSE

Well, you have.

At the very second Rose steps into the living room, as if calling to her:

The phone rings.

Rose, as if she's never heard a telephone in her life:

ROSE

What's that?

59.

In the busy emergency room of Mason City hospital:

Ginny and Ty hurry in. They look around for a moment before Ginny sees:

Daddy sitting on a bench against a wall, his face set in stubborn muteness, white gauze dressing taped to his cheek and up into his hair.

Ginny and Ty go to him:

GINNY

Daddy?

He won't look at them, continues staring out: at what?

TY

Dad? Larry? You okay?

Still without looking at them Daddy stands and walks out of the emergency room.

60.

Ty's pick-up travelling on gravel road through inky dark night fields. The headlights opening up the road ahead, under the enormous sky.

61.

The three of them cocooned in silence, except for the sound of wheels on gravel, until Daddy groans.

GINNY

Daddy? Have you got those pills the nurse gave you?

Daddy's silence is so long it's as if Ginny hasn't spoken.

Ty rolls his eyes, smiles at Ginny. His silent message: be patient, endure, hope.

But instead, Ginny suddenly spins around to face Daddy in the back seat:

GINNY

Daddy!

His eyes pop open. He lifts himself up with a grunt. Ty's head turns to Ginny:

TY

Ginny.

But Ginny ignores Ty's warning.

GINNY

I know you're hurt, and I'm sorry you got in an accident, but now's the time to talk about it. You're going to be in real trouble pretty soon. You've got to take this to heart. You simply can't drive all over creation, especially not when you're drinking. They'll probably revoke your licence, but even if they don't, I will, if you do it again. I'll take away the keys to your truck and if you do it after that I'll sell it. When I was little you always said that one warning ought to be enough. Well, this is your warning.

Ty very uneasy: this is against all his instincts. As Ginny continues to lecture her father:

61 cont

GINNY
(VO)

It was time to sit up! To act! It was exhilarating, talking to my father as if he were my child, laying down the law. I had never talked that way before.

Ginny has caught Daddy's gaze and won't let it go:

GINNY
I mean it about the driving, and Rose will back me up.

Daddy holds Ginny's gaze for a while, then, in a low voice, as if to himself:

DADDY
I got nothing.

Another silence as they stare at each other, and Ginny almost falters in the face of his pain.

62.

In early morning, Rose crosses the road to Daddy's house.

63.

Rose with Ginny in Daddy's kitchen where Ginny is cleaning up after making Daddy's breakfast.

ROSE
Sometimes I hate him. I want him to die, and go to hell, and stay there forever, just roasting.

GINNY
Rose!

ROSE
Why do you sound so shocked? Because you're not supposed to wish evil on someone, or because you really don't hate him?

GINNY
I don't. I really don't. He's a bear, but -

cont

63 cont

ROSE

He's not a bear. He's not innocent like that.

GINNY

Last night I told him that if he got drunk and drove again I'd take the truck keys away from him. And I've told him he has to work. He's gone out with Ty this morning. I think things'll improve. He's

But Rose has turned and left the kitchen.

GINNY

Rose?

Ginny follows her to: the living room where Rose is automatically making stacks of magazines four-square.

ROSE

Sometimes I hate you, too.

GINNY

Me?

ROSE

I hate you because you're the link between me and him.

GINNY

Between - ?

ROSE

Daddy, of course. Don't be so stupid. You're such a good daughter, so slow to judge, it's like stupidity. It drives me crazy.

Ginny oddly unoffended by Rose's anger.

GINNY

I was thinking the exact same thing about Ty, last night. He never questions Daddy. He's so loyal, it seems sort of dumb.

cont

63 cont

ROSE

(ignores Ginny)

Every time I've made up my mind to do something - get off this place, leave Pete, go back to teaching for the money - you stop me.

Rose's hand flutters up, and down, over vanished muscle and breast.

GINNY

Anyway, the point is, I've let him get away with a lot of stuff. We all have. But we can set rules, and I think the rules can be pretty simple.

Rose has walked to the big front window, standing with her back to Ginny, staring out west across the fields.

Ginny goes to stand beside her. She looks at Rose's face. After quite a while, Rose turns and looks at Ginny.

ROSE

Ginny, tell me what you really think about Daddy.

GINNY

Well, I don't know. I love Daddy. But he's so much in the habit of giving orders, no back-talk, you know.

Rose watching Ginny.

GINNY

I mean, he drinks and everything.

Rose continues to watch Ginny.

GINNY

I'm willing to admit he's been drinking a long time, probably as long as I can remember. But I'm sure if we sat down and worked it out...

Rose hasn't taken her eyes off Ginny.

GINNY

You're making me nervous. What do you want me to say?

cont

63 cont

Rose continues to look at Ginny then turns to look out the window.

GINNY

I mean, Mommy hasn't been around to tell us what to think of Daddy. I wonder about whether they were happy. Whether she liked him. I think different things. Things like that.

Rose clears her throat. Ginny silent. What does Rose want?

ROSE

Shit, Ginny.

Ginny laughs, relieved.

Rose quickly transforms herself back into the familiar Rose that Ginny knows: purses her lips, rolls her eyes, seems about to make a joke. But, instead, finally:

ROSE

I don't hate you, Ginny. You know I don't. Maybe rules will do the trick. We can try.

GINNY

I can't describe what it was like, to say to him, okay, you have to do this, you can't do that. I mean, it was so simple.

Rose laughs and puts her arms around Ginny: a strong grip.

ROSE

United front?

64.

Ginny driving. Daddy in the seat next to her. They are passing a farmhouse being bulldozed. Dust billows up around the destruction, the house toppling like sticks. Daddy stiffly turns to watch:

DADDY

The Heartland Corporation got that place for the bottom dollar.

He turns back with a grunt of satisfaction:

64 cont

DADDY

What happens is people don't watch out. They get careless because they weren't taught right.

65.

As Ginny pulls into a parking space in front of the chiropractor in Pike's Main Street:

GINNY

Daddy? I want you to talk to the chiropractor about exercise.

Daddy doesn't acknowledge this. Ginny opens her door to get out:

DADDY

What're you doing?

GINNY

I'm going down Main Street. It's too hot to sit in the car.

DADDY

You wait. You can window-shop some other time.

GINNY

I'll meet you at Pike's Peak Cafe, then.

DADDY

I don't want to walk there in this heat.

Ginny determined to keep her pact with Rose, to be strong with Daddy. But she is almost breathless with defying him.

GINNY

It's only a block and a half, Daddy. The walk will do you good.

DADDY

You wait. I want to ride.

Ginny hates the note of pleading that creeps into her voice:

GINNY

It's boring to wait, Daddy. I didn't bring a book or magazine or anything.

65 cont

Daddy inspired by the note of pleading:

DADDY

You wait.

Ginny gets back into the car. She watches Daddy walk heavily towards the chiropractors. The receptionist opens the door for him and he passes through.

The Receptionist smiles at Ginny, gives a small wave. Ginny waves in return.

She scrunches down in the seat: in her forties and she feels a resentful twelve.

66.

In the flickering shade of tall growth around them, Ginny and Jess are together on the old pick-up seat at the dump. Ginny's arms and legs feel stiff and awkward, her skin glaring. As Jess unbuttons Ginny's shirt, she doesn't watch.

JESS

Alright?

Ginny nods yes.

JESS

Sure?

GINNY

I'm not very used to this.

Jess's look, as he pulls back, is cautious, unsmiling. Ginny feels humiliated to ask, but also reassured:

GINNY

Yes. Please.

Her reward is Jess's smile, as he moves back to her.

67.

Jess, in running gear, pounding the road that passes Ginny's house. He stops, shading his eyes, to watch:

The activity of the new construction work: cement-mixer truck, work-crew's cars and pick-ups, a knot of men including Ty and Pete.

67 cont

GINNY
(VO)

The day before,

Ginny with Rose, outside her house, looks over Rose's shoulder.

GINNY
(VO)

I'd thought about just this,

Rose turns to follow Ginny's gaze to distant Jess. She gives the smallest of smiles, looking back at Ginny.

GINNY
(VO cont)

and wondered if I'd betrayed myself.

68.

Ginny shivering, in spite of heat, as she buttons her shirt after love-making.

JESS
You cold? It's only ninety four degrees
out here.

GINNY
...maybe t-terrified...

But Ginny's shaking is no longer fear, but desire.

GINNY
Hold me and keep talking.

Jess laughs. His words a murmur, half heard, warm and intimate:

JESS
...well, let's see...that farmer near Sac
City called me back. Morgan Boone...that
sound familiar to you?...

And Ginny comes and he holds her in a cracking embrace. Jess holds Ginny away from him, staring at her. She looks at him: deeply familiar as if she's been looking at him her whole life. She lies back on his shoulder:

GINNY
What time is it?

68 cont

JESS

Three fifteen.

GINNY

I left the house at one.

JESS

Seems a lifetime ago.

GINNY

Is that true? (she tries to sound joking)
You've done this before.

JESS

I've slept with women before. I haven't
done this before.

GINNY

I haven't slept with men. I've slept with
Ty.

JESS

I know, Ginny. I know what that means.

GINNY

Do you?

A little later: they are both finishing dressing, getting ready to leave the
privacy of the dump. Jess dusting off the back of Ginny's jeans:

JESS

You are such a nice person. How come
you and Ty don't have kids?

GINNY

Well, I've had five miscarriages.

JESS

Jesus. Oh, Ginny.

GINNY

Ty only knows about three. He couldn't
stand it after that, so I've sort of kept the
fact that I'm still trying, to myself. Kind
of like a last chance.

Ginny looks up from putting on her shoes to see a harsh look of fear cross
Jess's face. Her instant corresponding fear:

68 cont

GINNY

What?

JESS

It's the fucking water.

Ginny doesn't understand.

JESS

Have you had your well-water tested for nitrates?

GINNY

No.

JESS

Didn't your doctor tell you not to drink the well-water? Ginny, the fertilizer runoff drains into the aquifer, and you drink it.

GINNY

But Rose drinks (it) -

JESS

It doesn't affect everyone the same.

They stare at each other: Ginny sees Jess's anger and pity; he watches as a whole new set of possibilities and missed chances and fears settles over Ginny as she absorbs his words.

69.

Across fields of late-June corn, the farm construction work is more advanced than we last saw it.

Dark clouds piling upon the western horizon. A cool wind, full of rain, after the heat of the day.

70.

Briefly: rows of smooth backs of sows in shadowy farrowing shed. The sound of their snuffling and snorting, shifting in pens. Ty battens down windows, making the shed secure against the coming storm.

71.

The last of the light in the sky, as Daddy - head-down against the wind - crosses the road to Rose's house.

But, instead of going to the door, he gets into Pete's silver truck, backs out and drives off.

72.

A tv weather reporter with a storm warning, forecast to pass through Mason City at midnight. Zebulon County under a tornado watch. But the report is ignored for:

Rose and Pete, both in a lather, who have blown in with the girls in tow.

GINNY
But he didn't have a key.

PETE
If he wrecks my truck, I'll
kill him.

ROSE
He did, from last winter, when
his truck was in the shop. I can't
believe this.

LINDA
Did Grandpa steal Daddy's truck?

TY
I'll go into Cabot, see if he's
there. (to Pete) Coming?

ROSE
He took it without asking. He
snuck round.

73.

Pammy and Linda asleep in Ginny's spare room upstairs. Sound of wind stronger now. Night outside.

74.

New York City ballet on tv, the sound off. Ginny watching.

Rose stands at the screen door, looking out at the night. She sees a pair of headlights turn off the road.

74 cont

The lights cross the back wall of the room, then go dark. Rose silent at the door. Ginny continues to watch the ballet. Sound of a car door slamming, then another.

•

75.

Ty comes up to Rose at the front door, looks past her:

TY

• (low and calm)

Ginny? Come out here, please.

Rose pushes open screen door and Ginny follows her out.

TY

Larry has some things to say.

They wait for Daddy to join them. Lights on in house behind them and on the front porch, cast a little wash of light out into the darkness.

DADDY

Damn right I have.

Rose takes Ginny's hand, squeezes it, for solidarity.

DADDY

That's right, hold hands.

GINNY

Why shouldn't we? Anyway, what are we in trouble for?

ROSE

It's going to storm. Why don't I take you home and we can (talk in the morning) -

DADDY

I don't want to go home. You girls stick me there.

GINNY

We don't stick you there, Daddy. It's the nicest house. You've lived there all your life.

75 cont

ROSE

(wheedles)

Let me take you home.

GINNY

(urging)

Go with Rose, then tomorrow -

TY

Let Larry have his say.

DADDY

No! I'd rather stay out in the storm than
be stuck back there.

GINNY

Fine. Do what you want. You will
anyway.

DADDY

Spoken like the bitch you are.

ROSE

Daddy!

But Daddy is leaning towards Ginny:

DADDY

(cont)

You don't have to drive me around any
more, or cook the goddam breakfast, or
clean the goddam house. Or tell me
what I can do and what I can't do.
You've been creeping here and there all
your life, making up to this one and that
one. Just a bitch is all, a dried-up whore
bitch.

Ginny, transfixed, shocked, doesn't step back.

All at the same time:

Ty puts out a protesting hand to Daddy: "Larry" but is batted off.

The headlights of Pete's silver truck sweep over them as Pete turns the corner
and pulls up. And Rose:

ROSE

This is beyond ridiculous. Come on,
Pete and I will take you home. You can
apologise in the morning.

cont

75 cont

Pete out of his truck, voice flat and distant:

PETE

What's up?

As:

DADDY

Don't you make me out to be crazy.
I know your game. It's you girls make
me crazy. I give you everything and I
get nothing in return, just some orders
about doing this and being that and
seeing points of view.

As Pete joins the group: Rose like a fence-post, straight, unmoved, arms
crossed. Her voice as deadly serious as ice-picks:

ROSE

We didn't ask for what you gave us.
But maybe it's high time we got some
reward for what we gave you. You say
you know all about Ginny, well, Daddy,
I know all about you, and you know I
know. This is what we've got to offer,
this same life, nothing more, nothing
less. If you don't want it, go elsewhere.
Get someone else to take you in, because
I for one have had it.

Pete charged up by Rose's opposition to Daddy. Ty torn between his interest
on both sides. But neither man tries to stop them: there is a field-force
between father and daughters that says "keep out".

Now Daddy looks at Ginny. His voice almost conciliatory, as if he can divide
and conquer Rose and Ginny:

DADDY

You hear her? She talks to me almost
worse than you do.

GINNY

Daddy, if you think this is bad, then
you'd be amazed at what you really
deserve. As far as I'm concerned, you're
on your own.

75 cont

Rose looks at Ginny, perplexed by her unexpected strength, then with vindication:

ROSE

Your house is down the road, you can get there. I'm going inside.

Rose and Ginny turn to hurry inside, Pete running up porch steps ahead of them, to open the door, urging them into the house, But Daddy has moved in front of his daughters, between them and the steps, as:

DADDY

Don't think you can treat me like this, I'll throw you whores off the place. I'll stop this building. I'll get my land back. (to Ginny) You'll never have children, you haven't a hope. (to Rose) And your children are going to laugh when you die.

From behind Daddy, Pete is trying to hustle him away, but Daddy just bats him off. Ty protesting: "Larry, come on, that's enough".

Rose pulls Ginny around Daddy and up the steps and the door slams shut.

76.

Ginny and Rose very shaken. Ginny looks out of window to see, briefly:

Ty and Pete trying to urge Daddy into Pete's truck. Daddy batting out at them. Pete gives up, hurrying towards house, as:

ROSE

The almighty has spoken. Trembling yet?

GINNY

You were shaking, you still are. Is that what they call foaming at the mouth?

Shakily, they both laugh.

77.

Daddy staggering down the road. Ty follows, a little way behind him. Lightning. Big crashes of thunder.

78.

Rose at window, sees: the whole outside world, even the trucks parked ten feet away, instantly hidden by sheets of water as the storm breaks.

Ty into house: soaked, water running off him.

TY

I lost him.

Ty gives Ginny a cool look; almost, she feels, of hatred. She is dismayed: does Ty believe Daddy?

She gets down a dry anorak for Ty, a spare one for Pete, as:

The lights go out. Sound of girls calling from upstairs: Mommy! Mommy!

PETE

Shit!

ROSE

I hope he dies in it.

Lightning shows Rose going to stairs. Girls scream.

ROSE

(stern)

I'm coming. No more screaming.

PETE

You got any kerosene lamps?

79.

Ty peering out of his pick-up, windscreen wipers ineffectual against rain, sheeting up sprays of water to join the water spraying up from wheels, as he noses along. The headlights useless, lighting only rain.

80.

Pete, cocooned in his truck, pulled over on side of road, in storm. He reaches across to glove-compartment and takes out a full quarter-pint of whiskey. As he unscrews the cap:

81.

Rose's face seems to gather and reflect the light, cast by kerosene lamp. She and Ginny sit together in little pool of light, the storm blowing outside.

GINNY

They'll find him. He's indestructible.

Rose looks at Ginny, holds her gaze, her voice tight:

ROSE

You don't remember how he used to come after us, do you?

GINNY

I remember the time I lost my shoe. I was remembering that (when) -

ROSE

I don't mean when we got strapped or spanked. I mean when he went into your room at night.

GINNY

I don't remember that.

ROSE

You were fifteen. You must remember.

GINNY

Grandpa Cook used to prowl around looking at everybody. It was like checking hogs or something.

ROSE

It wasn't like checking the hogs with Daddy.

GINNY

What are you saying?

ROSE

You know.

Ginny afraid: a captive of Rose's stare.

ROSE

He was having sex with you.

81 cont

GINNY

He was not!

ROSE

I saw him go in. He stayed for ages.

Ginny's voice conciliatory:

GINNY

He was closing windows or something.

ROSE

I checked my clock.

GINNY

Oh, Rose. How am I going to believe that you woke up all those years ago and saw Daddy go into my room and checked your clock and then saw him come out and checked your clock again, and that's the evidence.

Rose's voice low, penetrating, demands belief:

ROSE

It's true...

A long pause. Ginny stumped, dismayed.

ROSE

I realised that you don't remember, the other day, at Daddy's.

Ginny's frustration with Rose's insistence:

GINNY

But it didn't happen.

ROSE

But it did.

Rose sees that Ginny can't believe her, so she plays her trump card:

ROSE

That's the way it happened with me.

Rose's tone so flat, Ginny wonders if she's heard clearly.

cont

81 cont

GINNY

What?

ROSE

Because after he stopped going in to you, he started coming in to me, and that's what he did. We had sex in my bed.

GINNY

When you were thirteen?

ROSE

And fourteen and fifteen and sixteen.

GINNY

I don't believe it!

Rose looks at Ginny as if from a long distance:

ROSE

I thought you knew. I thought all these years you and I shared this knowledge, sort of underneath everything else. I thought that if after that, you could go along and treat him normally, they way you do, then it was okay to just put it behind us.

GINNY

Caroline?

ROSE

I'm not sure. I mean, he told me that if I went along with him, he wouldn't get interested in her. I was afraid he'd try something with her, and she was eight, ten. But I was flattered, too. I thought he'd picked me, me to be his favourite, not you, not her. I thought it was okay, that it must be okay if he said it was, since he was the rule-maker. He didn't rape me, Ginny. He seduced me. He said it was okay, that it was good to please him, that I was special. He said he loved me.

cont

81 cont

GINNY

I can't listen to this.

ROSE

We were just his, to do with as he pleased, like the pond or the houses or the hogs or the crops. Caroline was his, too. That's why I don't know about her.

Ginny suddenly thinks of the girls, glances to stairs:

GINNY

And that's why you keep them away from Daddy.

ROSE

And why I send them to boarding school. I keep my eyes peeled. So does Pete.

GINNY

Pete knows?

ROSE

Pete'd kill him, if Daddy touched the girls. When they get to the age (we were)

GINNY

Not "we", you. It didn't happen to me.

Rose shrugs. Ginny suddenly angry, surprising herself:

GINNY

I don't know what to say. This is ridiculous.

She starts to cry.

GINNY

I mean, I feel idiotic. Naive...so foolish...I am so sorry he did that to you.

Rose calm, almost impassive:

ROSE

Don't make me feel sorry for myself. The more pissed off I am, the better I feel.

cont

81 cont

Rose moves to Ginny and puts her arms around her sister. Ginny tries to stop crying. Rose rocks Ginny a little. Then, for a second, we hear the sound of loud banging.

82.

In darkness, the sound of loud banging continues.

A light comes on in the dark hallway of Harold Clark's house as Harold - with Loren behind him, "What the heck - !", both in pyjamas - comes downstairs. Harold opens the door to:

Daddy, so wet it's as if he's risen from the ocean.

83.

Only the sound of heavy rain now the storm has diminished.

Pammy and Linda asleep together in Ginny's spare bedroom.

Ginny comes into room, the light from the hallway showing the way. She gently draws up the thrown-back covers. Smooths back Linda's hair from her face. She looks down at the sleeping girls. How could anyone approach them with ill intent? Ginny cannot imagine it.

84.

Rose asleep under the old quilt on Ginny and Ty's bed. Ginny comes into the room and creeps back into bed beside her sleeping sister.

85.

The clean curving lines of the Slurrystore rising next to the old barn. Sound of work-crew, machinery. Across the yard, Harold almost dances from his truck to Ginny's back door.

86.

Ginny could almost laugh if she weren't incensed by Harold's glee, his pleasure in trouble, as he comes in the back door:

HAROLD
You've got a problem, girlie.

cont

86 cont

GINNY

You think so, Harold?

HAROLD

I know so.

He points to coffee pot:

HAROLD

I'll take some of that.

GINNY

I'll make fresh.

He sits and as she prepares fresh coffee:

HAROLD

Your dad don't want to come home here, he don't want to lay eyes on any of the whole pack of you.

GINNY

How long are you going to keep him there?

HAROLD

He's got a right to stay. We've been friends for sixty years and more.

GINNY

Tell him to come home and don't encourage him.

HAROLD

Rose has always been trouble, between you and me.

GINNY

Maybe you'd better shut up, Harold.

Harold is startled. But Ginny is almost reeling with anger:

GINNY

That's right, Harold. Just shut up about Rose and Daddy.

Ginny could almost throw something at Harold. If the coffee-pot were in reach she would throw it. She holds on to the table.

cont

86 cont

HAROLD

He's a stubborn man. It don't matter what I think or say. He doesn't like being told he's wrong, especially when it ain't clear how wrong he is. Now, I'm going to do you a favour here.

GINNY

What's that?

HAROLD

This is what I'm going to do. I'm going to take your dad to the church supper, Sunday. And you girls are going to show up there and be sociable. Fact is, I think you should work this out. You got your side and Larry's got his, I know that.

Harold seeks Ginny's gaze and smiles at her. Harold's slow and steady voice affects Ginny, as she settles into, and is calmed by, its familiar rhythms:

HAROLD

(cont)

I've known you all your life, Ginny. I know you got a side here, and maybe even it's the right side. But if you work it out you can get past sides. That's worth something, ain't it?

87.

The graveyard and, beyond it, the church and church hall. Lines of cars and trucks and pick-ups parked outside while more arrive. Sound of voices, cars, doors slamming, children's voices, on this Fourth of July celebration.

88.

Men stand on chairs, pushing the hall windows open to their widest. Fans blow streams of air around the crowded hall.

A big church-made Fourth of July banner across the top of the hall.

Women carry offerings to big trestle-table loaded with food. Smaller tables set for lunch. Children moves through the hall in their private games. Knots of men talk farming. We recognise many of the faces from Jess's homecoming party.

cont

88 cont

Ginny, carrying casserole dish, coming into the hall. She stops in her tracks, startled by the sight of her father. Rose, behind Ginny, almost bumps into her.

GINNY

Look at him.

ROSE

It just goes to show you.

GINNY

What?

Rose's voice bitterly triumphant as she moves into hall:

ROSE

How much we were doing for him.
Namely everything. Although you'd
think Harold could lend him a comb

Ty comes in past Ginny:

GINNY

Look at Daddy. Does he seem different?

TY

He looks his age, if that's what you
mean.

Ty's tone cool, as he moves off into hall.

Another part of the hall:

Ginny can't take her eyes off Daddy. She watches him, in a group of people, his hair uncombed, his clothes unchanged since he left home, his oddly abashed - and totally new - manner. As he leaves the group:

Ginny also moves, working her way through the crowd, keeping him in sight.

She comes up behind him:

GINNY

Daddy?

Daddy turns his gaze to meet Ginny's. His voice tentative, flatter:

cont

88 cont

DADDY

Their children put them there, you know, it's a terrible place.

Ginny looks him in the eye. She sees his abashed, questioning look. Her voice vanishes.

Daddy turns away.

89.

Rose, looking for Ginny, comes into the hall's bathroom and sees her sister bent over the basin, splashing cold water over and over her hot face.

ROSE

Joan Stanley thinks Daddy's lost his mind.

GINNY

I just talked (to him)

ROSE

It enrages me

GINNY

En(rages) - ?

ROSE

This ploy.

GINNY

Rose, he's

ROSE

I'm not going to let him get away with it.

GINNY

He looks so, sort of weakened.

But Rose lowers her voice, grips the front of Ginny's shirt, very close to her:

ROSE

No. You've got to remind yourself what he is, what he's done. We have to stand up to that. I want him to repent, Ginny. I want him to feel humiliation and regret. I want those things. As long as he acts crazy, he gets off scot-free.

cont

89 cont

For Ginny, it is intoxicating to listen to Rose speak like this, as sweet and forbidden as anything she has ever done.

Rose sees that she has won Ginny with her call-to-arms.

As three teenage girls come into bathroom, across to mirror:

Rose kisses Ginny on the cheek, smooths out her creased shirt, and smiles.

90.

Harold waving away a couple of people from the table he is keeping for the Clark and Cook families. Ginny and Jess join the table, carrying full plates, and sit together, Pammy on Ginny's other side, Daddy opposite.

Henry Dodge, the pastor, saying grace.

Lunch now fully underway: sound of voices, laughter.

HAROLD
(calls)

Hey!

Harold speaks loudly, as if making a long-awaited announcement:

HAROLD
Look at 'em chowing down here, like
they ain't done nothing.

People around, mostly, pretend not to notice. They continue to talk and eat over Harold's voice.

Henry Dodge wonders if he should intervene.

HAROLD
(cont)

Threw a man off his own farm on a
night you wouldn't keep a wolf out of
your barn.

Henry Dodge pushes back his chair as, from across the hall:

MARY LIVINGSTONE
(calls)

Pipe down, Harold Clark, you're talking
through your hat, same as always.

cont

90 cont

Henry Dodge sits.

Harold starts again:

HAROLD

You know who I'm talking about, Ginny
and Rose Cook. I got their number.
Nobody's fooled me.

He leans across the table to Ginny, his face thrust forward and, almost conversationally:

HAROLD

Bitch. That's what you are.

Jess reaches out and pushes Harold's face: a strange gesture, violent and gentle at the same time.

Pammy holds Ginny's hand. Daddy looks straight at Ginny: his look of sly-righteousness.

Henry Dodge has stood again.

Harold jumps up, knocking his chair backwards, and stretches across the table and yanks Jess out of his chair,

JESS

Shit!

and across the table, cups rolling, food and cutlery swept aside.

People now standing to watch.

HAROLD

I got your number too, you son of a
bitch. You got your eye on my place. You
been cosy up to me, thinking I'm
going to hand it over. Well, I ain't that
dumb.

Henry Dodge hurrying between tables towards Harold. Bob Stanley coming from another direction. Ty and Pete both standing. Rose and Ginny signalling to each other to leave. Everything happening at once.

cont

90 cont

HAROLD

(cont)

"Harold you oughta do this, you oughta do that." Green manure! Goddam alfalfa! Who are you to tell me a goddam thing, stay away all these years, then come sashaying back -

But Henry Dodge, with Pete, has grabbed Harold from behind, as Jess hits his father.

91.

Ginny, Rose and the girls, in a little huddle, almost running out of the church hall fleeing:

GINNY

(VO)

We went straight home, but I kept saying "Where are wegoing?" as if there was someplace else to go.

92.

Rose's car zooms along road through fields:

GINNY

(VO cont)

I've often thought that we should have driven to the Twin Cities, taken jobs, waited tables, anything, Rose and me.

93.

Jess sitting in armchair, looking up:

GINNY

(VO cont)

and ducked this future that we never asked for.

at Rose, who is concentrating on Jess, watched by Ginny, in Rose's living room.

cont

93 cont

ROSE

Harold set out weeks ago to humiliate you, both you and us, and to do it in public.

Jess's voice low, rough, unfamiliar to Ginny:

JESS

I know.

Rose's voice is low, penetrating, taking direct aim. She surrounds Jess, captures his agreement, just as she has done with Ginny:

ROSE

He's been after you for thirteen years, ever since you left. He set you up when you got here, and then took his revenge.

JESS

Jesus.

Rose leans over Jess, a hand on each arm of the chair. He stares at her. She speaks softly, taking direct aim:

ROSE

You seem to think that there's some game going on here, that we can choose to play or not, that we can follow our feelings here and there and just leave when we don't like it any more. Maybe you can. But this is life and death for me. If I don't find some way to get out from under what Daddy's done to me before I die -

Rose's voice strangles, halts. Jess and Ginny don't look at each other.

GINNY

You can't go back there now.

ROSE

Why don't you stay at Daddy's?

Jess in spell that Rose has created, drawn into her version of the world:

ROSE

The house is just sitting there.

cont

93 cont

Ginny excited by the thought of having Jess so close.

GINNY
Until this blows over.

ROSE
Ginny is eternally hopeful.

And finally Rose looks away from Jess.

•

94.

The kitchen cabinets now rotting and buckled from both heat and storm.
Ginny passes them on her way up to Daddy's house.

•

95.

Old cedar linen cupboard: Ginny takes out sheets.

•

96.

Screen filled with billowing sheet, to reveal Ginny making the bed in her old
bedroom in Daddy's house, with its yellow walls.

She finishes making bed for Jess: folds back top edge of sheet over cotton
blanket, plumps pillow.

Stands looking down at bed, knowing Jess will sleep here.

She lies down on the bed.

In afternoon heat, tiniest sounds fill the silence: Ginny's breathing, the bed
creaks.

She looks around the room, at its everyday ordinariness: the empty closet
door ajar, the peeling yellow paint on the chest, bronze circles float in the
mirror, a water stain on the ceiling.

The corner of the room, where the wall meets the ceiling.

Ginny stares at this corner for quite a while.

Her face changing, as she remembers staring up at this deeply familiar corner
when Daddy was in bed with her.

•

97.

Ginny coming out of her old bedroom. She feels as if she will faint, fall down the stairs. She lowers herself to the floor, murmuring, in pain:

GINNY

Rose, Rose, Rose.

Ginny on the wooden floor of the shadowy upstairs hallway: she is shaking, rocking, possessed by the memory. Then she screams, and finds she needs to, and gives herself up to it, painfully, but also conscious of her screaming self:

GINNY

(VO)

I didn't tell Rose that she had
been right. She would press

•

98.

We are moving amongst the bounty of a summer vegetable garden: green tomatoes on vines, yellow peppers, onions, bush beans, and cucumbers starting to vine:

GINNY

(VO cont)

me and I wouldn't be able to resist her
and it would become an obsession I
couldn't bear.

And find Ginny hard at work in her vegetable garden. Although it is early morning it is already hot.

•

99.

Ken La Salle on Ginny's front porch, peering in through the window beside door. Sound of construction work from across the yard.

Ginny appears behind him, wiping dirty hands on shorts.

GINNY

Can I help you, Ken?

Ken spins around. Holds out papers.

KEN

These are for you. You and Ty, and Rose
and Pete.

99 cont

Ginny shows Ken her soil-blackened hands.

GINNY

Better tell me what they are.

KEN

Well, Ginny, your Dad and Caroline are suing you to get the farm back.

Ginny feels as if she's been slapped.

•

100.

Caroline on the phone in her Des Moines law-firm office.

CAROLINE

I can't talk about the suit, Ginny. If you want to talk about that, I'll have to hang up.

•

101.

Ginny, in her gardening clothes, on the phone. We see Caroline or Ginny as necessary.

GINNY

What else is there to talk about? It drives everything else out, doesn't it?

CAROLINE

The thought of Daddy out in that storm is what drives everything else out.

GINNY

He went! He just went.

Caroline silent, sceptical. Ginny tries to be calm.

GINNY

You weren't there. You don't know what happened or what it was like.

CAROLINE

Daddy was there. Ty was there.

cont

101 cont

GINNY

Ty?

CAROLINE

He was there.

GINNY

You've talked to Ty?

Caroline doesn't answer, but it is clear she has. After a moment:

GINNY

We did everything for you, Rose and I.
We found a way to get you whatever
you wanted.

CAROLINE

That's not the issue here.

GINNY

We saved you from Daddy. Rose, she -
he -

Ginny flounders.

CAROLINE

Saved me? From my own father? At
this point, I don't really blame you and
Rose for the way you raised me. I really
don't. Actually, I would like to go into it
someday. I think that would be healthy,
but right now I have a meeting.

And Caroline hangs up.

102.

The Harvestores, blue and efficient, with clean lines and rounded edges, now rise above the other farm buildings.

A three-man crew is tearing out the dairy-stalls in the old barn, dumping them outside.

Ginny moves through this changed landscape, past the new Slurrystore and into the gestation building.

103.

Lights, ready for night work, rigged up around the new gestation floor. Pete part of the work crew, with Ty, who is hammering nails into the form he is setting.

Ginny stands beside him, holding the legal papers, but he ignores her, continuing to hammer.

GINNY

You knew. Ty? Didn't you? You talked to Caroline.

But Ty continues hammering, as if Ginny hasn't spoken, is not even there.

104.

Later that evening, Ginny preparing supper as Ty comes in the back door and throws some dirty rags on the kitchen floor.

GINNY

What's that?

TY

You tell me.

Ginny looks closer: deciphers the pink stripes of a nightgown, some underwear. The rusty stains of dried blood. Dirt.

GINNY

Where was it?

TY

Where do you think?

Their gazes lock, then Ginny wipes her hands on a dish towel, wipes the counter with the dishrag. Wonders if she can bluff, then:

GINNY

Floor of the dairy barn?

TY

I didn't think you would admit it.

GINNY

Well, I did.

TY

What're the bloodstains from?

104 cont

GINNY

I had a miscarriage.

Ginny picks up the clothes and throws them in the trash can, then jams them further down into the trash with her foot.

TY

When?

GINNY

Last Thanksgiving, about. The day after.

TY

Lots of secrets round here.

GINNY

Do you want to know why I kept it secret? Because I didn't agree with you about stopping, but you drew the line. I didn't ever want to draw the line. But I couldn't stand up to you.

TY

I couldn't take it, the big buildup of being pregnant, and then the letdown.

GINNY

Taking it was better than not trying at all, just giving in. You think that whatever happens, if we just wait a while it'll turn out okay. I can't live like that anymore!

TY

You hid things from me. You lied to me. That's the fact, and you turn it around. You lied, simple as that.

Ginny feels her face heat up, the old familiar sense of shame.

•

105.

Moonlight shows corn plants, rattling in eternal breeze, as tall as a person.

The white centre line on the road through the fields.

cont

105 cont

The two houses: Rose's completely dark, an upstairs light in Daddy's.

Ginny appears, in shorts and sneakers, walking down the road.

Ginny looking up at lit window in Daddy's house.

She has circled the house, now standing under the partly-open back window of the lit room. She sees:

Jess, in white shirt, moving around room. She watches him for a while: evocative and desirable, but distant and unreal like an image on a tv screen.

•

106.

Jess in Ginny's old bedroom. Radio on.

GINNY
(OS calls)

Je-ess!

Jess, not sure of what he's heard, turns down the radio.

•

107.

Ginny calls again and, miraculously, the figure turns, comes to window, pushes it up higher and leans out:

JESS
Hi. Who's that - ?

Sudden shame and fear rise in Ginny:

GINNY
It's, uh, Ginny.

JESS
Hey! What're you doing? Did you knock? I had the radio on.

GINNY
I guess I haven't seen you in a while.

Jess smiles:

JESS
I missed you.

cont

107 cont

GINNY

I love you.

JESS

Oh, Ginny.

And Ginny hears the pure, clear remorse in his voice, which tells her everything she needs to know.

JESS

I'll be right down.

But Ginny has turned away. Not towards the open, revealing road, but into the stiff concealing rows of corn.

108.

Wet sheets and shirts fill the clothes line. Ginny appearing, disappearing, amongst the washing as she hangs the clothes. Early morning.

Ginny with empty washing basket, walks home to house. The sound of a number of cars makes her look up and stop to watch.

Ty, across the yard, standing still, also watching:

Line of cars and trucks leaving the farm. The lumber truck, the cement-mixer truck, the crew's cars and pick-ups, the electrician's truck, Marv Carson's car, all driving out.

GINNY

(VO)

When we were forced to stop the work,
it felt like our crowning failure as a
couple.

Ty watches until the trucks are only a distant moving thread, barely visible in the fields of tall corn.

He turns, looks back across the yard to the unfinished work. The silence. He takes off his cap, wipes sweat from his face. Then starts to walk back across the deserted yard.

109.

Daddy looking down at his feet, Caroline turned to help him negotiate the back steps of Roberta's fabric and clothing store.

cont

109 cont

And Ginny, in the middle of the store, is transfixed by this little group.

As Caroline and Daddy come through the door, Ginny slips quickly into a change-room, holding two blouses. She stands there, immobilized.

Daddy and Caroline come down the store, both speaking loudly as if each thinks the other is deaf:

CAROLINE

Daddy? Have you got your list?

DADDY

I've got it.

A long pause.

CAROLINE

May I see it?

Ginny hears them, now almost outside her cubicle:

CAROLINE

(OS cont)

Daddy? May I see the list?

DADDY

(OS)

You got money?

CAROLINE

(OS)

Yes, Daddy.

DADDY

(OS)

Let me see it.

Caroline looking at rack of socks:

CAROLINE

It's in my wallet. I've got plenty. It's okay. These are nice, Daddy. The heels are reinforced and they're a hundred per cent cotton.

DADDY

Let's sit down.

cont

109 cont

He shuffles to a chair and sits. His voice equal parts commanding and wheedling:

DADDY
Come sit down here.

His voice gives Ginny a chill. She notices she is gripping the blouses so hard that her knuckles are white. She hangs the blouses, flexing her hand.

CAROLINE
(OS)
Daddy, we should look (for) -

DADDY
(OS)
Sit by me.

CAROLINE
(OS)
Okay.

Ginny cautiously looks out and, through a tiny chink in cubicle curtains, sees: the chairs Daddy and Caroline are sitting on are too close for her to be able to escape.

She leans back against the wall, in gloom of cubicle:

DADDY
(OS)
Remember that brown coat you had?

Daddy and Caroline side by side:

DADDY
(cont)
You were a little birdy girl. Little hat, too. That velvet stuff.

CAROLINE
Velveteen.

DADDY
I called you my birdy girl. Looked like a little house-wren.

CAROLINE
Did I?

cont

109 cont

DADDY

You didn't like it, either. No, siree. You didn't want any brown coat and hat. You wanted pink. Candy pink.

CAROLINE

I don't remember that. I remember something red, a jacket with hearts -

DADDY

Couldn't ever get you to stay away from those drainage wells.

Ginny feels a kind of rushing pressure in her head, the walls of the booth become faint.

DADDY

(OS cont)

Didn't matter how much we punished you or whipped you, like a moth to flame.

Sound of Caroline and Daddy laughing. Ginny leans her forehead against the cubicle wall, faint.

110.

Ginny driving: her head throbbing, she barely knows where she is going. The air is intensely hot.

111.

Rose cutting out a pattern, scissors through cloth. Fan whirring. Ginny bursts in:

GINNY

Rose, what colour was your coat when you were five or so?

Rose, never startled, finishes the side she is cutting, then:

ROSE

My coat? It would've been, yes, it was that brown velveteen thing. Why? Little billed cap. I hated that (thing) -

cont

111 cont

GINNY

What colour did you want?

ROSE

Pink, probably. I was crazy about pink for years. (What is) - ?

GINNY

Did Caroline get your coat?

ROSE

No, it wore out, Mommy cut it up for polishing rags...Ginny?

Ginny has flopped down into a chair. The fan whirring round and round beside her.

GINNY

I was in Roberta's and Daddy and Caroline came in. I can't tell you the tone of voice he used to her. All soft and affectionate, but with something underneath. I thought I'd faint.

Rose stands over Ginny:

ROSE

Say it.

GINNY

Say what?

ROSE

Say it.

GINNY

It happened like you said. I realised it when I was making the bed for Jess in my old bedroom. I lay down on the bed, and I remembered.

Rose, reassuringly to Ginny, goes back to her cutting. The scissors through the cloth. Rose's calm, familiar movements.

Ginny closes her eyes, turns her face to the fan and lets the air blow directly over her:

cont

111 cont

GINNY
(VO)

I remember pretending to be asleep. I remember him saying "Quiet now, girl, you don't have to fight me."

The unyielding back of Daddy's head as he sits in his L-Z-Boy (as in Scene 25):

GINNY
(VO cont)

I remember his weight. I remember he carried a whole lot of smells,

Ginny, fifteen, lying on sofa. Daddy's legs, in work-pants, the only thing seen of him, move past the sofa:

GINNY
(VO cont)

whiskey, cigarettes, the smells of farm work.

The corner of the yellow room where the wall meets the ceiling, shadowy at night. Ginny's adult eyes open.

GINNY
(VO cont)

I remember my strategy, of leaving my body, of desperate inertia.

112.

Tall windows show a slice of hot city, from the cool interior of lawyer Jean Cartier's office.

Jean Cartier, smiling and orderly - compared to him Ken La Salle is an earnest, rumped bumbler - sits at the head of the table, with Ginny and Ty, Rose and Pete, on either side. Papers, coffee things on table. An hour into the consultation:

CARTIER

...believe me, it's always difficult, but once the transition's been made, and the older generation's taken care of, in most cases, things go back to normal.

ROSE

God forbid.

cont

112 cont

Cartier's smile becomes a touch uncertain, but:

CARTIER

The mismanagement or abuse clause in the transfer agreement isn't that well defined. But they'll certainly try to prove abuse and probably mismanagement, too. So, you've got to farm like model farmers until the hearing date.

He looks from Ginny to Rose:

CARTIER

And you ladies, wear dresses every day, and keep the lawn mowed and the porch swept.

ROSE

Are you kidding?

Cartier has glanced at his watch and now, as they all stand:

CARTIER

Appearances are everything with a clause like this. If I have to, I'll call some of your neighbours to attest to your skills, and their lawyer will call neighbours to attest to your mistakes, If you look good, they won't be able to touch you.

ROSE

It's ridiculous.

CARTIER

It's millions of dollars. Millions of dollars is never ridiculous.

113.

Briefly, in one sequence:

Rose: her broom sweeps along porch steps, as she backs down in its path.

Ginny: on ladder, washing down eaves of house with hose.

Rose: makes paths of lather across carpet, with carpet-cleaner.

cont

113 cont

Ginny: foot on spade, into soil, as she tends vegetable garden.

Rose: washing upstairs window. We are looking in from outside. Pammy and Linda washing the window next to her.

Pammy and Linda see Jess come out of Daddy's house, in running gear, checking his watch. Late afternoon.

PAMMY/LINDA

Je-e-ess!

Jess looks up, smiles and waves, then runs off.

•

114.

Fields of tall corn, almost ready for harvesting. Late afternoon light fills it with shadows, a breeze rustles and whispers through it.

Jess appears, running on road through corn, sweating, feet pounding.

On another part of the road: Pete drives his silver truck.

Jess and Pete pass each other: both give a wave.

•

115.

Pete watches, in his rear-view mirror: Jess disappearing away from him.

He takes a swig from a quarter-pint of whiskey held between his legs. He is very drunk, but we don't realise how drunk.

He sings, on and off, very sweet. He reaches over to glove-compartment.

The truck swerves on the road.

•

116.

Harold Clark's farmhouse.

Across the yard, behind the barn, we glimpse the front of Pete's silver truck.

In the truck, Pete has a rifle across his knees. He stares across at Harold's house, willing Daddy to come out. We barely hear what he says:

cont

116 cont

PETE

...c'mon Larry c'mon come out...

He lifts the rifle and takes aim at Harold's front door. The door opens and, improbably to Pete, it seems as if he has summoned Larry. Almost puzzled, he looks up at the old man in the doorway.

Larry waves him off, totally unafraid:

DADDY

I see you! You loser! Go on, clear out!
No-hoper, just hanging on! Clear out!

•

117.

The quarry in the time just before dusk: the light fading and cooling. Silence filled with small sounds. Tall dense growth of weeds and wild plants. Birdweed coils through everything.

Shadows move across the deep water.

Faint sound of a truck, growing louder.

Birds fly up, wheel around.

Pete's silver truck appears, driving too fast, flattening plants in its path and, instead of stopping before the quarry's edge, it keeps straight on.

Pete, in the truck, the ride of his life. Too late to turn back, he gives a giant bellowing roar of fear and astonishment.

The truck sails into the quarry, where it sinks quite easily.

•

118.

Early morning, about six. Ginny, carrying out blankets to air on the line, notices, down the road:

Rose coming up the road. It almost looks as if she doesn't know where she is going.

Ginny, halted by the strangeness of this, waits with her armload of blankets as Rose stops, about ten feet away, still on the road:

cont

118 cont

ROSE

Ginny, Pete's drowned himself in the quarry and the girls are still asleep. The sheriff's coming for me. Can you go down there?

Ginny drops the armload of blankets and starts to run.

119.

Apple and measuring cup lying on floor. Milk, eggs and so on, for making muffins, on counter.

Ginny into Rose's kitchen, panting from her run, bends to pick up apple and cup.

120.

Rose, in sheriff's car, driving through corn fields. Her face, almost unrecognisable, is bleached white, her eyes like holes burnt in paper.

121.

Muffins cooling on rack. Pammy eating one, drinking juice:

PAMMY

I wish Mom'd let me baby-sit. She said if she had to drive me, she'd charge mileage.

GINNY

That sounds like a joke to me.

Linda, still in nightgown, comes into kitchen:

LINDA

Where's Mom?

GINNY

She'll be back soon. Want a muffin?

As Linda takes a muffin and joins Pammy:

LINDA

Where'd she go?

cont

121 cont

GINNY

I don't know.

PAMMY

Daddy's going to take us to the sale barn today to look at some baby pigs.

GINNY

You can look at all the baby pigs you want at my place.

PAMMY

Not Yorkshires, Hampshires. I'm going to watch tv.

Linda goes into living room with Pammy, leaving Ginny in the kitchen.

122.

An hour later: Rose gets out of sheriff's car.

123.

Rose is now herself again: brisk, matter-of-fact, as she comes into the living room where the girls are on the sofa watching tv. Ginny comes to kitchen doorway:

ROSE

Girls, I have some bad news.

Ginny turns and goes out through kitchen, slamming the door behind her, to drown out their cries.

124.

Under the naive mural of Christ praying in his big landscape: the choir sings one of Pete's favourite songs.

In the church congregation: Pammy and Linda, in their white dresses, look bewildered and diminished. Rose, exhausted, has accepted the role of grieving widow. A number of people in the crowded church are crying.

125.

Choir singing continues over, very briefly:

A group of pallbearers, all local farmers. They are all different heights and so the carrying of the coffin is rather awkward.

126.

Song comes to an end as: Rose, drinking whiskey, drags furniture around her living room, determined to clean every corner. Lights blazing.

She suddenly stops, goes to phone, dials:

ROSE

Ginny?

127.

Big sky full of stars. Corn plants' eternal rattling. Two a.m.

The two houses: every downstairs window in Rose's house is lit, every window in Daddy's house is dark.

Rose and Ginny, the whiskey bottle with them, out on the moonlit road between the houses. The white centre line gleams in moonlight.

ROSE

When I met Pete I wanted someone exciting, exciting enough to just wipe Daddy. I thought he'd end up in Chicago, playing music, someplace Daddy'd never go. Once in a while it was exciting, but only because he was so unpredictable. But we never left. It's never been good. He wouldn't even look at me, when I got back from hospital, without my clothes.

Rose looks across the road to Daddy's house:

ROSE

I'm so tempted to just walk over there and go in.

GINNY

What for?

127 cont

ROSE

To get in bed with Jess.

Ginny stares at Rose.

ROSE

Oh, don't look at me like that. I can't deal with it.

Rose turns and walks down the middle of the road. Ginny watches her, then runs to catch up.

ROSE

Ask me a question. I'll tell you the truth.

Rose laughs.

GINNY

Just tell me.

ROSE

Okay. I slept around in college, and maybe a little in high school - don't look like that, Ginny, I know you disapprove - but since Pete there's only been one before Jess.

GINNY

Who's that?

ROSE

Bob Stanley, but it was nothing. Just a summer. This, is love.

GINNY

(hostile)

What does that mean, "love"?

ROSE

He has this sense of my body. He looks at it a lot. You know, touches it as if he loves it. I mean, I know that stops, but while it lasts I can't get enough of it.

GINNY

When that stops, doesn't everything stop? I mean, isn't that what affairs are all about?

cont

127 cont

ROSE

This isn't going to stop.

Ginny tries to sound sympathetic: low and easy.

GINNY

Jess has never settled down, Rose. He's restless. He's had plenty of women, I'd bet on that. Unless he commits himself -

ROSE

But he has! He's pushing me to just...

GINNY

Just what?

ROSE

That's what we can't decide. Where. What. The girls.

GINNY

Did you tell Pete about Jess?

ROSE

Yes.

GINNY

That last day?

ROSE

Weeks ago. Well, a week ago.

GINNY

What did he say?

ROSE

That he was going to kill Daddy.

GINNY

Daddy?

ROSE

And that if Harold got in the way, he'd kill him too. He blamed Daddy for everything that went wrong in our lives. When I told him about Jess he went out and drank every night, and

cont

127 cont

ROSE
(cont)

every night he drove to Harold's place
and sat outside in the truck, drinking.

Rose takes another drink, wanders on the road for a little:

ROSE

I was thinking leaving here - Jess and
me - was the only alternative. But then
Pete did me this favour. Did us. Not
Pammy or Linda, I know that. But I
don't want to leave here. I want what
was Daddy's. I want it. I feel like I've
paid for it, don't you? You think a breast
weighs a pound? That's my pound of
flesh. You think a teenage hooker costs a
hundred bucks? That's how many
bucks? People say what bitches we are,
and that's that, the end of history. I can't
stand that.

GINNY

Okay, here's a question. Did you know
Jess slept with me?

Rose smiles:

ROSE

Sure.

It hurts Ginny more than she had expected, although she's not surprised.

GINNY

Had he slept with you by that time?

ROSE

No.

GINNY

But he told you?

ROSE

Yes.

GINNY

I guess that means he and I don't have
anything private anymore.

cont

127 cont

ROSE

He loves me, Ginny. You don't think I'd let him have anything private with my own sister, do you?

GINNY

I didn't know you were jealous like that.

ROSE

Don't your remember how Mommy said I was the most jealous child she knew? I mean, when Pammy or Linda goes to you for something, I know in my mind that's good for them, but I'm always jealous.

Ginny recognises the tone Rose is using: frank and sincere, almost charming. She's used it on Ginny countless times. Drink has broadened it, added bravado and hardness to it.

GINNY

I guess you want everything for yourself.

ROSE

Well, I always have. I'm grabby and jealous and selfish and Mommy said it would drive people away, so I'm good at hiding it.

Ginny speaks as bitterly as she feels:

GINNY

You sound like you forgive yourself completely.

ROSE

You sound like you don't forgive me at all.

Rose looks at Ginny for a long moment. Her face is the colour of the moon, her eyes in shadow.

ROSE

The difference is, Ginny, that you can trust me. You can and the girls can. I won't hurt you.

cont

127 cont

But Ginny feels mortally wounded. Roses sees her scepticism and presses on:

ROSE

When I tell you the truth, it's not to hurt you. It's because it's the truth, and you have to accept it.

•

128.

The shadowy barn with sow-pens filled with sows. Ginny and Ty walking down between the pens as Ty talks about farm problems:

TY

Selling off the sows will tide us over till after harvest. But if the dry weather doesn't last we'll be in trouble.

But Ginny's mind barely on Ty, as he continues to outline the problems:

GINNY

(VO)

But all the time I was imagining them naked somewhere.

•

129.

Ginny's hands sponge-bathing her sister. We glimpse only parts of Rose's body:

GINNY

(VO cont)

I'd bathed Rose when she was sick, the soles of her feet, the back of her neck, the bumps of her spine, the three moles on her back.

•

130.

From an unseen Ginny's point of view in the pick-up at the dump: Jess - his neck and naked back - as he twists away from Ginny to bend down:

GINNY

(VO cont)

I knew I had to do something to rid myself

•

131.

GINNY
(VO cont)

of the sight and sense of their nearness.

Ginny pulls out a book from library shelf, the title page only glimpsed: POISONOUS COMMON PLANTS. Pages turn: we briefly see botanical illustrations.

•

132.

Thick undergrowth of swampy area opening out from the Scenic River, in late afternoon. Ginny's hands pull on yellow dish-washing gloves:

GINNY
(VO cont)

All my life I'd thought Rose and I were twinlike. That somehow we were each other's real self.

•

133.

Box of farm bounty: the glowing reds of tomatoes, the yellows of peaches, and the poisoned sausages. Ginny carries the box down the road.

GINNY
(VO cont)

Rose had shown me Daddy, but she had also shown me herself. It was unbearable.

•

134.

Sound of tv news from Rose's living room. Ginny holds out the box to Rose:

GINNY

Surprise.

Rose smiles and takes the box, putting it on kitchen counter and takes jars out of box:

ROSE

You're a sweetie. Did you do all this today?

GINNY

Just the sausages and kraut.

cont

134 cont

Rose holding sausages:

ROSE

The others won't eat this.

GINNY

I wouldn't either. I made it for you.

ROSE

Thanks.

She kisses Ginny on the cheek.

Through the doorway Ginny sees: Jess and the girls in the living room, on the sofa, watching the evening news. Jess catches Ginny's eye and smiles, waves, then looks back to the news.

135.

A chill wind blows across dark October fields, swirls dry soil into air.

A distant farmer fall-plowing, his white farmhouse bright against the umber fields. Fall leaves on trees, in ditches and caught in fence-lines.

Ginny and Ty driving, in silence.

136.

Daddy, big and strong and hunched forward, head swinging around like the head of a bull, and with the same suspiciousness.

He is walking through the lobby of Zebulon County Court House: Caroline and Frank on one side, Ken La Salle and their other lawyer Wallace Crockett, on the other.

Ginny watches Daddy, from within little group of Rose and Ty and their lawyer Jean Cartier, who is making last-minute notes.

137.

The Court in session.

Caroline in witness stand. Her lawyer, Wallace Crockett, questions her.

Daddy sits next to Frank, Caroline's empty chair on his other side. Ginny shifts her chair, so he is not in her view.

cont

137 cont

CROCKETT

Ms Cook, when were your suspicions aroused about the plans going forward for the division of the Cook farm?

CAROLINE

I was suspicious from the first. The whole project was very untypical of my father.

CROCKETT

What was your response to the project?

CAROLINE

I made my reservations known.

CROCKETT

How were they greeted?

CAROLINE

My sister, Ginny Smith, urged me very strongly to go along with the project.

CROCKETT

What did you think of that?

CAROLINE

I suspected her of ulterior motives. I knew she and Rose both wanted to get their hands (on the) -

Jean Cartier objects, as:

ROSE

Oh, my god, listen to this.

The Judge casts Rose a severe glance, as he upholds objection.

CROCKETT

Later, it was more than suspicions, right? You were really worried about your father's safety.

CAROLINE

Yes, I was. They sent him out into a terrible storm -

cont

137 cont

Jean Cartier objects again:

CARTIER
Objection. Hearsay.

The Judge sustains the objection.

CROCKETT
Mr Ty Smith told you that your sisters
had sent your father out into a terrible
storm, did he not?

Rose leans to Ginny:

ROSE
Did he?

CAROLINE
Yes, he did.

Rose sits back:

ROSE
I'm not surprised.

CAROLINE
It was common knowledge that my
father was out in that (storm) -

But the Judge has been scanning papers:

JUDGE
Ms Cook. You may not introduce the
subject of your father and his relation to
your sisters into this courtroom. The
mismanagement or abuse clause in the
pre-incorporation agreement refers to
the farm properties only.

Caroline flushes red.

CAROLINE
But -

Her lawyer gets her attention, smiles encouragingly:

cont

137 cont

CROCKETT

Has the Cook farm ever incurred debt?

CAROLINE

No.

CROCKETT

Is it now burdened with debt?

CAROLINE

It certainly is.

Caroline triumphant now. A glance at Ginny, then at Rose. Her face cool, like a stone. She smooths her hair. Jean Cartier declines to question Caroline. She leaves the stand. Silence, except for the sound of her heels clicking on the floor as she walks back to her seat.

Later: Rose now in the stand, being questioned by Wallace Crockett.

CROCKETT

So the work-crews were doing very long hours overtime?

ROSE

Yes.

CROCKETT

In order to push the work past the point of no return?

Over, Cartier objects, but the Judge overrules the objection, as:

CROCKETT

Everything was done in a rush, right?

ROSE

The sooner the work was finished, the sooner we'd start earning.

CROCKETT

Didn't your sister Ginny Smith tell you that (he checks notes) "the big dollars being spent made her giddy"?

Rose turns her gaze briefly to Ginny. Ginny looks at Ty. Who's talked to who? Crockett is following up quickly:

cont

137 cont

CROCKETT

In other words you were way over-extended.

ROSE

No.

But Crockett follows up ruthlessly:

CROCKETT

What date did your husband Peter Lewis meet his death?

Cartier objects. The Judge overrules the objection. Rose calm and self-contained but it's as if the words are being dragged out of her:

ROSE

August the second.

CROCKETT

What was the coroner's verdict on the cause of his death?

ROSE

Accidental drowning.

CROCKETT

And what was your husband's blood alcohol level at the time of his death?

Cartier objects. Rose looking at the Judge.

JUDGE

Where is this leading, Mr Crockett?

CROCKETT

I submit that Peter Lewis's death was directly related to the strain of the massive debts incurred by the two families in their knowing mismanagement of the farm -

Cartier objecting again, over. The Judge sustains his objection. But Crockett's words hang like an accusation in the courtroom.

cont

137 cont

Later: Daddy walks heavily to the stand. Ginny and Rose can't take their eyes off him as he slowly goes up the few steps into the witness stand. Ginny listens with fearful fascination, flicks a quick glance to Rose, as he falters, taking the oath from the Court clerk, then:

KEN

Mr Cook, did you, in good faith, form a corporation and relinquish your farm to your two older daughters, Virginia Cook Smith and Rose Cook Lewis, along with their husbands, Tyler Smith and Peter Lewis?

A long pause, before:

DADDY

By god, they'll starve there.

KEN

Mr (Cook) -

DADDY

Caroline!

CAROLINE

Yes, Daddy?

JUDGE

The witness will please refrain from addressing -

DADDY

Caroline?

JUDGE

Mr Cook?

Daddy swings his head around and catches the Judge's gaze.

JUDGE

Mr Cook, please answer the questions. You can't talk to Ms Cook just now. Do you understand?

Daddy looks at the Judge without answering.

cont

137 cont

JUDGE
Proceed, Mr La Salle.

Ken La Salle moves closer to the stand:

KEN
Larry? Did you sign the farm over to
Ginny and Rose?

DADDY
They can send me to jail, I don't care
about that.

KEN
Nobody's going to jail, Larry. We're
talking about the farm, your farm. We
want to know what you did with it.

DADDY
I lost it. Caroline?

JUDGE
Mr La Salle, try once more.

KEN
Larry! Listen to me. What happened to
your farm? Who did you give it to?

DADDY
(shouts)
She's dead!

JUDGE
Who's dead, Mr Cook?

Daddy now almost meek:

DADDY
My daughter. She's dead.

JUDGE
All your daughters are in the
courtroom, sir.

Caroline stands:

cont

137 cont

DADDY

I think those sisters stole her body and buried her already.

Rose gives a bark of laughter, quickly stifled.

Caroline has gone to Daddy:

CAROLINE

Here I am, Daddy. I'm not dead. I'm right here. You live at my house now. You can live there always, as long as you like.

Daddy can't seem to see Caroline in front of him.

Ginny is amazed and horrified, excited as if she is witnessing a wreck. Ken La Salle is holding up a sheaf of papers:

KEN

Judge, here's Exhibit A, the contract in question. I'll introduce it in lieu of the witness's response.

Daddy looks past Caroline to Ken La Salle:

DADDY

Help me up, boy. I can't do like I used to.

He reaches out an arm. Ken takes it and as Daddy steps down, to Caroline:

DADDY

Excuse me.

Rose leans over to Ginny:

ROSE

Ten to one this is an act.

Caroline, Ken La Salle and Daddy make their slow way down the aisle, as:

DADDY

She was the littlest thing. Singing all day. Little cap, like a brown bird. She's dead now. Those other two, they -

cont

137 cont

Suddenly Ginny stands, calls out: all heads, except for Daddy who continues to murmur on, turn to her:

GINNY

Daddy! It was Rose who had the brown coat! It was Rose who sang! (It was) -

The Judge banging his gavel.

Ginny's face hot. She sits down, looks at Ty:

GINNY

But it was.

Ty shushes Ginny. Ginny feels icy shaking spread through her body.

Later: the Judge is summing up.

JUDGE

...the arguments are fairly clear and the plaintiffs have failed to establish either abuse of the property or mismanagement of its assets. The fact is, in this state, if you legally sign over your property, it is very hard to change your mind and get it back.

A long pause.

JUDGE

Obviously, the mental condition of the chief plaintiff, Mr Cook, must also come under consideration. Were the property to revert to him, it's not clear, given the deep divisions in the family, who would farm it. But this is only a corollary consideration. The law is clear. I find in favour of the defendants, Mrs Lewis, Mrs Smith and Mr Smith.

Everyone starts to shift, but the Judge has not finished:

JUDGE

I would also like to say to Mr La Salle, Mr Crockett, Mr Rasmussen and Ms Cook, that there is merit in the argument of Mr Cartier that this

cont

137 cont

JUDGE

(cont)

may have constituted a frivolous misuse of the court, and Mr Rasmussen and Ms Cook, in particular, should have bethought themselves before they decided to carry a family fracas this far. For that reason, the plaintiffs shall be required to pay fees and costs. The court is adjourned.

•

138.

Caroline, Frank and Wallace Crockett and Ken La Salle in a little standing huddle around Daddy who is sitting on a bench in the Court House lobby.

We are with Ginny and Rose, Ty and Jess, as they pass through the lobby towards the entrance doors. Rose the volatile centre of the little group. Cartier a few steps ahead of them.

ROSE

He doesn't even know he's lost the farm.

TY

What do you want, Rose? Blood?

ROSE

I want him to know.

TY

You saw him, haven't you any pity?

Ty, impatient with Rose's never-ending anger, moves ahead to join Cartier.

ROSE

He's going to get off scot-free, Ginny. I can't bear it.

Rose stops and turns quickly towards Daddy and his little group of courtiers, taking a few rapid steps towards them:

ROSE

(calls)

Daddy!

138 cont

The group around Daddy turns to Rose. Rose mid-point between her group and Daddy's. Daddy's head comes up and Rose takes a few more steps towards him, as if it is all going to pour out. But she sees Daddy is looking at her as if she could be anyone. She falters, her anger deflected. And in that moment, Ty steps in front of her, and Jess touches her arm.

And Rose turns back, quickly, to her group and moves away with them towards the entrance. Furious with herself for not having said what she wanted to say, furious that it would not have been believed, that the blame would only circle and settle on her. Anger like a piston in her, driving her.

Ginny watches Rose, pleased her sister feels what she is feeling: a desire to punish the person who has harmed her and never acknowledged it.

139.

The farm, in fall evening, looks as lifeless as Ginny feels, as she and Ty drive in, back from Court.

140.

Brussel sprouts dropped into pot of water. Put on stove beside pot of potatoes.

Ginny looks around the kitchen: everything looks worn, useless, known beyond knowing.

Ty steps out of his boots, hangs his coverall on door.

GINNY

Supper will be ready in twenty minutes.

TY

Great.

Ginny puts chops on broiler. Ty washes his hands, dries them:

GINNY

One new thing we could get would be a range. This one's a menace.

TY

I don't think this is the right time to get a new range.

cont

140 cont

GINNY

Maybe it'll blow up then, and put us out
of our misery.

Ty's exasperated sigh.

TY

I think you've shown off plenty this
summer, frankly.

The endless sameness of the kitchen extends, for Ginny, into the endless
never-changingness of their lives: the divisions are complete, there will be no
reconciliation, it is unbearable.

Everything in the kitchen takes on this desolate meaning: steam from pots on
stove, chops spitting under broiler, two eternal places set at the table.

A long silence, except for the cooking noises.

Ty watches Ginny, compelled by her stare around the kitchen. She could
sweep everything off the table, tear down the curtains, tip the pot of boiling
water off the stove.

TY

...Ginny...settle down...

Instead, she holds out her hand.

GINNY

I need a thousand dollars.

Ty takes out a wad of notes from his pocket.

TY

Michael Rakosi brought the rent by last
night.

He puts the cash into Ginny's hand.

141.

Ginny takes coat and scarf off hall-tree. Car keys off key-hook.

She opens the door, wind blowing in, and shuts it behind her.

142.

Ginny walking across the yard, the light fading quickly to darkness.

Ty comes to the door:

TY
(calls)

I've given my life to this place!

But Ginny won't look back:

GINNY
(calls)

Take it! It's yours!

She stumbles over a rut, against the car. Puts the money deep into her coat pocket, and gets into the car.

•

143.

Rose's house: figures of Rose and the girls and Jess moving around the lit rooms in their evening lives.

Ginny's car drives down the road, between Daddy's dark house and Rose's house:

GINNY
(VO)

I got a dollar per acre.

Ginny's tail-lights smaller and smaller until, eventually, they disappear.

•

144.

Endless stream of traffic on Interstate 35 in Minnesota, seen from:

A small apartment: the sound of traffic, a sofa-bed, a palm-tree reading lamp with a stack of library books. Everything anonymous, makeshift, neat.

•

145.

Briefly, a car pulls into parking space in front of an apartment building surrounded by other apartment buildings. Ginny, wearing a waitress's uniform, gets out of car.

•

146.

Ginny comes into the apartment, tosses down bag, slips off shoes, feet sore, glances at mail she has brought in with her: all junk and a bill.

At the window, she looks out at traffic on freeway.

A seat in the corner of the room.

When Ginny sits, we realise that here is the place where she has been putting together her story, collaborating with us in her investigation. An anonymous corner of the anonymous apartment.

147.

A busy restaurant with its continual noise. After a while, we see that Ginny is one of the waitresses. She enjoys the job: the busyness, the small-talk, the coming and going, the limits of the world narrowly defined.

The back of Ty's head, in a cap, which Ginny - busy, head-down to order-pad - doesn't recognise, although we may, as she comes up to his table:

GINNY

What would you like this morning, sir?
(I can recommend) -

Now she glances at the up-turned face: Ty.

GINNY

(VO)

When Ty turned up, all I thought was
"How's Rose? Dead now?"

148.

Ginny and Ty crossing road, through traffic:

GINNY

(VO cont)

When he told me that Jess Clark had left her, had gone back to the West Coast, it didn't seem to make any difference to my vengeful wishes.

149.

The car-park of a diner: Ginny and Ty moving through the cars. Ginny can't see Ty's pick-up:

GINNY

What're you driving?

TY

That Chevy.

And Ginny looks: a beaten-up car with things piled high in the back seat.

GINNY

What's this?

TY

I'm going to Texas, Ginny. Thought I'd get myself a job, in one of those big hog places down there.

150.

Food on table between Ginny and Ty in the busy diner:

TY

Those hog buildings killed me. The winter after the trial was so bad -

GINNY

The hearing. Nobody was on trial.

TY

I was.

They glare at each other, then both veil the glares.

TY

I've never been to Texas. Or anyplace else, for that matter.

GINNY

What about Rose?

TY

Rose swears she's going to keep it together. She's grim as death about it. She's moved over into your father's house.

150 cont

GINNY

There's nobody left to farm it.

TY

I signed everything, the land, buildings, hogs, the equipment, I signed the whole lot over to her. She's sure she's going to be a land baroness. Got it all figured out, the way she always does. She goes around like some queen. Well, she does. Frankly, she's your dad all over.

Ginny feels her face get hot.

GINNY

Where is he?

TY

Caroline took him, he's living with her. I know what Rose says, Ginny, about your dad. She told me. She's told everybody by now. No one believes her. I think people should keep private things private.

Ty's voice has risen. Ginny is tempted into her old methods of conciliation: to nod or smile, to keep the peace.

But instead she holds Ty's gaze, showing her disagreement.

TY

(flat)

I guess we see things differently.

GINNY

More than you can imagine.

TY

I don't remember you like this.

GINNY

I wasn't like this.

TY

No, you looked on the good side of things, you were pretty, and funny.

cont

150 cont

GINNY

I was a ninny, I was a simpleton.

•

151.

Ginny and Ty wave simultaneously as he drives out of the diner carpark.

•

152.

Evening in Ginny's apartment. Sound of traffic from the Interstate. Ginny lying on sofa, reading a thick library book: *Middlemarch*. It is almost too dark to read and Ginny reaches out to turn on the palm-tree lamp. It casts a comforting, intimate circle of light on to the dark print of the page.

•

153.

Clothes show us the season has changed.

In the restaurant, a counter-hand gets Ginny's attention across the restaurant: phone for her.

The receiver lying on the counter, as Ginny negotiates the restaurant with a stack of plates.

•

154.

Ginny driving in busy traffic along Interstate. She wears her waitress's uniform.

•

155.

A woman lies on a trolley, an attendant beside her, in hospital lift. People, including Ginny, crowded around her. As the lift doors open:

•

156.

Ginny with Doctor (who we recognise from Scene 22) coming out through doorway of office:

cont

156 cont

DOCTOR

She wanted the whole lot, you know, a second radical mastectomy, all the chemo her body could take. It's just way too advanced. God knows though, she's a fighter.

And out into the busy corridor.

157.

Rose thin and little in hospital bed. Her eyelids lift like velvet curtains.

Ginny can't look away from her gaze.

Rose pats a place on the bed and Ginny sits. Rose speaks as if it tires her:

ROSE

At the peak of the harvest I drove fifteen truckloads a day to the elevator. We got twelve dollars twenty a bushel for corn.

GINNY

Sounds like a good price.

ROSE

We should have made Daddy show us more, and let us get more in the habit of working. If I'd been in the habit of doing it day after day like Ty or Loren, it wouldn't have been so hard.

Rose takes some deep breaths, drinks a little water through a straw.

Rose refuses to break down, she will make this as matter-of-fact as she knows how:

ROSE

Take the girls back with you.

GINNY

You mean - ?

ROSE

Tell me you'll take them.

GINNY

Of course I'll take them.

cont

157 cont

Rose's bossiness denies the extent of her gift: the giving of her daughters to Ginny. And Ginny's habit of vengeance is still too strong to make the first move to acknowledge the meaning of Rose's gift.

ROSE

Tomorrow we'll talk about when.

GINNY

Okay.

ROSE

Go home and make them some dinner.
Make them fried chicken.

•

158.

The two houses opposite each other: Rose's now boarded up, Daddy's lit. Ginny drives up the road towards them, one on either side.

•

159.

Pammy and Linda - more than a year older since we last saw them - opening the door to Ginny. The three hug, their arms around each other, their heads together.

Although Daddy's kitchen is now Rose's, it is essentially the same. Linda and Pammy hang around while Ginny unwraps chicken pieces she has bought. Ginny is freezing. The kitchen seems cold and underlit.

LINDA

Are they going to let her come home soon? She thinks they are, but I don't believe her.

GINNY

All she told me was to come and make you some fried chicken.

LINDA

We're vegetarians.

Pammy giggles. The girls look at each other, then:

cont

159 cont

PAMMY

We eat meat at school.

LINDA

And we go to Kentucky Fried
sometimes.

PAMMY

Will you make mashed potatoes and
gravy?

GINNY

Would you like me to?

The girls nod yes.

As Ginny starts to peel potatoes and the girls get out the various cooking
things, Ginny makes her voice as idle as possible:

GINNY

Has your mom got canned stuff down in
the cellar?

LINDA

There's some. We don't do as much as
we used to.

PAMMY

There's lots in our old house we didn't
bring over.

Ginny silent, as the girls' voices continue over about keeping left-overs for
hash-frieds. She feels freshly the force of the urge that took her to make the
sausages, and its attendant grief:

GINNY

(VO)

I had wanted Rose dead, and here she
was, dying.

160.

Rose is sitting up. It's clear that the force of life is stronger than yesterday.

cont

160 cont

ROSE

I didn't leave everything unsaid with the girls the way Mommy did with us. I wasn't enigmatic, either. I laid it out for them when I saw what was happening.

Her voice is weak but her tone is absolutely assured: she is going to die in a state of perfect self-confidence.

Ginny feels the anger she has been harbouring for so long. She struggles to soften her voice:

GINNY

I'm glad of that.

Rose's amused smile. Ginny can't resist:

GINNY

I'm impressed by the way you've tied up all the loose ends.

Ginny gives in:

GINNY

Bossy to the end.

Rose's hands stretch out like spiderwebs, then fold, then stretch again, on the blanket.

ROSE

Are you looking for a way to hurt my feelings?

GINNY

Probably.

ROSE

Still fighting over a man?

GINNY

For every one thought I've had about Ty, I've had twenty about Jess.

ROSE

That's because you didn't sleep with him enough, or do ordinary things. Eventually, you would have got fed up.

160 cont

GINNY

Did you?

ROSE

Almost. I would have been fed up by summer.

Ginny means "shut up":

GINNY

Thanks.

Rose ignores Ginny:

ROSE

Jess Clark wasn't the way you thought he was, Ginny. He was more self-centred and calculating than you gave him credit (for) -

GINNY

(parrots Rose)

He wasn't the way you thought he was, he was kinder and had more doubts than you gave him credit for.

Rose and Ginny stare at each other aggressively: a long minute. Then Rose lifts a hand and brushes it through her soft new growth of hair.

ROSE

The difference is I loved him without caring whether he was good. He was good enough and I wanted him and he slipped away. I might have killed him if I'd known what he was planning.

Ginny believes Rose: her flat conviction. Rose, tired now, lies back.

GINNY

Do you ever hear from him?

But Rose waves her hand, dismissing the question.

ROSE

I want to tell you some things, practical things.

160 cont

GINNY

Okay.

ROSE

I'm leaving the farm to you and
Caroline, not to the girls.

GINNY

Why?

ROSE

I want all of this to stop with our
generation.

Rose and Ginny stare at each other: a long look of understanding. "All of this" is Daddy's inheritance, which is still present right here at Rose's hospital bed.

GINNY

I don't want to farm.

ROSE

You won't have to. Marv Carson'll
make you sell to the Heartland
Corporation. I don't know what there's
going to be above and beyond paying off
the debt and the taxes.

GINNY

What if there's nothing?

ROSE

I know you don't like me to say what I
really think, but if I repeat myself about
Daddy or the farm, what he's done, you
could just walk out of here. I don't trust
you.

Now Ginny can say it:

GINNY

I don't trust you.

A long pause between them, then Rose - so touchingly - spreads out her
hands, spreads her arms wide, in all her weakness.

ROSE

Well, there you are then. Except
what is there about me not to trust?

160 cont

Tears prick Ginny's eyes.

GINNY

I guess I was all set to fight it out longer.

ROSE

Yeah, it shits, doesn't it?

GINNY

It's hard to bear. Oh, Rose!

ROSE

Don't do this to me. We're not going to be sad. We're going to be angry until we die.

Now Ginny confesses:

GINNY

I thought I was going to be angry with you forever. I mean, I wanted to kill you.

ROSE

I want to kill people all the time.

GINNY

No, I don't mean that I said, "Gee, I could kill her". I mean, I set out to kill you.

Ginny has Rose's attention, her belief:

GINNY

I made poisoned sausage, and canned it, and waited for you to eat it.

Rose stares at Ginny, surprised at last. Finally:

ROSE

Well, must have worked, huh?

But Ginny is not going to be robbed of her confession, of Rose's understanding:

GINNY

Don't you remember? That liver sausage and sauerkraut I brought over? Late summer?

cont

160 cont

ROSE

So much was going on, I must have forgotten it. And of course I was swept up in the Jess Clark lifestyle, so I would have spurned liver sausage even if I'd remembered.

Ginny, limp from her confession, slumps in her chair.

But Rose is invigorated!

GINNY

You hurt me so badly.

A long pause as Rose looks and truly "sees" Ginny and understands her sister's pain.

ROSE

Do you forgive me?

GINNY

Now I do.

They stare at each other, out of their old intimacy.

GINNY

What am I going to do without you?

ROSE

Exercise caution while making up your own mind, as always.

The sisters exchange their first real smile. Rose reaches out for Ginny's hand; pulls Ginny closer to her.

Now Rose confesses:

ROSE

Ginny? I didn't make a good life with Pete. I didn't see the girls into adulthood. I didn't win Jess Clark. I didn't work the farm successfully. I didn't even get Daddy to know what he did, or what it means. People around town talk about how I wrecked it all. Three generations on the same farm, great land, Daddy a marvellous farmer and a saint to boot.

160 cont

Rose's voice, although weak, holds a touching passion. Even now, Rose's testament is to truth, however hard it is.

Rose uses Ginny's hand to pull herself even closer:

ROSE

So all I have is that I saw!
That I saw without being afraid
and without turning away, and
that I didn't forgive the unforgivable.
That's something, isn't it?

Ginny, very affected, nods that yes, it is something.

Rose, exhausted, lies back.

ROSE

Caroline. Tell her...about Daddy...

Rose waits for Ginny to agree.

Ginny nods yes: she feels she will promise Rose anything.

ROSE

The girls. You love them.

GINNY

You know I do.

ROSE

...I'm not jealous any more...I'm glad...

Rose and Ginny's hands still linked on the bed.

Rose closes her eyes. Ginny sits watching her sister. After a while, she puts out a hand and strokes Rose's damp, hot forehead, up into her soft growth of new hair. She holds her hand there for a while, feeling the pulse of Rose's life.

Rose's eyes flicker open: they look directly, simply into each other's eyes, as close as they've ever been.

Rose's eyes shut. Ginny watches her sister:

We stay with Rose's beautiful wounded face for quite a while.

161.

Rose's face becomes the endless end-of-winter sky and the frosted and ice-patched winter fields.

Ginny, in a truck, driving into the wintry kingdom.

Outside Daddy's house, even though it is still early morning, she sees another rented truck parked there.

162.

In the cold house, the rooms are in disarray: drawers and cupboards open, contents on floor and tables, furniture in haphazard groupings.

In the dining room, the table is half covered with stacks of china, glassware and so on.

Caroline and Ginny taking out things from cupboards, stacking them on floor and table. A coolness between them. Ginny conscious of the task Rose has set her.

CAROLINE

What dishes did Daddy use?

GINNY

White with a turquoise trim,
remember?

CAROLINE

I'd like those. And so would Daddy.

GINNY

They're not valuable.

CAROLINE

What is valuable here?

GINNY

I don't know, Caroline.

CAROLINE

These plates must have been
Rose's. You can have them.

Ginny consciously cool:

GINNY

You don't want anything of
Rose's?

162 cont

CAROLINE

Not really, no.

GINNY

You must think you're going to take all of Mommy's and Daddy's things, and I'm going to take all of Rose's.

CAROLINE

I'm sure there's more that was Rose's -

GINNY

That's not the point.

Ginny sees that Caroline is, for once, a little afraid. Caroline silent.

GINNY

Let's hear it.

CAROLINE

What?

GINNY

What you're thinking.

CAROLINE

I think we should divide up the stuff and go home.

GINNY

How can we divide up the stuff without knowing what it means? Why do you want these things? Dishes and cups and saucers you don't remember? It's like you're taking home someone else's farm childhood. What if I wasn't truthful? What if I sent you off on purpose with all of Rose's things, and kept Mommy's things for myself?

CAROLINE

I thought of that.

Ginny looks at Caroline then almost runs out of the room.

163.

In Daddy's bedroom: the vivid squares and rectangles on the walls where photographs and pictures once hung. The door opens: Ginny looks in.

164.

Inside closet: the door opens and light falls on a stack of framed photographs leaning against some boxes.

165.

Ginny finishes placing the photographs on a cleared end of the dining room table. Caroline ignores her.

GINNY

Okay. Tell me who these are.

CAROLINE

I'm not taking tests.

GINNY

Tell me.

Caroline unwilling, but fear brings her across to the photographs:

CAROLINE

Well...these must be the Cooks,
or, no, the Davises...and these
are the Cooks...Grandfather Cook
with the tractor...Mommy...

GINNY

Who's the baby?

CAROLINE

You, probably.

GINNY

But you don't know.

CAROLINE

Rose, then. Or me. Who is it?

GINNY

I don't know. Rose didn't know.
You don't know.

165 cont

CAROLINE

So what?

GINNY

So everyone here is a stranger. They're our family, but they don't look familiar. Even Daddy doesn't look familiar. They could be anyone.

CAROLINE

Daddy looks familiar.

GINNY

How familiar?

Ginny ruthless in her task. Caroline picks up photo of Daddy: he is about twenty five, handsome and exasperated.

CAROLINE

He looks like Daddy.

GINNY

How familiar?

Caroline is frightened.

CAROLINE

I don't know what you mean.

Ginny silent. Caroline puts down photo of Daddy.

CAROLINE

So I can't pass some test.

Now, at last, Caroline flares out at Ginny:

CAROLINE

Have you got to wreck everything? I come here and you can't leave me alone. You're going to tell me something terrible, about Mommy, or Daddy, or someone. You're going to wreck my childhood for me. You're dying to do it, just like Rose was. She used to call me, but I wouldn't talk to her.

Caroline's hands hang down by her side: she is transfixed by Ginny's purpose, just as Ginny had once been by Rose.

cont

165 cont

GINNY

...you...

Ginny could tell Caroline everything, pour it right into her ear, with no resistance from Caroline, as Rose has told her to.

A long moment.

But Ginny sees Caroline, for once, absolutely defenceless. She feels pity for what she is about to do to her sister.

Caroline gradually puzzled, as she sees Ginny's intentions lose focus, her will withdraw:

CAROLINE

What?

And Ginny lets her go:

GINNY

It's alright.

Caroline, with relief and relaxing of tension: her face crumples like an accusing child's:

CAROLINE

You frightened me.

Ginny, after all, isn't Rose: she hasn't her tenacity of spirit, her will to pursue the truth whatever the cost.

Ginny goes to put an arm around Caroline. But Caroline side-steps her, turning away. Ginny watches as she squats down at the sideboard to continue the task of dividing the goods.

166.

A claw-hammer in Ginny's hand, as she walks across the road.

A frigid breeze blows up the road between the two houses.

167.

The claw-hammer easily levers up the boards nailed over the cellar door on Rose's old house.

167 cont

Ginny turns the metal handle. Lifts the door.

Her feet down steps, guided by torch light.

Cobwebs drift across Ginny's fingers and face.

Torch light across shelves holding smooth cold pints and quarts, all dusty.
The light settles on the gift-box Ginny gave to Rose.

168.

The jar of sausage, now a poisonous orange, lit by counter-light in Ginny's kitchen. The hum of traffic from the Interstate.

Ginny scared, as if she is handling explosives, twists off the ring, prises off the cap. She reacts to the strong, sour odour of vinegar.

The sausage and sauerkraut being ground in the sink's waste-disposal unit.
The tap turned on full-blast, water streaming down into the sink. Ginny watches the stream of water, almost mesmerised:

GINNY
(VO)

Rose left me a riddle I haven't solved.
How do we judge those who have hurt
us, when they have shown no remorse,
or even understanding?

*Ginny's eyes, as the sound of water and traffic changes to the ceaseless rattling
of breeze in tall corn plants.*

169.

Five years later, and we are in Ginny's present, in the time from which she has been telling us her story.

Tall corn plants, as high as a person, full of light and shadow, moving in the ceaseless breeze. A car drives on the road through vast fields of corn:

GINNY
(VO)

I inherited the girls. The farm is gone,
the houses bulldozed.

cont

169 cont

In the car, Ginny is driving, Pammy, now nineteen, next to her. Linda, now seventeen, is in the back. They are looking out for where they once lived:

GINNY

(VO cont)

When I think of Jess, I think of the loop
of poisoned water we drank from.

Ginny wanders along the road. The girls on another part of the road. Silos, industrial storehouses, but not a house in sight. The girls going from spot to spot: "Our house was here, and Grandpa's over there." "No. It was further up. There." "Where was your place, Aunt Ginny?"

Ginny points further along the road. But without the landmarks of the houses in what she believed was a permanent configuration, the road could be any road, the sweep of cornfields, anywhere. As the girls continue to explore, calling to each other:

GINNY

(VO)

Ty reminds me of the ordered, hard-
working world I used to live in. Anger
reminds me of Rose.

Daddy, briefly seen, his hair being combed by Caroline in her apartment.

GINNY

(VO)

Remorse reminds me of Daddy, who
had none.

Ginny watches as the girls disappear into the tall corn plants. Briefly we see them from above, moving through the plants:

GINNY

(VO cont)

When I think of myself, I remember my
canning jar of poisoned sausage. I can't
say I forgive my father, but I safeguard
above all else, the ability that canning jar
gives me, to imagine the unthinkable
urge that possessed him, taking him
into the very darkness.

Ginny wanders along another part of the road. She turns as the girls run up behind her, and the little trio walks on together.

THE END