

The Cartwheel Kids

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FADE IN:

EXT. CARTWRIGHT'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

FRANNIE CARTWRIGHT, 16, is happily walking up the driveway towards a modest-looking house, clutching a certificate. She is wearing a Black Sabbath T-shirt, gym shorts and tall, striped tube socks popular in the late 70's and early 80's.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

It's tough being the middle child in a big family. Just when you think it's your turn to be in the spotlight, someone steals your thunder. I call it sibling interruptus.

Frannie enters the house. She finds her family attempting to solve the memory game Simon.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

Like the time I unexpectedly won an art award at my high school. I pretty much suck at every other subject except art. I was all set to revel in my day in the sun, when...

FATHER CARTWRIGHT, late 40s, steps from behind an archaic-looking movie camera.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

You're just in time, Frannie. Here, take over the camera.

FRANNIE

But, Dad, I have something I want to show everybody.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

C'mon, Frannie. Chop, chop.

Frannie frowns and takes over filming.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

My family never takes me seriously. Ever since I showed a mild interest in making movies, that's become my job.

Simon blinks a furious sequence of colors. The last color blinked is red.

With a red marker in one hand, SUSAN CARTWRIGHT, 18, draws a red line on a large chart hanging on the wall where she is keeping track of the sequence. She holds a blue marker in the other.

SUSAN
Rouge! It was rouge!

FRANNIE (V.O.)
That's Susan, "The DRAMA QUEEN."
Her life is always on stage. My job
is to get all those precious
moments on tape.

SUSAN
Are you getting my good side,
Frannie?

PETE CARTWRIGHT, 17, is wearing a tailored suit and hat. He is standing next to Susan holding green and yellow markers to keep track of when Simon blinks those colors.

PETE
I didn't know you had a good side.

Father Cartwright is shouting out the latest sequence of colors.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
That's my father, Jack Cartwright.
He's been pretty lost ever since my
mother, the famous Mary O'Flanagan,
died a few years back.

SUSAN
(to Pete)
Nice suit. Who are you, Pat Sajak?

PETE
I dressed for the occasion.

SUSAN
Dork.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
That's Pete, "THE CLASS CLOWN." I
don't know who's more of a camera
hog, Pete or Susan.

As Father Cartwright shouts, DICKIE CARTWRIGHT, 15, with long, tousled hair and an aloof manner, presses the corresponding buttons on Simon.

DICKIE
 (calmly)
 Will you two be quiet? I'm trying
 to concentrate.

Dickie looks at Frannie and the camera.

DICKIE
 Disco sucks. Oh, and I want my MTV!

FRANNIE (V.O.)
 That's Dickie, "THE MYSTERY MAN."
 He plays the drums in a band.
 Nobody understands him, but
 everybody loves him. He's the most
 like our mother.

PETE
 Hey, who's bright idea was it to
 solve this thing, anyway?
 (to Frannie)
 Hey, Martin Scorsese, was it yours?

SUSAN
 It was Jack's, he doesn't have
 anything better to do.

JACK CARTWRIGHT, 20, dressed in punk rock style reminiscent
 of the Sex Pistols, is sitting apart from the rest of the
 family playing a hand held video game. CHRISSIE CARTWRIGHT,
 10, is sitting next to him watching.

JACK
 Hey, Dad, the Smithsonian called.
 They need that movie camera for one
 of their exhibits.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
 That's Jack, "THE REBEL." He
 graduated high school over a year
 ago and hasn't done anything since.
 Oh, and that's Chrissie, "THE
 MASCOT." She's the youngest.

JACK
 Frannie, are you getting some
 footage of me playing video games.
 I think everybody will want to see
 that when we look back on this fun,
 family memory.

Chrissie tries to take the game from Jack.

CHRISSIE
 (to Jack)
 It's my turn.

Simon blinks it's final sequence. If it is correctly mimicked, the game will be solved.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT
 Red, green, yellow, red, blue,
 blue, blue aaaand green!

The Cartwright kids rush to the game, which issues one, small razz.

PETE
 (outraged)
 That's it! That's all it's going to do? Give us a razz? You got to be kidding me?

SUSAN
 Yeah, I thought something cool would happen. Like the American flag would pop out and the Star Spangled Banner would play.

JACK
 (laughing)
 You guys are idiots.

Dickie picks up the game and walks calmly over to the window.

DICKIE
 Do you want to play a new game?
 It's called, "Let's see if Simon can fly?"

In his typically deadpan fashion, Dickie tosses the game out the window. After landing in the mud, it issues one final razz.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
 Like I said, it's tough standing out in a crowd full of Cartwrights. I just hope that someday I'll finally have my day in the sun. (beat) Oh, wait! I almost forgot. I'm Frannie, "THE OBSERVER."

EXT. CARTWRIGHT'S YARD - DAY

The Cartwright children (shown when they were younger) are waiting for the school bus. MARY O'FLANAGAN is holding Chrissie's hand.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

In my hometown, every kid has a nickname. In the Cartwright family, we had one for all six of us. We got it when I was 11.

The school bus approaches the yard.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

My mother vowed that when she finally put her youngest child on the school bus, she would do a cartwheel on the front lawn.

The school bus opens its doors. The older kids file on. Chrissie is the last to board. After she is safely on the bus, Mary O'Flanagan begins to do cartwheels.

MARY O'FLANAGAN

(as she cartwheels)

Yahoo! Yahoo!

The kids on the bus all rush to the windows to see the commotion.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

From then on the bus driver called us "the Cartwheel Kids." Like most stupid nicknames, it stuck.

The Cartwright kids sink lower in their seats, shielding their eyes with embarrassment.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Chrissie is walking down the sidewalk carrying an old-fashioned suitcase with stickers on it. When she reaches a house with an old lady sitting on the porch in a rocking chair, she stops.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

Every once in a while, Chrissie decides to run away. She never makes it farther than OLD LADY HARRIGAN'S house.

Chrissie gets on her hands and knees and starts crawling, in an attempt to sneak past the house.

FRANNIE (V.O.)

Old Lady Harrigan is blind as a bat. But somehow she always knows when Chrissie's coming.

Old Lady Harrigan rises from her rocking chair.

OLD LADY HARRIGAN

That you, Chrissie? Why don't you come up here on the porch?

Chrissie pops her head up in recognition. She slowly rises and climbs up onto the porch dragging the suitcase behind her.

OLD LADY HARRIGAN

You want some lemonade?

CHRISSIE

Okay.

Old Lady Harrigan rises from her chair.

OLD LADY HARRIGAN

You know, you never finished telling me that story about your mother you started the other day. I'd like to hear the rest of it when I get back.

Chrissie perks up.

CHRISSIE

She was world famous!

OLD LADY HARRIGAN

I bet she was.

INT. THE PIZZA PALACE - NIGHT

Frannie and Dickie are behind the counter preparing orders. Two flirtacious teenage girls approach the counter.

GIRL 1

Hi, Dickie, what are you doing after work?

GIRL 2

Do you want to come to a party with us?

DICKIE
Where's the party?

GIRL 1
Where would you like it to be?

As he talks to the girls, COMMANDER BOB, a middle-aged man with stringy long hair wearing a dirty Army cap and an "I'm With Stupid" T-shirt, approaches Dickie.

COMMANDER BOB
Hey, Dude, I have an idea for you.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
Dickie and I work at the Pizza Palace with Commander Bob. He's Dickie's biggest fan. Commander never has his facts straight and is famous for giving bad advice.

DICKIE
Commander, I'm right in the middle of something.

COMMANDER BOB
Sorry, Dude. But I figured it out.

Commander Bob pulls Dickie aside. He draws close as if he's telling him something in confidence.

COMMANDER BOB
(whispering)
Dude, you should join the Army.

FRANNIE (V.O.)
Commander Bob is obsessed with the Vietnam War, even though it's been years since he served. (beat) As a short order cook.

DICKIE
I'm only 15!

COMMANDER BOB
It doesn't matter. Back in 'Nam, there was 15, 16-year-old kids everywhere.

DICKIE
Why do you call me 'Dude?' My name's Dickie.

COMMANDER BOB

You're missing the point, Dude! I got your future all figured out.

DICKIE

Shouldn't you worry about your own future? Don't you want to open your own restaurant some day?

COMMANDER BOB

Yeah, I guess you're right.

As they talk, NORMAN RICHTER, 18, and LYLE RICHTER, 17, enter the Pizza Palace with their younger brother, SAM RICHTER, 16. Norman and Lyle, both athletic looking with square jaws and thick necks, approach the counter. Sam, thinner than his brothers and dressed in alternative-style clothing, waits for them at a table.

CUT TO:

Frannie walks over to Sam's table with a rag to wipe it off. The two exchange a friendly glance.

SAM

Hi.

FRANNIE

Hi.

Frannie wipes off the table. Sam points to a tiny spot on the table.

SAM

(joking)

You missed this spot.

Frannie smiles.

SAM

You're Susan's sister, right?

FRANNIE

She's crazy about Lyle.

SAM

Aren't you in Mrs. Nunes' French class?

FRANNIE

I just got transferred into it.

Frannie finishes wiping the table and walks away.

SAM
See you in class.

CUT TO:

NORMAN
(to Dickie)
What's good to eat in this dump?

DICKIE
We got lots of things. What do you like?

LYLE
What would you suggest?

DICKIE
(sarcastically)
Oh, I don't know. What about pizza?

NORMAN
Sounds good to me. Lyle, does that sound good to you?

LYLE
Sounds swell. How about two slices?

Dickie takes the slices and puts them in the oven. He walks over to Frannie who has resumed her spot behind the counter.

DICKIE
I can't stand those guys. I don't know what Susan sees in Lyle.

FRANNIE
Just ignore them.

CUT TO:

Norman and Lyle have gotten into an argument with two teenage boys over a table. Sam is trying to pretend he doesn't know his brothers.

NORMAN
I think we were here first. Sam, weren't we here first?

SAM
We can find another table.

BOY 1
You heard him. Find another table.

LYLE

I think you should move. Now.

BOY 2

And I think you should find another table.

Norman picks up the boy by his lapels and shoves him forcefully. The other boy gets up to defend him, but Lyle blocks him.

BOY 2

Let's just go. It's not worth it.

As the boys leave, Norman gives Lyle a high five.

NORMAN

6.5 on the Richter scale!

Lyle laughs.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The Cartwright family members, except Jack and Pete, are walking in the cemetery towards Mary O'Flanagan's grave. Father Cartwright and Susan are carrying flowers.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

(touching the flowers)

Lilies of the valley. These were your mother's favorite. You know, she would have been 46 today?

SUSAN

46, huh? I wonder where I'll be at age 46?

CHRISSIE

Everybody will be dead by the time I'm 46.

DICKIE

I won't.

FRANNIE

Yeah, Dickie will still be playing in his band. On the has-been tour.

DICKIE

(laughing)

Shut up!

The family reaches the grave. The headstone is green and carved in the shape of a shamrock.

FRANNIE

I don't know why Mom wanted a shamrock. A woman who dies at age 46 isn't exactly lucky.

DICKIE

Well, you can't miss it. That's for sure.

SUSAN

That was Mom. You couldn't miss Mary O'Flanagan.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

It was her last request. She wanted good luck for the six of you after she was gone. She really loved all of you.

Jack and Pete arrive. Pete throws himself at the foot of the grave. He begins to wail in an absurd fashion.

PETE

Mama! Ma dio! Ma dio!

SUSAN

Do you have to do that every time we come here?

FRANNIE

The kid learns five good words of Italian and now look at him.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

Pete, stand up I want to say a few words.

Pete knocks off the shenanigans and stands up.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT

Well, Mary, we've survived another year. We're still intact.

SUSAN

And Jack is still unemployed.

JACK

No comments from the peanut gallery!

FATHER CARTWRIGHT
We sure do miss you, though.
Especially me. I'm not sure if you
can hear me, but if you can, bring
us more good luck this year.

Chrissie tugs on Father Cartwright's sleeve.

CHRISSIE
Can you ask her to bring me a new
bicycle?

FATHER CARTWRIGHT
She's not Santa Claus, honey.
(to grave)
Keep giving us your strength and
love.

Dickie begins to sob. The others are a bit taken aback.

FATHER CARTWRIGHT
Dickie? Are you alright?

DICKIE
(tears running down his
face)
I just miss her, that's all.

FRANNIE
I miss her, too.

SUSAN
We all miss her.

Pete rushes to the foot of the grave again.

PETE
Mama, Mama! Ma dio!

SUSAN
Jesus, here we go again. You had to
get him going.

Dickie laughs, while wiping away his tears.

INT. MUSIC STORE - DAY

Frannie is looking at records. The CLERK, a guy in his teens,
approaches her.

CLERK
Can I help you?

FRANNIE
No, thanks. I'm just looking.

CLERK
Hey, you're one of those Cartwheel
kids, aren't you?

FRANNIE
Yes.

CLERK
You're Susan, right?

FRANNIE
(annoyed)
That's my sister.

CLERK
Chrissie?

FRANNIE
Chrissie's 10.

CLERK
Well, who are you?

FRANNIE
I'm nobody.

CLERK
You can't be nobody.

FRANNIE
I'm Frannie.

Frannie tries to move away from the clerk, but he follows her.

CLERK
I was in the same math class as
your brother, Pete. That guy's a
riot!

FRANNIE
I'm happy for you.

CLERK
So are you in a band like Dickie?

FRANNIE
No!

CLERK
What do you do?

FRANNIE
I exist, okay. I breathe air. Take
up space. Use valuable natural
resources. If that's alright with
you?

The clerk backs off.

CLERK
Sorry I asked!

Frannie storms out of the store.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Frannie grabs her head and grimaces. When she looks up, she
notices a flyer posted in a storefront window. It reads "Film
Students Wanted." She enters the store.

INT. STORE - DAY

Frannie approaches a WOMAN standing behind the counter. She
points to the flyer in the window.

FRANNIE
Do you know anything about that
flyer?

WOMAN
Which one?

FRANNIE
The one that says, "Film Students
Wanted."

WOMAN
Oh, that. Every summer the college
offers a special film program for
high school students.

FRANNIE
How much does it cost?

WOMAN
It's free. But you have to be
accepted into the program. And the
competition's stiff. You have to
submit a short film of your own.

FRANNIE
(dejected)
Oh, I see.

WOMAN
I can give you a copy of the flyer
if you like.

FRANNIE
I don't think I'm good enough to
enter.

WOMAN
How do you know that?

The woman reaches underneath the counter, retrieves a flyer,
and hands it to Frannie.

WOMAN
Here. Take this home and read it.

FRANNIE
I don't know.

WOMAN
C'mon, take it. It can't hurt.

Frannie reluctantly takes the flyer.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Susan stands by her locker. Lyle approaches.

SUSAN
Lyle, I'm glad you're here. We have
to make plans for Saturday night.

LYLE
About Saturday night. There's
something I have to talk to you
about.

SUSAN
What is it?

Lyle looks at the ground.

LYLE
I can't go.

SUSAN
What do you mean you can't go?

LYLE
(sheepishly)
The thing is, this isn't working
out?

SUSAN
Isn't working out? What do you
mean?

LYLE
I mean us.

Susan looks bewildered.

SUSAN
You're dumping me?

LYLE
It's just that...I mean, my
family...

SUSAN
Your family? What does that have to
do with it?

LYLE
It's not really my family. You see,
Norman...

SUSAN
This is about Norman? Do you do
everything Norman tells you?

Students are beginning to stop and take notice of the
commotion.

LYLE
It's not that simple.

SUSAN
God, you're spineless.

Lyle gets angry.

LYLE
Yeah, well at least I'm not a
whore!

Lyle storms away.

INT. CARTWRIGHT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack and Pete are watching television. Susan walks in, sighs loudly, and flops into a chair. Jack and Pete ignore her.

SUSAN
(loudly)
Ohhh!

Jack and Pete still ignore her.

SUSAN
(even louder)
Ohhhhhh!

Jack and Pete still ignore her.

SUSAN
Aren't you guys going to ask me
what's wrong?

Jack doesn't take his eyes off the television.

JACK
No.

PETE
Nope.

SUSAN
Fine.

Susan rises and stands in front of the television.

SUSAN
Lyle dumped me!

Jack and Pete finally look at her.

SUSAN
He called me a whore! In front of,
like, the whole school!

EXT. CARTWRIGHT'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jack, Pete and Susan are rushing to Jack's car, a junker.

PETE
Off to the Bat Mobile!

SUSAN
Don't you mean the Crap Mobile.

JACK
(fuming)
I'm going to give that jerk a piece
of my mind.

Jack, Pete and Susan are inside Jack's car. Frannie meanders over.

FRANNIE
Where are you guys going?

JACK
To the Richters. I'm going to kick
Lyle's ass. Come with us, we need
your help.

FRANNIE
You want me to film this?

JACK
No, we need your support. The
Cartwheel Kids stick together.

Frannie shrugs her shoulders and opens the car door.

FRANNIE
Oh, wait. Why are we kicking Lyle's
ass?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RICHTER'S - MOMENTS LATER

Jack, Pete, Susan and Frannie are outside the Richter's grand estate. Pete is holding a bullhorn.

PETE
(into the bullhorn)
Come out, with your hands up!

JACK
Who are you, the NYPD?

Pete points the bullhorn at Jack.

PETE
(into the bullhorn)
I'm your worst nightmare.

JACK
(yelling)
Hey, Lyle, come out here and face
the music.

As the others are yelling for Lyle, Frannie wanders around the side of the house. Inside a window, she notices Sam painting on a huge tapestry. A modern artist, Sam is completely immersed in his work. His clothes are covered with paint.

CUT TO:

JACK
Lyle, Norman, you can't hide
forever. Come out!

An Hispanic woman wearing a maid's uniform opens the front door.

HISPANIC WOMAN
Hola, señor. Are you UPS?

JACK
No, ma'am. We're here to see Lyle.

HISPANIC WOMAN
(in broken English)
Where is your brown uniform?

JACK
We're not UPS.

HISPANIC WOMAN
I am not from this country. But I
know UPS do not wear black
uniforms.

JACK
I told you, lady, I'm not UPS.
Could you just get Lyle?

CUT TO:

Sam has wandered near the window where Frannie has been watching him paint. He notices her. They lock eyes for a moment and Frannie dashes away.

BACK TO:

Jack is still arguing with the Hispanic woman.

JACK
I'm with Federal Express.

HISPANIC WOMAN
No, Señor. You are not with Federal
Express. Those uniforms are blue.

JACK
I guess you don't want the package.

HISPANIC WOMAN
Don't try to fool me.

Jack turns to leave.

HISPANIC WOMAN
You are with U.S. Post Office!

JACK
You caught me. No mail today,
though.

Jack and the others leave.

INT. MRS. NUNE'S FRENCH CLASS - DAY

Frannie walks into class and sits down. She exchanges glances with Sam who is seated a few desks away. The PRINCIPAL enters with a teacher, MR. JORDAN.

PRINCIPAL
I'm afraid I have some bad news.
Mademoiselle Nunes will no longer
be teaching your class.

The class reacts with surprise.

PRINCIPAL
Unfortunately she has a family
emergency and had to leave town
indefinitely. The good news is that
Mr. Jordan will be taking her
place.

The students chuckle to themselves. A student raises his hand.

STUDENT
I thought you taught wood shop, Mr.
Jordan?

Mr. Jordan begins to speak, but the principal cuts him off.

PRINCIPAL
I know this seems a little
unorthodox. But Mr. Jordan was a
French major in college. You should
give him your complete attention.

The principal nods to Mr. Jordan then leaves the room.

STUDENT
(barely audible)
This ought to be interesting.

Mr. Jordan shuffles a bit in front of the class and takes a deep breath.

MR. JORDAN
(in a thick southern
accent)
Je m'appelle Monsieur Jordan.

The class erupts with language.

MR. JORDAN
Hey, that ain't funny. It's been a while, okay. (beat) Repetez, s'il vous plait.

STUDENT
(mimicking Mr. Jordan)
Repetez, s'il vous plait.

MR. JORDAN
(to student)
Do you think this is funny, young man?

STUDENT
En Francais, por favore.

The class laughs.

Mr. Jordan forms a "T" with his hands as if he is calling a time out during a basketball game.

MR. JORDAN
Time out. Now, I know this may seem ridiculous to you, but the fact of the matter is, there was nobody else who could teach this class. So we're stuck with each other.

The class is quiet.

SAM
(to student)
Give him a chance.

The student sneers.

STUDENT
Give me a break.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE FRENCH CLASS - DAY

As Frannie is walking down the hall, Sam catches up to her.

SAM

I saw you.

Frannie walks faster.

FRANNIE

What are talking about?

SAM

I saw you at my window.

FRANNIE

Oh that. Where were your brothers, anyway?

SAM

Who the heck knows. Will you slow down?

The student from French class sees Sam.

STUDENT

Hey, Richter, stay out of my business, okay.

The student turns to his friend.

STUDENT

That kid is such a weirdo.

Sam ignores them.

SAM

(to Frannie)

So how long were you watching me paint?

FRANNIE

I wasn't watching you, okay. You know my brother wants to kick Lyle's ass.

SAM

(chuckling)

Everybody wants to kick Lyle's ass.

FRANNIE

He's really pissed off.

Frannie stops at her locker.

SAM
So can I call you sometime?

She is dialing the combination to her lock, but stops.

FRANNIE
I don't think that's a good idea.

SAM
Why not?

FRANNIE
It's just not.

Sam backs off a little.

SAM
I guess that's okay. (beat) For now.

Sam turns to leave, but Frannie stops him.

FRANNIE
Does it bother you that kids think you're weird?

SAM
It used to. But not anymore. I celebrate my individuality. You should celebrate yours.

FRANNIE
My individuality? That's a laugh.

SAM
I just figure if you want people to notice you, you have to step out into the light.

FRANNIE
I don't think I want people to notice me.

SAM
Yes, you do.

FRANNIE
How do you know?

SAM
Everybody does.

Frannie ponders the thought for a moment.

FRANNIE

I thought it was cool what you did
in French class. I wish I had the
guts.

Sam slowly looks down at his stomach. Frannie laughs.

EXT. CARTWRIGHT'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jack is fixing his car. Dickie is assisting him. The hood of
the car is open.

JACK

This wrench isn't going to work.
Get me another size.

Dickie exits and returns moments later with another wrench.
Jack tries the new wrench.

JACK

This isn't going to work either.
Get me another one.

Dickie exits. A Porsche slows down in front of the house.
Norman sticks his head out of a window. Lyle is sitting in
the passenger's seat.

NORMAN

Hey, Jack, I heard you were looking
for us. Maybe you should have
called first?

JACK

Why don't you come out of the car
and talk to me?

Dickie brings another wrench to Jack. He grabs it.

JACK

(pointing the wrench)
You know I have a score to settle
with Lyle. Does he talk for
himself?

NORMAN

What kind of car is that, a 1972
Piece of Shit?

Jack tries the new wrench.

JACK
Damn it! This doesn't work either!
I need another one!

Norman tosses a map out the car window. It falls near the feet of Jack.

NORMAN
So you can find me next time.

Norman and Lyle laugh. Jack walks toward the car, but it speeds off. He picks up the map.

JACK
Assholes!

Dickie returns with an arm load of tools. He drops all of them at once, and they fall in a loud pile at Jack's feet.

JACK
What...?

Dickie, face expressionless, stares Jack in the eye for a beat. He walks away without saying a word.

INT. SUSAN AND FRANNIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Susan is primping in a mirror. Frannie enters and sits on her bed.

FRANNIE
Do you really want Jack to beat
Lyle up?

SUSAN
I don't care what he does to that
creep!

Susan brushes her hair.

SUSAN
Besides, you know Jack. He's going
to do whatever he wants anyway.

FRANNIE
That's true.

Susan turns to look at Frannie.

SUSAN
What's wrong with me?

FRANNIE

What do you mean?

Susan sits down next to Frannie.

SUSAN

Do you think I'm pretty?

FRANNIE

You get way more guys than I do.

SUSAN

Then why do guys keep dumping me?

FRANNIE

As I recall, you dumped John. And Jason.

SUSAN

Jason was a mutual dump.

Susan gets up from the bed and opens a closet.

SUSAN

You know, you could get more guys if you tried a little harder. You should dress up sometimes.

Susan takes a fancy dress out of the closet and displays it for Frannie.

FRANNIE

I think Pete has his eye on that one.

SUSAN

No, seriously, you need to have more flair, more style.

FRANNIE

Having style isn't my style.

SUSAN

You know what Mary O'Flanagan would have said.

FRANNIE

Yes. She would have said, "You know where you can find sympathy? In the dictionary, between shit and syphilis."

SUSAN
No. She would have said, "if you think you're special, then you are special."

FRANNIE
But I'm not special.

SUSAN
That's what I mean.

Susan continues to rifle through her closet.

SUSAN
I think I could help you with Sam.

FRANNIE
Sam?

SUSAN
Yes, Sam.

FRANNIE
How do you know about Sam?

SUSAN
People talk, you know.

FRANNIE
I don't know what they're talking about.

SUSAN
Yes, you do. Don't pretend you don't like him. I know better.

FRANNIE
I guess I like him.

SUSAN
You guess?

Frannie smiles.

FRANNIE
Okay, I like him.

Chrissie walks past the bedroom door carrying the suitcase with stickers on it. She is wearing lipstick and a dress three sizes too big for her.

FRANNIE
(sarcastically)
Now there's a girl with style! What
flair!

SUSAN
Oh, God. Not again. Chrissie!

Susan and Frannie chase after her. They catch up.

SUSAN
Are you running away?

CHRISSIE
No.

FRANNIE
Then what's with the get up?

Chrissie pauses for an instant.

CHRISSIE
Will you play Monopoly with me?

FRANNIE
Only if I get to be the race car.

They walk down the hall.

CHRISSIE
You always get to be the race car!

FRANNIE
You can be the thimble.

Frannie grabs the loose dress.

FRANNIE
You'll need it when you hem in your
new outfit.

SUSAN
I'll be the dog.

Frannie stops short.

FRANNIE
You know, I could make a wisecrack
right now, but I won't.

Susan nods her head knowingly.

SUSAN
I appreciate it.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

A raucous teenage party is in full throttle. Frannie is with her friend RITA, 16, a stylish and popular girl.

RITA
All right, this party is totally lame. When are the cool kids going to show up?

FRANNIE
I AM the cool kids.

RITA
Honey, you are totally cool. That's not what I meant. You are a smokin' babe. Babe-a-licious.

FRANNIE
Babe-o-rama. Babe on a popsicle stick.

RITA
Babe on a popsicle stick?

FRANNIE
Sorry, I got carried away.

A straight-laced looking guy approaches them.

RITA
(to guy)
Peter? David? Matthew? Luke?

GUY
It's Paul.

RITA
Sorry. I had to go through all the names in the Bible. I knew I'd get to yours eventually.

The guy walks away.

GUY
(sarcastically)
Have a nice night, ladies.

FRANNIE
Why did you rip on that guy?

RITA
For sport. That's what it's all
about. Sport.

FRANNIE
So you're a jock now?

RITA
(laughing)
No. Don't be silly.

Rita sees somebody she knows.

RITA
Oh, my God, he's here! Wait right
here for a minute.

Rita scrambles off leaving Frannie by herself. Sam ambles
nearby. Frannie sees him and tries to shy away.

SAM
(in a French southern
accent)
Je m'appelle Sam.

Frannie laughs.

SAM
You know, I don't think we've ever
been formally introduced. I'm Sam
Richter. My friends call me "Screwy
Sam."

FRANNIE
Should I curtsy or something?

SAM
You should yodel. Yodel loudly.
Like this.

Sam yodels. Frannie giggles.

FRANNIE
You know my brothers would kill me
if they knew I was talking to you.

SAM
My brothers would kill me if they
knew I was speaking French at a
party.

FRANNIE
(sarcastically)
We have so much in common.

SAM
So why won't you go out with me?

FRANNIE
Are you kidding me? My brother is,
like, ready to assassinate your
brother.

SAM
So?

FRANNIE
So? Doesn't that concern you?

SAM
No. My brothers are jerks. I don't
care what they think.

FRANNIE
(raising her eyebrows)
Oh, really?

SAM
What are you so afraid of? It's
like you're afraid to be yourself
or something. Like you're more
comfortable on the sidelines than
in the game.

FRANNIE
If I want to get noticed, I have to
step out into the light. Right?

SAM
Right. And can you think of a
better way than dating me? Screw
Sam Richter?

Rita returns.

RITA
Oh, my God. Todd is totally hot. I
can't believe he's here. And he's
not with anybody.

FRANNIE
This is Sam.

Sam gives a small wave. Rita pulls Frannie aside.

RITA
 Why are talking to him? He's a
 total freak.

FRANNIE
 (defensively)
 He's in my French class. He just
 came up to me and starting talking.
 What was I suppose to do, ignore
 him?

RITA
 Just get rid of him.

FRANNIE
 But, I..

RITA
 (to Sam)
 It was a pleasure meeting you, but
 us girls have something to talk
 about. If you'll excuse us.

Rita drags Frannie away.

EXT. PARTY - LATER

The party is winding down. Frannie is waiting for Rita, who
 is busy talking to Todd. Sam approaches.

SAM
 (pointing to Rita)
 So you're friends with her?

FRANNIE
 Yeah.

SAM
 Do you have a ride home?

FRANNIE
 Rita's taking me.

Rita is locked in deep conversation with Todd.

SAM
 Might not be anytime soon.

Frannie sighs.

SAM
 Hey, do you know I do imitations?

FRANNIE
Imitations?

SAM
Watch this.

Sam raises his right arm over his head and slowly lowers it in front of him. He alternately closes his right, then his left eye, in rapid succession.

SAM
Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding

Frannie chuckles a little.

FRANNIE
What the heck is that?

SAM
It's a railroad crossing.

Frannie bursts out in laughter.

FRANNIE
That's about the worst imitation
I've ever seen in my life.

SAM
You've never seen my imitation of a
pinball machine.

Sam begins whirling around bumping into trees and other objects. Frannie howls.

FRANNIE
(in between chuckles)
God, that's awful!

SAM
(smiling)
Maybe I should stick to painting.

Frannie looks at Rita. She shows no signs of finishing up with Todd.

FRANNIE
I'm going to walk home.

SAM
Can I join you?

FRANNIE
Sure, why not?

Frannie steps underneath a street light.

FRANNIE
Look. I'm stepping out into the
light.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CARTWRIGHTS - LATER

Sam and Frannie are approaching the house. They are still laughing.

FRANNIE
So Lyle really sleeps with a teddy
bear?

SAM
I swear to God.

They both crack up.

SAM
If he knew I told you that, he'd
kill me.

They reach the house.

FRANNIE
This is it. (beat) Thanks for
walking me home.

SAM
My pleasure.

They linger a moment, then Sam turns to leave.

FRANNIE
Sam?

He turns back.

FRANNIE
I liked your imitations.

SAM
(in a French southern
accent)
Merci beaucoup.

Frannie laughs and Sam leans in to kiss her, but she backs away slightly. Sam touches her hair instead.

SAM
Don't be afraid.