

FADE IN:

INT. DARKENED CLASSROOM - CIRCA 1998 - DAY

ON A PROJECTED IMAGE: Cheesy anatomical diagram of the female reproductive organs, ovulation, and menstruation, completely isolated from the rest of the female body -- floating.

ON THE WIDE STRICKEN EYES of YOUNG ALLIE at twelve years old.

MALE NARRATOR (OVER)

(commanding voice)

This is what is called "that movie." Everything I'll tell you is perfectly normal, just another part of becoming a woman. Nothing to worry about. You will learn about getting your period, which is perfectly normal, just another part of becoming a woman. Nothing to worry about.

YOUNG FEMALE CLASSMATE (OS)

My cousin Trish says that if you stand on your head, you won't get your period.

MALE NARRATOR (OVER)

You will also learn about feminine hygiene, which is perfectly normal, just another part of becoming a woman. Nothing to worry about.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Skinny, self-conscious Young Allie dressed in gym clothes stands in a line of girls before a very masculine female GYM TEACHER.

GYM TEACHER

I have two pieces of bad news for you girls. Number one: Sanitary napkins

(she holds one up)

and

(she points to her vagina)

number two: menstrual cramps.

ON THE WIDE, more stricken eyes of Young Allie.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - LATER

ON the UPSIDE DOWN CLOSED EYES of Young Allie.

YOUNG ALLIE

Please God, don't let me get my period. I know all things are possible-and not possible-through you.

PULL BACK to reveal Allie hanging from the monkey bars. Two of Allie's classmates, Cool Girls, cheerleaders with boobs, arms crossed, nod in disbelief.

EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH- CIRCA 2002 - NIGHT

ON a church sign: REVIVAL

Allie at fifteen waits with a small group of girls on the church steps. A small group of boys approaches, one, her BOYFRIEND, beams when he sees Allie. She beams back.

LATER

Allie and her boyfriend, both in hormone overdrive, sit in their own column of light, intoxicated by primal passion and oblivious to the sweating and crying FERVOR that surrounds them. His fingers touch her hand. Her chest begins to rise and fall. The preacher, SAM, calls out:

SAM

Let us pray!

Allie and the boyfriend bow. She ever-so-lightly touches her thigh against his. He looks over at her breasts, rising and falling. His eyes move down to his about-to-explode penis then back up to her breasts.

BOYFRIEND

(murmurs)

Oh, Jesus. Please.

SAM

If you want us to pray for you, raise your hand.

Reflexively the boy's hand shoots up. At once, someone snatches the boy's arm. He's dragged to the alter, turns and looks at Allie with longing, disbelief and fear. He beckons to her, then turns and falls to his knees.

ON Allie: Panic. As if she's sent him to the gallows.

## INT. COUNTRY CHURCH - THE PRESENT - DAY

BUCKETS inside the small rustic church catch the rain. One of the Church Ladies, DOLLY, blue hair piled high, enormous bosoms, plays piano. The preacher, Sam, late sixties, stands behind the podium. The congregation is very OLD, its numbers few. ALLIE EDWARDS, mid-twenties with girl-next-door beauty, sits beside ancient AMOS. He raises one hip. Allie gets a whiff of something horrific. ACCUSATORY EYES turn on her. Two people behind Allie scurry away. The music ends. Sam steps forward. She's trapped with Amos.

SAM

Love is patient, love is kind...

Allie's stoic face reddens; she can't breathe.

SAM (CONT'D)

It does not dishonor others...

Her eyes cross. She begins to shiver for air.

SAM (CONT'D)

Love does not delight in evil...

Allie might pass out.

SAM (CONT'D)

Love never fails. Love will save our little church. It is the only thing that can save it.

ALLIE

(chokes out)

A-men!

LATER

Amos slinks past Dolly, mother hen who shields two other Church Ladies, LIL, a double for Olive Oyl, and JANE, a chunky bobble-head.

LIL

Rotten eggs.

JANE

(bobble-head)

I'd say sulfur.

Dolly spots Allie. The three Church Ladies draw a bead on her.

(CONTINUED)

DOLLY

Allie. You've got to do something about Amos.

LIL

We'll never increase our numbers.

JANE

(bobbles)

Now that you're back from college, you've got to help us save this church.

ALLIE

I want to do that.

Unconsciously, Allie MIRRORS Jane's bobble-head bobbling.

JANE

(bobbles)

Well, you've got to do something. And fast.

Allie's head bobbles affirmatively.

EXT. CHURCH - MINUTES LATER

Allie looks up at the sky, clear and blue now. She smiles. At a distance Sam shakes hands with MR. HEUSTESS, well dressed and about Sam's age. The two speak. Sam's smile falls to a frown.

DOLLY

(takes Allie's arm)

Hold up.

Dolly nods toward a young woman, DEIDRA, in the distance sitting alone INSIDE A CAR.

ALLIE

Is that Deidra?

DOLLY

Oh, Lord, yes. That's as close as she'll get to Jesus. Nothing like her sister.

ALLIE

How is Stephani?

(CONTINUED)

DOLLY

Sometimes I wonder if they have the same daddy? Stephani never was boy crazy. A true Christian that one. I need your help, Allie.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - LATER

Outside a convenience store, Allie watches as HER FATHER, Sam, buys lottery tickets.

ALLIE

Oh, Daddy.

EXT. THE EDWARDS FARM - DAY

Beautiful open fields and pastures. Allie and Sam walk past newly planted rows. Sam holds a puppy. Their silence is like a presence.

ALLIE

Where do we stand with the bank, Daddy?

SAM

Fine.

ALLIE

I saw you and Mr. Heustess. You could lose everything.

SAM

(smiles)

That's impossible. I'll still have you, won't I?

(to the puppy)

The Lord works in mysterious ways, don't He little buddy?

INT. ALLIE'S OLD CAR - DAY

In the CHURCH LOT, Deidra sits alone in a car listening to music. Allie pushes open the passenger door. Deidra removes her earphones.

ALLIE

Just for the record, this is kinda awkward for me too.

JUMP TO see Deidra in Allie's front seat lighting a joint. Allie drives, turns to speak when-

(CONTINUED)

DEIDRA

Wait!

(takes a deep hit)

Okay, go, Allie. I've never heard the abstinence lecture from an honest-to-God virgin before.

ALLIE

This is America, Deidra. Pursuit of happiness? Mine?

DEIDRA

But it's. Just. So. Weird.

ALLIE

It's not a lecture, Deidra; it's a choice. Happens to be my choice. If you find that weird, that's a choice too.

DEIDRA

I did the football team.

ALLIE

The team?

DEIDRA

Well, technically just the offense. I have a thing for quarterbacks.

ALLIE

That's not uncommon. I mean about quarterbacks. That's natural.

Deidra takes another deep hit. Allie rolls down the window, fans away the smoke.

DEIDRA

Why do you do things you don't want to do, Allie?

ALLIE

Your mother asked a favor.

DEIDRA

There's a cartoon bubble floating over your head. I'm looking at it now.

ALLIE

Really? I don't see anything.

(CONTINUED)

DEIDRA  
Big letters: V.I.R....

ALLIE  
Okay, okay.

DEIDRA  
Why are you against sex?

ALLIE  
I'm not. I'm for a lot of things,  
one being marriage.

DEIDRA  
(meditates; seriously)  
That's cool... But how do you know,  
Allie? How do you really, really  
know when you've found the right  
one?

ALLIE  
(thoughtfully)  
You listen for a little voice, I  
think.

INT. SMALL TOWN DINER - DAY

In a booth of the crowded diner, Allie sits holding a pen and studying a newspaper, sips coffee. She wears a Y'all Mart smock.

TODD (O.S.)  
Allie? Is that you?

At the sound of Allie's name, ALFRED E. NEWMAN, mid-twenties, alertly looks up to see Allie and Todd.

TODD (CONT'D)  
You're back.

TODD NORRIS, mid-twenties, is Adonis gorgeous. Powerful rays of sexuality radiate from him. He sits across from her.

ALLIE  
Todd... Todd!  
(swoons)  
What's up? Ah, I mean, I don't mean  
what's up, as in what's up. Not  
that.

ANGLE ON what appears to be a WEDDING BAND. Alfred twists the ring and looks up to see:

(CONTINUED)

Allie's legs are crossed under the table. The leg begins a slow pump.

TODD

Wow! It is you, Allie. You got so - beautiful... That didn't come out right, did it?

ALLIE

I'm sorry about the knee injury.

TODD

How did you know?

ALLIE

I sort of followed your football career, you know, high school, college, NFL, not religiously or anything.

TODD

Just a knee. I have another one. Let me guess. MBA.

ALLIE

Marketing.

TODD

You're something, Allie.

Todd places his hand over hers; the leg pumps faster.

TODD

You really haven't changed a bit.

ALLIE

Not just a tiny bit?

BUBBLES, a buxom waitress, approaches.

BUBBLES

Hey, Toddy.

TODD

Hey, Bubbles.

She bends deeply, displaying her bounty, sets down a fruit plate. Both Todd and Allie get an eyeful. Todd slides the plate to Allie.

TODD

Share with me?

(CONTINUED)



ALLIE  
(forces her hand from his)  
No, thanks.

Allie watches as Todd's lips close around a peach slice. Unconsciously, her lips mirror his. The leg pumps.

TODD  
You've always had this, ah, special quality, Allie. It's written all over you.

ALLIE  
"Steady?" "Solid?"

Allie lifts a strawberry to her mouth. Todd's eyes devour her lips.

TODD  
Virginal.

He again takes one of her hands, holds it with both his, prayer like.

She twists her hair; the leg pumps.

TODD (CONT'D)  
I have a proposal for you.

ALLIE  
A what?

TODD  
I'm opening a sporting goods store, here on the square. Come work for me.

ALLIE  
Oh, my. I couldn't, ah, do that.

ALFRED'S POV: She presses a hand against her leg, which will not stop. Alfred's EYES NARROW in disapproval.

Todd holds up a large, ripe fig.

ANGLE ON THE FIG. He squeezes top and bottom, and it OPENS UP, pink, meaty, filled with juice.

TODD (CONT'D)  
(hands it to her)  
Here's the interview. Sell the fig to me, Allie. Please.

(CONTINUED)

ALLIE  
 (breathless)  
 Well. Ah. First. First. To start,  
 you'd need to gently fold back the  
 skin. Then, oops, catch the juice.

His eyes devour her. Todd rounds the booth and sits close beside her.

TODD  
 I want to see this.

He gently takes the fig from her. When his TONGUE runs up the slit, Allie's leg pumps like a jackhammer. His lips suck the fruit from its skin. Allie explodes from the booth, dashes for the door.

TODD (CONT'D)  
 Allie?

ALLIE  
 I can't stop my leg!

TODD  
 Will you consider my offer?

ALLIE  
 (under her breath)  
 Not if I have the strength.

A sullen Alfred E. Newman sneers.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

At the mailbox, Allie stands across from the end of their drive. The mail in her hand spells bad news. She looks up. The puppy races down the drive toward her. She looks over, a speeding car approaches.

ALLIE  
 Stay!

The puppy leaps. The car skids off the road. The passenger door flies open. A large middle-aged black woman with blond hair, RIKI, springs out. To comic effect, she goes into a fit, pogos and prays, wails -

RIKI  
 Oh, Jesus! Sweet Jesus. Old Lord,  
 no, nooooo! Oh, Bobby Lee!

BOBBY LEE, a middle-aged white man, appears from the driver's side. Riki freezes.

(CONTINUED)

Riki's POV: Allie holds the lifeless puppy cradled in her arms.

BOBBIE LEE  
Riki? Riki, baby?

Riki dashes toward Allie, her gait awkward, her blond hair appearing to levitate. She extends her hand. The puppy raises its head, unharmed. Riki breaks down into heartfelt tears.

RIKI  
(tears streaming)  
Praise Jesus.  
(stroking the dog)  
God is good.

She lifts her eyes to Allie, who sees that Riki is a man.

ALLIE  
Yes, He is.

Bobbie Lee nears, Riki turns, and he takes her into his arms.

EXT./INT. TODD'S SPORTING GOODS - DAY

Allie sits in her car looking at the storefront display window, a sign for sneakers and two mannequins, a man and a boy standing shoulder to shoulder like soldiers. She rehearses.

ALLIE  
I was just driving by. I kinda have an eye, you know. The display? It's awful. No, not a job. Just a little professional advice. Free. No, not the two of us. Together in the shop? All day? Every day? Not that.

ON THE SIDEWALK.

Allie, gives the display a disapproving look, opens the door.

ALLIE  
Knock, knock. Todd?

Allie enters. The store is cluttered. An NFL poster of Todd in uniform leans against a shelf. She stands before a glass door at back.

(CONTINUED)

Shirtless Todd unloads a truck. His sculpted chest and abs glisten in the sun. In a tank top, busty Bubbles, wearing glasses and holding a pen and clipboard, stands beside him. He takes the clipboard. She towels off his chest.

ALLIE  
Nooooo. Not Bubbles.

Allie sees her reflection in the glass. Her look says, What was I thinking?

She scurries back past the display window. Stops. Turns. Debates. Studies the two mannequins. She tilts her head and squenches her eyes, indicating the gears in her head at work.

LATER

As Allie exits the store, we HOLD ON the display, the two mannequins rearranged: The man is on his knees, his hands suggest that he is tying one of the boy's sneakers. The boy smiles. Above the boy's head, a placard: BELIEVE.

EXT. ALLIE'S MAILBOX - DAY

Wearing her Y'all Mart smock, Allie stands woefully, a letter hanging from her hand.

INT. BANK - DAY

She sits across from the banker, Mr. Heustess.

ALLIE  
I'll get the money. Somehow.

MR. HEUSTESS  
There's not a job in this county  
that could pay you enough.

ALLIE  
The debt is greater than the value  
of the farm, isn't it?

MR. HEUSTESS  
I offered to loan Sam money from my  
own pocket, but your father has  
such pride.

ALLIE  
It's been in our family for 150  
years.

(CONTINUED)

MR. HEUSTESS  
It's gone.

EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH - DAY

Allie pulls up in her old car. In the distance, her father watches as workmen put a NEW ROOF on the church. She staggers forward in shock.

ALLIE  
(whispers)  
Oh, Daddy.

Sam turns, indicates the new roof and smiles broadly. Allie turns back toward her car.

SAM  
Allie! Allie?

INT. ALLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Allie packs her suitcase. Sam stands beside her.

ALLIE  
Losing the farm is not an option. I can't let that happen.

SAM (CONT'D)  
The Lord will provide.

ALLIE  
I know Daddy, and I know He works in mysterious ways. You've handed the farm off to the Lord. And now He's handed it off to me.

EXT. ALLIE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

ANGLE ON the PUPPY that scampers behind Allie's car as it heads down the drive. The car turns onto the highway. The puppy stops, wags furiously. Then barks out to the fading car.

CUT TO: