

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)

I see skeletal 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 such direction you saw this fellow 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

Good Heavens, give answer!

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.

A HORN SOUNDS in the distance.

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

Blast! It calls!

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
Look at the undefinable state of you two.

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.

Gerald hands Poppy a handkerchief.

POPPY
To what good, brother?

MR. BAINCROFT (O.S.)
Is that my little Popaloo I hear?

Poppy's face lights up.

PENELOPE
 For goodness sake, go on!
 (beat)
 Oh and 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, forgive the intrusion but--

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.

INT. BAINCROFT HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The TRUNK is in the living room adjacent to the kitchen. It's worn, scraped and covered in KELP. On the front are the initials E.F.B.

WATER LEAKS from it. Poppy watches.

POPPY
No. Papa?

Poppy searches her father's face. His hair is DRIPPING WET. His skin is now a BLUISH-GREENISH HUE and he's covered in CORAL and KELP.