

"COMING UP, STEPPING OUT"

INT. BUS - NIGHT

ERIN, CLARE, MICHELLE, ORLA and JAMES (AKA the GANG) are standing, crammed into a dimly-lit crowded bus, cheek to jowl with other young people. They're wearing a lot of gothic purple, as are the other passengers. The bus sways and bumps over the rough Derry roads; hands clutch rails and straps, bodies heave in rhythm to the movement.

MICHELLE

For feck sake, I'll be up the duff
by the time we get there.

CLARE

Eww.

MICHELLE

(At someone behind her)
If you're going to ride me, you
could at least buy me a pack of
Dunhills first.

ERIN

(Barking at a young male
passenger nearby)
Tommy Orlow, I know what you're
thinking and you better bloody stop
it or I'll tell your Gran.

CLARE

(disgusted)
Oh, not sweet little Tommy.

ORLA

This wee Prince fella's crackin'.
Brings out the crowd doesn't he?

ERIN

Aye, he doesn't half get the juices
flowing too.

CLARE

He's a dead set legend. I'm really
looking forward to tonight.

James stands on the outer periphery of the group, in among a mass of heaving male limbs. He looks lost in his thoughts.

ERIN

It looks like you're having a great
time over there James.

MICHELLE

At least you won't die a virgin.

Erin and Michelle laugh as James struggles for space, accidentally brushing his groin against a stranger's thigh. He goes suddenly still and the girls notice.

MICHELLE & ERIN

(Playfully singing the chorus from Prince's hit song *Cream*)

Cream
Get on top
Cream
You will cop
Cream
Don't you stop
Cream
Sha boogie bop

ERIN

Claire, with your...ah, insight, do you think Prince is gay?

CLARE

It's hard to say.

MICHELLE

Gah, he's as straight as James is.

JAMES

I'm not gay.

ORLA

No, you're bisexual.

CLARE

(To Orla, shocked)

Nooo.

ORLA

Sure, it's plain as day: James likes boys as much as girls.

James goes to speak but the bus lurches and in a sudden tangle of limbs James' whole body stiffens, and he smiles contentedly, looking off into the distance.

END OF COLD OPEN

INSERT: TITLE SEQUENCE

ACT 1

INT. QUINN LIVING/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

MA MARY, AUNT SARAH, GRANDA JOE and DA GERRY are gathered around the kitchen table, drinking tea. Joe has a newspaper open in front of him. He points to an article in the paper

JOE

That's shite that is.

GERRY

What's that Joe?

JOE

This Prince fella's not even English and they've given him the run o' Derry.

GERRY

I don't think he's actual royalty.

JOE

Sure he is ya buffoon. You can't go round calling yourself a Prince without the paperwork.

SARAH

Tis true Gerry, I heard it down the shops.

JOE

Aye, I'm not in the least surprised - the English breed like plague mice wherever they infest.

The gang arrive home after the Prince concert. Spilling through the door into the living/dining room they're excited, loud and maybe a little tipsy.

MARY

How was the concert girls?

MICHELLE

Fuckadoodle doo it was dead
banging Mary.

ERIN

James thinks he's bisexual.

JAMES

I'm not--

MARY
Language, Michelle.

James pauses, thinking, as the girls rattle around the room throwing off their coats excitedly.

JAMES
-- I guess maybe I am.

Screech. Everyone comes to a halt. There's a moment of complete silence.

ERIN
Bugger!

JOE
Good for you lad. Riding bicycles was all the rage when I was younger.

GERRY
Ah, Joe--

MARY
(shaking her head)
Don't bother Gerry.

INT. QUINN DINING ROOM - NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Everyone is crowded around the dining table. The newspaper is folded. Mugs of tea and piles of plates sit on the table following a late supper.

ERIN
Mammy... Daddy... can we go some place fancy to celebrate our graduation.

MICHELLE
Aye, some place we can have a few drinks over dinner.

CLARE
A place that has fancy puddings with lashings of cream.

ERIN
(looking at James)
Somewhere a girl can impress a wee fella that's unsure about things.

ORLA

And that has those blowers in the bathroom that make your hair look like you're in a music video.

JAMES

Yeah, somewhere I can invite mum along to as well.

(Pausing)

She's divorced. Again.

Silence and disbelieving looks are passed around the table. Erin though is zoned out of the conversation - instead, she has picked up the paper and is flicking through it.

MICHELLE

Again? What the hell?

JAMES

Her new fella left a few weeks ago. I'm worried about her being alone, and I'd like mum to come to graduation. She'll be able to see me for who I've become.

MICHELLE

Your mother? The one who's left you in Derry? Twice?

(Angrily)

It's a really, really feckin' bad idea James.

MARY

No, no, if James wants his mother with him to celebrate graduation then she's more than welcome to come along to the dinner too.

GERRY

Would I be paying for her?

Erin puts down the paper abruptly and points to a big ad.

ERIN

That's it. That's the place. Denny's.

The gang nod enthusiastically.

ORLA

Ooh, I've heard that's real fancy.

ERIN

Says they've got a new wine list.

ORLA
I'm not eighteen.

MICHELLE
(winking)
I'll take care of that.
(pausing)
What do say Gerry?

GERRY
Jaysus you lot, we're not made of
money.

ERIN
But daddy...

MARY
But nothin' Erin.

CLARE
Not to pressure Ger', but Denny's
is absolutely banging.

ERIN
Come on, one night out won't be the
death of us.

GERRY
No, but living for a month with the
electricity cut off just might be.

The gang press in, excitedly watching as Gerry scans the
faces looking for a way to say no. His eyes meet Joe's.

JOE
Go on ya cheap bastard, the weans
only graduate school the once.

Gerry looks at Mary who shrugs.

GERRY
Who needs electricity anyway?

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Michelle and Erin spot James in the school's busy corridor.
Girls are getting ready for class. James' head is buried deep
in his locker.

MICHELLE
You know you're supposed to come
out of the closet, not your locker.

James stands suddenly, bumping his head.

ERIN
We've been talking.

JAMES
When?

ERIN
In maths.

JAMES
I wasn't in maths.

MICHELLE
You were there in spirit.

JAMES
So, you've been talking.

ERIN
Exactly.

James rubs the bump on his head.

MICHELLE
Take a guess what we talked about.

JAMES
Graduation?

MICHELLE
Aye, we think you're an idiot for
inviting your mum.

ERIN
Yeah. Literally whenever you're
with your mum it's a Holy show.

MICHELLE
Cathy is the feckin' devil.

JAMES
She's not.

MICHELLE
She's a nightmare. She's your
nightmare. And we just want to make
sure you don't wake up screaming.

ERIN
Again.

The bell goes for the next class.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Don't invite her James. It's bad enough this whole bisexual thing is on your mind, but adding flame to that particular fire is bound to lead to more trouble than Gerry Adams playing the drums at the Orange Day parade.

Erin walks away. James closes his locker, having forgotten what he was looking for.

MICHELLE

It's not your problem she's driven some bloke away. But I tell you, don't be her doormat.

JAMES

Okay Michelle. I get it. Between you and Erin It'd be hard not to.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Michelle, James and Orla are at the bus stop waiting for Clare and Erin to arrive before they board the school bus.

JAMES

So, you know...

MICHELLE

Oh for feck sake.

ORLA

What?

MICHELLE

James still wants to invite his mother to graduation despite everything we've said. Don't you?

JAMES

She's not as bad as you think.

MICHELLE

I think she's pure poison. Is she better than that?

JAMES

I get why you don't like her but she's been lonely of late. She needs me to be the piece that's missing in her life.

MICHELLE

You sure you're that man are you?

JAMES

I need to be that man if she's going to be proud of me. If I'm going to be true to myself I need to tell her the truth of who I am.

MICHELLE

Eeejit, you'll need to get yon back of the queue if you want to be the main man in Cathy McGuire's life.

Michelle boards the bus in a huff. James follows her onboard sheepishly, just as Erin and Clare arrive.

CLARE

What's their problem?

ORLA

James' mother. He's inviting her.

CLARE

Oh no. This is a disaster.

ERIN

Yeah 'tis, but did he talk about me? Even a mention of me?

Orla shakes her head as the trio climb onboard the bus just as the door closes behind them.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

James is in the dimly-lit hallway. He takes a seat at the phone desk and makes a call.

JAMES

Hello. Mum.

(Pause)

It's James.

(Pause)

Your son.

(Pause)

How many sons named James do you have?

(Pause)

It's school graduation in a couple of weeks. I'd like you to come.

(Pause)

I've got huge news and I hope you'll be really proud--

ACT 2

INT/EXT. QUINN HOUSE ENTRY - DAY

The doorbell rings. Mary opens the door to find James and his mother Cathy on the doorstep. Cathy's luggage is beside her.

CATHY

Hello Mary.

MARY

(Confused)

Cathy. Not that it's not good to see you and James of course, but what are you doing here?

CATHY

Deirdre and I have had a row.

Mary rolls her eyes and James sighs heavily as Mary leads the pair inside.

INT. QUINN LIVING/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerry is rifling through some drawers and doesn't look up as the trio enter the room. Sarah is doing some ironing.

GERRY

Who's that at the door then?

MARY

Cathy. Fresh off the plane.

Gerry looks up, his eyes grow huge when he spots the luggage.

SARAH

Did ye lose Deirdre's address?

CATHY

We had a row.

GERRY

(Quietly)

Colour me surprised.

MARY

So Cathy will have to stay with us for a couple of days. We might have to shuffle sleeping arrangements. I'll go in with Erin, and Ger' ye might have to bunk in with Da'.

Gerry and Joe look at one another, both bristling.

JOE
You'll not be sleeping in my bed.

GERRY
Oh, I very much concur.

Gerry looks at James and pauses.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Not that there's anything wrong
with that.

Joe is puzzled, then a look of understanding comes over him.

JOE
Oh, oh, aye, indeed.

Cathy, confused, looks at the men and then at James who is suddenly overcome with panic. He gulps.

JAMES
Cup of tea anyone?

INT. ERIN QUINN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Orla sits on Erin's bed as Erin goes through her wardrobe. She selects a yellow dress and holds it out for Orla to view.

ORLA
That's cute. You'll look like a wee
daffodil growin' in a meadow.

Frustrated, Erin thrusts the dress back onto the rack and flicks through her collection, looking for another one.

ERIN
I don't want cute. I want sexy.

ERIN (CONT'D)
(Showing Orla a dress)
This one?

ORLA
Ooh, that's a pretty colour.

Erin puts the dress back on the rack and continues searching.

ERIN
Yes, this is absolutely *the* one.

She holds a little black dress aloft like a trophy.

ORLA
That's cracker, but it might just
cross the line into slutty.

ERIN
Perfect.

Erin sighs softly as she plays with the dress's fabric.

ERIN (CONT'D)
I need this dress to really, really
work for me tonight.

Orla raises an eyebrow.

ERIN (CONT'D)
Cos I'm crushin' on James real bad.
When we kissed it was dead
brilliant - like Romeo pashing
Juliet, only with more tongue. So I
figure I'll squeeze into this
dress, add a splash of Dewberry,
show a bit of leg, and cure James
of this whole bisexuality thing.

ORLA
I've seen the wee penguin fellas at
the zoo and I don't think that's
how sexuality works. Mind, they do
wear those dapper little suits...

ERIN
Well a lass like me really oughta
be on the forefront of James' mind,
so I'll see how I go.

ORLA
Didn't you get grounded for wearing
that dress out before?

Erin pauses, throws the frock at Orla and frantically digs
into her closet again, pulling a long coat off its hanger.

ERIN
I'll cover it with this.

ORLA
Your ma will be there, remember.

Erin stomps her foot.

ERIN
Shit. Shit. Shit.

INT. QUINN LIVING/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerry sits on the couch beside James and Cathy. He digs between couch cushions, producing some coins and crumbs, which he pockets.

GERRY

Cathy, have a feel under the cushions love. We'll need all the dosh we can find.

Cathy digs into the corner of the couch, handing a stash of lost coins and pre-historic crusts of toast to Gerry.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Terrific. Just need about fifty quid more in penny pieces then.

The news is on TV. There's a story about the proposed peace deal. Joe is in the kitchen listening.

JOE

Turn it up Gerry, you don't have to pay extra for the volume you know.

Gerry waves an annoyed acknowledgement as he goes to the TV and cranks the volume up before returning to the couch.

Sarah is still doing the ironing and the kitchen is full of steam and general chaos as she presses a shirt. Joe rattles around the kitchen banging cups and plates.

Mary sits at the kitchen table staring at Cathy. She's completely still while the chaos moves all around her. Erin comes into the room in a huff, followed by Orla. Erin is holding the black dress.

ERIN

Mammy.

Mary doesn't react

ERIN (CONT'D)

Mammy!

MARY

(Angry)
What? Erin? What?

JOE

Leave off the wean Mary. You'll have yourself a stroke.

MARY
(Yelling)
Right. Listen up you lot.

Silence. Gerry leaps to his feet, turning off the TV.

MARY (CONT'D)
Change of plans. Cathy, you're
sleeping in with Sarah. Orla,
you'll bunk with Erin--

ERIN
Mammy.

MARY
Shush. Gerry, it's you and me.

GERRY
(Quietly)
So romantic.

Mary gives Gerry a withering stare.

MARY
James you'll go home. Everyone
else, be dressed for dinner and out
the door by 6pm on the dot. Yes?

Everyone nods except for Erin.

ERIN
(To James)
When did you get here?

JAMES
An hour or so ago.

ERIN
Oh... Mammy?

MARY
What?

Erin holds up the little black dress.

ERIN
Can I wear this?

MARY
Not in this lifetime. Or the next.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Michelle, her mother Deirdre and James are seated at the table. They stand when everyone else arrives. Erin, grumpy, is wearing the yellow dress she'd rejected earlier.

ERIN
(to Michelle)
Move. I have to sit next to James.

MICHELLE
What? Actually, I don't want to know, but I will say I'm lovin' the sunflower vibe.

Everyone takes a seat, with Deirdre sitting as far from Cathy as possible. Michelle flashes a smile at a young male waiter who comes to take the order. He winks at Michelle.

WAITER
Welcome. Grand it is to hear from Michelle here that you're all 18. I'll bring some wine in a moment.

The waiter leaves.

GERRY
God help me Michelle, please make sure what you've got planned doesn't bite me in the wallet, or get me arrested.

MICHELLE
Relax Ger', let's just say he'll be really looking after us tonight.

MONTAGE INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

- There's good craic and lots of laughs although Gerry frequently looks nervously at the menu as he watches the many dishes and wine bottles come and go.

- Erin flirts with James, hanging off his every word. James is clearly puzzled by the attention.

- Michelle continues to flirt with the waiter and the two slip outside. Michelle reappears later, her lipstick smudged.

- Dessert is done and plates are collected. Glasses are charged in readiness for a toast.

END MONTAGE

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Tipsy, Clare stands. She taps her wine glass, silencing the table. The general hubbub of the restaurant continues, with the neighbouring table being especially loud.

CLARE

Erin, Orla, Michelle, James and I
would like to thank everyone for
celebrating graduation with us...

Erin, who is drunk, chimes in.

ERIN

Love you Ma and Da - especially for
loosening the pursestrings tonight.

Gerry takes a huge gulp from his wine glass. He tops his glass up with the last of the wine remaining in the bottle.

CLARE

And I'd like to thank Cathy for
coming to celebrate with James.

Deirdre, fuming, realises her glass is empty and grabs Gerry's glass from his hand, sculling the contents.

DEIRDRE

Michelle, you want to get that
waiter fella of yours over here?

Michelle nods, making a motion to the waiter to deliver some wine. The neighbouring table kicks up a stir when the waiter bypasses their table to serve Michelle.

JOE

(To the other table)
Pipe down. The wean's talking here.

The effects of alcohol take over and Clare sits. James stands, pulling Erin's hand away from his lap as he does so.

JAMES

Thanks Clare. And while I don't
know what's gotten into you Erin
I'd like to thank you for your
friendship and, ah, affection.

Erin, drunk, ruffles her hair in an attempt at flirting.

ERIN

I'll show you affection.

MARY

Erin Mary Sinead Josephine Quinn
you'll do no such thing.

JAMES

Michelle, Aunt Deirdre, thanks for
taking me in. And Orla, I'll always
remember it was you who helped me
see sense of who I really am.

A man from the neighbouring table interjects.

DINER

Oy, ya English git, quiet down. We
can hear you droning on from here.

JOE

Aye, he might be English, but at
least he's not Protestant.

GERRY

(Whispering)
Settle Joe.

JOE

Pipe down Gerry, the lad's talking.

The waiter returns with the bill.

JAMES

Most importantly - as I go into the
last weeks of school and plan for
life after it - I need to let every
one know that I am officially
bisexual. I am out and I am proud.
And I am ready to walk in my
father's footsteps.

CATHY

What?

ERIN

Dammit.

WAITER

Ooh, can I have your number?

The waiter smiles and winks at James, which angers Michelle.
Gerry checks the bill and his face turns pale.

GERRY

Ah, Michelle, this bill--

MICHELLE

--Feckin' men, you're all boked!

The neighbours point at James and laugh. Joe stands.

JOE
Shut up you lot.

GERRY
Um I think we'd best head off, yes?

CATHY
(To James)
You can't be serious. Tell me
you're not serious.

JAMES
I finally figured out who I am.

Cathy stands and grabs her coat. She digs in her purse and throws a wad of cash angrily onto the table. Gerry's eyes light up. Cathy storms out, followed by James.

EXT. DENNY'S CARPARK - NIGHT

Cathy strides angrily into the carpark. It's cold. As she pulls her coat on James crashes through the door after her.

JAMES
Mum! What's wrong?

Cathy turns to face James who catches up to her. Michelle and Erin step outside and watch silently from a distance.

CATHY
Stop it. Stop trying to be...

Cathy runs out of words and slaps James across the cheek. He reels backward. Michelle makes a move to intervene but Erin holds her tightly by the forearm.

CATHY (CONT'D)
You're as bad as your horrible,
useless fucking father.

James goes to speak but words fail him.

CATHY (CONT'D)
You know he ran off with another
man, yeah? Jesus, you so remind me
of him. You're just another chip
off a rotten, disappointing block.

Cathy turns and strides away, hailing a nearby taxi.

ACT 3

EXT. DENNY'S CARPARK - CONTINUOUS

Michelle and Erin race to James, who is standing alone.

ERIN

You okay?

JAMES

Not really, no.

MICHELLE

I told you. She's drunk and she's a bitch at the best of times.

ERIN

We're proud of you for coming out.

JAMES

That's not enough. I mean maybe she's right. How could I not know that about my father?

MICHELLE

To be fair the fella she's talking about is probably not your actual biological dad.

ERIN

Not now Michelle.

JAMES

I need to clear my head.

James rubs his cheek.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I need some space. I feel so crowded by... by all of you.

James turns. Michelle touches his shoulder, but he shrugs her off and heads into the darkness of the Derry night.

The restaurant door bursts open and everyone from the table pours out of the venue: coats, bags, chaotic mayhem.

MARY

(Urgently)

Right girls, we best get going.

ERIN

Why?

Joe stands at the door. He shouts into the restaurant.

JOE

Wind yer neck in ye buck eejit
sassenach.

GERRY

Yes, best be off girls.

Wide eyed, Erin and Michelle nod at each other in furious agreement. In the distance a siren can be heard.

MONTAGE EXT. VARIOUS - NIGHT

- James walks the lonely streets; he's seen overlooking Derry's wide river, the cathedral tower, an IRA mural.
- An Army truck rolls past. Soldiers look with suspicion.
- James makes his way to Mary Immaculate College.
- There's a poster in the dark doorway of the School Parish's Church: In closeup there's a crossed-out LBGTQ symbol and a headline: "Embrace the light, Reject the dark". James tears off a tab at the bottom of the poster with meeting details on it, and shoves it in his pocket.
- James falls asleep in the sheltered entryway of the church.

END MONTAGE

INT/EXT. SCHOOL ENTRY - DAY

Sister Michael unlocks the school's front door. Through the door's glass panel she sees James sitting forlornly on a bench. He's not in uniform, instead he's wearing his clothes from the night before. She checks her watch. It's 6am. She rolls her eyes and walks away.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRY - DAY/LATER

Girls are arriving at school. Among them is Erin and she spots James, still sitting forlornly on the bench.

ERIN

Thank God. Between throwing up, me
and Michelle have been on the phone
worried about you all morning.

JAMES
I needed time to think.

ERIN
And?

JAMES
I think I need to be the son my
mother wants me to be.

ERIN
Meaning?

JAMES
It's not like I've ever been truly
myself anyway. I mean what good has
that done me so far?

The bell rings. Sister Michael appears in the doorway.

SISTER MICHAEL
Right you lot, get to class. And Mr
Maguire, you're out of uniform.
I'll see you in my office now.

INT. SISTER MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

James and Sister Michael enter her office. She sits behind
her desk and gestures to a chair.

SISTER MICHAEL
Sit.

James takes a seat in front of her desk, awkwardly scraping
the floor as he moves his chair closer to the desk.

JAMES
Sorry about my uniform.

SISTER MICHAEL
Tosh. I don't give a rats about
your uniform. Although, that said,
after we chat you can fish a blazer
out of lost property.

JAMES
They'll be too small.

SISTER MICHAEL
Like I care.
(Pausing)
More importantly, what were you
doing haunting my doorstep at dawn.

JAMES

I had a row with my mum last night.

SISTER MICHAEL

Ah, the actual whore of Babylon.

James looks shocked.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You forget, I knew her as a teen.

JAMES

Ah... You see, we had a graduation dinner and, well, I told her something.

SISTER MICHAEL

That you're gay.

JAMES

Why does everyone keep saying that?

Sister Michael thinks for a bit.

SISTER MICHAEL

Definitely bisexual.

JAMES

Well yes, but--

SISTER MICHAEL

--She got upset and acted the fool. Blah blah. Poor dear Cathy Maguire finding out the world doesn't rotate around her ample ego.

JAMES

I needed time to think, so I came here last night. It was amazing - I even got a sign from God.

SISTER MICHAEL

(Incredulous)

What, at our chapel? That chapel?

JAMES

Yes. I know now that I need to reject my bisexuality.

SISTER MICHAEL

And you got that message here?

JAMES

Yes, see.

James gives the poster tear-off to Sister Michael.

SISTER MICHAEL

Oh for Christ himself's sake! I've been trying to catch the feenian bastards putting up these awful abominations for months now.

Sister Michael scrunches up the tear-off.

JAMES

Sorry?

SISTER MICHAEL

Between you and me, if we stopped gay, bisexual or any queer folk from being in the church there'd be no priests from Derry to Donegal.

JAMES

Really? There are queer priests?

FATHER PETER appears at the door, all suave and boyishly charming. Sister Michael waves him away.

SISTER MICHAEL

There's even the odd nun who's partial to a bit of cloistered fun.

JAMES

Really?

SISTER MICHAEL

Welcome to Catholicism: Where what we say in mass may not be what we do behind doors.

(Pausing)

So, be bisexual. Be fierce. Be proud. But most of all - it's graduation day and I've got parents to disappoint - so be out of here.

James stands.

JAMES

I'm happy that if I had to go to a girls' school it was this one.

SISTER MICHAEL

Blazer, now.

James heads out of the office and Sister Michael opens her drawer, taking a sneaky swig out a small bottle of whisky.

ACT 4

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Students take their seats in the front half of the hall. At the back of the hall family and friends file in.

On stage, Sister Michael, Father Peter and a couple of other senior clerics watch on nervously as JENNY, AISLING and their entourage get ready at the side of the stage to perform. In the audience, James - wearing a too-small blazer - sits between Erin and Michelle. In the back of the hall, Cathy finds herself sitting beside a visibly grumpy Mary.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

The audience quiets itself as "MMMBop" from THE HANSONS begins to play over the speakers. Jenny takes centre stage. She grabs the microphone surrounded by a phalanx of her fellow students who begin to dance awkwardly, almost in time to the tune. Jenny bursts forth in song.

JENNY

(Singing off-key)

Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Yeah

You have so many relationships in
this life, Only one or two will
last, You go through all the pain
and strife, Then you turn your back
and they're gone so fast, Oh yeah--

Sister Michael stands suddenly and silences the music. She steps forward and wrestles the microphone from Jenny.

SISTER MICHAEL

--Oh no. That'll do thank you very
much.

Dejectedly, Jenny and the dancers return to their stage-side seats. Sister Michael addresses the audience.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

We've got just a few weeks until
exams and the end of the school
year - blessed be me - so I welcome
you one and all to Mary Immaculate
and the annual celebration of the
graduating class.

Sister Michael pauses for a smattering of applause.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Firstly, a big thank you to our head prefect Jenny and the dancers of what I assume are the drunken horsemen of the apocalypse for that all too brief performance of whatever that was.

Dull applause.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And welcome too to Archbishop Muldoon and the other leaders of our sainted Church who have come all the way from the pub next to Derry Cathedral to lend their support to this august event. We women couldn't do all the work without you.

(pausing)

Before we get into the ceremony proper, and celebrate what has been a bothersome and somewhat tiresome year level if I'm completely honest, tradition dictates that I open this ceremony by revealing the winner of the student-voted award for what is known as 'Best Girl.'

The student section of the audience erupts in applause and Sister Michael rolls her eyes, silencing them with a grimace.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The award celebrates the young woman at Mary Immaculate whom the student body believes most encapsulates the spirit of learning, of growth, of female virtues - or some such rubbish.

Jenny sits up expectantly in her chair.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The sort of person who absolutely stands out in a crowd of Immaculate girls. Someone who has learnt some of life's lessons the hard way, and has come far alone, yet with their friends' support still has a long way to go...

Jenny is buzzing; she's got the win in the bag.

SISTER MICHAEL (CONT'D)

To that end, I'm ignoring the student vote. Now welcome to the microphone to accept the award for 'Best Girl' one Mr James Maguire.

Jenny stands. Then James' name registers and she sits, the air deflating from her. The audience is silent. The gang madly applaud James. Michelle pokes him in the ribs.

MICHELLE

Go get yer award ye feckin' eejit.

James stands and makes his way awkwardly through the stunned crowd towards the stage. Mary, Gerry and the gang's other parents - except for Cathy - stand and applaud him.

James approaches Sister Michael who places a sash marked 'Best Girl' over his shoulder.

SISTER MICHAEL

(Quietly)

You're a good fella for an Immaculate girl.

James smiles. Sister Michael pats James proudly on the back as she takes her seat next to a pair of visibly confused priests. James steps up awkwardly to the microphone and looks out at the audience. In the background Jenny can be heard sobbing quietly as James coughs nervously.

JAMES

My fellow Immaculate Girls I want to say that you should be true to yourself. You are who you are, even if not everyone believes in you.

The crowd murmurs. Erin and Michelle look at each other.

JAMES (CONT'D)

For instance, I have just come to terms with me being bisexual. While many of you have thought that I am gay I regret to inform you that I will try to snog both your boyfriends AND you at Erin and Orla's upcoming birthday party.

The audience applauds.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'll wear this sash with pride and I swear to be the "Best Girl" Mary Immaculate has ever produced.

There's loud audience.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Finally, I'd like to say I love you
to all the Derry Girls. And boys.

James steps away from the microphone and the audience - both students and parents - cheer loudly.

INT. SCHOOL HALL (REAR) - CONTINUOUS

Cathy stands to leave. Mary, who is already standing and applauding James grabs Cathy by the arm.

MARY

Your boy is a hell of a man.

Cathy is silent.

MARY (CONT'D)

The next time he calls - and he
will because that's the sort of man
he is - you best make sure you
don't pick up the phone.

Cathy nods.

MARY (CONT'D)

Remember this moment. You'll need
it when you're on your death bed
all alone.

Mary releases her grip and Cathy slips out of the hall. On stage, a beaming James sees his mother leave and makes eye contact with Mary, who smiles. He grins back.

INT. SCHOOL HALL (FRONT) - CONTINUOUS

Two students, looking puzzled, are standing and applauding.

STUDENT 1

Didn't get a word he said.

STUDENT 2

Aye, the English accent's shite -
impossible to understand.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The gang are walking home from school after the graduation ceremony. James is proudly wearing his 'Best Girl' sash.

They're quiet, all seemingly lost in their own thoughts except for Orla, who is skipping ahead, dancing to some unseen beat playing in her head.

MICHELLE

Well that's that then
motherfuckers.

Erin and James are walking side by side slightly behind the others. She hugs James' arm as they stroll.

ERIN

Aye. Who'd have thought our wee
Englishman would grow up to be Mary
Immaculate's best girl?

CLARE

I honestly thought Jenny's head was
going to explode.

MICHELLE

If only.

ERIN

Just swotvac and exams to go, then
we're done with Mary Immaculate.

MICHELLE

And then I'm outta Derry for good.

Erin and James stop. She releases her grip on James' arm.

JAMES

What do you mean for good?

Michelle and Clare stop and turn around while Orla continues up the road in her own little world, oblivious to the group.

MICHELLE

Well not straight away.

Michelle points to the local shop.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I got a job with Dennis. I'm going
to save every cent and go skiving
as soon as possible. I'm thinking
America. Or Australia. Somewhere
warm where the fellas are a ride.

JAMES

How did I not know this? Who else
is leaving?

CLARE

I'm going to uni in Belfast.

ERIN

(swooning)

It's Dublin for me. Literature studies in the city of poets.

JAMES

Seriously, how did I not know this?

Orla is now quite a way down the road.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(Loudly)

Orla. What are you doing after school?

Orla stops, turns and thinks deeply for a while.

ORLA

I'm getting ice cream.

JAMES

No, like after school is over and done with yeah?

ORLA

Oh, that. I don't know yet. Either Paris or Berlin.

JAMES

Whaaat?

ORLA

I got a scholarship and offers to dance schools in both places.

Everyone except James goes mad with delight, clapping and racing over to Orla excitedly.

ERIN

When did you find out?

ORLA

Um, last week. Maybe the week before. I forget.

MICHELLE

Fucky ducky doo dah, my friend's going to be a global superstar.

James arrives, hovering on the edge of the group. Silent.

ERIN
What about you?

JAMES
I'm staying here. I was thinking about studying fashion or maybe hairdressing or, or, I might even become a priest - I'm not quite sure yet.

CLARE
A priest? I don't think they let people like us do that.

JAMES
You'd be surprised.

MICHELLE
Feck sake. Imagine being the last of the Derry Girls and you're not from Derry, nor are ye a girl.

ERIN
(grabbing James' sash)
That's not what this says.

CLARE
Yeah, James is the best Derry girl out of the lot of us.

James smiles.

JAMES
I am aren't I?

Michelle smiles at her cousin and punches him on the shoulder, mouthing the word 'loser'.

ORLA
So ice cream yeah?

JAMES
My shout. Gerry gave me some money just before, and also - strangely - some pieces of very old toast.

Orla and Clare race ahead, swinging around street signs and dancing on the street. Following them are Michelle and Erin on either side of James, holding him by the arms.

FADE OUT.