

INT. BASEMENT RECORD SHOP - DAY

NILES MAXWELL (60's) flips through a bin of overpriced old records. He sets one out of every six or so aside.

The store is cramped, mostly empty, and gloomy as all get out. If there's an employee somewhere you'd never know it.

He's a dapper as fuck black guy with a two-decades-old style that would make people want to imitate it, not criticize it.

Also, he's got some pretty amazing mutton chops.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

God dammit. I just paid twice as much
for this online. Fucking Cassavetes.

Niles glances at the GUY FLIPPING THROUGH RECORDS at the bin next to him. He cocks an eyebrow.

The guy holds a DUVALL record. The cover is a handsome black man ALL IN ORANGE with a two year old girl on his lap.

It's PENNY'S DAD. The girl is PENNY.

GUY FLIPPING THROUGH RECORDS

It's in better condition too.

He puts the record back, tutting. Niles grabs it.

NILES

Yoink.

He adds the Duvall album to his stack. The pale-eyed, dry-skinned record nerd doesn't say a word.

EXT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TOWN - STREET - DAY

A rich saturation of wealth and pastel colors swirl along a beachside avenue. The Ocean does an Ocean thing.

Niles walks up the stairs from the record store. He throws his sunglasses on quick as he can - the world is bright.

He only has the Duvall record. He swings his jacket over his shoulder and turns for a BISTRO on the corner.

His focus is direct. His head doesn't move from side to side. His hands don't fuss with anything.

Dude has some repose.

EXT. BEACHFRONT BISTRO - DAY

VIOLET, a giddy 20 something, sits in the middle at a corner table of a very beachy bistro. Nautical everywhere.

She wears a bikini top and a pair of jean shorts. Her hands never stop moving. From drink to straw to napkin. Etc.

Two BUDDY PAL GIRLS sit on either side of her. Their food is long done - their cocktails less so.

VIOLET
I'm telling you. You haven't fucked
until you've fucked to Mingus. Sugar
read me some of his auto-bio after
one night. So pervy.

Her Friends respond, but they don't interject. They know full well she's not done talking.

VIOLET
Ladies, why we ever farted around
with guys our own age is a mystery to
me. Children. Fucking toddlers.

Niles walks into view down the block. All four of her Chums look in his direction. Violet doesn't.

VIOLET
He's coming, isn't he?

They make affirmative gestures and sounds.

VIOLET
I bet he already picked up the tab.
Like called in his credit card number
or something. Fuck he's amazing.
Check it out when he gets here. His
voice is like a vibrator.

Niles walks up behind her. He snakes his hands down her arms and kisses her on the cheek.

NILES
Hey girls.
(to Violet)
All set?

She leans up and makes out with him. Real sloppy-like.

NILES
We ought to get a move on.

She stands and lowers her sunglasses. She motions at Niles with her head in what she thinks is a subtle way.

It isn't. She makes a show of taking out her credit card.

NILES
Already got it.

VIOLET
Thanks, Sugar.

He rolls his eyes.

VIOLET
Oh oh, wait wait. Gimme your phone. I want to show the girls that picture of Ellie you showed me.

She throws the table a knowing glance.

VIOLET
Little Miss Over Achiever looks like total shit these days.

She looks at him and bats her eyelashes.

VIOLET
Phone, please.

NILES
Nah. Lets go.

He walks away. She drains a cocktail and hops after him.

INT. STUPID TWO SEATER SPORTS CAR - DAY

Niles waits for Violet to arrange herself enough to get in the car. It takes a second.

When she slides in she reaches to put the top down. He shakes his head at her. She stops.

He REVS UP. They're in motion.

NILES
Why do you get like that when we come down here? It's not you you.

VIOLET
I dunno. Habit, I guess. And you're really old. It makes me feel weird.

She flashes him a HA HA SMILE. He exhales a PFFT. She digs around in her ENORMOUS bag.

VIOLET

I know I turn it up. I know I do. But it's only so they have something else to pay attention to before they start giving me shit. Most of their parents are friends with my parents. And you know my parents still want to hit you in the face with a shovel.

She fishes a huge DIAMOND RING out of the bottom of the bag and slides it on her ring finger. Dude. They're engaged.

NILES

That why you call me Sugar, too? To keep my name out of their mouths?

VIOLET

(sullen)

Nuh uh. I call you Sugar because I thought you liked it. You do, don't you? Like it.

NILES

Vy, you can call me whatever the hell you want. Got it?

She takes his hand.

VIOLET

Got it.

He switches gears and ramps up the speed. They drive in silence for quite a while. The coast speeds by.

She absently twists the ring around her finger.

VIOLET

You don't think Ellie is gonna hit me in the face with a shovel, do you?

He grins.

INT. THE HP CAFE - OFFICE - DAY

Max checks and double checks a whole table's worth of fancy foods. Ellie stands in the doorway, waving her arms.

ELLIE
Stop fancying things. That dope'll be
lucky enough that I don't hit her in
the face with a shovel.

MAX
You asked Niles to come up.

ELLIE
Do not call him that. It's icky. Call
him dad, like a normal person.

MAX
You wanted dad to meet the baby.

Max lifts the lid off a huge pot and pours a decent sized
portion of its contents into a serving bowl. Ellie sniffs.

ELLIE
Of course I want dad to meet the
baby. I mean. Duh. She's my baby.
What is that? That smells like the
Bison stew. Is that the Bison stew?

MAX
Yup.

ELLIE
You know Violet's a vegetarian,
right?

MAX
Yup.

Max shoots Ellie a look.

MAX
Different kind of shovel.

ELLIE
God I love you.

EXT. FIGUEROA AVENUE - DAY

THUNK. THUNK. Niles and Violet get out of the car a couple
of blocks away from the HP CAFE.

She puts the engagement ring in her bag. She has cross-
hatched red lines on one side of her face.

VIOLET
Bleh. I was almost drunk now I'm
almost hung over. Why did you let me
sleep so long?

He stops in front of a BAR NAMED AFTER A DOG.

NILES
Are you really feeling rough? We
could hop in here. Max doesn't serve
booze at her place.

VIOLET
Aren't we late already?

His only response is to hold the door open for her.

INT. BAR NAMED AFTER A DOG - DAY

Two GIANT AND STUPID LOOKING COCKTAILS sit in front of them.
She sips hers through a straw.

He pushes his to the side to carefully inspect his record.
Violet points the straw at the cover.

VIOLET
Whose that dude?

NILES
Ambient dude. Boring as hell if
you're not into it. I doubt you'd be
in to it.

VIOLET
I might be in to it.

He doesn't respond. Too caught up in the liner notes.

VIOLET
Sooooo.

NILES
What's up now?

VIOLET
I dunno. I thought you wanted to give
me a talk or something.

He decides the record was worth the price tag and gently
slips it back in the plastic bag.

NILES
A talk about what?

VIOLET
Oh, I don't know. Me seeing your daughters for the first time since high school. As your girlfriend.

NILES
Fiance.

VIOLET
Right. Yeah. We're still not going public with that yet.

NILES
Suit yourself.

VIOLET
You don't want to give me the lay of the land or a list of things I'm not supposed to talk about or anything?

NILES
Why would I do that?

VIOLET
I thought. I mean. Did you really just come in here to get a drink?

NILES
I had a perishing thirst. Didn't you have a perishing thirst?

He slides his drink in front of him and sips it for the first time. She studies his face. He winks at her.

VIOLET
You are a strange, strange man.

NILES
So I've been told. Drink up, Pickle. We've got a big night ahead of us.

VIOLET
What. With Ellie and Max?

NILES
After. With us. I want to show you a little slice of my L.A. Big time.

He grins. She sips her drink. Dreamily.

INT. THE HP CAFE - DAY

Ellie and Max sit at a corner table in front of the window. The next table over is loaded up with the food.

The rapidly cooling food. They look at their phones. They look at the window. They check the time. A lot.

Their eyes lock. Ellie shrugs. Max rolls her eyes. Their eyes drift apart. Ellie's lands on the food.

ELLIE
Hell with this.

She all but leaps out of her chair and grabs a plate. Max opens her mouth to protest, but stops herself.

MAX
Get me some stew.

ELLIE
On it.

EXT. FIGUEROA AVENUE - EVENING TIME

Niles has his arm around Violet. She has her hand in his back pocket. They stroll at a leisurely pace.

VIOLET
I like this neighborhood. It feels like a city in a way L.A never feels like a city.

NILES
It's a dump. But a fancy dump. Or so people tell me.

VIOLET
God, don't say that in front of Ellie. All her Facebook posts are about how great it is.

NILES
You follow Ellie on Facebook?

They reach the corner across the street from The Cafe. Violet stops walking.

VIOLET
Ohhhhh boy. I don't know if I can do this. Sugar? I feel queasy.

NILES

Pickle.

He lifts her face by the chin.

NILES

You can do this.

He plants on on her. When he pulls away her eyes are still closed. He puts his arm around her again.

VIOLET

OK.

INT. THE HP CAFE - NIGHT

Max and Ellie sit across from Niles and Violet. The plates are mostly empty. Ellie watches Violet finish her stew.

ELLIE

(pointed)

It's better when it's hot.

NILES

Alright, Pickle. Settle down.

Violet stops the spoon halfway to her mouth. It's definitely not cool that he uses her pet name with his kids.

MAX

You were crazy late.

VIOLET

God. Yeah. Sorry. That was probably my fault. I got together with -

NILES

We stopped in a bar down the street for a drink. The one named after a dog. What's it called?

ELLIE

Brucey was on his way with the baby but I told him to take her home for a nap. So. It'll be a bit.

VIOLET

She's gorgeous, by the way. Absolutely stunning.

ELLIE

Fun fact. You're closer in age to my baby than you are to my father. Math is crazy, right?

NILES

Come on, now.

He shoots a look at Max.

MAX

I didn't say it.

VIOLET

No, Sugar. It's OK. We don't get to decide how they feel about this. Would you be thrilled if they were dating my dad?

She glances at Max.

VIOLET

Or mom?

She glances back at Max. Max takes her glasses off and palms her face. Ellie drops her fork.

ELLIE

Oh good god.

NILES

Hey. Hey hey hey. Heyyyyy.

Max and Ellie look at their dad.

NILES

It looks great in here. Expanding really worked out.

Everyone at the table - except Niles, whose already chill - takes a collective breath.

MAX

You really think so?

NILES

Yeah. Your mom would have loved it.

Ellie's ire fades a little.

ELLIE

Thank you. I've been telling her that for months but she never believes me.

MAX

You don't think she would have wanted it to have a little. I dunno. More?

NILES

Kiddo, wherever she is, she's beaming with pride. You can feel her everywhere in here. Especially in the food. Don't doubt it for a second.

The small family unit shares a moment. Violet respects it but clearly feels left out.

BLOOP. Ellie gets a text.

ELLIE

Oh oh! The baby's here.

She hops up.

MAX

Need a hand?

ELLIE

Yup yup.

She hops up.

VIOLET

Is there a bathroom back there?

ELLIE

Yup yup.

Violet hops up. She looks down at Niles.

VIOLET

You OK on your own, Sugar?

NILES

Yup yup.

The three women walk to the back of the cafe.

EXT. THE HP CAFE - NIGHT

Niles steps outside, a cigar between his teeth. He lights it up and absolutely relishes the first drag.

He strolls to the corner. A car pulls up to the curb by the gate to the back of the cafe.

PENNY drives it. She stops long enough for DUVALL to hop out. He's older. Still handsome. Still wearing all orange.

Niles does a double take. Penny pulls a U-Turn and drives off down the side street.

Niles walks toward Duvall.

INT. THE HP CAFE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Violet "fixes her face" in the mirror. It's a pretty elaborate process. Her makeup is laid on the sink.

She fishes around in her bag for more. Her eyes land on the engagement ring. She looks at her bare finger.

She chews her lower lip and looks over her shoulder at the door to the cafe.

INT. THE HP CAFE - NIGHT

Ellie and Max push through the double doors that lead to the office. Ellie pushes a stroller forward.

We don't see the baby. I mean. Who wants to cast a baby. Total hassle. Their eyes land on their table.

Niles isn't there. The look at each other. They know what his absence means instantly.

ELLIE

Of course.

She wheels the stroller around and walks right back through the double doors. Max stares at the empty table.

INT. THE HP CAFE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Violet inspects her work. She did a good job of using makeup to make it look like she's not wearing any makeup.

She holds up her hand and smiles at the engagement ring, snug on her finger. She walks out the door into -

INT. THE HP CAFE - BACK HALL

- and picks up some excitement as she moves to the double doors and pushes into the -

INT. THE HP CAFE - MAIN ROOM

- where Max sits at the table. Alone. She continues through the room to her seat, and plops down all giddy.

She folds her hands on the table. Max doesn't look at them.

VIOLET
Where's the baby?

SHUNK. Ellie pushes through the double doors with a bottle of wine and three glasses.

ELLIE
On her way home. All we had in the office was a Malbec. Hope that's OK.

VIOLET
Oh. Um. Sure. I don't know how much longer we can stay. Sugar. Niles. Your dad. Has a whole night planned.

Ellie sits, pops out the cork, and pours three VERY HEFTY glasses. She slides the fullest one in front of Violet.

ELLIE
Do you really call him "Sugar"?

VIOLET
Sometimes, I guess.

ELLIE
Don't...don't do that.

Violet eyes the three glasses.

VIOLET
Is he not drinking?

Max and Ellie share a look. BLOOP. Violet gets a text.

VIOLET
Oh. It's from your dad.

Violet's posture sags. Ellie nudges the glass closer to her.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

A small, intentionally shitty bar glows with the radiant light put out by young, hep-cat drinkers.

Niles and Duvall sit in a corner booth, by the jukebox. They're caught up in a bona-fide chinwag.

Niles's phone lights up on the table. He turns the ringer off and flips it over. Duvalls asks about the call.

Niles brushes off the question and holds up two fingers to the passing waitress.

Their chinwag continues.

CUT TO BLACK: