

An abstract painting of a sailboat, focusing on the textures and colors of the sails and hull. The sails are depicted with various shades of beige, tan, and brown, showing signs of wear and weathering. The hull is a darker, more textured brown. The background is a mix of light and dark tones, suggesting a sky and water. The overall style is painterly and expressive.

A film by Maria Finitzo

A TASTE OF LIFE

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, *A TASTE OF LIFE* 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

In 1961, an ambitious young woman takes a job at a luxury resort to help pay for college, but her future is thrown into question when she gets entangled with a pair of wealthy brothers.

SYNOPSIS

It's 1961, and Grace Kane has just graduated from her rural high school at the top of her class. Abandoned by her father at the age of eight and raised on her aunt and uncle's farm, Grace is independent, curious, and an impassioned reader – qualities that set her apart in this rather provincial environment. Rather than get trapped by marriage and motherhood like so many young women of her time and place, Grace is determined to go to college and become a writer with a worldly, adventurous life. But education and independence require money, and Grace's estranged father has broken his promise to pay her way.

Opportunity comes in the form of a summer job at Bailey's Falls Resort, a luxury vacation spot in the affluent community of Sabot Lake. On her very first night as a waitress, Grace captures the attention of two brothers from a wealthy local family who are as different as can be. Paul is handsome, decent, and traditional, and wants Grace to be his wife. The older Neil is roguish, dangerously attractive, and already married – and what he wants from Grace is a bit harder to figure out.

With Paul as her steady boyfriend, Grace is welcomed into a world of comfort and familial warmth that she missed out on as a child, and that provides a welcome distraction from her own financial insecurity. But as her intellectual ambitions and sexual desires bump up against Paul's old-fashioned ideas about women, Grace finds herself drawn increasingly towards Neil – who seems to see her for who she really is and may offer what she truly wants. Even though, there's no future with Neil, she can't quite bear to break it off with Paul and sever ties with the family she has grown to love, and the possibility their money represents.

As the summer unfolds amid a haze of new friends, parties, writing, and romantic possibility, Grace must weigh her desire for security against the urgency of her passions. In a culture on the cusp of great change, the progressive ideas Grace believes in, frequently bump up against the realities of how women are still expected to think and behave. The deeper she gets with Paul, who everyone agrees is a great catch, the more she finds herself frustrated, insecure, and longing for a way out – and wondering if that way out might be Neil.

As her relationship with Paul deteriorates and Neil's own behavior becomes more and more erratic, the situation reaches a breaking point – and in trying to take action, Grace makes a choice with tragic consequences that will forever change her life and the lives of those she loves.



A TASTE OF LIFE 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.

The Look of

A TASTE OF LIFE





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.



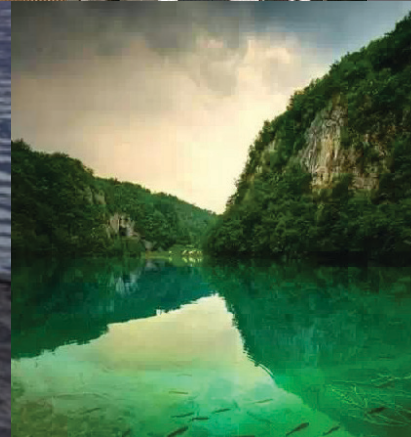
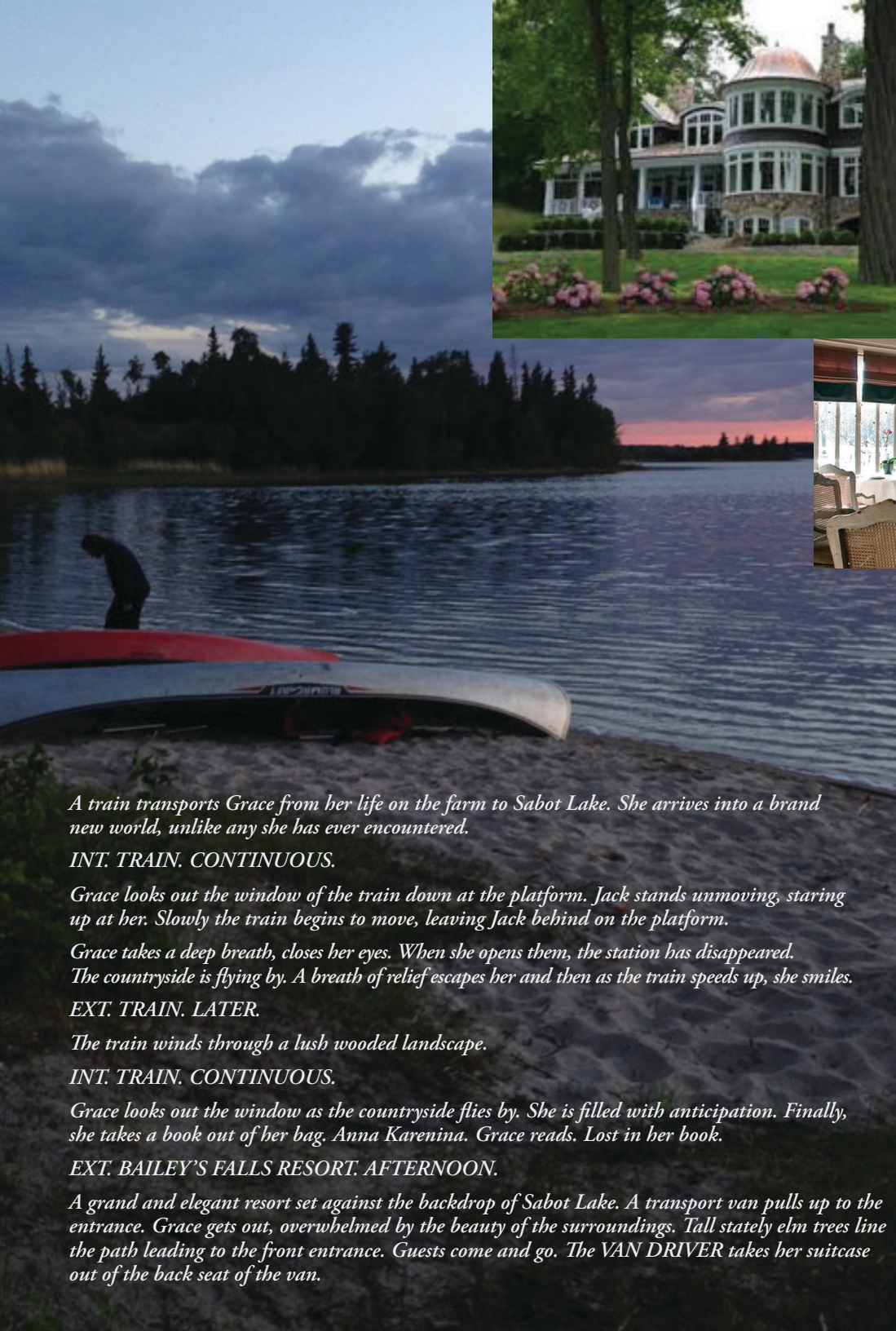
Emotions play across her face. Shock. Surprise. Curious...nervous about her curiosity. She listens to their VOICES as she inches forward on her stomach to the opening to look out.

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.

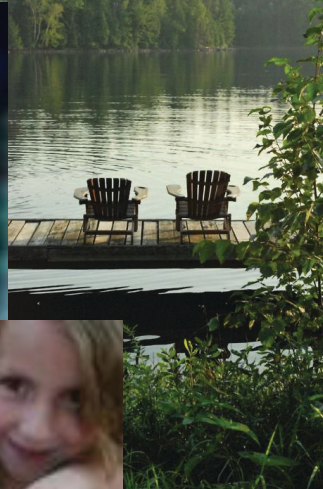
JANEY

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

A TASTE OF LIFE

"Like the O. Henry award-winning masterwork on which it is based, Maria Finitzo's A TASTE OF LIFE 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."

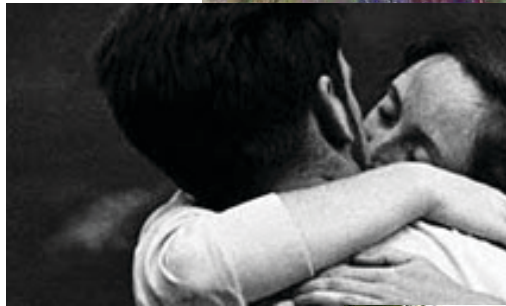
"The dialogue is well written, and the character's voices believable conveying their emotions and worldview setting the scope and stakes of the piece."


"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.





About the Producer

STEVEN A. JONES

Steven A. Jones grew up in Brooklyn, New York and was educated at The Institute of Design at The Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Design.

He spent 10 years as a director of animated TV commercials for clients such as Cap'n Crunch and McDonalds before teaming up with director John McNaughton to produce his first feature film, the controversial *Henry – Portrait of a Serial Killer*, which was nominated for six Independent Spirit awards.

Since then Jones has produced films including *Mad Dog and Glory*, *Normal Life*, *Wild Things*, *Drunkboat*, *The Promotion*, *The Merry Gentleman*, and the recently completed *The Harvest*.

His films have been featured at film festivals including: Cannes, Telluride, Sundance, SXSW, Tribeca, Turin, Locarno, Chicago International, and others.

Steve is Producer in Residence at DePaul University in the School of Cinematic Arts.

He also directs the background video content, music videos, and documentary material for the band Styx.



CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about the Company or the Project, or to discuss ways to get involved in the development, financing or production of the project, contact:

Maria Finitzo

FilmArts, LLC

mfinitzo@gmail.com

<http://filmartsproductions.com>