

EMILY

Written by

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FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE: Amherst, Massachusetts - August 1846

EXT./INT. SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AMHERST - DAY

The Second Congregational Church is white and wooden made, silhouetted against the clear sky and the meadows around.

The REVEREND BELDEN preaches from the pulpit. The church is crowded, the FAITHFUL's faces are fogged by the sermon.

REVEREND BELDEN

The Lord embraces each of you
and in each of you puts a
portion of His light. As in a
procession where everyone is a
candle. As a fireplace where
each of us is a small brand
almost consumed. Because faith
is a flame...

EMILY, 16, head bowed under the black cap, narrow shoulders, says to herself, muttering.

EMILY

In the word light it is already
all light, Reverend Belden,
whereas here we have to hear
candles, embers, flames; what is
this, a fire of metaphors!?

Sitting next to Emily is her sister LAVINIA, 14, alongside with her brother AUSTIN, 17.

A WOMAN nods to silence her.

Lavinia looks embarrassed at the mumbling Emily.

REVEREND BELDEN

But if our little flame comes
and goes... it is because we
host doubt. Doubt is like water
on flames. Turbid water. To say
nothing then of vice: putrid
water!

EMILY

First fire and now water.

A FAT FINGER hits the Emily's thin shoulder. The owner of the finger is a fatty LADY sitting behind her.

REVEREND BELDEN

One day we listen to the words
of a skeptic, one day the words
of an atheist who is presented
as a friend. But these are all
tests of the devil, I'm telling
you! Buckets of water thrown on
our faith!

Oh Lord chase away Satan,
(pointing to a shadowy part of
the church)
lurking in the shadows, in his
arm a bucket of water taken
from the pit of hell!

The FAITHFUL turn their heads towards the point indicated by the Reverend as if the devil were there.

Emily is enchanted by the Reverend's clumsy eloquence.

REVEREND BELDEN (CONT'D)

You who are looking to
extinguish our flame, vade
retro!
I do not turn my back on Jesus
to embrace you, Satan! I do not
give into sin!
And I do not disown God! And I
do not fall in the carnal vice!
Carnal vice, who does not now?

A FARMER, round face, red cheeks, handkerchief on her head, turns frightened to the HUSBAND, who has two nice whiskers, a burned face from the sun and, next to him, a dozen children aligned by height.

REVEREND BELDEN (CONT'D)

Oh, do not think that the vice
is so pleasant. It offers some
pleasure, just miserable and
passenger.

A "GENTELWOMAN", understanding well the speech, smiles; HER HUSBAND however, fat-faced clerk, listens naively.

On the two bears the look of a wrinkled face OLD WOMAN, that now watches them and tattles to nearby ladies.

REVEREND BELDEN (CONT'D)
I call you to stay at home with
your family, to fasten doors and
windows and to open yourselves
to God! Only to Him!
And, women must be discrete and
restraint, as well as men must
be honest and must roll up their
sleeves to work for their bread.
Remember: on one side there is
light, on the other there is
shadow...

CUT TO:

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF AMHERST - DAY

Mass isn't finished but Emily is already out of the church
and with energetic step runs off alone and free.

EMILY
I want to live, live, open all
the windows of life!

CUT TO:

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF AMHERST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Passes in front of a house fully made of wood on which gate
is written: "MILLER FAMILY".

EMILY
I saw them at the function,
Elijah and Rachael Miller.

CUT TO:

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF AMHERST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Drums with her fingers on the white fence of the next
house: "LOCKE FAMILY".

Behind the fence now we see a parade of geese and a "sad"
dog lying on the ground with his nose out of the fence.

EMILY
Good Sunday Geese ladies, why
aren't you at Mass? You can't
do this, good girls go to Mass
on Sunday!
(to the dog)

Lazarus come forth, 'cause Mass
has ended and your masters are
already coming back!
You should thank the Almighty
for this moment of solitude but
instead you seem plagued by
unspeakable tragedy.
Dr. Charles Darwin will note
you down in his notebook as one
of the less gifted with
imagination dogs. You know that
imagination is the essence of
everything, or you don't know?

Behind the fence, some sheets wave majestically in the sun;
and stockings, panties and panty hoses jump onto the wire
like puppets moved by the wind.

Emily looks at that theater bowing her head to one side,
"slantly", as if this would be the right angle of her
visionary optics.

EMILY (CONT'D)

The clothes are alive. Even
more alive than certain people.

(looking at the dog)

And then certain dogs!

(to the clothes)

I know your masters, misters
clothes. You dress one of the
most respectable families of
Amherst. These should be Mr.
Samuel's briefs, and those of
Mrs. Eloise. And here are the
three young daughters, prim and
starched up, perfect models of
correctness and good behavior,
like these panties. And all
thanks to you, clothes!

(looking into void)

I see them coming out of the
church, now, the respectable
family. So close to God,
enchanted. They look like
saints. For them, exists only
the passion of the cross.

From a pile of clothes in the back, hidden, now the wind
tears a pair of black lace culottes and puts them in the
grass, right in front of Emily.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Uh! However, another passion now comes to the fore! It does not refer to the cross. So it is true that the more they seem respectable in public the more they have to hide in private, *respectable families*. Ah, cute panties, the oldest passion in the world is yours, by nature, useless denying it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALONG THE CULTIVATED FIELDS - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

In a field, TWO FARMERS raise their hats and each with his handkerchief dries the other's face. The presence of Emily alerts them, but soon they notice that the flash all black from head to toe is her.

I° FARMER

Good morning Emily!

II° FARMER

Sweetie pie good morning!

EMILY

Good day to you! But please go on: I would not want to cause a love block; earth needs love.

The two, understanding the irony, watch her complicit. Emily frees the hair from the bonnet and continues fast.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOR HOUSE ("FORTUNE HOUSE") - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Behind a dilapidated fence, among free chickens and geese there is an ILL GIRL; surrounded by dolls, she is in a rocking chair adapted to wheelchair with wheels and canopy.

ILL GIRL

Hello miss Emily!

EMILY

Hello little queen, have you seen what a beautiful morning? This time I'll bring you blue

flowers. This is the Sunday of
blue flowers!

I LL GIRL

The other time was "Sunday of
yellow flowers"!

The father, MR. FORTUNE, from his plank covered with tools
turns and greets Emily with a broad toothless grin. He's
wearing a destroyed work overall.

MR FORTUNE

How beautiful we are today!

EMILY

Actually I wore the same dress
the other Sunday, Mr. Fortune.

MR FORTUNE

Well, I also "*wore the same
dress the other Sunday*", ha!

EMILY

The forest calls me impatient,
sir, see you later!

MR FORTUNE

Good sauntering in the woods!
(imitating a duct man)
But prudence, PRUDENTIA!

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE OF AMHERST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A COWHERD goes down a green hill, with behind the woods.
Emily instead goes up, with behind the Fortune house. Even
the cowherd is poor but cheerful. Huge nose and beard but,
between the wrinkles of a hard life, the air of a child.

The cowherd reveres Emily making a sign with his head, as
inferior, and Emily reciprocates with a gesture even more
reverent; then he shudders, adjusts his vest and remains
watching Emily that passes like a comet.

The COWHERD'S POINT OF VIEW is replaced now by SOMEONE
ELSE'S P.O.V (DANNY), looking at Emily as from a binocular,
focused on her female forms.

Now we see DANNY, 23, with his brothers in descending age order: MICKEY, TOMMY and SAM; each on horses, cowboy hats and muddy boots but well-dressed, like landlords.

Danny observes her still like "in binoculars": Emily is reaching the woods. But now he look at her face, the little potato nose, the funny tuft of hair that jumps on her neck at every step; and then at her refined, obscure soul.

DANNY

You know her?

MICKEY

No.

TOMMY

Never seen.

SAM

The girls in Amherst I know them all, but that...

DANNY

Come on! But slowly, not like you usually do.

EXT. IN THE WOODS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

With calm horse step they reach her in the woods. Touches of blond protrude from their hats and their eyes are moist and rogue.

Emily gives them a look and with more firm step goes on.

EMILY

Are you the four horsemen of the apocalypse or seraphim?

MICKEY

They've called me many names but never this.

DANNY

We are the Collins, the pastures in the West are ours.

TOMMY

Half the region is ours! But you, where do you go trotting, beautiful filly?

EMILY

I go where all "fillies" go.

TOMMY

And where all fillies go alone
on a Sunday morning?

MICKEY

When the Mass is not over yet
and the other fillies are still
in the stable of the Lord(?)

SAM

In the stable of the Lord
listening to the pastor(?)

MICKEY

To hear the pastor who says: My
fillies, beware of male
stallions!

The boys, after having such a good return, laugh proudly.

EMILY

"Male stallions" you say? Any
professor of rhetoric would
underline this phrase as an
error, with the simple reason,
since there aren't any female
stallions, saying "male
stallions" it's... *redundant*.
But I would not agree. I would
argue that your expression
reinforces the idea and
represents the young and ardent
mouth that pronounced it; in
short, I would say that yours
is a reinforcement, not a
pleonasm; although it
reinforces the usual, boring
and wrong idea of males.

TOMMY

So, does Miss long-tongue hast
something against men?

SAM

If you hast something against
us you can tell me, I know
females, for me you are like
horses, I just need a peek!

EMILY

You know women so well?

SAM

If I want I can see your thoughts one by one, baby.

TOMMY

The problem is that you can't see under her dress.

They laugh.

SAM

And if a woman has been drinking a bit, I can understand her even better.

MICKEY

Yes, like you did with that one last Saturday, it took you eight beers just to get her to tell you her age!

They laugh again.

SAM

Three beers, three, and she kissed me as well!

Sam laughs, taking off his hat and hitting it to clean it.

EMILY

Blessed are you who are laughing like angels, and that happiness, which for many is unknown, for you it is so natural. As the dust on your hats, you have to shake it off, so much you have.

TOMMY

But, how does your new playmate speak, Danny ?!

DANNY

(very serious)

She speaks well, is educated.

TOMMY

Speak some more, honey, I like educated girls.

EMILY

Maybe I was wrong, you are not exactly angels, or at least you are not guardian angels.

MICKEY

So, are you mocking us?

EMILY

Yes I'm not kidding, no I'm not serious. *It's not good for a girl to joke with boys, right?*

DANNY

On my way, one day,
four angels I have met,
but full of sin were they.

EMILY

So cute, Mr. Danny!

SAM

Miss you know, actually I haven't got the religious instinct...

EMILY

(ironic)

Oh, I hadn't noticed.

SAM

But at least you can joke around with someone like me, and you can do even more, if you want, Miss.

(Blushes a bit, courageous but timid as a youngster.)

DANNY

Forgive him, he is our little brother, Sam the indiscreet.

EMILY

You have a beautiful tongue Sam! Aren't you afraid that He up there might turn it red with a nice thunder?

SAM

If it has to happen it will happen, but I hope that before He strikes me I can use it at least a little, by Gosh!

TOMMY

Well said brother! So why else do we have it if not, just to say the rosary?

(Laughs like a bear)

EMILY

(teasing Tommy)

Oh, I see, you on the other hand, unlike your brother Sam, are a man of faith!

TOMMY

Well, let's say I am a *man*, more than a man of faith. I mean that I like women...

EMILY

A *male man*, you mean?

MICKEY

She is making fun of you, Tom!

TOMMY

She is mocking us all!

EMILY

No, I like to talk with you! It seems like savoring the grace of flowering fields, exchanging words directly with the flowers that grow there.

Tommy, testily, with the horse blocks her path and forces her to stop. Emily stops and looks down.

TOMMY

I don't like those like you.

DANNY

Be nice Tommy, there's no problem, it's just a girl.

Mickey, also annoyed, approaches Tommy to back him and together they go around threatening Emily.

DANNY

What the hell are you doing!

MICKEY

"It's just a girl", you are correct Danny. Do you want to be put under by a girl ?!

TOMMY

To me it seems that she wants to enchant us... I don't know how to say it.

EMILY

Like a witch? Well, the world has always had problems with women, and when it had no other reason to punish them, it judged them as witches. Anyway, Mr. Tommy, I haven't asked for your angelic protection --

TOMMY

-- I am not an angel!!

MICKEY

She's a witch Tom, let's go!

He runs galloping.

TOMMY

May God strike you if you're a witch!

He also leaves, reaching Mickey.

SAM

Danny, leave her alone!

DANNY

(to Emily)

You make men just run away, and I'm not just saying it, look how they run!
You know what you seem like, with this strange way of speaking that you have? One of those fish that can't stay in water. Those flying fish on the north river, do you know? Half

birds and half fish, and they go to the mountains instead of down the stream. Those who go to the opposite, in fact.

EMILY

I have never seen them, are they beautiful?

DANNY

They are shiny, strange... they fly. Yes maybe they're beautiful, I don't know.

EMILY

You see Mr. Danny, you also have visions, metaphors, your "strange way". But I don't mind, in fact, it shows me what you are. It says this is you, and not another. And this is very important, don't you think? Being ourselves, in essence. It's not just a matter of being honest, but of being.

SAM

Danny come on come on! Tom and Mickey await us.

DANNY

(to Sam)

They don't understand anything! To them, the habit of wandering the lands controlling the niggers and thieves, has undone their brain. And for what? To beat the Irish and drink like idiots every Saturday? Sam leave me alone, I want to talk to this Miss.

EMILY

Emily Dickinson is her name!

DANNY

Emily, you are smart and then I will ask you something. In your opinion what are we? I mean me and my brothers. Good or bad?

EMILY

Well, you're crude, but good.
Natural sons of crude colonists

SAM

What naughtiness, dad would
give us a batch of whippings in
the mouth if we would speak so
of those who we don't know!

EMILY

Sorry, didn't mean --

DANNY

-- No, it's all right, keep on.

Sam makes hoist the horse, takes a shallow look at his
brother and runs away ramming till blood the animal.

EMILY

Sons of "whippings", in fact.
Sons used by fathers as guard
dogs. And watchdogs shouldn't
think or study, or read books.
But there is no malice in you,
nor falsehood. The worst thing
in the world are the bad and
the false! Those who beat their
chest under the pulpit every
Sunday dressing clean shirts,
while other days dress bloody
clothes. And theirs Bachelor's
wife, like embroidery.
But the worst is at the pulpit,
talking to chickens in the name
of God!

Danny spits, and gives a long silent look at Emily.

DANNY

Pam pam pam! With three words
you dry the world, you. To me
they never come, damn words!
And I feel stupid, and what I
have to say is left inside and
explodes.

EMILY

But Mr. Danny, you speak better
than any Reverend!

Your metaphor is so beautiful
and heartfelt; yes, I see
myself in the fish-bird that
goes up the river to the pure
source while many confide the
current and roam in it just
cause is more frequented; and
cause it's easier to go down.

Danny, hit by such insight, while high on the horse looks
small; he would like to speak, but is embarrassed.

DANNY

So you can understand me when I
say I like to do rhymes.

Searches complicit Emily's eyes and she reciprocates; and
turns the head in her way: slantly for slant stuff.

DANNY

I do rhymes for myself, and
they make fun of me, for this.

EMILY

But what does it mean "I do
rhymes"?

DANNY

I do rhymes with words. I don't
know, it sounds stupid but it's
something that comes natural.
Once a girl told me that I was
a poet, but I'm not a poet, but
I liked that she told me that.
Dunno, maybe I'm a little fish-
bird like you.

EMILY

Maybe we're all a little fish-
birds, since human nature is
vast. What mistake would be to
limit it! I believe that if you
feel like flying or swimming or
rhyming... you must, Mr. Danny.

DANNY

You're strong Emily! And you
know what? *If that tongue of
yours won't get struck by God,
sooner or later I'll bite it!*

For a mixed burst of shame and joy Danny gives a shot of reins and takes off fast, disappearing into the woods.

EXT. FORD OF THE STREAM IN THE WOODS - DAY - LATER

Emily mirrors into the water.

A BUMBLEBEE flies in the beam of light falling *slantly* into the woods to the stream ford.

EMILY

Slant, slant, slant.
The earth upon an axis
Was once supposed to turn ...
so much that our pace
that seems vertical,
truthfully is slant!
Let's say we see badly:
we are slants that think
ourselves straight!
(to the bumble on a Harebell)
Oh Bumblebee in love, if the
Harebell loses her corset to be
taken by you and if it says:
it' s all I have to bring today
(pointing to the woods)
this... and my heart, and all
the fields, all meadows wide.
You drink from her, kissing
her; because you and I, dear
Bumble, we live to drink, no,
live by the quaffing!
And we chant for cheer when the
wines fail! And we get drunk,
and how! Ask the jolly Clovers!

She takes off her shoes, with white feet goes in the water, the black skirt over her thighs: she's sensual to our eye.

EXT. ROAD AND DICKINSON'S WEST STREET HOME - DAY - LATER

Emily comes from the woods: the face once pale now is reddish, but always muggy. On the gown has blue flowers.

Sister Lavinia and brother Austin play behind the fence. CARLO, the Newfoundland dog, runs towards Emily.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

EMILY

(to the sister)

Look how colorful you are,
Vinnie, you've got green socks.
Show me a bit?

(rising her skirt)
Even the culottes are green!

LAVINIA
It was him, he made me do "the
slide game"!

EMILY
And the slide was you, right?

LAVINIA
Yup.

EMILY
(to the brother)
This was just a stunt, mom will
not like it.

AUSTIN
But she will never know, 'cause
you'll wash Vinnie's things.

EMILY
Oh yeah, and who says that I'll
play your game?

AUSTIN
Who says so? Licit question.
Point one: it's so because I'm
the big brother. But since I
don't want to assert blood
privileges, I'll pass now to
the second point.
(Lifts her skirt with a finger;
we see some leaves below.)
Second point: it seems that we
have a secret to hide. We went
to the woods, the leaves don't
lie! And you know that Dad does
not want you to go alone in the
woods. That's why, if we do not
want to disturb our folks with
our little secrets...

Austin's words fade now under a HIGHER VOICE that is made
of sheets and whispered verses.

Emily rise the eyes to the open window of her room on the second floor and goes towards it, walking onto the patio robotically and continuing to watch her window.

Austin looks at her.

INT. ATRIUM AND STAIRS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily enters the house and sees the GUESTS with her MOTHER in the living room; salutes them and climbs the stairs in a polite way, but her dress behind is dirty of leaves.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She opens wide the door of her room, runs to the desk, opens the drawer and we see two books in it: one written with silver letters "SHAKESPEARE", the other, less thicker, with a gold inscription "KING JAMES BIBLE".

From the dark drawer comes now to light a SMALL PAPER.

With slight HAND Emily puts it near the inkwell and opens it. On the small paper there is the beginning of a sonnet: four verses, written by her. We read the third and fourth:

"THE HIGH DO SEEK THE LOWLY, THE GREAT DO SEEK THE SMALL,
NONE CANNOT FIND WHO *SEEKETH*, ON THIS TERRESTRIAL BALL."

She looks at her "window of poetry", from where she sees houses and threes, then dips the pen and adds the verses:

"THE BEE DOTH COURT THE FLOWER, THE FLOWER HIS SUIT RECEIVES
AND THEY MAKE A MERRY WEDDING, WHOSE GUESTS ARE HUNDRED
[LEAVES;
THE WIND DOTH WOO THE BRANCHES, THE BRANCHES THEY ARE WON,
AND THE FATHER FOND DEMANDETH THE MAIDEN FOR HIS SON."

Again looks out of window, the cemetery there at a hundred meters, and, after treading the crosses, proceeds:

"THE *WORM* DOTH WOO THE *MORTAL*, DEATH CLAIMS A LIVING BRIDE,
NIGHT UNTO DAY IS MARRIED, MORN UNTO EVENTIDE;"

She gives another look but farther, on the distant fields.

The cheerful NOISE of Austin and Lavinia playing "slide" diverts her; rests the pen and goes to the window to see: Austin holds Lavinia for her feet, she resists but laughs.

Emily smiles, with half the face hidden by the curtain.

SUPERIMPOSE: AUGUST 1848

INT. DILIGENCE (FROM SOUTH HADLEY TO AMHERST) - DAY

No more from her room's window but from the diligence, Emily is looking out, and she is pale and sick. EMILY'S MOTHER, 42, a simple and pious woman, sits on the same side of the daughter but at a seat distance; at the opposite EMILY'S FATHER, 45, austere man, a judge.

EMILY'S MOTHER

(to her husband, looking at
Emily)

Look at her, she's fine just in her own world. The carts nauseate her, the diligence....

EMILY'S FATHER

It's not the diligence, it's her head that's wrong! Three quarters... only three quarters she lasted in the first women's college in the United States!

EMILY'S MOTHER

Be calm dear, they can hear us.

EMILY'S FATHER

I'm very calm! But if she isn't able to stay in the world, and you also noticed it, what will she do then, close herself in the house?

Emily continues to look at the scenery.

EMILY'S FATHER

(to Emily)

Your grandfather was in debt up to his neck, he even rented the house, for you all to study! If we left the Homestead and we live in West Street is not by mistake, do you realize that?

Emily coughs, and continues to look out the window.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Maybe it's better this way, Edward, a character like her would disperse even more in

pursuing chemistry, astronomy
and what else they study there
I don't know.

Emily looks at herself in the window, and remembers some
sad facts. The parents voices fade in the FLASHBACKS.

BEGIN SEQUENCE OF FLASHBACKS

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK 1

The hard white face of MISS LYON, chemistry teacher and
founder of the college, stands out on the blackboard.

MISS LYON

That concludes today's lesson,
but the laws of Dalton will
accompany you to your room all
afternoon, ladies. Tomorrow
I'll examine you.

(Pause.)

Miss Allis, tell me, atoms are
"indivisible and"--

MISS ALLIS

-- "Indestructible", Miss Lyon.
First principle.

MISS LYON

First *law*! Dalton is law!
The principles leave them to
the philosophers.
And how are the atoms of an
element, Miss Baker?

MISS BAKER

"The atoms of an element are
equal to each other and have
the same mass", Miss Lyon.

MISS LYON

Hence the third law, namely:
"From the atoms of an element
you can't obtain the atoms of
another element."
But these reflections on atoms
don't they teach us something
perhaps even of us men?

Cold silence in the class.

MISS LYON (CONT'D)

Even among men bonds are formed, and these are stable only where there is equality, not where there is difference. We can easily observe that different people repel! The devout man rejects the godless, the white man rejects the black, the learned man the ignorant and so on - would you not agree Miss Dickinson? You who have a thought... *free* - or should I say *private*, since they've heard you mention the theory of *private thought*, or as it is called, of that half philosopher poet, that Emerson! Well, why don't you illustrate your thoughts on Dalton's laws, assuming that yours is not such a private thought... not to be made public.

BAD GIGGLES animate the class.

EMILY

Actually... I think that Mr. Dalton is wrong.

Miss Lyon feels the pinch. MURMURS in the classroom.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh I don't mean that he is wrong in terms of science, of course not, but I think that people, like things, can come together in a stable manner even if they are different. I know that the bee doesn't understand the flower, but it feeds on it. And I know that in spite of our laws and our fixed dogmas comets are hungry to yonder free in the cosmos as within us.

MISS LYON

Miss Dickinson I've noticed you, and I know for sure you are on the path to hell!

And it is unlikely that I'm wrong. I've identified you all, dear ladies, and you will not escape! I've divided you into categories, and only a few are saved. Those most devout are saved; then there are those for which there is some hope; and finally there's Miss Dickinson!

Emily coughs, as suddenly fallen ill 'cause of such malice.

MISS LYON
(almost hysterical)
Water, Miss Bell, can you say how is it composed?

MISS BELL
From one hydrogen atom and one oxygen atom, Miss Lyon.

Miss Lyon goes to the blackboard and writes: $H O = WATER$.

MISS LYON
A hydrogen atom and one oxygen atom form water. And this is the law, not a "comet"! These are the sacred values of science, these! But keep in mind, these values are never contradictory or competing with the values of faith. God gave us eyes to see into the matter, and with the science we obey; but seeing the matter does not mean being materialists, on the contrary: it is to love the great work of the Father. In the next lesson we will cover the coal gas and you will see the greatness of God! With gas, Mr. Murdoch, in 1792, illuminated his home. In 1801 Mr. Lebon lightened a hotel in Paris. In 1805 a factory was illuminated in Manchester, and in 1807 Pall Mall Street in London; with gaslights. I believe that soon the cities of the world, God willing, will

be lit by gas, and it is
unlikely that I'm wrong.
But everything always happens
only by the will of the Lord!
(She gives a long, severe look
on the class.)
Who wants to be a good
Christian? Arise from the bench
in case it's positive.

All rise except Emily, who huddles and coughs.

CUT TO FLASHBACK 2

INT. COLLEGE SECRETARY - DAY - FLASHBACK 2

Emily is sitting in front of Miss Lyon's desk. Her parents
sit behind her. Miss Lyon is standing.

MISS LYON

Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson, if I
called you here is because I
want your daughter to explain
to us, God willing, the reason
for such behavior that we can't
ignore and we can define...
contrary to faith; behavior
that has reached the limit last
week, as you well know from the
information provided to you in
the letter of invitation,
namely when I asked the class
that simple question and I had
from your daughter that
response that can only be
described... *scandalous*.

(to Emily)

Don't you do the prayers every
day, miss?

EMILY

Yes I do, although this makes
no difference to Him.

EMILY'S FATHER

Reply as you should, Emily!

EMILY

I repeat: I don't want to be
Christian as a nun, or a female

soldier, to have the obligation
to love Christ!
He and I have already agreed,
we have a particular bond.

MISS LYON
"A particular bond"?

EMILY
(staring into void)
There is a great deal of
religious interest here and
many are flocking to the ark
of safety. I haven't yet given
up to the claims of God --

EMILY'S MOTHER
-- Emily, what are you saying?

EMILY'S FATHER
You're not here to take vows or
something!

EMILY'S MOTHER
Edward, it's not possible, it
must be the books she reads...

MISS LYON
Books contrary to faith?

EMILY'S FATHER
Not in my house! We are a
devout family, Madame Lyon.

MISS LYON
Miss, please.

EMILY'S FATHER
But if the books are at fault,
as my wife is inclined to
think, I'll provide right away!
(watching Emily severely)
From now on, no books. Do you
understand? No more books!

MISS LYON
The kids today are confused.
With all the theories that run:
skepticism, transcendentalism--

EMILY'S FATHER

-- The identity of the American people is not yet defined. They make speeches, debates, print magazines, books, and a girl of eighteen can easily be misled.

EMILY

But father, I read the Bible and you know it; especially the book of Genesis, which you gave me. Our Lord with his "whole legions of Angels"... and then Jacob, who fights against God but doesn't lose, because God isn't oppression but respects those who have their own idea of faith...and fight for it.

(with calm irony)

Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson defines it "integrity of private thought", Miss Lyon. But I understand Jacob, yes, because I am sure that the struggling spirit is our best form of prayer. In the struggle between us and God, like Jacob, there is a deep exchange of love. And then comes the reconciliation!

At these words of faith her face kindles, in the dark room of the secretary, on the chair to which she is nailed, and to the grim reminder overlaps now a pleasant FANTASY.

END FLASHBACKS. BEGIN SEQUENCE OF FANTASY

EXT. FORD OF THE STREAM IN THE WOODS - DAY - FANTASY 1

Emily is at the stream when from the woods comes a half-naked and sweaty man with his hip in pain: JACOB.

He has a torn red robe, Emily observes his beautiful body.

JACOB

You must not be afraid. If you see me, it means you aren't.

Jacob can't talk, turns toward the water and drinks.

JACOB

You know who I am.

Drinks again, bathes his head and chest, then smiles.

EMILY

No... I don't think so.

JACOB

If I'm here it means that you know. And you also know how much I believe in Him and that I need to feel His love. We human beings need love as bread needs yeast, and even before we are born is so! Soon you'll understand that the pain of the world is like a question without answer.

So I have blasphemed and I suffered because to my many questions He never answered! But know this, I have never prayed. I'm not one of those who ask for favors. I wanted an exchange of love and nothing else. I just wanted to feel Him next to me. I'd never confuse Him with those who supply alms or indulgences or, you know, with that excise man to which many are calling for a delay. Yes, many call him Father, but treat him like a stranger, or a charity office.

For me He was like an absent father and so I told Him what's what! Yes, 'cause finally He came to me, personally...

(shaking his fist in the air)
and we settle the score!

CUT TO FANTASY 2

EXT. FORD OF THE STREAM IN THE WOODS - NIGHT - FANTASY 2

Jacob is at the ford of the stream, has the red tunic and a dagger in his belt (as in the "Jacob and the Angel" Luca Giordano's painting).

A light enlightens the woods and between the trees a human figure in a white robe appears, of gentle but disturbing aspect: the ANGEL.

JACOB

Who are you?

ANGEL

If you are here, it means you know who I am. If you see me, it means you aren't afraid.

JACOB

(with the hand on the dagger)
I am Jacob, son of Isaac and Rebecca.
Who sent you against me?

ANGEL

Yourself.

Jacob, seeing that the Angel is disarmed, throws the dagger. With great black and human eyes stares at the Angel and jumps him.

They fall to the ground and twist as in the Greek-Roman fights. The Angel hits Jacob on the hip, but the pain doesn't stop Jacob who immediately fastens the Angel by his waist, lifts him up and folds him to the ground into a force measurement until he is exhausted.

Jacob is moved, looks the Angel into his eyes and leaves him. The Angel falls into the stream and Jacob helps him up. We see now the Angel's wings: wet and delicate.

ANGEL

You hast thou power with God
and with men, and hast won.

Emily is lying on the bed of the stream with eyes closed.

END SEQUENCE OF FANTASY. BACK TO PRESENT

INT. DILIGENCE - DAY

The mother's HAND on her forehead, Emily is feverish. However she opens her eyes and replies to her parents.

EMILY

Since always the best books were printed for males because only males had to read them, but today it's not so: for the first time in America in women's colleges are used those

same books - and myself I am perfectly aware, father . This means that women today can be as smart as men - hope you don't mind, mother. However, this doesn't mean that women who know chemistry and astronomy, geology and algebra, or physiology and Latin... are necessarily smart!

EMILY'S MOTHER

Do you think that Miss Lyon is a stupid woman like many?

EMILY

"A stupid woman like many"? Oh I did not know that many women were stupid.

EMILY'S FATHER

Your mother did not mean... but, well, if we recognize the proficiency, we can't say that Lyon is not proficient!

EMILY

We recognize the proficiency, but faith has nothing to do with proficiency, and the faith of Lyon is vulgar as much as the legend about the stupidity of women! There are people who see well with faith, others see well only with the microscope.

EMILY'S FATHER

Today I'll communicate to the college your withdrawal. At the end of the next session you will return home.

EMILY

But I want to continue studying, father; please! When you enrolled me to college I accepted with great joy, and with the same joy I have always attended. Then I got sick, but I swear it's not my fault! And

if I've been hiding it was just not to disappoint you.

EMILY'S FATHER

Nonsense! Yours are just whims. Your fever is mental, including this cough you have! Look at you: pale, emaciated, while you say you have attended college "with great joy." To say nothing of your ideas of our Lord, who is so kind to you, and I don't know how He does it!

EMILY

Will I be able to take at least the final exams?

EMILY'S FATHER

(angry)

If the last quarter includes exam, you will take them.

EMILY

(with growing excitement)
Then I have to prepare myself right away! You will see that I will not let you down, sir. I will make a candy scrape of books! And then there will be the Holyoke Anniversary: the dance. Oh I can't wait!

Emily seems already healed, the father looks at her stunned

EMILY'S FATHER

(to his wife)

This strange creature is your fault, Emily Norcross, if you had not spoiled her!

EMILY'S MOTHER

It's you who covers her with gifts, my dear Edward --

EMILY'S FATHER

-- You lament the books, you know how many books she has?

EMILY'S MOTHER

But they're all yours --

EMILY'S FATHER

-- Almost, not all! And she does too much. She cultivates flowers, takes singing lessons, walks here and there when and where she wants, writes letters to whomever...

(with a resigned tone)
and I have no strength to do anything... against her joy.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Your father's right, Emily Elizabeth. He spoils you, but you profit. Sometimes you're away for hours, like when you go to "your friend the woods", as you say, and no one scolds you; and finally your oddness seems too normal, we almost don't see it. We, but others see it and talk about it instead. Lately you keep saying to everybody that "the stars send you signals"... and in fact I realized that while we all sleep you're awake --

EMILY

-- Constellations, not stars!
Betelgeuse, Orion, Bellatrix.

EMILY'S MOTHER

For this, last November were you in the garden at midnight?!

EMILY

No mother, I was there to pick flowers. That is the period in which Messer Time is hard on them, and should be picked before Old Winter's arrival.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Are you listening yourself?!
God knows what's in that head of yours. I see the other girls and I see that they are normal;

and I hate to say it but I understand them better than I do my daughter. You are... incomprehensible for me!

EMILY

Normality is an illusion, it confuses us. Serves this, certainly not to understand! It was created by *ordinary people*, not special people. Those special have always suffered it, such as women. The dominant mentality has always had a beard, and if we cut that beard what's behind it? A huge ignorance of hypocrites. The incomprehensible things, mother, do not exist, except --

EMILY'S FATHER

-- Enough! Don't talk like this to your mother, be quiet!

EMILY'S MOTHER

I'm amazed, Emily --

EMILY'S FATHER

(to his wife)

-- And you also, be quiet! Shut up, women! A veil of silence should drop all the way home.

But Mr. Dickinson is so nervous that the imposed silence is soon ruined by him.

EMILY'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Even the dog I gave you! And the piano. Ah, so many things I do regret, Emily. Your mother's right: I covered you in gifts, books and books, but now enough with gifts and enough with books! And enough words!

Emily looks at her father, so funny, then at the landscape.

EMILY (V.O.)

My God, thank you for granting me such a safe return to my own dear Home.

PASSAGE OF TIME (from 1848 to 1851): from the DILIGENCE'S WINDOW we see the seasons overlapping each other: the sun changes in rain, snow in grass, grazing herds appear and disappear like clouds of smoke.

INT. VARIOUS AREAS OF DICKINSON'S WEST STREET HOME - DAY

The WINDOW of the diligence is now a window of the house from where Emily looks at the garden, the apple trees, chickens, growing flowers.

The different hair styling gives her an air more mature. Her face is sullen.

EMILY'S MOTHER
(to Emily)

No, this Sunday you go! It would be the second in three months, and then you know that your father can't stand it if you don't go, his mood changes and then everything is ruined: the entire Sunday is at risk: lunch, our afternoon meetings.

EMILY
But I can't, I told you, I know my sake a'nt much.

EMILY'S FATHER
(from the door of the study)
What are you two plotting?!

EMILY'S MOTHER
Emily is sick, possibly fever.

EMILY'S FATHER
(opening the door of the study ominously)
Last Sunday she had a cough and remained at home, two Sundays ago her eyes hurt and that's fine, we all saw in what state she was; but three Sundays ago, our young lady, if I recall well, came back saying it was cold, indeed argued that Amherst was icy. Icy in May!

EMILY

I *argued* that Amherst wasn't ice cold, but I was *icyfied*!

EMILY'S FATHER

Well, I correct me, you were icyf -- what kind of word is "icyfied"!

EMILY

And you have still forced me to go, if *I recall well*, sir.

EMILY'S FATHER

It's obvious! If I tell you to do something you have to do it even if you do not like it, at least until you are under this roof!

EMILY'S MOTHER

When you'll get a husband, you won't have to be accountable to your father.

EMILY

But I will have to give account to this husband.

EMILY'S FATHER

But really, Aust' and Vinnie have already left half an hour ago while you --

EMILY

-- Yes I'll go! But you are responsible for my health!

EMILY'S FATHER

I feel a bad smell in the house. A sour odor.

(to his wife)

Sorry dear, is there anything on the fire? Oh no, I know well what it is, it's the smell of blackmail. If your daughter doesn't stop rebelling immediately --

EMILY

-- Will you whip me, sir?

EMILY'S FATHER

Worse! You will not have the Iliad. Nor that other book you wanted; was it? Dickens's David Copperfield, right?

EMILY

Adorable father, it's right to remind me one by one my moral commitments. I'm going!
(buttoning her collar)

EMILY'S FATHER

But be careful, Emily, we are in June, there is no snow, no rain, no wind at all, if this time also you come back home, in church I'll carry you!

P.O.V. of her parents: Emily, all dressed in black, passes the garden and the gate happy like a little girl.

INT. FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AMHERST - DAY - LATER

The passionate Reverend Colton is at the church's pulpit.

REVEREND COLTON

Dear brothers, I am happy to see you. As you know I was in Boston to attend to certain commitments and I must say that the city is not only ice creams, beverages and similar temptations...

Composed LAUGHS; faces of pious people.

REVEREND COLTON (CONT'D)

Boston is also newspapers and magazines, so many that we can know the world. But even disown it!
So, today I will not keep sermons on family, as befits a man of the church, but I will speak of human knowledge, and I will put you on your guard. Today we have philosophers and scientists, but many of them

have got lost. Oh, certainly human intelligence has made progress, we are in 1851! We are *modern*! And certainly the modernity is not a sin in itself, and I appreciate it, in fact, just the other day I did make a daguerreotype. My face now is imprinted on paper, and sometimes I watch it. I don't know why I should watch it, but I watch it.

GENERAL LAUGHS. Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson are smiling, seated some rows behind their sons Lavinia and Austin.

Austin has a book in a hand. Close to him there is SUSAN, 21, of modest origins but with ambitious and shrewd eyes.

REVEREND COLTON (CONT'D)

If I meet Mr. Daguerre I would shake his hand, certainly! But if modernity means twisting the words of the Lord... The criticism, for example, who has not heard of it?! Today we have half men of letters, so-called "critics", that explain the books from a technical point of view. Well, some of them think they can even criticize the Bible! They put it under their lens as any book and will "analyze", as they say, the "form", "style", and so on. But if we continue at this rate will come a day when these literate men will even give votes to the apostles! Certainly!

Austin looks at his book and then hides it in his coat.

Susan touches Austin but looks charmingly at Mr. Dickinson.

Lavinia looks around searching for Emily.

CROSS-CUTTING:

EXT. FORTUNE HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

MR. FORTUNE delivers to a flabby and bespectacled CUSTOMER a brass plate on which was engraved the title and name: "DOCTOR PHYSICIAN S. STRONG".

REVEREND COLTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The man of letters is always indebted to the humble man, because it is the humble effort that allows the duct to be duct. Progress advances on the sweat of those who work!
"I Thank you Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to little ones", says the gospel according to Matthew.

EXT. IN A FIELD OF WHEAT - DAY - SAME TIME

FARMERS look at Emily crossing their field. She caresses the wheat ears and salutes the peasants, who, no longer having dark faces, reciprocate smiling to the intruder.

REVEREND COLTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The holy scriptures, however, are also poetry, and are not easy to read, certainly! Poetry is the language that God chose to speak to us, and words are never just words but are what we are. He who speaks with grace, chose it, and who receives it as a gift, like the poet then, must use it for the sake of God and everyone.

END CROSS-CUTTING.

INT. FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AMHERST - DAY - SAME TIME

Austin, comforted by the words of the Reverend, discovers the book from his coat, whose title is "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

REVEREND COLTON (CONT'D)
But woe anyone who stands on God for the sake of art or science! If the ink of the poets or scientists expands as a stain and dirties all, what will become of us?

Austin hides the book again in his coat.

REVEREND COLTON (CONT'D)
I want to conclude now talking
to our sisters women. We all
know that under the latest US
laws will soon be stocked with
well-educated and skilled
women, which will understand
science and cite from memory
the verses of poets. And this
is not a sin, certainly, 'cause
God has endowed women with a
deep soul and the government of
the United States has noticed.

General laughs. Austin and Susan smile tenderly.

REVEREND COLTON (CONT'D)
But culture is not something to
be taken lightly. Is not
breaking an egg in a frying
pan. Therefore women I tell --

EXT. ROAD OF DICKINSON'S WEST STREET HOME - DAY - LATER

Emily is on the way home, has red flowers on the black
dress. The face is red. Mumbles verses not to forget them.
She sees her mother and FIVE GUESTS going into the house,
including MR. LORD, 39, with his WIFE, 29, and MR. NEWTON, 30.

EMILY
The guests are already here,
how strange! They shouldn't
have come for lunch. Oh, there
is Mr. Lord and his wife. And
that's Newton! It can't be.
(with great agitation)
It can't be, no, it can't be.

EXT. WEST STREET HOME'S GARDEN AND PATIO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Austin and Susan seat on the patio reading "THE ARABIAN
NIGHTS". Lavinia defends her nice white dress from the dog.

LAVINIA
My beautiful dress...
Carlo, down those paws!
Aust' do something.

Austin and Susan smiles maliciously, reading from the book.

LAVINIA

(to the dog)

Don't you have a bit of common sense?

EMILY

(entering suddenly)

Learn the *canine*! Dogs speak it perfectly, better than English, which remains them a little tricky, or so they say.

SUSAN

(to Emily)

Finally! But where were you?

EMILY

Susan, honey, hug me!

Emily opens her arms. Susan down the patio and hugs her.

SUSAN

We didn't see you in church.

AUSTIN

(ironic but always sweet)

And even at the table!

EMILY

No! you've already had lunch!?

LAVINIA

Mom was very angry, but she won't tell you anything, in front of the guests.

AUSTIN

Our Emily loves so much Sunday sermons that she can't wait to get to the woods before they end; but, be it clear, it is only because she urgently wants to prove every sentence, every word; especially if the sermon concerns the family. But when our little sister is in the woods... poof! She forgets everything; not only the sermon on the family, but the family itself.

EMILY

The forest, if you knew how beautiful it is! The glorious sun caresses it and even our silences, there, are splendid. But seeing you it's better: Aust', Vinnie and you, my Sue. And then the lunch hour, that rings as if the pendulum was linked directly to our hearts!

AUSTIN

Your heart runs behind!

EMILY

(to Susan, giving her a thing)

I gathered something for you. Some moss blossoms and a little shell of a snail. I tied them all up in a leaf with some grass of June.

I thought of you all morning.

(then, aloud)

Oh, I see that *all*, here, on this Sunday, is white as Vinnie's dress!

(to Austin, with morbidity)

But next you'll leave, Austin, and the union will be broken - but we will write, right?

Tell me that you'll write me!

SUSAN

(to Emily, hurrying her)

Go inside, now, go!

EMILY

(with fear)

Yes, but Vinnie comes with me,

(to Lavinia, wheedle)

so you'll change the dress, right?

LAVINIA

No, no, the dress I won't change it! Go alone, coward!

EMILY

Oh, very nice! I hope Carlo will make it all black, so it

will be more appropriate to go
to church.

AUSTIN

Ah, you with this black! God
isn't black. He's light, joy--

EMILY

--God yes, Reverend Belden no!

LAVINIA

(astonished)

Belden? He died two years ago.

AUSTIN

No, it can't be that you don't
put a foot in church since
then. Reverend Colton of the
First Church, you know him?

EMILY

(looking down ashamed)

Sure... but time has passed
since I went to the gathering.

She goes fast to the patio to escape from Austin but hangs
outside the door, and from a window peeps inside the house.

LAVINIA

(to Emily)

He talked about you, you know?
He spoke of poetry.

AUSTIN

Yes, it's true! Mr. Colton
spoke of poets and literate
men terrible like you.

(chuckles)

This object in my hand can
corrupt the humble and gentle
people, he said. In fact, look,
I cannot read it!
But mostly you, *look* how are
you reduced because of books!

The joke hurts Emily, which mirrors herself in the
window... and sees a funny girl, dirty by ears and leaves.
Reflected in the same window we see now Austin, climbing on
the railing and imitating the Reverend on the pulpit.

AUSTIN

The woman must be the guardian
of the household; and also
docile and balanced --

EMILY

(turning instantly)

-- Foul tongue! God abhors this
terms. He loves women of
letters that go into the woods!

AUSTIN

Did He told you exactly?

EMILY

Oh, how I am late!

(to the Sun)

Don the sun, until now you were
so fine that I could have sworn
it was mid-morning and instead,
like a fat satisfied king that
you are, you have deceived me!

Austin looks at her shocked.

EMILY

(to Austin)

No, I don't speak with God, I'm
not mad! I speak with the Sun!

Austin, Lavinia and Susan look at each other.

Emily turns to the door, arranges her bonnet, shakes the
skirt, takes a deep breath and goes in.

INT. ATRIUM AND LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily is blocked in the doorway and her parents and GUESTS
in the living room look at her (Newton isn't there).

EMILY

(revering)

Mr. Lord and Mrs. Lord.
Gentlemen. Oh father, mother, I
swear it is not my fault --

EMILY'S MOTHER

-- Apologies, always apologies

EMILY'S FATHER

Wait dear, Emily is telling us
that she is innocent.

(to Emily)

Please, come in Emily, don't be afraid.

EMILY

Oh yes sir, thank you for understanding, thanks.

EMILY'S FATHER

Moreover, she is no longer a child, she's twenty-one, is of age. This delay will have some reasons and we have the duty to listen, and we also have a duty to reserve her a chance of acquittal. Come Emily, we are listening.

Austin and Lavinia rush into the house to enjoy "the show".

Susan still in the patio and sits where was Austin, looking around and welcoming as a mistress.

Not to come between their father and Emily, Lavinia and Austin slink behind her and sit in one spot of the atrium invisible from the living room, but visible only to Emily.

EMILY

Well, then... I walked! And when you stroll around our lovely countryside, ah how many traps should one avoid! If it were not, however, that just these traps make so lovable the countryside.

I think of spring flowers that conspire to attract me: the trailing arbutus, liver leaf, yellow violets, blood root, adder's tongue and many other smaller flowers. And then there's the Sun! Today he rose so hasty that his anticipation was certainly my lateness --

EMILY'S FATHER

--Guilty! For distraction and for incorrect time calculation

EMILY

But I'm not *distracted*, rather I'm... *attracted*.

Lavinia and Austin incite her with gestures.

EMILY (CONT'D)

If we are offered a gift we receive it, but if they are many it takes time to receive them all.

EMILY'S FATHER

But you can always suspend the sitting and update it, right?!

EMILY

See how you judge me? As the people. Always ready to throw in prison a poor soul, instead of capturing the true culprit. You should put in prison the countryside, it's the weapon! Or, if you must stop someone, stop life, 'cause life isn't what it purports to be!

All watch her open-mouthed, as in a picture.

EMILY'S MOTHER

(breaking the ice, troubled)
If on Sundays she doesn't go to church she remains at home, helps, makes bread. But when she goes... doesn't come back.
(to Emily, tough)
Anyway, your meal is in the kitchen!

EMILY

(replying kindly, ironic)
Thanks mother, and anyway... I can't eat! Soon I have singing lessons and *I hate to be late.*

The mother has fire in her eyes, but she is contained.

Mr. NEWTON, sited among the guests but different: as wrapped in a light, rises and reaches Emily, smiling.

EMILY

I'm surprised, Mr. Newton, I thought of you in Worcester.

NEWTON
*Guilty... is the Dickinson's
lovable company, as you'd say.*

We see Emily talk to Newton as out of time, until she greets, goes out of the living room and up the stairs.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Enters the room mumbling verses to write and goes to the desk, but a blinding SUN LIGHTNING strikes her.

EMILY
(to the Sun)
With you I'll deal later!

Opens the drawer and we see a hundred sheets, not just one. Poems and recipes, also written on fragments and reused paper; and a dozen letters. Near the Bible isn't anymore Shakespeare but WORDSWORTH.

She puts the paper on the desk, next to LONGFELLOW's and IK MARVEL's books. We see well also DICKENS's COPPERFIELD and the ILIAD (which finally her father gave her).

She writes fast the poem and puts the paper in the drawer.

INT. ALONG THE STAIRS - DAY - LATER

Emily spies from the stairs her mother serving tea and her father conversing with guests. It's a far away world for her, like it were placed beyond a thick lens.

Newton is not there, but behind her and now appears:

NEWTON
What are you doing, spying?

Emily is startled and turns. Newton shines like a vision.

NEWTON (CONT'D)
Or play hide and seek?

EMILY
(intimidated)
No, I...

NEWTON
Shh, careful they'll hear us;
we play hide-and-seek, right?

EMILY

But I didn't want to hide.

NEWTON

No matter, it's a secret between you and me. Moreover we already share secrets. The secrets of literature.

Newton coughs, pulls out a handkerchief, leads it to the mouth. We note that it is already dirtied with dried blood.

EMILY'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Mr. Newton?

Newton hides pulling back even Emily.

NEWTON

It's nice to play hide-and-
seek, I didn't remember it. But
also the literature is a kind
of hide-and-
seek, don't you
think? The author is behind the
words. You don't see him but he
is there.

EMILY

But there are authors who only
hide 'cause of hypocrisy.

NEWTON

For example?

EMILY

John Donne, preacher poet. I
read his poems and sermons -
given to me by my father - and
finally I said to myself:
what's the point in reading the
preaches of a libertine?

NEWTON

"For whom the bell tolls".

EMILY

Great religious work, but given
that on the moral level -
that's the only true religious
level - the author is a
"poultice of a man". So they
say, isn't it?

Better, *poor Richard...*
Crashaw, true man of faith!

NEWTON

And the books I sent you?

EMILY

Those I loved more of all, for
the opposite of hypocrisy!
Emerson's poems! The emotions
are true and the author is
cautious, he hides well, for
necessity of a poet.

NEWTON

"Cautious"? "Hide"? Cautious
it's not for the poets, rather!
Poets make us move just for the
freedom of their emotions, like
Keats or like--

EMILY

-- Free emotions have a too
strong smell - macerate petals.
But if I *have to be excited* by
someone, it's Wordsworth! His
verses are so fragile that
pulverize while reading them.
Not macerate petals but pollen
flying on promontories and
woods from the same heart of
the Flower, there they get
drunk the Bees.

NEWTON

(admired, stutters)

Well, I love Wordsworth, but
not the caution... I mean:
there's already so much
hypocrisy in the world that
even if the poet --

EMILY

-- Not hypocrisy but measures!
The writer needs it as one who
receives it. You say: "the
world is hypocritical", so it
rejects the truth. Thus the
poet can't but be cautious.

NEWTON

What about Shakespeare then,
that even shoots to the kings?

EMILY

It does so through the actors,
who are his hiding places.

NEWTON

But the actors pretend!

EMILY

The actors, the poet not.
As we weave lampshades for the
small golden evening lamps, so
the poet needs the actors, or a
more classic meter, in order to
give himself to the world.
Without filters his truth would
be blinding light.

NEWTON

But the truth exists beyond the
poets, and the world already
has its filters to protect
itself.

EMILY

Typically the world actually
filters the truth using false
filters, filters beauty using
ugly filters.

(staring into void)

Shakespeare, so brave, he's
actually more *cautious* than we
think. Enters in secret in our
hearts and enlightens them from
within, in a way that no one
can escape.

(back to being present)

But excuse me if I was rude and
I contradicted you!

Newton smiles at her, Emily is embarrassed and slips away:
goes downstairs, to the kitchen.

On the doorstep of the kitchen, she turns to look at him
but her father is already taking Newton into the living
room, where Emily's mother and the guests are having tea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

EMILY'S FATHER

Have you seen a ghost?

NEWTON

Why, don't you believe in them?

EMILY'S FATHER

What question! Are you insane?

NEWTON

You are very rational, dear Edward, but in life there are also irrational things. Art for example: all ghosts! Poets, characters... and when we read them we exhume them. They relive, speak to us, as if they were sitting next to us.

EMILY'S FATHER

"Sitting next to us"? A lawyer who believes this!

MR. LORD

(curious)

What should we not believe in?

EMILY'S FATHER

In ghosts, dear Otis.

NEWTON

Let's talk about literature. The ghosts of literature. As you read, have you never had the feeling that the author sits next to you?

GUEST LADY

The only feeling I have now is that this issue does not seem convenient with tea.

MRS. LORD

Right! Better to talk about things we like hearing as much as this jam pleases the palate.

They laugh.

NEWTON

Ladies, a little patience. Or should I say pity? I speak of

those skilled ghosts who are the authors of our readings. My opinion is that if we read with sensitivity, writers can live again.

MRS. LORD

(ironic)

Even if we read a cookbook?

NEWTON

Well, yes, quintessentially.

GUEST LADY

What big words! With you one has to have the dictionary.

EMILY'S MOTHER

(not understanding the joke)
If you need it. We even have two: the Noah Webster of '28 and then the latest edition, made here at Amherst.

EMILY'S FATHER

Maybe now it should really be useful a dictionary... but to give it to our dear Benjamin, so that he may see how the difference is *concrete* between "author" and "ghost". Imagine if I have to defend the right of a dead author. Maybe in a case of plagiarism. Do you think I should discuss it with the author's successors, or wait for his ghost *to sit next to me*?

They laugh again.

NEWTON

The lawyer Dickinson is as always very tricky, but if he was not, he would not be at the General Court of [Massachusetts](#) or at the House of Representatives. And he is also the treasurer of Amherst College, so... a practical man.

No, someone like him cannot, indeed *must not* believe in ghosts! While, on the other side, who do we have? A modest reader as well as lawyer pleading a lost cause.

In the reflection of a mirror Newton sees Emily again hidden and intent on spying, and so he brings her up.

NEWTON (CONT'D)

But, *in hindsight*, maybe the cause is not lost. The poor defender of ghosts perhaps has a witness. Someone as he, who sees them, the ghosts. And if I were to cite him in this courtroom, what would you say?

Emily responds to Newton's gaze in the mirror.

EMILY'S FATHER

Well, in the presence of witnesses things would change.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Why, Edward, even if it's about so unreal things?

NEWTON

But the ghosts are real, Mrs. Dickinson. Concrete as light, as the truth. And the more brighter they are the less concrete we are, less sure of ourselves. So much so that placed in front of their truth even kings become puppets!

Emily and Newton winking in the mirror. Emily ashamed, "leaves the mirror" and slips away again to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily is happy; observes the things in the kitchen: the dark wooden bowl to chop meat, the gingerbread, the cake.

Cuts a slice of cake and bits it.

From the window another SUN LIGHTNING: strong, blinding.

INT. PARENT'S ROOM - NIGHT - (THREE YEARS LATER)

Lavinia enters the parent's room, holding a lamp.

LAVINIA

Mother, wake up! Come!

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

They enter Emily's room; talking in her sleep, agitated.

EMILY

I could not help but notice
those spots - you're so modest
- the handkerchief - I haven't
greeted you --

EMILY'S MOTHER

(grabbing her)

-- Calm down dear!

EMILY

(waking)

I HAVE TO SEE HIM!
Why am I here? I must see Mr.
Newton! I slept? A sunstroke?

EMILY'S MOTHER

Calm down, Newton is not here.

EMILY

I have not said goodbye!

EMILY'S MOTHER

Mr. Newton...is dead, my dear.

EMILY

Not true, he's here! He was in
the living room with you!

EMILY'S MOTHER

Poor Benjamin died two years
ago of tuberculosis.

EMILY

I tell you that he's here!

LAVINIA

Emily please don't do that!

EMILY'S MOTHER

Your father is leaving for Washington, he's a member of Congress, and you two will follow him shortly, remember?

EMILY

No mother, next Sunday Austin goes to Boston to teach and Mr. Newton was here today and you talked about poets and I've been late to lunch!

EMILY'S MOTHER

You haven't been late to lunch

LAVINIA

Yes she was, mother, but this is something that happened years ago, before Austin left. The diary of that year!
(She opens the bedside table.)
Emily writes all.

EMILY

He was sick, I understood it but didn't say anything.

The mother touches her forehead and caresses her.

Lavinia searches in the DIARY OF THE YEAR 1851 (we see the date on the cover) then reads:

LAVINIA

I found it! On the 7th June of '51 Austin left for Boston, to teach at Endicott School. The Sunday before, let's see... it was the 1st June and Emily came home around two o'clock. But Mr. Newton was not there! Emily didn't mention him among the guests. The following Monday we sent him a dispatch.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Benjamin married on the 4th of June of '51 in Worcester, where he lived. Three days before we sent him our wishes.

(to Emily)

That Sunday he was not here at all, my dear, that's why we sent a telegraphic dispatch.

(touching Emily's forehead)
It's not fever, maybe it's one of her nervous breakdowns.

EMILY

First Mr. Humphrey, then dear Sophie and now him, no! Death possesses us - everyone! The land wades in pools of grief - the bee meets the closed flowers - try a ford but before us we have a sea - only we had sailors - but for what? What's on the other side of the sea, joy or other death?

EMILY'S MOTHER

Calm down Emily. Vinnie will remain here with you.

Emily's mother kisses her daughter on the forehead and whispers something to Lavinia, which enters Emily's bed.

The light goes off and after a few seconds, in the dark, Emily talks with calm and happy VOICE (between this and the delirious voice before we have the sense of a double Emily)

EMILY (V.O.)

"SUSIE, TODAY HAS BEEN A FAIR DAY, VERY STILL AND BLUE. TONIGHT, THE CRIMSON CHILDREN ARE PLAYNG IN THE WEST, AND TOMORROW WILL BE COLDER. IN ALL I NUMBER YOU. I WANT TO THINK OF YOU EACH HOUR IN THE DAY. WHAT YOU ARE SAYING - DOING - I WANT TO WALK WITH YOU, AS SEEING YET UNSEEN. I MISS YOU, MOURN FOR YOU, AND WALK THE STREETS ALONE - OFTEN AT NIGHT, BESIDE, I FALL ASLEEP IN TEARS, FOR YOUR DEAR FACE. IF IT IS FINISHED, TELL ME, AND I VILL RAISE THE LID TO MY BOX OF PHANTOMS, AND LAY ONE MORE LOVE IN; BUT IF IT LIVES AND BEATS STILL, STILL LIVES AND BEATS FOR ME, THEN SAY ME SO."

INT. GUEST ROOM COLEMAN'S HOUSE (PHILADELPHIA) - EVENING

Emily's HAND, with wide and round handwriting, writes:
"WE WERE THREE WEEKS IN WASHINGTON, WHILE FATHER WAS THERE,
AND HAVE BEEN TWO IN PHILADELPHIA."

Emily looks at the window and some MEMORIES of Washington
and Philadelphia come up.

QUICK SERIES OF FLASHBACKS

A) WASHINGTON STREETS: cars and fashion aficionados.

B) DELWARE RIVER in Philadelphia, with its colorful boats.

C) WASHINGTON'S GRAVE in Philadelphia.

EMILY (V.O.)

"WE HAD MANY PLEASANT TIMES AND
SEEN MUCH THAT IS FAIR, AND
HEARD MUCH THAT IS WONDERFUL -
MANY SWEET LADIES AND NOBLE
GENTLEMEN HAVE TAKEN US BY THE
HAND AND SMILED UPON US..."

D) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of Arch Street, Philadelphia.
Lavinia, Emily, her friend ELIZA COLEMAN and the COLEMANS
sit next to each other in the back of the church.

E) The REVEREND WADSWORTH is at the altar, we see him from a
distance: long sideburns, calm gestures. His DEEP VOICE
flows soft under Emily's voice over.

F) Emily looks at him infatuated.

G) The sermon is over and the Colemans reach the Reverend
thru the crowd.

H) The Reverend Wadsworth and Emily are talking in the empty
church. We see them from a far, in the golden light of a
stained glass window.

EMILY (V.O.)

"I TRIED TO WRITE SO HARD
BEFORE I WENT FROM HOME, BUT
THE MOMENTS WERE SO BUSY, AND
THEN THEY *FLEW* SO.
SOMETIMES I WONDER IF I EVER
DREAMED - THEN IF I'M DREAMING
NOW, THEN IF I *ALWAYS* DREAMED."

END QUICK SERIES OF FLASHBACKS. BACK TO PRESENT

INT. GUEST ROOM COLEMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Emily is still looking out the window. Then looks at the letter she is writing and signs the lower right:

"THE FORGETFUL
EMILIE"

INT. CARIDGE - DAY - ONE YEAR LATER/NOV. 1855

The Dickinson family is in the carriage and the movers wagon is in front. Emily stairs fearful at her boxes on the wagon, precariously covered by a cloth.

EMILY'S MOTHER
(to her husband)
You do not seem happy, Edward.

AUSTIN
Sorry father, but I think that if God wanted you not to be re-elected to Congress is just to make you appreciate the return to your home. And then there's our law firm together, the things that you'll teach me... and I will not disappoint you!

LAVINIA
I love knowing that Homestead will be your home and work.

EMILY'S MOTHER
And then, since Austin leaves home - gets married -, your law firm in the home will keep us together!

AUSTIN
"Austin leaves"? But if we are neighbors! By the way...
(to his father)
When will work begin, father?

EMILY'S FATHER
Do not be impatient, Austin, the wait is part of the gift.

It is also the first quality of a good lawyer, knowing how to wait.

EMILY'S MOTHER

(to Austin)

Have you decided the wedding date?

LAVINIA

Whatever the day, I want to be the first to know!

EMILY'S FATHER

It will be ready in time, your home, and will be a home with style. Italian style!

EMILY

(still staring at the wagon)
"Your home"? And Susan does not count?

A jolt of the wagon slides the tarp. A box is uncovered. Emily sees her fragile books so exposed.

AUSTIN

Oh father, it's wonderful! Dear mother, Susie prefers April, but I would marry in July.

EMILY

(looking out the window)
July, the month in which the most fragile flowers are dead. "*You and I in a future April*", as the poet says sounds better.

AUSTIN

(to Emily, testily)

Death is out, understand? The house will be called Evergreens and we'll give feasts on feasts!

HOMESTEAD HOUSE is there, solid, down the tree-lined road. The movers wagon arrives.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Here is the house where you were born!

EMILY'S FATHER
Grandfather has pulled it up
brick by brick in 1813. The
first brick house in Amherst!

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The carriage pulls over and we see a BLACK MOVER, 50, bold,
and a WHITE MOVER, 30, pale and thin.

the Dickinson family gets off and Mr. Dickinson goes
towards the reverent white mover.

Stealthily Emily looks at the shay black mover.

The white one is wearing a dirty overall but intact, the
black is in rags and his black, sweaty skin, shines.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM (HOMESTEAD HOUSE) - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily is on the threshold of her new room. Looks at the
large bed, the dresser, desk and the four windows.

She has in her arms a box of books and with grace puts it
on the small desk near a window, from there looks out.

She sees the far woods, then down to the garden: her mother
giving orders to the movers; and notes that when the mother
speaks to the black mover he stands attentive, looks down
and touches with one hand his wrist.

EMILY'S MOTHER
(to the black mover)
Careful with that hanger. Not
so, that box must not be took
from the neck but from the
base, is a gentle old hanger!
(to the white mover)
Mr. Roland, please, tell your
colleague to have a little more
grace, if possible.
(loudly commenting)
Grace is a great virtue but...
one is born with it.

Austin sees Emily at the window and approaches.

AUSTIN
Madame, but you're a spy!

EMILY

Look at these two men: so different from each other, while colleagues.

AUSTIN

(kidding)

One is darker than the other.

EMILY

You note only that, you gem of Harvard, esteemed lawyer?

AUSTIN

I see that you know me, madam.

Black mover lifts up a vase and shows the bruised wrists.

EMILY (V.O.)

Look there, the signs!

AUSTIN (V.O.)

I see them. On the wrists.

EMILY

When slavery was abolished in our state?

AUSTIN

In legal terms in 1783, but you know that for the slave owners it means money and --

EMILY

-- And money wins on law! You want to tell me this?

AUSTIN

Do not exaggerate! The law also poses limits, fixes criteria. You know what settled in 1772 Judge Sharp? If a slave who escapes from the colonies manages to reach Great Britain he is legally free.

Black mover loads a large piece of furniture on his back.

EMILY (V.O.)

But it is very unlikely that a slave can escape, right? I read

that often, when it happens, he is captured, and I dare not think about the consequences.

AUSTIN (V.O.)

They kill him. But fortunately we are in Massachusetts, not in a southern state.

EMILY (V.O.)

They should make a law to prevent the import.

AUSTIN (V.O.)

There already is a law of 1807.

EMILY

(turning toward Austin)

But the slave trade has increased! But didn't you say that "the law places limits"?

AUSTIN

(harsh)

Poetry is much better instead of law! Why not write a good poem, attach it to one of your letters, make a nice package and send it to all slavers?

EMILY

Mr. Emerson says that only genius can change things, namely people. Take "Uncle Tom's Cabin", was printed only three years ago and yet this little book on slavery has already changed our America more than eight decades of laws

AUSTIN

Without the freedom of press protected by law, adieu Uncle!

Black mover reveres Emily's mother.

EMILY (V.O.)

I read that they are branded with fire. And I read about

black women raped till death.
Who knows where this man comes
from. Yet he carries not only
humiliation but grace and other
blacks that I saw in New York
and Michigan have given me the
same emotion.

AUSTIN (V.O.)
(shocked)

Emotion?

EMILY (V.O.)
Our mother instead, look, she
does not care for grace as she
does not care for thought.

Emily's mother appears clumsy between objects.

EMILY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That thing inside her that she
calls grace is only a lean and
feeble dignity of a pious rich
and respectable woman. Yet that
man shining submits to her. Ah,
Africa must be a place full of
such a human beauty, my Austin,
to which we are unprepared. All
humanity of God is there.

AUSTIN
You're too hard on Mom, and too
soft on that guy!

EMILY
(looking severe at Austin)
Except your delicious Susan I
can't recollect another white
with such grace, then, dear,
see to treat her well.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TWO YEARS LATER/JANUARY 1857

Emily is now a woman: her face is a little changed.

From the same window we see the patio bare and snow-covered

SUPERIMPOSE: 1857

Emily looks up to the EVERGREENS HOUSE, at the end of the Homestead' backyard, and "sees" Susan receiving guests. But it is a product of her imagination, a "fantasy".

BEGIN FANTASY

INT. EVERGREENS HOUSE - AFTERNOON - FANTASY

Susan is the same as always: humble dressed and without makeup. She's on the door and smiles to undefined guests.

END FANTASY. BACK TO REALITY

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

Emily turns away from the window, sits down at her desk (on which we see the magazine ATLANTIC MONTHLY) and writes some verses.

Behind her there is Lavinia that looks herself in the mirror then goes out of the room.

Emily finishes writing the verses, and the pen she goes to trace the latest dash in the poem. We see the poem:

"ONE SISTER HAVE IN OUR HOUSE -
AND ONE, A HEDGE AWAY.
THERE'S ONLY ONE RECORDER,
BUT BOTH BELONG TO ME.
ONE CAME THE ROAD THAT I CAME -
AND WORE MY LAST YEAR'S GOWN -
THE OTHER, AS A BIRD HER NEST,
BUILDED OUR HEARTS AMONG."

Lavinia returns with makeup and Milliner's flowers and goes to the mirror.

Emily folds the scrap of paper with the verses, goes to the dresser, turns the key, puts the paper inside and... in the dresser we see hundreds of scraps of papers scattered.

Lavinia spies Emily's gesture and the mysterious dresser.

Emily takes a book of ELIZABETH BROWNING from a shelf, puts it in a basket among flowers, muffins and chestnuts, then sits on the bed and watches Lavinia getting ready.

EMILY

If a mirror could consume
itself by mirroring, now this
would be dust.

LAVINIA

I love the literary meetings
that Susan organizes at
Evergreens?
Oh Susan, thank you!
I'm very curious to meet this
famous... this great
philosopher!

(looking in the mirror)

This dress, I wore it at the
party of South-Deerfield.

EMILY

Yes, I remember! Ten years ago,
in a January cheerful as April.
We made charades - walking
around indefinitely --

LAVINIA

-- I also wore it to Sydney
Adams's party!

EMILY

I remember that too. It was too
slippery for heels!

LAVINIA

(placing the Milliner's flowers
and showing cleavage)
Ready! But won't I be indecent?

EMILY

I would not want to disappoint
Vinnie but the world is now
full of women in cleavage, and
certainly with exposed skin
portions much larger than this!

LAVINIA

But I have Amherst's charm; and
the air of a mature woman.

EMILY

The charm of the provincial and
the spinster air are endearing
qualities, but now let's go!

LAVINIA

If it is as you say, then you
will be liked more than me!

Lavinia takes her cape and they get out of the room fast.

Passing the mirror Emily watches herself.

EXT. HOMESTEAD'S GARDEN - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

They are cheerful, crossing the last, snowy piece of the
garden, bordering with Evergreens. Emily holds the basket.

EMILY

Evergreens, Evergreens
armed we are with sweet muffins
and a book of Madame Browning
Evergreens, Evergreens.

LAVINIA

"Evergreens", what a beautiful
name for a house in which to
live in.
Evergreens, Evergreens, armed
we are with sweet muffins!

SUSAN'S VOICE joins them in the ditty. She is over the
fence that separates the two homes and now we see her.

SUSAN (O.S.)

"Evergreens, Evergreens!"

EMILY

(to Susan, happy)
Disturber of public peace,
unparalleled doer of crimes!

The gate between the houses is open, Emily and Lavinia
pass.

EXT. EVERGREENS HOUSE'S GARDEN AND DOOR - SUNSET

While Emily approaches Susan, realizes that she has too
much makeup and a flamboyant dress, and is disappointed.

EMILY

Susie, what have you done?

Susan doesn't mind her, has the manners of a smug mistress.

SUSAN

Listen to this: a moment ago I took Austin aside and I said: I feel that Emily is here, so I went out and here you were.

LAVINIA

Again? But yours is a disease! You are joking but I hear these things usually happen only for Siamese twins...and werewolves.

Susan pushes the door ajar and they enter the house.

SUSAN

And now a little demeanor, my dears. Vinnie, I recommend, not to mention werewolves!

The door closes. LINEAR GUEST behind the windows.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, Misses Emily and Lavinia Dickinson!

INT. EVERGREENS HOUSE - EVENING - LATER

The fireplace is lit. Some elegant GUESTS surround Susan, commenting on one of the paintings on the walls.

MISTER X (who stands for any philosopher of the time)seats on the sidelines, enjoying a tea.

SUSAN

Anyway, it is a very beautiful painting, what else can I say.

AUSTIN

But dear, art criticism is not made like this!

SUSAN

All right, in this house Austin is the painting lover! But I love this house more than he does. And as he fills it with paintings, I fill it with the best minds in America!

Susan is full of herself, under everyone's eyes.

Emily's father and mother, sited on the sofa, attend pleased.

Mister X goes to seat next to Emily and speaks to her. And as he begins to speak everyone is silent.

MISTER X

You talked little, but I could not help but notice your lexicon. You are certainly very educated and love books.

EMILY

I went to school, but as it is meant I had no education. I have always drawn from my father's library and he buys me many books, but he fears that they can confuse my mind, so he asks me not to read them.

LAUGHS among the guests.

EMILY'S FATHER

(to Mister X, testily)

I hope the humor will not offend you, Sir.

MISTER X

If it does not offend you, Mr. Dickinson.

Other laughs, irritating even more Emily's father.

EMILY

But the same Bible, that for my father is the most recommended - and certainly it is - it is also the most dangerous!

AUSTIN

(kidding but serious)

My sister is not joking. She reads the Bible as if it were Shakespeare. So much that we hear her laughing like crazy, browsing the Revelation!

Other laughs.

EMILY'S FATHER

Do not be inconvenient Austin,
leave out the Bible!

(to Emily, testily)

Let's say that Emily reads more
letters, and more than she
receives she sends, right?

EMILY'S MOTHER

She has a full dresser! A
dresser full of secrets that
only she has the key to.

AUSTIN

But some she does not send! Or
rather, she does not send by
post. And for each one that she
does not ship there is one that
she receives directly by hand.

SUSAN

But, darling, these are her
private things!

MISTER X

(to Emily, changing the
subject)

I bet you love the first book
of the Bible.

EMILY

Unfortunately I am not as
optimistic as you, and years
have passed since I read last
the Genesis. As Austin says, I
read the Book of Revelation.

MISTER X

Even better then..."Pamela, or
the Rewarded Virtue "!

(ashamed)

Oh, miss Emily, sorry this
abundance of sick jokes!

EMILY

"Where sin abounded, grace did
more abound".

MISTER X

St. Paul, Letter to the Romans.

EMILY

I love the Letters to the Romans, as much as John Keats, that I rediscovered recently.

MISTER X

Have you read our new American poet Walt Whitman?

EMILY

No, they say he's inconvenient.

MISTER X

If you think that I wrote five pages of praise for him. "Of Manhattan the son, turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding". It is maybe an "inconvenient" who writes like this? I think that is the portrait of a normal American.

EMILY'S FATHER

(resentful)

I'm not turbulent nor I drink, prohibiting alcohol by law I also believe is right.

MISTER X

Maybe. But the law has its course and nature has its. In nature it is right that the cat eats the bird. Justice and nature coincide.

EMILY'S FATHER

Maybe you have interviewed the birds, Sir? Do you think they wouldn't want to be defended by law?

MISTER X

If nature respects itself needs no lawyers, instead the man is always ready to be defended by lawyers even though he is not respecting others. And in the rare cases where he doesn't want to be defended, the law

requires it. As it happens for
Whitman, accused of scandal.
Is it proper all this?
Not to mention the business
spirit that maneuvers today our
industry, whose only law seems
to be more and more
individualism and selfishness.

EMILY'S FATHER

(ironic)

The one to which you refer they
call it the "law of the jungle"

MISTER X

They're wrong! In the jungle
there is no animal that has fun
in destroying or hurting. Some,
today, are shrinking the world
to the size of one's own
garden, even using the law.
That's why I say in my books:
Nature is the real reference,
not the law.

Austin takes a book from the library behind him.

AUSTIN

Here is a book that you will
surely recognize.

(reading at a marked point)

"Must the citizen ever for a
moment, or in the least degree,
resign his conscience to the
legislation? Why has every man
a conscience, then?"

"Law never made men a whit more
just".

(Turns the page and continues)

"All men recognize the right of
revolution, that is, the right
to refuse allegiance to, and to
resist the government..."

(Skips some pages.)

"When the subject has refused
allegiance, and the officer has
resigned from office, then the
revolution is accomplished."

MISTER X

It is a text of the philosopher as well as skilled writer Henry Thoreau. A literature that serves the world like bread.

EMILY

But because it comes to the world, the world must know how to receive it, don't you think?

MISTER X

Well, if the world does not try at least a little, everything is useless. But other than that I think the world, just to fight against its own bad, had as dowry creativity. The creation against destruction! The music, which is harmony, goes against violence. Poetry, which is so unusual in its way of speaking and seeing, goes against habit and its scabs, those scabs from where prejudices are born. But watch out for sellers of fine words! Of that private garden that I mentioned before, to which someone would want to reduce the world, the best gardeners are the talkers. Pretty regular pruned hedges, but ultimately what do we need them for? From what we recognize then the true writer? Certainly from the courage in dealing with our language, and thus ourselves.

EMILY

But does it seem licit to you that the poet takes our kind language and disassembles it at will, as would a black female crow do with the picnic basket?

MISTER X

"A black female crow"? Yes it's licit! You understood me perfectly, miss, indeed, your

metaphor is an example of what I call creativity. If the poet is no longer the beautiful, and the crow is no longer the ugly, poetry has already won, while undermining the usual patterns. By using another metaphor I would say that art wanders among us as the comet in the cosmos; the comet shatters the false perception of a fixed universe and tells us that the stars are still not as it seems, that even the sky is moving.

True art always collides the human rigidity, and I, in my small way, when I write verses I feel that the language --

EMILY

-- Is narrow, hard, stifling!
When the poetry presses it, we feel all its rigidity, just as we feel that in the form of the language, the poetry moans. The strict rules of grammar are so unsuited to respond to life. And then the words, we can never have enough.

(staring into void)

The militia of the things tops in number one hundred and a thousand times more than what we have in port in our silly dictionaries: just two brigs, a schooner and a yacht. And then in June he arrives, the friend Bumblebee, and asks me to be named with a capital B! And then there's the punctuation, but in life there are no dots! Maybe, that's why, finally come to visit me some... dashes.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT - TIME LATER

Emily is at her desk, exalted and pale.

Her trembling HAND writes the first phrases of a letter:

"DEAR MASTER,
I AM SICK - BUT BEING EVEN MORE WORRIED FOR YOU WHO ARE
SICK, I WORK MY ENERGETIC HAND TO BE ABLE TO WRITE TO YOU."

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE - NIGHT

We see the Homestead from outside: Emily's illuminated window on the second floor and Emily sited at the desk, next to her "golden lamp".

Then we see the whole house, outlined in the summer sky around. A black spot where only that light is on.

EMILY (V.O.)

"I WISH THAT YOU WERE WELL. I
WOULD THAT ALL I LOVE, SHOULD
BE WEAK NO MORE. THE VIOLETS
ARE BY MY SIDE - THE ROBIN VERY
NEAR..."

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Emily turns a piece of used paper and writes behind it. We see the verses while they are written by her hand with inside capitals and dashes.

"WHEN ROSES CEASE TO BLOOM, SIR,
AND VIOLETS ARE DONE -
WHEN THE BUMBLEBEES IN SOLEMN FLIGHT
HAVE PASSED BEYOND THE SUN -
THE HAND THAT PAUSED TO GATHER
UPON THIS SUMMER'S DAY
WILL IDLE LIE - IN AUBURN -
THEN TAKE MY FLOWERS - PRAY!"

Rereads the verses fast and is amazed, shocked.

EMILY (V.O.)

My God, there is no dot!
And even the commas... gone!
Instead these dashes are more
and more, increasing!
The last verse then... is
almost inconvenient. And all
these capitals... incredible!
Emily, what's wrong with you
in this night of 1858?

SUPERIMPOSE: March 1860

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE - DAY

The house is dark and silent. Emily is working with the garter's bars, sitting in the kitchen, close to Susan.

EMILY

(whisper)

I had read of Christ's temptations, and how they were like our own, only He didn't sin. I wonder if they were like mine last night.

SUSAN

Again those desires?

EMILY

I had another letter. From his part. How much affection and care for me, so much that sleep, even this night, circled me around without taking me. But I wanted to be taken!

SUSAN

Shh, speak softly, your mother can hear us. They say that pain amplifies the senses.

EMILY

Whether my bark went down at sea - Whether she met with gales missing friend! Especially since my absent friend is coming - it seems that today, or tomorrow, he'll come to see - and take me away.

SUSAN

(indulging her)

Maybe you speak of Mr. Clark? Or that other, Mister --

EMILY

-- No, no, no.

SUSAN

Tell me what he's like, dear.

EMILY

I cannot. I can only tell you
that when I see him I will
recognize him.
He is my Master and Lord.

The doorbell rings and Emily startles. She gets up, ready
to flee to her room, as usual.

EMILY

I'm going upstairs.

SUSAN

Here we go again! A moment,
let me see who it is.

EMILY

Please, I'm going to my room.

Emily has one foot on the stairs, but Susan is already at
the door.

The VISITOR has the deep voice of reverend Wadsworth:

THE VISITOR (O.S.)

Anybody home? I am looking for
Miss Emily Dickinson!

Susan opens the door and the external light fixes Emily on
the stairs, stopping her as a fox in front of a car light.

EXT. HOMESTEAD'S DOOR, PATIO AND GARDEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We see THE VISITOR from behind: manly shoulders and top
hat, in the atmosphere of an idyll.

And we see Emily: intimidated, in the shadow of the house.

He, always from behind, takes off his hat and bows. He has
long sideburns, like reverend Wadsworth. With a kind
gesture he invites her and Emily leaves the house, silent,
with mingled steps. He goes to the gate, she follows him.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE ATRIUM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SUSAN'S P.O.V, from the atrium: The VISITOR is not high nor
manly as appears to Emily, but Emily is taller.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING - SAME DAY

Emily's mother cries, seated on the armchair. Emily is next to her, on the sofa, but is absorbed in her thoughts.

EMILY'S MOTHER

You can go to your room,
daughter, I remain still here.

EMILY

You cannot sleep in the living
room.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Your Aunt Lavinia will not make
it, the doctor is pessimistic.

EMILY

It will mean that Heaven will
be welcoming her with love!
Pointed attentions from the
Angels, will chose for her the
most beautiful Wings.

The doorbell rings, Emily jumps up, as before, but she doesn't want to leave her mother, so hesitates.

LAVINIA (O.S.)

It's Susan!

Susan reaches Emily, who is sited again, thoughtful.

SUSAN

(whisper)

You stayed long outside, we
didn't see you coming back.

EMILY

Finally I came back before the
Dark. And I'm still a child, at
thirty years. I have not
betrayed you, *Sue forevermore.*

(staring into void)

And you know why? Because there
is a morn by men unseen whose
maids upon remoter grass keep
their seraphic May, and all day
long, with dance and game, and
gambol...

A morn that I may never name.

Lavinia goes to sit on the sofa too, next to Susan and Emily. The four women make now a pure feminine picture.

SUSAN

(to Emily)

Come back to us, dear. Think of my drawing room, when we are there to chat and laugh.

EMILY

Vinnie, can you play "AULD LANG SYNE"?

LAVINIA

But...today is not Christmas, and then with mom crying, and with this war advancing --

EMILY

-- I know! Our guys from north and our guys from south kill themselves, yet, there are angels who ask me to sing now!

Susan takes Emily's hand, and Lavinia goes to the piano.

EMILY

(hallucinated)

Hurry up Vinnie, before my friend leaves. He is still here, but it will be days when he will be gone.

Lavinia is at the piano, and sings from the second stanza:

LAVINIA

"FOR OLD TIMES SINCE, MY DEAR,
FOR GOOD OLD TIMES, WE'LL DRINK
A CUP OF KINDNESS YET, FOR GOOD
OLD TIMES. AND SURELY YOU'LL
HAVE YOUR ONT CUP! AND SURELY
I'LL HAVE MINE! AND WE'LL DRINK
AND A CUP OF KINDNESS YET, FOR
GOOD OLD TIMES."

SUSAN

(to Emily)

This ancient poem is sweet even out of season, right?

EMILY

And you, teacher, surely know
the name of who wrote it.

SUSAN

Robert Burns, a man who in his
short life was always in love;
and one night he fell asleep in
the snow.

EMILY

He never died! The sweet Burns
is now seated at God's piano
and directs the choir of
angels. Let's toast to the
Lassies!

Emily raised her cup of tea in a dark toast.

INT. THE SAME LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON (ONE YEAR LATER)

To that cup raised, unite now Lavinia and Susan's cups, in
a happy toast. It's a day in May of a year later: the
sunlight enters the house and Susan is pregnant and holds
her belly.

SUSAN

To this poem, more than worthy
of being on a newspaper!

EMILY

Thanks, teacher.

Next to the teapot, the "SPRINGFIELD DAILY REPUBLICAN" is
open on the poem "I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED", devoid of
Emily's name. We see the date MAY 4, 1861. Lavinia has a
copy, which reads with vivacity but without pauses.

LAVINIA

"I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED
FROM TANKARDS SCOOPED IN PEARL.
*NOT FRANKFURT BERRIES YIELD THE
SENSE SUCH A DELIRIOUS WHIRL!*
INEBRIATE OF AIR AM I AND
DEBAUCHEE OF DEW REELING THRO'
ENDLESS SUMMER DAYS FROM INNS
OF MOLTEN BLUE. WHEN LANDLORDS
TURN THE DRUNKEN BEE OUT OF THE
FOXGLOVE'S DOOR"-- "Fox" what?

EMILY

It's a flower.
And you know what pauses are?

LAVINIA

The ones that are between
verses! And instead these
dashes, how do I read them?

Turning her head to her "slant way" Emily looks at Lavinia.

Lavinia takes composure and so she reads correctly.

LAVINIA (CONT'D)

"WHEN BUTTERFLIES - RENOUNCE
 [THEIR «DRAMS» -
I SHALL BUT DRINK THE MORE!
TILL SERAPHS SWING THEIR SNOWY
 [HATS -
AND SAINTS - TO WINDOWS RUN -
TO SEE THE LITTLE TIPPLER -
FROM MANZANILLA COME".

(Pause.)

I like it! Yes. There is only
one problem. It isn't signed.
But of course I like it!
From the first verse that
says:"I taste a liquor never
brewed". Never. Which it is
also true: in fact, we here do
nothing but drink tea, tea and
only tea!

They laugh.

QUICK SERIES OF FACTS (PASSAGE OF TIME)

- A) EVERGREENS HOUSE'S BEDROOM. Susan gave birth and is
in her bed. Emily is beside her and holds the NEWBORN.
- B) EVERGREENS HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM. Emily meets MR.BOWLES and
MRS.BOWLES, among OTHERS GUESTS. Mr. Bowles is lively and
nice: speaking he shakes his long beard and a copy of the
SPRINGFIELD DAILY in his hand; so he even shakes his
wife, who he holds by arm with the other hand.

MR. BOWLES

Miss Emily, your poems are like
brandy, give an inexplicable

thrill. The Springfield Daily,
therefore, asks you for more,
and does so in the person of
the director, who likes to
drink, and it's me. Your
letters on the other hand, if
you allow me a criticism,
are... sugar! The criticism is
that since my wife and I
received them... we took about
three pounds!

But let's talk seriously.

(handing her a note)

This is the address of known
critic Higginson. Submission
him your poems and publish!

C) EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT. She is at the desk and reads one of
her poems on a page of the SPRINGFIELD DAILY. The title
is "THE SLEEPING". We note that it is anonymous.

D) Emily's HAND writes the beginning of a letter:
"MR. HIGGINSON,
ARE YOU TOO DEEPLY OCCUPIED TO SAY IF MY VERSE IS
ALIVE?"

E) EMILY'S ROOM - EVENING. From another letter we read:
"I'M OLDER - TONIGHT, MASTER - BUT THE LOVE IS THE
SAME."

F) Emily's HAND turns the page and continues to write:
"SAY I MAY WAIT FOR YOU - SAY I NEED GO WITH NO
STRANGER TO THE TO ME - UNTRIED FOLD - I WAITED ALONG
TIME - MASTER - BUT I CAN WAIT MORE - WAIT TILL MY
HAZEL HAIR IS DAPPLED - AND YOU CARRY THE CANE"

G) Emily's HAND opens the page of the newspaper "DRUM BEAT",
where we see the date FEBRUARY 29, 1864 and the poem
"BLAZING IN GOLD - AND...", anonymous; and with a pen she
adds her name and surname.

H) Newspaper "THE ROUND TABLE": below the date MARCH 12, 1864
we see the poem "SOME KEEP THE SABBATH SOME GOING TO
CHURCH", even this poetry is anonymous.

END QUICK SERIES OF FACTS.

SUPERIMPOSE: August 1970

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Austin, long sideburns and a few gray hairs, is reading a copy of the SPRINGFIELD DAILY REPUBLICAN and comments:

AUSTIN

What a strange poem! The first,
the second and the last verse I
understood them, but what is in
the middle? Bah.

Emily is stretched out on the sofa with a cloth over her eyes. The mother takes the cloth and baths it in a basin. There is also Emily's father and Mr. Bowles.

LAVINIA

No, it's nice! Except for the
title. And except for the fact
that even this is anonymous!

EMILY

That title was given by the
newspaper. And if my name is
missing, a vanity less for me!

MR. BOWLES

Do not worry Emily, the
Cambridge doctors are superb;
soon your eyes will be back to
work, they just need peace. All
the letters you've written over
the years, and poems...

EMILY

In '61 I wrote a poem every day
of the year, in '62 a little
less, let's say... like a year
without Mondays.

We hear Susan, in the hallway, speaking to her son Ned in a false whisper audible by Emily.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Here, go to your aunt, Ned, but
slowly, it is a surprise.

NED, almost 3, launches into the living room, SHOUTING.

EMILY

It's little Captain Jinks!

Austin nabs Ned and takes him to Emily.

Emily embraces him and, despite the cloth on her eyes, sees that Bowles makes an intimate wink at Susan, who returns.

Lavinia goes to the piano and plays "CAPTAIN JINKS OF THE HORSE MARINES".

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

Emily has healed, wears a long white dress and looks from the window. The house's GROOM is passing with the horse.

He greets her making a good-natured wink, to which she reacts turning fast, very annoyed.

The room is full of white lilies like her long dress.

On the desk we see needles, wires and a fascicle of poems sewn by hand. She takes the fascicle and forces it to test its strength. Then takes the key from the desk drawer, goes to the dresser for storing the fascicle, opens the dresser and... we see a treasure of thirty fascicles so candid that give off light, ten sets of twenty sheets matched but unrelated and hundreds of loose papers, all kept in order.

The MAID MAGGIE (MARGARET), Irish, spies from the ajar door, but seeing that treasure she opens the door.

MAGGIE

Holy Virgin! You have written
all that stuff?!
Oh excuse me if I spied, Miss.

EMILY

(fast closing the dresser)
What is wrong in spying!

MAGGIE

Really? Well, if you say it.

EMILY

Even my playmate is a spy; she
has lynx eyes! Often she made
me uncomfortable, so I must
keep her closed.

MAGGIE

(with scorn)

Have you ever presented to an editor, your "playmate"?

EMILY

What do you say! Publishing is so foreign to my thoughts.

MAGGIE

Well, how do you keep tidy I would bet that you tremble to get it out of the drawer as soon as possible!

Emily retracts, shameful, unmasked in her true will.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(softened)

Anyway, I understand you; I have already been at the service of those who had a playmate like yours, though it wasn't held in the underwear drawer! However, I must say, I have never served anyone who wrote so much.

I have an idea! Be right back.

CUT TO:

She returns dragging a large trunk.

MAGGIE

With this I am coming from Ireland; I'll give it to you!

EMILY

Oh Margaret.

MAGGIE

Anyway, I came to tell you that Mr. Higginson is here.

EMILY

Really?! And what do you expect me to say, Margaret! Have you done what I asked you?

MAGGIE

Of course! I've put the peaches in pieces to soak --

EMILY

-- Half, not pieces! In fleshy halves they must cook.

MAGGIE

Yes ma'am! Then I took the clothes, put in pot the beans. But before I fried them a bit.

EMILY

Good! Fried and then fricasseed make a tasty cream.

MAGGIE

And your father is in the living room, as you ordered; although he seems to have pilloried. Mr. Dickinson does not like critics, right?

EMILY

And mother? And Lavinia? And the Dickinsons of the neighboring hedge?

MAGGIE

All at the battle stations! The lady, your mother smiles as if she wasn't sick, but she does not so well. Yet your sister has done what you have asked, has made shiny the vegetable garden and picked the flowers, that now the house looks as the vegetable garden and the garden is clean as a house! But as she does well with the flowers she can't do with kiddies: it's a half hour trying to calm Mattie and Neddie. Mr. and Mrs. Susan Austin are weird, have both two long faces! Maybe they had a fight.

EMILY

Do you think so? -- And Martha and Ned, usually behave! --

MAGGIE

-- "Usually", but today they do not it so well too.

EMILY

You are a believer, Maggie?

MAGGIE

Of course I am!

EMILY

(ironic but tired)

And can you "do it well"? I mean, I also am but today I'm afraid I do not it well. If I take my critic away is better. I decided: we'll go out!

MAGGIE

(very surprised)

Out of the house?!

EMILY

Nooo, we go out in the garden.

Emily takes two lilies from a jar and looks at herself in the mirror.

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Emily has a blue shawl on the white dress and Higginson has big mustache and he's snooty; but the lily in his hand (given to him by Emily) makes him funny. Emily's father and mother greet Higginson and enter the house.

Emily and Higginson are leaving the garden to go into the Dickinson's meadow. Lavinia, holding her cat, and Ned, 9, greet them. Susan and Austin play with MARTHA, almost 4.

EMILY

(to Higginson)

Sir, I'd be happy if you visit with me some little corners of our property before returning to Boston. Do you mind if we start from the fruit?

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S ORCHARD - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

They walk in the orchard. The blue crocheted shawl on the white dress make Emily perfect, but her way to pose as a fearful schoolgirl with Higginson makes her ridiculous.

HIGGINSON

Finally you are able to make me come to Amherst. More than ten years have passed since you keep inviting me, omitting each of my invitation!

EMILY

Truth be told there are sixteen years, from the very first letter I wrote you, and if I omitted your invitation is because he does not want me to visit anyone, and wants me here. You know, my dad loves just the bread made by me!

HIGGINSON

By the way, I remember a letter in which you told me only that your dog died. I remember his name was Carlo.

EMILY

Why do you say "was called"? He is always with us. Have you not noticed that just now he was in the grass and played and jumped?

At one time I had a friend, then he moved to Worcester. Before he died he wrote me "If I live, I will go to Amherst - if I die, I certainly will."

HIGGINSON

Do you believe in the supernatural?

EMILY

The supernatural is nothing more than the natural revealed

While they walk among the trees, some PEOPLE beyond the fence of the house indicate Emily, and gossip.

She accelerates her step, offended. Higginson is amused.

HIGGINSON

I now that you have published.

EMILY

(embarrassed, defensive)
Only six poems... but I did not
wanted, it was them --

HIGGINSON

-- Oh, you need not to justify
yourself! Anyway your verses
are interesting. Although not
regular, and elliptical, and--

EMILY

-- You know that I do as you
suggest, I'm your scholar!
You wrote that I must wait to
publish, and I do it. You said
that my poetry is "not in
order", my gait "spasmodic" and
that "I have to improve"; and
you wrote I am "Wayward"
because I cannot do this; that
"I confess the little mistake
and omit the large". In
conclusion, Sir, I realize what
an error would be to give to
the world a poetry as mine!

HIGGINSON

(embarrassed)
Well, I didn't meant --

EMILY

--"Oh, you need not to justify
yourself". You don't, not you.
I saw your name in illustrious
mention, while mine is only
mentioned by those who talk
about the strange and crazy.

Emily has the smile of someone who has overcome every evil.

EMILY

And then it's true: I write of things going around about, in "elliptical" way, as you say. And circle, circle... until a few days ago, I found myself writing even about a leopard!

HIGGINSON

A leopard?

EMILY

Can I read it? It's here.

(She opens a paper and reads.)

"CIVILITATION - SPURNS - THE
[LEOPARD!
WAS THE LEOPARD - BOLD?
DESERT - NEVER REBUKED HER
[SATIN -
ETHIOP - HER GOLD -
TAWNY - HER COSTUMES -
SHE WAS CONSCIOUS -
SPOTTED - HER DUN GOWN -
THIS WAS THE LEOPARD'S NATURE -
[SIGNOR -
NEED - A KEEPER - FROWN?
PITY - THE PARD - THAT LEFT
[HER ASIA -
MEMORIES - OF PALM -
CANNOT BE STIFLED - WITH
[NARCOTIC -
NOR SUPPRESSED - WITH BALM."

INT. ATRIUM AND LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON - LATER

Emily comes home. Lavinia takes her shawl. They enter the living room, where father is reading the Bible to his wife.

EMILY

Someone's visit, is a fair thing to think about, but people don't know how to think, know just to use the eyes and mouth against the other!

LAVINIA

Your reclusiveness makes them curious. They haven't seen you in years, it is normal that

people will look at you. And then, if you are with a man --

EMILY'S FATHER

-- Nonsense! The woman who leaves home arouses interest, not the one who remains with her mother. And that's just a friend, Emily, is it not?

EMILY

Of course it's just a friend! I write him letters and that's it, as I do with our cousins, or with Mr. Samuel Bowles.

EMILY'S MOTHER

Ah, daughter, and you too, dear, don't start again. Emily is not like everyone else, and she herself says: "I write letters and that's it." Five years since she left these walls. Vinnie is right: she goes rarely in the garden and when there she also lurks. But this time they saw her, people talk; so? Emily is strange, she always has been, and even your critic looks at you in ways --

EMILY

-- It's not true! Mr. Higginson is a man of thought. The people out there, however, you've seen them? They live with no ideas. How they manage to find the strength to get dressed in the morning without having ideas, I do not know! We've just talked about it in the orchard --

LAVINIA

-- "We talked"? Who talked about it? You perhaps, surely not that clever guy.

EMILY

Rude! I talked about it, yes!

EMILY'S FATHER

Stop! It is the devil to sow discord, and you make him proud. And it is the devil that makes bickering people talk.

LAVINIA

What? You say that yourself, father! And when people talked about me and Mr. Lyman? He to me was not... "just a friend".

EMILY'S FATHER

Do not be inconvenient. And then you were too young.

LAVINIA

I was already twenty! And you only listened to the people. Even later, whenever I had a tender friend.

EMILY'S FATHER

Be quiet! Those pigs out there, I know them. I have the duty to keep you away from danger. Do you blame me for this, maybe?

(Pause.)

But soon your father will be away again, because I decided that I will candidate again to the House of Representatives.

(becoming insanelly calm)

But now I want you to sit down at the table and have dinner in peace. Come on, brave young ladies, prepare.

—
EMILY

Sir, I'll bring you my bread!

Emily flies happy like a child toward the kitchen.

EMILY'S FATHER

(whispering to his wife)

As for Emily, I'll not let her to Satan. I'll ask our confessor to come see her.

EMILY'S MOTHER

That sounds great, dear. Pastor
Jenkins is capable, he will
know how to straighten her.

INT. HOMESTEAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

It's May, but the pulled curtains obscure the living room.
On the sofa, covered with horsehair, Emily's white dress
stands out. PASTOR JENKINS, 43 (her age), sits in front of her
Emily's father is at the door, uncomfortable, waiting.

JENKINS

But this thing is not part of
my field ...

EMILY

Yet it is said that these
strange uncontrolled movements
of mine, if they don't depend
on syphilis - and I do not have
it - or on onanism - do you
know, sir, what is the onanism?

JENKINS

(very embarrassed)

Sure, it's the masturbation.

EMILY

They can also depend on demonic
possession. But these symptoms
affect us women, not men -
funny is not it?

JENKINS

Do you fear of being possessed?

EMILY

Not me, but maybe my father.

JENKINS

(smiling)

You want me to say an exorcism?

EMILY

(ironic)

Oh yes! I love feeling clean.

JENKINS

What about men, do you have
normal relations?

EMILY

(always ironic)

If I happen to see one right away I exorcise my eyes reading the Bible! But I do not know whether to be lost or saved, I must answer yes to your question. If I say no, I'm a virgin, if I say yes, meaning I like men, I am normal. In any case I'm rescued, is not it?

JENKINS

(always embarrassed)

Yes, I think so. In any case... I would like to clarify that if I am here today is because your father loves you so much.

EMILY

My father is a politician. But he's also a believer. Let's say he wants these two things to go together. By the way, Reverend, what are the relationships between God and politics today? Quiet living? False respect?

JENKINS

I get it, you're joking, you aren't as they say: a little...

EMILY

"Strange"? "Mad"? And they say you're not from Amherst! I know you have studied at Yale. Well, you should know that here things less comprehensible than an onion are defined "strange" and strange things are defined "normal". The train, for example, no one knows how it works and yet is fully understood, better than someone who writes poetry, or is honest while many betray. You know, Mr. Jenkins, the best sermon I ever heard is about the disappointment of Jesus in Judas. I suppose we cannot have a surprise so sick as that!

JENKINS

(demoralized and awkward)

I was thinking of it. The train, I mean. It's better if I leave. I have another soul to visit twenty miles from here, and it's late. But luckily there's the train! Indeed, we owe it to your father who brought the railroad. Miracles of politics! But the train is not like the diligence, departs even without people.

(feels stupid and stands up)

Well, young lady, can I tell your father that you are with God among the saved souls?

Emily nods. The pastor greets her and reaches her father.

JENKINS

(to Emily's father)

Miss Emily is sound and let it go at that. Bye Mr. Dickinson. (He goes away almost fleeing.)

EMILY'S FATHER

(screaming at him)

Our carriage awaits to take you to the station!

SUPERIMPOSE: June 1874

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

Emily's HAND, trembling, writes the begin of a letter:

"TO LOUISE AND FRANCES NORCROSS

WE WERE EATING OUR SUPPER THE FIFTEENTH OF JUNE, AND AUSTIN CAME IN. HE HAD DESPATCH IN HIS HAND, AND I SAW BY HIS FACE WE WERE ALL LOST, THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW HOW. HE SAID THAT FATHER WAS VERY SICK, AND HE AND VINNIE MUST GO"

CUT TO:

Emily is sleeping and delirious, wearing her white dress.

The trunk is open, the papers are scattered on the floor.

KNOCKING at the door (is Maggie).

INT. IN FRONT OF EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE

The cousins arrived from
Springfield, Miss Emily. There
is also Mr. Lord with his wife.
The function starts!

(waiting)

Forgive me, but like this is
worse. Come to see with your
eyes, the coffin is so superb!
If I must say, your father in
there makes us look proud!

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Almost twenty GUESTS. Among these stand out TWO WOMEN,
Emily's age (her cousins). They are seated near Emily's
mother (their aunt), giving her comfort.

Mr. Lord, with almost all white hair, embraces Austin.

TWO MEN from the funeral house want to close the coffin.
Austin rushes to his father and kisses him, and talks to
him.

AUSTIN

Look father, now I do what I
never had the courage to do when
you were alive.

INT. HALLWAY AND EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY (AUGUST '75)

The summer light bursts through the windows of the second
floor, where Emily's room overlooks and is firmly closed.
Maggie, tanned, runs on the stairs to Emily's door.

MAGGIE

Miss, it's a baby boy!
He's called Gib!

EMILY (O.S.)

What? They call him Gib!

MAGGIE

Gilbert! But he's called "Gib".

EMILY

Please Margaret, tell Susan
that I'm coming to them.

INT. HALLWAY AND EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY (OCTOBER '76)

It's Autumn: dead leaves in the hallway and in front of
Emily's door. Maggie closes all the windows of the second
floor and, with her calloused HAND, knocks on Emily's door.

MAGGIE

Miss, the writer is here.

(waiting)

It is Mrs. Helen Jackson!

EMILY (O.S.)

All right, let her come, please.

MAGGIE

Miss, forgive me, will I see you
for dinner? I hope so because I
have prepared some yummy tidbits

EMILY (O.S.)

No, dear, but save some for me,
and tell Vinnie that tomorrow
morning I'll tend to our mother.

Maggie goes away and we see some delicate HAND (of Helen
Jackson) knocking at Emily's door, which is open. The hand
pushes the door and Emily appears: seated at the desk, with
her white dress and pale, looking like a ghost.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY (DECEMBER '76)

We only see the door, from inside the room.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Miss Emily, judge Lord and his
wife ask of you.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mr. LORD and his WIFE talk with Emily's mother, paralyzed
by a stroke, seated on her armchair with footstool. Lavinia
is beside her.

From the windows we see the snow.

Maggie comes down the stairs looking desolated.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry gentlemen, but she
feels "slant". She says so, bah!

INT. HALLWAY AND EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY (SUMMER '76)

A BUMBLEBEE flies slow in the hallway to Emily's room door.
The door opens, it enters, the door closes.
Immediately after it comes Lavinia, but the door is closed.

LAVINIA

Emily, Mr. Bowles is here!

EMILY (O.S.)

Thank God you're here. I'll
give you a letter for Mr.
Higginson and a note for Ned.

LAVINIA

Emily, did you hear me?

EMILY (O.S.)

Mr. Bowles, yes. No, I'm not
presentable to men today.

LAVINIA

Come on! You were not even for
Mrs. Seelye this morning!

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lavinia goes to the living room and reaches Mr. Bowles.

LAVINIA

Mr. Bowles, I'm sorry, she said
that she doesn't want to see
anyone. This is the delivery.

BOWLES

(screaming toward the ceiling)
Emily, damn rascal! No more of
this nonsense! All the way from
Springfield I've travelled to
see you. Come down at once!

Silence, then NOISE OF STEPS(it's Emily). Bowles goes under
the stairs and Emily is up there, flushed, happy, childish.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE FATHER'S STUDY - DAY - LATER

Emily and Bowles speak in father's studio, among books.

BOWLES

How are your little eyes?

EMILY

The eyes all right, the soul a bit less. I keep it alive with a crumb. Not portly but alive.

BOWLES

Years have passed since we last saw each other. You're changed. Instead I see Susan and Austin often, in their now everywhere famous home: "Evergreens". They invite me and I go. Ah, if I think you have adjoining houses but... it is as if for you were not. Perhaps to the *evergreens* you prefer death! In return, however, they tell me that you often write to Higginson.

EMILY

I submit him my poems.

BOWLES

Do not listen to the critics.

EMILY

You have presented him to me.

BOWLES

It's true... but you have to publish, my Emily!

(quoting a poem of her)

"THE CLOUDS THEIR BACKS

[TOGHETER LAID

THE NORTH BEGUN TO PUSH

THE FORESTS GALLOPED TILL

[THEY FELL

THE LIGHTNING PLAYD LIKE MICE

THE THUNDER CRUMBLLED LIKE A

[STUFF

HOW GOOD TO BE IN TOMBS

WHERE NATURE'S TEMPER CANNOT

[REACH

NOR MISSILE EVER COMES."

You talk of death, but it's beautiful!

You know, a man in my position has to beware of two evils: from the ambitious writers and the modest ones. Often the ambitious are scoundrels, mean and greedy, but I prefer them. The ambitious can still be curbed, however the modest are quite a problem... if I can't convince them to publish.

EMILY

(smiling, flirting)

You talk to me as to Napoleon
The night before the crown.
Yet, for me, a modest lot is
enough - a brief campaign of
France, all fought in my room.

BOWLES

You talk in verse!

EMILY

I wrote verses on the subject:
"A SAILOR'S BUSINESS IS THE
[SHORE!
A SOLDIER'S - BALLS! WHO ASKETH
[MORE,
MUST SEEK THE NEIGHBORING LIFE"

BOWLES

I do not like it! What's this
"neighboring life", a refusal
of life? Death, in fact. The
poems you sent me over the past
years are full of it. Susan
imputes it on the passing of
your father. But is not so.
"OUR SALARY THE LONGEST DAY,
IS NOTHING BUT A BIER."
Here are your last verses!

EMILY

Yes, but I also wrote that:
"DEATH'S WAYLAYNG NOT THE
[SHARPEST
OF THE THEFTS OF TIME -
THERE MARAUDS A SORER ROBBER -
SILENCE - IS HIS NAME."

At the word "silence" Bowles makes a sign to shut up and puts a finger on her lips, playing and flirting with her.

SUPERIMPOSE: January 17TH 1878

INT. EMILY'S MOTHER ROOM (HOMESTEAD HOUSE) - DAY

The SILENCE before played is now terrible: the mother is in bed, sick; Lavinia and Emily are next to her, mute.

EMILY (V.O.)

"COUNT NOT THAT FAR THAT CAN BE
HAD, THOUGH SUNSET LIE BETWEEN.
NOR THAT ADJACENT THAT BESIDE,
IS FURTHER THAN THE SUN".
In December, Mr. Lord lost his
wife. In September, Mr.
Higginson his. And now the deep
Stranger came to dispose me of
my lover.

EMILY'S MOTHER

(looking out the window)

Listen: there isn't a child
playing... nor a dog.
I know it's difficult, we are
all in God's hands. Mr. Bowles
was a good man, and God loved
him, yes, that's why after so
much suffering He took him to
His side. God is merciful. But
now read something, Emily, as
if it were another day.

Enter Susan, Martha(12) and GIB,2, kept by the hands by Martha, making him walk in upright position.

Susan is cold, distant, kisses Emily's mother forehead, sits next to Emily and takes her hand, but mechanically.

EMILY (V.O.)

(looking at Susan, thinking)
Precious to me you still shall
be, though you forget the name
I bear and the color of my hair

LAVINIA

(to Susan)

How's Ned? Aust' told me about
the epileptic seizures.

SUSAN

He's fine, it was an accident.

EMILY

I know those seizures.

Susan turns suddenly and shocked towards Emily.

THE DOORBELL RINGS. Emily gets up to flee (as usual) but stops, seized by a strange FLASHBACK.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S DOOR AND ATRIUM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Emily sees the home's door opening, slowly, like magic; and she sees herself on the first steps of the stairs, in the shadows; the external light touching her breasts and lips.

Then she sees a man in the doorway, dark in the backlight. When he speaks, we recognize that is Emily's father.

EMILY'S FATHER

What's wrong, compose yourself!
There, Otis Lord with his wife.

Emily's father vanishes, Mr. Lord comes along. But even him, as the visitor before, is an erotic fantasy, an unreal tall man with a long top hat. So that now, filling the door, cancels the backlight and shows us the face of Mr. Lord(66): stern but sweet, framed by fluffy white hair.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. IN FRONT OF EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY - TIME LATER

MAGGIE

(knocking loudly)

Mr. Lord is here... and since I
now know you I let him in!

EMILY (O.S.)

What does it mean that "I now
know you"?

MAGGIE

Nothing bad, I just wanted to
say that since his wife was
called to heaven - God bless her

- I think he likes your company,
and you his, that's all!
 (with sly expression)
But I realized, I'm wrong, I'll
go tell him to go away!

Emily opens the door quickly; they stare at each other with understanding.

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE GATE AND GREENHOUSE - DAY - TIME LATER

It's springtime. Emily greets Mr. Lord on the gate.

He goes away and she runs in the greenhouse, happy.

We see her IRISES, NASTURTIUMS, TIGER LILIES and DAFFODILS.

Emily makes a bouquet of simple flowers.

Emily feels that Maggie spies from the greenhouse's door.

EMILY

Oh dear, come in! You have to
make the bouquets that you'll
bring to all of our neighbors!

MAGGIE

Including the arrogant Mrs.
Boltwood?

EMILY

Sure! And also to Mrs. Hills
and Mrs. Cooper.
Think: the newspapers say that
judge Lord is cruel, but -
think - I know he's sweet, a
lot, and loves flowers. *Think.*

MAGGIE

Why do you always say "think"?

EMILY

I say this so you think. If
cruelty has a weak point,
arrogance must also have one.
But now I go, I have to write a
poem for each bouquet.

Emily gives the clippers to Maggie, smiles and walks away.

MAGGIE

"Even the arrogance must have a weak point", she says, and gives her flowers, and poetry, to that arrogant!

(taking a thinking position, scratching her head)

I figured it out: if there is a weak point, we can hit it. Boh!

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

It's summer. Emily walks into the room, happy, with flowers in hand; she goes to the window and greets Mr. Lord down in the garden until he disappears like a vision; then she runs to the mirror, looks at herself, and touches her hair.

We see some phrases written inside of a letter:

"IT IS STRANGE THAT I MISS YOU AT NIGHT SO MUCH WHEN I WAS NEVER WITH YOU - BUT PUNCTUAL LOVE INVOKES YOU SOON AS MY EYES ARE SHUT - AND I WAKE WARM WITH THE WANT..."

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

It's winter. Emily walks into the room, happy, with books in hand; tosses them on the bed and we see "OTHELLO" and "ROMEO AND JULIET"; she runs to the mirror, looks at herself and goes to the window; Mr. Lord is in the garden.

Nearby, Ned(19), Martha(14) and Gib(4) are playing with snow.

The very serious Mr. Lord looks around and then, believing not to be seen, imitates Romeo's balcony scene.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S ATRIUM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Susan is in the atrium and sees the whole scene, then gives an envious look to the ceiling (to Emily's room), and then at Austin, sitting in the dining room, reading oblivious.

Susan's P.O.V: Austin disappears and there, in the dining room appear Emily and Mr. Lord, embraced.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S DINING ROOM - DAY

EMILY

(to Mr. Lord, hugging him)

I dreamed last week that you had died - and one had carved a statue of you and I was asked to unveil it -

MR. LORD
It was just a bad dream.

EMILY
And if it was an omen?

MR. LORD
It has no reason to be. Yes I
condemn criminals, but they
certainly cannot kill me!
No one can hurt us, darling.

EMILY
And if it's not them but others
who want to kill our love?
If for some was a crime
all this of our happiness?
(joking bitterly)
Shock news: the upright judge
Lord... criminal of love!

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

Emily is at her desk, among the newspapers "THE REPUBLICAN" and "THE SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY", and is reading "THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE". On a page of these we read "YEAR 1881", and we see in large scale the image of the American flag.

EMILY
Even the cut of a dress comes
from someone's ideas. If we
have our own ideas we are not
worthy to wear elastic flags!

MAGGIE (O.S.)
(from behind the door)
Miss, Mr. Lord!

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S STAIRS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We see Mr. Lord under the stairs and we hear the STEPS of Emily on the second floor moving in a hurry to reach him.

She is happy, at the top of the stairs; Mr. Lord is cold.

MR. LORD
Dear, how are you?
I'm not alone, here's my niece.

The nice, ABBIE FARLEY, 35, goes now "on stage" with haughty steps of the sharp heels and from under a proudly hat looks hard at Emily, who sudden withdraws into the shadows.

EXT. EVERGREENS HOUSE'S GATE - EVENING - TIME LATER

It's summer. At the gate there's MABEL TODD, 25, her HUSBAND, 26, and their NEWBORN, in the stroller. A SERVANT goes to opens them but Susan stops her and receive them herself.

In front of the gate there is the Dickinson's two-horse carriage. The black COACHMAN reveres his mistress Susan.

INT. EVERGREENS HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Mabel, white gloves and showy white hat, imposes herself. The husband pushes the stroller and is silent. Austin has a black suit as his mood: gives a handshake to the Todds and returns to GIB(6) to play with wooden cubes. Abbie Farley sits on the sofa and Martha(15) indulges her clever mother.

SUSAN

(to Austin and Abbie Farley)
Here it is: Mrs. Mabel, writer,
and her husband Mr. David Todd,
he'll teach astronomy at the
Amherst College.

(to the Todds)
And here: Martha, my daughter;
Miss Abbie Farley, niece of the
famous judge Lord and a recent
addition of the Evergreens. And
there, with the black man, is
Thomas Gilbert, our Gib.
Now I'll show you the house, to
start from this painting, which
always arouses much curiosity.

Susan indicates a big painting in which a white panther attacks a black buffalo - while Mabel accosts Austin.

MABEL

(to Austin, winking)
We just moved from Washington,
but I already like Amherst,
here are such pleasant people.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - SAME EVENING

Emily is at her desk; the "CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE" is open to the American flag page.

On a silver tray is a dry thistle and red, white and blue cloth pieces; with skilled HANDS Emily cuts three strips, that interweaves and stabs with a thorn taken from the thistle.

She writes verses on a note and puts it in an envelope with her "thorny flag".

EMILY (V.O.)

"At Lexington the American tailors have cut our gown, and my country now must not change idea only because the old tailor Great Britain disapproves the stars".

INT. EVERGREENS HOUSE - EVENING - TIME LATER

Tea party: MANY GUESTS, Susan entertains them.

Mabel and Austin talk closely.

Lavinia, humble, watches Gib.

MABEL

(with deceitful ways)

Two months have passed since I moved here, I have heard a lot about Mr. Dickinson. They say you helped build the new church and they say you spend a lot for the development of Amherst.

AUSTIN

Sometimes they say well, Mrs. Todd. Can I call you Mabel?

MABEL

Sure, my lord of deep green eyes. And I, can I call you so?

(Laughs.)

I know you have a paralyzed mother and two sisters.

(looking at Lavinia)

But the interesting one is not her. It's the one called "the myth", they say --

AUSTIN

--I know what they say! Rumors!
And you don't have to repeat
them in this house, Mrs. Todd.

MABEL

Call me Mabel, my lord.

AUSTIN

Emily is particular, is pure,
and my children love her.

Ned(20) bursts nervous into the room and calls his father
from afar. Austin joins him. Susan approaches Mabel.

SUSAN

That's our son Edward, but we
call him Ned. He's twenty and
he is still wild.

MABEL

Wild but very nice!

SUSAN

Mabel dear, I heard that you
were talking about Emily. You
also want to meet her?

MABEL

They say she cannot be seen by
anyone and she denies herself
even to friends; and hasn't
left the house for fifteen
years; and she dresses wholly
in white. Her mind, is said to
be wonderful, a diamond!

SUSAN

Later, when you'll sing for us,
to repay you I will read her
poems... you'll see!

MABEL

Oh I must, I must meet her!
(to Lavinia, who is coming)
Miss Lavinia, just talking
about you. I was saying that
I'd love so much to sing for
the Dickinsons and I just want
to sing to your mother.

LAVINIA

What a beautiful thing! My mother would be happy. Organize it with Austin.

(to Susan)

Susan dear, now I must go, I have to replace Emily.

They salute each other. Lavinia goes. Mabel watches her.

MABEL

You say that I can see her?

SUSAN

I don't think, but she will listen, she will not miss a note... our dear, old Emily.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

Emily is at her desk. KNOCKING at the door (is Austin).

AUSTIN (O.S.)

Aunt Emily, here's Gib!

Emily opens the door and bows, Gib laughs and goes in.

AUSTIN

I'll leave you for a while, the time to go get the lady who has to sing.

CUT TO:

Emily is reading "TOM SAWYER" to Gib when she hears VOICES in the house, so with habitual ways, takes her place at the point of the room from where usually she eavesdrops better.

LAVINIA (O.S.)

Welcome Ms. Todd, please come, my mother is already in the living room, waiting for you.

MABEL (O.S.)

Thanks Lavinia, very kind. What a beautiful house, old!
Good morning Mrs. Dickinson!

EMILY'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Good morning Madam, forgive me if I do not get up.

MABEL (O.S.)
God forbid! I'm here to
entertain, not to torture you!
(Laughs brightly.)
But your daughter Emily isn't
she here?

Upon hearing this, Emily goes to the window.

Some STRANGERS across the road watch Emily.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF HOMESTEAD HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

P.O.V. OF THE STRANGERS on Emily at the window: dressed in
white, hair still dark: she's 51 but looks younger.

I° STRANGER (V.O.)
I'm telling you it's her!

II° STRANGER (V.O.)
No, that there is just a girl!

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

From the same window we see Austin and Mabel, very
intimate, opening the gate and entering the Homestead.

Emily, with a chubby face and always dressed in white, goes
in the place of the room where she eavesdrops better.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Good evening Mr. Dickinson,
Mrs. Todd. I'm preparing tea,
you want it?

AUSTIN (O.S.)
No, rather, since we have to do
some urgent work, I would not
want to be disturbed.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Certainly sir.

Various NOISES. After a few seconds, Emily hears KNOCKING.

GIB (O.S.)
Auntie it's me. Dad said I
could come find you.

EMILY

Come in, it's open.

GIB (O.S.)

Can I, auntie Emily?

Emily opens the door. Gib is in the shadow, very serious.

EMILY

But who has taught you so well!
Not your father. He's here?

GIB

Yes, in the dining room with
Mrs. Todd.

EMILY

They are locked inside, right?

GIB

Yes.

EMILY

And we read Tom Sawyer!
It's very important to read. If
you know how to read a good
book, you can read even that
which is out of the book.
Let me tell you a story. There
was an old tree full of knots
and nuts, and a carpenter with
his student who often passed by
it. The student always watched
the tree and the master always
reproached him saying that tree
knotty and old was useless,
that you could not obtain good
wood; and it was useless to
even look at it! And now I ask
you, Gib, in your opinion, that
old fir broken by lightning and
covered by moss that is near
Evergreens, is a useless tree
not worth watching or do we've
reasons to lay our eyes on it?

GIB

(very serious)

We have *endless reasons*, aunt.

Emily embraces Gib, then she takes his hand and leads him to the window. They both look outside.

Emily "sees", like in a dream, a series of facts - on which her voice flows, reading some passages of her literature.

MONTAGE - LIKE A DREAM

A) Mr. Lord is in the garden and greets her; the flowers in the greenhouse open.

B) From her window Emily sees some strangers watching her across the road.

C) Mr. Lord is in the garden and now vanishes; the open flowers in the greenhouse are *ruined*.

D) From her window Emily sees herself in the garden, she smiles at herself, but a strong wind comes and *ruins* her.

E) Emily's mother, with a younger face, mulches the meat in her dark wood bowl.

F) Emily's mother dead body is on the bed; next to her Lavinia, Maggie and Emily lit funeral candles.

G) Gib is on his little bed and he's reading; next to him Lavinia and Maggie lit funeral candles.

EMILY (V.O.)

A) "I AM TOLD IT IS ONLY A PAIR OF SUNDAYS SINCE YOU WENT FROM ME. I FEEL IT MANY YEARS"

B) "THE DANDELION'S PALLID TUBE
ASTONISCHES THE GRASS.
THE TUBE UPLIFTS A SIGNAL BUD
AND THEN A SHOUTING FLOWER"

C) "THE DEPARTURE OF OUR MOTHER IS SO BLEAK A SURPRISE. THE NIGHT BEFORE SHE DIED, SHE WAS HAPPY AND HUNGRY AND ATE A LITTLE SUPPER I MADE HER WITH SUCH ENTHUSIASM, I LAUGHED WITH DELIGHT"

D) "MOTHER HAS NOW BEEN GONE FIVE WEEKS. WE WERE NEVER

INTIMATE MOTHER AND CHILDREN
WHILE SHE WAS OUR MOTHER - BUT
MINES IN THE SAME GROUND MEET
BY TUNNELING AND WHEN SHE
BECAME OUR CHILD, THE AFFECTION
CAME"

E) "SHE WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL WHEN
SHE HAD DIED - SERAPHS ARE
SOLEMN ARTISTS"

F) "SUMMER BEGINS TO HAVE THE
LOOK PERUSER OF ENCHANTING BOOK
RELUCTANTLY BUT SURE PERCEIVES
A GAIN UPON THE BACKWARD
LEAVES"

G) "DEAR FRIEND,
I DREAM OF YOUR LITTLE GIRL
THREE SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS - I
HOPE NOTHING AFFRONTS HER" --

A branch BEATS ominously on Emily's window and the sequence
of facts stops abruptly.

END MONTAGE. PRESENT DAY (TWO YEARS LATER).

SUPERIMPOSE: October 1883.

It's night. Emily is delirious, lying on the bed, dressed.
The ominously BEATING branch at her window is now a
ominously KNOCKING on her door. She wakes with a startle.

EMILY

Maggie it's you?!... Vinnie?!

KNOCKING again. Emily opens the door, but there is no one.

INT/EXT. MOTHER'S ROOMS AND GARDEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

She enters her mother's room; all objects are motionless.

Among them she sees a picture of Gib, then remembers.

EMILY

GILBERT!

CUT TO:

She runs and crosses the garden screaming the name of the nephew until Evergreens house, and there, beyond the hedge, she sees Susan, elegant dressed, kneeling in the grass, with loose makeup.

EXT. EVERGREENS HOME GARDEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In an illuminated window on the first floor we see PEOPLE PATTERNS in backlight. Emily surpasses Susan and enters the house. We hear her furious STEPS on the stairs and see her SILHOUETTE, adding itself to the others in the window.

AUSTIN (O.S.)

What are you doing here? Go back home!

EMILY (O.S.)

I came to wake Gib. Wake up Gib, aunt Emily is here!

AUSTIN (O.S.)

Vinnie, take her home!

EMILY (O.S.)

Aunt Emily stays here!

AUSTIN (O.S.)

Doctor, tell her yourself.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

It's no use fidgeting, now the child cannot hear us.

EMILY (O.S.)

LIES! Like when a year ago you assured us that our mother was recovering, and instead the next night she died!

With furious STEPS Emily goes down the stairs, across the garden like a mad woman and disappears beyond the hedge.

INT. IN FRONT OF EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY - TIME LATER

Maggie, dressed for travelling, talks at Emily's door.

MAGGIE

Then I go. I will not be gone long. Take care, the doctor made recommendations: refrain from books and writing. Remember: even a single reading can hurt you! I know this is difficult for you, but at least try it! And then you have still your beautiful flowers that await you in the garden... and there is also that beautiful small flower of Mr. Lord. Well, pretend to be like normal people: don't think and you'll see that your nerves will heal.

EMILY (O.S.)

Write, dear, I will write back!

MAGGIE

Sure Miss!

Maggie reply automatically, but Emily's words soon freeze her, because they vanish any recommendation up mentioned.

PARALLEL EDITING BETWEEN GARDEN AND DINING ROOM

EXT. HOMESTEAD'S GARDEN - DAY

Emily and Mr. Lord greet each other full of tenderness. Mr. Lord's carriage awaits beyond the gate.

MR. LORD

(very timid)

I thought, since you don't have to look after your mother...why don't you come stay at my house? I'll try my best not to make it unpleasant, rather --

EMILY

-- Do not ask for what is already yours. Writing letters is gorgeous! The letters are earthly joys, denied to the gods. And then reading of you in the morning newspaper is so sweet! You grappling with judges and thieves. Sometimes I think those thieves are more fortunate than me. They can see

you and I not! Oh, is not this
also a theft of them to the
detriment of your Emily?

PARALLEL - INT. HOMESTEAD'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Susan and Abbie Farley whispering badly, in front of copies
of the book "A MASK OF POETS" (edition Brothers, Boston).

SUSAN

Abbie I'm sorry, but I had to
tell you. They were right here,
in the dining room, and she was
reclining in his arms.

ABBIE FARLEY

They say she's crazy about men,
(taking a copy of the book)
and now also with my uncle...

PARALLEL - EXT. HOMESTEAD'S GARDEN - DAY

MR. LORD

What will you do when I'm gone?

EMILY

I'll run to my room all alone,
to confirm your presence.

MR. LORD

My absence, you mean!

EMILY

No, the withdrawal of the Fuel
of Rapture does not withdraw
the Rapture itself.

PARALLEL - INT. HOMESTEAD'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

SUSAN

(sad, thinking of herself)
She has loose morals. Maybe
this is a Dickinson's flaw.

ABBIE FARLEY

If she thinks she'll take away
my inheritance she is wrong!

SUSAN

You think that your uncle --

ABBIE FARLEY

-- My uncle has a sick heart!
He doesn't speak about it, but
that one knows it... the poet!
(reading a page marked)
"Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar Requires
sorest need" and bla bla bla;
it's hers?

Susan nods.

ABBIE FARLEY

It is not signed.
So we will sign it.

Abbie Farley opens her purse, takes a pencil for the eyes
and "signs" the poem with: LITTLE HUSSY. Susan looks down.

END PARALLEL EDITING.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S GREENHOUSE - DAY

Emily's skilled HANDS bind a graft and Maggie assists
enchanted and affectionate, holding the scissors.

EMILY

The scissors, Maggie. Maggie!

MAGGIE

Excuse me Miss, here it is! I
was absentminded. I *absentmind*
that when you care for flowers
or make a cake, you're so good!
It's a shame all the death that
has plagued you in these years.
But it's also a shame that you
are always locked in the room--

EMILY

-- "For each ecstatic instant
we must pay an anguish that is
a keen and quivering ratio to
the ecstasy". Love, for
example, there is an hour of
love without coffers full of
tears? You know how much I love
Mr. Lord... well I will pay for
all that.

MAGGIE

I do not know if I ever felt
"ecstasy", but I have loved,
and I cried so much, damn it!

EMILY

Who does not prove one does not
know the other. The *normal* ones
usually do not know it. If you
have cried so much then you
have known it. Consider the
lilies! They have bulbs in the
black earth but their white is
pure. The lilies have lived the
black, that's why are so white.
Ah, if the *normal* would learn
from the lilies!

MAGGIE

When my brother Michael died in
the mine - remember? Four years
ago - I was dead too, but today
death has changed in to peace.

EXT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S ROAD AND GARDEN - DAY

The Austin's two-horse carriage, with its black coachman,
arrives fast and stops at the Homestead.

Austin and Mabel descend, cross the gate and walk laughing.

AUSTIN

(to Mabel, murmuring)
Susan discovered something.
Maybe it was Ned, you know Ned,
he is not well with his head.

MABEL

He cannot, Ned loves me, he
would never talk about us.

Austin, freezes, blocked in the garden, while she laughs.

MABEL

Yes I made him fall in love
with me, but only to cover us!

AUSTIN

You really love me, Mabel?!

MABEL

Stupid! You are my king!

SUPERIMPOSE: March 1884

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S GREENHOUSE - DAY

The flowers are covered by black drapes - all is still.

EMILY (V.O.)

"WE THINK THAT ECSTASY IS
IMPERSONALE, BUT THEN WE FIND
OUT THAT HE WAS THE CUP FROM
WHICH WE DRINK."

"ALL STILL, ALL EMPTY,
THE MAGPIE CLOSSES THE NEST, AND
[TRIES WINGS -
SHE DOES NOT KNOW THE MODE"--

INT. IN FRONT OF EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE

-- Should I cover also the
hyacinths?

EMILY (O.S.)

(voice breaking with tears)
Even the flowers of the garden,
and those born in the grass,
all, all flowers you find!

EXT. HOMESTEAD GARDEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Black drapes hanging from some plants in the garden.

EMILY (V.O.)

"WHAT I SEE TODAY? A POOR WORLD
MADE BY YOUR PRESENCE. STUFF
PETITE AND SECONDARY REMAINS
HERE TO BEG.
BUT THE SUSTENANCE IS OF THE
SPIRIT; THE GODS ARE SCUM!"

INT. HALLWAY AND EMILY'S ROOM DOOR - DAY - TIME LATER

It's winter. Tired STEPS on the stairs: Lavinia(52),
wearing an old shawl as an old woman, goes to Emily's door.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily is at the desk in front of the window, very pale.

LAVINIA (O.S.)
The doctor is here.

EMILY
I'm not presentable.

LAVINIA (O.S.)
(cutting short)
I get it, I'll make him come up

Emily gives a look from the window to the road.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF HOMESTEAD HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The road is a parade of carriages.

Across the road we see the Homestead house, motionless.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - TIME LATER

It's springtime. Emily is in bed, ill but lively. She writes some notes. Lavinia sits next to the bed.

AUSTIN (O.S.)
(from behind the door)
Vinnie, it's me.

LAVINIA
Come in.

Austin comes in and gives Lavinia the change in usual ways.

EMILY
(grabbing Lavinia's hand and offering the notes)
One goes to sweet lady Holland, as thanks for those newspaper clippings that you've read before, and one goes to Mrs. Field along with the flowers that I ordered for her; the beautiful azaleas that she sent me demand an equal answer!
(to Austin)
I also wrote a little note to Mabel, for her so many gifts. But Aust', what about my Susan?

She who doesn't speak to me
anymore.

AUSTIN

That woman ruined two of my
children, and the death of the
third was divine punishment!

LAVINIA

If she talks about you and
Mabel I understand her, and I
find obvious that the children
listen to their mother.

AUSTIN

What do you know about it! Did
not you see how Martha was
tough with me.

EMILY

(tender, above all)

Oh, Mattie, dear; when does she
returns from college for the
holidays?

AUSTIN

(to Lavinia)

We would have never been able
to be so with our father! You
always say that my wife scares
you, but you are her friend!

EMILY

(staring into void)

When Ned came up to me, I
promised that I would not sign.

(to Austin)

How can you give Mabel the land
that belongs to your children?

Lavinia nods to Austin to get out.

Lavinia and Austin go out.

VOICES OF CHILDREN in the garden.

Emily stands up and goes to the window, holding her kidneys
in pain.

Some children climb over the gate to retrieve the kite and then play down there, happy, in the Homestead's garden.

EMILY (V.O.)
"NEW CHILDREN PLAYING UPON THE
[GREEN -
NEW WEARY SLEEP BELOW -
AND STILL THE PENSIVE SPRING
[RETURNS -
AND STILL THE PUNCTUAL SNOW!"

PASSAGE OF TIME: The 'children of spring' vanish - the snow come to cover the garden.

PRESENT DAY.

Emily sits on the floor, like a child, and takes at random some poems from the trunk and reads.

KNOCKING (it's Maggie).

MAGGIE (O.S.)
(kidding)
Miss, Santa Claus wants you. He said that there are some gifts from me and Vinnie for you; no, I have done something wrong!
(break)
Miss, can you hear me? In short, it will be a party with single women: you, Vinnie and me. So it will be a great Christmas, don't you think?

EMILY
Come in, Margaret.

Maggie opens the door and sees Emily sitting on the floor, among the papers.

MAGGIE
But what do you do, you'll catch a cold!

Maggie drags Emily by the armpits and puts her back to bed.

EMILY
You are like a sister, and therefore I ask you to make me the same promise that I asked

Vinnie. You see those poems and letters? When I die, burn them.

MAGGIE

You need to rest and not think!
What did the doctor say? And
then today is a holiday! You
have to do nothing but enjoy.

EMILY

You see? Even entertainment
asks us to think.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME DAY

The three women have dinner in silence, dressed for party.

LAVINIA

(looking at the pendulum)
1886 is upon us; one minute to
midnight.

(to Maggie)

And now we will do what we must
do, are you ready?

MAGGIE

Very ready!

Lavinia goes to the piano and Maggie prepares to sing.

LAVINIA

(looking at Emily)
For the sister poet that is not
so fine, this Christmas,
poetically we say:
if the hard life we try,
and with songs we mollify,
therefore to sing we go
as traditionally we love.

MAGGIE

And in the manner that we know!

Lavinia songs on piano "OLD LANG SYNE".

Maggie gets close and sings "OLD LANG SYNE" in the Scottish
way, and in a sublime way.

MAGGIE

"SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE
FORGOT, AND NEVER BROUGHT TO
MIND? SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE
BE FORGOT, AND AULD LANG SYNE?
FOR AULD LANG SYNE, MY JO, FOR
AULD LANG SYNE, WE'LL TAK A CUP
O' KINDNESS YET, FOR AULD LANG
SYNE. AND SURELY YE'LL BE YOUR
PINT-STOWP! AND SURELY I'LL BE
MINE! WE'LL TAK A CUP" --

INT. HALLAWAY AND EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

The gloomy Doctor, with his leather bag goes up the stairs.

Seeing him Maggie stands on Emily's door like a guard,
holding the broom like a rifle.

DOCTOR
I must see the Miss!

MAGGIE
I know, but in any case you
need permission. Now I ask.
Miss is the doctor, what I do?

EMILY (O.S.)
Open the door, Maggie.

Maggie opens. Emily is in the bed.

EMILY
(to the doctor)
I beg of you stop there, no
need to take the step. You have
taken away books and thinking
and now I'm better. Thank you.

DOCTOR
But I have to visit you.

EMILY
The land traffic serves no
more. Please close, Maggie.

Maggie grabs the doctor by the arm and closes the door.

EMILY
(to herself)
The otherworldly traffic has
already begun, someone else now

cares for me. I feel they are
dressing me... but of courage,
not for the coffin!
My father has stopped making me
afraid, now I can leave this
house.
Are you, angels touching me and
filling me, or have I found my
wings? If the right hand of God
is amputated, then I am to
bless myself!
Anyone here with me now, even
if it is a Seraph or Santa
Claus does not matter; the
first I ask for nothing, not
being among the saved I have no
right, to the second however I
can, because I'm still a little
girl. I could ask for new eyes,
since these I broke like toys.
And new kidneys, that don't
spill blood... But no, after
all, I just want the glances of
those I loved, even for an
instance, and when I'll have my
small wings I'll go. I from
here will go only flying. With
Bliss, with Ecstasy!
They'll say: the strange goes
out strangely. But strangeness
does not live with her, I say.
And when the June Bumblebee -
master of humid kisses, of many
drinks the friend - shortly
will come, won't find me.

Emily smiles and sinks into a coma.

Pause.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
MISS EMILY IS DEAD!

INT. VARIOUS AREAS OF THE HOMESTEAD AND EMILY'S ROOM - DAY

From the dining room the doctor, Austin and Lavinia run up
the stairs.

They arrive at Emily's room, that is open.

They stop at the door, like blocked.

The doctor does step in, reluctantly, like entering a prohibited place.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

DOCTOR
(feeling her pulse)
She's alive, but no longer
here.

Emily is very white, her robe and her face are blurred.

Austin hugs Lavinia.

Maggie cries.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - EVENING - TIME LATER

Lavinia is sitting next to Emily. She looks anxious to the dresser, the trunk and the drawer of the desk.

She opens a HAND, in which she holds a little key.

CUT TO:

Comes back to the room holding a pillowcase, opens the dresser, overflowing with letters and poems, and fills the pillowcase with some of them, throwing them inside fast.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Lavinia is in front of the lit fireplace. The pillowcase slips out of the hand and some papers come out.

One of this it's a poem, that she reads and puts it in her dress.

CUT TO:

Throws a letter into the fire.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM AND LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maggie prays beside the Emily's bed.

Lavinia enters, they look at each other and Maggie, crying, shows Lavinia the front pocket of her apron, full of letters.

CUT TO:

In the fireplace a fair number of papers burns.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S STAIRS - DAY

Homestead house's door is open. Some LADIES are walking up and down the stairs, visiting Emily in coma.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOUSE'S KITCHEN - DAY - SAME TIME

In the desolate kitchen, Mabel seats close to Lavinia.

MABEL

Dear, you're not alone, I'm here and I'll be forever. But tell me one thing. I know that you had made commitments towards her, and I know you do not feel like completing them, is not it? Destroy that gift of God, but how can you! The wisest decision is therefore not to, and for that I respect you a lot. But something just as wise is not to give those writings to Mrs. Susan; person full of bitterness, unable to handle them.

LAVINIA

I had to destroy them, I had to!

MABEL

I know how you feel, Lavinia, but since Emily was no longer well with her head, certain promises worth nothing.

LAVINIA

She is not dead yet, and you've never known her. Instead Susan knew her very well.

MABEL

But that's not the point. The point is that you have to be able to understand the value of this great heritage, and who better than a writer like me can understand it?

I'm telling you that your brother has already given me the part of letters entrusted to him, and I have already agreed with Mr. Higginson to review and publish the writings of Emily.

LAVINIA

But certain letters say things that can cause a scandal; I dare not even tell.

MABEL

Really? How beautiful! So Mr. Higginson's right: "a pure soul, but to a certain point, this recluse virgin".

LAVINIA

He really said that?

MABEL

Don't be offended, you know how these men speak of women.

LAVINIA

Austin gave you the letters?

MABEL

(standing up to leave)
Sure! By now we expect only yours. Goodbye dear.

SUPERIMPOSE: May 15, 1886

INT. EMILY'S ROOM AND LANDSCAPE - DAY

Emily's face is serene.

On the desk there is a piece of paper with some verses. A blast of wind makes it fly out the window (Emily is dead).

From the window: the fields, the trees, the clear sky.

Some HANDS pull a curtain that obscures the window and all.

In the dark, a few seconds later, we hear NOISE of papers.

Emily's "golden lamp" lights up, illuminating letters and scattered poems on the desk.

SUPERIMPOSE: Almost over 2000 poems and 1000 letters survived the fire and even touch and neither the changes made by different hands could have blemished them. Today we can read them everywhere, also thanks to many lovers of the poet. Our film wants to be only a partial tribute to the poetry of Emily Dickinson and our responsibility stops here, in helping to spread it.

Your responsibility starts now, because in your life you are the ones responsible for the presence of poetry.

EMILY'S VOICE, finally, pronounces these words:

EMILY VOICE (O.S.)

"IT'S A GREAT THING TO BE
'GREAT', AND YOU AND I MIGHT
TUG FOR A LIFE, AND NEVER
ACCOMPLISH IT, BUT NO ONE CAN
STOP OUR LOOKING ON, AND YOU
KNOW SOME CANNOT SING, BUT THE
ORCHARD IS FULL OF BIRDS, AND
WE ALL CAN LISTEN. WHAT IF WE
LEARN, OURSELVES, SOME DAY! WHO
INDEED KNOWS?"