



*A film by Maria Finitzo*

# THE PASSION OF GRACE

film  
ARTS

## I was immediately drawn to Alice Munro's *Passion*

in 2006 when I first read the short story in the *Runaway* collection. Central to my attraction was the character of Grace, a smart, sexually curious girl, who longs for a better life than the one she is living and so escapes that life in pursuit of her passion – to be a whole and independent person. However, in the process of becoming who she really is, she incurs painful losses and dislocations: she causes irreparable harm. The rippling consequences of her action drive the narrative towards its surprising, yet inevitable conclusion. These are moments of fateful, irrevocable, dramatic action. Missteps, mistakes, misapprehensions, life-altering misjudgments – the very essence of what makes us human I immediately envisioned this story as a film with the character of Grace – a high intensity energy field, driving the narrative.

Thematically, THE PASSION OF GRACE grapples with the reality of settled love versus the feelings that come with passion, be it fantasy or real, the meaning of the question of life – is it worth living or not and most importantly, the transfiguring force of passion.

The year is 1961, the very beginning of the sexual revolution and political changes that will rock the world.



# Synopsis

## LOGLINE

Grace, a young woman abandoned by her single father when she was a child, grows up yearning for love and passion. When she gets a summer job waitressing at a lakeside resort she befriends a wealthy family and begins dating their youngest son, Paul. Only passion is missing between them and one night she goes off with Paul's older married brother, Neil, a choice that forever changes her life and the lives of those she loves when it sets in motion the inevitability of Neil's suicide.



## SYNOPSIS

A near death accident awakens in Grace, 70, a need to find meaning in a moment in her past when she crossed a line that made all the difference in her life. After fifty years she revisits the summer community where, at the age of eighteen, she'd met the Travers family and began dating their youngest son, Paul.

Although Paul believes he is in love with Grace, there is no passion between them. Her sexual desire and willingness to give herself to him, goes against his notion of the kind of woman he wants to marry. Grace is frustrated with Paul and his unwillingness to allow sexual passion between them. She becomes increasingly taken with Neil, Paul's older married half brother. He fascinates Grace. Although she barely knows him and they have never spoken, he is bold in the way he looks at her, stirring up fantasies in Grace about overpowering sexual passion.

As the summer passes Grace and Mrs. Travers, Paul's mother, become close friends. They share intimate life stories with each other, including their hopes and dreams about love and life. Mrs. Travers is the mother Grace never had and Grace is the young woman Mrs. Travers once was – smart, ambitious, adventurous. Grace realizes she wants to be a part of Paul's family more than she loves Paul. She knows that marriage to Paul, safe and unexciting, is a cage she could never endure. But to give him up would be to lose the family she has always wanted.

At the end of the summer at a family dinner a minor accident finally brings her together with Neil, who takes her off for what she believes will be a night of passion. Together, they embark on an odyssey into the countryside, leaving duty and propriety behind. Stopping along the way at bars to drink, Neil teaches Grace how to drive and teases her with the promise of passion when he casually licks her palm. However, the longed for night of sexual passion does not happen. Instead, they share a deeper connection – a vision of life's promise undercut by its emptiness.

The next morning when Neil drops her off at the resort, as they embrace he tells her he has left his mark on her and he is sorry for that. Later that day, Grace learns that Neil has killed himself in a car crash. When Paul comes to see her, he offers her one last opportunity to come back into his family. "Just tell me he made you do it. Just tell me you didn't want to go." Grace responds finally with complete honesty when she tells Paul, "I did want to go." A few days later, Mr. Travers pays her a visit, handing her a \$1,000 check. After imagining a gesture of refusal, Grace instead uses the money to give herself a new start in life.

THE PASSION OF GRACE is a story of a crucial moment in a young woman's life when for reasons that cannot be explained, she crosses a line, forever changing her life and risking all she holds dear.

THE PASSION OF GRACE will aspire to a similar cinematic aesthetic achieved in Jane Campion's *Bright Star*, the 2009 film based on the last three years of the life of poet John Keats and his romantic relationship with Fanny Brawne. In making *Bright Star*, Campion's goal was to "find the images in the poetry." Working closely with cinematographer Greig Fraser, the pair assembled their intimate and emotional portrait, relying on the natural light and air of their "interior/exterior studio" to do so.

Fraser took inspiration from the natural world using the changing seasons to highlight the emotional progression of the film. The light is warm and rich and yellow. It's the very perfect conception of summer. The gorgeous, natural lighting for the interior scenes were shot as organically as the passing weather.

To create the look of THE PASSION OF GRACE we have identified two gifted cinematographers whose cinematic eye will resonate with THE PASSION OF GRACE.

*The Look of*  
**THE**

# PASSION OF GRACE



## RACHEL MORRISON

Rachel has emerged as a refreshing young talent at the forefront of independent cinema, channeling each story's core emotion into arresting imagery. Her work has a haunting quality at times and a beautiful elegance at others. Morrison has lensed three Sundance premieres in the past three years; *Fruitvale Station*, starring Michael B. Jordan and Octavia Spencer, winner of both the Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize for Best Picture; *Sound of My Voice*, released by Fox Searchlight; and, *Tim and Eric's Billion Dollar Movie*, released by Magnolia. In 2012, she also saw *Any Day Now* premiere at Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the Audience Award for Best Picture. The film won eight other Audience Awards on the festival circuit before its November release. She has garnered numerous awards for her imagery, including an Outstanding Cinematography Emmy Nomination for her work on Showtime's *Riker's High*, a documentary about the high school within the Riker's Island prison system. Morrison has traversed the globe with an eye attuned to the beauty, sorrow and emotion of the shared human experience.



## LYLE VINCENT

Lyle Vincent dabbled in painting and fine art photography before heading to New York University's Tisch School of Art's directing program. In his first year at NYU his directing teacher, Boris Frumin, took notice of his work and said, "You're a cinematographer!" Inspired by Frumin, Lyle changed his focus to cinematography and went on to study with ASC members Sandy Sissel and Declan Quinn. "They helped me a great deal and they both spent a lot of time with me outside of class," he says. It paid off and Lyle won the 2006 ASC John A. Alonzo Heritage Award for student cinematography. Of the 2014 Sundance feature film hit *Agwahaan* lensed by Lyle the *Hollywood Reporter* says "...and the introspective mood is enhanced by the monochrome visuals and the exquisite use of the widescreen canvas of cinematographer Lyle Vincent." Of the same film Scott Feinburg said, "The visuals are what really make this movie great. While watching this film, I couldn't help but recall Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert* with the industrial setting and existential angst sort of hovering over the film. The black and white cinematography is breathtakingly beautiful, making each image leap off of the screen." His other Sundance film *Cooties*, starring Elijah Wood, was picked up by Lion's Gate and is being released in 2014. Lyle continues work as a cinematographer shooting commercials, music videos and narrative feature films.



# Grace's Island

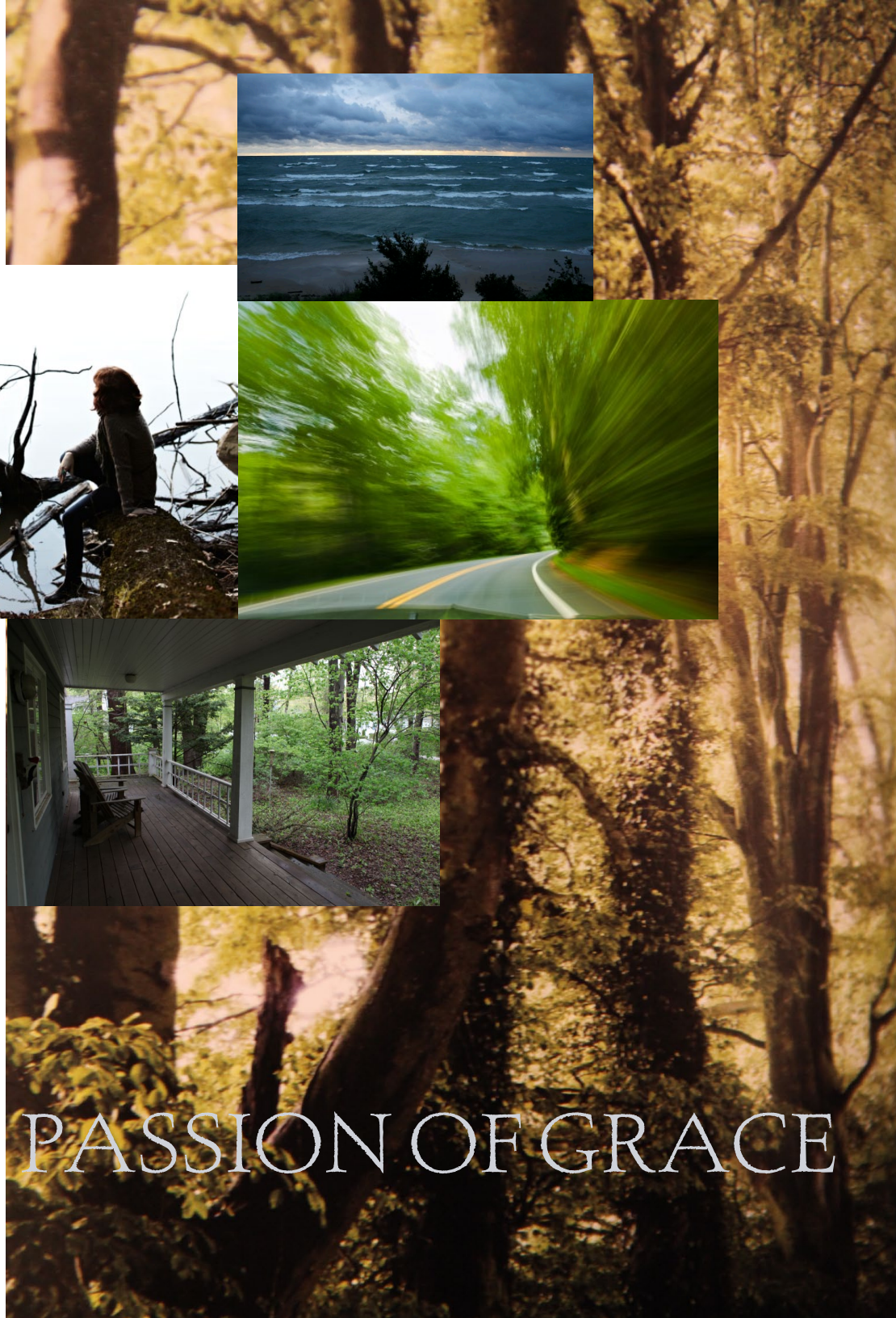
The story begins in the present with Grace, now in her 70's living out her life in her cottage on an island. This world is one of towering trees – maple, ash, white pines, deep forests cut by narrow winding roads. An occasional glimpse of bright blue water shining through the trees, hints of its isolation.

Grace's island is a place of afternoon showers and cool mornings blanketed with fog. The aesthetic is deep saturated color. There is solitude here, a place to escape, the demands of the unrelenting pace of the modern world...yet, not the unexpected emergence of the past.

*The ROAR of a car engine is heard seconds before a speeding car appears. Tires SCREECH as the car hits the curve. It is going too fast. Out of control. Startled by the sound, Grace turns back to witness the car heading right toward her mail box where only moments before she stood. She watches in horror as the car slams into the mailbox post, breaking it like a twig, sending the mail box sailing through the air.*

*A speeding car on a rain soaked road appears out of nowhere. Witnessing a crash summons back a memory leaving Grace no choice but to return to the place where her life was forever changed.*

*The World of*  
**THE PASSION OF GRACE**





## The Farm

When Grace arrives at her Aunt and Uncle's farm, it is 1949. Prosperity has yet to come to the heartland. The visual aesthetic of Grace's life on the farm will take its inspiration from the palette and elegant simplicity found in the paintings of Andrew Wyeth. Set in America's rural Midwest, the landscape, the capriciousness of the wind, sun and rain, the passing seasons set the stage for the yearning deep within Grace. Cornfields, silos, barns – weathered, splintered, browned. This is a place of austerity standing in sharp contrast to a young woman filled with desire and the hope for a different life found in far off horizons.





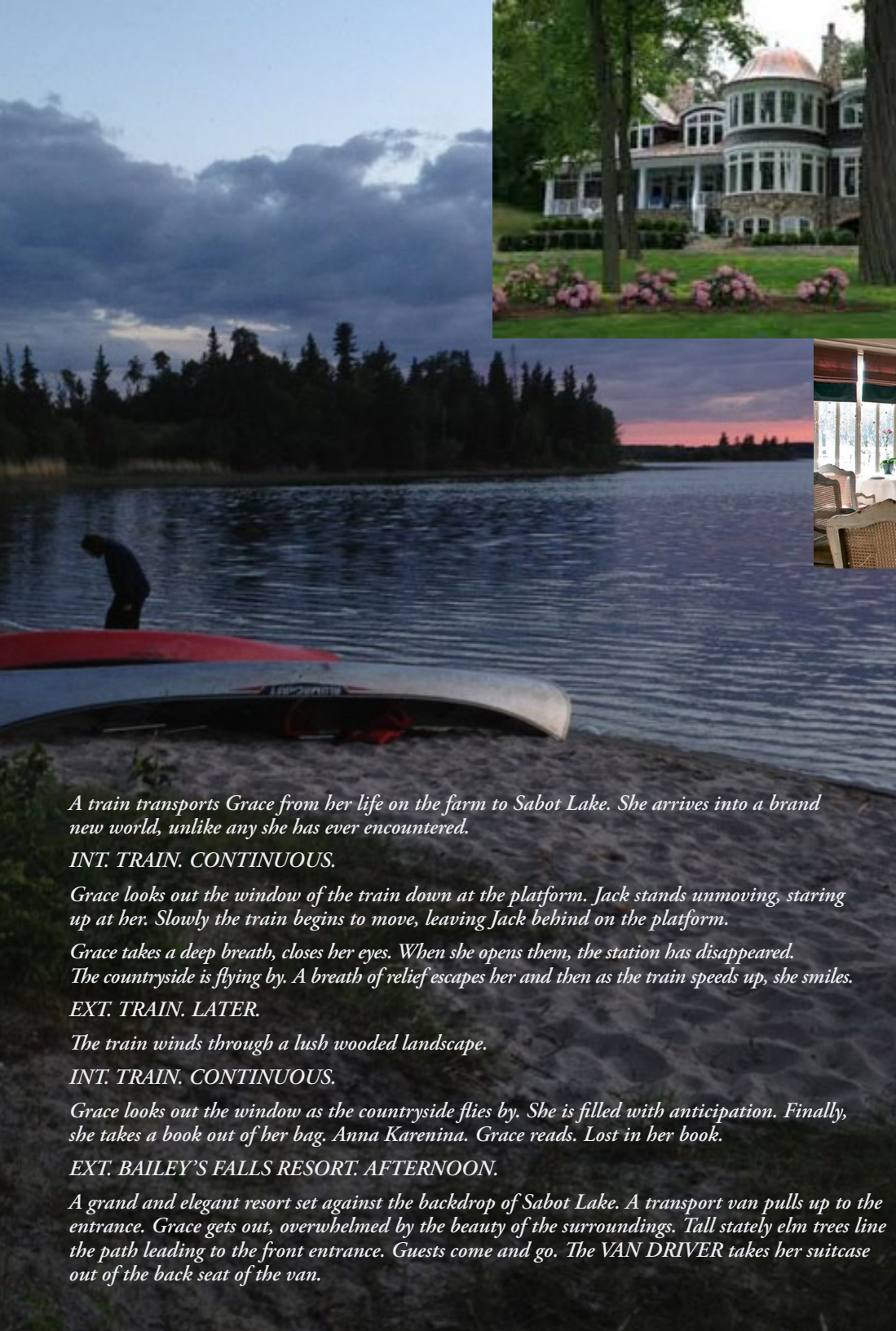
*Emotions play across her face. Shock. Surprise. Curious...nervous about her curiosity. She listens to their VOICES as she inches forward on her stomach to the opening to look out.*

*GRACE'S POV: Chris is skinny and tall, not quite a man. But Jack's body is athletic and fit. Grace can't take her eyes off of Jack. She suppresses a giggle. He dives into the water, surfacing with a gasp.*

## The Pond

Overgrown, unmanaged, wild, the pond is Grace's refuge from the limitations of her life on the farm and the place where the site of two young men swimming naked with glorious abandon awakens in Grace a longing for love and a curiosity for passion. Hidden in her tree house high above the ground, she writes, her imagination runs wild and everything seems possible.





## The Inn at Bailey's Falls & Sabot Lake

*A train transports Grace from her life on the farm to Sabot Lake. She arrives into a brand new world, unlike any she has ever encountered.*

*INT. TRAIN. CONTINUOUS.*

*Grace looks out the window of the train down at the platform. Jack stands unmoving, staring up at her. Slowly the train begins to move, leaving Jack behind on the platform.*

*Grace takes a deep breath, closes her eyes. When she opens them, the station has disappeared. The countryside is flying by. A breath of relief escapes her and then as the train speeds up, she smiles.*

*EXT. TRAIN. LATER.*

*The train winds through a lush wooded landscape.*

*INT. TRAIN. CONTINUOUS.*

*Grace looks out the window as the countryside flies by. She is filled with anticipation. Finally, she takes a book out of her bag. Anna Karenina. Grace reads. Lost in her book.*

*EXT. BAILEY'S FALLS RESORT. AFTERNOON.*

*A grand and elegant resort set against the backdrop of Sabot Lake. A transport van pulls up to the entrance. Grace gets out, overwhelmed by the beauty of the surroundings. Tall stately elm trees line the path leading to the front entrance. Guests come and go. The VAN DRIVER takes her suitcase out of the back seat of the van.*



*Janey comes running back to the table.*

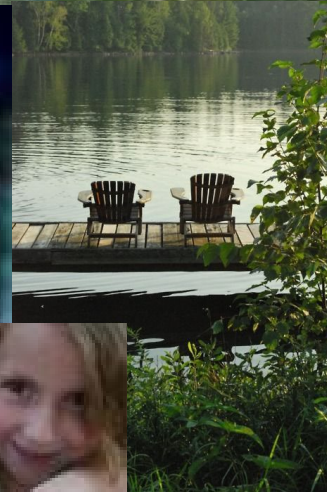
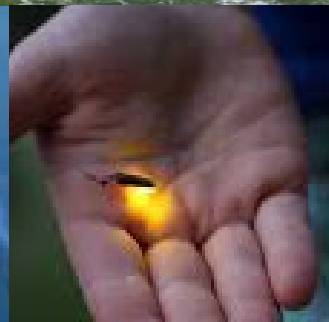
*JANEY*

*Grandma, we've caught a million fireflies.*

*Janey opens her hand to reveal  
a single firefly in her palm.*

*MRS. TRAVERS*

*Looks like you're going to need a jar.*



## The Travers' House

It was the first house of its kind that Grace had ever seen – one story high, the roof continuing without a break out over that veranda, on all sides – a style that makes you think of hot summers. It used to be possible to run from the veranda across the dusty end of the driveway, through a sandy, trampled patch of weeds and wild strawberries, and then jump – no, actually, wade – into the lake.

## Reviews of Finitzo's Script

# THE PASSION OF GRACE

*“Like the O. Henry award-winning masterwork on which it is based, Maria Finitzo’s THE PASSION OF GRACE is nuanced, quiet spoken, and strikingly beautiful. The coming of age story feels languid and nostalgic over much of its first two acts, but eroticism is always surging below its repressed surface, and this brilliant narrative turns in the moment when that passion cannot help but erupt. There are real, lasting, tragic consequences. Ms. Finitzo is going to make a beautiful and deeply moving film.”*

*And from*

### The Black List: Hollywood’s Source for the Best-Unproduced Screenplays

*“This seems like the kind of story that could really appeal to a select, sophisticated audience... literary and intellectual in tone. Given the strength of its characters and setting, it could draw viewers and critical acclaim as a feature film.”*

*“There is an elegant simplicity to the storytelling that allows small moments to shine through with impact. Grace’s conflicting desires – a yearning for passion and a yearning for belonging – set the stage for a compelling character journey. The themes of femininity and Grace’s unapologetic challenge of the gender norms of the time add dimension to an already promising romantic coming-of-age story.”*

*“The setting of Bailey’s Falls was a well-conceived “upstairs, downstairs” community, and the disparity between the resort staff and wealthy patrons created conflicting goals for the characters.”*

*“The characters are believable and nuanced. Grace’s complicated relationship with Jack, and Neil’s womanizing and sadness (which consequently makes him “the most interesting” to be around), paint the characters as complex human beings.”*

*“The dialogue is well written, and the character’s voices believable conveying their emotions and worldview setting the scope and stakes of the piece.”*

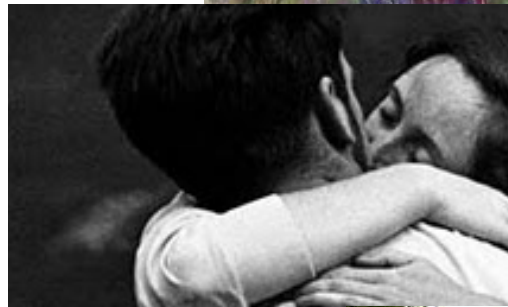
*“An especially well-developed world – the glamorous, yet fleeting (literally, with the changing of the seasons) summer resort setting simultaneously enchants and forebodes from the get-go. While beautiful, this world has the constant feeling that there is much lurking beneath the surface – like Neil’s alcoholism and Mrs. Travers’ illness.”*


*“These characters intrigue because the writer doesn’t take a stance on their moral standpoints; so much as these standpoints are simply presented and left to the audience to interpret. The result is a compelling and thought-provoking story.”*



*In her imagination, he was handsome, like Paul,  
Passionate, like Paul. Pleasurable physical intimacies followed.*

*But this was the thing that had not happened. In Paul's car, or out  
on the grass under the stars, she was willing. And Paul was ready,  
but not willing. He felt that it was his responsibility to protect her.  
And the ease with which she offered herself threw him off balance.*





Mouths, tongues, skin,  
bodies, banging  
bone on bone.

Inflammation. Passion.



*How strange that she'd thought of becoming one of them – a Travers. Marrying Paul. A kind of treachery, it would be. But not a treachery to be riding with Neil, because he wasn't fortunate – he knew some of the things that she did.*

*She had thought that it was touch. Mouths, tongues, skin, bodies, banging bone on bone. Inflammation. Passion. But that wasn't what she'd been working toward at all. She had seen deeper, deeper into him than she could ever have managed if they'd gone that way.*

## About the Director | Screenwriter

### MARIA FINITZO

Maria Finitzo is a two-time Peabody Award-winning social issue documentary filmmaker whose 26 years as a documentary filmmaker has resulted in a body of work that has won every major broadcast award and has been screened in festivals and theaters around the world. Her films are novelistic in their structure, providing multiple points of connection for an audience. She allows the narrative arc of her character's story to evolve, colliding with other subjects from the film, creating a complex, nuanced story that serves as a vehicle to deepen our understanding of society through everyday human drama.

A coming of age story that reveals the resilience of adolescent girls (*5 Girls*), a father determined to heal his daughter after a tragic accident (*Mapping Stem Cell Research: Terra Incognita*), a young man, alone in the world trying to find his way (*With No Direction Home*), a soccer coach committed to teaching his players – Hispanic girls – about winning in life (*In the Game*), and a community deep in the Amazon trying to navigate the rocky shoals of both hope and despair in a country in the midst of political transition (*Living Revolution*), are films that explore different realms of storytelling by investigating the important social issues of the day.

Finitzo's films have tackled a variety of subjects from the controversial science of stem cell research and the complex questions surrounding the command and control of nuclear weapons to the psychology of adolescent girls, each film demonstrating a depth and breadth of knowledge and

expertise. She is a long time associate of the award-winning documentary company, Kartemquin Films, one of the oldest and most respected social issue documentary film companies in the country. It is here that she learned her craft as a filmmaker.

Her interest in fiction filmmaking is a natural evolution of her commitment to exploring different realms of storytelling. She produced and directed *Life Lessons* her first fiction short film based on her original screenplay. *Life Lessons* screened in competition at the New York International Shorts Festival, the LA Shorts Festival, the Gene Siskel Film Theater, the Taos Shortz Fest, the Los Angeles International Women's Film Festival and the Dances with Films Festival.





## CONTACT INFORMATION

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