

POPPY FIELDS

WRITTEN BY

MAND PASKUSKI

FADE IN:

EST. ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

THE YEAR IS 1812.

Reverberant Piano Forte fills our ears.

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

Our TITLE FADES IN and OUT with the misty fog center frame:

P O P P Y F I E L D S

EXT. FARIN'S LAKE - DAY

A gentle breeze. WOMEN'S GARMENTS and UNDER-THINGS hang over a flower-peppered tree branch.

POPPY (21), floats naked in a lake filled with robust FLOWER HEADS atop mossy LILY PADS. Brainy, stubborn, mischievous and currently... HIGH out of her skull. She blinks, squinting awestruck at the sky. Pupils dilated dark.

A beautiful hallucination, one of many she'll have today: The flower PETALS PLUCK OFF their lily pads and rise slowly up. They DRIP WATER onto Poppy's cheeks.

Using her arm as a paintbrush, she swats the flowers PAINTING WITH THEM - pushing the petals from solid to paste-like-form. Using the sky as both canvas and pallet, she pulls in colors.

She's painting an OCEAN. At first it looks lovely but as she adds in shades of navy, we're witnessing her craft A STORM.

CREEEEEEEEEK! SOUNDS OF WIND and WOOD SPLINTERING.

OLD CAPTAIN'S VOICE (V.O.)

*Batten down the hatches, lads,
she's keeling! Hurry! Faster!
Aweigh with you Beaster! Be down
with ye and done! Heave yond boy!*

CLOSE ON POPPY'S DILATED PUPILS: The waves come alive. Angry.

The sky is the sea. Blue and terrifying. THE WHORL OF A GROUNDSWELL, circling to a distant epicenter - a great POOL OF BLACK centered like a watchful eye.

What began beautiful has shifted ugly. She SMEARS the whole of her creation together, a smush of muddied sour colors. Sounds of the storm wane away under gentler sounds of water.

PENELOPE (O.S.)

She loves us. She loves us not.

Backstroking into position next to Poppy, floats PENELOPE (21). Their heads bob next to one another's, ear to ear. Best friends. She's cumbersome, sweet-faced with freckles and giggly - naked except for her undies which she's refused to discard. More modest than Poppy. In her hands is a DANDELION she's been plucking petals off.

POPPY

She?

PENELOPE

A man could not have crafted such beauty in the world as this.

POPPY

My how our worlds are dissimilar, Penelope.

Penelope senses the shift in Poppy's mood.

PENELOPE

What is it? Is it the water?

Poppy offers only a look, one she hopes will convey the thing she doesn't want to say.

GUARD 1 (O.S.)

You two there! Did you see a man pass through here wearing a soldier's coat?

The women YELP and cover their exposed bodies with large FLOWER HEADS. Penelope gulps water, sputtering shocked.

On the edge of the lake, TWO ROYAL GUARDS sit on horseback.

GUARD 2

He will have been badly wounded.

Poppy stares at them, seeing only AMPHIBIOUS CREATURES astride horses - so strange. They have EEL HEADS with large blinking eyes. One BURPS a BUBBLE the size of her head.

GUARD 1

I say, what is it you're doing in there?

PENELOPE

Avert your eyes, for god's sake!
Can't you see we're indisposed?!

GUARD 2

Did you see the man?

GUARD 1

We do apologize, but it's a matter of royal security.

POPPY

(lying)
I saw a man.

Penelope caught of guard, looks over at her.

PENELOPE

You did?

POPPY

He went that way.

A HORN BLASTS in the distance. The Guards lift their chins, nod to the women and kick off into a sprint.

Penelope giggles, embarrassed.

PENELOPE

How peculiar.

POPPY

(re: eel-heads)
Indeed.

MRS. BAINCROFT (O.S.)

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

POPPY

Blast. It found us.

They swim towards the shoreline and hop out, yanking garments on, trying not to dirty them.

PENELOPE

Oh no!

Penelope's dress is badly stained by FLOWER POLLEN.

Poppy shoves a PACKET OF SEEDS in her pocket.

FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING GRASS approach.

POPPY

Quickly!

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

MRS. ELLEN BAINCROFT (40's), strides down to the water's edge. She's a woman not to be trifled with. Her personality happens to be in great contradiction to her lovely face, a face of un-contestable beauty. It's clear she takes great care in her own preservation. This is Poppy's step mother.

They're not fooling her. She stands, arms akimbo.

MRS. BAINCROFT

Your father's back.

Poppy steps out from behind the tree. She looks as though she's seen a ghost and takes off into a run.

PENELOPE

Poppy! Wait for me!

EXT. BAINCROFT HOUSEHOLD - DAY

A modest, sturdy, lovely little house with life bounding from every hole or entryway. Circumfenced in plant and animal life, flowers and ribbons strung aside dream catchers and tintambulums (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, cleans crusted mud from a donkey's hooves out front. His features are similar to Poppy's but with a feline, secretive quality.

Next to him stands a delicate, bookish girl with silky black hair and long carefully filed nails. This is AMELINE (15), their younger sister.

Poppy runs to a stop before the entrance, eyes only for who might lay within the house. Penelope runs up after her.

GERALD

What a wretched state you look.

POPPY

I wasn't aware the ass could speak.

A returning smirk - just simple sibling banter.

Ameline possesses the high-pitched, pinched voice of a girl wishing to sound more refined.

AMELINE

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

PENELOPE

I'm afraid I'm beyond salvaging.
Thank you anyhow, Ameline.

Gerald hands Poppy a HANDKERCHIEF.

POPPY

To what point, brother? By
intending to clean me I would only
sully it. Is it true? Is he--

MR. BAINCROFT (O.S.)

Is that who I think I hear
squawking about out there?

Poppy's face lights up like a spark. She bounds inside.

INT. BAINCROFT HOUSEHOLD - STUDY / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. ELDRICH BAINCROFT (50's), is happy and handsome in that order. Seated at a piano bench, he plunks keys of a sad-sweet melody. A lullaby of his own composition: POPPY FIELDS THEMATIC MOTIF. This is simply gorgeous music. A recognizable recurring melody we'll hear time and time again.

Mrs. Baincroft sits next to him. She seems younger by his side and happily content.

MR. BAINCROFT

You take the high notes, my dear,
and I'll take the low.

MRS. BAINCROFT

How spoiled I am, Mr. Baincroft.

MR. BAINCROFT

You've gifted me every high note in
my life, my darling. I would take
all lows to keep you in the ups.

He goes in for a kiss but...

POPPY

Father!