

"Beneath the Blueberry Bush"

FADE IN.

EXT. BLUEBERRY FIELDS. 1970. DAY.

The afternoon is hot, creating shimmery waves. Rows upon rows of blueberry bushes line dirt paths in the open field.

A woman, HARPER (30s), looks around her. The blazing afternoon sun causes her to squint.

In the distance a car drives through the checkout point, kicking up dust as it leaves.

Harper sighs, bends down, and while balancing her half filled bucket of blueberries, adjusts the strap on her canvas sandal, with a perfect one-legged stand.

She moves her way along the dirt trail which leads to the opening of each row, making a slight pause at each entrance, peering down them briefly.

A very slight, almost imperceptible rustle in one of the bushes causes her to turn.

Harper walks tentatively down one of the rows, a slight smile creeping across her face.

Beneath one of the bushes, sits GINNY (6). Her mouth and fingers are covered in purple.

She reaches up above her head, and removes another blueberry from the branch. She chews it contentedly.

HARPER
Hello baby bunny.

Harper moves closer to Ginny.

HARPER (CONT'D)
(affecting a Southern accent)
- whatcha doin' down there?

Ginny sits in front of Harper chewing emphatically.

With some reluctance, Harper kneels down prayer-style on the patchy grass. Her bucket placed next to her side.

HARPER (CONT'D)
You know, you have to pay for
those. You can't just eat them.

Ginny gives no sign of acknowledgment, but continues picking berries.

(CONTINUED)

Harper notices the strip of skin running along Ginny's stout nose. It has turned bright red, stretching as far as the top of both cheeks.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I didn't put enough sunscreen on you.

Ginny holds out her hands for her mother.

GINNY

My hands are all sticky.

HARPER

I can see that, I can see that they are.

She reaches into her pocket and removes an old tissue. She proceeds to unravel it and wipe the juice off Ginny's hands.

GINNY

I like holding them between my fingers and skooshing them.

Harper watches as Ginny pulls her fingers together, then separates them - testing the remaining stickiness.

HARPER

Happy?

Ginny looks up with a smile and nods.

GINNY

You happy, Mama Bear?

Harper's face drops slightly, before making a quick recovery to an even sharper smile. She exhales a laugh.

HARPER

Don't I look happy?

Harper bites at her lower lip, eyes locked with Ginny, both deep in thought contemplating the other.

She moves to reply to Ginny's question, but instead nods her head.

HARPER (CONT'D)

We should probably go before you make yourself sick. Hm?

Ginny pulls herself up to a standing position. Harper gently touches the golden pieces of hair curling around Ginny's ear.

(CONTINUED)

HARPER (CONT'D)
You remind me so much of your
father sometimes.

As if actually confused, Harper adds:

HARPER (CONT'D)
It's strange.

Harper stands up, picking up her bucket as she does.

HARPER (CONT'D)
Come on now, don't forget your
bucket.

Ginny grabs her empty bucket.

They hold hands together as they walk back in the direction
of their car.

INT./EXT. CAR. DAY.

Ginny and Harper get in their respective seats. Harper
reverses the car, puts it in drive, and heads towards the
check out stand.

Harper parks the car.

HARPER
Stay here, bunny.

She gets out of the car holding the two buckets - one almost
empty with the exception of one or two blueberries, the
other half full.

At the check out stand, a BOY (18), waits patiently in the
baking sun. He is deeply tanned, going on burned in some
places, with prominent freckles.

BOY
Good picking?

HARPER
Yes, but I'm afraid my daughter
hasn't quite grasped the concept
yet.

Harper puts the buckets on the table, the boy notices the
bucket with several berries in it.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

Ah.

HARPER

I'll pay you for the bucket.

BOY

Don't worry about it.

HARPER

I insist.

The boy waves her off.

BOY

As long as you both had fun.

He picks up Harper's bucket, and sets it on the scale.

HARPER

You just graduate?

BOY

Yep, class of '70.

HARPER

What an unfortunate year to finish school.

Harper's tone has become a little sharper. The boy seems taken aback by her comment, but moves the conversation forward politely.

BOY

I don't think it's so bad.

HARPER

Yes? You've got a plan, then?

BOY

Not yet.

He's taking her slightly off-putting manner with gracious aplomb.

BOY (CONT'D)

That comes to 77 cents.

Harper fiddles around in her change purse, removing three quarters and two pennies.

He takes the change and puts it in the register.

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

Just going to play the waiting
game, then?

The boy looks up at her. Trying to think how best to
respond.

Harper takes her buckets.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Good luck. I hope you get a
favorable number.

Harper walks back to her car, frustrated.

They drive off.

INT. HARPER'S BEDROOM. 1970. NIGHT.

On top of the covers of her bed, legs outstretched, sits
Harper. She is dressed in an unflattering dressing gown. All
the better to hide her sharp, thin figure.

A phone is pressed close to her ear. She grits her teeth as
tears form in the corners of her eyes.

LYNN (O.S.)

Hello?

Harper inhales sharply, composing herself enough to speak on
the phone.

HARPER

Lynn.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LYNN'S HOUSE. 1970. NIGHT.

A small room with a rickety staircase leading down to a side
table on top of which sits the phone.

LYNN (30s) stands in her dressing gown. She adjusts the
phone against her ear as she realizes who is on the other
line.

LYNN

Harper?

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

Yes. Hello. I apologize for calling so late. Were you sleeping?

LYNN

Dozing.

HARPER

Sorry. My mind wouldn't settle, I thought I'd give you a call. See if you were still awake.

LYNN

Is everything alright?

Harper bites her lip harder, her chin quivers. She still manages a level phone voice, though.

HARPER

Do you remember what I told you the other night when I first heard?

LYNN

Is this about

HARPER

- Mm.

LYNN

Still no word?

HARPER

It's so hard. If I knew one way or the other, even if it's not what I want... at least I would have an answer. There would be resolution.

Harper makes a choked laugh into the phone, still determined not to give in to the tears.

LYNN

Isn't there someone you can speak with? I mean, there must be *someone* you can speak with.

Harper interrupts her with a pitiful laugh.

HARPER

They're all fairly useless. "Just wait. Be patient. We'll let you know as soon as we hear something..." Such careless disregard for his family.

(CONTINUED)

Lynn picks up the rotary dial telephone and brings it over with her to the stairs. She sits, phone in lap.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I took Ginny to the farm to pick blueberries today.

An expectant silence from the other line.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I didn't know what to say...

Harper wipes her nose with the sleeve of her dressing gown. Not a word from Lynn.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Ginny's mouth moves the same way Charlie's does. Did. I don't know. I just felt such a horrible person standing in front of her.

LYNN

Harper...

HARPER

Do you ever have those moments, those strange realizations, almost as if someone has literally slapped you across the face?

Lynn tentatively responds.

LYNN

Of course.

HARPER

Well that was it for me.

LYNN

What are you going to do?

HARPER

Wait? God, it's the endless waiting... I have to tell her something...

Lynn's mouth moves, but no words come out: there's nothing she can say.

Harper exhales a sad laugh into the receiver. She clears her throat before continuing, now more composed.

(CONTINUED)

HARPER (CONT'D)

Darling, I shouldn't keep you up.
It's very rude of me. We'll talk
tomorrow.

Harper returns the phone to its hook.

She leans forward and runs her hand from the top of her foot
up to where her dressing gown sits just below the knee. She
runs her hand back down again.

She looks to the phone beside her bed.

FADE OUT.