

“Lines to Rhyme”
A Screenplay by Karen Rustad

Opening credits:

In Bryn’s dorm room. Sits in front of a Word document, blinking cursor

*“Where Northeastern Europe falls in love with Jem’s Paradise
Where Sati dumps Jesus and marries the Anti-Christ
Where teenagers are frenching in Sault Ste. Marie
Where Penelope is dancing and Antigone is free...
...we’ve still got...”*

*“Green River” plays faintly in background. Bryn looks up, like she could almost hear it.
Poster on wall: “Pink Parapet Productions presents...” (w/ logo)
She slowly types, “Lines to Rhyme”
Shakes her head, deletes it.*

* * *

*Bryn sits in front of piano singing and playing a verse
Stops at solo—shades of “Just Can’t Last” solo in background
Starts trying to improvise, messes up
Plays same thing over again*

MOLLY: I’m sorry... The music’s lovely, but... could you play something different?

BRYN: Oh, sorry, sure...

Short piano interlude

* * *

Bryn in her room doing makeup, changing clothes, picking out jewelry... half hour passes

ANDREA: I thought you and Kyle were just friends.

BRYN: We are!

ANDREA: You’re flipping out like it was a date...

BRYN: I am not flipping out... I’m just not going to the movies in sweats, that’s all!

ANDREA: It’s nothing to be ashamed of. Kyle’s a cute guy. And you get along with him really well.

BRYN: Of course we get along. We’ve been friends since high school.

ANDREA: I mean, like, chemistry.

BRYN: *Warning look, then resigned.* You’re not the first to say that...

* * *

High school montage!! Whoop!

In high school:

BILL: “Will you go to Morp with me?” Oh—I’d love to, Bryn.

BRYN: Glad to hear it.

BILL: If you don’t mind me asking, I thought you and Kyle were going out!

BRYN: *Legitimately surprised.* Oh—no, no! We’re just friends!

Lunch:

SHAINA: You guys are dating, right?

Pool party:

KATY: You and Kyle would make a really cute couple.

Send-off party:

DESIREE: You two totally have chemistry!

* * *

Back to previous scene:

BRYN: But I don't like him in that way.

* * *

Kyle and Bryn at the movies—Rose Hills? Friday Night Movie Guys? Movie within a movie: a Frisbee action epic.

A couple nearby is vigorously making out. Bryn looks awkward, Kyle appears amused.

* * *

Walking back to Scripps on Elm Tree Lawn:

KYLE: The ending seemed kind of contrived. Like, the one thing I find annoying about mainstream theatre is their insistence on ending at some definitive point. "And they lived happily ever after"—*their swinging hands touch briefly--* or what have you. *Bryn looks up.* I mean—*Kyle continues talking to her--* life isn't like that at all. The characters in the movie will still have to go to school the next day. They'll get older, sprain an ankle or something, stop playing Frisbee. Maybe Jordan will get married and have a bunch of kids. Perhaps Bailey will someday run for president. Their stories go way beyond the scope of the movie, yet the moviemakers seem to act like none of that reality exists. They make it seem so dramatic, like everything important in those kids' lives was completed in a high school Frisbee game.

BRYN: Well, you couldn't make a movie out of people's whole lifetimes. It'd take too long and get boring.

KYLE: Oh, I agree. I just think the whole idea of a movie script ending is kinda artificial. Like, in the really old days, myths **would** cover the hero's whole life. Individual lives have a definite beginning—people are born—and a definite end—people die—so that whole story structure made sense. Today's stories don't have that attention span, so they try to impose that definiteness onto a much smaller scale. Seems kind of absurd to me.

BRYN: I think you're making far too big a deal about this.

KYLE: Well, I think you don't pay enough attention.

BRYN: Well, I think you're a dumbface.

KYLE: Bah.

BRYN: Well, it appears that we have made it back to Frankel without getting mugged.

KYLE: Indeed.

BRYN: Thank you again for walking me home. You didn't need to.

KYLE: It's no big deal. *Pause.* Well, I guess I'll head back to Mudd. Hopefully I won't get mugged on the way.

BRYN: Hey, I'll walk you home!

KYLE: *Laughs.* We'd be walking together all night!

BRYN: So? *Realizes what she has said.* So—yeah. Goodnight.

KYLE: *Hasn't noticed anything out of the ordinary.* 'Night, Bryn.

* * *

In her dorm room.

ANDREA: So....how was it...?

BRYN: I'm a-gonna die...

ANDREA: What happened?

BRYN: Nothing... I think enough people have been asking whether or not I like Kyle that it's become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

ANDREA: Mm.

Bryn checks her AIM.

IRSHAD397: Sooooo, r u and kyle datign yet??

BRYN: Argh!! *Quits the program.*

ANDREA: What?

BRYN: My friends are such wonderful, caring, supportive human beings and they need to shut up!

Bryn and some other students in a Core classroom:

PROF 1: Quiet, quiet, you guys. Now, the midterm is tomorrow, so here's the class period where we integrate everything we've learned so far into one big story...

Bryn reading late at night in study room, pored over textbook.

You have feudalism leading into the Enlightenment leading to the West's postmodern critique of itself.

Colonialism montage: Boston tea party, map, "Project for a New American Century"

You have the United States beginning as a colony, only to gain independence and colonize other nations itself. Now the US is the most powerful country in the world, and even though most colonial states have gained their independence by now, we still see them dominated by Western neocolonialism.

Bryn jerks back a bit from sleep

Fade out: All of history can be made into one, long, fascinating story. It's your job to construct it.

Dream sequence: Smith and Mercantilism, French Revolution, Cold War, something else...

Alarm clock sequence: Close up, farther away, sound outside-- someone walking by looks up, whole room (empty), sound outside—same person walking back looks up

Bryn asleep with book in study room. Cell alarm goes off—on first beep, reacts violently. Shuts off alarm, looks at clock slowly, panic reaction, runs off. Silence. Pause. Runs back, grabs book and bag, runs off.

* * *

In a classroom, with slideshow showing some watery Impressionist painting

PROF 2: At first, art critics called Impressionist paintings "unfinished" because they were so light and undefined. Most of the art at the time was very dark and detailed. Light washes were merely a pre-painting step. Impressionist art, however, was founded on the idea of these washes—painting with

quick strokes to capture the moment and show the effects of light on the subject.

Next slide: several haystack paintings.

Here we see Monet's haystacks. The subject is the same for all of the paintings, yet each piece is significantly different. If it were not for the Impressionist movement, we would have never understood nearly so well the subtle effect of light on a painting.

Hand drawing portrait—fast-forward, in reverse

Even though their contemporaries thought these paintings were "unfinished," we now view them unanimously as great art. Nowadays we see some artists pressing this question even further, splashing only a few strokes or even leaving the canvas blank, asking: what does it mean for a work to be "finished"?

Bryn at piano, with laptop on archive.org page. Records some tidbits, uploads it, shot of the webpage she created. Still not satisfied. Group of students walks by, all dressed up.

GROUP: Party! Party! Party! Etcetera.

BRYN: Party?

STUDENT: Party! *Gestures in a direction.*

In Bryn's room:

BRYN: Party!

ANDREA: *Slaving over homework, disappointed.* Party...

In Lizzie's room, where anime is being watched:

BRYN: Party!

LIZZIE: *Gestures toward screen.* Party!!

Bryn on phone:

BRYN: Party?

Kyle on phone:

KYLE: Party!

Bryn puts down phone, holds shirt reading "PARTY" to self:

BRYN: *Grinning.* Party!

Bryn and Kyle dancing at a party. The crowd thickens, and they are pushed closer and closer together. Shot of their faces near one another.

Bryn's face—eyes blink shut:

Kyle and Bryn reach for one another in unison, start kissing on the dance floor

Interrupted with Bryn's eyes blinking open:

They're dancing as before.

BRYN: (shouting over music) I'm going to take a break.

KYLE: Great? This party's fantastic!

BRYN: No, I'm taking a break!

KYLE: Oh, okay.

Bryn wades through a sea of people to the drinking fountain, somewhat bewildered.

Cut to: Bryn ambling back and forth talking on a cell phone.

BRYN: No, I haven't drank yet. Beer's gross, dude. *Pause.* Well, I dunno. It might be nice to get drunk just once. Then you would have an excuse to do stupid things, y'know? *Pause.* I mean, with some things you can't change the past. You have to be careful. But with other things—you could be like,

“I didn’t mean that, I was drunk.” Intoxication could be like a giant “Undo” button.

Cut to Bryn and Kyle walking from the party—reverse, then to forward motion?

BRYN: Want to come up to my room and hang out?

KYLE: Thanks, but I have homework to do.

BRYN: Oh.

KYLE: Well, then I guess I’d better take care of that.

BRYN: Yeah.

KYLE: Well, g’night.

BRYN: Goodnight.

Lots of awkward pauses throughout the above. Kyle walks away. Bryn pauses, then turns and enters the dorm.

PROF 3: Here we see an instance of two people following typical sexual roles. The female may only make the subtlest of suggestions of possible romantic interest. It is exclusively the male’s job to make the first move.

Bryn sees the piano of doom. Fantastic piano music plays in background. Bryn’s fingers work in temptation and frustration. Sighs, returns to room.

BRYN: Do you ever get the feeling that you’re not accomplishing anything with your life?

ANDREA: Oh, Bryn, you’re not supposed to be saying things like that until you start having a desk job or something!

BRYN: Yeah, well... Right now I have the free time to compose music. I thought college would be my most productive period ever. Yet I have hardly completed a new thing since I got here. I’m swimming in a fishbowl, going over the same ground again and again. I get ideas for new songs and stuff, but I’m never able to get them past the second verse. I don’t think I’ve ever had writer’s block for this long before. Is it that I lack discipline? Or did I leave my creativity at home?

ANDREA: Maybe you’re still adjusting. College is a big transition from high school, especially when you move thousands of miles away from home. You’ve been busy with homework and that cyberculture essay. It’s a lot to get used to.

BRYN: I suppose. I just—I know I’m busy with other stuff, but, this close to LA, you can’t help but dream of becoming a Real Musician. Of leaving something more behind than just a half page of scribbled lines.

ANDREA: Oh... Do you want to be a rock star?

BRYN: Yeah.

ANDREA: I wanted to be a rock star when I was little. Nah, I never wanted to be one. It was just my dream.

BRYN: What’s the difference?

ANDREA: Well, like—what I’ve heard of your music is excellent. Way better than anything I ever did. If you wrote a few more songs, you could totally be a professional musician if you wanted. But is that really what you want? You’d probably have to drop out of school to tour the country. Months on the road and getting no sleep. You’d finish one album and your fans would be begging for more. Once you’re famous, once you’re a brand name,

you're expected to produce. Instead of writing freely, you'd be forced to suck the songs out of yourself, until you have nothing genuine left to give. Look at all the worn-out crap on the radio these days. You'd probably be forgotten by age 30. The rock star life has its allure, of course. If that's what's most important to you, do it. But you're going to have to make that choice... Of course you have writer's block, with the stress you're putting on yourself!

Meanwhile, Rock Star montage:

Fatigue while driving

CDs being snatched off shelf

Argument w/ agent

Bryn writing late at night furiously

Near-empty lounge scene

BRYN: Yeah.

* * *

Meditation in Fowler Garden:

Images repeated from Rock Star montage.

Interspersed with images of winning Pulitzers, giving speeches, earning fellowships.

BRYN: (voice-over) Is this what I want for my life?

Kyle keeps showing up in thought-images.

BRYN: Kyle, go away.

Steps off virtual stage after speech and falls into Kyle's arms. Clips of kissing imagery from party scene.

BRYN: (voice-over) Do I really want that to happen?

Relationship montage:

Romanticness, long phone calls, late assignments, few other friends, romance dying down, interest in other guys, jealousy, break-up, loneliness

BRYN: What I really need right now is a good friend.

Music montage:

Bryn singing at the piano, writing productively on staff paper, performing at Motley

BRYN: (voice-over) I have no idea what's going to happen over the next four years. What I'll major in, whom I'll love, how I'll live. But I have a clue of what I want. That's good enough for now.

* * *

Credits interspersed with clips from Bryn's college life:

Conversation on the couches at Mudd

Waiting in line at dining hall

Playing basketball

Double dating with Mike and Kyle and Lizzie

Breaking up with Mike

Studying for LSATs in library

Applauding, cheering, at the end of a play