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The Winter Garden

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School of Language and Culture

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Creative Writing

Abstract

This thesis consists of practice-led research in the form of a full-length script for a feature film, and a 7000-word essay (exegesis). A summary of the script is as follows:

The Winter Garden is a black comedy about a disadvantaged teen in foster care who sets out to steal the life of a wealthy but lazy classmate. En route to a new foster placement, eighteen-year-old Winter glimpses the embodiment of everything she yearns for in the relationship between upper-middle-class mother Helen Dunbar and her daughter Emily. Finding herself enrolled at the same high school as Emily, Winter reinvents herself as a middle-class girl, befriends Emily, and begins probing the cracks she discovers in the Dunbars' mother-daughter relationship to usurp Emily's place in Helen's affections. A battle of wits between the two girls ensues. When Winter frames Emily as a methamphetamine user, Helen chooses to believe her over Emily. Emily is thrown out, and Winter moves in. But with Emily out of the way, Helen turns all her passive-aggressive attention on Winter, who discovers the price of being Helen's daughter.

The script is framed by an exegesis, which is a 7000-word essay on the subject of:

- (a) The thematic and methodological context of the script
- (b) My intentions and the methodologies employed in the script development process.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya Moir". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tanya Moir

THE WINTER GARDEN

A feature film

Second draft

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I/E. NICKI'S KIA CERATO - DAY - SATURDAY MORNING

CAR RADIO plays CHEERY 90S POP.

A tidy mid-range hatchback leaves Christchurch Domestic Airport. At the wheel is NICKI (30s, well-dressed) -- she could be a soccer mom. Ignoring her in the back seat is teen goth WINTER(18), equally put together but in a completely opposite way. Winter stares out the side window. It's early June -- cold -- grey.

Outside the terminal, TWO CUTE KIDS in fairy costumes run from their FATHER to meet their MOTHER -- the mum drops her bag and scoops the kids up. Winter watches, impassive.

The car passes a FAMILY OF FIVE towing suitcases on the pavement. They're wearing Gold Coast theme park merch and joking around as they trek to the free parking zone.

Nicki turns the MUSIC UP -- hums along under her breath.

There's a cabin bag on the seat beside Winter. Through the rear window, the airport recedes. Winter watches Memorial Ave go by -- neat lawns -- tidy middle-class homes -- leafless trees.

A park -- more happy families -- KIDS -- DOGS -- DADS playing ball.

A YOUNG MOTHER jogs behind a stroller, SPOODLE in tow.

The houses get bigger and flasher. TEENAGERS in sports gear spill from SUVs -- proud PARENTS fuss.

Nicki checks her satnav -- turns off into the side streets.

The houses get flasher again -- higher walls -- more expensive cars on the streets. Winter's attention fixes on glimpses of gardens -- pretty upstairs rooms. Her face remains unreadable.

The car stops. A Mercedes in front of them is trying to turn right into a driveway. Nicki waits.

Winter looks at the house beside them -- Edwardian -- double-storey brick. The automatic gate is open. There's a Porsche Cayenne by the door. Its rear hatch is opened by a forty-something blonde woman in cashmere sweatpants -- she is HELEN DUNBAR. The back of the Porsche is full of orchids.

Coming around the car to join her mother is a girl Winter's age, also blonde -- she is Helen's daughter EMILY (18).

Winter watches them.

They're struggling with the logistics of orchids, potting mix and cashmere. First World problems. They laugh -- Helen reaches out towards Emily.

The auto gate begins to close.

2 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Helen's hand strokes Emily's cheek -- tucks back the hair getting in her eyes. Emily beams. A golden mother-daughter moment.

The auto gate inches shut.

3 I/E. NICKI'S CAR - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter -- impassive still -- stares at the closed gate. The car moves on. The street glides by. The satnav signals a turn.

Winter's attention moves inward.

FLASHBACK TO:

4 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS EARLIER

THE ORCHIDS.

HELEN'S FINGERTIPS BRUSH EMILY'S CHEEKBONE.

BACK TO:

5 I/E. NICKI'S CAR - DAY - PRESENT

Nicki's car turns -- enters a crescent -- and a different world. An enclave of council housing -- mid-century -- badly maintained. Bedsheets slung across windows. Front gardens bristling with knee-high grass -- dead couches -- dying cars.

SAT NAV (V.O.)

Arrived.

Nicki pulls into the kerb. She and Winter survey the house for a moment. There's a folder on the passenger seat with the ORANGA TAMARIKI LOGO.

6 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

A grimy front porch. The door opens on a plus-sized woman, 50s, unsmiling, wearing a muscle tank and a nicotine patch. This is RUBY. She studies Winter.

RUBY
This her?

NICKI
(bright)
This is Winter --

RUBY
(to Winter)
Go on in.
(indicates the hallway)
The girls are down there.

7 INT. HALLWAY/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Winter picks her way down an untidy hallway. WHOOPING can be heard coming from a TV.

RUBY (O.S.)
When's the allowance pay?

Nicki's reply is lost in the increasing volume of a whipped-up STUDIO AUDIENCE.

8 INT. LOUNGE/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Drew Barrymore Show is playing on the TV. Ruby's granddaughters watch -- deadpan. MELODY (14), is stocky and swathed in athleisure gear. DALLAS (20), a recovering meth head in leggings and singlet, is five months pregnant and drinking a Red Bull.

Neither of them appear to notice Winter standing in the doorway.

RUBY
Your room's over there -- you're sharing with Melody.

9 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - DAY

The stays on the bedroom window frame are broken. Winter idly pushes the casement -- lets it fall back -- repeats.

She's sitting on a bare single mattress next to a mountain of laundry. It might be clean or it might not.

LATER

Winter's bed is neatly made -- her things are arranged beside it. On the other side of the room, Melody's bed looks like a bomb has hit it.

10 I/E. LOUNGE/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Dallas and Melody are now watching a DATING SHOW -- they don't appear to have moved.

Outside, Winter walks past the lounge window unnoticed.

11 EXT. AMITY CRESCENT - DAY

Winter slouches out of the crescent -- assessing the neighbourhood -- a teen with nothing to do and nowhere to be.

12 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Dunbar's gate opens -- Helen and Emily walk out -- they're deep in discussion.

Winter is mooching down the opposite side of their street -- her attention latches onto the Dunbars.

Helen and Emily start to turn the same way Winter is going. Then they see her. They stop -- wait for the auto gate to close fully behind them -- then continue on their way.

Winter walks behind them.

HELEN

She DIDN'T...

EMILY

SERIOUSLY! -- I swear --

Winter hears snatches of LAUGHTER -- she can't catch the rest of the words.

13 EXT. SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

An upmarket strip mall on a quiet neighbourhood street.

Helen and Emily check out shop windows. Winter watches from a discreet distance.

Their heads threaten to turn in her direction -- she ducks behind a lamp post and pretends to look at her phone.

Helen and Emily go into the pharmacy. Winter steals closer. She can see them moving about inside -- but their backs are mostly to her.

14 INT. PHARMACY/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY - SAME TIME

Helen waits by the prescription counter. Emily is idly browsing hair accessories -- none are to her liking.

She spots a particularly blingy Alice band -- OMGs -- mock-models it for Helen.

HELEN
(acid)
Lovely.

15 EXT. PHARMACY/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Winter takes evasive action as Helen and Emily exit the pharmacy. They don't see her.

16 INT. SCANDI BOUTIQUE/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Emily tries on felt slippers. She holds up the same pair in two different colours -- which ones?

Helen hands over her credit card.

Two boxes of slippers are bagged up.

17 EXT. HOMEWARE BOUTIQUE/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Emily spots a distinctive vintage-floral-print pencil case in the window of another boutique -- she wheedles Helen inside.

Winter watches.

18 INT. HOMEWARE BOUTIQUE/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Emily shows Helen the pencil case. Helen rolls her eyes.

The pencil case goes into an elegant store bag.

19 EXT. TOUJOURS MACARONS/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

The bag swings from Emily's arm as she and Helen pass a pyramid of macarons in a cafe window -- they go inside.

LATER

Across the street from Toujours Macarons, Winter sits at a bus stop. There's a BILLBOARD for a family skiing holiday behind her. Winter looks bored.

She perks up as Helen and Emily exit the cafe with their shopping bags and a box of macarons. They bicker companionably as they head away up the street.

Winter waits until they're out of sight -- crosses the road to the cafe.

20 I/E. TOUJOURS MACARONS/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Winter looks through the cafe door at the Dunbars' empty coffee cups on the table.

She checks out the window display -- the macarons are \$5 each.

The CAFE OWNER gives Winter a snooty look -- turns the OPEN sign on the door to CLOSED.

21 INT. SCANDI BOUTIQUE/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Winter retraces Emily's movement through the store -- finds the rainbow display of slippers -- runs her fingers across it.

22 INT. HOMEWARE BOUTIQUE/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Winter finds Emily's pencil case -- handles it curiously. She opens the zip -- finds the \$75 price tag -- carefully puts the pencil case back on the shelf.

23 INT. PHARMACY/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Winter -- reverent -- browses the hair accessories stand. A PHARMACY ASSISTANT watches her like a hawk.

Winter picks up the Alice band -- holds it over her head the way she saw Emily do. The pharmacy assistant bristles. Winter hangs it back on the stand.

In doing so, she spots a box of hair colour -- the model on the box looks not unlike Helen. Winter studies it more closely.

24 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Winter is curled on the bed with a towel wrapped around her head. She's streaming *An Officer and a Gentleman* on her laptop.

LATER

A roller brush moves through glossy blonde hair. Winter -- transformed -- examines her reflection. Her goth makeup is gone. She's fresh-faced -- pretty.

Melody stops in the doorway.

MELODY

What the fuck happened to you?

25 EXT. AMITY CRESCENT - DAY

Winter tosses her shiny blonde hair. It's Monday morning -- the first day of term. She strides forth up the crescent, chin high.

Melody mooches -- baleful -- a few paces behind. Both girls wear the uniform of the upmarket state girls' school Amity Crescent is zoned for. Winter's is box-fresh and prospectus perfect -- Melody's a disaster.

In the window of a neighbouring house, a pit bull calmly watches them pass. He is OTIS (35kg, shovel-faced).

26 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Behind Otis, his owner KURT (30s, stringy, bloodshot) lights a bong. Dallas is under the bedclothes beside him.

DALLAS

You coming to the scan today?

Kurt inhales -- shakes his head.

KURT

I gotta meet Chas.

Dallas is disappointed. She studies her meagre baby bump -- regroups.

DALLAS
I need fifty bucks.

KURT
What for?

He passes Dallas the bong.

DALLAS
Folic acid and shit.

She takes a hit -- but just a small one.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
We don't want him coming out
retarded.

27 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Winter and Melody join the throng of SCHOOLGIRLS walking in through the gates. Winter disappears into the crowd without looking back -- Melody watches her go.

28 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

The door of a floor safe opens to reveal a large supply of meth, a stack of cash and a B12 notebook tied to a green biro.

Kurt removes \$50 -- notes it down in the book.

29 INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Winter walks into class -- takes in the thought for the day written on the board -- BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE.

She looks around -- spots a free desk. Sitting beside it is Emily.

30 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Kurt hides the safe under a floorboard, the carpet and a dog bed. He turns to Otis -- makes a hand signal -- 'guard'. The dog leaves the window and settles on the bed.

Dallas watches -- waits. Kurt hands her the cash.

31 INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Winter sits beside Emily -- she can't believe her luck. Emily smiles at the new girl -- no recollection they've seen each other before. With Winter's new dye-job the resemblance between them is striking.

Emily's \$75 pencil case is on the desk in front of her.

Winter pretends not to see it. She reaches into her bag -- takes out the exact same pencil case -- sets it nonchalantly on her own desk.

FLASHBACK TO:

32 INT. HOMEWARE BOUTIQUE - DAY - PREVIOUS

We revisit Winter putting the pencil case back on the shelf.

She glances at the counter -- sees there's nobody around -- stuffs the pencil case up her top.

BACK TO:

33 INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY - PRESENT

Emily clocks Winter's identical pencil case -- beams! The two girls take each other in. Wow -- what are the chances?

34 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GATES - DAY

The end of the school day. Emily and Winter -- brand new BFFs -- walk out together. It's cold -- they're rugged up.

Amid a group of equally SCRUFFY FRIENDS in the crowd behind them, Melody watches them walk away.

EMILY

I can't believe we have to get that assignment done by Friday.

Winter nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It's like some teachers just don't get how much other shit we have to do. I've only got tonight free.

Winter makes like -- same.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I mean fucken essay questions man --
who even sets those anymore?

WINTER

I actually think essay questions
can be kind of fun.

EMILY

Freak!

Winter smiles -- thinks -- like it's just occurring to her --

WINTER

Hey -- you want to work on it
together?

35 INT. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

A meticulously elegant old-money space below a grand
staircase -- airy -- light-filled.

Emily walks in. Winter follows -- takes it all in -- tries to
look like she does this every day. Emily immediately starts
shedding layers.

EMILY

(yells)

Mum?

Winter takes off her jacket -- it's hot inside. She surveys
the huge oil painting dominating the hall.

HELEN (O.S.)

Out here.

WINTER

I like your painting.

EMILY

(mocking her parents)

It's a McCahon.

(rolls eyes)

Come on -- we'd better go say hi.

36 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Orchids everywhere -- they and other tropical beauties fill a
botanic-gardens-worthy replica of an Edwardian conservatory.
Helen is playing 90s CHILL-ROOM TECHNO MUSIC to the plants
and misting them with a crystal spray bottle.

She shifts focus -- a touch reluctant -- to Emily.

HELEN
Hello darling --
(sees Winter)
Oh -- who's this?

EMILY
This is Winter --

HELEN
'Winter'?

Winter isn't listening -- she's fixated on the flowers. She gently touches a bloom.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What a -- *pretty* name.

Winter's eyes meet Helen's. They assess each other thoughtfully.

EMILY
We're going to be upstairs
studying.

HELEN
(reproving)
Winter might like something to
drink first -- coffee? Fruit tea?
Mineral water? Juice?

EMILY
That's okay, we don't really have --

WINTER
Something to drink would be lovely.

MINUTES LATER

French press coffee and macarons adorn a table in the conservatory. Winter examines a nearby orchid. Emily's eyes have glazed over.

WINTER (CONT'D)
What's this one called?

HELEN
Ah! That's *Ludisia discolor* -- my
jewel orchid. I've finally got her
to flower.

WINTER
Is that hard to do?

HELEN
Orchids are a lot like children.
They need warmth -- food --
protection -- or they don't thrive.

Emily rolls her eyes -- takes another macaron.

HELEN (CONT'D)
It's a cold mean world out there.
(notes Emily)
For some kids, anyway.

Emily doesn't react.

HELEN (CONT'D)
(abruptly)
What do your parents do, Winter?

WINTER
They're away a lot.

HELEN
Doing what?

WINTER
Have you had much to do with the
military?

HELEN
No -- nothing.

WINTER
Mum and Dad are serving overseas.

HELEN
What, both of them?

WINTER
It's how they met. Army brat --
that's me.

HELEN
(impressed)
Where are they stationed?

WINTER
They're involved with the War on
Drugs.

CUTAWAY TO:

37 INT. KITCHEN/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruby lights up a joint -- takes a hit -- contemplates the view from the kitchen window.

WINTER (V.O.)

That's all I'm really allowed to say.

38 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Outside, Kurt stows a \$20 note as he leaves Ruby's.

BACK TO:

39 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Helen and Emily stare at Winter.

HELEN

So -- where do you live while they're away?

WINTER

There's a facility on the base.

HELEN

Really?

Winter reconsiders.

WINTER

I guess facility's a strong word -- it's more like -- well, I pretty much board with this couple.

EMILY

I thought you said you lived off Rolleston Ave.

WINTER

I said I was going to Rolleston Ave -- that's where I get my bus.

Emily tries to remember what Winter actually said.

HELEN

You must miss your parents terribly.

WINTER

Yeah. I mean -- obviously.
 (truthfully)
 But I guess -- I'm kind of used to
 it now.

40 INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A sophisticated teenage dream of a room -- bare tree branches outside the window -- glimpses of statuary and a swimming pool.

Sprawled on a queen-size bed, Emily and Winter work on their assignment. Emily stares at her laptop -- Winter surreptitiously studies Emily's french plaits. She averts her gaze quickly as Emily looks up.

EMILY

You are so lucky. I wish my parents
 would go away and leave me alone.

Winter smiles.

WINTER

Do you?

41 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Major Dad streams on Winter's laptop. Winter watches intensely.

WINTER

Ow! Fuck...

Melody is using a Youtube video to try to french plait Winter's hair -- she's not happy about it.

MELODY

Hold *still*. Jesus! Don't be such a
 pussy.

Winter returns to *Major Dad* -- jots down a couple of notes. She flicks over to a web search for ORCHIDS -- grimaces as Melody pulls her hair again.

LATER

Winter, unsmiling, hands over five bucks.

Melody turns her back -- tucks the money into her bra.

42 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

French-plaited blonde hair -- a tender neck -- are framed by orchids. Emily?

HELEN (O.S.)

Winter!

Helen strolls in.

HELEN (CONT'D)

How lovely to see you again.

Winter beams.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I like your hair -- do you braid your own?

(fusses with a plant)

I still have to do Emily's for her. She refuses to learn.

WINTER

(of the plant)

That one's a phalaenopsis -- right?

HELEN

(delighted)

A moth orchid, yes. *Phalaenopsis Aphrodite...*

Emily arrives in the doorway -- she's carrying a mega-bottle of Coke and two glasses.

EMILY

Hey Winter, you coming up --

Emily sees Helen -- tries to hide the Coke.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh, hi Mum. I didn't realise you were home.

Helen raises her eyebrows -- evidently not. She thinks for a moment.

HELEN

Winter -- would you like to stay for dinner? We're having steak. Well, most of us are. You're not vegan as well are you?

43 INT. KITCHEN-DINING ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Blood oozes as a knife slices into a hefty chunk of flesh on Winter's plate -- she tucks in. Emily looks queasy.

EMILY

I could have sworn you said you
didn't eat meat.

WINTER

(chewing happily)
I don't very often.

EMILY

Didn't we have a whole conversation
about 'meat is murder'?

PAUL

Maybe this guy died in an accident.

At the head of the dining table, Emily's father PAUL DUNBAR (50s) winks at Winter. Emily rolls her eyes -- total dad joke.

HELEN

(pointed)
Maybe Winter's allowed to make an
exception now and again. You know,
like you do for cake.

PAUL

And bacon.

EMILY

That was ONE time!

HELEN

Tell that to the pig.

Emily glares at Helen.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Meat is murder.

Helen gets up.

Winter steals a glance at how the others are holding their cutlery -- corrects herself -- removes an elbow from the table.

PAUL

Jack!

Emily's brother JACK (20, nerdy-cute, self-effacing) strolls into the kitchen and dumps an indoor cricket bag on a barstool.

HELEN

Darling! I thought you'd be out all night -- did the tournament finish already?

JACK

It did for us. We got knocked out in the second round.

Jack clocks Winter.

JACK (CONT'D)

So I see you've cloned Ems. How long was I away?

Helen and Paul smile -- Emily is unamused.

Winter stares at Jack.

HELEN

This is Emily's friend Winter.

JACK

Winter -- hey.

Jack has a nice smile.

LATER

Emily and Winter load the dishwasher. They're alone in the kitchen.

WINTER

I didn't know you had a brother.

EMILY

All my life -- why, do you want him?

(checks out Winter's face)

Omigod, you don't LIKE him do you?

Winter squirms.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Holy shit -- you do! You want me to tell him?

WINTER

No!

(beat)

(MORE)

WINTER (CONT'D)
I guess he probably has a
girlfriend.

EMILY
(chokes)
Who, Jack? No way.

WINTER
He's not into girls?

EMILY
Oh no -- he is -- in theory.

Winter waits.

EMILY (CONT'D)
He's just too chickenshit to ever
talk to one, that's all.

A pause.

WINTER
He really isn't seeing anyone?

EMILY
(mock serious)
No, Winter -- he really is not
seeing anyone.

HELEN
(walking in)
Who isn't seeing anyone?

The girls hesitate -- but Emily can't resist.

EMILY
Jack.

HELEN
Oh!
(considers Winter)
I see.

EMILY
Winter thought he might have a
girlfriend.

HELEN
(staunch)
A lot of girls don't appreciate
Jack.

EMILY
Jack's *special*.

HELEN

That's right -- he is.

(beat)

A smart young woman will see that.

Winter doesn't know how to take this.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I'll finish up here -- you girls go
and talk to Jack. He goes back to
uni on Sunday.

44 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

A plush room -- designer sofas -- more expensive art on the
walls -- sculpture on the coffee table. Paul nurses an after-
dinner scotch and addresses Jack.

PAUL

You don't want to go to Italy in
their summer, everything's shut --
leave it till November and come
skiing with us next month.

EMILY

Oh no -- but Jack -- if you go then
you'll miss the gardens.

Jack and Emily *ugh* at each other.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Remember when Mum made us take that
bus from Rome to Tivoli? It was
like forty-five degrees.

(to Winter)

Can you imagine?

Winter tries to act like she can.

JACK

(mocking)

But Emily, the Villa d'Este is the
finest example of a Renaissance
garden in Europe.

HELEN

(entering)

Yes, it is -- and you should be
grateful you got to see it. Not
every kid gets to go to Europe, you
know.

EMILY
Just all the ones we know.

HELEN
What about you, Winter? You must
have been all over the place --
where was your last family holiday?

A beat.

WINTER
We don't really do that -- you know
-- with my parents travelling so
much. When they're not on
deployment the last thing they want
to do is go away.

The Dunbars nod sympathetically.

JACK
But -- like -- you've been out of
New Zealand though -- right?

WINTER
Oh -- yes, of course.

EMILY
So where's your favourite place?

WINTER
(thinks)
I guess -- I would have to say...

FLASHBACK TO:

45 INT. LOUNGE/RUBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dallas and Melody are streaming *Love Island USA* -- on the TV
screen, contestants cavort on a Big Island beach.

BACK TO:

46 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

WINTER
... Hawaii.

The Dunbars look pitying -- except Jack, who's thinking about
Winter in a bikini.

HELEN
Oh. Lovely.

EMILY

I hadn't really picked you as a beach babe.

WINTER

Oh -- I'm not.

(beat)

It's the gardens I love.

FLASHBACK TO:

47 INT. LOUNGE/RUBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

On the TV screen, *Love Island* contestants receive their orchid leis.

BACK TO:

48 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

WINTER

Orchids *everywhere*...

(watches Helen melt)

Amazing.

49 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Otis lies on his bed above the safe. He hears something -- lifts his head -- what was that?

50 EXT. AMITY CRESCENT - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Winter walks past Kurt's house on her way home from the Dunbars -- she's deep in thought -- ignoring the RAISED VOICES of a domestic dispute in a house somewhere up the street.

There is a distant THUD. CHINA BREAKS.

51 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

The DISTANT FIGHT continues. Otis relaxes -- same old same old.

52 I/E. HALLWAY/RUBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter walks in -- passes the lounge where Ruby and Dallas are watching TV -- heads for her room.

53 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Melody is already in residence.

MELODY
Where've you been?

WINTER
Out.

MELODY
Out with who?

WINTER
What's it to you?

Melody sizes Winter up.

MELODY
Does Emily Dunbar know where you
live?

Winter says nothing. Melody thinks.

MELODY (CONT'D)
What if she found out?

54 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Paul has nodded off on the sofa. Helen, Jack and Emily are clearing the coffee table.

JACK
So you finally brought home a
friend Mum likes --
congratulations.

EMILY
What did you think of her?

JACK
(shrugs)
She seemed cool.

EMILY
Yeah? You didn't think -- I don't
know -- sometimes I feel like
there's maybe something -- odd --
about her.

JACK
Like what?

EMILY
I don't know...

JACK
Is it maybe that she's not a bitch?
Because I can see how that might
throw you.

HELEN
She has such good manners. It's
from growing up in a military
family I guess.

Emily ignores Helen.

EMILY
(mischievous)
Would you go out with her?

JACK
I might -- but I'm pretty sure Mum
saw her first.
(beat)
Anyway, it'd be kind of weird don't
you think -- she's way too much
like you.

HELEN
Oh darling, no...

CUTAWAY TO:

55 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Winter practices Emily's up-do of the evening in the mirror.

BACK TO:

56 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

HELEN
... Winter is *nothing* like Emily.

Emily is stung.

On the sofa, Paul SNORES. Helen considers him with
resignation.

57 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Kurt is also SNORING. The room is dark. Otis begins to SNORE too. In bed beside Kurt, Dallas lies awake -- puts a hand to her belly.

58 INT. RUBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruby -- asleep -- is hooked up to a CPAP MACHINE. She sounds like Darth Vader.

59 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Winter lies in bed -- brain working overtime.

Across the room, Melody -- pretending to be asleep -- contentedly counts a stack of \$5 notes hidden in her pillowcase.

60 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - SUNDAY MORNING

Jack dumps his bags in the boot of a secondhand starter Mercedes -- joshes around with Paul in the driveway -- drives away.

61 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Helen -- happy in the moment -- deftly tends her orchids.

62 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter sits alone on Ruby's doorstep -- surveys the wasteland front garden. The other residents of the crescent are still mostly asleep. Somewhere nearby GLASS SMASHES -- VOICES are raised.

NEIGHBOUR (O.S.)

Fuck YOU!

In the distance a CAR ENGINE REVS and departs.

A flowering weed -- dead -- protrudes from Ruby's cracked path. Winter stares at it. Slowly her gaze shifts across the crescent to Kurt's house. Otis is watching her from the window.

63

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY - MONDAY

Class is about to begin. Winter slides into the desk beside Emily -- beams.

WINTER

Hey!

Winter is wearing her hair the same way Emily did at Friday night dinner -- Emily notes this.

EMILY

(cold)

Hey.

WINTER

Is something wrong?

EMILY

No...

(thinks)

Just -- I don't get how you can say you're a vegetarian and then like -- scoff half a cow.

Winter -- blindsided -- regroupes.

WINTER

I know... I'm sorry. I wanted your mum to like me.

EMILY

(bitter)

Well, mission accomplished. You can stop trying so hard.

A TEACHER starts to move through the class handing back assignments. The girls lower their voices.

WINTER

I know -- sometimes I do try too hard -- I'm sorry. It's just -- I guess mums make me nervous. Mine is so...

Winter looks traumatised.

EMILY

So -- what?

WINTER

She's just very -- particular, I guess. Very strict.

(MORE)

WINTER (CONT'D)

It's like whatever I do, it's never good enough.

(beat)

Sometimes I -- I don't even think she likes me.

Winter is describing exactly how Emily feels about Helen. Winter drops her voice again.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Sometimes -- she -- she can get so angry...

EMILY

Winter -- omigod -- does she...?

WINTER

It's not her fault -- it's the PTSD. They're treating her for it but --

Assignments land on the girls' desks.

EMILY

I'm so sorry...

WINTER

That's why I... well, it's true what I said -- I want to be vegetarian. But you see, the way I've been raised -- you eat what gets put on your plate --

EMILY

No, of course --

WINTER

-- and you better look like you enjoy it.

EMILY

Omigod. Fuck. Winter -- I'm sorry.

Emily doesn't know what else to say -- she wants to crawl under the desk. Her eyes fall on her assignment.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Omigod! Fuck!

WINTER

What is it?

64 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Amid the orchids, Emily thrusts her assignment at Helen.
Helen looks it over. Her eyebrows rise -- she beams at Emily.

HELEN
Darling! Your very first 'A'!

Emily beams back -- she knows!

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'm so proud of you. Well done.

Winter hangs back demurely.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What did you get, Winter?

WINTER
(hesitates)
A-plus.

A tiny pause.

HELEN
Well!

Helen looks over Emily's shoulder at Winter.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What *clever* girls you are.

65 EXT. KURT'S HOUSE - DAY - EVENING

In Kurt's window, Otis watches Winter walk home.

66 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Melody sits waiting on the top step of the porch. She holds
out her hand -- Winter puts \$5 in it -- walks on.

MELODY
I need a raise.

Winter stops.

WINTER
What *for*?

MELODY
Inflationary forces.

WINTER

I can't afford to pay you more.

MELODY

Nana said you get seventeen dollars a week.

WINTER

I need *some* of it.

MELODY

What for?

WINTER

I have to pay for stuff, you little shit.

MELODY

You've got rich friends. They can pay.

WINTER

I don't want them to think I don't have money.

MELODY

(grins)

They don't know you don't have money?

A second \$5 bill is placed in Melody's hand.

67 INT. TOUJOURS MACARONS/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY

Emily, Helen & Winter are chatting over vegan macarons and hot chocolates in the cafe.

HELEN

So what are your plans for the weekend, Winter?

WINTER

Oh -- nothing, really. My weekends are pretty quiet. You know. Stuck out on the base.

Emily looks at Helen -- Helen nods approval.

EMILY

Why don't you come over on Saturday night? It's Mum's birthday. We're having a party.

WINTER
 (to Helen)
 Really?

HELEN
 Absolutely. I'd love it if you
 came.

EMILY
 (teasing)
 Jack'll be there.

Winter blushes.

WINTER
 That'd be great.
 (beat)
 I'll just have to check when my
 last bus is.

Helen and Emily look at each other again.

HELEN
 You're welcome to stay over.

WINTER
 Oh! Well -- I don't want to be any
 trouble...

HELEN
 Don't be silly. It's no trouble at
 all --there are plenty of beds.
 (thinks)
 Should I call the people you stay
 with and clear it with them?

WINTER
 Oh no. They're totally fine about
 that sort of thing. I mean -- I'm
 over eighteen after all.

68 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark. FOUR AM on Winter's alarm clock. Melody tumbles in
 through the bedroom window -- lands heavily on Winter's bed.

Winter wakes up -- manages not to scream -- wtf?

They glare at each other in silence.

WINTER
 I need money.

MELODY

What for?

WINTER

I have to buy a present.

69 EXT. OP SHOP - DAY

Winter walks past an op shop -- eyes a preppy party dress in the window. The perfect outfit. Reluctantly she walks on.

70 INT. INDIE BOOKSHOP - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Winter browses the eclectic shelves of an indie bookshop. The elderly PROPRIETOR has his nose buried in a philosophy text.

Winter finds a Frida Kahlo display -- looks at a postcard print of Frida in her tropical garden -- it resonates.

Next to the postcards -- a notebook with the same print. Winter picks it up -- checks the price -- turns to take it to the counter. Behind her is the same print again -- near actual size -- on the cover of an expensive art book.

71 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - SATURDAY

Winter back-flops onto the Dunbars' guest bed. She's in *House & Garden* heaven.

She opens the door to the ensuite -- checks it really is there.

Winter opens the wardrobe -- if she had Emily's clothes, this is where they would go.

She surveys the room again -- goes to the window. It overlooks the conservatory -- Helen's orchids are visible through the glass roof.

72 INT. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

More orchids dominate a floral showpiece at the foot of the Dunbars' staircase.

Winter descends the stairs -- she's wearing the dress she saw in the op shop window.

She picks her way through aproned waitstaff doing their final prep -- rejects a champagne cocktail. She's holding something behind her back.

73 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Dunbars -- preloading -- are drinking their champagne straight.

HELEN
Winter! Don't you look lovely.

JACK
Let me get you a drink.

Emily slides a box in department store wrapping across the coffee table to Helen.

EMILY
Happy birthday.

HELEN
Darling, thank you. Should I open it now or put it on the gift table?

EMILY
Open it now!

Helen picks open the present -- an upmarket fragrance diffuser.

HELEN
(smiles brightly)
Air freshener. How lovely.

A moment's silence.

WINTER
(shy)
I got you something too.

She hands over the package she's been holding. It's in orchid gift-wrap.

HELEN
Oh isn't that sweet -- you didn't need to do that. What a lovely thought though.
(starts opening it)
And such special paper too.

It's the Frida Kahlo book.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Kahlo? I love her. Oh Winter, it's fabulous. How did you know?

WINTER

She was a gardener -- like you.

Helen and Winter share a moment. Emily watches them. Jack returns with another glass of champagne -- takes in the dynamic between the three.

HELEN

Well, you really shouldn't have.

FLASHBACK TO:

74 EXT. INDIE BOOKSHOP - DAY

The bookshop doorbell BINGS -- Winter exits -- the book is stuffed up her top.

BACK TO:

75 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Winter takes the glass of champagne -- smiles modestly.

WINTER

It was nothing.

HELEN

But thank you so much. I absolutely adore it.

Emily stares at Helen -- Winter -- the book. Winter is careful not to catch Emily's eye.

LATER

Emily's fragrance diffuser remains on the coffee table. PARTY GUESTS mingle on the other side of the room.

Emily walks by a heavily laden gift table -- sees Winter's book taking pride of place. She uplifts a cocktail from a passing waiter and downs it.

Winter stands alone -- studies the crowd -- tries not to look nervous. Waiter DAN (20s, cute) offers her a cocktail -- she looks at them wistfully.

WINTER

Oh -- no thanks -- I couldn't.

DAN

(joking)
They're free.

Winter reassesses -- they are? Dan twinkles at her -- flirty -
- offers the tray again. Winter takes one.

DAN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
It's all free -- everything on the
trays.

Winter stares at him -- seriously?

DAN (CONT'D)
I know, right?
(flirting harder)
Where are you from?

Jack arrives beside Winter.

JACK
Bored much?

He takes a glass -- Dan retreats. Winter -- surreptitiously
eyeing the departing Dan -- makes an effort to concentrate on
Jack.

WINTER
It's a great party.

JACK
(mock 1950s MC)
Why yes. Yes it is. If you're 103.

Winter smiles -- sips her cocktail. More canapés approach.

WAITRESS
Scallop?

76 INT. DOWNSTAIRS TOILET/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Bodies THUD against the wall. Dan is making out with a
blonde. It could be Winter. But no -- it's Emily.

77 INT. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A half-empty tray of champagne cocktails rests on a sideboard
beside the toilet door. Helen walks by -- frowns at the
abandoned tray -- tries the toilet door. It's locked. She
sighs -- heads for the stairs.

78 INT. DOWNSTAIRS TOILET/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Emily and Dan giggle -- do a line of coke.

79 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Helen chats to a group of comfortable-looking 40-somethings -- among them is CHLOE (42, fit), of whom there will be more later. As she speaks, Helen keeps half an eye on Winter and Jack, who are drifting towards the conservatory.

HELEN

... thank you, yes. Well, we always knew we wouldn't have to worry about Jack, didn't we?

Affirmations all around.

HELEN (CONT'D)

But -- I have to say -- I'm really pleased with the progress Emily's making this year. I mean, don't get me wrong, we all know how teenage girls can be --

More affirmations.

HELEN (CONT'D)

-- but I'm starting to think she's turning a corner. She's not letting herself be influenced by the wrong people so much.

(watching Winter)

She's hanging out with a much smarter crowd.

Behind Helen's back, Emily re-enters the party -- sniffs -- adjusts her skirt. Dan follows, tray held high.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I just feel like she's making better decisions, you know?

80 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter and Jack have made it into the conservatory. They're alone. There are fairy lights among the orchids -- through the glass, a sparkling winter night -- if Jack wanted to make a move, this would be the perfect spot. Winter watches Jack -- wonders how long she might have to wait.

JACK

Looks cold out there.

Winter nods -- the conservatory is almost uncomfortably warm. She looks out at the world beyond the glass.

JACK (CONT'D)
We might get a frost.

Winter nods again. Jack looks like he's feeling the heat.
There's a moment of silence.

Emily interrupts it.

EMILY
(to Winter)
There you are!
(grins at Jack)
What have you two been up to?

JACK
Just talking.

EMILY
I don't doubt that.
(to Winter)
Hey --

JACK
Are you *high*? At Mum's birthday party? Jesus. What the fuck is wrong with you?

EMILY
(to Winter)
-- you want to go to a real party after this?

WINTER
I -- I don't -- what?

JACK
(to Emily)
Where did you even get --

EMILY
I made a new friend.
(to Winter)
He's got more.

JACK
Oh you are so gross --

EMILY
(to Winter)
He's going to swing back and pick me up after they clear. You want to come?

JACK

No she doesn't, you freak.

Emily shrugs -- gives Winter a long look.

EMILY

Suit yourself.

She walks out. Winter stares after her. Jack shakes his head.

JACK

I'm sorry you had to see that.

81 I/E. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter -- still blown away by her room -- gets ready for bed.

A STONE hits her window.

Winter looks outside -- sees Emily and Dan below. Emily shivers -- hugs herself against the cold -- beckons.

Winter thinks -- shakes her head -- waves goodbye.

Emily scampers off. Dan locks eyes with Winter -- waits. Winter stays where she is. He nods -- saunters away.

Winter gets into bed and turns off the light.

Outside, BASS THUMPS -- a CAR ENGINE departs.

Winter lies awake in the dark. The Dunbar house is silent.

82 EXT. GARDEN/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Outside the conservatory, a water feature TRICKLES gently. The garden sparkles with frost.

83 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - NEXT MORNING

Morning light wakes Winter in her luxurious bed -- she reassures herself she isn't dreaming -- smiles. It's a beautiful day.

84 INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME TIME

Emily -- in the dregs of last night's makeup and most of last night's clothes -- is passed out on top of her bed. She stirs -- recoils from the sunlight.

85 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Jack prepares to drive back to uni. He glances up at Winter's window -- sees her looking down. Jack waves -- Winter waves back. He gets happily into his car -- he feels he's making progress.

86 INT. KITCHEN-DINING ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Emily -- rough -- slouches into the kitchen. The first thing she sees is the Kahlo book on display.

Helen and Winter -- impeccable -- are chatting over coffee and toast.

HELEN

... that's all sorted then! Oh, I'm so glad. Emily will love that.

EMILY

(bleary)
What will I love?

HELEN

Oh, hello darling -- you are up.
(looks closer)
Oh dear -- I did tell you to lay off the cocktails.

Emily -- still waiting for an answer -- considers the toast. She can't face it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Winter's going to come skiing with us next month. Isn't that great?

Winter beams at Emily. Emily doesn't smile back.

EMILY

The whole week?

HELEN

You won't have to put up with just me and Jack and Dad this year.

EMILY

(to Winter)
Do you ski?

WINTER
 (tentative)
 I haven't really done a lot -- at
 least -- you know -- not for years.

Emily stares.

HELEN
 That's alright -- if you don't like
 it, you can hang out with me. It'll
 be nice to have some intelligent
 company.
 (notices Emily's pallor)
 Darling? Are you okay?

87 INT. DOWNSTAIRS TOILET/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emily finishes throwing up in the downstairs loo -- sits back
 -- sees her fragrance diffuser on the vanity unit.

88 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Winter walks back to Ruby's house -- passes a different bus
 stop with the same ski holiday BILLBOARD as the one outside
 Toujours Macarons. She stops -- looks up the ski-field's
 website on her phone.

Her eyes widen -- a lift pass costs *how* much?

89 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - DAY

Winter walks into her room -- finds Melody crosslegged on her
 bed.

MELODY
 I want my fifty bucks back.

Winter puts her bag down.

WINTER
 Not yet.
 (beat)
 You need to lend me some more.

Melody stares at Winter - wtf?

WINTER (CONT'D)
 Seven hundred dollars more.

MELODY
 You're crazy.

WINTER

No -- I'm not. Think of it as a long term investment -- with interest.

MELODY

An investment in what?

WINTER

In me.

MELODY

Fuck off.

WINTER

I'm getting out of this shit hole. You see that, right?

MELODY

Bullshit.

WINTER

(triumphant)

Emily Dunbar's family want to take me skiing.

It works -- Melody is floored.

WINTER (CONT'D)

(muses)

Did you know the more shit you have, the more people give you?

MELODY

What do you need seven hundy from me for then?

WINTER

So it looks like I have shit.

Melody thinks about this.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Think of me as a start-up. This is your one chance to get in on the ground floor.

MELODY

(shakes her head)

I don't have access to that kind of cash.

(thinks for a while)

But I know somebody who does.

90 INT. DALLAS'S BEDROOM - DAY

The bedroom door opens to reveal Dallas checking her teeth in the mirror. She's bemused -- and a touch afraid -- to find Melody and Winter in her doorway.

91 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Winter -- prim -- flanked by Dallas and Melody -- sits in negotiation with Kurt. Otis keeps a watchful eye on them all.

KURT

Do I look like the fucken ASB to you?

WINTER

I'll pay you back. Plus interest.

KURT

Yeah? And how are you going to do that?

WINTER

You just have to wait till I get my first real job.

KURT

(to Dallas)

Has she been into the gear?

DALLAS

(considers)

I don't think so.

WINTER

Twenty per cent a year -- compounding.

Kurt sizes Winter up -- is he thinking about it?

KURT

No way.

(decides)

You want money from me -- you're going to have to earn it.

92 INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emily arrives to find Helen rummaging amid the mess in her overstuffed walk-in wardrobe.

EMILY
(suspicious)
What are you doing?

HELEN
I'm looking for your old ski suit.
I thought it might fit Winter --
she's not as big in the thighs as
you.

Emily eyes her reflection in the mirror -- tries not to get
distracted.

EMILY
Mum, about her coming...

Helen isn't listening.

EMILY (CONT'D)
The thing is -- I mean -- I don't
really know her that well...

Helen unearths the ski suit.

HELEN
That's why this trip will be so
nice. The two of you can bond.

EMILY
I don't even like get why she wants
to come -- I'm pretty sure she's
never skied in her life.

HELEN
Not everyone is handed your
privileges.

Emily rolls her eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Some kids actually have to try.

EMILY
I just think --

HELEN
Darling, there's no need to be
petty just because you don't fit
into your Moncler anymore.

EMILY
Jesus, Mum, IT'S NOT ABOUT THE SKI
SUIT!

Silence.

HELEN
 (conspiratorial)
 Has she said anything to you about Jack?

EMILY
 (not in the mood)
 What do you think she's going to say?

HELEN
 He told me he's thinking about asking her to the Aspirational fundraiser.

EMILY
 (bitter)
 Great!
 (realises)
 God, do we have to go to that again?

HELEN
 I've always said that when Jack finally falls for a girl, he'll fall hard. Won't it be funny if Winter turns out to be 'the one'? You girls could end up sisters.

Emily stares -- has Helen lost her mind? Helen clocks Emily's expression.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 You may look at me like that. But stranger things have happened.

Emily regroups.

EMILY
 I thought it was Jack's job to marry a rich wife.

HELEN
 Well, I'm quite sure Winter will be that one day. She's a highly motivated young woman.

93 INT. LOUNGE/SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

A comfortable middle-class family room. Four put together Year 13 girls are watching Netflix -- painting toenails -- gleefully preloading RTDs.

DOORBELL. Three of the girls, KRISTEN (18), ARIA (17) and MADISON (18), hold up banknotes. The fourth -- she is GEMMA (17) -- collects the cash.

94 I/E. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Gemma opens the door. Winter -- morose -- stands on the doorstep. Gemma exchanges the cash for a bag of crystal meth -- shuts the door in Winter's face.

Winter walks back out onto an affluent tree-lined street. She feels this may be her lowest ebb.

95 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Otis watches Winter hands the night's takings to Kurt.

Kurt counts the cash carefully -- makes an entry in his notebook.

96 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Otis lies on his bed.

KURT

Otis.

Kurt makes another hand signal - 'off'. Otis hops up obediently.

KURT (CONT'D)

Watch out.

Otis gets into his usual spot on the window seat -- stares out at the street. Kurt stows the cash and the notebook in the safe. Dallas -- preoccupied with her baby bump -- watches from the bed.

97 I/E. BENTLEY COUPE - DAY - DAYS FOLLOWING

A SALESMAN (30s, bespoke suit, dark glasses) waits behind the wheel of his parked Bentley. A hand TAPS his window. He winds it down -- hands an envelope to Winter -- receives one in return.

98 EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL GATES - DAY - DAYS FOLLOWING

Winter walks up to a Range Rover parked near the gates of a private primary school. In the driver's seat is Chloe from Helen's party -- over her shoulder we glimpse a child's booster seat. She and Winter pretend not to recognise each other -- they swap envelopes wordlessly.

99 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Kurt receives his money from Winter. Otis supervises. Kurt writes up the transaction in his notebook.

100 EXT. BANK ATM - DAY

Winter deposits her wages -- \$350 -- into her bank account. The screen shows her ACCOUNT BALANCE: \$687.74.

101 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Winter tries on Emily's ski suit -- checks her reflection. It's a perfect fit. She looks born for the slopes.

Melody wanders in.

MELODY

Omigod. You look like a fucking Power Ranger.

Winter ignores this.

MELODY (CONT'D)

When are you mighty morphin off?

WINTER

I have to be at their place by ten tomorrow.

MELODY

What, they're not picking you up at the base?

WINTER

I told them I had an appointment in town first thing.

Melody thinks about this -- are rich people really so stupid?

MELODY

Yeah, that reminds me -- Kurt wants to see you.

WINTER

In the morning? I can't.

MELODY

No, I mean he wants to see you now.

102 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter and Kurt are locked in debate -- Otis observes calmly.

KURT

Come on -- what's one more drop?

WINTER

I told you I don't have time! Helen wants to leave at ten -- she TOLD me not to be late.

KURT

Well we wouldn't want to upset Helen.

WINTER

Look, when I get back I'll do as many drops as you like --

KURT

That's just dandy -- I'll tell the Range Rover bitch she can have her puff in seven days -- she'll be fine with that I'm sure.

WINTER

Take it yourself!

KURT

You think I'm going to show her my face? The pigs ever bust her she'll serve me up on a plate.

WINTER

Oh but it's okay for her to rat me out to the cops?

KURT

She already knows you.

(beat)

Look -- take her the gear first thing -- you'll have plenty of time to get back before ten.

Winter considers.

KURT (CONT'D)

I'll advance you another hundy,
okay? You can afford a ski field
pie.

WINTER

Like you'd know -- have you ever
skied?

KURT

Christ's College team captain 1994.
(thinks)
I might be a little rusty.

DALLAS (O.S.)

Kurt?

Winter and Kurt turn to look. Dallas sways in the doorway --
hands, forearms and fluffy dressing gown slathered in blood.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I think there's something wrong.

103 EXT. KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An ambulance crew load Dallas into the truck -- Winter is
alongside. Kurt hangs back -- throws up into a bowl. Dallas
SOBS in pain.

LEAD PARAMEDIC

Dallas, honey, you need to tell me
what drugs you've already taken
today.

WINTER

She's clean.

The paramedic looks dubious.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Swear to god -- you can give her
whatever you've got.

SECOND CREW

Is anyone coming with her?

Dallas grabs Winter's hand.

DALLAS

She is.

Winter hesitates -- Dallas clings harder.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
 (to Winter)
 You're smart -- you'll know what to
 do.

Kurt waves from a few metres back -- spits up a bit more.

KURT
 I'll see you there babe.

104 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

Dallas -- pale -- hooked up to monitor and IV -- is off her
 face on opioids. Winter sits beside her -- checks her phone --
 the time -- where's Kurt?

DALLAS
 (slurring)
 Is he going to be alright?

WINTER
 Kurt?

DALLAS
 Jay.

WINTER
 Who the fuck's Jay?

DALLAS
 My little boy.
 (tries to pat abdomen)
 In here.

Winter doesn't know what to say. Dallas flops an arm towards
 her.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
 You hold my hand?

Winter takes Dallas's hand -- sits back in her chair -- eyes
 the curtain desperately -- where the FUCK is Kurt??

HOURS LATER

Winter is asleep in the chair -- head on Dallas's bed. She
 wakes slowly -- stiff -- tries to place where she is. Does
 so. *Shit!* She sees the time on the monitor screen: 08:45.

Winter's eyes widen. She disentangles herself from the
 sleeping Dallas -- starts running.

105 EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY - MORNING

Winter exits the hospital at full speed -- pulls up -- looks at the bus stop -- no bus. Looks at Hagley Park -- starts running across it. She's desperate -- feral -- nearing tears.

106 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

The Dunbar's auto gates open. Helen's Cayenne inches out -- Paul driving -- ski box on the roof -- back crammed with luggage.

107 I/E. HELEN'S CAYENNE - DAY - SAME TIME

Emily sits in the back seat -- AirPods in -- phone in hand. She scans the street as the Cayenne moves forward.

108 EXT. DUNBARS' STREET - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter -- laden with luggage -- struggles towards the Dunbar house. Parts of Emily's ski suit are sticking out of her bag. She's still in last night's clothes.

She sees the Cayenne.

It's not too late -- they'll see her -- they'll stop!

109 I/E. HELEN'S CAYENNE - DAY - SAME TIME

In the front, Helen fiddles with charging her phone -- Paul looks straight ahead. In the back, Emily spots Winter. She stiffens. Says nothing. Looks at her phone.

110 EXT. DUNBARS' STREET - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter stares in disbelief as the Cayenne drives away.

Maybe they'll turn around? She clings to her bag -- waits.

The Cayenne disappears around the corner.

111 I/E. HELEN'S CAYENNE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

An incoming call from Winter lights up Emily's phone -- it's on silent. Emily declines. Her screen shows 3 MISSED CALLS from Winter. She turns her MUSIC UP.

112 EXT. DUNBARS' STREET - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter -- alone on the street -- lets her bag fall -- devastated.

113 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - DAY

Winter and Melody sit on their respective beds in stunned reflection.

MELODY

Arseholes.

Winter doesn't disagree.

114 VARIOUS SCENES - DAY - WEEK FOLLOWING

Winter -- grim -- repeats her meth delivery round day after day -- making drops to the Bentley guy -- Chloe in her Range Rover -- the houses of Gemma and her friends.

Each day -- she passes the Dunbars' house. Inside, a HOUSECLEANER (50s) dusts -- ministers to Helen's orchids -- safe and warm in the conservatory.

Each day -- Winter hands Kurt his cash. Each day -- she sits in silence with Dallas -- still pregnant and on bed rest.

Each day -- the weather is worse -- Winter's uptown clients more strung out. The Bentley guy is losing the plot -- Chloe is getting thinner. Only Gemma and her friends look like they're keeping their shit together.

115 EXT. TOUJOURS MACARONS/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY - 8 DAYS LATER

Foul weather pelts the cafe window in front of the macaron display.

116 INT. TOUJOURS MACARONS/SHOPPING VILLAGE - DAY - SAME TIME

Inside it's toasty. Helen and Emily sit chatting -- they're relaxed. Emily sports a ski tan.

A presence looms over their table.

HELEN

(tightly)

Winter -- how nice to see you.

Emily stiffens -- uh-oh.

Winter is rain-lashed -- borderline scary.

HELEN (CONT'D)

We missed you in Wanaka. Such a shame you weren't able to come -- and so very last minute.

Winter -- processing -- looks from Helen to Emily.

WINTER

You didn't get my messages?

EMILY

Yeah um... I've been having some problems with my phone actually... What are you doing in this part of town in the holidays?

Winter stares hard at Emily -- weighs options -- reaches her decision.

WINTER

Buying macarons.

Winter's body language changes -- she looks suddenly vulnerable.

WINTER (CONT'D)

For my mother.

EMILY

Your mum's in town?

WINTER

She's in hospital. She got wounded.

HELEN

Oh Winter!

WINTER

They med-evac'ed her home the morning we were supposed to leave. That's why I had to cancel.

Emily listens incredulously -- wtf?

WINTER (CONT'D)

I had no idea she was coming -- they didn't tell me anything about it until after her plane had landed. I'm so sorry I let you down.

HELEN

God, Winter, no -- that's awful!
How is she?

WINTER

(bravely)

She's doing okay. The surgeons say
she'll be fine -- it'll just take a
little time.

HELEN

If there's *anything* we can do...

WINTER

Thanks.

(beat)

I'd better get going -- I don't
want to miss the bus back to the
base.

EMILY

What about the macarons?

WINTER

Excuse me?

EMILY

I thought you were taking them to
your mum -- you know -- in the
hospital.

WINTER

Oh I am -- but they won't let me in
to see her again till tonight.

(shaky)

I don't want to just hang around
town -- I'm not really in the mood
for the mall -- you know?

HELEN

Of course you're not. But you can't
go all the way back to Burnham --
come home with us!

WINTER

Oh! No -- I don't want to be any
trouble --

HELEN

Don't be silly, it's no trouble at
all. Is it, Ems?

Emily has no words.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You're welcome to stay with us
anytime you like -- you know, until
your mum gets out of hospital --
save you travelling up and down.

Emily and Winter stare at each other in barely concealed
hatred. First blood to Winter. The game is on.

117 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Winter lies on her bed -- stares contentedly at her phone
screen. It shows an incoming call.

MELODY

Who is it?

WINTER

Emily Dunbar's mother.

MELODY

You're not going to answer it?

WINTER

(happily)

I can't right now -- I'm in
intensive care.

118 INT. KITCHEN-DINING ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Helen and Emily are mid-argument -- Helen loads the
dishwasher while Emily fumes on a barstool.

HELEN

So what if I asked her to stay?
Winter's your friend isn't she?

EMILY

NOT REALLY!

HELEN

Did you girls have a fight?

EMILY

She copies everything I do. It
gives me the creeps. And she's
always HERE! In our house!

HELEN

Oh come on darling, you hadn't seen
her for over a week.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

And I think you're being a little silly -- why would Winter copy you?

EMILY

You feed her, you fuss over her, you give her my clothes -- you act like she's part of the family and she's NOT!

HELEN

Darling, for god's sake, her mother's in hospital --

EMILY

IS she? Is she even in town?

HELEN

Why on *earth* would anyone lie about that?

EMILY

So you'd feel sorry for her! Can't you SEE how she's trying to worm her way into our life?

HELEN

Oh don't be such a drama queen. Given how *dreadful* our life is according to you, I'm surprised you think she'd bother.

EMILY

Why didn't she tell me about her mother the morning we left? Why didn't she SAY she wasn't coming to Wanaka --

HELEN

(puzzled)

That is what she said. Isn't it?

EMILY

(recovering)

Yes -- but I mean -- she didn't say it was because her mother was hurt. She never mentioned anything about that until we saw her today. Don't you think that's strange?

HELEN

You didn't get the rest of her messages, remember?

(realising)

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

Emily -- was that not true? Were you lying to Winter?

EMILY

No -- of course not -- I just --

HELEN

(reproving)
You just what?

EMILY

Why can you NEVER take my side?

HELEN

Because you always *insist* on choosing the wrong one.

119 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Kurt and Winter are also locked in debate -- Winter brandishes a fistful of cash.

WINTER

What's the big deal? All I'm asking for is a point.

KURT

I don't sell meth to kids.

WINTER

Yes you do.

KURT

Well I don't sell to kids I live across the street from.

WINTER

What about Dallas?

Kurt reflects -- an uncomfortable process.

KURT

I thought you were the girl who was getting out of here.

WINTER

I am that girl. I am getting out. I just need one point bag to help me.

KURT

I know you think that kid. They all do. But the puff only takes you one way.

Kurt turns both thumbs down -- then points them in the direction of Ruby's house.

120 I/E. DALLAS'S BEDROOM - DAY

Through the bedroom window we see Winter at Dallas's bedside. She gazes pleadingly at Dallas.

DALLAS
Nuh-uh. I'm clean -- you know that.

WINTER
But you can get it from Kurt.

DALLAS
No way. I'm not speaking to that
arsehole.
(sniffs)
Besides -- I swore on Jay's head
I'd never touch the stuff again.

WINTER
Okay...
(thinks)
Okay -- so you don't have to touch
it. Just tell me where it is.

DALLAS
Are you high?

WINTER
You know where he keeps it, right?

DALLAS
You're talking crazy.
(beat)
I can't stop you picking up the
pipe -- but I ain't gonna help you
fill it.

Dallas sits up slightly -- slurps Red Bull through a straw.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
Don't you be like me. You're too
smart to go that way.

Winter thinks again.

WINTER
You know, you're right. I am too
smart.

This confuses Dallas.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 I haven't been telling the truth.
 It's not Kurt's meth I want. It's
 his money.

This sinks in.

DALLAS
 You want to rip off Kurt?

WINTER
 Make him pay.
 (nods slowly)
 You want to help me?

Dallas's eyes widen -- and light up.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 All you have to do is tell me how.

121 INT. BEDROOM/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Otis lies on his bed above the safe -- his eyes are fixed on Winter.

Winter gathers her courage -- moves slowly -- deliberately.

WINTER
 Otis --

She makes Kurt's 'off' gesture. Otis's ears go up -- he stares harder at Winter.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 (reproving)
 Otis!

She gestures again. Otis obeys.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 (without thinking)
 Good *boy!*

Otis stiffens -- stares suspiciously -- these are not words he's heard before.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 I mean -- Otis -- WATCH OUT!

Otis gives her a hard stare -- but slopes off to look out the window.

Winter uncovers the safe -- opens it -- takes stock of the contents. Under Kurt's notebook is most of a kilo of crystal meth, a box of the point bags Winter has been delivering and \$100k in cash.

Winter ignores the kilo and the cash -- selects a single point bag -- stashes it in her bra. She looks at Kurt's stash again. SO. MUCH. CASH. Winter's hand moves towards a bundle of notes --

A WARNING GROWL. Winter's head snaps round. Otis sits in the window glaring at her. She takes the hint -- leaves the money -- puts the stash back under his bed. Otis doesn't take his eyes off the process. Winter rises carefully.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Otis --

She makes Kurt's 'guard' gesture -- backs slowly towards the door. Otis -- not without suspicion -- settles back on his bed.

WINTER (CONT'D)

(automatically)

Good dog.

Otis erupts from the bed -- goes for Winter -- she just manages to slam the door in his face and escape.

122 EXT. KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Winter scurries out of Kurt's back door -- makes it onto the street -- regathers her dignity.

WHUMP. Otis bashes the window. BARKS.

Winter jumps -- checks -- sees he can't get out. Trying to look staunch, she crosses back to Ruby's.

123 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter unpacks her overnight bag -- sets her things in the guest suite wardrobe. She gets out the stolen bag of meth -- triumphant -- holds the crystals to the light.

124 INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - DAY

In Emily's wardrobe, the Dunbars' housecleaner dangles the point bag between thumb and forefinger -- stares at it with a mix of horror and delight.

We see she's found the bag amid the clothes on Emily's floor.

125 INT. LIVING AREA/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

The point bag rests in the centre of the Dunbars' coffee table -- the Kahlo book can be glimpsed to one side.

EMILY

I TOLD YOU it's not MINE!

Emily is at the centre of a family intervention -- mobile phones in a vintage punchbowl. Jack and Paul look nervous.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

Omigod is this why you came back from uni?

Jack's discomfort increases.

JACK

You need help Ems --

HELEN

(evenly)

If the drugs aren't yours, how did they get in your room?

Emily thinks hard -- can find no answer to this.

PAUL

The first step towards recovering from addiction is to admit you have a problem.

EMILY

I DON'T have a problem!! Or an addiction!

PAUL

Ems, it's okay --

HELEN

Actually, Paul, it's not okay.

(to Emily)

And darling, I believe you -- I don't think you're an addict at all.

Emily stares at Helen -- really?

HELEN (CONT'D)

Not yet. I'd have more sympathy for you if you were.

Emily *wtf*s.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I think you're just a deeply self-involved, *reckless* young woman who doesn't care about the danger she brings to herself or her family or *anyone else*, and who refuses to learn that her actions have consequences.

Emily is floored.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Which is why your father and I --

EMILY

Wait a minute -- back up -- what do you mean '*anyone else*'? What danger?

HELEN

(waves point bag)

For god's sake Emily, you brought hard drugs into our home! Do you even know what's in this!?

EMILY

Do YOU?

HELEN

As a matter of fact, yes I do. Your father didn't believe it was meth. So I had it tested.

JACK

Omigod Mum...

HELEN

And Winter told me --

EMILY

WINTER!!? Omigod -- you've got to be fucking kidding me --

PAUL

Emily! Please!

HELEN

Winter told me she saw you sneaking out of the house in the middle of the night with some strange boy she thought was on drugs -- and not only that -- but you tried to make her go with you!

EMILY

Omigod -- she *actually* said that to you?

JACK

Don't shoot the messenger Ems.

Brother and sister stare at each other.

JACK (CONT'D)

We both know it's true.

Emily looks around -- Paul refuses to meet her eyes -- betrayal on every side.

HELEN

Which is why -- as I was saying -- your father and I have decided --
 (pushes printed out
 brochure at Emily)
 -- you'll finish the year here at St Jude's.

EMILY

I'll WHAT?
 (rifles pages)
 Omigod what is this -- some kind of Christian boot camp? No way -- you can't do this -- omigod -- Mum!
 It's my FINAL YEAR --

HELEN

Yes, darling, it is. This is your very last chance to learn to make better decisions.

126 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Winter is engrossed in her laptop.

MELODY

Not staying at the Dunbars' tonight?

WINTER
 (contentedly)
 I'm giving Helen and Paul a couple
 of days.

MELODY
 How's your mum doing?

WINTER
 She's out of the ICU.

We see Winter is streaming *Grey's Anatomy*.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 But she's about to develop
 complications.

127 I/E. HELEN'S CAYENNE - DAY

Helen's Cayenne departs the grounds of a gated boarding school -- it's St Jude's. Paul is driving. He's uncertain -- are they doing the right thing?

He sneaks a glance in the rear view mirror -- another sidelong at Helen.

Helen -- steely -- stares straight ahead.

128 INT. DORMITORY/ST JUDE'S - DAY

A barracks-like dorm room -- empty -- bleak -- squeaky clean -- overlooking the route of the departing Cayenne.

Emily -- teary -- clutching a gym bag -- arrives in the doorway. We see there's no actual door. A MATRON (50s, teen-weary) stands behind her -- holds out her hand. Emily surrenders her phone. She takes in her new home in disbelief.

129 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

In the Dunbars' guest suite Winter does the same. She flops back on the bed -- bliss.

130 INT. DORMITORY/ST JUDE'S - DAY

Emily opens her bedside locker. There's a bible inside. She unpacks what little she's been allowed to bring with her -- surveys the shapeless grey PE uniform waiting for her on the bed.

131 INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter heads out of the guest room -- almost bumps into Jack loitering by the door.

JACK
Winter!

Winter waits -- yes?

JACK (CONT'D)
I was wondering...

Yes?

JACK (CONT'D)
Mum's got this charity gala bash coming up -- I was wondering if maybe you might like to come.

Winter waits again -- will he spit it out?

JACK (CONT'D)
You know -- like -- with me.

Winter smiles -- sweetly shy -- nods.

They gaze at each other. Winter hopes Jack might kiss her. Jack can't find the courage. They share a moment of which St Jude's would approve.

132 INT. DORMITORY/ST JUDE'S - NIGHT

Emily -- in hideous uniform -- flicks idly through the bible --
-- OMGs at its contents.

She looks up -- curious -- as her dorm mates troop in -- a tight posse of similarly aged girls fresh from the volleyball court. They're too involved with each other to notice her at first.

Their leader arrives at the bed next to Emily's -- smiles in welcome. We see the girls are Gemma and her meth-buying friends.

133 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE CHANGING ROOMS - DAY

A plush, snooty space. Helen waits in a velvet armchair -- a uniformed SALES ASSISTANT hovers.

Winter exits the cubicle in a Valentino-esque gown. Helen's face lights up -- Winter looks stunning.

134 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE COUNTER - DAY

The sales assistant rings up the dress -- it's \$695. Winter pays with her debit card.

135 EXT. PINE FOREST - DAY

A foul winter day. Emily -- grim -- hacks pine branches with an axe. She, Gemma and other girls are being forced to construct bivouacs. An OUTDOOR EDUCATION TEACHER supervises, stopwatch in hand. Nobody is having fun.

136 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Tucked up safe and warm among the orchids, Helen and Winter share coffee and macarons. They're having a ball.

137 EXT. PINE FOREST - DAY - DAYS FOLLOWING

Rain lashes the forest. Emily slogs her way around a gruelling cross-country course -- other running girls can be glimpsed through the trees.

A stick emerges from a bivouac -- ankle-taps Emily. She stumbles. An arm pulls her inside.

138 INT. PINE BIVOUAC - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Inside the bivouac, Gemma, Madison, Aria and Kristin sit sharing a pipe. They offer it up to Emily.

She hesitates -- she's never done meth before -- doesn't really want to now -- but wtf? She's already doing the time -- might as well try the crime.

Gemma shows her how to take a puff. Emily eye's widen -- WOW.

139 EXT. PINE FOREST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emily attacks the remainder of the cross-country course. She feels *GRRREAT!* Gemma comes up beside her -- they sprint for the finish line.

140 INT. GALA VENUE - NIGHT

Winter -- resplendent in gown -- walks into the Aspirational charity gala.

Jack hovers beside her -- unsure what to do with his hands. She takes in the scene -- a stuffy, conservative crowd -- most of them over 60.

GFX on the big screen promote the charity:

'ASPIRSATIONAL
BECAUSE EVERY KID SHOULD REACH FOR THE STARS!
Teaching disadvantaged youth to break out of the poverty
cycle.'

There's a picture of kids who look like Melody being mentored by people who look like Helen.

The irony is not lost on Winter. She accepts a glass of champagne from a passing tray.

Across the floor, Helen schmoozes potential donors.

A FLASHBULB POPS. A PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER is doing the rounds for the society page -- she motions Winter and Jack closer together -- Jack takes the opportunity to put his arm around Winter. They smile. The FLASHBULB POPS again.

Helen looks over -- smiles -- it's all going wonderfully to plan.

141 INT. DINING HALL/ST JUDE'S - DAY - MORNING

Over breakfast at St Jude's, Emily picks up the only entertainment available -- the morning paper -- and flicks through it with minimal interest.

EMILY
You've got to be fucken kidding me.

GEMMA
What?

EMILY
What a pair of dicks.

GEMMA
(motioning for the paper)
Who are?

EMILY
(handing it over)
My brother and the psycho little
bitch my mother's moved into the
house.

Gemma studies the photograph of Winter and Jack.

GEMMA
That's her?

EMILY
(bitterly)
That's my best friend Winter.

GEMMA
(starts to laugh)
Omigod...

EMILY
What?

GEMMA
(mock serious)
Emily babe -- I think there's
something you should know.

142 INT. DORM CORRIDOR/ST JUDE'S - NIGHT

Kristen stands sentry outside the dorm room doorway.

143 INT. DORMITORY/ST JUDE'S - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Emily, Madison, Aria and Gemma sit on Gemma's bed. Gemma -- ceremonious -- opens her bible -- reveals a contraband burner phone. The girls watch her type in a number -- it starts to RING.

144 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A CHEERY RINGTONE. Kurt -- watching TV on the sofa -- doesn't recognise the number. He picks up.

KURT
Yuh-lo?

145 I/E. BENTLEY COUPE - DAY

Winter -- in school uniform -- delivers the salesman's meth through the window of the parked car.

146 EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Winter approaches Chloe's Range Rover. Chloe -- gaunt -- receives her envelope.

147 EXT. GEMMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Winter walks past Gemma's house -- no drop there today. She continues along the street.

148 EXT. NEIGHBOURING STREET - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Winter approaches an overgrown property. She checks the mailbox -- takes out an envelope -- swaps it for another -- walks on out of view.

Gemma and Emily emerge from the shrubbery -- retrieve the envelope -- open it to reveal a bag of meth. They regard it with glee.

149 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Winter crosses the crescent from Kurt's place to Ruby's -- walks inside.

150 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Winter changes out of school uniform -- checks her makeup.

151 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Winter -- immaculate -- exits the house. She heads up the crescent towards the Dunbars'.

152 I/E. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Helen welcomes Winter inside. Jack is coming down the stairs behind her -- he smiles shyly.

153 I/E. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Melody opens Ruby's front door. Emily and Gemma stand on the doorstep.

154 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Helen, Winter and Jack are sharing a civilised afternoon tea amid the orchids.

The door flies open.

EMILY
 (points at Winter)
 It was her!

Winter freezes. Jack and Helen stare at Emily.

HELEN
 What are you doing here? Emily? Why
 aren't you at St Jude's?

Emily deflates a little -- she'd forgotten about that.

EMILY
 She's a drug dealer! She must have
 planted that meth in my room.

HELEN
 Don't be ridiculous -- what on
 earth is wrong with you?

WINTER
 (thinks fast)
 Emily -- are you high?

Emily deflates slightly more.

HELEN
 (disgusted)
 Oh my god.

FLASHBACK TO:

155 EXT. OVERGROWN HOUSE - DAY - EARLIER

In the bushes, Gemma and Emily smoke the meth Winter just
 delivered -- it'd be a shame to waste it, after all.

BACK TO:

156 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - PRESENT

Emily strives to regain the high ground.

EMILY
 Her mother's not in hospital -- she
 doesn't live on an army base -- she
 doesn't even have parents! She's in
 foster care. She lives in that
 shitty crescent around the corner --
 the one you won't drive round.

Helen and Jack look at Winter -- could this be true?

EMILY (CONT'D)
 (triumphant)
 She's been lying to us about
 EVERYTHING.

HELEN
 Emily, please.

They wait. Winter hangs her head.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 Winter?

Silence.

WINTER
 It's true. I live in a foster home
 in Amity Crescent. And I don't have
 parents -- at least, not ones you'd
 want to know.

Helen and Jack take this in.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 I've never met my dad -- he's in
 Australia I think.
 (beat)
 My mum's in the North Island. In
 jail. I haven't seen her since I
 was a little kid.

HELEN
 Why didn't you tell us?

WINTER
 (tearing up)
 I was ashamed. I -- I didn't think
 you'd want to know somebody like
 me.

HELEN
 Oh Winter...

JACK
 So you just -- lied? All this time?

WINTER
 You have *so much*. I just wanted a
 little. To be -- to be part of a
real family. You know?
 (looks at Emily)
 With a mum who loves me.
 (to Helen)
 (MORE)

WINTER (CONT'D)
 So I -- I made one up. I'm so
 sorry...

Jack and Helen are moved. Emily stares in disbelief.

EMILY
 YOU PUT METH IN MY ROOM!

WINTER
 (quickly, to Helen)
 No.
 (to Emily)
 I'm sorry -- but you know I didn't
 do that.

EMILY
 OmiGOD!

WINTER
 I get that you're going through a
 really hard time --

EMILY
 (to Helen)
 She's lying again!

HELEN
 (stern)
 Emily --

EMILY
 Look!
 (brandishes Gemma's phone)
 This is a PICTURE of her delivering
 meth today!

Helen -- reluctant -- looks at the photo on the screen. It shows Winter placing the envelope of meth in the mailbox of the overgrown house.

HELEN
 Winter?

Emily thrusts the phone screen in Winter's face.

WINTER
 (pitying)
 Delivering *meth*? Delivering meth to
 who?

EMILY
 My friend!

Helen and Winter exchange a look.

JACK
Jesus Ems. Nice.

EMILY
No -- not like that! It was a trap!

Helen and Winter look at each other again.

WINTER
(gently)
That's a photograph of me
delivering a birthday card from my
foster mum.

Emily thrusts the phone forward again -- she has a shot of
the envelope's contents.

EMILY
It's a bag of meth!

WINTER
Emily -- I'm really sorry -- you
know that's not the same envelope.

Helen stares witheringly at Emily.

EMILY
YES IT IS!!
(to Helen)
She SOLD US meth!

A beat.

WINTER
Okay... Emily? If I 'sold you' meth
-- where is that meth now?

Emily opens her mouth -- closes it. Jack and Helen are
staring at her in disgust.

WINTER (CONT'D)
(quietly)
It's true I've been around drugs in
my life -- I've had no choice about
that. And I've seen what meth does.
That's why I'll never touch it.
(to Emily)
Ems -- you need help -- you really
do.

157 INT. SECURE WING/ST JUDE'S - NIGHT

A robust institutional DOOR SHUTS on Emily alone in a single room -- the LOCK TURNS. The matron -- dangling Gemma's phone between thumb and forefinger -- walks away.

158 INT. KITCHEN/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT

Helen makes dinner -- takes a swig of wine -- tries to concentrate on the recipe in front of her. Winter sits across the kitchen counter -- watches Helen's face.

WINTER

Don't be too hard on her. It's the drugs -- not Emily.

HELEN

Sometimes I think I haven't been hard enough. Maybe this is all my fault. Maybe it wouldn't be happening if I'd set clearer boundaries...

WINTER

You're a good mother.
(shyly)
The best.

HELEN

Thank you, Winter.

She reaches out -- strokes Winter's cheek -- tucks back Winter's hair the way Winter saw her do for Emily. Winter leans into the touch.

HELEN (CONT'D)

It means a lot to me to hear somebody say that.

They share a moment.

WINTER

Thanks for letting me stay here.

HELEN

What kind of person would I be?

She chops a carrot.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Knowing what you've told me? I wouldn't be able to sleep.

(pause)

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)
Every young person has the right to
feel safe in their own home.

WINTER
(tentative)
I'm sorry I lied. I wish I'd just
told you the truth from the start.

HELEN
I wish you had too.
(looks up)
But I'm glad you've told me now.

A companionable silence.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Winter -- I know I can't replace
what's been taken from you -- your
mum and dad -- your *childhood*...

Winter waits.

HELEN (CONT'D)
But I hope -- maybe you can start
to think of *us* as family.

Winter's eyes widen.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Anytime you need it, there's a safe
place for you here.

Winter is hanging off every word.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Whatever happens from here on in, I
promise you -- the Dunbars will
always want to know you.

159 INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Jack and Winter walk up the stairs together -- pause between
their respective rooms.

JACK
That was quite a scene today, huh?

Winter channels bravely handled trauma.

JACK (CONT'D)
I hope you know -- I would have
still liked you.
(beat)
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
I mean -- I do -- like you -- now --
still.

Winter nods. Is he EVER going to kiss her? Slowly, Jack moves to do so.

JACK (CONT'D)
Is this okay?

WINTER
Uh-huh.

JACK
Are you sure?

Winter wills him to get on with it.

WINTER
(demure)
I'm sure.

He kisses her gently. Winter tries her best to feel something. She does not. Jack pulls back.

JACK
(pleased with himself)
Well -- goodnight.

WINTER
(sweet still)
Goodnight.

160 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Darkness. Winter is asleep.

A STONE TAPS the window.

161 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Waiter Dan from Helen's party looks up at Winter's room.

Her bedroom light comes on.

He grins.

162 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Winter and Dan -- half-naked -- are having wild sex on the Dunbar's guest bed.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS. Winter's eyes snap open. She was dreaming. She clutches the duvet -- checks she's alone in the bed. A gentle SNORE can be heard through the wall.

163 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Winter walks down the crescent towards Ruby's. She's seeing the neighbourhood and the house with new eyes -- the nostalgia of the soon-to-depart.

She walks up Ruby's path -- enters the house.

164 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - DAY

Winter is packing up the last of her clothes. She surveys the broken window frame -- pushes it back and forth as she did the day she arrived.

Melody slumps in -- sees Winter is packing -- flops on the bed.

Silence.

MELODY
(matter-of-fact)
Dallas had the baby last night.

Winter stops.

WINTER
Yeah?
(beat)
Is she alright?

MELODY
They took him to hospital. She's still there.

WINTER
Is he -- ?

MELODY
Normal?
(shrugs)
Hard to say.

Winter -- thoughtful -- finishes packing.

MELODY (CONT'D)
Going somewhere?

WINTER
Working on it.
(zips bag)
Here.

She hands Melody ten bucks.

MELODY
What's this for?

WINTER
Severance pay.

Melody doesn't understand.

WINTER (CONT'D)
I don't need you to lie for me
anymore. They know everything.

This is not news to Melody.

MELODY
(considering)
They still want to have you round?

Winter nods. Silence.

MELODY (CONT'D)
I guess maybe they're not as dumb
as we thought.

Winter almost smiles. She picks up her bag.

MELODY (CONT'D)
Will you go see Dallas?

WINTER
(guilty shrug)
I have to meet Jack.

She heads for the door.

MELODY
It wasn't me who told them.

WINTER
It doesn't matter now.

MELODY

Even so. It wasn't me.

They share a look. Winter walks out. Melody watches her go -- surveys the empty bedroom.

165 INT. KITCHEN/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Amid the mess in the kitchen Ruby sits reading a gossip mag and smoking a joint. Winter -- bag over her shoulder -- passes the door.

RUBY

Where are you going?

WINTER

What do you care?

Ruby thinks.

RUBY

Those girls who came looking for you yesterday -- are they going to be trouble for me?

Winter shakes her head slowly.

Ruby loses interest. Winter continues on her way.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(calls after her)

Anyone asks, you still live here!

166 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Winter arrives at the Dunbar's gate. She enters the security code. The gate opens for her.

167 INT. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The front door is unlocked. Winter walks into the house -- nobody seems to be home. She puts down her bag.

WINTER

(calls)

Helen -- ?

She strolls through to --

168 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Winter stops short.

Enthroned amongst the orchids is Kurt. Otis sits at his feet -
- emits a LOW GROWL.

KURT

You're not such a smart girl after
all.

(beat)

Did you think I wouldn't count?

WINTER

How did you get in here?

KURT

It wasn't that hard. Two little
meth-birds gave me the gate code --
they agreed you and I should have a
chat.

WINTER

What do you want?

KURT

You know, I haven't decided yet.

He fingers an orchid. Winter wants to tell him not to touch --
forces herself to hold it in.

KURT (CONT'D)

Your friends have a lot of nice
stuff.

WINTER

I'll pay you the money.

KURT

You'll pay me the money? That's
very good of you. How much are you
going to pay me, Winter?

WINTER

(hopeful)

Thirty bucks.

Kurt laughs.

KURT

(to Otis)

That's not very generous, is it,
mate?

Otis GROWLS at Winter again.

KURT (CONT'D)
 (to Winter)
 I think we're past that -- don't
 you?

WINTER
 Sixty?

Kurt smiles -- shakes his head.

WINTER (CONT'D)
 A hundred?

KURT
 (to Otis)
 I don't think she's getting this.

WINTER
 Come ON! It was ONE little point
 bag of meth! ONE!! We both know a
 point isn't worth more than thirty
 bucks.

Kurt smiles again.

KURT
 The question, Winter, is not what a
 missing point bag of meth is worth
 to me. The question is -- what it's
 worth to you?

WINTER
 (understanding)
 I don't understand.

KURT
 What did you do with that one
 little bag, Winter? Because when I
 was chatting to our good customer
 Gemma yesterday she told me that
 very amount was found here in this
 house.
 (feigns astonishment)
 In your friend Emily's bedroom!
 Isn't that strange?

He has her -- they both see it.

KURT (CONT'D)
 You know, I couldn't help but
 notice Emily's mummy and daddy have
 some very nice art on the walls.
 (MORE)

KURT (CONT'D)
I particularly like that McCahon in
the hallway.

Winter stares -- wtf does he know about McCahon?

KURT (CONT'D)
I have some friends who are
connoisseurs. I'm thinking I'd like
to bring them over sometime -- show
them round the whole collection.

WINTER
What do you need me for? You
already know how to get in.

KURT
(nods)
I've got you in more of a
scheduling role. My friends are --
reclusive -- let's say. They'd
prefer a private viewing.

Winter digests this.

KURT (CONT'D)
There's also the small matter of
the burglar alarm code.
(off Winter's reaction)
Meth chicks -- what can you do?
They never remember anything
useful.

WINTER
(reluctant)
When?

KURT
No rush. Check the social calendar -
- let us know. We'll need a couple
of hours.

169 EXT. PINE FOREST - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

The St Jude's girls slog through cross-country course mud.

In a secluded corner of the forest, Gemma and Aria hold back
a loose sheet of wire mesh from the perimeter fence. Emily
crawls out through the gap. Aria hands her a different burner
phone. Emily -- steely -- sprints away.

Gemma and the crew look on as she disappears -- go girl.

170 I/E. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - HOURS LATER

Melody answers the POUNDING on Ruby's front door -- it's Emily. She's out of breath and steaming mad.

MELODY
She's not here.

Dallas -- with the baby -- is in the hallway behind Melody. She looks worried.

EMILY
WHERE IS SHE?

MELODY
Fucked if I know. Your place?

171 EXT. AMITY CRESCENT - DAY

Emily hurtles for home.

172 INT. CONCERT HALL FOYER - DAY

Winter, Helen and Jack are among a CROWD OF CONCERT-GOERS enjoying a pre-recital high tea. Winter's phone starts to RING. Her screen shows MELODY'S NUMBER.

173 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Emily inputs the gate code -- it opens. She strides towards the Dunbars' front door. As usual, it's unlocked -- she flings it wide.

174 INT. ENTRANCE/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Emily bursts into the hallway -- brandishes Gemma's phone.

EMILY
I'VE GOT PROOF she deals meth! It's
here on the phone!!

No answer. Emily realises the McCahon is gone from the wall. She glances around.

Kurt saunters out of the living room -- he's carrying the coffee table sculpture.

KURT
Emily, is it?

Emily stares.

KURT (CONT'D)
I'd get going if I were you. You
don't want to be here right now.

Behind him, a MOB MEMBER in coveralls is crating up the
McCahon.

EMILY
(faltering)
Where is she?

Kurt is about to reply -- when the sight of something behind
Emily stops him in his tracks.

KURT
Winter!

Winter stands in the doorway behind Helen and Jack.

HELEN
Emily?
(beat)
What is this!? What are you doing
here? Do you know these men?

Emily tries to get her head around what's going on --
remembers this is her victory.

EMILY
Yeah I do -- he's Winter's meth
dealer.

Stunned silence.

JACK
(despairing)
Omigod Ems.

EMILY
She sells drugs for him. His name
is Kurt. That's what I came to tell
you.

HELEN
(slowly)
Emily -- did you bring this man
into our house?

EMILY
No!! I just found him here!

WINTER
(quietly to Helen)
They must have got your gate code.

The mob member tries to slip into the conservatory with the crate -- Helen spots him.

HELEN
(snaps)
You put that down.

He does so -- holds up his hands in placation.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'm calling the police.
(to Kurt)
How did you get our gate code?

KURT
Don't call the police -- your
daughter here gave me the code.

Everyone stares at Emily.

HELEN
Is that true?

EMILY
You don't understand -- I'm trying
to show you! She WORKS for him.
It's his meth she put it in my
room.

HELEN
(acid)
You're telling me that Winter --
your friend -- stole drugs -- from
a dealer -- to put in your bedroom.

EMILY
YES!

HELEN
And why would she do that, Emily?

EMILY
I don't know! Because she hates me!

WINTER
(sweet)
I don't hate you, Ems. Why would I?

EMILY

Because I stopped you coming on the stupid ski trip I guess!

HELEN

(aghast)

You stopped Winter coming on the ski trip?

EMILY

THAT'S what you care about right now!? SHE'S DEALING METH!!

A moment's silence.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(indicates Kurt and Winter)

He knew her name! They're in this together -- look at them.

HELEN

Do you know this man, Winter?

WINTER

(beat)

He lives across the street from me. But he's not a meth dealer. At least -- not as far as I know.

(beat)

Are you a Class A drug dealer, Kurt?

Kurt and Winter lock eyes -- Kurt weighs his options.

KURT

No way. I don't deal drugs.

EMILY

Yes you DO! You deal them to Gemma!

HELEN

Who's Gemma?

EMILY

My friend!

JACK

Nice. So your friends are on meth as well as cocaine. But it's Winter's fault drugs *somehow* happened to get in your room.

EMILY

I've got a recording! LISTEN!

She puts a PHONE RECORDING on speaker -- holds it high. The audio quality is poor.

KURT (V.O., RECORDED)

Yeah, she can drop a gram there tomorrow.

GEMMA (V.O., RECORDED)

Who do I look for?

KURT (V.O., RECORDED)

Your usual girl.

GEMMA (V.O., RECORDED)

You mean Winter?

KURT (V.O., RECORDED)

Yeah.

Emily -- triumphant -- STOPS THE RECORDING.

Stunned silence.

KURT (CONT'D)

That wasn't me.

Emily stares at him in disbelief.

KURT (CONT'D)

I don't know what she's talking about.

WINTER

A full gram? Omigod Ems -- how often are you using?

EMILY

It IS him! It's --

HELEN

That's *enough!* I can't listen to any more of this -- this *drug-addled* NONSENSE! Jack --

(to Kurt)

Give him the sculpture.

Kurt hands it to Jack.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now GET OUT.

She stands aside from the door -- Kurt slinks out through it.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 (to Jack)
 Make sure he leaves.

Helen strides into --

175 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The conservatory doors are wide open -- assaulting the orchids with a stiff breeze. Helen GASPS -- races to shut the doors.

EMILY
 Mum -- you've got to listen to me --

Helen turns to Emily.

HELEN
 You get out too.

EMILY
 What?

HELEN
 Get out of my house. I can't stand to look at you.

EMILY
 How can you not believe me? How can you take HER word over mine?

HELEN
 (tired)
 Very easily, Emily. Very easily indeed.

Jack returns from outside.

JACK
 He's gone.

HELEN
 Check the rest of house -- see if anything's missing.

Jack obeys.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 Thank god you weren't feeling well,
 Winter -- we'd be sitting there
 listening to Chopin while those
 awful men cleaned us out.

Emily is still staring at Helen.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 (to Emily)
 As for you -- I mean it. Get out.
 You're not welcome here anymore.

EMILY
 You can't chuck me out -- I live
 here. I'M YOUR DAUGHTER! Not her!

HELEN
 Yes -- that's true. And that fact
 makes me deeply ashamed and
 disappointed.

Emily might as well have been slapped. She looks at Winter --
 back at her mother.

EMILY
 You're ACTUALLY choosing her over
 me?

HELEN
 Emily, please stop embarrassing
 yourself and just go.

EMILY
 Go WHERE?

HELEN
 That's up to you, isn't it? You've
 made your bed. Perhaps you can live
 in the gutter -- you seem to like
 it down there.

EMILY
 (seethes)
 You're a shitty mother... I *hate*
 you...

HELEN
 (mock cheery)
 Bye-bye, Emily.

Emily picks up the nearest orchid -- hurls it as hard as she
 can against the conservatory windows -- waits for the smash.
 The pot bounces off the triple glazing.

Emily -- crying -- runs out of the house.

Ruined orchid litters the conservatory floor.

176 EXT. STREET - DAY - DUSK

Emily -- cold and distraught -- wanders the streets -- no idea what to do. All she has with her is Gemma's burner phone. She looks at the screen: NO CREDIT REMAINING.

She sits down at a strip mall bus stop -- checks the phone case -- finds a five dollar note. Looks up. Sees the shops are already closed for the night.

177 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - LAST LIGHT

In the guest room window, Winter looks out from the warmth of the house. It starts to RAIN.

178 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

RAIN lashes the crescent. Emily -- soaking wet -- makes her way up the street. She stops -- looks at Kurt's house. FIERCE BARKING erupts inside. Emily recoils.

179 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The broken window frame opens. Emily climbs in -- flops onto Winter's bed.

Melody -- waiting -- holds out her hand. Emily puts Gemma's five dollar note in her palm.

MOMENTS LATER

Melody -- highly satisfied -- adds the five bucks to the stash in her pillow -- goes back to sleep.

180 EXT. DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - MORNING

Jack walks out with his bags -- heads for his car. He looks up lovingly at Winter's window -- she's there -- they wave.

181 INT. GUEST ROOM/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter turns away from the window -- blows out her breath -- thank god he's gone.

182 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - DAYS FOLLOWING

Helen is tending the orchids.

Winter -- bright-eyed and perfect in school uniform -- walks in -- beams at Helen.

HELEN

Oh darling -- you look dreadful --
did you not sleep well?

183 INT. WINTER & MELODY'S ROOM - DAY

Emily lounges in Winter's bed -- stretches -- lights a joint.

184 INT. LOUNGE/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

The TV is on -- *Drew Barrymore* in full flight. Relaxing in front of it are Emily, Melody, Dallas and the baby. Emily plays with BABY JAY -- jokes with Dallas and Melody -- they're all getting on like a house on fire.

185 I/E. DATSUN SUNNY - DAY

The former Bentley-driving salesman waits -- hollow-eyed and disheveled -- for his drop.

Emily pops the envelope through his car window -- takes his cash -- walks on cheerily.

186 EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Emily approaches Chloe's Range Rover. She and Chloe are equally bemused to see each other -- but they swap envelopes without comment.

187 INT. LOUNGE/KURT'S HOUSE - DAY

Kurt receives the cash -- pays Emily her cut. Otis watches approvingly. Emily rubs Otis's ears.

188 INT. KITCHEN/RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruby is in her usual spot at the table. Emily walks past the kitchen door -- Ruby notices her. She looks a lot *like* Winter -- but is clearly not.

Ruby stares after Emily for a second -- wtf? *Oh well -- close enough.* She goes back to her magazine.

189 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

Winter -- proud -- shows Helen her school assignment. She's got an A-MINUS.

Helen pats Winter's arm consolingly.

190 I/E. DAN'S NISSAN PULSAR - DAY - TWO MONTHS LATER

Waiter Dan REVS the engine -- grins.

191 EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Sunshine. Neglected spring bulbs bloom amid the weeds along Ruby's garden path. Emily scampers past them -- hops into Dan's car.

192 I/E. DAN'S NISSAN PULSAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dan and Emily kiss -- laugh -- take off with a boy racer ROAR.

193 EXT. GARDEN/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY

A perfect spring day -- outside the conservatory, the sunny garden is full of flowers.

194 INT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Winter's hand is in Jack's -- they're sitting demurely over coffee and macarons with Helen. Winter is looking out -- wistful -- at the flowers in the garden.

Jack helps himself to another macaron. Winter goes to do the same -- catches Helen's eye. Helen raises her eyebrows -- looks pointedly at Winter's thighs. Winter leaves the macaron on the plate -- goes back to staring out through the glass.

One of the conservatory windows is ajar -- an orchid nods gently in the breeze.

Helen starts to pour more coffee -- pauses -- frowns.

HELEN

Winter darling, would you close
that window for me, please?

Winter gets up obediently.

HELEN (CONT'D)

There's a draught.

195 EXT. CONSERVATORY/DUNBAR HOUSE - SAME TIME

Winter shuts the window -- lingers for a moment -- gazing out. The breeze has dislodged a strand of her hair. Winter tucks it behind her ear -- touches her cheek -- an echo of Helen's gesture.

She stays a moment more -- then turns back to Helen and Jack --
- and is lost amid the rest of the hothouse flowers.

FADE OUT.

EXEGESIS

The Winter Garden

EXEGESIS

Introduction

My thesis is creative practice as research, comprising a creative artefact (a screenplay) accompanied by a critical component (an exegesis). This conforms to Auckland University of Technology's guidelines for a *Format Three* thesis, as described in the Postgraduate Handbook 2021, which states:

Practice does not serve to illustrate theory but is more appropriately understood as the site of research; the exegesis relates directly to the practice-oriented work and as such does not have a research topic or question of its own; the purpose of the exegesis is to elucidate and clarify the relationship between the central concept, key contexts, relevant critical context. (pp. 109-113)

Accordingly, in my exegesis I will provide a discussion overviewing the creative work, which will include:

- A synopsis of the creative component and an explanation of my intentions.
- A review of key texts relevant to development of the creative work, in the form of a comparative analysis.
- A detailed description of the process and methodology used, and a reflection on the outcomes of this creative practice as research.
- Discussion of theoretical, historical and critical context where relevant.

Part One

Introduction

The first part of my exegesis contextualises the central theme of my screenplay by examining commonalities and differences in five dramatic works employing similar themes.

The central theme of *The Winter Garden* deals with the strategy chosen by its 18-year-old protagonist, Winter, to try to overcome the harsh realities of her life. It can be understood as self-realisation versus self-invention, or engaging with reality versus inhabiting an illusory world of lies.

The works chosen for comparison are:

Muriel's Wedding (Hogan, 1995);
The Talented Mr. Ripley (Minghella, 1999);
Catch Me if You Can (Nathanson, 2002);
The Queen's Gambit (Frank and Scott, 2020);
Inventing Anna (Rhimes et al, 2022).

Commonalities

- 1) All of these screenplays involve protagonists who are underdogs, dissatisfied with their circumstances but lacking the agency, ability or fortitude to effect their desired change by conventional means. In *The Queen's Gambit*, Beth Harmon is a child confined to an orphanage; *Catch Me if You Can's* Frank Abagnale Jr. is a minor fleeing his parents' failing marriage; *The Talented Mr. Ripley's* Tom Ripley and *Inventing Anna's* Anna Delvey are unlikely to overcome the barriers of class and wealth to achieve the lifestyles they covet; in *Muriel's Wedding*, browbeaten, 'useless' (Hogan, 1995, p. 23) Muriel Hunter is bereft of the confidence, knowledge and drive necessary to escape Porpoise Spit.

It can be argued that because these characters are underdogs, audiences are more likely to want to side with them, and, crucially, are willing to cut them more slack in

their misdeeds than might be accorded to a go-getting alpha type: if Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* (McCullah & Smith, 2001) were to shoplift and empty her parents' savings account as Muriel Hunter does, it seems unlikely she would engender the same audience sympathy.

- 2) For the most part, each protagonist's journey can be read as a descent of an increasingly slippery moral slope, beginning with an action that is questionable, if not downright illegal, but that is also understandable and seemingly victimless: Tom Ripley fails to correct an assumption that he went to Princeton; Muriel uses her mother's cheque to join her supposed friends on holiday; Beth sneaks drugs from the orphanage that got her addicted; Anna Delvey preys only on the rich and powerful; Frank Abegnale Jr. defrauds the wealthy banks that refused to help his father.

This first action necessitates a second, and so on, setting off a domino chain of escalating consequences for the protagonist and those around them, until the protagonist arrives at a choice to either commit an action that will destroy them in some form, or risk losing all their previous gains. Tom Ripley must murder the man he loves or be caught for his previous crimes; Anna Delvey must defraud her friends or be revealed as penniless; Frank must break his fiancée's heart if he is to escape the FBI; Beth must risk losing her biggest game or be consumed by addiction to the drugs she relies on for chess supremacy; Muriel can have the wedding of her dreams, but only at the cost of her friend, her self-respect and her new 'as good as an ABBA song' (Hogan, 1995, p. 47) life.

- 3) *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Catch Me if You Can*, and *The Queen's Gambit* all begin at or near to the end of their stories, with their main characters at or approaching their lowest ebb. Tom Ripley is 'desolate in a ship's cabin' (Minghella, 1999, p. 1), expressing his wish to go back in time and 'rub everything out. Starting with myself.' (Minghella, 1999, p. 1). Frank Abegnale Jr. appears in a double prologue, first as a free man recapping his crimes on a humiliating game show, and next half-dead in a French prison cell. 20-year-old Beth Harman wakes up '*still drunk, high, whatever*' (Frank & Scott, 2020, p. 1) in a hotel bathtub, downing a pill and a vodka, and 'clearly trying to do the math as to just who the fuck is in her bed' (Frank & Scott, 2020, p. 1). Each screenplay then cuts back in time to the beginning of the character's

journey: Tom plays piano at a Manhattan cocktail party; 15-year-old Frank watches his dad become a lifetime member of the Rotary Club; nine-year-old Beth stares at her mother's dead body on the highway.

This device can be interpreted as serving a dual purpose. Firstly, it establishes a line of suspense and sets up interest in the story question: what has Tom done that is so terrible? How did Frank end up in a French jail? Why is Beth high in a French hotel? Secondly, the juxtaposition of the two story points – the character suffering for their misdeeds, and the character in their innocence – again elicits sympathy and therefore likeability: sick, humiliated Frank was just a wide-eyed kid who loved his dad; Tom is a decent boy who is clearly very sorry. In the case of *The Queen's Gambit*, it can be argued that there is also a third purpose: set side by side, the contrasting images of 20-year-old Beth behaving badly in a luxury hotel and newly bereaved nine-year-old Beth on the highway engender greater curiosity about her character than either image might have done alone.

- 4) Having arrived at the beginning of their stories proper, four out of the five screenplays proceed in simple linear fashion with few, if any, flashbacks. *Muriel's Wedding* is entirely linear. *The Talented Mr. Ripley* completes a precise circle: the first line of the screenplay is 'Fade up on Ripley, as in the final scene of the film' (Minghella, 1999, p. 1). *Catch Me if You Can*, *The Queen's Gambit* and *Inventing Anna* continue past the points at which they began their stories to what might be described as a final chapter; in both limited drama series, the circle is completed in the penultimate episode. *The Queen's Gambit* is the exception to the linear structure, making frequent use of flashbacks to illustrate Beth's thoughts and to unravel the backstory of her mother's suicide.
- 5) Although each of the texts differs in tone (as shall be discussed in the following section), within the context of its genre each is highly stylised. This can be interpreted as contributing to a sense of surrealism or altered reality, serving the idea that the protagonists are operating in worlds of artifice and imagination where the usual rules may not apply. All of the texts use humour and other elements of subversion which it may be argued further underline the idea that these are quirky individuals journeying outside societal norms. *Catch Me if You Can* archly juxtaposes and choreographs its

scenes to create an enveloping sense of mischief that contextualises Frank's cons as likeable peccadilloes. *Muriel's Wedding* employs then-out-of-fashion pop music as a metaphor. The E.M. Forster-like characters of Dickie Greenleaf, Marge Sherwood et al., together with Italian Grand Tour settings disguise *The Talented Mr. Ripley* as a Merchant and Ivory-style period drama, making its segue into a psychological thriller all the more chilling. *The Queen's Gambit* utilises a nine-year-old protagonist who is not a sweet little orphan but a bad loser hooked on benzodiazepines who becomes, on playing chess, 'all killer' (Frank & Scott, 2020, p. 29). Biopic *Inventing Anna* revels in its inauthenticity with the jaunty front-and-centre disclaimer, 'This whole story is completely true. Except for all the parts that are totally made up' (Rhimes, 2022, ep. 1, 0:02:12), topping every episode, and a Greek chorus of old-school journalists hanging out in the toilets.

It can be argued that these devices also make potentially grim material more watchable: in an interview with the podcast *Fresh Air*, Scott Frank (2020) spoke about his desire to 'play against expectation' (0:07:32) in writing *The Queen's Gambit*, noting his intention to use 'humour, the tension of the chess matches and everything in [Beth Harmon's] intellect' (0:08:28) to try to prevent a story about a journey into addiction and obsession from becoming 'weary' (0:08:22). Similarly, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* employs hefty doses of irony, if not outright black comedy, to assist its audience in continuing to sympathise with Tom Ripley until, and beyond, its chilling ending. In reviewing the film upon its release, movie critic Roger Ebert (1999) wrote, 'There is one sequence in the film ... that depends on such meticulous timing and improvisation that if you made it speedier, you'd have the Marx Brothers' (para. 12).

- 6) The writers of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Catch Me if You Can* share a willingness to be explicit with their metaphors. When 16-year-old Frank Abagnale Jr. runs away from choosing between his parents, he does so literally, sprinting down the street in an echo of the screenplay's title; Tom Ripley voices the fear that 'I'm going to be stuck in the basement, aren't I... terrible and alone and dark... so nobody can ever find me' (Minghella, 1999, p. 84), and on the very next page the light dies literally as a closet door swings shut on Tom's solitary reflection in the mirror (Minghella, 1999).

Subjectively, it can be argued that overt metaphors such as these help to establish the prevailing tones of irony and deliberate stylistic artifice present in these screenplays, and succeed because of it, whereas in more naturalistic or straight-faced works they might run the risk of seeming didactic.

Differences

- 1) Although *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Catch Me if You Can* and *The Queen's Gambit* could all be categorised as mid-century period dramas, they and the remaining texts all differ from each other in genre and tone: *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a lush psychological thriller with elements of black comedy; *Catch Me if You Can* is a comedy-drama with the tone of an R-rated *I Dream of Jeannie* (Sheldon, 1965); *The Queen's Gambit* is a limited series with gothic overtones and a Beat Generation ethos; *Muriel's Wedding* is a comedy that abruptly turns tragic, 'another of those Australian films that walk a careful line between satire and misery' (Ebert, 1995, para. 2); *Inventing Anna* is a contemporary limited drama series that belies its factual basis with a fast, bright, breezy and deliberately abrasive of-the-zeitgeist tone.
- 2) While the writers of the other texts may be argued to expend significant energy in making their characters likeable, *Inventing Anna* differs in presenting a central character who is not immediately so. In stark contrast to her charming, good-natured fellow fraudster Frank Abegnale Jr., the dramatised Anna Delvey seems cold, humourless, rude, bullying, vain and utterly self-involved. She is derogatorily referred to in dialogue as 'queen of the millennials' (Rhimes, 2022, ep. 9, 1:12:30); production studio Netflix invites us to 'love her or hate her' (Wang, 2022, para. 3). While the frauds committed by Frank and Tom Ripley are opportunistic, Anna's are premeditated. She never admits guilt, like Frank; her crimes do not appear to weigh on her as they do on Tom.

Rhimes (2022) appears to seek to make a virtue of her title character's unpleasantness. The first episode opens with Anna breaking the fourth wall to insult an audience she predicts is about to 'sit on your fat ass and watch like a big lump of

nothing' (Rhimes, 2022, ep. 1, 0:55:00) and gloat about her superiority. It can be argued the story question this poses is *who does this woman think she is?*

Because the series creator chooses to structure the show as a mystery in the form of a journalistic investigation of Anna's true origins, she cannot elicit sympathy for Anna by showing the circumstances that prompted her crimes as is done in *Catch Me if You Can*, *Muriel's Wedding* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. By the time the penultimate episode of *Inventing Anna* posits childhood trauma as the root of her behaviour, it is too late to alter the audience's experience of viewing the show; it may also be argued that Anna's character is too well established for the audience's perceptions of her to be materially changed by new information.

Instead, Rhimes (2022) can be interpreted as addressing the potential problem of audience engagement by surrounding Anna with more sympathetic and relatable characters. With the exception of Anna's opening tirade, the story is rarely presented from her point of view, concentrating instead on that of vivacious pregnant journalist Vivian Kent, a character who radiates all the warmth, humour, integrity and self-awareness Anna lacks. It can be argued that the more compelling story question is not what is going to happen to Anna, but what is going to happen to Vivian as she tries to unravel Anna's story. Similarly, it can be argued that the major relationship and inner line questions revolve around the personal lives of Vivian and of Todd Spodek, Anna's long-suffering, dedicated and charismatic lawyer: will their increasing obsession with Anna's problems ruin their marriages? Will it ruin their careers? This strategy seems to invite us, as an audience, to care about Anna because Todd and Vivian care about Anna, and we care about Todd and Vivian.

- 3) *Inventing Anna* further differs from the other texts by approaching its lead character entirely from the outside, as a puzzle to be solved. Even when Anna addresses us directly, the audience is never allowed inside her head. The dialogue between the show's other characters is structured almost like a courtroom drama, where opposing counsels argue back and forth, constantly building and dismissing arguments for and against Anna's actions and ethics, and we the audience are invited to play judge and jury in the case. Rhimes (2022) repeatedly dangles character insights only to reveal them as red herrings. In the penultimate episode, a string of false flashbacks is

employed to first set up as fact, then contradict, the circumstances of Anna's childhood. It can be argued that the show's examination of theme is an invitation to further debate: in keeping with its journalistic source material, it puts forward arguments, but leaves its audience to draw their own conclusions.

- 4) The one original screenplay, *Muriel's Wedding*, differs from the four adaptations in delivering a positive outcome for its protagonist: Muriel redeems herself, stops seeing marriage as validation, rescues her friend from Porpoise Spit and taxis off into the sunset to resume her 'good as "Dancing Queen"' (Hogan, 1995, p. 47) Sydney life. However, the price of her success has been high. Her mother has committed suicide, her father is broke, and her younger brother and sister are left to fend for themselves in what seems unlikely to be a happy home.

The two biopics, *Inventing Anna* and *Catch Me if You Can*, hampered by facts, have no choice but to have their protagonists caught, found guilty and jailed for their crimes. *Catch Me if You Can* turns this apparent negative into an positive by proceeding past it to end with Frank's early release and adoption into the FBI, providing him with a replacement family and father figure in the form of the bureau and Joe Shaye; Nathanson (2002) redeems Frank fully with an end title card revealing him to be a married father of three, a millionaire and a decorated federal agent. (p. 161)

Without the luxury of 40 intervening years between Anna Delvey's crimes and its production, *Inventing Anna* can travel no further forward in time than Anna's release from prison and subsequent detention by the immigration authorities, which is where the series ends. The writers take an ambiguous approach to framing this outcome for their protagonist. The show can be argued to conclude that the biggest victim of Anna's self-invention is Anna herself: the final flashback to her childhood shows her alone in her bedroom, cutting out pictures from fashion magazines, while we hear the sounds of normal, happy family life continuing without her on the other side of the closed door.

The Queen's Gambit also ends in ambiguity, but being based on fiction, it is ambiguity of a more deliberately crafted type. Executive producer William Horberg is

quoted as saying ‘We felt that the series had a satisfying endpoint and we’d allow the audience to fill in the spaces as to what happens next for Beth Harmon’ (*Deadline*, 2021, para. 2). In the final episode of the show, we see the previously addicted Beth resisting all temptation to drink, throwing away her Librium, and discovering she can still beat the best in the world at chess without them. The writers show the audience that she has confronted, and is coping with, the horrible truth about her mother; they show us Beth has friends to support her; they show her seizing control of her own life, ditching her minders and going off to experience Moscow; and they end with her playing chess for nothing more than the joy of the game. In summary, the writers leave their protagonist in a good place. Scott Frank is quoted as saying, ‘It just felt really good... by getting concrete in sort of the next chapter of her life, it kind of takes away from what – for me, at least – was so lovely about this story.’ (*Fresh Air*, 2020, 0:29:25).

The Talented Mr. Ripley is unique among the texts compared in presenting a wholly negative outcome for its protagonist: Minghella (1999) ends with ‘Ripley, alone, in a nightmare of his own making.’ (p. 85)

Conclusions

Unsurprisingly, these five explorations of theme are unanimous in concluding that sooner or later, for better or worse, reality must – or should – prevail over fantasy, hard-won self-realisation over self-invention: that it is not, as Tom Ripley puts it, ‘better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody.’ (Minghella, 1999, p. 84)

In reinventing themselves, both Anna Delvey and Tom Ripley are running towards something rather than away: the promise of wealth, success and ‘the beautiful world of the magazines’ (Rhimes, 2022, ep. 8, 0:40:31). Both end trapped in solitary worlds of their own making: Tom repentant and self-loathing; Anna seemingly still without awareness.

Likeability of the protagonist seems key to audience engagement and gratification: a sufficiently likeable character can commit coldblooded murder, as Tom does, and still retain an audience’s affection. Subjectively, the devices that appear most successful in eliciting liking for a character appear to be an early evocation of audience sympathy for their plight;

allowing the character to display a sense of humour, to be playful, self-deprecating and self-aware; having them take responsibility for their actions; and the minimisation, concealment, or strong justification of any negative consequences their actions might have on others.

Relationships to *The Winter Garden*

Commonalities

The Winter Garden also employs a protagonist who is an underdog seeking to improve her lot, and who embarks upon a descent of a slippery moral slope. In this instance, the protagonist's trajectory begins with the ethically questionable but seemingly victimless act of pretending to be someone she is not in order to win the friendship of a more successful peer. As in the texts examined above, the protagonist's first action initiates a domino chain of increasingly unjustifiable acts until she arrives at an ethical point of no return.

In common with all the texts compared, *The Winter Garden* aims for a tone of irony and artifice, and like *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Catch Me if You Can*, it makes use of overt metaphors, such as the Dunbars' sheltering-but-stifling conservatory, in an effort to help establish this tone. Like the other texts, it seeks to use humour, subversion and arch juxtapositions of scenes to create a sense of mischief, which is intended to engender and retain audience sympathy for its protagonist's misdeeds as her actions escalate and their consequences grow. It is hoped that Winter, like Muriel, Beth, Frank and Tom, will be accepted as journeying outside societal norms, and that her forays into shoplifting and drug-dealing will not detract from her likeability.

As in *Muriel's Wedding*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Catch Me if You Can*, an effort is made to minimise and justify the negative consequences of the protagonist's actions: it is intended that, like *The Talented Mr. Ripley's* Dickie Greenleaf and Freddie Miles, Winter's victims are perceived as somewhat deserving of their fates.

Differences

Unlike the majority of the aforementioned texts, *The Winter Garden* begins at the beginning of its story rather than the end. Cases could be made for commencing the screenplay at

several of the later turning points on its story arc and then circling back in time, as *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Catch Me if You Can*, *The Queen's Gambit* and *Inventing Anna* do. However, a choice was made to tell the story in linear fashion because it is at the beginning of Winter's story that she is believed to be most likely to engender audience sympathy and therefore liking: by first showing what it is she wants to escape, it is hoped that she will be forgiven for employing any means she can to escape it.

While *The Winter Garden* is decidedly, and deliberately, reminiscent of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* in ending on an image of Winter confined to a prison of her own making, in this case the ending aims to strike a different note. It is not wholly negative, like *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, in which Tom has passed beyond redemption and all the screenplay's other major characters are either dead or seem soon to become so; nor is it wholly redemptive, like *Muriel's Wedding* and *Catch Me if You Can*. Instead, *The Winter Garden* aims to turn the tables of expectation with an ironically positive ending for antagonist Emily, who achieves the insight Winter does not: that being Emily Dunbar is not worth a lifetime of trying to be someone you are not.

Part Two

Introduction

The second part of my exegesis reflects upon the intentions of my own screenplay, examining the choices faced, decisions taken and conclusions reached in the construction of *The Winter Garden*'s dramatic narrative. It begins by providing a synopsis of the work's central story before discussing individual core components employed to create and build dramatic tension.

Synopsis

Definition

Writing for potential applicants for Screen Australia funding, story consultant Michael Brindley supplies the following definition of a screenplay synopsis:

The generally accepted idea of a synopsis... deals in WHO, WHAT and HOW, but also establishes the other major characters and their lines of conflict, what is at stake for these characters, the setting in time and space, and the major turning points of the story. The last is crucial; the key element of any synopsis is a clear indication of the story's structure. That is, how the story begins, develops and ends. (2009, p. 4)

Synopsis: *The Winter Garden*

Driving past a Fendalton garden en route to her latest foster home placement in wintry Christchurch, disadvantaged teen Winter (18) glimpses the embodiment of everything she yearns for in the seemingly model relationship between rich, upper-middle-class mother Helen Dunbar (40s) and her spoiled daughter Emily (18). Clever Winter uses the opportunity of starting at the same state high school as Emily to reinvent herself as a respectable middle-class girl and inveigle her way into the Dunbars' hearts and home. With increasing deviousness, she probes the cracks she discovers in Helen and Emily's relationship to try to usurp Emily's comfortable place, while simultaneously cultivating the affections of Emily's nice-but-gormless brother Jack (20). Emily is the only Dunbar not fooled, and a battle of wits

ensues between the two girls in which Emily proves herself under-resourced and Winter shows no mercy.

In order to raise the cash necessary to accompany the Dunbars on their annual family ski holiday, Winter begins running methamphetamine to the middle-class clients of Kurt (30s), the drug dealer who lives across the street from her foster home. But all her work goes to waste when Emily tricks the family into leaving without Winter. In revenge, Winter steals meth from Kurt and plants it in Emily's room, causing Emily to be banished to boot camp. There, Emily befriends one of Kurt's clients, Gemma (17) and begins smoking meth for real.

Gemma and Emily set a trap to reveal who Winter really is. But Winter is too clever for them and the plot backfires. Helen moves Winter into the house and sends Emily back to boot camp. Thanks to Emily and Gemma's not-so-cunning plan, Kurt figures out what Winter did with his missing meth and uses this information to blackmail her into helping him burgle the Dunbars. Emily escapes boot camp and rushes home to confront Helen with what she believes to be incontrovertible proof that Winter is moving meth. Instead, Emily interrupts Kurt burgling the house and is framed by Winter as his accomplice. Choosing to believe Winter over her daughter, Helen throws Emily out on the street.

Winter has won: Emily's life is now hers. But with Emily out of the way, Helen turns all her passive-aggressive attention on Winter, who discovers the price of being Helen's daughter. Emily, meanwhile, takes refuge with the other misfits in Winter's foster home. Falling into Winter's old life of freedom, self-reliance and drug money, she is well on her way to becoming her best self.

A black comedy about self-delusion and self-realisation, *The Winter Garden* ends with unhappy Winter confronting her ultimate choice: does she continue to pretend to be someone she is not in pursuit of an illusory ideal of maternal love and familial protection? Or go back to her real life and try to make the best of what she was given? The lure of the illusion remains too great. Winter chooses to stay with Helen.

Intentions

The intention of this thesis is to explore the dramatic and comedic potential inherent in the belief that we would be happier if we were somebody else: someone richer, more famous, better-looking or better-loved than ourselves. It sets out to subvert the politics of aspiration, satirise concepts of privilege, and play devil's advocate in offering up an alternate realisation of contentment.

Primarily, the screenplay is conceived as a mischievous romp that leaves audiences with a smile, albeit a wry one. It aims to encourage us to feel better about ourselves – more satisfied with what we have achieved in our own lives and more forgiving of our failures – happy to be real nobodies (Minghella, 1999). The work is envisioned as an invitation to examine our aspirations and the degree to which they may be contributing to or detracting from our perceived happiness. It also seeks to serve as a reminder of the wisdom in seeking the middle ground between the poles of over and under-achievement. Intellectually, it is hoped that audiences might take pleasure in musing as to whether, in the end, it was Winter or Emily who got the better deal.

The action line of *The Winter Garden* sets out to engender a smile by means of a comic extrapolation of misplaced over-achievement in Winter's increasingly devious quest to win Emily's place in the Dunbar home. Taking inspiration from crime capers like *Snatch* (Ritchie, 2000) and *Ocean's Eleven* (Brown et al., 2001), its plot is deliberately contrived, seeking a tone of artifice and irony to counter the bleaker elements of poverty, neglect and addiction it contains.

Thematically, the failure of the life strategies employed by both protagonist and antagonist to achieve wholly positive outcomes for themselves is intended to make the audience feel their own life choices have been superior: Winter gets what she wants, but not what she needs, while Emily can be argued to have achieved the reverse. Things do not end entirely well for either main character, but neither do they end entirely badly. Winter and Emily are not robbed of all hope of redemption or happiness, thus contributing to a viewing experience designed to be entertaining rather than gruelling.

World of the story

Definition

McKee (1998) defines the world of the story, or setting, thus:

A story's SETTING is four-dimensional – Period, Duration, Location, Level of Conflict... PERIOD is a story's place in time... DURATION is a story's length through time... LOCATION is a story's place in space... LEVEL OF CONFLICT is the story's position on the hierarchy of human struggles. (pp. 68–69)

McKee (1998) goes on to further define a story's potential *level of conflict* as the characters' inner struggles; the conflicts in their personal relationships; their conflicts with societal institutions; or their conflicts with the forces of nature. He observes that a story 'may be set at any one or any combination of these levels'. (p. 69)

The world of The Winter Garden

Period and duration

The Winter Garden is a contemporary screenplay taking place over four months, from winter to spring, in the protagonist's final year of high school.

Location

Within the suburb of Fendalton in north-west Christchurch, events take place in two diametrically opposed but geographically contiguous 'worlds' that coexist with little knowledge of each other. The first is Amity Crescent, the site of Winter's latest foster placement, a tiny enclave of rundown mid-century social housing largely hidden from its wealthy neighbours. Home to pit bulls, meth deals, feral high-schoolers and peeling Honda Integras, in Amity Crescent rates of substance abuse and casual violence are high, and expectations and incomes low. Less than a five minute walk away is the world of the Dunbars, a traditional blue-ribbon Fendalton street home to real estate deals, tax avoidance and Labradors, where graceful old houses nestle behind security gates, gardens are large, and success is taken for granted.

The division between the inhabitants of these two worlds is tribal. Generally speaking, it soothes the psyches of the residents of each to ignore the existence of the other. In the world of the Dunbars, particularly, Amity Crescent is little more than a scary rumour, no more real than the bogeyman. Under normal circumstances, traffic between the two worlds is nonexistent. The same goes for empathy. The one thing Amity Crescent has in common with the Dunbars' street is that both fall inside the zone of a well-to-do state girls' school, allowing the daughters of both tribes an opportunity to get to know one another. Prior to Winter's arrival, this opportunity has never been taken up by either side.

Level of conflict

The levels of conflict in the world of the story are intended to be threefold. Firstly, the conflict is societal, in that Winter's desire and seeming ability to trespass in the Dunbars' world has the potential to disrupt both it and the world of Amity Crescent. Secondly, there is the personal conflict of Winter's relationship line battle with Emily. Thirdly, there is conflict on the inner line between the love and protection Winter wants, and the self-realisation she needs to achieve in order to be happy.

Protagonist

Definition

Aronson (2010) writes that 'Conventional narrative is all about the protagonist's journey' (p. 78) and goes on to list these identifying markers of the protagonist: 'The film is the protagonist's story, the protagonist is who the "film is about"... The protagonist drives the action that makes the decisions.' (p. 79)

The Winter Garden's protagonist

Winter, a girl with nothing, wants to be Emily, a girl with everything. In particular, Emily has an aspirational mother to nurture, mentor and adore her, and the security of a stable family home. Wrapped up in the TV-picture-perfect packaging of the Dunbars' wealth and sophistication, it is everything Winter ever dreamed of and more.

In order to get what Emily has, Winter decides to do what Emily does. She shoplifts the same things Emily buys. She copies Emily's hair, her mannerisms, her tastes. Pretending to be

someone she thinks Emily will like, she infiltrates Emily's home, steals the affections of Emily's mother, and begins, like a cuckoo chick, to shove Emily out of the Dunbar nest.

Winter believes that if she succeeds in taking Emily's place, effectively becoming Emily, she will be happy for the rest of her life. She sees Emily's life as an unclaimed winning lottery ticket waiting to be cashed. All she has to do is win the race to the counter and she will be forever comfortable, safe and loved. But if she loses, she fears she will never escape Amity Crescent and all it represents to her: a cycle of poverty, neglect and hopelessness. The closer Winter gets to replacing Emily, the higher the emotional stakes become for her: the affection and approval of a mother figure are gains she cannot bear to lose.

While Winter *wants* to become Emily, the audience is expected to see that she *needs* to stop faking it as an Emily Dunbar and start making it as herself. The inner line question is, will Winter change? The answer is no. To the end, Winter remains impervious to the increasing evidence – much of it uncovered by her own actions – that Emily's life is not all she thinks it is. Nor does she gain the parallel insight that her own 'real nobody' (Minghella, 1999, p. 84) existence in Amity Crescent has the potential to become less bleak than it first appeared, and that more honest and rewarding relationships might be available to her there than in the Dunbar house.

Note

Consideration was given to the option of structuring Winter and Emily as dual protagonists in the work. A decision was made, for this draft at least, that telling the story from a single principal point of view would create greater suspense, and therefore tension, on the action and relationship lines, and would allow the twist of the role reversal between the two girls to be achieved as a surprise.

Antagonist

Definition

'In storytelling, the antagonist is the opposer or combatant working against the protagonist's or leading characters' goal ("antagonizing") and creating the main conflict.' (MasterClass, 2022, section 4)

The Winter Garden's antagonist

Opposing Winter's goal is the real Emily Dunbar, who, unwilling to be replaced, fights back against Winter's attempts to take over Helen's affections. Emily's opposition escalates Winter's actions, forcing her to take greater risks and resort to more drastic means to achieve her goals. When Winter discovers that Emily deliberately stopped her joining them on the family ski trip, it provokes Winter to rise to a new level of ruthlessness in deciding to frame Emily as a meth user. On the action line, Winter's reaction to Emily's provocation leads to her stealing meth from Kurt, thus setting in motion a chain of events that should lead to Winter's downfall, but in fact leads to Emily's.

Emily's actions, though frequently ill-judged, are conscious and deliberate from the outset. On the relationship line, her feelings for Winter escalate from distrust to jealousy to downright hatred. Emily wants Winter out of her house and her life, and, until she reaches her own moment of realisation in the final scenes of the screenplay, she is just as willing to destroy Winter as Winter is to destroy her in their battle for the role of Helen's daughter.

Dramatic tension

The primary source of dramatic tension in *The Winter Garden* is intended to arise from the conflict between Winter and Emily for the role of Emily Dunbar.

Truby (2007) writes:

... the opponent should want the same thing as the hero. That means the hero and the opponent must come into direct conflict throughout the story... The relationship between the hero and the opponent is the single most important relationship in the story. In working out the struggle between these two characters, the larger issues and themes of the story unfold. (p. 59)

Aronson (2010) writes that, to achieve change, the action line is key:

A relationship cannot change until events force it to change, so you need to

create a strong action line: a series of events that force change on your characters. If your action line does not provide events that can change the relationship, all your characters can do is bicker unproductively.... The action line permits, indeed causes, the relationship line to happen. (p. 73)

Generating dramatic tension in The Winter Garden

It is envisaged that the audience is waiting to see if firstly, Winter succeeds in replacing Emily, and secondly, if Winter realises that she should stop trying to be Emily and concentrate on being herself.

The screenplay's story proper begins when Winter, having transformed herself into a facsimile of Emily Dunbar, arrives at her new high school and takes a seat next to the real Emily. This is the point at which the audience is intended to realise that dramatic tension on the action and relationship lines is going to stem from what happens between these two girls.

The stakes escalate when Winter is introduced to Emily's mother, Helen, and a relationship triangle between the three is established: the girls are competing for Helen's love. Further tension is generated through Winter's actions in proving herself a credible threat: clever, controlled, hard-working Winter would make a far superior Emily Dunbar than lazy, none-too-bright pleasure-seeker Emily herself.

As Winter gains the upper hand, Emily is forced to fight back by underhand means, and a turning point is reached when Emily lies to her family to prevent Winter joining them on their ski trip. When Winter finds out what Emily did, all pretense between them that they are friends is destroyed, the gloves come off, the girls are placed in open opposition to each other, and Winter is provoked to take revenge.

The point of no return occurs when Winter plants stolen meth in Emily's room, a crime for which, if she is found out, Helen will never forgive her. From now on, Winter has to defend the lie at all costs or *without doubt* lose Helen's love, as well as all her other gains. As a result of Winter's action, Emily is sent away, and her relationships with Helen and the rest of the family are forever changed. The damage cannot be undone: Winter simply cannot allow herself to be caught.

An attempt is made to lead the audience into believing that Winter has sown the seeds of her own destruction in getting Emily banished to a boot camp at which she meets Winter's meth client Gemma, and the two uncover Winter's true identity. But this expectation is subverted when the big revelation that Winter lives in a foster home in Amity Crescent only strengthens Helen's increasing preference for Winter over Emily. Emily's action leads instead to the moment of Winter's greatest success: Helen invites Winter to live with them, and packs Emily off back to boot camp. Winter has effectively *become* Emily: suspense in the story now stems from the questions of whether she can remain so, and what that will mean for her and Emily.

The screenplay's final sequence commences when Winter's action in planting the meth is discovered by Kurt, the drug dealer for whom Winter works, and used to blackmail her into helping him burgle Helen's house. Emily, meanwhile, is plotting her revenge. The forces of Kurt and Emily converge on the house in scenes intended to seem certain to lead to Winter's downfall. The audience expectation thus created is then subverted when Helen, faced with a climactic choice between believing Emily, who is telling the truth, or Winter, who is lying, chooses Winter. Emily is banished from the family: Winter has won.

Winter's victory resolves the tension on the action and relationship lines: the protagonist achieves her want, the antagonist is vanquished, and the relationship between the two is over. Tension now centres on the answer to the second story question: will Winter realise she needs to stop being trying to be Emily Dunbar? The final scenes of the screenplay focus on the costs of being Emily, and the hitherto-overlooked joys of Winter's old life. But Winter remains adamant. The key moment when the audience is intended to know for sure that Winter has not changed comes in the final image of the screenplay: Winter closes a window, shutting herself in Emily's world, and we know she will continue trying to be Emily Dunbar, whatever the cost.

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