

FIRST DROP OF RAIN

Written by

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Based on

Discovering Evelina by F. Frankfort Moore

An insightful woman dreams of being a novelist, however, women's writing is not taken seriously in 1777, so she must become as strong as the female character she wrote to break barriers and publish her groundbreaking novel.

Based on a true story.

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FADE IN:

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

YOUNG FRANCES BURNEY (12), glum in her mourning dress, cuts a length of black ribbon and crosses it over a portrait on the fireplace mantle of her recently deceased mother.

SUPER: "London, 1762"

Frances gently places a magnificent ENGLISH HAND FAN on the mantle next to her mother's portrait. She reads an old and faded BUSINESS CARD she holds in her hand.

FRANCES (V.O.)

Esther Sleepe. Makes and sells all sorts of India and English Fans after the most modern taste. Reasonable Rates. Fans mended after the neatest Manner.

A tear rolls down Frances' cheek. She props up the business card on the mantle near the fan.

CHARLES BURNEY (40s), scholarly historian and her father, comes knocking. Frances can see that he has been crying.

Frances goes to him and cries in his arms.

FRANCES

Father, I decided I do not want to grow any older.

CHARLES

You mustn't say that. Why would you even consider such a silly notion?

FRANCES

Because, if I grow older, I will have less time with you.

Her words bring a hint of a smile to his face.

CHARLES

Frances, you have a way of seeing things differently than I.

FRANCES

Perhaps, I look at things you do not.

He nods. His eyes wander to his wife's portrait on the mantle. He picks up the fan and gazes wistfully at it.

FRANCES (cont'd)
 Mother gave it to me before she --

She dries her eyes.

CHARLES
 Esther made and sold quite a lot of fans by the time I met her. Her shop, *The Golden Fan* was very successful.

FRANCES
 I cannot recall Mother making fans.

CHARLES
 She quit before you were born. It was the day after our engagement when I instructed her to close up shop. I allowed her to finish this final fan.

She gives him a look.

CHARLES (cont'd)
 My dear, it's not proper for a married woman to be professionally active.

She frowns.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - EVENING

Frances cries by the window as the sun sets over London.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/DINING ROOM - SAME

HANNAH BURNEY (18), a natural beauty who carries herself with confidence and grace, dines with Charles. There is a third place setting at the table that is untouched. Servants come in and out to clear the main course and serve dessert.

CHARLES
 My dear Hannah, what is to become of your sister?

HANNAH
 Have you considered sending her to school? Perhaps a change of scenery would brighten her spirits.

CHARLES

Frances lacks any discernible talents or quickness of study. A formal education would be wasted on her. You recall her difficulty learning her letters.

HANNAH

I remember you making a jest of it by pretending to teach her the alphabet with the page turned upside down.

CHARLES

I wasn't poking fun. I was teaching her perspective. She used to say the upside-down J was an old man's walking cane. Such imagination.

HANNAH

On rainy days, Mother would read Shakespeare and Pope to her. Frances still regales me with their stories from memory. She's quite capable.

CHARLES

I shall continue Frances' education at home. She would be miserable among bright girls far away at school.

Hannah scoffs.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Frances practices her mending. Charles walks in. He clutches a book. Frances glances at the book and rolls her eyes.

CHARLES

It's my duty to see to it that you complete your education. How a young lady conducts herself is important.

He sits and opens the book. She sighs in exasperation. He flips to a marked page and reads. She is quite annoyed.

CHARLES (cont'd)

(Reads.)

One of the chief beauties in a female character is that of modest reserve. That retiring delicacy which avoids the public eye and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration.

FRANCES

I shall have no admirers. Am I done?

He clears his throat and reads. She tunes him out and we hear only the occasional words...

CHARLES

(Reads.)

Never contradict a man. -- Active courage is not in a woman's nature. -- A woman's strength is her moral fortitude. -- Wit is the most dangerous talent a woman can possess.

FRANCES

So many rules. I fear I am destined to make mistakes.

Charles is not amused.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM - DAY

Frances mends a tablecloth by the warm hearth. Linens much in need of mending are strewn across a table.

Hannah comes knocking. She clutches a new leather-bound journal, inkwell, and box of quill pens.

FRANCES

What is all this?

HANNAH

I happened upon an adorable writing shop in the Strand.

Hannah sets journal, inkwell, and quills upon the table.

HANNAH (cont'd)

You tell the most engaging stories. Perhaps, you could commit them to paper for the enjoyment of others.

Frances scoffs. Hannah twirls in her elegant dress.

HANNAH (cont'd)

This will surely catch Bernard's eye.

FRANCES

I pray with all my heart that no boy will ever take notice of me.

HANNAH
You'll pray differently one day.

Frances rolls her eyes.

HANNAH (cont'd)
I'm playing piano at Father's dinner party, tonight. You should join us.

FRANCES
I must. I am to serve dinner. Father dismissed the staff this morning.

Hannah gives her a look of disbelief.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I blame the public for not loving his book. He is taking it hard.

HANNAH
I will help. We can do this, the two of us. Dinner will not miss a beat.

Frances smiles. Hannah gently shuts the door on her way out.

Frances glances occasionally at the journal as she sews. She gives into her curiosity and opens the journal. She ponders, inks a quill, and writes in perfect Italian 'ladies' hand' handwriting, which is much narrower and more slanted than modern cursive. Words appear on the screen as she writes:

"To Nobody will I write my Journal since to Nobody can I be wholly unreserved."

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Charles entertains his esteemed visitors: MRS. EVANS (30), a fashionable lady; BERNARD (21), a dashing opera tenor; THOMAS LOWE (50), curmudgeonly publisher, and Thomas' charming son HUGH LOWE (15). Charles' daughters Hannah and Frances round out the room.

Hannah coyly exchanges glances with Bernard.

Frances makes herself as small as possible in the corner.

Hugh tips Frances a wink and she pretends not to notice.

THOMAS
The influence of opera is like the air we breathe.

MRS. EVANS

Mr. Lowe is right. Londoners flock in droves to the opera house to be transported to another world by Bernard's angelic voice.

CHARLES

On many occasions, Bernard's singing has made our hearts beat at times beyond all computation of time and space. Would you agree, Hannah?

Hannah flushes.

THOMAS

Heed my words as your publisher, Charles. Opera must be the topic of your next book.

CHARLES

I will take it into consideration.

MRS. EVANS

I would volunteer my services to copy notes for you; however, I have endeavored upon penning my own novel.

THOMAS

For the delectation of your servants, I presume.

MRS. EVANS

It is high time that you publish a woman's book, Mr. Lowe.

Thomas scoffs.

Frances ponders.

Conversation continues indistinctly.

Hugh goes to Frances in the corner. He produces a folded sheet of paper from his pocket and hands it to her. She unfolds it and studies the pencil sketch of a flying fish.

HUGH

It's a flying fish. Father saw one years ago from the deck of a frigate in the south seas. It's yours, Fanny.

FRANCES

It is lovely, Hugh. Thank you.

HUGH
I intend to follow in my father's
footsteps.

FRANCES
You desire to be a publisher?

HUGH
After a stint in the Royal Navy, yes.

FRANCES
I cannot imagine a worse fate than to
have a boat shot out from beneath me
and to sink straight away into the
ocean. Simply dreadful.

HUGH
My life. My choices.

FRANCES
Choices -- a lovely concept.

Hugh gives her a quizzical look.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - EVENING

An upstairs bedroom with an inadequate fireplace for warmth
and a secretary for writing.

Frances wets a quill and writes: "*Caroline Evelyn. A novel
by Frances Burney.*" She ponders, then writes with fluidity.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - NIGHT

Frances clutches her short story *Caroline Evelyn* as she
tiptoes quietly across the room to the fireplace. She stokes
the fire and tosses the pages one by one into the flames.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - LATER

Vacant room. Fire embers glow. Hannah comes in to bank the
fire and is surprised to see handwritten pages burning. She
retrieves a few smoldering yet salvageable pages. She reads.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Frances gathers dishes. Hannah walks in and holds up the
burnt edged pages of *Caroline Evelyn* for Frances to see.

HANNAH
You wrote this.

Frances nods and goes about her work cleaning up the table.

HANNAH (cont'd)
It left me wanting more. Why did you
make a bonfire of it?

FRANCES
I was worried Father would discover
it.

Hannah holds up a page and indicates a word.

HANNAH
What is this word? It is unfamiliar.

Frances glances at the page in Hannah's outstretched hand.

FRANCES
A-shopping. It means to purchase
goods from shops.

Hannah gives her a quizzical look.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I was dissatisfied with the words at
my disposal, so I created a new one
that conveys my meaning precisely.

HANNAH
My little sister, a wordsmith.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

FRANCES (now 25) strolls down a path to a rosebush. Seeing
that she's alone, she hides a letter deep within the bush.

SUPER: "Spring of 1775."

Frances walks down the path and around the bend. She sits on
a bench and flips open the book *Pamela*, by Samuel
Richardson. She reads the last few pages.

HUGH (now 28) strolls down the path to the rosebush. Seeing
that he's alone, he retrieves Frances' hidden letter. He
opens the letter. It reads: "*Meet me at our bench.*"

He tucks the letter into his messenger bag and walks down
the path. He sees Frances reading a book and goes to her.

FRANCES
Good morning, Hugh.

HUGH
Fanny.

FRANCES
May I assume you found my letter?

HUGH
Our rosebush never disappoints.

She smiles. He sits next to her.

HUGH (cont'd)
Until today, that is. Your letter was merely a message directing me to you. I had very much looked forward to a continuation of your didactic discourse on how you feel women are so poorly represented in literature. It's your favorite topic of late.

She rolls her eyes.

HUGH (cont'd)
I see you're reading Richardson's *Pamela*. What's the verdict?

FRANCES
Is it not enough that I enjoy the books you bring me?

HUGH
Your father compensates me well to improve your correspondence. As your tutor, I'm expected to inquire, and you're compelled to respond.

FRANCES
Very well. Mr. Richardson's epistolary style is effective. He presents Pamela as an autonomous person and not an appendage to father or husband. And she works for her living. For that, I applaud him.

HUGH
I never thought I'd see this day. An author has satisfied your standards for writing a female character.

She puts up her hand.

FRANCES

However, I cannot relate to a naive protagonist who views her chastity as a priceless possession to be guarded by all means necessary.

HUGH

Women find Pamela to be a heroine for rebelling against her abusive master.

FRANCES

Yet Pamela surrenders herself to him when she becomes his obedient wife. I certainly would not marry a so-called gentleman whose concept of courting involved attempted rape.

HUGH

Pamela protects her virtue, and, in doing so, wins a wealthy husband.

FRANCES

Chastity is not a woman's highest currency. This is the rubbish we get in our libraries when men hold the pens.

It begins to rain. Frances races Hugh to a shelter house.

INT. SHELTER HOUSE - DAY

Hugh makes it inside the shelter house a few steps ahead of Frances. They are both laughing. They watch the rain.

FRANCES

Mother would read to me on rainy days.

Distant THUNDER. Rain intensifies.

FRANCES (cont'd)

There is no letup in sight. I fear we will miss today's lesson.

HUGH

Because of a few harmless raindrops?

FRANCES

Many seemingly harmless raindrops working together can breach the strongest dam.

Hugh steps to a table and pulls out a chair for Frances.

HUGH
Shall we begin our lesson?

FRANCES
How do you expect me to practice my letters with neither ink nor quill?

HUGH
I've something to show you. Please.

They sit. He produces a FOUNTAIN PEN from his messenger bag.

FRANCES
What is it?

He demonstrates the pen.

HUGH
A fountain pen. Recently arrived from Germany. I bought a box of them. Cost me a small fortune. One day, my father will place me in charge of the publishing business. And when that day arrives, I plan to gift these incredible devices to all my authors. Observe.

He writes with the pen. She's amazed. He hands her the pen.

HUGH (cont'd)
You may use it, but just this once. This is intended for use by skilled authors, not correspondence pupils.

She gives him a look.

EXT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

The rain has stopped. Frances and Hugh admire the fine books on display in the window. Frances' gaze tracks from book to book, all credited to male authors. She frowns. He notices.

HUGH
Booksellers are shrewd men of business. A woman's book would have to be sensational to be published.

FRANCES
But a man has only to be good enough.

INT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

LIBRARY MAN (adult) works behind the counter. Frances peruses titles on display. Library Man gazes at Frances. Hugh notices and steps up to the counter.

HUGH

She's my pupil. I encourage her to read for her edification. What do you recommend in the way of romance novels?

LIBRARY MAN

Let me give you some free advice. I wouldn't let your *pupil* dirty her mind with books. Women are not capable of separating the romantic rapture and passion found in books from reality. I see the sort of ladies that read. They become lost in romantic fantasy and unable to be satisfied by any other means.

Frances approaches and places the book *Clarissa*, by Samuel Richardson, on the counter. Library Man gives her a look.

FRANCES

Is *Clarissa* a poor choice?

EXT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

Hugh and Frances, book in her hand, emerge from the store.

FRANCES

I shall give this a fair appraisal.

HUGH

Your father must never become wise that I procure novels for you. He's reminded me on more than one occasion that you're forbidden to read them.

FRANCES

It will remain our precious secret.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM - DAY

Sewing table is cluttered with linens in need of mending, and there is an evening gown in the early stages of making on a dress form.

Frances is hunched over the book *Clarissa*. She reads to the end and sets the book upon a sewing table, upon which is an inkwell, quills, and some sheets of paper.

She pens the opening of a letter; "*Dearest, Hugh.*"

FOOTSTEPS of a man approaching.

She scurries to hide *Clarissa* under a pile of linens. She hides the inkwell and quills under linens as well. She is about to hide the letter but KNOCKING at the door signals that she is out of time. She runs to the dress form, where she pins the evening gown.

Charles opens the door. He glances at the unfinished gown. His demeanor screams disappointment.

FRANCES

Picture it with ruffles and lace.

CHARLES

Mrs. Stokes expects the dress in time for her niece's birthday. She agreed to pay handsomely if you were to deliver it this very afternoon.

FRANCES

Must I on such a lovely day?

CHARLES

The path to idleness is known to lead many far off the King's highway.

He notices the letter on the sewing table. He picks it up.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Hugh?

FRANCES

Do you find it unreasonable for a pupil and her tutor to share written intimacies?

He shakes his head disapprovingly and drops the letter.

CHARLES

I desire for you a gentleman who'll elevate your social status.

She frowns.

CHARLES (cont'd)
You're no longer a girl. Every year counts in reducing one's chances of being settled in life. It's past time for your introduction into society.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Frances follows Charles as they pass through the parlor.

FRANCES
I intend to stand on my own two feet. Only then will I wed the man of my choice.

CHARLES
I do not wish for you the hard life of a woman of labor; however, I trust you can earn a respectable living as a dressmaker. That is, until you find yourself a proper husband.

FRANCES
I shall always earn enough not to be shackled to a man for want of money.

CHARLES
Your husband will have plenty to say about whether or not you'll be allowed to work outside his home.

FRANCES
I will not settle. I am not Mother.

CHARLES
You have her spirit and intelligence.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER

FRANCES
I enjoy dressmaking, yet I love writing far more. Writing is what I desire to do.

CHARLES
You're a good girl, my dear, and I'm indebted to you for your admirable copying of my notes for my book. Do not let the idea take hold of you that such work is well paid.

FRANCES

I was not thinking of copying.
Perhaps, I could write a novel.

CHARLES

You might write a novel for your
private collection. Have you
considered that?

She is saddened. He can see the disappointment in her eyes.

CHARLES (cont'd)

You must understand. If you become
labeled as a literary lady, your
prospects of reaching for a higher
shelf will come to an end.

He retrieves his hat and coat.

CHARLES (cont'd)

I pray my new book will find the
shelves of many readers. In the
meantime, we must rely upon your
dressmaking. Attracting a proper
husband is an expensive proposition.

FRANCES

I remember how proud you were when
you first beheld your *History of
Medieval Music* in cover and binding.
I desire to one day feel truly proud
of myself, if only for one moment.

CHARLES

You have plenty of reasons to be
proud. Many fine ladies have
complimented your dressmaking.

She sighs in frustration.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Saturday night, we're going to the
opera. I'm doing research for my
book. Afterwards, you'll attend your
first formal ball, where I suspect
you'll find many eligible suitors.

She scoffs.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Your sister married a singer, and she
lives in the lap of luxury.

FRANCES

I implore you, do not compel me to attend some dreadful ball.

CHARLES

Do you prefer the spinster's solo to the matrimonial duet?

FRANCES

I am not ready. I will not go to any man without first being his equal.

He takes a long, hard look at her hair. This makes her suddenly self-conscious.

CHARLES

We must have your hair done properly. I'll call on Hannah to help you.

FRANCES

A real gentleman understands that the true worth of a woman is sealed within her pages. He is a pretentious cad who makes the mistake that he fancies all there is to know about a woman by glancing at her cover.

CHARLES

Your beauty, my dear, is how you'll win a man's heart.

He walks out the front door. She stomps her feet and grunts.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM

Frances stands in front of a full-length mirror. She is saddened by her appearance as she does not see her beauty.

She sits in front of her "*Dearest, Hugh*" letter and writes.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM

Frances clutches the book *Clarissa* and the letter sealed in wax as she scurries in. She locks *Clarissa* away in the secretary and walks out with letter in hand.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Frances strolls down a path to the rosebush. Seeing that she is alone, she hides the letter deep within the rosebush.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Hannah plays piano. Frances and Charles listen with rapt attention. The private concert comes to an end and Frances and Charles applaud.

CHARLES

Hannah, please express my gratitude to Bernard for allowing his wife to visit her broken down father.

FRANCES

I must attend to my mending. Thank you, Hannah. Delightful, as always.

Frances walks out.

CHARLES

Frances has none of your advantages.

HANNAH

She really is not a dunce, you know.

CHARLES

I must admit, despite her lack of musical ability, she has done some very pretty sewing. It's humbling, but what she earns as a dressmaker is all we have to keep up appearances.

HANNAH

She can write. Her letters possess great warmth of feeling.

CHARLES

Writing a proper book requires more than female feelings. It demands male intellect. Besides, it's unladylike.

Hannah rolls her eyes at him.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM

Hannah toys with the contents of Frances' sewing basket while Frances sews.

HANNAH

You've always been creative. I could never have made up such clever little pieces to act as you did when we were children.

FRANCES

Ha! I have heard our guests ask, when they have heard you play the piano, who the shy little girl in the corner is and what she means to do for their entertainment? They cannot believe that a girl with no musical talents can be your sister.

Hannah examines cutouts that will eventually form a dress.

HANNAH

How is it that you can make such elaborate dresses?

FRANCES

It is not difficult. I see the dress in my mind, break it down into sections, cut out the pieces and sew them together.

HANNAH

I believe you'll find that the same creative process is important to a writer.

Frances gives her a quizzical look.

HANNAH (cont'd)

Ignore Father's advice when it concerns what you can, or cannot, do. Men believe that nothing a woman could do would surprise them.

FRANCES

It is my belief that men deny us the quill out of fear that our success will come at their expense.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Thomas is at his desk. Mrs. Evans scowls at him.

THOMAS

Mrs. Evans, the quality of your manuscript is - ah - quite unlike anything in our catalog.

Mrs. Evans glances at her manuscript on his desk. It sits on top of a stack of other rejections.

MRS. EVANS

Then, why not publish it?

THOMAS

We are a respectable publisher. We must adhere to our principles.

Thomas and Mrs. Evans in a stare down. Neither blink.

MRS. EVANS

My manuscript, please.

He hands her manuscript over. She storms out of the office. Thomas sees Hugh outside the door. Hugh carries a messenger bag. Thomas motions to him. Hugh comes to the doorway.

THOMAS

Son, where are you off to?

HUGH

I've been summoned by Mr. Burney. It's rumored that he's finally writing a history of opera. I've a contract for him to sign.

THOMAS

Make it happen. Charles needs a success and so do we.

HUGH

Mrs. Evans seemed rather put out.

THOMAS

It's not enough that her husband's a member of parliament. She considers herself something of a novelist.

HUGH

Is her book any good?

THOMAS

Scandalous story in the style of Haywood's *Love in Excess*. Entirely inappropriate for our respectable clientele.

HUGH

You reject all literary ladies.

THOMAS

They're all scandalous women with stories to match. Lowe and Son will never publish a literary lady.

Hugh turns for the door.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Are you still instructing Frances in
the womanly art of correspondence?

HUGH
I am.

THOMAS
I've always had a warm place in my
heart for that poor pitiful girl, a
seamstress in a family of writers and
musicians.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hannah and Charles converse over tea and cakes.

HANNAH
Are you quite certain that Frances
desires to attend this ball?

CHARLES
It matters not what Frances desires.
It's my duty to see her marry well.

HANNAH
You really should give her some say
in the matter.

CHARLES
Frances is not blessed with your
abundance of feminine charm and
grace. I need you to help Frances put
her best foot forward. She has one
chance to make a meaningful first
impression. She cannot afford to make
a mistake. Frances must be fetching
in a room full of attractive ladies.

HANNAH
Well, that shouldn't be so difficult.
When one finds oneself in the company
of attractive people, one naturally
feels an attractive person also.
Isn't that why you entertain so many
distinguished visitors, Father?

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hugh strolls to the rosebush. Seeing that he's alone, he retrieves Frances' hidden letter. He breaks the wax seal and reads.

FRANCES (V.O.)

Dearest, Hugh. I am grateful for your gift of *Clarissa*. As an interpreter of women, Mr. Richardson has sorely missed the mark yet again. In this novel, the female protagonist is drugged and raped by her suitor. I fear; what is to become of young women if all they have to read are novels written by men.

Hugh chuckles and places the letter in his messenger bag.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - EVENING

Hannah helps Frances into her elegant evening gown. Frances' hair is beautifully done.

FRANCES

You cannot think how oddly my head feels, full of powder and black pins. When I shall be able to use a comb again, I cannot tell.

HANNAH

I thoroughly enjoyed going a-shopping with you.

FRANCES

The ladies were so much dressed, that I should rather have imagined they were making visits, not purchases. But what most diverted me was that we were more frequently served by men than by women. And such men. So finical. So affected. They seemed to understand every part of a woman's dress better than I did myself.

Hannah looks amused.

FRANCES (cont'd)

I do not want to attend the ball. When Father invites his students into our home, they gawk at me. I can feel them judging me by my plain features.

HANNAH

Oh, my goodness. I don't think those young men are gazing at you because they consider you plain.

Frances scoffs.

HANNAH (cont'd)

If you're to write a romance novel, you must learn a thing or two about men. That is the value of the ball.

Frances ponders her words.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Charles, in formal attire, swirls a glass of wine. Hugh sits up straight in a nearby chair.

CHARLES

I wish to speak with you on a matter of some gravity.

HUGH

I'm hopeful this matter has to do with your new book.

Hugh goes to open his messenger bag.

HUGH (cont'd)

I took the liberty of preparing a contract for your consideration.

CHARLES

I hold your father in high esteem. Thomas has grown Lowe Publishers from humble beginnings into the most respected publishing house in London.

Hugh, caught off guard, stops short of retrieving the contract.

HUGH

You mean, *Lowe and Son Publishers*.

Charles ignores him and sips wine.

CHARLES

You were a Navy man.

HUGH

I served my King, yes.

CHARLES

Then, you've been among the savages of the South Seas, and are well acquainted with the rules of chasing and capturing prizes.

HUGH

What does this have to do with your book? You're writing on the subject of opera, not of ships and seas.

CHARLES

I venture to say you see my daughter as something of a prize.

Hugh's look of astonishment is met with Charles' stern gaze.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Nothing happens in this house without my knowing it. I understand you and Frances exchange personal letters.

HUGH

That she may practice her correspondence, yes.

CHARLES

No more personal letters. I wish for Frances a husband who can provide her the status she richly deserves.

Hugh is dumbfounded.

Hannah and Frances, breathtaking in her evening gown, appear standing in the passageway. Hannah hangs back to allow Frances her moment. Frances is surprised at the unexpected presence of Hugh.

Hugh is fast to his feet. He bows. He is speechless.

Frances curtsies. She glares at Charles. He shrugs.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Tonight, is my daughter's introduction into society. Quite the formal affair. Many of London's most eligible bachelors will be there.

Hugh gazes at Frances. This makes her self-conscious.

HUGH

I've never seen you so elegant.

FRANCES
No one will notice me.

HUGH
London will adore you.

Frances beams. Charles notices and whispers in Hugh's ear...

CHARLES
She deserves a true gentleman.

Charles extends his arm and Frances accepts.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Hugh, you may see yourself out. Leave
your contract on the table.
(To Frances)
Shall we?

Charles escorts Frances out.

Hugh sets the contract on the table. Hannah gives him a comforting smile.

HANNAH
Father can be a muttonhead.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM/LOBBY - NIGHT

MILES HAZELTON (28), one of London's most famous tenors and an eligible bachelor, makes his entrance. He takes a step to one side that allows him to have a full-length view of his reflection in a long mirror. His image pleases him. He walks towards the ballroom entrance with the short strut of a man who does not underrate his own importance.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Chamber orchestra plays. Ladies and gentlemen waltz.

Miles holds court with many fashionable ladies. He notices Bernard across the room and goes to him. Bernard lustfully gazes at a young beauty who appears quite available.

MILES
Bernard, you really must find
yourself a more suitable hobby.

BERNARD

Come now, Miles. Those eyes of yours
sure do a deal of roving in the
course of a night.

MILES

Unlike you, I'm not married.

BERNARD

One must pluck many violins to keep
one's masculinity in tune.

Frances and Charles enter across the room. Frances notices
that men are looking at her and she hangs onto Charles' arm.

FRANCES

I want to go home.

Charles scoffs.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Men are looking at me as if I am
entirely at their disposal. Does that
not concern you?

Charles slides his arm out from Frances' grasp.

CHARLES

My dear, you cannot experience life
sitting in a corner.

Charles winks and makes his exit.

Frances gingerly steps into the room.

MUSIC ends. APPLAUSE from all, except Frances who observes
for a second, not knowing what to do. A moment passes.
Frances applauds with great enthusiasm just as the applause
dies down, placing herself as the center of attention.

Miles gazes at Frances.

Bernard looks surprised to see Frances. Miles notices.

MILES

Do you know her?

BERNARD

She's my wife's sister. Last time I
saw Frances, she was flatter than a
tone-deaf soprano.

MILES
Will you introduce me?

BERNARD
Hannah cannot know I'm here. Sorry.

Bernard retreats into a corner and hides among the ladies.

Miles gazes at Frances.

Frances tries and fails to feign a self-confident posture. As she looks for a friendly face, her eyes land on Miles. Intimidated by him, she retreats into a corner far from Bernard. Miles approaches and they stand face to face. Her beauty has rendered him breathless. He gazes into her eyes.

FRANCES
I would rather you talk to me than merely look at me.

MILES
Yours is a face that deserves to be admired.

FRANCES
I do not invite people to look at me, and happily few people do.

The next waltz begins to play.

MILES
Will you honor me with a dance?

FRANCES
I would rather not be considered ready to accept the first partner who would take me.

MILES
Please allow me to properly introduce myself. I'm Miles Hazelton.

Frances is starstruck.

FRANCES
The opera tenor?

Miles bows.

MILES
At your service.

Miles waits for Frances to introduce herself, but all she can do is gaze at him.

MILES (cont'd)
And you are?

FRANCES
Frances. Frances Burney.

Miles offers to take her hand.

MILES
Miss Burney, allow me the honor and happiness of this dance.

Frances extends her hand at first, then draws it back.

MILES (cont'd)
It's perfectly natural.

FRANCES
I am sure it is. I just have never seen nature so formally attired.

Miles gallantly extends his hand and waits patiently.

Frances summons courage and takes his hand. Miles leads her out onto the dance floor. Dancing couples sneak peeks at Frances. She catches their glances and is suddenly more self-conscious. Miles soaks in the attention.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I must be an embarrassment.

MILES
Let them look. They're envious that I have such a lovely partner.

Frances struggles to maintain a proper dance posture.

MILES (cont'd)
Your part is easy. All you have to do is follow my lead.

They dance. It is evident that Miles is an accomplished dancer, and this is all new to Frances.

MILES (cont'd)
Do you like opera?

FRANCES
I cannot say. I have never taken the opportunity to find out.

MILES

Are you fond of music?

FRANCES

Not particularly. I find singing tedious.

MILES

So, box seats at my opera would not please you?

FRANCES

England is blessed with wonderful works of Shakespeare yet Londoners flock to imported operas. I could imagine nothing worse than enduring an entire performance where no one speaks a word of English.

He forces a smile, yet she can see he is hurt.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Perhaps, I could give opera a try.

His smile broadens. He attempts to pull her closer, but she maintains a respectable distance.

FRANCES (cont'd)

My sister says singers have many lovers. Is that true?

MILES

Miss Burney. You shock me.

Miles is embarrassed.

FRANCES

You're blushing.

MILES

Am I?

FRANCES

I read in a romance novel that when a gentleman blushes it is but a reflex of guilty intentions. Is that true?

MILES

No, it is not. May I suggest reading a higher class of novels.

FRANCES

I will take that under advisement.

Her feet get in his way, and they nearly topple with Miles catching her. She is embarrassed. He is amused. They dance.

MILES

Women are the fortunate ones.

She gives him a look.

MILES (cont'd)

Men are burdened with high expectations while ladies are granted allowances for their failures. Take this dance, for example. Your right foot is unfamiliar with your left, yet I'll be the one ridiculed for being an inadequate lead.

She pulls away, which startles him.

FRANCES

I am sorry that you have been so unfortunate as to make choice of me.

MILES

What accident of mine may I attribute to your poor behavior?

FRANCES

Accident, sir?

MILES

Yes, accident; for surely, it's not my intention to tempt a lady to be guilty of ill-manners.

She takes a step back. He realizes his mistake and softens.

MILES (cont'd)

My apologies, Miss Burney. Please, allow me another dance.

FRANCES

London has just grown tiresome.

She struts out the room, drawing unwanted attention to him.

A laughing Bernard makes his way to wistful Miles.

BERNARD

Bravo! Miles Hazelton in the new opera *How I cost myself a night's pleasure*.

MILES

It was far from my intention to offend such a fetching creature.

BERNARD

What does it matter? Look around you. A feast of willing dance partners.

MILES

Frances danced differently.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM/LOBBY

Charles observes Frances' storming in from the ballroom. She makes her way to the exit and, realizing that she is without her father, comes to a stop. She waits in dignified fashion as Charles approaches. Charles escorts Frances to the door.

FRANCES

I should have stayed in the corner.

CHARLES

I see. What's the gentleman's name?

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - DAY

Frances vigorously removes her gloves.

FRANCES

Young women need an instruction book on the vexing subject of romance.

Frances sits at the secretary and inks a quill.

Words appear on the screen as she writes:

"To draw characters from nature and to mark the manners of the times, is the attempted plan of the following letters. -- Evelina to the Rev. Mr. Villars."

Charles appears standing in the doorway.

CHARLES

More letters?

FRANCES

Yes, Father. I am authoring letters.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Fashionable ladies mingle. Frances and Hannah sip tea.

FRANCES

Miles believes himself to be the belle of the ball, but I shall teach him that a woman can be just as important as a man.

HANNAH

I'm somewhat acquainted with Mr. Hazelton. He has performed in more than one opera with my husband. I'm certain he was quite taken with you.

FRANCES

My heart raced when he asked me to dance. Is this what love feels like?

HANNAH

Careful now. What one considers love is often veiled infatuation.

FRANCES

He chose me. So many distinguished ladies, and he danced with me, a nobody, a seamstress.

HANNAH

There are seamstresses that do more for this world than ladies of rank.

FRANCES

I must lift myself up from my level of insignificance. I will never play the part of a crowned beggar maid.

HANNAH

Is that how you think of yourself - a beggar maid?

Ladies flock to greet Miles, who is on a stroll through the park. Frances does not notice, but Hannah does.

FRANCES

Miles is exceedingly handsome.

HANNAH

Not to mention fashionably dressed.

Hannah motions for Frances to turn around. The sight of Miles catches Frances by surprise.

Ladies press around Miles and speak at him in a buzz of voices. He bows low to the ladies and smiles politely. Miles catches a glimpse of Frances, and his smile broadens. He comes to her side. It is only then that he notices Hannah. He tips his hat and bows. Frances is speechless.

MILES

Miss Burney. - Mrs. Pearce. I'd join you fine ladies, but I'm expected at rehearsal for my new opera.

Miles presents a pair of theater tickets to Frances.

MILES (cont'd)

Nothing would please me more than for you to be my guest on opening night.

Frances remains speechless as she accepts the tickets.

MILES (cont'd)

Consider this an apology for my rude behavior. Enjoy your tea, ladies.

Frances watches Miles walk away.

HANNAH

Tell me about this rude behavior.

FRANCES

We exchanged a few words in haste and I walked out on him. This opera is my second chance to get it right.

HANNAH

I'd never wish for you the hard fate of having a singer at your side.

FRANCES

And yet, you married one.

HANNAH

That's what makes me an authority. Singers think they are far above us.

FRANCES

My only sister considers me unworthy of a gentleman's affections.

HANNAH

I'm serious. Be wary of a man who is smitten with himself.

Frances scoffs. Hannah shakes her head in frustration.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC plays. Couples waltz. Frances walks in with Charles.

FRANCES

Miles was incredible tonight. His performance of *Waft her, Angels* was something I will not soon forget. Was there ever so angelic a man?

Frances scans the room for Miles. He is nowhere to be seen.

CHARLES

It may take him some time to leave the theater, considering all those ladies gathered at the stage door.

Frances rolls her eyes at him. She has her back to the entrance, so she does not notice the appearance of Miles. The crowd welcomes Miles with enthusiastic applause. Frances twirls to observe Miles standing at the entrance. She smiles and he answers her with a low bow.

Charles grins and feigns a yawn.

CHARLES (cont'd)

All this excitement has taken a toll on this old man. Would you mind terribly if I called it a night? I'll ask our driver to return.

Frances gives her father a peck on the cheek. He bows and makes his way to the door. Miles approaches Frances. Charles beams with pride as he makes his way out the door.

FRANCES

What is it like to walk into a room resounding with acclamation?

MILES

Tiresome.

FRANCES

I have often wondered how it would feel to be admired.

MILES

You must have many admirers.

FRANCES

That is a nice consideration.

MILES

Thank you for coming to my opening night.

FRANCES

I thoroughly enjoyed it, although I am still somewhat ignorant of what it was all supposed to be about.

MILES

Here's a secret. So am I.

FRANCES

Surely, you understand the story.

MILES

I sing my part, the same words night after night, and try not to appear bored out of my mind. That's the real craft in acting. What did you think of my performance?

FRANCES

I am still thinking of *Waft her, Angels*, although nearly an hour must have passed since I heard you sing the last notes. It seems to me that when half a century will have passed, I shall still be thinking of it.

MILES

Then I've not sung in vain.

Miles bows and extends his hand.

MILES (cont'd)

May I have the honor of this dance?

FRANCES

I would much rather dance with you than with a stranger.

They dance.

MILES

My old maestro gave me this advice when I was proving to him my success in reaching the high note. "*That is all very well,*" he said. "*You have aimed at touching that rare note. Now your aim must be to touch the heart.*"

FRANCES

Not too difficult for you.

MILES

I did not care to touch hearts. For me, it was all in the musical challenge. That is, until my eyes beheld you. Now, I want to touch your heart with everything I sing.

His hand wanders low on her waist.

She takes his hand and guides it from her waist.

FRANCES

It is enough for one evening that I was wafted by the angels.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frances lights candles. She retrieves the manuscript of her novel *Evelina* from the locked secretary. She writes.

FRANCES (V.O.)

(As she writes...)

Evelina to the Rev. Mr. Villars. - Just attended my first opera. I had not any idea of so great a performer. His voice is so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones. Such grace in his motions. And - Such fire in his eyes.

She glows. She inks a quill.

FRANCES

I shall not visit my pillow. My quill has much to say.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - LATER

A frazzled Frances reads a page of her manuscript. She inks a quill and crosses out one paragraph and then another. Her frustration grows. She wads up the page and tosses it onto a discard pile of pages. She pensively paces. She opens a secretary drawer and pulls out the book *Clarissa*. She flips and scans pages until she finds one of interest.

She paces as she reads...

FRANCES (V.O.)
 Clarissa threatened to kill herself
 with a penknife should Lovelace
 resort to physical violence.

She drops the book *Clarissa* on her bed.

She sits at the secretary, inks a quill, and writes.

FRANCES (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Note to self. Evelina must stand up
 to men who pursue her with any amount
 of physical or verbal violence.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - LATER

Frances sleeps at the secretary. The last candle burns out.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - MORNING

Early light illuminates Frances sleeping at her secretary.

KNOCKING at the door awakens her.

CHARLES (O.S.)
 You slept in. I was forced to fend
 for myself at breakfast. I'm off to
 the opera house. Long day of
 interviews for my book. I expect
 dinner at the conventional hour.

FOOTSTEPS recede. Front door OPENS and SHUTS.

Frances peers out the window and watches Charles walk from
 view. She settles in at her desk to write. She is out of
 paper and low on ink. She sighs.

FRANCES
 I am going to need many quires of
 paper and a whole box of quills.

She hides her manuscript in the secretary drawer.

She attempts to burn the discarded papers in the small
 fireplace; however, the draft is poor and the fire
 inadequate. She collects the discarded pages and walks out.

The book *Clarissa* sits on her bed.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM

Frances incinerates discarded pages of her manuscript in the fireplace.

She sews the final stitches on a dress.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Frances stands at the open front door to a London home. Woman admires the dress Frances made her - the one she just finished sewing. Woman pays Frances for the dress.

EXT. WRITING SHOP - DAY

Frances walks out with paper, ink, and a box of quills.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - EVENING

Frances stashes paper and quills so they are well hidden.

We notice that the book *Clarissa* is gone.

KNOCKING at the front door to the house.

Frances peers out the window and is shocked to see Hugh standing at the front door. Charles answers and lets him in. Indistinct conversation from downstairs. Frances grunts in frustration. She frantically primps.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Charles serves Hugh a drink.

CHARLES

I summoned you because I've important business to discuss.

HUGH

I'm your servant, sir. I trust that this time you refer to our representation of your new book.

Charles rolls his eyes away from Hugh's view.

Frances appears standing in the passageway. Hugh rises.

HUGH (cont'd)

Fanny.

Hugh bows. Frances curtsies. Charles smirks.

CHARLES
Please, join us.

FRANCES
Are you quite sure? The conversation impressed upon me that you are conducting business.

CHARLES
I insist.

Frances takes a seat, followed by Hugh. Charles reaches into his vest pocket for the contract and comes up empty.

CHARLES (cont'd)
How careless of me. I must have left your contract on my desk.

Charles smirks and leaves the room.

FRANCES
Did you get my letter?

Hugh produces her letter from his messenger bag.

Charles eavesdrops unobserved just outside the passageway.

HUGH
I considered you could read it to me and expound your review of *Clarissa*.

FRANCES
You have always been sincere in your interest to learn my perspective.

HUGH
Once I finish up with your father, we can get to our lesson.

FRANCES
That would be lovely. Unfortunately, I have misplaced *Clarissa*.

Hugh catches a glimpse of Charles. Charles clearly holds a book in his hands. Hugh gapes. Frances considers Hugh's expression is in response to her misplacement of the book.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I will find a way to replace it.

CHARLES

I believe Hugh wasn't expecting me to discover this.

Charles holds up the book *Clarissa*.

Frances frowns.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Have I not made myself perfectly clear that my daughter is forbidden to read novels?

FRANCES

It was all my doing, Father. I am responsible for bringing Richardson's rubbish into your house.

CHARLES

Samuel Richardson was a devout moralist and I'll not have his name sullied by you or anyone else.

FRANCES

Richardson praises women more for defending their virtue than anything related to their abilities or intelligence.

Charles scoffs.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Father, you have opined on more than one occasion that the mark of a lazy writer is he who fails to understand his subject before inking his quill.

Charles is mildly amused.

CHARLES

If you're to go to all this trouble to sneak a book, I suggest you hide it properly. Not to mention, show appreciation for quality writing.

FRANCES

Of course, the issue you would take most umbrage with is that I did not like the forbidden book.

HUGH

Surely, you do not suggest that Fanny is lesser for reading novels.

CHARLES
It's indecent.

FRANCES
Would it be so terrible if I were to
write a novel?

Charles laughs.

CHARLES
(To Hugh, in fun)
Look what you've done. You've
disillusioned the poor girl through
the reading of fiction.

FRANCES
You said yourself that I did good
work on the notes for your new book.

CHARLES
Copying notes for your father's book
does not make you a novelist. It
simply means that you're a useful
daughter.

HUGH
Her correspondence is high quality.

Charles raises an eyebrow at the letter in Frances' hand.

CHARLES
Be serious, man. I don't mean writing
letters. What if she wrote a serious
book? Would you dare publish her?

HUGH
Lowe and Son does not publish women's
writing.

CHARLES
There you have it, my dear. If you
were to write a book, it would be all
for naught.

Frances is peeved and directs her anger at Hugh.

FRANCES
I am not quite up for a lesson today,
Mr. Lowe. Since the chance of me
seeing you again before you take
leave is remote, I bid you goodbye.

Frances makes a graceful exit despite her dashed hopes.

Charles hands *Clarissa* to Hugh.

CHARLES
Literacy causes women no end of
trouble.

HUGH
I believe reading conjures up fond
memories of her mother.

Charles produces Hugh's contract from his vest pocket.

CHARLES
Esther was a voracious reader.

HUGH
And yet, you made choice of her as
your wife.

Charles raises an eyebrow.

HUGH (cont'd)
May I be so bold as to suggest that
Fanny will fair equally well - not
despite her reading - because of it.

CHARLES
Frances is a grown woman. She can no
longer afford to engage in such
unfashionable activities, especially
now that she has attracted the
attention of a real gentleman.

Hugh looks puzzled.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Evidently, she failed to inform you
that she met a tenor at the ball.

Charles peruses the contract.

CHARLES (cont'd)
The sum is far less than expected.

HUGH
It's a generous offer. Music history
is no longer the treasured subject it
once was.

Hugh extends a handshake.

HUGH (cont'd)
 However, if this book sells as well
 as your first, I'll personally see to
 it that you're fairly compensated.

Charles softens and shakes his hand.

CHARLES
 You'll have a first draft shortly.

HUGH
 Perhaps, Fanny could help you with
 this book beyond copy work?

CHARLES
 I won't allow it.

HUGH
 Why not? She's a good writer.

CHARLES
 I'm her father. I must protect her.

HUGH
 From what?

CHARLES
 Humiliation.

HUGH
 Hers or yours?

Charles ponders his words.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM

Frances mindlessly sews a dress. She is upset and unable to
 concentrate on her work.

KNOCKING at the door.

HUGH (O.S.)
 May I?

FRANCES
 If you insist.

Hugh enters.

HUGH
 Have I upset you?

FRANCES

The winds seem to send you in all four directions at once. I would expect a former pilot to steer his ship on a truer course.

HUGH

I'm confused.

FRANCES

You are confused? Try being taught to appreciate literature only to discover that your friend and tutor is not supportive of women's writing.

HUGH

A publisher such as Lowe and Son is held to high standards. I'm not saying it's fair, nor that I agree, but London is not ready to elevate women's writing to respectability.

FRANCES

How can Londoners be ready when there is nothing for them to elevate?

He sets *Clarissa* upon the desk.

HUGH

We must be more careful. If your father finds you with another book, he may banish me. We cannot allow that to happen. Do you agree?

FRANCES

Of course, I agree. Why pose such a ridiculous question?

HUGH

Your father mentioned you met a gentleman at a ball. A tenor.

Frances is suddenly embarrassed.

FRANCES

I did not wish for you to find out this way. Hugh, I value our friendship. I do not want anything to come between us. Please understand. I am of age where I should no longer burden my father.

HUGH

You consider it better to burden a husband?

She gapes. Her mood darkens.

HUGH (cont'd)

I was only trying to suggest that a hasty marriage is not your only path.

FRANCES

I have said nothing about marriage. I support this household with my dressmaking. If other doors open, I will consider them. You have options. It is not so easy for me.

Hugh's head droops. Frances softens.

FRANCES (cont'd)

It is a great mystery to me why a man who is as handsome as an archangel should so much as glance at me.

Hugh forces a smile. He walks over to the unfinished dress.

FRANCES (cont'd)

A private ball it was called, so I had expected to have seen about four or five couples: but Lord! I believe I saw half the world.

He tries to distract himself by examining the dress.

FRANCES (cont'd)

It was quite a formal affair. The men were dressed so foppishly. You would have laughed.

HUGH

Your herringbone pattern is impressive. How do you do it?

She tosses her hands in the air.

FRANCES

Fine! Let's talk about sewing!

(a bit sarcastic)

Would you like me to teach you how to herringbone?

HUGH
(In perfect honesty)
Would you mind?

Frances is caught off guard. She softens her tone.

FRANCES
It would be my pleasure.

Frances sits next to Hugh. She takes up needle and thread.

FRANCES (cont'd)
What you know is modeled from the
common Channel herring.

She demonstrates the stitching of a herringbone pattern.

FRANCES (cont'd)
My new pattern is modeled after the
flying fish of the South Seas.

He gives her a quizzical look. She gives him a coy smile.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I still have the drawing you gave me.

He smiles broadly.

FRANCES (cont'd)
Notice the beautiful design of the
backbone.

He observes intently as she sews.

HUGH
You have a steady hand.

FRANCES
Why, thank you.

HUGH
Can you teach me how to do it?

Frances gives him a look.

HUGH (cont'd)
Simple mending, I can do. I'd rather
it not become common knowledge that I
enjoy sewing so much.

FRANCES
It is a strange world, indeed, when
one must hide one's talents.

HUGH

It's a hard world for men. We're expected to be one sort of way.

FRANCES

I can only imagine the strain.

HUGH

Having no sister, I took it upon myself to learn the basics. Perhaps, we could alternate lessons. I teach you literature one week and you teach me sewing the next - with the utmost discretion, of course.

She smiles and nods her head. They sew together.

FRANCES

Have you ever dreamt of doing something truly meaningful?

HUGH

Fanny, I've little doubt you can make a man instantly happy while also taking the world by storm.

FRANCES

Men take the world by storm. Women are destined to dance in their puddles.

Charles steps into the room. He looks with suspicion at Hugh holding a sewing needle. Hugh, suddenly self-conscious, sets the sewing work down.

Charles stares blankly at Frances and shakes his head. He leaves and shuts the door behind him.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Father is exasperating.

HUGH

He means well.

FRANCES

A father's acknowledgment that a daughter is useful is practically an announcement that she's not accomplished.

EXT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - EVENING

Thomas goes to lock the door on his way out only to discover that he has misplaced his key.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - EVENING

Thomas searches his desk and finds the key under a stack of papers. He notices the window near his desk is open. He sighs in exasperation at his forgetfulness. He shuts the window and secures the latch on the sash.

EXT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - EVENING

Thomas locks up and walks away.

EXT. SHELTER HOUSE - DAY

Frances watches in hopeful anticipation as Hannah reads a draft of *Evelina* - a scribbled mess of notes and crossed out sentences. Hannah sets down the pages; she looks pensive.

HANNAH

Your *Evelina* has promise. The time has come to inform Father.

FRANCES

Why would I do that?

HANNAH

Because you have no husband to represent you.

Frances gives her a quizzical look.

HANNAH (cont'd)

A publisher, if he does not dismiss you out of hand, will demand proof you have Father's permission to have it printed.

FRANCES

Hugh can intervene on my behalf with his father.

HANNAH

Hugh has no standing with you. And his father will not publish a woman. You told me so, yourself.

Frances sighs in exasperation.

HANNAH (cont'd)
Have you considered paying a printer
and selling your book on your own?

FRANCES
My novel deserves a first-rate
publisher. I want to see my book in
the libraries and at the booksellers.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Frances and Hannah stroll in pensive silence.

FRANCES
I could deliver my manuscript to Mr.
Lowe anonymously.

Hannah gives her a quizzical look.

FRANCES (cont'd)
Yes. I shall remain anonymous until
Evelina is accepted for publication.
They will naturally consider my book
the work of a man. Once she goes to
the printers, I shall reveal myself
as her author and demand credit.

HANNAH
Sadly, your scheme will never work.

FRANCES
Why not?

HANNAH
For starters, you write like a lady.

Frances gives her a look.

HANNAH (cont'd)
Men write in round hand. Hugh taught
you to write in Italian 'ladies'
hand.' Furthermore, due to your
correspondence with Hugh and your
copy work on Father's books, your
handwriting is well known by Mr.
Lowe, his printers, and his son.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/CHARLES' STUDY - DAY

Frances copies notes for her father's manuscript, *The History of Opera*. She holds up Charles' handwritten pages.

FRANCES

How hard could it be to feign a man's penmanship?

She sets Charles' handwritten pages next to her notes. She studies the handwriting differences between her father's penmanship and hers. Charles' penmanship is in round hand: a plain, middle-size script akin to modern day cursive - simple and easy to read, compared to the elegance and flourishes of 'ladies' hand.'

SERIES OF SHOTS -- Frances learns to write in round hand.

- A) Frances sews a dress in her sewing room.
- B) Frances sells the dress to a lady in town.
- C) Frances purchases tracing paper from the writing shop.
- D) Frances traces her father's penmanship in his manuscript.
- E) Frances studies the tracings and works on her own interpretation of round hand penmanship.
- F) Frances practices round hand while growing more and more frustrated with what seems to be a lack of progress.
- G) Frances writes a page of *Evelina* in her round hand and compares it against her 'ladies' hand' original. There's a slight improvement in her round hand with a hint of 'ladies' hand.'
- H) Frances rewrites the first page of *Evelina* in fluid round hand and is pleased with her new manly style of handwriting.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Frances and Miles appear deeply infatuated with each other. He attempts a kiss. She stops him with a raised palm and a shake of the head.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frances is bleary-eyed as she arranges pages of her draft manuscript on the floor in different sequences like she is building an enormous jigsaw puzzle.

She uses her sewing scissors to cut a page into smaller sections with one paragraph each. She inserts the paragraph cuttings into the sequence and ponders. She is not satisfied with the result and reshuffles the pages and cuttings.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM - DAY

Frances and Hugh sew together. Hugh is focused on his work. Frances is lost in thought.

HUGH

Our rosebush has been lonely.

FRANCES

I had not realized how sincerely you have missed reading my letters.

HUGH

I feel as if I were suddenly cut off from some great interest in life. As if I'd gone to the office one morning and found that someone had stolen the printing press.

Hugh inadvertently pricks his thumb with the sewing needle.

FRANCES

That is why God invented the thimble.

She giggles.

HUGH

Does my sewing amuse you?

FRANCES

You show much improvement.

He smiles. They resume sewing. She coyly glances at him as she stitches a seam. She turns her attention back to her work and can clearly see that she has wandered off the seam with her needlework. She gasps. He examines her mistake.

HUGH

You wandered off the line.

FRANCES

My heart is not in my needlework.

HUGH

Sew it seams.

He laughs at his own puns.

FRANCES

You do realize puns are the lowest form of humor.

HUGH

I'm an editor. I've never claimed to be a *sew-phisticated* writer.

She rolls her eyes at him.

Charles comes knocking with roses and a card from Miles. He shoots Hugh a cheeky grin and walks out.

Frances opens the card and beams. She fawns over the roses. Hugh is thrown off-kilter. Frances notices and sets the roses in a vase.

FRANCES

Perhaps, we could do a writing lesson after we finish sewing?

Hugh smiles.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Hannah practices piano while Frances turns pages for her.

HANNAH

In the book you're writing, Lord Orville respects Evelina physically and emotionally. Is that true of Mr. Hazelton in respect to you?

FRANCES

Miles sometimes forgets himself. But I know what to do.

HANNAH

It's a beautiful romance you're writing. One can learn a great deal about men from Evelina's experiences.

Frances turns the music page. Hannah does not miss a note.

FRANCES

Do you remember how Father made a jest of my thirst for reading by pretending to teach me the alphabet with the page turned upside down?

HANNAH

I considered him clever. He was the first to recognize your early difficulty reading letters.

FRANCES

I could have sorted it out on my own.

HANNAH

I have no doubt.

FRANCES

Evelina will prove to Father that I can write a novel. Furthermore, I will show Miles that I can be as admired for my writing as he is for his singing.

HANNAH

A singer doesn't share a stage with his wife.

FRANCES

Once my book is published, I will be able to give myself fully to Miles. If he proposes marriage, I will gladly accept as his equal.

HANNAH

What about Hugh?

FRANCES

(Hesitates.)

Hugh is my writing tutor. Of course, he will be impressed with my book.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - NIGHT

Miles relaxes on the sofa while Frances lights candles. She joins him on the sofa. She sits a respectable distance from him, yet he slides closer. He places his hand upon her knee. She gently slides his hand from her knee.

MILES

Why do you keep me waiting?

FRANCES

I hope that if you ask me three months henceforth, I shall be able to say yes.

(MORE)

FRANCES (cont'd)

It is not so long to ask you to wait, seeing that I have let you have a glimpse of my heart and told you that as you feel for me, so I feel for you.

MILES

I can be patient.

She glances at a folded sheet of paper set on the fireplace mantel. He is drawn to the piano.

MILES (cont'd)

I suppose you play.

FRANCES

I find my enjoyment in writing.

She goes to the fireplace and retrieves the folded paper.

FRANCES (cont'd)

I have something to read to you.

MILES

A love letter. That's adorable.

FRANCES

No. Not a letter. This is a poem.

MILES

My sister sends me the most thoughtful letters from Paris. Correspondence is a ladylike accomplishment and one worth excelling in.

She hesitates.

MILES (cont'd)

Please, proceed. The stage is yours.

She folds open the poem. He gazes at the piano.

MILES (cont'd)

That's a beautiful forte-piano. I understand your sister is quite a talented pianist.

FRANCES

Yes. May I read to you what I wrote?

MILES

Only a few years ago, no one thought to improve upon the harpsichord. I'm of the opinion that the piano will replace the harpsichord in every household.

Miles directs his gaze from the piano to Frances.

MILES (cont'd)

How has this come about? I'm making a speech about pianos when I mean to talk to you of yourself.

FRANCES

We always seem to find a more profitable topic.

Her head droops. He goes to her and takes her hands in his.

MILES

I will read your letter when I am alone and want to be reminded of you.

She gives him a look.

MILES (cont'd)

I'd rather you not waste our precious time together reading when your lips are meant to be kissed.

He leans in for a kiss and she leans away.

MILES (cont'd)

Frances --

She raises her hand.

FRANCES

You must not speak another word lest the charm of the evening should fade away.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frances' frustration grows as she writes and makes mistakes. She thrusts down the pen with a grunt. She glances wistfully at her mother's hand fan, calms down, and writes at a furious pace.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY (WINTER)

Decorated for Christmas. Hugh and Frances sit close together on the sofa. She looks like she has not slept. Ink stains her hands. He gives her a wrapped package.

FRANCES

What is it?

HUGH

A surprise. You must open it to find out.

She opens her present. He watches with anticipation.

FRANCES

You always give me the most thoughtful presents.

She is thrilled to find that the gift is the novel *Shamela*, by Henry Fielding.

HUGH

I figured you'd enjoy a bawdy parody of Richardson's book *Pamela*.

FRANCES

I expect I will enjoy every word.

She yawns.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Sorry. Late nights.

He gives her a look.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Copying notes for my father's book.

He glances at her ink-stained hands and nods.

She turns to page one of *Shamela*. She dozes off with her head on his shoulder. He is left not knowing what to do.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frances, bleary-eyed and determined, writes by candlelight.

SUPER: "1778"

She writes "*The end*" and blows out the candle.

INT. SHELTER HOUSE - DAY

Frances observes intently as Hannah reads *Evelina*.

HANNAH

This is more real than life itself.

FRANCES

You are always so supportive. I love that about you.

HANNAH

You have captured how a bad courtship or marriage can hurt a woman. You have given an honest appraisal of intimacy and relationships.

FRANCES

Why, thank you. That was my intent.

HANNAH

Willoughby is quite a character. A privileged man forcing his male advantage to seduce a woman he views as far below him. Who's the real rake you based him on?

FRANCES

Willoughby is not based on any one man. He is a composite character based on stories I have heard.

HANNAH

I see. What about Lord Orville?

Frances gives her a look of suspicion.

HANNAH (cont'd)

Orville's courtship of *Evelina* is based on his respect for her as a person. He does not see her as a wife who will belong to him, but rather as a lover who is at least his equal.

FRANCES

Are you passively implying something about the men in my life?

HANNAH

I'm passionately implying that your novel reflects real experience.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - DAY

Frances gets a fresh sheet of paper and writes in perfect men's round hand. Words appear on the screen as she writes:

"Dear Mr. Lowe, the liberty which I take in addressing to you the trifling production of a few idle hours will doubtless move your wonder."

KNOCKING at the door.

She frantically covers up the letter.

CHARLES (O.S.)
I'm departing to deliver my revised
manuscript to Lowe and Son.

Charles' FOOTSTEPS recede as he descends the staircase.

She is amused by her reaction to hide her enterprise.

She resumes the letter. Words appear on the screen as she writes:

"Without name, without recommendation, and unknown to success, I apply for your patronage. Let not the anxious solicitude with which I recommend myself to your notice expose me to your derision."

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Frances is huddled over her manuscript as she writes.

FRANCES (V.O.)
You were a young writer once and by
recollecting your first publication
and those first terrors you will
allow for mine.

Frances and Miles waltz across the ballroom dance floor.

FRANCES (V.O.) (cont'd)
My novel, *Evelina*, tells the story of
a young woman, educated in the most
secluded retirement and, at the age
of seventeen, makes her first
appearance upon the great and busy
stage of life. If you would honor me
with a proper reading of my words,
you shall find my voice in *Evelina*.

Frances wistfully gazes at books on display in the window of Hill's Circulating Library.

FRANCES (V.O.) (cont'd)
I thank you in advance and look forward in hopeful anticipation to seeing my novel in the booksellers and circulating libraries.

END MONTAGE.

Frances writes. Words flow across the screen:

"I have the honor to be your most obedient and humble servant. Signed,"

She breathes deeply. She signs: *"Anonymous."*

She emphatically places the quill in its holder.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Hannah struggles to keep up with Frances' snappy pace.

HANNAH
Of all your ill-conceived notions, this scheme of yours takes the cake.

FRANCES
I have carefully considered every detail other than how to actually break into Mr. Lowe's office.

HANNAH
You know nothing about burglary.

FRANCES
It is not burglary if you are giving instead of taking. And what I do not already know I can easily learn. Just like my *Evelina* is an instruction manual for young women entering society, there are many authors who write instructions on how to get away with murder.

HANNAH
People buy books on deplorable topics?

FRANCES
Of course. Have you read *Pamela*?

INT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

Hannah hovers as Frances flips through a book.

FRANCES

This one says that I will need a sharp knife to do the deed.

Hannah hushes her with her finger to her lips.

HANNAH

Do you want to end up in the tower?

FRANCES

Where does Father keep his blade?

Hannah looks at her bug-eyed.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frances changes into Charles' trousers and shirt. A sharp knife rests on the desk. She pockets the knife.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER

House is dark. Frances descends the stairs without the aid of candlelight. She clutches her manuscript. She puts on Charles' long coat and hat. Nothing fits.

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Frances steps quickly in and out of the feeble illumination from oil streetlamps. She turns onto a dark side street.

EXT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Frances nods to a gentleman as he walks past aided by a link boy with a lantern. The footsteps fade well after the glow of the lamp. All is silent. Frances takes the knife from her pocket and inserts the thin blade between the sashes of Thomas' tall office window. She fumbles yet finally succeeds at undoing the catch of the window, which enables her to lift up the under sash. She shoves her manuscript through the opening and slides inside.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Frances makes her way to Thomas' desk. FOOTSTEPS of men approaching outside the open window. She makes herself as small as possible behind the desk. Lamp light as a gentleman and a link boy pass by the window and down the street. All is quiet. She sets her manuscript *Evelina* on top of a stack of submissions on Thomas' desk. She wiggles out the window.

EXT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Frances tries to lower the under sash and is unsuccessful. She gives up and disappears down a dark street.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - MORNING

Thomas is first to arrive. A breeze alerts him to the uncharacteristically open window. He is confused.

He shuts the window and gets to work reading manuscripts. He grabs *Evelina* and reads the title. He flips to the title page and finds that the author is "Anonymous." He frowns. The query letter falls out of the manuscript and lands on the desk. He glances at it and scoffs. He unceremoniously plops *Evelina* and the query letter into the wastebasket.

Hugh runs in from the street and hangs up his coat and hat. He catches Thomas' look of disapproval.

THOMAS

You're late. Make yourself useful.
Incinerate the trash.

Hugh starts a fire in the stove. He grabs the wastebasket containing *Evelina*. He tosses paper from the wastebasket into the fire. He reaches into the wastebasket and retrieves *Evelina*. He reads the title. His interest is piqued.

HUGH

Did this fall in by mistake?

THOMAS

Nothing I do is a mistake.

HUGH

Have you forgotten that just
yesterday you misplaced your keys in
the printer's room?

Thomas glances at the window that he believes he left open.

THOMAS
Read me the title.

HUGH
*Evelina, Or, the History of a Young
Lady's Entrance Into the World.*

THOMAS
Oh, yes. The anonymous submission.
Burn it.

HUGH
What if the story is as good as the
title?

THOMAS
If that were so, the author would
have revealed himself.

Hugh tosses other papers into the fire.

Thomas goes to the printer's room.

Hugh opens *Evelina* and reads the first page. He likes what
he reads and flips the page.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - EVENING

Thomas rubs his tired eyes and sets aside his work. Hugh is
heads down editing manuscripts. Thomas grabs his coat.

THOMAS
Lock up.

Thomas leaves through the front door.

Hugh opens *Evelina* and trims the candlewicks.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Hugh intently reads *Evelina* by candlelight. He ponders.

INT. PARK - DAY

Hannah and Bernard stroll.

BERNARD
After many sleepless nights, I've
something important to say to you.

HANNAH

Dear Lord, please don't tell me she's pregnant.

BERNARD

Don't be crass. I've decided to revoke my permission and thus forbid you from playing piano in public.

HANNAH

You wouldn't dare.

BERNARD

I've already informed the artistic director. Nothing more to discuss.

Hannah grunts and turns away.

BERNARD (cont'd)

I envy Miles. Frances runs no chance of exciting the envy of others. She's important because she's with him. That is as our Heavenly Father intended.

Hannah glares at him.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - EVENING

Hugh presents a wrapped parcel to Frances.

FRANCES

What is it?

HUGH

A surprise. You must open it to find out.

She rips open the parcel and is amazed to find that Hugh has brought her manuscript *Evelina*.

HUGH (cont'd)

A fresh manuscript, yet to be considered for publication.

FRANCES

That would account for its half-dressed appearance, lacking a cover.

HUGH

I must admit, the first few pages are not terrible.

FRANCES

Evelina: Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World. Do you call that an alluring title?

HUGH

Too sentimental. And the author is anonymous. The worst kind.

FRANCES

How did you come by it?

HUGH

I rescued it from the fire when I was incinerating the rubbish.

FRANCES

Do you consider it rubbish?

HUGH

I perused a page or two. I would say that it has some potential in the hands of a skilled editor.

Frances gives him a look.

Charles comes knocking. He is dressed in his finery.

Frances hides *Evelina* behind her.

CHARLES

I'm off to the opera. Hugh, you may say your goodbyes and see yourself out. Propriety must be observed.

Charles steps out.

Frances tries to conceal her laughter. Hugh is not amused.

FOOTSTEPS recede. Front door OPENS and SHUTS.

HUGH

You're taking a night off from the opera?

FRANCES

Miles' understudy performs tonight.

HUGH

And Miles didn't call on you? What a shame.

FRANCES
You are jealous that I would rather
dance with him than practice
correspondence with you.

HUGH
Would you like to read *Evelina*?

FRANCES
I suppose we can read a page or two.
We have an hour before sunset.

Hugh makes himself comfortable on the sofa. Frances takes a
seat by the window for reading light.

HUGH
All that I ask of you, Fanny, is that
you do not glance at me every now and
then to see if I'm still awake.
Romance novels don't thrill me.

She gives him a look.

HUGH (cont'd)
Regale me. Let's see how it reads.

She reads *Evelina*. He listens with rapt attention. Sun sets
outside the window. She yawns and sets the manuscript down.

HUGH (cont'd)
Candles! Candles!

FRANCES
Are you not exhausted?

HUGH
The story is wonderful. We must light
candles. Candles, I say!

She is fast to her feet.

FRANCES
Does it sound real to you? All about
the young lady who is about to enter
the world.

HUGH
Not merely does it sound real, it is
real. It's reality.

FRANCES
You really think so?

HUGH

Yes, indeed! The man who wrote this is something of a genius!

FRANCES

You do not think it possible that the author is a woman?

HUGH

Will you get the candles, Fanny? It seems that you're sorely in need of illumination if you put that question to me seriously.

FRANCES

You think there is nothing womanly in the story?

HUGH

There's plenty that is womanly, because the man who wrote it knows how to convey to a reader a sense of womanliness. That's his genius.

FRANCES

Do you consider the writer has a deeper understanding of Evelina than if she were imagined by Richardson?

HUGH

Absolutely. Evelina is attracted to a gentleman who respects her in every way. No more chatter. Get candles.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/DINING ROOM

Frances beams as she gets a pair of candles.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Frances steps in with two candles. She sets the candles on a table and lights them. She pulls a chair close and sits.

FRANCES

I think we can get through two more chapters tonight.

HUGH

The entirety.

FRANCES

You have heard a great deal of it already.

HUGH

What you read seems to me to be as good as anything I've read in years. But that's not saying that the remainder may not be so greatly inferior as to compel me to pronounce unfavorably of the book as a whole.

She reads as time passes.

Clock CHIMES midnight.

She sets aside *Evelina* and yawns as she rises.

FRANCES

Evelina will be the better for a sleep. Please make yourself at home in the guestroom.

HUGH

Please, may I have the manuscript? I usually awake before six, and so shall have a couple of hours of it before rising. I'd like to know how it resolves before morning tea.

FRANCES

I will take it to my room, and we shall finish it tomorrow.

He does not budge. She holds her ground. He bows and walks out. She is giddy and walks out without snuffing out the candles. The book *Evelina* is left sitting on the table.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER

Clock CHIMES at two o'clock in the morning.

Charles enters from the street. He is weary from a long night of opera and party. Silence, save for TICKING clock.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Charles is on his way to bed when a warm glow from the parlor gives him pause. He enters the candlelit room.

He extinguishes one of two candles. He is about to extinguish its pair but stops short when he catches a glimpse of *Evelina* upon the table. He pulls close the candle and flips to the dedication page.

He reads. The dedication draws him in.

FRANCES (V.O.)

Oh, author of my being. Far dearer to me than light, than nourishment, or rest. If ever your eyes read these feeble lines, let not their folly their intent destroy. Accept the tribute but forget the lie.

He ponders. He rubs his eyes. He flips to the first page of *Evelina* and reads. Clock CHIMES at four in the morning. He is engrossed in the book.

Hugh strolls in, half asleep, and both men are startled at the presence of the other.

CHARLES

What the devil!

HUGH

Your daughter has given me a sleepless night.

Charles gives him a quizzical look.

HUGH (cont'd)

I could never understand you banning novels, but now I see the wisdom of it. They tend to unsettle one. Read not a word more of it. Go to bed and save yourself from the evil influence of *Evelina*. Goodnight.

Hugh turns to leave.

CHARLES

Her round hand is quite good.

Hugh hesitates.

CHARLES (cont'd)

You knew, didn't you?

Hugh turns to face Charles.

HUGH

You can't mask a writer's voice. It is like a fingerprint.

CHARLES

I never thought her capable.

HUGH

And yet, here we are. Fanny accomplished what she set out to do. She improved upon Richardson.

CHARLES

Do you really believe so?

HUGH

Richardson's Pamela valued her virtue above her life. Fanny writes of the virtue in Evelina's good nature, intellect, and ability to make her own way in an unfamiliar world. She is far from the meek, helpless girl one expects in novels. This book deserves readers.

CHARLES

You cannot publish this book. It would ruin her marriage prospects, not to mention sully the Burney name. As for you, well, you would be sacked.

HUGH

In writing her novel, Fanny showed that she's as brave as her Evelina. She needs us to be equal to her courage.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/DINING ROOM - MORNING

Frances and Charles eat breakfast in awkward silence. Charles occasionally glances at her. She appears perplexed by his odd behavior.

Hugh walks in. He is dressed for the road in a coat and hat.

HUGH

I must be on my way. I've much work.

FRANCES

What a pity.

HUGH

Mr. Burney, was I correct to say that the book I lent you is enthralling?

CHARLES

I wouldn't know. I've yet to open it.

HUGH

Ah! Those dark rings about your eyes betray you, sir. Is it not true that it's to blame for your lack of sleep?

FRANCES

What book is that, Father? A source for your *History of Opera*?

CHARLES

A fresh manuscript with the title - *Evelina: Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*.

Frances has the expression of a caught thief.

HUGH

(To Frances)

I'm grateful to you for reading it to me last night. And you're quite an accomplished reader. It was as if you knew *Evelina* before reading her words.

CHARLES

Not a finer work of fiction will you find than this new masterpiece.

HUGH

I wish we knew who the master was.

Frances glances at both of them with a look of suspicion.

CHARLES

Do you intend to publish it?

HUGH

The story is a revolutionary treatment of romance; one that I believe would stand out as suitable for young ladies. That would broaden our readership.

CHARLES

There's nothing more profitable than a successful novel for which no authorship may be attributed.

HUGH

Wealth would improve my prospects with the ladies. I suppose I could consider taking a risk on an anonymous publication.

FRANCES

Does that mean you consider it ready?

HUGH

It does require an editor's touch. Without knowledge of the author, it would be left to me to secure one.

CHARLES

I'll edit it for you.

HUGH

You, sir? A novel?

CHARLES

It would broaden my scope as a writer to dabble in frivolous romance fiction. Would you agree?

HUGH

I dare say I do. I'll see to it that you receive a generous fee.

Charles and Hugh shake hands. Charles can barely conceal his amusement. Hugh bursts into laughter.

Frances frowns at first and then joins in the laughter.

FRANCES

Bastards.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/DINING ROOM - LATER

Frances clears the table. Charles enters clutching *Evelina*.

CHARLES

I fear that this duplicity has been going on for a long time.

FRANCES

I did not mean any disrespect.

CHARLES
How did you manage it?

FRANCES
Many a page of my novel I wrote when you believed that I was copying the notes for your history. I could sometimes not get through more than three or four pages of my own book during a whole week.

CHARLES
Brilliant.

FRANCES
I started writing the story for fun, but then it became deadly earnest. Evelina is the best part of me.

CHARLES
If I may ask, what do you consider the best part of yourself?

FRANCES
My self-will to be independent of men. To love deeply the man of my choosing. To earn my rank and fortune, not to marry it.

She tears up.

FRANCES (cont'd)
To not be pitied for being motherless but be revered for being successful like my mother was with her business and my loving father is as an author.

He hugs her.

CHARLES
I'm so very proud of you.

FRANCES
I have always felt that you have very little confidence in my abilities.

CHARLES
You very well may be the most talented Burney. I'm sorry I didn't see it sooner.

FRANCES

I should have told you I was writing a novel.

CHARLES

I would have talked you out of it.

FRANCES

Wrong, but you would have tried.

They laugh and dry their eyes.

FRANCES (cont'd)

How did you conclude it was me?

CHARLES

Last night, I came across your manuscript and sat down to peruse it. It opened to the dedication, and I tell you truly that I did not seem to read it. I seemed to hear your voice reading the verses in my ear, and the truth came upon me. I knew that it was you who had written it.

FRANCES

Although I meant every word of the dedication, the idea of writing it came to me only when I felt that I had behaved badly in writing the book without your knowledge.

CHARLES

You wished the dedication to be a sort of peace offering?

FRANCES

I hoped that when you read it, you would forget to be angry.

CHARLES

It touched my heart. I love it as much as I love you.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/CHARLES' STUDY - DAY

Charles carefully studies a page of *Evelina*. Frances comes knocking.

FRANCES

How does the story read, Father?

CHARLES

There's no difference between it and a real book.

He winks. She playfully rolls her eyes at him.

CHARLES (cont'd)

We must work together to improve your manuscript.

She looks thrown slightly off-kilter.

CHARLES (cont'd)

What's wrong?

FRANCES

Do you remember when you taught me the alphabet?

CHARLES

Oh, yes. The upside-down pages.

FRANCES

You are doing it again.

He gives her a quizzical look.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Upside-down help. I can do this on my own.

CHARLES

Then you shall. -- Why Lowe and Son? Surely, you considered the possibility that Hugh would attach you with your story.

FRANCES

It was a risk worth accepting. I considered he would inform me of its progress, as he does with all of their new novels.

CHARLES

How were you going to manage the edits?

She gives him a quizzical look.

CHARLES (cont'd)

There will be revisions. You've seen me move commas around my pages.

She sighs.

CHARLES (cont'd)

No matter. The problem has been unwittingly solved. Hugh's been your willing accomplice sneaking novels into this house for longer than I care to know. I'm quite certain that the two of you will hatch a plan to sneak your book to the printers right under Thomas' nose.

FRANCES

We have become adroit dissemblers.

CHARLES

Thomas has not the slightest notion that he's about to publish my daughter's book.

They laugh.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Frances, tell me how you got your knowledge of the things in your story - the pictures red with life - blood of men and women - love - emotion - pathos. Tell me, author to author, how you filled your canvas.

She opens the manuscript and flips to a page.

FRANCES

Well, Father, let us start where Evelina first arrives in London.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - NIGHT

Charles, Bernard, and Miles are happy with their drink as they entertain themselves. Hannah plays piano. Frances turns her music pages. The men pay them no notice. Frances looks downcast. The men and women are separated far enough apart as to not hear each other over the music.

MILES

I understand that Hannah no longer plays piano in public.

BERNARD

Playing at home is sufficient for her.

MILES

I'm truly fortunate that Frances has no musical talents.

CHARLES

I think you'll find that Frances is full of surprises.

MILES

I'll drink to that!

Miles and Bernard clank glasses.

Charles gives Miles a smug look.

HANNAH

Look at them. They're quite pleased with themselves.

FRANCES

I never considered there would be so many opening nights.

HANNAH

Opening night is no excuse for Miles to forget your birthday. I'm sorry.

KNOCKING at the front door.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER

Hannah stays a few steps back as Frances answers the door. It's Hugh and he has a small, gift-wrapped box in his hand. Hugh hears the men's drunken laughter and searches Frances' face for a clue as to what is transpiring.

FRANCES

Opening night.

Charles appears in the passageway. He lingers to observe.

Hugh presents the gift to Frances.

HUGH

Happy birthday.

FRANCES

What is it?

HUGH

A surprise. You must open it to find out.

Frances opens the box and finds an elegant quill pen and holder set. She is overwhelmed.

HUGH (cont'd)
 (Whispers in her ear)
 For your revisions.

Hugh and Charles exchange warm smiles. Charles walks away.

FRANCES
 I love it so much. Thank you.

Hugh kisses Frances' hand. She glows. He bows and leaves out the front door.

Frances admires the gift.

FRANCES (cont'd)
 Hugh remembered.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Hugh approaches Thomas with the manuscript *Evelina* tucked under his arm. Thomas looks up from his work.

HUGH
 I have a new novel that is worthy of publication.

THOMAS
 It's my job to select what to print, not yours. Get to work on your edits.

Thomas directs his attention to his work. Hugh lingers. Thomas is annoyed.

HUGH
 I'd like this book to be my first.

THOMAS
 You're not ready to approve manuscripts for publication.

HUGH
 When do you consider I'll be ready?

THOMAS
 When I jump up and don't come down.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Frances and Hugh stroll. Frances is peeved. Hugh is anxious.

FRANCES
I cannot believe that you refuse to
publish my *Evelina*.

HUGH
I didn't refuse. I'm not allowed.

FRANCES
Did you just say that you are not
allowed? A flying fish has more
backbone. I will find another
publisher.

HUGH
Your romance story will have to be
far more scandalous to attract a
publisher's interest.

FRANCES
You do not know when to quit, do you?

HUGH
I'm trying to help you.

She scoffs.

HUGH (cont'd)
Hear me out. I love your *Evelina*. I
sincerely believe that London will
fall in love with her as well. You
know I don't care for scandalous
stories; however, I must think like a
businessman. We could make it more
marketable - add a few under the
skirt elements to entice a publisher.
It would be my honor to assist you.

She treats him to a very elaborate curtsy and walks away.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - DAY

Frances crumples the flying fish drawing Hugh gifted her.
She screams. She breaks down and cries.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Hugh marks up *Evelina* with his edit notes by candlelight.

EXT. BURNEY HOUSE - DAY

Hugh clanks pebbles against Frances' bedroom window. Frances opens the window and pokes her head out.

FRANCES

You hurt me and I do not want you to fix it. Go away.

He holds up her manuscript. She gives him a quizzical look.

HUGH

The publication process has begun.

She gapes.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Hugh presents the manuscript to Frances. She flips it open.

FRANCES

What accounts for your change of heart?

HUGH

I have more than once fled in panic from a naval battle only to reengage the enemy and fight like a demon.

FRANCES

You confronted your father?

HUGH

He doesn't need to know.

She grins. She flips through pages of her manuscript. Many pages are heavily marked up, some less so, but nearly all have at least one suggested change or edit.

FRANCES

So many notes. I do not know where to begin.

HUGH

You needn't address every note. Even the most experienced authors go to publication with a list of errata.

FRANCES

I want *Evelina* to be perfect.

HUGH

Then you must read your words with diligence beyond the author's eyes.

FRANCES

I shall. It is worth every bleary-eyed moment holding a quill in my ink-stained hand to see my name in print.

HUGH

Sorry, Fanny. You must remain anonymous.

FRANCES

Now that you have accepted my *Evelina* for publication, surely, I can be credited as her author.

HUGH

Fanny, I'm sorry, but your name cannot be connected to your book. Only your family and I can know.

FRANCES

This is unacceptable. I will go elsewhere. You may see yourself out.

HUGH

Fanny, hear me out. If anyone, from printer to bookseller, even suspects a woman's authorship, your *Evelina* will never be enjoyed by a single reader. And that would be a tragedy.

FRANCES

This is ridiculous. I demand to be credited as the author. Make it happen.

HUGH

If you desire to see your book on the shelf in Hill's Circulating Library, you must abide by the system.

FRANCES

I dream the same dream that comes to so many men who have written a book and sent it forth for the world to receive with acclaim - the dream of fame. I am not ashamed to admit it.

HUGH

Fanny, you've done something truly significant. Please, don't let your wounded pride stand in the way of your book being published.

FRANCES

Must fame elude me?

HUGH

Those of us who love you are aware of your success. That must suffice for now. The time will come when I control the printing presses. When that day arrives, I will do my best to see you receive your recognition.

She nods and forces a smile.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/CHARLES' STUDY - NIGHT

Frances writes with an unsteady hand and strains to read with tired eyes. She uses the new quill pen set that Hugh gave her as a birthday present. Charles pokes his head in.

FRANCES

So many mistakes.

CHARLES

You often told me as a young girl that you were destined to make many mistakes. Look at you now. You have achieved your destiny.

She rolls her eyes at him.

CHARLES (cont'd)

May I be of assistance?

She nods and indicates the other chair of the desk. He sits. She slides the manuscript in front of him and he studies it.

FRANCES

If I ever have a daughter who shows difficulty reading, I will turn the page upside-down as well.

He smiles. She holds up her hand.

FRANCES (cont'd)
However, I will explain the purpose
of my actions to her, so she is not
left feeling incapable.

He nods and goes about his work studying the edits.

FRANCES (cont'd)
I am afraid of being inferior in the
eyes of the world.

He tries to lighten her mood with a joke.

CHARLES
There's no cause for concern. You're
anonymous.

She gives him a look.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Frances hands Hugh the edited *Evelina*.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - NIGHT

Hugh reviews the revised *Evelina* by candlelight. He is pleased. He goes to Thomas' desk and grabs a printing order form. He fills out the form authorizing the printers to print a first run of *Evelina* and he forges Thomas' signature.

Hugh unlocks the door to the printing room and makes his way to the printer's desk. He places the manuscript *Evelina* on the desk along with the forged printing order.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - MORNING

Printer reviews the printing order form and sees that it is signed by Thomas.

Printer begins the process of making printing plates.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Thomas and Charles shake hands in victory.

Charles and Hugh come eye to eye from across the room. Charles gives Hugh a quizzical look. Hugh responds with a grin and a nod. Charles smiles.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - EVENING

Frances is dressed for an elegant evening. Hannah plays piano. Charles rushes in, full of enthusiasm.

CHARLES

I just came from Lowe and Son. My *History of Opera* is to be printed.

HANNAH

That's wonderful news, Father.

FRANCES

Congratulations on your happy day. Is there any news for me?

CHARLES

Evelina is next. Her plates are set.

He winks and leaves the room.

Hannah hugs Frances.

HANNAH

You did it!

FRANCES

This does place quite a different complexion upon my future with Miles.

HANNAH

Please, be careful. Singers always have an audience that loves sensational rumors.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Miles and Frances make a grand entrance complete with applause directed at Miles. He soaks in the attention.

MILES

How many performances does this make?

FRANCES

I have been to twenty - no - I believe this makes twenty-one.

MILES

It seems as if a moment has passed since I first set eyes upon you, and you tell me that you've seen over twenty of my performances already.

FRANCES

Been to that many. Watched but a few scenes, here and there.

MILES

You don't watch the entirety?

FRANCES

By the time it is evening, I am so fatigued with dining and wine, well, it is perfectly an impossibility.

MILES

I suppose the libretto of an opera can be difficult for some to follow.

FRANCES

I am accustomed to following stories.

He takes her in his arms and initiates a passionate kiss. This uninvited kiss startles her, and she pulls away.

MILES

I assumed you wanted to.

FRANCES

If you and I were alone, perhaps.

MILES

What are these people? They're nothing to us. Less than nothing.

FRANCES

People will naturally assume that the renowned opera singer is having an affair with one of his fawning fans.

MILES

What are people in a church to the devout who enters and keeps his eyes fixed upon the lovely face of the saint to whom he prays?

FRANCES

Am I supposed to be the saint?

MILES

Indeed, you are my beautiful saint. I look into your face, and I have a glimpse of heaven itself.

She gazes into his eyes.

MILES (cont'd)
 I'm just a man. But I feel, gazing
 into the face of my saint, as if I
 were immortal and crossing the
 threshold of the heaven that is hers.
 It's only then that I feel that we
 are equal.

She glances at a closed door. She flirts with her eyes.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM/EMPTY ROOM

Miles and Frances passionately kiss.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Frances and Charles sit together on the sofa.

CHARLES
 My dear, I'm no believer in leading
 by degrees up to such a communication
 as I have to make to you.

FRANCES
 What is it, Father?

CHARLES
 Mr. Hazelton secured my permission
 for him to address you with a view to
 marriage.

Frances beams. She hugs him.

FRANCES
 I have dreamt of this day.

CHARLES
 I want you to be sure.

FRANCES
 I am confused. Do I, or do I not have
 your blessing?

CHARLES
 You have my blessing in all things. I
 have one question and I want you to
 answer me genuinely. Do you feel as
 deeply for Miles as Evelina does for
 Lord Orville?

FRANCES

My *Evelina* is pure romantic fantasy. There is no perfect suitor. I dream the day will come when Miles respects me for my talents, and this dream is what makes me happy.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - NIGHT

Charles drinks alone. He is in a serious mood as he pours himself another, finishing the bottle. He walks to the window and gazes out at night.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Hugh checks the rosebush for a letter from Frances. There is none. Hugh spots Frances and Miles at a distance. They do not see him. Seeing that there is little chance of escaping unnoticed, he hides behind a tree. He observes from far too distant to make out what they are saying to each other.

Frances and Miles stroll up to the rosebush.

Miles goes down on one knee. Frances is overwhelmed. He proposes. She enthusiastically nods and accepts. He takes her hand. They passionately kiss.

Hugh is crestfallen.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Hugh is hard at work. Thomas walks in and hangs up his coat.

THOMAS

I just came from the Burney house. Frances is engaged to Mr. Hazelton.

HUGH

I know. I'm trying to wrap my mind around it.

THOMAS

Indeed. It makes no sense, a man such as Miles seeking her hand. The poor girl is clearly out of her depth.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hugh sits on a bench, holding his head in his hands. He watches lovers out on a stroll, and this saddens him even more. He wistfully gazes at the rosebush.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE/PRINTING ROOM - DAY

Printer thumbs through *Evelina* and frowns. He quizzically examines a line of text with a magnifying glass.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE

Through the glass in the door, we observe Printer speaking to Thomas. Thomas' face darkens.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - LATER

Thomas reads the final page of *Evelina*.

Hugh walks in and hangs up coat and hat.

Thomas begins to read out loud. Hugh recognizes the words and has the look of a caught thief.

THOMAS

(Reading.)

The fate of your *Evelina* is decided. This morning, with fearful joy and trembling gratitude, she united herself forever with the object of her dearest, her eternal affection. I have time for no more; the chaise now waits which is to conduct me to dear Berry Hill, and to the arms of the best of men. *Evelina*. The end.

HUGH

A masterpiece. Do you agree?

THOMAS

You disobeyed me.

HUGH

This book will sell many copies.

THOMAS

Are you aware of the author?

HUGH
He has not revealed himself.

THOMAS
You assume this is the work of a man?

HUGH
Of course, it's the work of a man.

THOMAS
I have a suspicion. We must not make
the accident of publishing a lady.

HUGH
But you surely noticed the masculine
handwriting of the script?

THOMAS
Our printers have examined it and say
that it's a lady's calligraphy only
disguised to look like a man's. In my
own judgment, they're right.

HUGH
Ridiculous!

Thomas indicates for Hugh to approach the desk, which he does. Thomas opens the book to a random page and examines the handwriting. Hugh feigns interest to appease Thomas.

THOMAS
It's an upright round hand, neat and
clear. But see here. There's the
issue of an occasional slip into
'ladies' hand.' This is the work of
a woman pretending to be a man.

HUGH
What of it? The fact remains that
this is the best book since Fielding.

THOMAS
I cannot allow you to publish this
fraud. We'd find ourselves pilloried
by all of London.

HUGH
The plates are ready for printing. It
would be a waste to stop now.

THOMAS
I will not be humiliated by
publishing a woman!

EXT. BURNEY HOUSE - DAY

Hugh knocks at the front door and Charles answers. Hugh appears to be sad as he shrugs and shakes his head.

CHARLES
I suppose you've heard about the engagement.

HUGH
It's off.

CHARLES
What are you talking about?

HUGH
Fanny's book is not to be published.

CHARLES
You've some nerve to punish her this way. And just when I was warming up to you.

HUGH
If it were up to me, *Evelina* would be in the front window of every library and bookseller in London.

Charles gives him a quizzical look.

HUGH (cont'd)
Father is wise. The printers sniffed out a ladies' hand. I'm truly sorry.

Frances' bedroom window SLAMS shut!

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER - DAY

Frances glares down at Charles from the top of the stairs.

CHARLES
You heard, didn't you?

She stomps off. Bedroom door SLAMS.

Front door opens and in walks Hannah, full of enthusiasm. She carries a bakery box.

HANNAH
Sorry I'm late. I brought a celebratory cake for dessert.

Hannah sees the concern in Charles' eyes.

CHARLES

It's off.

They can hear Frances' screams in rage. Something SHATTERS.

HANNAH

Dear Lord.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM

Room is a wreck. Shattered water pitcher and other broken items are evidence of Frances' fit of rage. It is evident that Frances has been crying.

Hannah consoles Frances. Charles paces.

FRANCES

I frittered away an entire year writing in my damp room when I could have been sewing by the warm hearth - all for naught.

CHARLES

Writing a book is like throwing a stone into the ocean. It may fall so that it makes a splash and sinks down straightaway, or it may fall so that it forms ripples. However, it will sink to the bottom all the same. Success or failure is only the difference between a splash and a ripple.

FRANCES

I was a fool to think that my little stone would float.

HANNAH

You wrote a wonderful novel.

FRANCES

Evidently, not good enough for Hugh to take a stand with his father.

CHARLES

Even if it's never printed, you have the right to consider yourself an author.

FRANCES

Sadly, no one will ever read my poor *Evelina*.

CHARLES

There's no use crying over spilt milk.

Frances glares at Charles. Hannah gapes.

CHARLES (cont'd)

I have an idea. I'll pay to have a few copies printed for our friends. It would make for the perfect gift.

Frances grunts and goes to the window. Charles looks to Hannah for support. Hannah rolls her eyes at him.

FRANCES

Father, you have helped me see how men regard my poor little story. It has been my constant companion night and day. I worked at it in the cold, and I tried how I could improve pages of it, copying it and recopying it. I practiced a duplicity which was foreign to my nature in writing it. I robbed myself of sleep so that I might complete it, and when it was completed, I lay awake in anxiety lest no publisher would look at it. All this trouble I had with it so that the world might have of my best. And what is the verdict of the world after all this? You have pronounced it. You said thoughtfully and consolingly; there's no use crying over spilt milk. A Young Lady's Entrance into the World. Nay! Call it rather a rickety brat that should never have made her entrance into the world at all!

CHARLES

Frances, listen to me.

Frances puts up a hand.

FRANCES

Leave!

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/STAIRS

Hannah and Charles descend the stairs.

HANNAH
Spilt milk?

Charles shrugs.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - LATER

Frances cries. Hannah comes knocking.

FRANCES
I held my head too high. This rebuke
has put me in my place.

HANNAH
It's not your fault Mr. Lowe cannot
appreciate your beautiful book.

FRANCES
My poor *Evelina*, a sunken stone.

HANNAH
Perhaps, your book is not a stone.
What if *Evelina* is a raindrop?

Frances gives her a quizzical look.

HANNAH (cont'd)
Raindrops make ripples, and, unlike
stones, they do not sink. A raindrop
becomes one with the ocean.

Frances contemplates Hannah's words.

HANNAH (cont'd)
Elstob, Manly, Haywood to name a few,
have rained into our ocean with their
written words, yet women are not
taken seriously as writers.

Frances ponders.

HANNAH (cont'd)
What if your book is the first drop
of rain that springs forth a new era
of respectably for female authors?

Frances looks determined.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR

Charles calms his nerves with a drink.

Frances storms in.

FRANCES

Father, I demand the return of my
manuscript!

EXT. BURNEY HOUSE - DAY

Hugh knocks at the door. His messenger bag is slung over his
shoulder. Frances answers the door.

HUGH

Charles said you called for me.

FRANCES

My manuscript, please.

Hugh pulls *Evelina* from his bag and hands it to her.

She slams the door in his face.

His head droops.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - DAY

Frances is fashionably dressed. Hannah helps her with her
hair. Frances has a determined look.

Charles comes knocking. He sets a letter upon the desk.

CHARLES

Here's a letter granting my
permission. I trust you know what
you're doing.

EXT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Frances and Hannah at the door. Frances takes a deep breath.

HANNAH

Go make it rain.

Frances enters. Hannah waits outside.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

PUBLISHER (adult male) reads a page of *Evelina* while Frances looks on with hopeful anticipation. Publisher looks up from the manuscript and sighs.

PUBLISHER
I cannot publish this.

FRANCES
Why not?

PUBLISHER
It's too good for women's writing.
Besides, our clientele demands more
salacious stories. I'm sorry.

EXT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Frances exits the building in a huff. Hannah goes to say something, and Frances puts up a hand.

FRANCES
This is how Mother must have felt
when Father demanded she shutter her
shop.

They walk away in silence.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Hugh edits a new work. Thomas walks in from the street.

THOMAS
I learned from a colleague that
Evelina has been rejected many times
over, even by the least discerning
publishers. Let this be a lesson. You
must always be on guard against
women's writing.

Hugh glances at the box of fountain pens on his desk and ponders.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - DAY

Frances locks *Evelina* in the secretary drawer. She gets to work mending linens. A single tear runs down her cheek.

EXT. PAWNBROKERS SHOP - MORNING

Hugh walks up to the door. He glances at the fountain pen box in his grasp and hesitates. He sighs and opens the door.

INT. PAWNBROKERS SHOP - MORNING

Hugh opens a box of fountain pens for the PAWNBROKER (adult male). Pawnbroker nods and sets a large stack of coins on the counter in front of Hugh. Hugh takes one of the fountain pens from the box and returns a few coins to the Pawnbroker.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - EVENING

Hugh looks up from his work to watch Thomas leave for the day.

Hugh breathes deeply and heads for the Printing Room door.

A single fountain pen sits on Hugh's desk.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE/PRINTING ROOM

Printer is hard at work when Hugh walks in. Hugh summons Printer to a private corner. Hugh stealthily shows the Printer an ample bag of coins.

HUGH

Do you still have the plates for
Evelina?

Printer grins and nods. Hugh hands Printer the bag of coins.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - MORNING

Thomas glances at Hugh's empty desk chair. He frowns.

Thomas makes his way to the Printing Room.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE/PRINTING ROOM

Thomas checks on the newly printed stack of Charles' book *History of Opera*. He is pleased.

Thomas is about to walk out when an unexpected smaller stack of books catches his notice. He checks out the stack and is enraged to discover that it is a freshly printed stack of *Evelina*. He slams his fist on the stack of books.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - LATER

Thomas angrily fidgets at his desk. Hugh walks in from the street and is greeted by Thomas' glare.

THOMAS
Am I to understand that you
instructed our printers to proceed
with *Evelina*?

Hugh hesitates and finally nods.

THOMAS (cont'd)
You disobeyed me!

HUGH
I made a prudent business decision.

THOMAS
It's our business to publish
gentlemen authors!

HUGH
All of my authors are simply authors.

THOMAS
You're fired!

EXT. PARK/ROSEBUSH - DAY

Hugh sits on a bench and gazes wistfully at the rosebush.

EXT. BURNEY HOUSE - EVENING

Hugh knocks and knocks on the door. No one answers. He walks away with his head hanging.

Frances glares down at him from her bedroom window.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - MORNING

Charles peers in the cracked open door and finds Frances in a dejected mood.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER

Charles glumly dons his hat and walks out the door.

INT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - MORNING

The library is bustling with clientele.

DOORBELL RINGS and heads turn to watch Mrs. Evans make her way up to the Library Man at the counter. She seems quite at home with her celebrity status, and she holds her head high.

LIBRARY MAN

Mrs. Evans. What a pleasure. I trust Doctor Johnson is in fine fettle.

MRS. EVANS

His quill has been quite chatty of late. Of course, he will look to me to edit his words. And, I am in fine health as well, thank you. Do you have anything new?

Library Man slides *Evelina* in front of her.

LIBRARY MAN

Published by Mr. Lowe. Sixpence sewed or nine shillings in cover.

Mrs. Evans flips to the title page.

MRS. EVANS

No author is credited.

LIBRARY MAN

It's rumored that this is a secret work of Doctor Johnson.

Mrs. Evans gives him a look.

EXT. BURNEY HOUSE - MORNING

Miles taps his walking cane against the front door.

Frances appears in her bedroom window. She throws up the sash and pokes her head out.

FRANCES

Miles? What are you doing here?

MILES

Good morning to you, too.

FRANCES

I have not begun to dress, and Father is a-shopping in the Strand.

MILES

Then, we have the day to ourselves.
I'll come up.

FRANCES

Certainly not! It would be
scandalous!

MILES

We're engaged to be wed.

FRANCES

Which means that I am not yet your
wife, and you are not quite my
husband. What are you doing here
hours before our agreed upon time?

MILES

Maestro Joshua cut rehearsal short.
It was entirely unexpected.

FRANCES

Was he feeling ill?

MILES

Fit as a fiddle. He announced his
desire to get back to a novel which
he affirms is the best he has read
since Richardson. Can you imagine?
Leaving rehearsal for some book.

FRANCES

What is its name?

MILES

The opera?

FRANCES

The book, of course.

MILES

Oh. *Evelina*, I believe.

She gasps and slams shut the sash.

Bewildered, Miles walks away.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FRANCES' BEDROOM - MORNING

Frances is in a state of pure wonderment.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER - DAY

Charles hangs his hat.

Frances, full of joy and renewed vigor, charges down the stairs and gives him a hug.

CHARLES

What has you all a dither?

INT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

Men and Women peruse titles on display. Library Man makes himself useful with some work behind the counter.

DOORBELL RINGS as Frances and Charles enter.

Frances is drawn to her *Evelina* on the shelf with the new arrivals. She glances at Charles. She can see immense pride in her father's eyes as he gapes in stunned silence.

Frances' smile broadens as she pulls *Evelina* from the shelf.

Frances slides her *Evelina* in front of the Library Man.

FRANCES

Before I part with my hard-earned money, I am curious as to what this book is about.

LIBRARY MAN

It's bad enough that I'm compelled to hand out books all day to readers without being forced to read them myself. But I suppose that *Evelina* is a novel of the usual sort.

Charles attempts to conceal his amusement.

FRANCES

That is not extravagant praise. Perhaps, I should return it to the shelf where I found it.

DOORBELL RINGS as FOOTMAN (adult male) enters and approaches the Library Man at the counter.

LIBRARY MAN

May I help you?

FOOTMAN

I'm here for a copy of the new novel,
Evelina.

Frances and Charles exchange glances and try to keep straight faces.

FOOTMAN (cont'd)

It's been recommended to her
Ladyship. I've been commanded on no
account to return without it.

FRANCES

The book must be quite good.

CUSTOMER (adult female) steps forward and speaks to Frances.

CUSTOMER

I'm dead tired on account of its
goodness, for I was foolish enough to
take it to bed with me last night,
and I never closed my eyes in sleep.

FRANCES

Well then, I believe I will take a
copy home and see for myself what all
this fuss is about.

Charles is on the verge of laughter.

EXT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

Frances and Charles share a moment of laughter. She is in awe at the sight of her book. Beaming with pride, he places a fatherly hand upon her shoulder.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hannah and Frances stroll the path. Fashionable ladies sip tea and share the latest society news.

HANNAH

I'm glad you called a truce with
Hugh.

FRANCES

I felt horrible that he was sacked
over my book. Oddly enough, he seems
relieved. He plans to open his own
publishing house.

HANNAH

That is music to my ears.

Hannah spots Mrs. Evans seated at a table with two open chairs and three tea services as if she's expecting guests.

HANNAH (cont'd)

Oh, look. It's Mrs. Evans.

Frances takes a long look.

FRANCES

I have not seen her since I was a child.

HANNAH

Father used to make me play piano for her entertainment.

FRANCES

I remember. And she would inquire; who is the little shy one in the corner without musical talents?

HANNAH

Doctor Johnson has her edit all of his books. She's quite good at it. And she harbors aspirations of being a novelist, herself.

FRANCES

I take it that this is no accident - Mrs. Evans at a table with two invitingly empty chairs.

HANNAH

Let's learn how London's literary ladies consider your book.

Hannah and Frances walk towards Mrs. Evans.

Mrs. Evans catches a glimpse of Hannah and smiles politely.

MRS. EVANS

Mrs. Pearce. What a lovely day you have chosen for tea in the park.

HANNAH

Mrs. Evans, do you remember my sister, Frances?

Mrs. Evans takes a long hard look at Frances.

MRS. EVANS

My dear, it has been ages. The little shy one in the corner. Look at you, all grown up.

Frances glances knowingly at Hannah. They sit.

HANNAH

Frances is a voracious reader.

MRS. EVANS

Remarkable.

(To Frances)

If I recall correctly, you did not know your letters till you were perhaps eight.

FRANCES

And now I find pleasure in a good book.

HANNAH

I was just inquiring with Frances if she believed Doctor Johnson had a finger in writing the new sensation of a novel, *Evelina*.

FRANCES

From what I have been told, its authorship is quite a mystery.

MRS. EVANS

London has had many conjectures. They're all wrong. I've solved the puzzle and my friends agree. The author is most certainly a woman.

FRANCES

It has been expressed in my presence that *Evelina* is the work of a man.

MRS. EVANS

Only a woman could have had the varied experiences described so vividly.

HANNAH

Are you saying that Doctor Johnson had no influence on the book?

MRS. EVANS

I can assure you that the name Evelina has not once appeared in any of his books.

HANNAH

Your secret is safe with us. Are you aware of the author?

Mrs. Evans hesitates.

FRANCES

London is full of pretenders. It is a near certainty that one of these pretenders will come forward as the author.

MRS. EVANS

Dear ladies, if an author desires to remain anonymous, is it not discourteous to try to snatch away her veil of anonymity?

FRANCES

I am sorry. Are you claiming authorship?

MRS. EVANS

I would love nothing more than to attach my name to *Evelina*. I sincerely hope that I am right in my assertion that it is the work of a woman, and that the authoress finds the courage to remove her veil.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/SEWING ROOM - DAY

Frances observes as Hugh sews the final touches on a basic dress. Hugh is quite pleased with his work.

HUGH

You've turned me into something of a dressmaker.

FRANCES

Well done. Consider this dress your first drop of rain.

HUGH

Thank you, I think. I do hope we may continue our lessons once you're settled at Mr. Hazelton's estate.

FRANCES
I would like that.

HUGH
I have something for you.

Hugh produces a gift-wrapped box from his messenger bag and presents it to Frances.

FRANCES
What is it?

HUGH
A surprise. You must open it to find out.

Frances unwraps the box. She produces an EAR TRUMPET from the box. She is bewildered by the gift.

HUGH (cont'd)
An early wedding present.

FRANCES
I do not know what to say.

HUGH
It's what they call an ear trumpet.

FRANCES
I can see what it is. I am not blind. However, you seem to consider me somewhat hard of hearing.

HUGH
Never judge by cover alone. May I?

She hands him the ear trumpet.

HUGH (cont'd)
I know how you always wanted to play a musical instrument, so I considered you should have the most expensive musical device in all of London.

He holds the ear trumpet to his ear.

HUGH (cont'd)
Have you ever seen a musician who could play an instrument with his ear?

She giggles.

FRANCES

I seriously doubt anyone has.

HUGH

A vast amount of ingenuity is needed to produce even the simplest sound. However, with practice, you'll soon be the envy of the concert hall.

He makes a silly face as he pretends to blow air out of his ear. He hums to imitate the playing of music. She laughs.

FRANCES

You are so silly.

He hums even louder as he "plays the ear trumpet." She rolls up a strip of linen into a ball and sends it flying at him. He dodges the ball. She rolls up a second ball of linen and throws it at him. He uses his hand as a battledore and sends the ball back in her direction. She returns it with both force and precision. They scurry to make more balls of linen, and the game is on.

EXT. "HILL'S" CIRCULATING LIBRARY - DAY

Frances and Hugh gaze at *Evelina* in the window. They smile.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - DAY

Thomas is worn out as he reads a pile of letters, each a claim to the authorship of *Evelina*.

Mrs. Evans enters in a huff and walks up to Thomas.

MRS. EVANS

Mr. Lowe, if you are earnest in saying that you are unaware who is the author of your *Evelina*, I have done you some service in curtailing by one the list of authors to whom it might possibly be attributed. You may strike out the name of Doctor Johnson on my authority.

THOMAS

Of course, madam. I was never foolish enough to fancy that he had written more of it than a page or two.

MRS. EVANS

The woman who wrote this masterpiece will come forward and you will credit her in all the London papers.

THOMAS

Are you suggesting that you have a hand in writing *Evelina*?

MRS. EVANS

I am flattered you consider me capable of being the author. I am not. London must learn the author's name. Get to work and find her.

Mrs. Evans storms out. Thomas frowns.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/FOYER - DAY

Charles winds the clock. It reads four o'clock. Frances comes into the room. She is elegantly dressed.

FRANCES

Miles sent his carriage for me.

CHARLES

Do you know where he's meeting you?

FRANCES

It is a mystery. The rich can afford their surprises.

CHARLES

I've given your engagement deep thought. You needn't go through with it if you do not love him.

She gives him a quizzical look.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Have you ever sewn with Miles? Read a book with him? Hidden a love letter?

FRANCES

I have written Miles many letters.

CHARLES

Has he written to you?

She hesitates, then shakes her head ever so slightly.

CHARLES (cont'd)
I know you have feelings for Hugh.

She looks away.

FRANCES
I must not keep the carriage waiting.

CHARLES
You are a grown woman. You will make your own choices. I have one last question; what would Evelina do?

FRANCES
She would honor her commitment.

She steps towards the door.

CHARLES
Hugh's expected any moment. I could tell the driver you're under the weather.

FRANCES
I must not keep Miles waiting.

He glumly nods.

FRANCES (cont'd)
Father, do you consider it wise for me to share my authorship with Miles?

His eyes widen. He smirks.

CHARLES
Oh, indeed I do. Sooner the better.

FRANCES
Please convey my regrets to Hugh.

CHARLES
What regrets are you referring to?

She gives him a look.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

The clock chimes at five o'clock. Charles and Hugh converse.

HUGH
The day has turned rather gloomy.

CHARLES

I expect rain to come soon enough.

HUGH

Fanny wrote a book far better than Lowe Publishers has ever printed. Oh, with the exception of your books, of course.

CHARLES

You were correct the first time. Frances has bested me at my own game. People have discounted her since she was that shy little girl sitting in the corner.

HUGH

Not I. Two curious eyes looking out from a corner with a creative mind behind them. There is a true writer.

EXT. PARK/ROSEBUSH - DAY

Dark clouds gather. Frances walks the path and stops at the rosebush. She looks within the rosebush for a letter, and she is disappointed there is none to be found. FOOTSTEPS approaching. Frances looks around the bend. Then all at once she hears Miles' exclamation of surprise. He runs to her.

FRANCES

This is my favorite place.

MILES

I know.

FRANCES

There is something I want to share with you.

MILES

What is it, my love?

FRANCES

I wrote a book.

Miles furrows his brow as he tries to comprehend.

FRANCES (cont'd)

The new novel, *Evelina*.

MILES

The same *Evelina* that caused Maestro Joshua to cut short rehearsal?

FRANCES

Yes. I first put pen to paper the day I met you at the ball. You inspired me.

He tries to wrap his mind around this unsettling news.

FRANCES (cont'd)

It was important to me that I was accomplished on my own before we could be together. That was why I put you off for so long. There is no better moment to share my good news than the eve of our wedding.

His mood turns dark.

FRANCES (cont'd)

I am a published author. We are both artists. Are you not happy for me?

MILES

Of course, I expect you to deny it - if the question is ever put to you.

She's thunderstruck.

FRANCES

When the time is right, I fully intend to inform all of London that *Evelina* was written by my hand.

MILES

You were my saint and now my saint is gone. In her place, I find not a soft, gentle girl, but a woman who's put her heart into a book.

FRANCES

Is that any different than a man who places his heart into a book?

MILES

A woman who puts her heart into a book is like a woman who disrobes in a public place. She becomes a gross indelicacy to the eyes of man.

FRANCES

And that is how you think of me on account of what I have done?

MILES

How can I think anything else?

FRANCES

Then, sir, I respectfully decline your proposal of marriage. I now perceive the mistake I have made.

MILES

You have no right to refuse me. I'm not the one in the wrong.

FRANCES

You are sorely mistaken.

MILES

All I'm saying is that your womanly charm suffers by reason of you appealing to the public for applause.

FRANCES

Is it not right that I should desire the same fame as a man?

MILES

Your book will one day cause your name to be tossed about freely by men. I can hear it now. Your name, which I regarded as sacred, spoken as freely as men speak the name of their Kitty Fisher - their Polly Kennedy - any number of courtesans. Just the thought of it is vulgar.

FRANCES

When I saw my book, bound in cover, I felt prouder than I have ever felt.

MILES

Is it worth what you forfeited?

FRANCES

What did I lose? A singer who pretended to love me for his purposes without a care for mine.

MILES

You have me all wrong, Miss Burney.

FRANCES

You are nothing more than a trickster who reached my heart through illegitimate means. Your sentimental grimaces, your head shaking, your appeal to my feelings with pathetic eyes turned heavenward. I am ashamed of you. I am ashamed of myself for believing in you.

Frances pulls off her engagement ring and holds it out for him to take. He hesitates before taking the ring.

MILES

My poor child. You can never return to your former innocence. No honorable man will have you. I'll leave you my carriage.

FRANCES

I'll walk.

Miles strolls away. Ominous clouds roll in and wind gains in intensity. Rain begins softly. Frances stands alone.

INT. BURNEY HOUSE/PARLOR - DAY

Charles and Hugh gaze out the window at the falling rain.

CHARLES

Do you love her?

Hugh is caught off guard.

CHARLES (cont'd)

I see how you are together. You're practically courting. For a pair of insightful writers, the obvious has passed your collective notice.

HUGH

I've more than once thought that she would make an excellent wife. But I soon perceived that I was not good enough for her.

CHARLES

Miles called on me this morning. He inquired as to Frances' favorite place in London.

HUGH

The park. Our rosebush.

CHARLES

Of course, you know that. Miles had no idea. She's there, now.

HUGH

Fanny is promised to Miles.

CHARLES

That situation may change soon enough.

Hugh gives him a quizzical look.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Frances went to meet Miles with the intention to share that she's the author of *Evelina*.

Hugh gapes.

CHARLES (cont'd)

As in Frances' novel, when a strong woman reveals herself as such, the plot will thicken.

Hugh is dumbfounded.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Why are you still here?

INT. SHELTER HOUSE - DAY

Frances stares out at the driving rain. LIGHTNING and THUNDER. She catches a glimpse of a man on the path. He is looking around as if he is lost. Suddenly she realizes - it is Hugh. She waves, drawing his attention. He runs to her.

FRANCES

You look like a drowned rat. What in heaven's name are you doing here?

He glances about. She's alone. He's confused.

FRANCES (cont'd)

I released Miles from his commitment.

He looks hopeful as does she.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Miles could not bring himself to accept my accomplishment, and thus I made a choice. I would rather live alone than with a man who cannot support my professional endeavors.

HUGH

If the women of London were aware of *Evelina's* authorship, they'd adore you for your grand accomplishment.

FRANCES

What about you?

HUGH

You needn't be any more than Fanny Burney to be adored by me.

She gives him a huge hug and does not let go.

Freeze frame on a RAINDROP in the form of a crown.

BLACK SCREEN.

SUPER: "A few years later..."

Hugh has finally stashed away enough money to open up his own publishing house.

Frances spends her days and nights by the warm hearth penning many notes for her next novel.

They somehow make enough time to formally begin courting."

EXT. PARK - DAY

Frances and Hugh promenade and greet people passing by.

HUGH

I've reflected deeply on the question of *Evelina's* authorship. I wish for all of London to celebrate you. Your anonymity is an injustice that must be made right. It keeps me up at night.

FRANCES

No, you must not reveal anything. Things must remain as they are.

HUGH

But why?

FRANCES

Such a bold announcement would surely jeopardize your prospects as a publisher. You would be admitting to a conspiracy, one in which you played a role. No, you cannot say a word.

HUGH

My dear Fanny, you've taught me a great deal about courage. My mind is made up. Tomorrow, I'm going to pay a visit to every newspaper in London and announce that Fanny Burney is the one and true author of *Evelina*. I'll see to it that all earnings, past and future, come to you.

FRANCES

What if your father stops printing new copies? What about my book, then?

HUGH

Not to worry. I will soon open my own publishing house. It would be my honor and privilege to publish all of your novels, Miss Fanny Burney.

She treats him to a coy smile.

HUGH (cont'd)

Would you like to hear how I plan to announce your authorship to the newspapers?

She nods.

HUGH (cont'd)

People speak of *Evelina* being the work of Doctor Johnson or Mr. Anstey or any man of letters. Pay no attention to these astute investigators. I'm here to tell you that this book is the work of Miss Fanny Burney, the woman who I love and respect with the entirety of my being.

She beams.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Frances and Hugh stroll down a London street. She looks as if she was just struck by a brilliant idea.

FRANCES

Before you go to the newspapers,
there is something I must do.

INT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - MORNING

Thomas is hard at work. The door opens and in walks Frances.

THOMAS

Miss Burney. This is quite
unexpected. Is your father unwell?

FRANCES

He is in fine fettle, thank you. I am
here because the time has come for
the author of *Evelina* to receive
credit.

THOMAS

No one can possibly know who the
author is. He refuses to reveal
himself.

She grins knowingly.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Yours is the face of a woman who has
formed a theory. Have you heard
something?

FRANCES

Not a mere something, but everything.

THOMAS

Who's your informant?

FRANCES

The author of the book, herself.

Thomas gives her a quizzical look.

FRANCES (cont'd)

I am the author, sir, and thank you
for publishing my book.

Thomas is speechless.

FRANCES (cont'd)
 I intend to write another -- many,
 perhaps. Hugh is going to be my
 editor and publisher. Good day, sir.

Frances walks out as Thomas gapes.

EXT. "LOWE AND SON PUBLISHERS" OFFICE - MORNING

Frances beams as she walks out and is greeted by Hugh. She breaks into laughter, and he joins her in laughter.

BLACK SCREEN.

SUPER: "Frances Burney's novel *Evelina* saw at least eighteen editions as well as reissues. It was published in English, German, French, and Dutch. Frances went on to author *Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and *The Wanderer*.

Today, Frances is largely forgotten in mainstream history, her name coming up in English and Women's Studies courses.

Her work still deserves many readers."

EXT. PARK/ROSEBUSH - DAY

Frances casually strolls to the rosebush. Seeing that she is alone, she stealthily retrieves a letter hidden in the rosebush. She reads the letter: "*Meet me in the tea garden.*"

EXT. PARK/TEA GARDEN

Frances finds Mrs. Evans sitting with Hugh at a table set for a party of three. Frances is confused. Hugh pulls out a chair. Frances sits.

MRS. EVANS
 Please accept my heartfelt gratitude.
 Your *Evelina* has given me hope.

FRANCES
 You make too much of my little book.

MRS. EVANS
 Miss Burney, your book has greatly improved the respectability of the female writer. Not to mention, your romance story gives young ladies the power of permission.

FRANCES

Then it was worth the effort.

MRS. EVANS

Would you consider assisting me with my promise of a book?

FRANCES

You honor me.

CASSANDRA

Miss Burney?

All turn to find CASSANDRA AUSTEN (30s) and her daughter JANE (10). Jane is starstruck as she gazes at Frances.

MRS. EVANS

Cassandra, what a pleasant surprise. I believe proper introductions are in order. May I present Miss Frances Burney, although you already seem quite aware of that, and her publisher, Mr Hugh Lowe. -- Frances, and Hugh, may I present my dear friend, Mrs Austen.

CASSANDRA

Pleasure to meet you, Miss Burney, Mr Lowe.

FRANCES

The pleasure is ours.

CASSANDRA

This here is my daughter, Jane. She is quite smitten with your beautiful novel, *Evelina*. She'd love you to sign her copy.

Jane, starstruck, holds out a copy of *Evelina*.

CASSANDRA (cont'd)

She adores reading romances.

Frances accepts Jane's copy of *Evelina*.

JANE

I wish to write a novel of my own, someday.

FRANCES

That warms my heart. Jane, you should start straightaway and never stop. I am certain your pen has much to say.

Jane beams.

CASSANDRA

I tried my best to convince Jane that you have not the means to sign her copy of your book here in the park, however she is a hard one to dissuade when she dearly fancies something.

Frances and Hugh exchange knowing grins.

Hugh reaches into his messenger bag and produces a fountain pen. He presents the fountain pen to Frances.

Frances accepts the pen and turns to Jane.

FRANCES

I am honored to sign your copy.

Jane is all grins and giggles as Frances signs her book.

FRANCES (cont'd)

Our words are meant to be shared.

Jane cradles her treasured signed copy of *Evelina*.

JANE

Thank you, Miss Burney.

FRANCES

You are most welcome, Miss Austen.

Jane giggles and beams.

Frances returns the pen to Hugh. He does not accept it.

HUGH

It's yours. You've earned it.

Frances beams.

EXT. PARK/ROSEBUSH - DAY

Frances and Hugh at the rosebush.

HUGH

You did it, Frances.

FRANCES
Did what, exactly?

HUGH
You took the world by storm while
making a man instantly happy.

She treats him to a coy smile.

FRANCES
I have an idea for my next book.

HUGH
Tell me. What's your concept?

FRANCES
It is a romance about a female
novelist who falls in love with her
dashing publisher.

HUGH
I like it. Tell me more. Does their
love story end with a kiss?

FRANCES
No. It starts with one.

They passionately kiss.

BLACK SCREEN.

SUPER: "Frances Burney vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters. Several accomplished women have followed in her track. At present, the novels which we owe to English ladies form no small part of the literary glory of our country. No class of works is more honorably distinguished by fine observation, by grace, by delicate wit, by pure moral feeling. Several among the successors of Frances Burney have equaled her; two, we think, have surpassed her. But the fact that she has been surpassed, gives her an additional claim to our respect and gratitude. - Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1843"

FADE OUT.