

Passion Flower

by

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Five Page Extract (of a Ten Page Script)

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

The sun, a crimson fireball, hovers over a broad meadow bounded on one end by woods.

PEOPLE step out of the trees by ones, twos, threes. Country people, farming families mostly, in their Sunday best.

The People's shadows stretch across scrub grass to their battered, dusty vehicles. Not a word is spoken. Only the BIRDS chirp.

The People disperse into their vehicles, head down a rutted lane to the nearby highway.

INSIDE PHIL'S PICKUP - MOVING

PHIL drives. Phil, mid-40's, craggy face, red from the elements, wears a John Deere cap, neatly pressed plaid shirt and jeans.

Beside him, ELLA, big-eyed and serious. She wears a WWJD T-shirt and long denim skirt, her pale hair piled in a bun on the back of her head.

Between them, a wide empty gap on the bench seat.

Phil opens a spotless ashtray. Inside, a single cigarette.

Ella's eyes follow his hand as he takes it out, pops it in his mouth, presses the truck's lighter.

They get eye contact. Ella shows disdain. Phil shakes his head, looks out the front window.

PHIL  
Doesn't matter now.

THE LIGHTER

Flares red as Phil lights his cigarette.

IN ELLA'S SIDEVIEW MIRROR

The sun, a perfect red ball.

EXT. PHIL AND ELLA'S FARM - DAY

SHEEP look up as the pickup rolls to a small wood frame house.

INT. PHIL AND ELLA'S FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Near a window, an apple pie thaws next to an aluminum tray of lasagna.

Ella unlatches the window screen.

EXT. PHIL AND ELLA'S HOUSE

The lasagna tray collapses on the hard dirt, pasta and sauce spewing.

The pie tin follows, rolls like a coin and spills fruit.

Chickens mob the splattered food.

PHIL

Opens a gate. Sheep and a couple of pigs rush into the yard, scattering chickens, devouring lasagna and pie.

ELLA

Turns away from the window, notices the photo tacked on the wall beside it,

AN ADVERTISEMENT

Torn from a nursery catalog: "THE MYSTERIOUS PASSION FLOWER!" A photo shows glorious purple flowers.

ELLA

Sighs. The screen door squeals open, bangs shut. Phil stops in the threshold. They look at each other, serious.

Phil walks purposely across the room, toward the bedroom.

EXT. PHIL AND ELLA'S HOUSE - HALL - DAY

Ella walks past the open bedroom door.

Inside, Phil sits on the bed and cleans a shotgun.

EXT. PHIL AND ELLA'S FARM - DAY

Ella holds the passion flower ad to her cheek, lowers it. In the b.g., her own passion flower plant: Flowerless, a dark lump engulfing a corner of the fence.

She leans close, sees a single flower bud, tightly sealed.

Ella unravels a garden hose and dowses the bud with water.

Behind her, the porch screen door whines open. Phil pokes his head out, watches her.

PHIL

You coming, Ella?

ELLA

You go on ahead. I'll catch you up.

He nods, watches her, backs into the house, disappearing behind the screen.

ELLA

Twists the hose's tap closed.

A SHOTGUN BLAST O.S.

Ella looks at the house while absently looping the hose up. She lets it drop, turns slowly to the front gate.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Ella walks down the center of the street. HAMMERING O.S.

ELLA'S P.O.V. - A SMALL HOUSE

A MAN on a ladder nails a sheet of tin over an upstairs window. All of the lower windows are sealed with tin.

A WOMAN sits on the edge of the porch, cradles a small CHILD, rocks back and forth.

A DOG in the front yard howls at the sky.

ELLA - MOVING

Stares to the road ahead, wipes sweat from her forehead.

THE SUN

Lower on the horizon, hot pink in a bloody sky.

EXT. RIVER - LATER

Reflected in rushing water, a bridge overhead, Ella crossing it.

ELLA'S P.O.V: THE ROAD

A GRIM MAN comes toward her, his pressed white shirt buttoned to the collar, hair neatly combed. He passes Ella like she doesn't exist.

A WOEBEGONE WOMAN, in her Sunday best dress, follows. The BABY in her arm holds a stuffed dog.

TWO BOYS, of about 10 and 12, in the same stiff white buttoned up shirts, follow.

Not one of them looks at her.

ELLA

turns back to the road. A trickle of sweat runs down her neck.

Over her shoulder, the blurred white forms of the family, now on the bridge.

Grim Man lifts and drops his squealing children over the side. Water splashes faintly.

Ella wipes her neck with the back of her hand.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Heat shimmers over dusty deserted pavement. Ella appears in the distance, distorted in the waves.

ELLA (V.O.)

When my cousin Stella died, you  
made me miss her funeral. You knew  
she was like a sister to me, but  
you remember what you said?

Ella crosses the deserted street to

PAT'S HOUSE

Sprawling red brick in a shady yard. A glass of iced tea sits untouched on a small table. A large drop of moisture rolls down its side, pooling at the bottom.

Beside it, a blank-faced WHEELCHAIR MAN. In his lap, a small oxygen tank, tubes up to his nose.

PAT, large, 50ish, cateye glasses and tightly curled hair, lights a cigarette and sticks it in Wheelchair man's fingers. She notices Ella in the yard, purses her lips, perturbed.

Pat straightens her silk dress and wilted orchid pinned to her breast, marches inside. Ella follows.

INT. PAT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

A big room, nice furniture littered with discarded gift-wrapping paper. A banner sags on one wall:

CONGRATULATIONS SHERRY AND LOUIS.

Pat's heels clack across the wood floor as she collects paper plates with remnants of cake and sandwiches.

PAT

If you came to apologize, don't bother. It's just a little late for that. You knew how important today was. You knew I needed you.

ELLA

I had to go to church. It was - vital.

PAT

Vital? As vital as my daughter's engagement party?

Pat, fuming, scoops gobs of wrapping paper from the floor.

PAT

And how can you call where you go to a "church"? Mucking around the woods, listening to some fanatic calling himself a prophet? You should be locked up, all of you.

Pat stuffs wrapping paper into a trash can.

ELLA

It don't matter now, anyway.

Pat looks up. Ella stares at her, intense.

ELLA

None of it's gonna be here by morning.