

POPPY FIELDS

WRITTEN BY

MAND PASKUSKI

FADE IN:

THE YEAR IS: 1812.

Reverberant Piano Forte fills our ears.

We're in Hertfordshire: Exquisite landscape views of golden sun sparkling on dewy green grass hairs, misty valleys where pools of fog sink low around large trees, rain pouring over cliffs and bluffs atop high peaks that all but kiss the clouds. Dazzling cinema to grasp our surroundings.

EXT. FARIN'S LAKE - DAY

A gentle breeze, WOMEN'S GARMENTS and UNDERGARMENTS hang over a tree branch.

POPPY (21), bathes naked in a lake filled with FLOWER HEADS. She's beautiful, brainy, stubborn, mischievous and currently... very HIGH.

Her SPARKLING EYES search the sky. Pupils dilated in full. Saucers.

A beautiful hallucination: The flower PETALS PLUCK OFF and RISE slowly towards the clouds. They DRIP WATER as they do.

They fill up the clouds and smear colours into the puffy whites, like paint. Poppy watches, transfixed.

PENELOPE (21), floats opposite Poppy so that their heads touch, ear to ear. She is cumbersome, sweet-faced with freckles and giggly. She too, is naked. Best-Friends.

POPPY

He loves us. He loves us not.

PENELOPE

God?

POPPY

Death.

Penelope turns to look at Poppy's expression, studying her eyes, aiming to see what she sees.

POPPY (CONT'D)

So skeletal and grotesque. I see only masterworks of horror.

PENELOPE

I see a frog sucking himself off.

Penelope BURPS. Poppy snaps out of it. They giggle, wildly, feverishly, child-like.

SOUND: HORSE HOOVES.

The girls grab FLOWER HEADS and cover their chests as TWO ROYAL GUARDS approach on horseback. The girls gasp!

GUARD 1

Quickly! Did you see a man pass through here?

POPPY

Beg your pardon?

GUARD 2

Damnit woman! A man! Did you see a wounded man?

GUARD 1

A wounded man!

Penelope blinks. The Guards' faces are morphing into huge SUNFLOWERS. Their facial features remain intact, but PLUMES OF PETALS GROW from the sides of their heads. Penelope sees a pretty version, Poppy sees decaying flowers.

PENELOPE

Is this real?

POPPY

I don't think so. That one looks like my Aunt Magda.

GUARD 1

We're tracking a wounded man.

GUARD 2

If aware, do please point in the direction you saw this man heading!

PENELOPE

Turn your gazes, Sirs! Can't you see we're not with clothes!

GUARD 2

Ladies, please! It's a matter of royal security!

GUARD 1

Answer us, damn you!

POPPY

Look away you bastards!

They cover their eyes with their hands. Guard 1 peeks through his fingers (which are PLANT BRANCHES with TWIGS and LEAVES). Penelope giggles, eyeing him.

GUARD 2

For bloody sake! For the last time,
did you or did you not see a man,
wounded or not, pass through here?

PENELOPE

We saw sunflowers.

POPPY

And frogs.

GUARD 2

For God's sake, Sod it. Onward!

The guards race on, away and out of sight or eat-shot.

PENELOPE

How peculiar.

POPPY

Law permitted, I should've liked to
be a soldier.

PENELOPE

You'd make a splendid soldier,
you're very purple-hearted.

POPPY

Do you really think so? How sweet
of you to say.

PENELOPE

Yes I do. I really do.

MRS. BAINCROFT (O.S.)

Poppy Baincroft! Penelope
Sinclair! You better not be
bathing in Farin's bloomin' lake!
It's full with leaches!

POPPY

Oh fuck!

The girls swim towards the shoreline and hop out. They pull
on their clothes.

PENELOPE

My dress!

Her dress is badly stained with yellow flower pollen.

Poppy pockets a PACKET OF SEEDS.

POPPY
Quick! Quickly!

They race over to a large tree and hide behind it.

MRS. ELLEN BAINCROFT "STEP-MOTHER" (40's), strides down to the water's edge. She is stern, thick-willed, tight-lipped and poised. She also happens to be extremely attractive. This is Poppy's step mother.

She turns to leave but speaks as she does.

MRS. BAINCROFT
Your father's back.

Poppy pokes her head out from behind the tree.

POPPY
He's back? What, just now?

Mrs. Baincroft carries on walking into the distance, she smirks and shakes her head.

Poppy pulls Penelope along, tugging her up and away from the lake.

Up the camera rises to the flower clouds that spell:

P O P P Y F I E L D S

EXT. BAINCROFT HOUSEHOLD - DAY

A modest, sturdy, lovely little house with life bounding from every hole or entry. Circumfenced in plant and animal life, flowers and ribbons strung aside dream catchers and tintinnabulums (wind chimes). This is no mere house, this is a home and a nice one at that.

GERALD (21), Poppy's twin brother and the battery of the family, pets a donkey out front. Next to him is their sister AMELINE (15), a beautiful, bookish-type with silky black hair and long nails.

GERALD
Late as usual. He's been waiting for you. You look a mess.

AMELINE
Penelope, would you like me to fetch you a towel?

PENELOPE

Oh, gosh, no, thank you. I should hurry home, mother will fuss about this stain. I dare not help it dry.

POPPY

We could--

PENELOPE

No really, it's alright. Go before you burst a blood vessel.

MR. BAINCROFT (O.S.)

Is that my little Popaloo I hear?

Poppy's face lights up.

PENELOPE

For goodness sake, go on!

(beat)

Poppy?

Poppy turns before entering.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Happy Birthday.

Poppy smiles and bounds inside.

INT. BAINCROFT HOUSEHOLD - STUDY / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. ELDRICH BAINCROFT "FATHER" (50's), handsome, happy, humorous, he sits at a PIANO BENCH. He plays the saddest, sweetest lullaby: POPPY FIELDS THEMATIC MOTIF for Mrs. Baincroft's benefit.

She sits beside him and plays some high notes.

MR. BAINCROFT

You've been practicing, my darling.

MRS. BAINCROFT

Only the high keys.

Mr. Baincroft chuckles and scoops himself a handful of Mrs. Baincroft's bum.

MR. BAINCROFT

You take the high notes, I'll take the low!

POPPY

Ukh, sorry to interrupt.

Mr. Baincroft turns his attention sharply, clearly to his favorite. He wraps Poppy in a bear hug that lifts her feet slightly off the ground.

POPPY (CONT'D)

Oh, Papa. Oh I'm so happy for your safe return! How were the winds this time?

(beat)

Did you find it?

He bends down to meet her eyes. Out of his pocket he gifts her a large CLAM SHELL. It's been pre-cracked for easier opening.

MR. BAINCROFT

Well, go on.

She opens it. Inside is a BEAUTIFUL PINKISH PEARL.

POPPY

Oh Papa. It's perfect!

Ameline and Gerald enter.

AMELINE

Papa?

MR. BAINCROFT

Yes, cherub?

AMELINE

Are you dead?

MUSIC CUE: TONAL SHIFT.

POPPY

Ameline!

GERALD

We received word from the ferryman down at Portlin Court Road. The ship--

POPPY

Stop it!

AMELINE

No survivors. Only the trunk--

GERALD

Yes. The trunk.