

Learning to Drive

by

Linda Manning

Grand Prize Winner
StoryPros Awards Screenplay Contest

Quarter-Finalist
PAGE International Screenwriting Competition

Finalist
Filmmakers International Screenwriting Award

Semi-Finalist
Creative World Awards

BRIO Award Winner
Bronx Council on the Arts

WGA Registration No. 1649873
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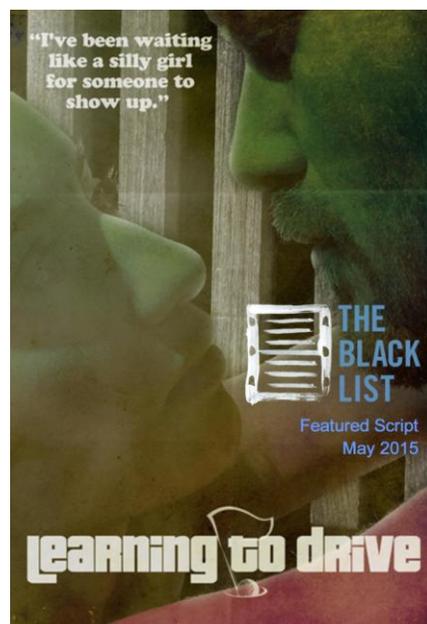
Featured Script of the Month The Black List website

"Breathtaking, poignant, and lovely, LEARNING TO DRIVE should be a strong contender for the industry's attention and interest... A spiritual and chronological successor to nostalgic feature masterpieces like THE VIRGIN SUICIDES and ALMOST FAMOUS, LEARNING TO DRIVE is an accomplished, market-ready script There is a growing awareness of the fact that women comprise the majority of filmgoers; a script such as LEARNING TO DRIVE reflects so many facets of the female experiences of innocence, abuse, sexuality, and self-discovery that it would make a savvy pick for any studio looking to court this important audience."

The Black List

"This script is sure to attract the attention of industry readers due to its provocative concept and the dark and unique combination of themes it explores. On a technical level it is very clean and has a quick pace to the read. The plot is outstanding and contains a very satisfying ending that brings everything full circle."

The Black List



FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE: 1978, outskirts of the West

INT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is empty except for a lean, sharp-featured, pretty, 15 year old girl slouching in her chair, LOUISE LOREY. She wears an over-sized worn "Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band" t-shirt, blue jeans, and no make-up. She has a wary gaze.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Tell me about your story.

LOUISE
What do you mean?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Where did the idea come from?

LOUISE
I don't know.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Your main character is a man, much older than you.

LOUISE
He's not a man, he's a cowboy.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
He's unexpected.

LOUISE
You think I stole it? You think it's not mine?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
No, Louise, I know you wrote it. I want you to write a two thousand word piece of fiction over the summer.

LOUISE
Why?!

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Because I take you seriously, and you don't. And you need to go to college.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

What am I supposed to write about?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)

Anything ... continue this story.
If you do the assignment and write
it as well as I know you can, I'll
get you a spot in honors English in
the fall.

No response.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)

Okay. You can go.

Louise bolts out of the room.

INT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Bob Seger's "Night Moves" plays.

Louise opens her locker. The inside is bare except for a few books and folders. She tosses the book she is carrying into her locker and slams the door.

She stares down the hallway, mapping her route, looking for an escape. End of the school day. KIDS are hanging out.

LOUISE'S POV

She walks the gauntlet toward the exit peering into a classroom where NERDY KIDS are playing musical instruments poorly. She passes another classroom of MISFIT KIDS dragging folding chairs into a circle.

A group of older TOUGH-LOOKING GIRLS wearing tons of blue eyeshadow and stick-straight hair a la Cher stare her down. A gaggle of ridiculously enthusiastic CHEERLEADERS don't notice her. She rushes out the double front doors.

EXT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - ENTRANCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise darts past KIDS getting on their bikes, and then turns, stops, and surveys the vast, flat sea of cars that is the student parking lot.

END POV

EXT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise leisurely weaves through the parking lot running her fingers along the cherry Camaros, VW Bugs, Firebirds, etc.

EXT. STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

At the edge of the parking lot Louise dodges traffic crossing in the middle of a busy two lane street.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise pushes through a stand of trees into a never-ending graveyard. The grass is dry and sparse. She strolls in and out of the headstones.

There are groups of STONER KIDS smoking pot.

JOHNNY (O.C.)

Louise.

Louise turns around to find JOHNNY, a tough-looking, loner high school kid, practicing putting a golf ball over gravestones.

JOHNNY

Hey.

LOUISE

Hey.

JOHNNY

You're in my English class.

LOUISE

Yeah.

Louise takes off. He follows her.

JOHNNY

Hey, what are you doing when school lets out?

LOUISE

I don't know.

JOHNNY

I just got a job at Oak Hills.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE
You actually know how to play golf,
on a golf course?

JOHNNY
A little. Those guys make good
money hitting a ball with a club.

LOUISE
It takes a lot of practice.

JOHNNY
I got time.

LOUISE
You can get a job there if you are
fifteen?

JOHNNY
I'm sixteen.

LOUISE
Oh.

JOHNNY
When's your birthday?

LOUISE
End of the summer.

JOHNNY
Got your learner's permit?

LOUISE
I've got a car.

JOHNNY
What?

LOUISE
See ya.

Louise runs toward a thick border of trees at the edge of
the graveyard.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise pushes through the stand of trees at the edge of the
graveyard out into a typical middle class subdivision built
in the 1950's. The topography is relentlessly flat.

(CONTINUED)

She walks down the street, turns a corner and eyes her car, a 1972 olive green two door Chevy Nova, parked outside her house. Her family's house is a dirty brown split-level ranch with a long cement driveway leading down to the street.

She puts her key inside the lock of her car door.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise sits in the car, slams the door, and locks it.

END MUSIC

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF LOUISE'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

LOUISE glares out the front windshield.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA - DAY

Louise is staring into space as the sun is going down. Her ten year old brother, LUKE, gawky, insecure, but whip smart, knocks on the passenger side window.

LUKE
(shouting through the glass)
MOM SAYS IT'S TIME TO COME IN FOR
DINNER!

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF LOUISE'S HOUSE - DAY

Louise gets out of her car and slams the door hard.

LUKE
Why do you sit in there so much?

LOUISE
Practicing - for the day I drive
out of here and never come back.

LUKE
He's pissed off.

LOUISE
He's always pissed off.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Louise and Luke sit around the dinner table with their mother, FRANCES, 40, pretty, and wearing a stiff mask of contentment. Their stepfather, PHILIP, 45, a mass of tension, hunches over his food, sweating in a suit that is too small.

PHILIP

It's going to be a perfect party, no screw ups. I want you to make those mini sausage sandwiches, Frances, with the good rolls. No frozen food. Nice music. Good paper napkins. Everything top shelf. Everyone from the office will come. They will see that we have a good home, a decent family, that I know real estate. A real change from my last place. And I'll be looked up to there.

INT. TEENAGE CLOTHING STORE IN THE MALL - DAY

Louise hurries into the store ahead of her mother and immediately grabs a cool, modern, jersey halter dress. Louise checks the size and beams at her mother.

LOUISE

This one!

FRANCES

Let's look around.

Frances goes slowly through the racks of clothes as Louise impatiently stands behind her holding the halter dress. Frances pulls out a shapeless daisy print dress.

LOUISE

No, Mom. Please let me get this one. I love it. I love it!

FRANCES

Louise, this party is very important to Philip, and we ALL need to make a good impression.

LOUISE

This dress makes a great impression.

Frances holds the cotton daisy print dress up to Louise.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCES

This is the best dress for you.

Louise is crestfallen.

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Louise's furniture is left over from when she was a little girl, but she has decorated it with flower power, happy face and peace sign stickers. Her record player and a large stack of albums have a prominent place in her room.

The walls are covered with movie posters that feature men including Clint Eastwood's "The Outlaw Josey Wales," Robert Redford's "Jeremiah Johnson," Steve McQueen in "The Getaway," and Charles Bronson in "Death Wish."

She studies herself in the mirror, and plays with her hair and some makeup trying to make herself look older.

LOUISE

You could go to college.

She digs through her underwear drawer, pulls out a small bag, counts out some cash, and takes off.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Philip's party of WORK COLLEAGUES/REAL ESTATE AGENTS, is in full swing. Engelbert Humperdinck plays on the stereo.

PHILIP

If I could have everyone's attention for a minute. I'd like to thank you all for coming. I'd like to give a particular thank you to a great man, a great sales man, and a great leader, our boss, the one and only Mr. Steven Richards.

Everyone applauds. Philip gestures to STEVEN, a slick-looking, handsome 35 year old with long sideburns.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

He has taught me, he has taught all of us, many, many great lessons from The Great One, Mr. Norman Vincent Peale, but perhaps the greatest, simplest lesson of all, the most important words a salesman can hold in his mind, "Be

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PHILIP (CONT'D) (cont'd)
interesting, be enthusiastic ...
but"

Louise suddenly appears at the top of the stairs that lead into the sunken living room. She is WEARING THE HALTER DRESS she wanted. Her hair is pulled up, she has on make-up and heels, and she looks stunning. All eyes turn toward her. She drinks in the attention, smiling with great satisfaction.

Steven stares up at Louise as he speaks.

STEVEN
"Be interesting, be enthusiastic,
but don't talk too much." Phil.

Everyone laughs loudly. Philip tries to laugh along.

Luke appears behind Louise dressed in a stiff suit and tie. He watches everyone laughing and staring at his sister, and then sees his shocked mother and Philip.

LUKE
I told you they were going to be
mad.

LOUISE
I don't care.

Louise rushes down the stairs awkwardly.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Steven, Louise, Philip, and Frances stand around the bar.

STEVEN
So you're a sophomore this year.
High school is great fun.

LOUISE
Right.

STEVEN
Between you and me it's a lot more
fun than being a real estate agent,
isn't that right, Phil?

Philip laughs loud and nervously.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN
Could I get you another drink?

LOUISE
Sure.

STEVEN
What are you having?

LOUISE
A coke please.

Steven pours a coke, hands it to Louise, and she smiles.

STEVEN
Here we are.

LOUISE
Thanks.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A few couples dance to the Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive." Louise dances with Steven. He whispers in her ear and she laughs.

Frances and Philip, unnerved, watch them.

Luke sits on the stairway alone watching his sister.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louise looks over her shoulder and then pours some rum into her coke. Frances walks in as Louise sets down the bottle.

FRANCES
Where did you get the money for
that dress?

LOUISE
I saved it.

Steven walks into the kitchen and makes himself a drink.

STEVEN
Another for the beautiful Louise?

LOUISE
No thanks, I'm fine.

Frances steps in front of Louise.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCES
I'd like a drink, Steven.

STEVEN
Of course, what'll it be?

FRANCES
Gin and tonic, please.

STEVEN
Coming right up.

FRANCES
You're quite the dancer.

STEVEN
Thanks. I enjoy it. Here's your
cocktail. Louise, another dance?

LOUISE
Sure.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Philip is trying to impress RICHARD, a paunchy salesman.

PHILIP
I just listed two on Crestview and
I've got Cherry Knolls locked
up. I'm doing a newsletter over
there every month that should
deliver in a few more ...

RICHARD
Hey, looks like the boss is pretty
impressed with your daughter.

PHILIP
Stepdaughter.

Louise, now tipsy, is bumping and grinding with Steven.

Philip watches Louise move. Frances watches Philip. Philip
looks around the room to see who else is watching Louise --
everybody.

Philip pushes through the dancers and grabs Louise's arm.

PHILIP
You need some fresh air.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE
No, I don't.

 PHILIP
Come outside now!

Louise looks back at Steven who shrugs his shoulders. Philip pulls Louise to the front door and takes her outside.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

 PHILIP
Do not come back in the house.

Philip slams the front door as he goes back in.

Louise stands alone on the front porch staring at her Nova.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Philip enters, the slam of the door stops the party.

 PHILIP
Everything is fine. Everything is
great.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Louise and Steven stand close together in the driveway murmuring to each other. Philip and Frances watch from the front porch as they tensely say good-bye to their guests.

 PHILIP
LOUISE! GET YOUR ASS UP HERE!

Louise runs up to the front porch. Steven waves good-bye.

 STEVEN
Thanks, Phil, it was a great night.

He winks at Louise and gets in his car.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Louise walks in the front door unsteady on her feet. Philip comes in behind her and HITS HER with an open hand on her ass as hard as he can sending her tumbling forward. Frances comes in behind him, silent. Louise scrambles to her feet.

Luke, terrified, watches from a distance.

(CONTINUED)

PHILIP

YOU HAVE RUINED MY CAREER! How in the hell am I supposed to go into the office tomorrow and face those people. HUH?! You get drunk and put your hands on my boss?! Answer me? You come in here dressed like a whore!

FRANCES

That is not the dress we bought for this evening.

PHILIP

Go to your room. I DO NOT want to see that dress again. Take it off and give it to your mother.

Louise walks up a step toward her room.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I said take it off and give it to your mother.

LOUISE

I will. I have to go up ...

PHILIP

TAKE IT OFF!

LOUISE

Now?

PHILIP

DO WHAT I TELL YOU!

Louise looks to her mother. Frances is steely eyed.

LOUISE

I can't. I don't ...

PHILIP

You don't what?!

LOUISE

I don't have a bra on.

PHILIP

You are disgusting.

Louise runs up the stairs.

INT. LOUISE'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Louise shuts the door to her room. Panicked, she grabs her desk chair and braces it against the bedroom door knob. She crouches down by her window, wraps herself into a ball, and stares down at her car.

EXT. LOUISE'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Louise walks out the front door of her house and stops. She is wearing the daisy print dress, her hair in a pony tail and no make up.

She twirls the car keys around her fingers.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA (MOVING) - DAY

Louise speeds down the street, alone in the car, windows down, with Jackson Browne's "Running on Empty" blasting on the radio.

EXT. PARKING LOT AT OAK HILLS COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Louise drives into the parking lot of the Oak Hills Country Club. It is a recently built Tudor style building attempting to look exclusive and sophisticated, but coming off like a German beer hall.

Inside is a restaurant, The Cabriolet, and the golf pro shop. Outside is a driving range and 18 hole golf course suffering from being built on the dry western plains.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - BAR - DAY

Louise gingerly steps in the front door. She stands at the entryway not sure where to go.

The Cabriolet bar is decorated in heavy dark wood, overstuffed paisley print furniture, and cheap carpeting.

WAITERS wearing black pants, white shirts, and red polyester vests pass through the bar.

MICKEY, a good looking 30 year-old waiter passes by with a tray full of clean glasses, notices Louise, and stops.

MICKEY
Do you need something?

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

I want to talk to someone about a job?

MICKEY

The old guy, Hank, over there.

Mickey tips his head toward HANK, a tan, slender, handsome man in his late forties who looks like he has spent his life on a golf course. Mickey keeps on walking.

Louise puts on her game face and strides up to Hank.

LOUISE

Excuse me, Sir? I'm looking for a job.

HANK

Have a seat.

She does. He skeptically looks her over.

HANK (CONT'D)

How old are you?

LOUISE

Seventeen. I'll be a senior in the fall.

HANK

You ever been a hostess before?

LOUISE

No.

HANK

It gets real busy in here on Friday and Saturday nights.

LOUISE

I worked at Baskin Robbins for about three weeks. It was busy.

HANK

Which one?

LOUISE

The one on Louisberg Road.

HANK

Managed by that asshole, George?

Louise laughs loudly and then abruptly stops.

(CONTINUED)

HANK (CONT'D)

Will he give you a good reference?

LOUISE

No.

HANK

Follow me.

They get up and head toward the dining room.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - DINING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The dining room is a large rectangle room filled with heavy wooden square tables that each have four wooden chairs around them. Fake flower centerpieces adorn each table.

HANK

Here's the main room, broken up into eight stations, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. There is a map. Your job is to keep all those stations evenly seated and all the waiters happy. You got customers walking in the door one on top of another. I don't want to see them standing in a line. This is a country club. People coming in here think they deserve something. You've got to play along. You got waiters constantly bitching at you. They don't make money if you don't seat them well.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Hank and Louise enter into a busy kitchen full of COOKS, DISHWASHERS, and BUS BOYS working.

The MALE WAITERS are eating. Only Mickey notices Louise. Louise's face lights up at the organized chaos.

HANK

Over there you got the fryers. Prime rib is our biggest seller. Those guys are working fast and hot all night long. Do not go behind the line, ever. The prep station, the freezer, waiters pick-up, etcetera.

(CONTINUED)

CLIFF, a waiter in his early twenties, deferentially approaches Hank.

CLIFF
Hank, Jill just called. She can't make it in again.

HANK
Can you start now?

LOUISE
Yes.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - BAR - DAY

Hank opens a closet and pulls out a uniform.

HANK
What are you? About a six?

LOUISE
Yes. That's right.

In walk CHET, CARL, BOB and DAVE, all tan, fit golf pros in their late twenties, oozing success.

HANK
Well, well, look what the cat dragged in.

Hank greets them warmly. Louise steps back and listens.

CHET
Hey Hank.

HANK
What are you doing over here on the poor man's course?

CARL
Came by to see you.

HANK
Back home for the Cherry Creek tournament?

CARL
Yep.

HANK
Played a practice round yet?

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Two.

HANK

Well, Chet, you fix that slice I saw you hitting in Palm Beach?

CHET

I'm ready.

Mickey walks into the bar balancing another full tray of clean glasses. Everyone stiffens and is silent.

Louise is mesmerized.

Mickey sets down the tray on the bar, looks at the four men, and walks away.

CHET

Some things still haven't changed.

HANK

Lay off.

Awkward silence.

DAVE

We just came by to say hello.

HANK

Take care boys. Watch your backs out there.

BOB

Thanks Hank. See you soon.

HANK

Come by for dinner.

CHET

Is it on you?

HANK

Not with what you're making now.

They all walk out. Hank wistfully watches them go.

HANK (CONT'D)

Those boys all started out as caddies here. And now they're playing the pro tour.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

Why were they staring at that waiter?

HANK

You don't know anything about golf, do you?

LOUISE

No.

HANK

Go in the ladies room and put this on. And take out that ponytail and put on some lipstick or something.

LOUISE

I've got some heels in my car.

HANK

Good. I'd burn that dress if I were you sweetheart.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - BAR - DAY

The waiters are gathered in the bar for the afternoon meeting with Hank about specials, etc.

Louise comes out of the ladies room wearing the hostess uniform, a short skirt and fitted blouse, with platform heels. Her hair is down and she has put on make-up.

SHE SILENCES THE ROOM. Louise looks out at all the men staring at her, smiles, and stares back.

MICKEY

(in Hank's ear)

Wow.

HANK

Magic. Everyone, this is ... this is ... I'm sorry sweetie, what's your name again?

LOUISE

Lou. Lou Lorey.

HANK

Lou is our new hostess. Jill couldn't join us again, so give Lou here a break boys. It's her first night on the floor.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Louise leads a party of two couples through the dining room with grace and ease like she has done this a million times before. She pulls out the chairs for the women and hands them their menus.

LOUISE

Your waiter will be with you in just a moment.

Mickey walks up behind her and she grins at him with girlish enthusiasm. He can't help but smile back.

EXT. CABRIOLET/OAK HILLS COUNTRY CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Louise ogles a mint condition 1965 cherry red Mustang convertible. Mickey comes toward the car and puts his key in the door.

MICKEY

What are you staring at?

LOUISE

My car.

MICKEY

What do you drive?

Louise points to her Nova.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

1972 Nova, that ain't so bad.

LOUISE

Not what I would have picked out, but it wasn't up to me.

MICKEY

Parents idea?

LOUISE

Something like that. They wanted me to be able to drive myself around, not bug them for stuff. It runs.

MICKEY

You're lucky to have your own car.

LOUISE

Yeah. But yours is a work of art. It's perfect, even the color.

(CONTINUED)

MICKEY

So how was your first night? You coming back?

LOUISE

Yes, I really like it here.

JERRY, a 24 year old cocky ex-frat boy, now a waiter and golf pro in training, comes up behind them and moves in close to Louise, but speaks to Mickey.

JERRY

You better watch out for these old guys, but if you need any help learning the ropes I'm your man.

Jerry saunters away. Mickey gets in his car and takes off. Louise watches Mickey pull away.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Louise parks the Nova, turns off the engine, gets out, quietly shuts the car door, watches the house for a moment, and hurries toward the front door.

LUKE (O.C.)

Stick 'em up!

LOUISE

SHHHHH!

Louise looks up at Luke who hangs out of his bedroom window.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I'll be up in a second.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Louise walks in the front door. Philip and Frances are waiting.

PHILIP

What the hell are you wearing?

LOUISE

My uniform.

FRANCES

You scoop ice cream in that, dear?

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

I got a better job, hostessing at
the restaurant at Oak Hills.

Frances watches Philip looking Louise up and down.

PHILIP

That piece of shit golf course?
They serve liquor there?

LOUISE

Yes, but I just seat people.

PHILIP

How did you get there?

LOUISE

I drove my car.

PHILIP

That is not your car. Everything
under this roof is mine, paid for
by me. That car belongs to me
until you make the last payment.

LOUISE

This job pays better and I can work
more hours and pay off the car
sooner.

PHILIP

Did I tell you you could go get a
"better" job?

LOUISE

No, but I thought it would be a
good idea.

PHILIP

You don't have good ideas, Louise.
You're not capable of them. If you
get pulled over, you are going to
lose your license all
together. Bad idea.

LOUISE

I won't get pulled over.

PHILIP

Better not. Because I'm not
helping you out if you do.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE
My Dad bought the couch.

PHILIP
What did you say to me?

LOUISE
The couch is not yours, paid for by
you, it's my Dad's.

PHILIP
Well, your piece of shit Dad is
gone isn't he? Once you turn
sixteen you can get in that car and
get the hell out of here for all I
care.

Philip storms out of the room.

LOUISE
Mom?

FRANCES
I have told you not to talk about
your father in front of Philip.

LOUISE
Did you hear what he said?

FRANCES
Did you hear what I just
said? Your father left us. Philip
is here.

Frances follows Philip out of the room.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LUKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Louise's tiptoes in and shuts the door.

LUKE
You look weird.

LOUISE
This is my new uniform. I got a
different job. I like it.

LUKE
Where?