

Pleasure Head

NO MEMO

HAPPYTHANKYOUMOREPLEASE

by

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In the darkness, a ringing phone...

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

The camera slowly pans around a one-bedroom apartment. By the size of it, we can only assume we're in New York. We see bowls of half-eaten cereal, empty beer bottles, clothes on the floor, finished-in-pen crossword puzzles, a laptop, a typed manuscript on a table, etc.

The camera then lands on two shirts lying on the sofa, one striped, the other solid. A hand reaches in and picks up the solid shirt.

The phone finally stops ringing as the answering machine picks up and we hear:

ANNIE (V.O.)

Sammy boy, big day. It's gonna be great.

A full-length mirror is propped against a wall. In it, we see SAM WEXLER, 29, stuffing his arms into the shirt.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Will you call me after your meeting? I need you to talk me down. Hey, you're gonna wear the striped shirt, right?

Sam quickly rips off the solid shirt and grabs the striped one, begins putting it on.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Uch, this happens every time I host a party. There's always this moment beforehand when I prepare myself to learn I'm not nearly as well-liked as I thought I was.

Sam has finished buttoning his shirt and leaves frame. We stay on the mirror.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And you've gotta admit this is weird, Sam. I'm having a weird party. Tuck, tuck. Don't forget to tuck.

Sam pops back into frame and tucks in his shirt.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

These people can't know you normally dress like a fourteen year-old. Okay, you're probably gone by now.

Sam looks down at his watch. He's late. We see him dash into the bathroom, hear him gargling some mouthwash.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Speaking of fourteen year-olds, Spencer Gibson's gonna be there - Mr. Hot Floppy-Hair East Coast Boarding School Man - and he makes me go weak in the knees. Who's never left Junior High? Show of hands...

Sam races out of the bathroom, dialing his cell phone. He grabs his keys and throws his bag over his shoulder.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Wow, huge day for you, making it all about me. I'm so good at that-- Ooh, look, you're calling me.

She hangs up. We can faintly hear Annie on the other line as Sam walks out the door.

SAM

Hey.

ANNIE (V.O.)

How do you look?

SAM

National Book Award-Winning.

Door slams.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Sam tears down the stairs, fast.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Good boy. Will you come early tonight? I'm convinced no one's gonna show.

SAM

You're wrong, but I'll be there early.

ANNIE (V.O.)

When?

SAM

First thing.

ANNIE (V.O.)

God, I fucking love you. Now go get your bad self published.

SAM

Done.

ANNIE (V.O.)

And remember: You're the voice of our generation.

Sam stops cold right at the front door. Silence.

SAM

That's a lot of pressure.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Sorry.

SAM

Okay. See you tonight.

He hangs up and bursts out the front door. The sunlight is blinding and beautiful. Sam Wexler's day has begun.

MAIN TITLES.

GREAT SONG.

Throughout, we see various images of our characters:

--Sam winding his way through the city streets, a spring in his step. He's feeling good.

--MARY CATHERINE stacking brushes in an art store, lost in a pleasant memory: She and CHARLIE making love in the morning light.

--A young, beautiful, hairless woman, ANNIE, putting a turban/wrap on her head in the mirror. It's clear from her proficiency she's done this hundreds of times.

EXT. STREET - DAY - LATER

Sam has picked up the pace a bit. Suddenly, he notices a STRIKING GIRL emerge from the subway carrying a ton of bags. She walks towards him. Time stops a bit, in the way it does when beautiful women are drawing near. She smiles at Sam as she approaches.

When they are face to face, they play a tiny game of "Who's-Gonna-Go-Which-Way?" Finally, they navigate things and Sam turns to watch her go. She takes a left into a bar. Sam jogs a few steps back to catch the name of the bar. He then heads down into the subway.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Sam looks down at his watch, taps his foot. He glances around and notices an OVERWEIGHT BLACK WOMAN. She is surrounded by a gaggle of children, to whom she pays little attention. One of the boys is trying to take a piece of candy from one of the girls.

GIRL
(pushing him off)
Stop!!

He doesn't. He grabs for the candy and she yanks it away. Little pieces spill out all over the train and she knocks into her mother's leg.

MOTHER
Sitcho ass down.

She grabs the girl hard by the arm and pulls her down to a seat. The girl rubs her arm. The boy collects random pieces of the candy and stealthily tosses them at the girl. The mother does nothing.

Sam notices another SMALL BLACK CHILD (6) with them. He has thousand year-old eyes and is calmly staring out the window. He and Sam notice each other. The boy subtly tips his chin up at him ("What's up?") Sam tips his chin back. The boy then resumes staring out the window.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY - LATER

A voice announces the next stop. The mother gathers her things, separates the still warring boy and girl, and waits for the train to pull into the station.

Sam notices the other boy still seated and staring out the window. The train stops and the mother gets off. The kids file out behind her. The boy does not. Sam starts to grow a little concerned.

We hear the voice announce the next stop. People file into the train. Still the boy does not move. We see the mother and the kids get swallowed by the sea of commuters on the train platform.

Suddenly, the boy races toward the exit. A crush of people entering the train block his way. He can't get through, but it doesn't look like he's trying that hard. The doors close. Sam pops out of his seat and runs toward the boy as the train begins to move.

SAM

Hey. What are you doing? They'll help you in there.

The boy shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

What, are you wanted for something?

Nothing. Sam has no idea what to do.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, someone has to... I can't-- I gotta leave you here, dude. I don't know what else to do with you.

The boy looks devastated. Sam gets nearer to him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you know your address?

The boy shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

What neighborhood do you live in?

(the boy shrugs)

You don't know? Is it in Manhattan?

(beat)

Brooklyn, Queens...? You really don't know where you live?

(no answer)

What's your name?

The boy stares at Sam but says nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)

My name's Sam.

(beat, impatient)

It's not good to talk to strangers, I know, but I'm clearly a good... citizen or something. I'm trying to help you.

(beat)

You not gonna tell me your name?

Nope. Sam looks at his watch.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fuck.

(to the kid)

Don't swear.

He sees some people getting out of a taxi. Decision time. What does he do? He looks down at the boy.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Sam hops in the taxi.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy is walking away from the station. The cab pulls up next to him. The door opens. Beat. The boy gets in.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY

Sam and the boy get off the elevator at a fairly swank publishing house and approach the receptionist.

SAM

Hi, I have a meeting with Paul Gertmanian.

RECEPTIONIST

Your name?

SAM

Sam Wexler.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY - LATER

They sit, waiting. Sam is clearly nervous. Suddenly, he furiously untucks his shirt. He then pops up and goes to the receptionist.

SAM

Hey. When I go in there would you mind keeping an eye on him?

The receptionist looks at the boy on the couch.

RECEPTIONIST

What's his name?

Sam is at a loss.

SAM

Ask him. He likes to chat.

Her phone rings.

INT. PAUL GERTMANIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam sits across from PAUL GERTMANIAN. Two other EDITORS sit in the room staring at Sam. A manuscript rests on Paul's desk. The door is open.

PAUL

Susan speaks very highly of you.

SAM

I speak very highly of Susan.

PAUL

Mmm. So... We like this. We do. A fantastic start. We think you're good. But first. Answer me this: How good do you think you are?

(Sam is tongue-tied)

Let me put it this way: You're sitting where I'm sitting.

(holds up the manuscript)

Do you buy this?

(then)

Come on, we don't know much about you, beyond these fifty pages. What kind of writer are you going to be?

(beat)

Seriously. Help me out. You have my job, do you write the kid a fat check and tell him to finish?

SAM

I... really couldn't say. I write books, I don't publish them. It's like asking an architect to speculate on real estate.

PAUL

Cute. The correct answer was 'yes.'
Come on, Sam, get a little cocky.

Suddenly, Sam sees the boy, unaccompanied, walk past the open office door. Paul and the other editors do not see him. Sam doesn't know what to do.

PAUL (CONT'D)

We want to get this book out of you.

(leaning in)

Do you have this book in you?

(Sam is frozen)

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Sam, I'm going to get a bit crude about this: Do you have any idea how much it takes to publish and market a first novel?

Sam leaps up out of his chair.

SAM

Excuse me for one second.

He rushes out of the office.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam calls after the boy.

SAM

Hey.

The boy turns around.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

The boy points down the hallway. Sam goes to him.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam and the boy find the men's bathroom. The boy looks up at Sam.

SAM

Go ahead. I'll wait for you here.

The boy goes in.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

We see Sam tearing around the corner and racing towards Paul's office. He pops his head in.

SAM

Sorry about this. Be back in one sec.

He goes. Paul is confused.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is impatiently waiting. Finally, he opens the door just as the boy is coming out.

SAM

You good?

The boy nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's go.

They head back towards the lobby, passing Paul's office. Paul notices Sam is with a small black child. How odd.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They reach the lobby. The receptionist is gone. A creepy-looking OLDER MAN sits holding a manuscript. He smiles at the boy. Sam doesn't like this one bit.

INT. PAUL GERTMANIAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul and the editors are waiting, impatiently. Finally, Sam appears at the door, with the boy. He places the boy in a chair by the door and retakes his seat. Beat.

SAM

Yes.

PAUL

Hmm?

SAM

I'd write the kid a fat check.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

Sam and the boy are waiting for the elevator. Sam looks disappointed. The elevator arrives and they step in. Just as the doors are closing, we hear the receptionist:

RECEPTIONIST

Bye, Rasheen.

RASHEEN

Bye.

Sam turns to him as the doors close.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - ELEVATOR - DAY

Sam's looking up at the floor numbers as they descend.

SAM

What kind of a name is Rasheen?

No answer.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna call you Mean Green Rasheen.
Would you like that?

RASHEEN

No.

Ding. Elevator doors open. They leave.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam walks fast. Rasheen struggles to keep up.

RASHEEN

Where are we going?

SAM

Toy store.

RASHEEN

(thrilled)

Really?

SAM

No. We're going back to my place where
there's a phone book so I can call
whoever the hell it is I call and we can
get you back home.

Rasheen stops walking. Sam turns back to him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dude, come on.

(beat)

Come on.

Suddenly, Rasheen turns and runs, fast, in the opposite
direction. Great. Sam chases after him. It's not easy.
The kid has some speed. Finally he catches up to him.
Rasheen has slowed to a jog, and Sam jogs alongside him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Not cool, dude. Not cool.

They jog. Sam is breathing pretty hard.

SAM (CONT'D)

Could we stop running? I'm almost thirty.

They stop running.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look, you're obviously having some family issues. But whatever, it's childhood, it ends.

Rasheen looks at him like he's insane.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. That piss you took might have seriously damaged my writing career.

(deep breath)

Now, come on, it's time to get you home. Your mom's probably worried sick about you.

RASHEEN

(quietly)

She's not my mom.

SAM

What?

Rasheen says nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)

That woman on the train, that wasn't your mom?

Rasheen shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

Were those your brothers and sisters?

Again, he shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's your mom?

(he shrugs)

So you were just staying with that woman?

(beat)

Were you living with that woman?

(he nods his head)

Like in foster care?

Rasheen says nothing. Beat. Sam realizes something.

SAM (CONT'D)

Did you mean to stay on that train?

He gets no answer. Rasheen is just staring up at him, something both helpless and imploring in his eyes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam and Rasheen walk by the bar where Sam saw the girl earlier. They pass the large front window. Sam looks in but doesn't break his stride.

INT. BAR - DAY

We see the girl seated at the bar, wearing headphones and studying some sheet music. From inside, we see the large front window that Sam and Rasheen just passed. Suddenly, we see Sam lightly jog back a few steps. He grabs another short look at the girl, then jogs off. The girl looks up at the window. He's gone.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam stands by the door of the bar and looks down at Rasheen.

SAM

Don't move.

INT. BAR - DAY

Sam walks in. The girl looks up at him.

SAM

Hey... You guys open?

STRIKING GIRL

Not yet.

SAM

Cool.

Sam has no idea what to say.

SAM (CONT'D)

You work here?

STRIKING GIRL

Yep.

SAM

Uh-huh.

(beat)

Hi.

STRIKING GIRL

Hi.

Sam doesn't move. Suddenly, the door opens and in walks Rasheen. The girl smiles at him. Sam shoots him a look: "This was not our plan."

STRIKING GIRL (CONT'D)

Who's this?

SAM

Oh, this is... my little brother. Not my actual brother, but I'm his Big Brother, like Big Brother/Big Sister... type-of-thing.

STRIKING GIRL

That's great. Good for you.

SAM

Yeah. Good deeds.

Sam rubs the top of Rasheen's head.

SAM (CONT'D)

So, great... I'm going to come back here... and drink... soon.

STRIKING GIRL

(you're cute but weird)

Okay.

He smiles and they go.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam and Rasheen emerge from the bar and walk. After a few moments, Sam holds out his hand.

SAM

Good save.

Rasheen gives him five.

EXT. STREET - PIZZA SHOP - DAY

Sam and Rasheen are standing at an outdoor table at a pizza shop. They each toss down a slice.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DUSK

The sun is setting. Sam sits on a chair across from Rasheen who is on the couch. They stare each other down.

SAM

You can't stay here.

RASHEEN

Why not?

SAM

Cause.

RASHEEN

Cause why?

SAM

Cause you can't.

RASHEEN

Why can't I?

SAM

Cause.

Long beat.

RASHEEN

Why not?

SAM

Cause.

RASHEEN

Cause why?

Sam says nothing.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rasheen is on the couch, drawing something on a take-out menu. Sam sits on the other end of the couch, asleep. Suddenly, Sam pops up and looks at his watch.

SAM

Fuck.

(getting up)

Don't swear. We have to go.

They leave.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

We hear music and other party sounds from inside. Sam's hand comes into frame and knocks on the door. After a few moments, the door opens and we see:

ANNIE (28) She has soulful eyes framed by a fair amount of eye make-up. She also wears large earrings and a fantastic, colorful, and tall wrap/turban thing around her head.

[Note: Annie has Alopecia Universalis, which means she has no hair anywhere on her body - head, eyebrows, etc.]

ANNIE

Early meaning... late?

SAM

I'm so sorry.

ANNIE

Thank God my friend Grey Goose was here early to comfort me.

(huge smile)

I'm wrecked.

They hug, then she notices Rasheen standing next to Sam.

SAM

This is Rasheen.

ANNIE

(shaking hands)

Hi, Rasheen. I'm Annie. Hey, good handshake.

They enter and Annie leans over to Sam, sotto voce.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You'll explain later?

SAM

Yeah, things got a little... complicated.

ANNIE

I can see that.

(kissing his cheek)

Go get drunk. None for the kid.

She shoves him and goes off to hostess. They head towards the bar. Despite Annie's prediction, the party is well-attended. As they walk, a guy recognizes Sam.

GUY

Sam, what's up, man?

SAM

(not stopping to talk)

Hey, how's it goin'?

Sam and Rasheen reach the makeshift do-it-yourself bar. Some cookies, chips, and vegetables are also laid out. Sam pours Rasheen a ginger ale and hands him the cup.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here.

RASHEEN

Can I have a cookie?

SAM

Dude, it's a party, you can have like ten cookies.

Rasheen grabs a handful of cookies and takes his ginger ale. Sam pours himself a stiff drink, turns from the bar and scans the crowd. He sees a familiar face, a very cute girl, KAITLIN, who blows him a kiss. He catches it and pastes it on his cheek. He's about to go to her but he's cut off by MARY CATHERINE, cute, tough. She's wearing a T-shirt that says "I've Got Potential."

MARY CATHERINE

Hey.

Mary Catherine notices Rasheen, then looks up at Sam.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

SAM

(admonishing)

Come on. Child.

(then)

Rasheen, this is my cousin Mary Catherine.

SAM (CONT'D)
 We're not really cousins.
 Parents, best friends...

MARY CATHERINE
 Thanksgivings, the whole
 bit.

They look down at Rasheen, whose mouth is stuffed full of
 cookie.

MARY CATHERINE
 Look. He's riveted.
 (to Sam)
 What's going on?

SAM
 I'm just... looking after him for awhile.

MARY CATHERINE
 And you thought, "I know what kids love:
 Alopecia Awareness Parties!"

SAM
 Kind of. How are you?

MARY CATHERINE
 Nauseous.

SAM
 Nice. Where's Charlie?

MARY CATHERINE
 In L.A. He's back tomorrow.

SAM
 I like that Charlie.

MARY CATHERINE
 So do I. I'm a mess without him.

Mary Catherine looks back down at Rasheen, then up at
 Sam. She points back and forth at both of them.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 This is fishy.

SAM
 It's fine.

MARY CATHERINE
 Why do you have a small child with you,
 Sam?

SAM
 We're gonna mingle.

He and Rasheen start to walk away.

MARY CATHERINE
 (calling after him)
 I'm calling you tomorrow.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Sam winds his way with Rasheen through the now-larger crowd. He leaves frame and we linger for a bit to pick up the following party conversation.

GIRL
 I think there might be bigger problems.

GUY
 Well, it's the root of all our problems.
 For sure.

GIRL
 People not *breathing* properly?

GUY
 Yeah. Oxygen deprivation. Leads to all
 sorts of bad decision-making.

We hear Annie's voice.

ANNIE (O.S.)
 It's showtime everybody. Gather 'round.

They start to go.

GUY
 Be a whole different world if people were
 breathing right.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

People file into the living room as Annie says:

ANNIE
 In here. Follow... my... voice...

The crowd settles in.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Thank you all for coming. I'm Annie,
 your hostess-- oh my God, Tommy, you're
 here.

TOMMY waves.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

So happy about that. Where was I? Oh, yes--

(pointing to self)

Annie, hostess, welcome. Thank you all for humoring me.

(tension-releasing scream)

Ahhhhh. I'm nervous. Okay, I promise this won't take long and if anyone wants an extra dash of fun, whenever anyone says, oh, I don't know... 'follicle' or 'white blood cells,' we could all drink.

Someone whoops.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(trying it out)

'Follicle.'

Some people drink. Annie is pleased.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Very good. Now. The first thing most people notice about me is that I am...

Annie looks for some audience participation.

FEMALE PARTY GUEST

Hot.

ANNIE

Yes, that's correct. I am super hot. I am also, in addition to being super drunk--
(indicating her body with a flourish)

Hairless. Now unlike some of the hot gay men here, I do not wax. I have a very awesome auto-immune disorder that we're going to learn about right... now.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Some people are standing up in front of the room reading from note cards. Annie sits off to the side.

MELISSA

"...that approximately two percent of the population will be affected at some point in their lives. Onset most often occurs in childhood."

(MORE)

MELISSA (CONT'D)
 (looking up)
 That's all I have.

ANNIE
 Friends, amazing. You may be seated.
 Now Alopecia, as we heard, is an auto-
 immune disorder. Here's a fun fact. Get
 this: Both, yes, *both* of my parents
 are... immunologists.

The crowd "oohs" ironically.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Right? Is that not some trippy Twilight
 Zone shit?

(crowd laughs)
 Who has the next card? No, one more fun
 fact. Wait, is everyone having fun?

CROWD
 Yes!

ANNIE
 We should drink. 'White Blood Cells.'

Everyone drinks. We find Sam in the back of the crowd
 with Rasheen who's standing on a chair so he can see.

SAM
 You okay?

Rasheen nods.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Learning something?

He nods again.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Cool.

We find Annie again.

ANNIE
 Imagine if you will - Long Island circa
 1988 - and you're noticing at shower-time
 after gym class that you're not
 developing like all the other girls. Who
 knows what I'm talking about?

Some giggles, Annie looks around.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Yes, Peter, exactly. But one of the lovely treats of adulthood has been the current trend towards--

(elegantly gestures south)

The Smooth. It's the silver lining. I'm a total trendsetter.

We hear a cell phone ring.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(mock-pissed)

Oh, yeah, could everyone please turn off their cell phones?

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)

Sorry, sorry.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine steps away from the crowd and into the kitchen to answer her phone.

MARY CATHERINE

(slight whisper)

Hey.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Oh, my God, baby, I wish you were here with me right now!

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DUSK

Mary Catherine's boyfriend, CHARLIE (funny, great spirit,) is speeding alongside the Pacific Ocean.

CHARLIE

I'm driving on the PCH in a goddamn convertible and the sun is setting, it's UNBELIEVABLE. This is not an east coast sun, it's like some sort of... magic ball that's splattering this *amazing* color, I just want you here so I can park you on the beach with your paints and watch you capture this.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine has thawed and is now smiling warmly.

MARY CATHERINE

How's Dave doing?

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Amazing. Do you know I haven't encountered a single mosquito out here?

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DUSK

Back with Charlie on the phone.

CHARLIE

It's like a no-mosquito zone. They're outlawed or something. And I never really appreciated the palm tree. Palm trees are the fucking best.

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

They're not indigenous. They shipped them in and planted them for effect. Kind of like everything in Los Angeles.

CHARLIE

I know, I know.

(sing-song mantra)

"L.A. sucks, the people suck..." But I wish you could see this sunset.

He's stopped at a light and is hypnotized by the view.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine waits to hear if Charlie's going to go on.

MARY CATHERINE

Charlie. Come home right now. I miss you. And New York misses you, too.

(beat)

Charlie.

Silence. Mary Catherine looks down at her phone. "SIGNAL FADED." She hangs up. She has a pensive moment as we hear from the other room:

TYLER (O.S.)

It's from the Greek 'alopekia,' which means "fox."

Someone whoops. Mary Catherine returns to the party.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

We pan around the party, now slightly less crowded, and pick up snippets of conversation like this:

GIRL (O.S.)

That's when I realized: Self-aggrandizement is the new self-deprecation.

We find Rasheen asleep on the couch. Sam talks to Kaitlin, the cute girl from earlier. He's pretty wasted.

SAM

I think I saw you in a commercial.

KAITLIN

Probably. I have a few running right now.

SAM

Do you ever feel weird about hawking product for corporate Goliaths?

KAITLIN

Sometimes. But then I look around my new loft on Perry Street, and I feel totally great about it.

SAM

Ooh, show me your loft. I want to see your loft.

KAITLIN

(laughing)
I'll bet you do. Not tonight.

SAM

Yes, tonight. Tonight's perfect.

KAITLIN

Don't you have other responsibilities?

Kaitlin gestures to the couch. Sam looks down at the sleeping Rasheen, sighs.

SAM

Fucking kid continues to ruin my day.

KAITLIN

You're gonna be a great dad.

SAM

Kiss me.
 (puckering his lips)
 Come on. No one's looking.

KAITLIN

(not uncharmed)
 Why should I?

SAM

The real question is: Why *shouldn't* you?

KAITLIN

Cause I'm about to turn 30. You have to at least buy me dinner.

SAM

Isn't that prostitution?

KAITLIN

Possibly.

Sam puckers up again. Kaitlin smiles, gives him a sweet kiss on his cheek, then walks away. Sam watches her go.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Annie talks to SPENCER, her floppy-haired crush.

ANNIE

I think it went well. Parties should be more educational, don't you think?

SPENCER

Why not?

Sam comes over to Annie, with the sleeping Rasheen slung over his shoulder.

SAM

Great party.
 (kissing her cheek)
 I never noticed you didn't have hair.

Annie pushes him towards the door. Sam then turns around, suddenly ruminative.

SAM (CONT'D)

I feel like my life is totally different all of a sudden... And I don't know if I like it.

He turns and passes the 'breathing guy' from earlier.

GUY

Just remember to breathe, my friend.

As Sam and Rasheen leave, the guy turns to his friend.

GUY (CONT'D)

He'll be fine.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sam and Rasheen, zombie-like, stumble down the street. They pass the bar. Sam looks in the window. No sign of the girl. They continue to stumble home.

EXT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie gets out of a cab with his bags and heads to his front door. He has trouble with the key. The door opens and the super walks out.

SUPER

Mr. Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey. Still having trouble with the lock.

SUPER

Right. The lock.

He leaves. Charlie enters.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie is inside the building. The light flickers annoyingly. He stares up at it. He then turns to the stairwell. Four flights await him. He sighs, then hoists his bag up onto his shoulder. Home sweet home.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - MORNING

Annie is at her desk. She's slightly hung over, trying to get the top off a bottle of aspirin. It's not going well. She sticks the bottle in her mouth and tries prying the top off with her teeth.

Suddenly: A flash. She looks up. A man stands by her desk holding a camera. This is SAM #2 - pleasant enough but no one's idea of Mr. Right - Think a younger, jollier Paul Giamatti. He wears a suit and is all smiles.

SAM #2

Don't worry. I'll destroy that. Here.

He grabs the bottle from her and easily pops the top off.

ANNIE

Thanks.

SAM #2

Rough night?

Annie doesn't answer. She pops two pills in her mouth.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

I have a question. Why aren't we better friends?

ANNIE

(not totally mean)

Um... I wasn't aware we were friends.

SAM #2

(not offended)

I think we'd get along very well.

ANNIE

Well. My best friend's name is Sam...
Sam. I mean, seriously, how many Sam's
can a girl have in her life?

SAM #2

You could call me Sam 2. Hey, I sound
like a sequel.

Sam #2 chuckles at this. Annie does not. He gestures to a chair by her desk.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

(sitting)

May I?

He keeps smiling, but says nothing. Not knowing what to do, she turns to her desk. Beat. She turns back to him.

ANNIE

Help me out with something here, Sam
Number 2. You work in legal, right?

SAM #2

Yeah.

ANNIE

Seventh floor. Why are you always lurking around down here?

SAM #2

Come on. Everyone knows the party's on five.

(then, mock frat-boy)

Philanthropic giving! Woo-hoo!

Sam #2 is loving this, grinning wide. Annie turns back to her desk. Beat. She can feel that he hasn't moved. OK, she's just going to politely ask him to leave. She turns to him and - FLASH! - he snaps another picture.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Rasheen is at the kitchen table drawing on a newspaper. Sam, still half-asleep, comes out of his bedroom.

SAM

You sleep okay?

He nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

That's a quality couch.

Sam heads towards the refrigerator.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hungry?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam sits across from Rasheen. They are each eating an ice cream sandwich. Sam leafs through the Yellow Pages.

SAM

Who to call who to call...? Child... services something or other...

Sam looks up at Rasheen.

SAM (CONT'D)

Is this your first experience with foster care?

Rasheen shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)
How many other places you been?

Rasheen thinks and starts counting on his hands. He holds up seven fingers. Whoa.

SAM (CONT'D)
And how old are you?

Rasheen puts down one of his fingers. Sam takes this in. He turns back to the phone book, but then abruptly shuts it and tosses it aside.

SAM (CONT'D)
We can deal with this later.

Sam finishes his ice cream sandwich.

SAM (CONT'D)
You want another?

Rasheen nods. Sam takes out two more, tosses one to Rasheen, keeps one for himself. They eat.

SAM (CONT'D)
So whatcha reading lately?

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie and Mary Catherine are in bed.

MARY CATHERINE
Welcome home.

She kisses him and goes off to the bathroom. We hear the water running. Charlie stares up at the ceiling.

CHARLIE
Dave thinks he's really gonna get this thing off the ground.

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)
That's great.

CHARLIE
Yeah. He was the happiest I've seen him in a long time.

Beat. Charlie looks tormented.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

L.A. seems to agree with him.

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)

Yeah?

CHARLIE

Yeah. He says he doesn't miss New York at all.

SFX: Toilet flushes. Mary Catherine reenters.

MARY CATHERINE

I knew he'd bail. Dave was always too much of a wimp to stay here forever.

(hopping on him)

You know what I want?

(seductive)

An omelette.

She kisses him.

CHARLIE

You think it's wimpy to want to leave New York?

MARY CATHERINE

Yes. *Huuuuungry...*

CHARLIE

Wait, no, just... curious. Why do you hate Los Angeles so much?

MARY CATHERINE

Because it's the epicenter of all that is awful.

CHARLIE

You know, the coolest person on the planet lives in Los Angeles.

MARY CATHERINE

Who's that?

CHARLIE

Bob Dylan.

MARY CATHERINE

(unimpressed)

Dylan lives in Los Angeles?

CHARLIE

Well, Malibu, but yeah.

MARY CATHERINE

(beat)

Never been hungrier.

CHARLIE

Wait. Dave told me this great thing about L.A.

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping, quietly)

Feeeed me.

CHARLIE

Listen: He said he figured it out. He said the whole town is a blank canvas and whatever you bring to it, that's what it is. It's just this random collection of neighborhoods where it's always sunny, and it basically reflects wherever you are back at you. You're happy, L.A.'s great. You're not, L.A. sucks. But it has nothing to do with Los Angeles cause get this:

(greatest thing ever)

There's no such thing.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

And?

CHARLIE

And... that's it.

MARY CATHERINE

That's like marrying someone who has no personality and holding that up as their chief virtue.

(then)

"Look, this person has nothing going on and nothing to offer but they really let me be me."

CHARLIE

Not... really.

MARY CATHERINE

If you don't feed me soon, I'm going to eat your face. Let's go.

Mary Catherine climbs off him and starts to get ready. Charlie doesn't move. Mary Catherine stares at him.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Okay, what's going on? Dave said what?

Moment of truth.

CHARLIE

He wants to partner with me. 50-50. But we'd need... to be out there.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

When?

CHARLIE

The end of the month.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

And you want to do it?

Charlie sheepishly shrugs.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well, if you think it's best. I mean, I can paint anywhere, right?

CHARLIE

(cautiously thrilled)

Totally.

MARY CATHERINE

And we could have a much bigger apartment and take walks on the beach and it would force me to get my driver's license *finally* and I could get some fake boobs and, ooh, we could both stop reading books and start writing *screenplays*. How soon can we book our flight?

Charlie deflates. Mary Catherine grabs his face and squeezes it tightly, making him look ridiculous.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

If you think I'm moving to Los Angeles, Charlie, you're fucking insane.

(then)

Breakfast?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rasheen sits on the sofa. Sam bursts into the living room from his bedroom.

SAM

Dude, this is not right. I'm not-- You, you, you shouldn't be here. I have to...

(definitive)

It's time for you to go.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam and Rasheen sit on the sofa calmly watching TV, splitting some microwave egg rolls.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam sits at the table, writing. Rasheen sits across from him, drawing. Curious, Sam gets up and wanders over to him. He stares down at the drawing. It's stunning.

SAM

Dude.

Rasheen looks up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good work.

Sam sits back down, but then pops up out of his seat. He grabs a cupful of pencils and highlighters and a stack of blank paper from his printer and places them by Rasheen.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Later. Sun is setting. Sam is writing. Rasheen is drawing. It seems to be going well for both of them.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam and Annie hover over a sleeping Rasheen. Annie sifts through Rasheen's drawings.

ANNIE

Whoa.

SAM

I know. I don't know what to do.

ANNIE

Sell them. Kidding.

(then)

What do you think was going on?

SAM

Something bad. He says he won't go back.

Annie takes another look at him.

ANNIE

He's super cute.

(re: the drawings)

Possibly a genius.

(beat)

I say we keep him.

She looks at Sam.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. We can't keep him.

They start to head out.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Sam. Seriously. Don't keep him.

INT. SAM'S ROOF - NIGHT - LATER

Annie and Sam sit in lawn chairs on the roof of Sam's apartment building. A beautiful night. They're taking hits off a one-hitter that looks like a cigarette.

ANNIE

Did I ever tell you what he said about having kids with me?

SAM

Huh-uh.

ANNIE

Fucking Ira. This is like when we were totally in love. It was just so awful. He said if we had kids and they turned out to have Alopecia, he would want them in wigs cause quote: "Kids can be cruel."

SAM

Whoa.

ANNIE

I know. And I just burst into tears. I was like, "No, you can't say that, don't say that. You have to love your bald wife and your little bald kids." But it made me think about something my mom said when I was little. She literally sat me down, I was like ten or eleven, and she said-- to her *daughter*: "It's going to take a very special man to love you."

SAM

Oh, my God.

ANNIE

Yeah. Thanks, mom. Helpful.

(then)

Like the manner in which I am damaged vis a vis men is so not veiled in any way. It's like *there it is*.

Beat. Annie takes a hit, exhales.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Did you know that was a wig freshman year?

(then)

Why am I talking about all this stuff so much?

(then)

Wait, did you?

SAM

Yeah. I mean I think so. I don't really remember.

ANNIE

Well, I was fat, too, so the whole period's a bit of a blur.

Sam smiles. She hands the one-hitter back to Sam.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Did you end up meeting that guy Spencer at my party?

SAM

No.

ANNIE

My little *crushy-crush*. We talked pretty much all night.

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Get this: I ask Peter Mehlman about him the next day and fuckhead somehow felt free to tell me: "He only dates hot girls."

Sam groans.

SAM

Annie, you have to stop talking to people.

ANNIE

Right? I know...

(beat)

Some shit's really coming up for me, Sam, I don't know. Like I'm playing at the whole *I-am-what-I-am-and-I-love-it* thing, but more often than not I just feel like an unlovable bald freak.

SAM

That's crazy. You're the greatest girl pretty much ever, and you're totally hot. You just have uniquely terrible taste in men.

Annie stares at Sam as he takes a hit.

ANNIE

If I'm so great, how come you never wanted to be with me?

Sam is smoking and this doesn't really land on him.

SAM

(out the side of his mouth)

What?

ANNIE

Any word on the book?

SAM

Nope.

ANNIE

Nervous?

SAM

I don't know. I don't even know if it's what I want anymore, you know?

(pretty high now)

Like *goals*, I have them, cause I guess I'm supposed to, but what... what's a goal... even?

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
 (long beat)
 Whatever.

ANNIE
 Life is hard.

SAM
 Yeah. It is.

ANNIE
 And I somehow want it not to be, which I
 think maybe misses the point.

They both stare up at the sky, taking it all in.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Lunch. Charlie is looking down at the table sullenly. The tension is thick. Mary Catherine playfully attempts eye-contact. Charlie doesn't respond. Mary Catherine can't take it anymore. She shuts the menu dramatically.

MARY CATHERINE
 Fine, just, you know what? Just give it
 to me.

CHARLIE
 What?

MARY CATHERINE
 Let's hash it out. Give me the whole
 anti-New York case you've been building
 up in your head ever since you fell in
 love with the palm tree.

Charlie rolls his eyes.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Seriously. Lemme have it.

CHARLIE
 Fine.

MARY CATHERINE
 Fine.

CHARLIE
 Fine. You wanna know what I think?

MARY CATHERINE
 You know I do.

CHARLIE

I think. New York... is done.

MARY CATHERINE

New York City is 'done?'

CHARLIE

Totally.

MARY CATHERINE

Uh-huh. And you're declaring this right now? Officially?

CHARLIE

I'm just saying...

MARY CATHERINE

What kind of bullshit is that? New York is the greatest city on earth.

CHARLIE

Right, I forgot about that time you went to every city on earth and then decided--

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping)

Oh, fuck you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Just, okay, let's-- Calm down.

(then)

Tell me what you're so afraid of?

Mary Catherine really gives it some thought.

MARY CATHERINE

I'm afraid of my brain melting. I'm afraid we'll turn into people who watch and care about reality television. I'm afraid we won't care about things anymore except opening weekend grosses and... Pilates classes.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but you know they'd be, like, the best Pilates classes.

(beat)

Kidding.

MARY CATHERINE

Scary Jacob and Hallie Sorenson and remember Valerie What's-Her-Face who was trying to start her own religion?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

MARY CATHERINE

All born and raised in Los Angeles.

Charlie rolls his eyes.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Kids who grow up in Southern California are weirdos.

CHARLIE

And New York City kids are so well-adjusted?

MARY CATHERINE

There's no art there--

CHARLIE

That's ridiculous.

MARY CATHERINE

There's no culture--

CHARLIE

What, you don't think people paint in Los Angeles?

MARY CATHERINE

Yes, toenails.

(then)

New York has everything. The best restaurants, the best theater, museums--

CHARLIE

And how many museums do you hit in an average week? Just curious.

MARY CATHERINE

That's not the point. The point is that I *can*.

CHARLIE

No, that *is* the point. What good is paying out the nose to live here if we never take advantage of it. We should just visit every once in awhile and actually *do* things. Hit the Met, take in a Broadway show, Carnegie Deli...

(mock-tourist)

"Whoa, that's one big sandwich. I don't know if I can eat all--"

MARY CATHERINE

I love New York.

CHARLIE

You're miserable more than not.

MARY CATHERINE

Yes, but that's not New York's fault. I love being on the subway and seeing people from every corner of the globe all packed in, ignoring each other, yes, but generally getting along. New York is...

CHARLIE

What?

MARY CATHERINE

It's fucking New York!! I don't need to defend it!

Silence.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Mary Catherine and Charlie sit on a bench somberly watching some kids on swing sets. Then:

CHARLIE

Look, maybe I'm... weak. I just think about us. Here. And it scares me. I see us... poor and bitter. And I don't want that.

MARY CATHERINE

We'll have more money eventually.

(beat)

And we'll move uptown and only eat sushi and take cabs and be grown-ups.

CHARLIE

When?

(beat)

Seriously, when? There's no time limit on how long New York is allowed to beat the shit out of you. And it will win, I know it will. I don't want that.

MARY CATHERINE

So you'd rather us burn incense and do juice fasts?

CHARLIE

Maybe. Those people are really happy.
(beat)
There's nothing wrong with being happy.

MARY CATHERINE

I don't make you happy?

Charlie says nothing. Mary Catherine doesn't press him. He takes her hand. They watch the kids swing.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Annie's gathering her things to head home. She looks up and Sam #2 is standing by her desk.

SAM #2

So... I'm not generally a Happy Hour kind of guy, but...

ANNIE

Sorry. Can't. It's a school night.

She grabs her bag and goes.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

'Bye.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam sits on a chair across from Rasheen who is on the couch. They're mid-conversation, both eating cereal.

SAM

One has to engage in the world. I believe that. And I don't know what I'm living in response to. Does this make sense? Like... The novel; that which is new. Where's my... what do I draw upon?

RASHEEN

I don't know.

SAM

Exactly. Me neither. Like my great shame as a writer is that I'm just a suburban kid with good parents. I was fed, clothed, carpooled... Very little in the way of Hemingway-esque adventure. You know what I'm saying?

Rasheen nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

I suppose I could demonize the whole experience, which always seems to be in vogue, but honestly, I don't hate my parents, I don't hate the suburbs - I don't want to live there, but I don't begrudge people the desire to find good school districts. You good on milk?

RASHEEN

Yeah.

SAM

I mean, you, what with your... situation, you probably got enough material for three lifetimes. Seriously, man, I envy that.

The phone rings. Sam answers it.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello...

Sam listens for a few moments. Slowly, his face betrays grave disappointment.

EXT. STREET - EARLY EVENING

Annie's walking home. Her cell phone rings. She takes it out and looks at who's calling. Oh my God.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Annie enters. She's applied a fresh coat of make-up. She walks in a few feet then suddenly turns and leaves.

EXT. EAST VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Annie flees, her phone rings. She looks at the caller I.D. Fuck. She picks it up.

ANNIE

Yes?

VOICE (O.S.)

I saw you walk in. Come back.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Annie makes her way to a table in the back where we find: IRA, her ex-boyfriend. He wears glasses and has big, wild hair - part intellectual, part rock-and-roll (more the former than the latter.) She sits, clutching her bag to her chest. They sit for a few moments in silence.

ANNIE

What?

IRA

What do you mean?

ANNIE

Why did you want to see me so bad?

IRA

Does there have to be a reason?

Annie glares at him.

IRA (CONT'D)

I don't know, I still... whatever. It's been awhile. Just have a drink with me.

(beat)

Please.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Rasheen is sleeping on the sofa. Sam stares down at the table which is now covered with more drawings, each more impressive than the last. He glances over at Rasheen, then quietly slips out the door.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Sam sits at the bar with a drink. He scans the room. The girl is nowhere to be found. He drinks.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Sam is slumped over the jukebox, unsuccessfully trying to load in a dollar. He turns and - finally - there she is, the girl, henceforth MISSISSIPPI.

She wears a fantastically short skirt and boots. It should be a classic movie star entrance, perhaps in slow motion. She passes Sam and flashes a warm smile. She might have just saved his life.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - NIGHT

Ira and Annie, a few drinks in, are mid-argument.

IRA

From the second she saw me--

ANNIE

Not true.

IRA

She *hated* me.

ANNIE

She didn't hate you. She thought you needed a haircut.

IRA

I couldn't have been any nicer to that woman. I brought flowers. I even tucked in my shirt.

ANNIE

Shocking that that didn't win her over.

IRA

Nothing would have.

ANNIE

I'm her daughter. She didn't want me to get hurt. But I guess, in fairness, she was wrong about you. Oh, wait, no, she was totally right.

IRA

Come on--

ANNIE

Mothers are always right. I fucking hate that.

Annie picks up her drink. Ira grabs her wrist.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You're touching me.

IRA

I can handle your mother hating me. I
can't stand the thought that you hate me.

Beat. Annie pries his fingers off her wrist. She drinks
but says nothing.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Sam sits at the bar, drunker now. Mississippi comes by
to wait for the drinks the bartender is gathering.

SAM

Hey.

MISSISSIPPI

You're back.

SAM

Man of my word.

MISSISSIPPI

How's your Little Brother?

SAM

Who?

MISSISSIPPI

The kid.

SAM

Oh. Good. He's good.

MISSISSIPPI

It's great that you do that.

SAM

Yeah.

(then)

You know you're really good at your job.

MISSISSIPPI

Am I?

SAM

Yeah, I've been watching you. You're
good.

MISSISSIPPI

(to bartender)

Austin, I still need a Harp.

SAM

See? Look at that.

Mississippi gives him a half-smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

What's your name?

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi.

SAM

M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-...P-P-I?

MISSISSIPPI

Very good.

SAM

That's your real name? Mississippi?

MISSISSIPPI

It's what everyone calls me.

SAM

And I'm assuming it's also where you're from?

She points to her nose.

SAM (CONT'D)

Does that coincidence ever just floor you?

She smiles, charmed. She grabs the Harp and as she walks past Sam, she leans in to him.

MISSISSIPPI

What's your name?

SAM

Sam.

MISSISSIPPI

Hi, Sam.

She goes.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - NIGHT

Annie sucks on a lime. She seems much more relaxed.

ANNIE

This is bad. I have to work in the morning.

(pointedly)

Some people work.

IRA

Hey. I work.

ANNIE

Playing bass in a shitty band and considering applying to grad school is not a job.

Beat. Ira looks genuinely hurt.

IRA

You think the band is shitty?

Annie coyly says nothing.

IRA (CONT'D)

You were front row at every show.

ANNIE

I was your *girlfriend*. That, like, contractually obligated me to be a groupie.

IRA

Yeah, but. You always... looked like you were enjoying yourself. That's all.

Annie stares at him, gently relents.

ANNIE

I was. I did.

Their eyes lock. Danger-time.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I should go.

IRA

Yeah. Probably.

They don't move.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Mississippi has joined Sam. She's done with her shift. It's a bit later. They've had a few.

SAM

It sounds like you married a guy named
"Mr. Sippi." And you're Mrs. Sipp--
You're not married, are you?

MISSISSIPPI

You proposing?

SAM

Maybe. What would you say?

MISSISSIPPI

I'd probably need to think about it.

SAM

Ouch. After all we've been through?

She holds up her hand and wiggles it. Ringless.

SAM (CONT'D)

So what do you do, Mrs. Sippy, when
you're not kicking ass at serving booze?

She opens her mouth wide, mimes singing a song.

SAM (CONT'D)

You give head?

She turns to go, but only playfully. Sam pulls her back.

SAM (CONT'D)

No, c'mon, I'm kidding. What is that?
What?

MISSISSIPPI

I sing.

SAM

Songs?

MISSISSIPPI

Yes, songs. Cabaret.

SAM

You any good?

MISSISSIPPI

You come and listen and then tell me.

SAM

No, I could never come here you sing.

MISSISSIPPI

Why not?

SAM

Cause I once dated this girl in college who desperately wanted to be an actress. I mean it was all she talked about. And I finally went to see her in this play...

Sam makes a face.

MISSISSIPPI

Bad?

SAM

Beyond. So unburdened with talent it was *amazing*. I mean, what do you say? I had to break up with her.

MISSISSIPPI

Cause she was a bad actress?

SAM

No, I didn't care if she was good or not. It was that she so *believed* she was good and it made me feel like "Wow, this girl doesn't know herself at all." And I think you're terrific. Therefore: I can never come hear you sing. Cause it'll change everything if I learn you can't.

MISSISSIPPI

What if I'm amazing?

SAM

What if you aren't?

MISSISSIPPI

You're kind of a dick.

SAM

Right? I know.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - NIGHT

With Ira out of earshot, a very drunk Annie calls Sam.

ANNIE

Sammy, I'm calling you cause you're my sponsor and I'm about to fall off the wagon. It happens, right? Don't be mad.

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to take your not picking up to mean that the universe wants me to fuck up badly right now. I'll call you tomorrow and confess.

She hangs up, takes a deep breath to steady herself and heads back to the table.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - LATER

The bar is almost empty, minutes from that crushing moment where they flip on the overhead lights. Sam and Mississippi are drunk, their faces close together.

SAM

I like your looks.

MISSISSIPPI

Good.

SAM

No, I do. I like the looks of you. Why is that? What's that all about?

Mississippi traces her fingers gently along Sam's face. A long moment of silence.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm a failure.

MISSISSIPPI

No you're not.

SAM

I am. I got bad news today. I'm a failure. Everything I touch...

(haunted)

I was impressive once. Parent-teacher conferences, back in the day...

Mississippi says nothing. She continues to trace the contours of Sam's face.

SAM (CONT'D)

I talk too much. Silence is good, right? The movie people nailed it, it's fucking golden.

(points to his mouth)

Stop me. I won't stop. It's just gonna keep going going please stop me plea-

Mississippi kisses him. It's lovely and deep and sad. They pull apart and look at each other.

Sam is fairly transported and does indeed forget to speak. Mississippi smiles one of the great smiles of all time and Sam falls a little bit in love. She puts her finger to his lips.

MISSISSIPPI

Shhh.

She kisses him again.

INT. EAST VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

Annie stumbles out of the bar. She turns and Ira is behind her. She shoves him hard against the wall of the building, attacking him hungrily.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Sam and Mississippi drunkenly make their way up the stairs towards Sam's apartment. They are trying to kiss the entire time, which proves difficult.

SAM

There might be a small black child sleeping on my couch so we have to be quiet.

MISSISSIPPI

'Might?'

SAM

There's definitely a small black child sleeping on my couch so we have to be quiet.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

They enter. There is indeed a small black child sleeping on the couch. Sam leads her quietly into his bedroom.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sam is getting pretty aggressive with Mississippi, but she stops him.

MISSISSIPPI

Hey.

SAM

What?

MISSISSIPPI
I'm not gonna sleep with you.

SAM
Sure you are.

MISSISSIPPI
No, I can't.

SAM
Come on, that's defeatist. You can do anything you set your mind to.

He grabs her and throws her down on the bed. She screams, not out of fear but more playful shock.

SAM (CONT'D)
Hey, keep it down. Children are sleeping.

Sam sits down on the bed and starts to kiss her neck.

MISSISSIPPI
Does he stay with you a lot?

SAM
Uh, occasionally. Rough home life. You know.

They resume kissing. Sam tries to remove some clothing. Mississippi pushes him off and sits up.

MISSISSIPPI
Sam. I'm serious. I'm not sleeping with you.

Sam groans.

SAM
What? Is it Jesus? It's Jesus, isn't it?

MISSISSIPPI
No. I made a New Year's resolution.

SAM
To what?

MISSISSIPPI
To not be such a whore.

SAM

(beat)

How's that been going for you?

Mississippi stares at him, then cracks a bit of a smile. He leans into her. She pushes him back.

MISSISSIPPI

I don't even know you. I'm not gonna just spend the night with you.

She pulls what little there is of her skirt down towards her knees. Sam sits up next to her, best behavior.

SAM

Okay. I don't think you should spend the night with me, either.

MISSISSIPPI

You don't?

SAM

I think you should spend the next three nights with me.

Mississippi doesn't know how to respond.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Stay with me. Three days. I've got an extra set of keys, come and go as you please.

She laughs, rolls her eyes.

SAM (CONT'D)

Come on, this'll be awesome. I completely agree, one-night stands are the worst.

MISSISSIPPI

So you want to have a three-night stand?

SAM

Yes.

MISSISSIPPI

You're insane.

SAM

Maybe.

MISSISSIPPI

What is this like your line or something?
(realizing)
You've said this to other girls before.

SAM

I've never even *thought* this before. But it's totally genius, isn't it?

MISSISSIPPI

It's the worst idea ever.

SAM

Hey, you stay here for three days, who knows what could happen? We sleep together once, let's be honest: odds are I'm never gonna call you.

MISSISSIPPI

You really are a dick.

SAM

Yes, but I'm also good...
(points to the living room)
Community service. Come on, move in with me for three days!!

Mississippi leaps off the bed and runs to a corner of the room, covering her face.

SAM (CONT'D)

Seriously. It'll be an adventure. We'll cook, we'll make obscene amounts of love, we'll play with the small black child out in the living room. Doesn't it sound like fun?

Beat.

MISSISSIPPI

Is this for real?

SAM

Yes.

MISSISSIPPI

I'm not... We just *met*, won't it be awkward?

SAM

Yes.

They laugh, then stop. She looks at him intensely, considering it, but trying to gauge his seriousness.

MISSISSIPPI

You're not gonna want me here for three days.

SAM

Yes I will. I do.

MISSISSIPPI

Now you do. But you're *drunk*. Are you gonna be drunk for three days?

SAM

Possibly.

She takes him in.

MISSISSIPPI

You must be like... super lonely.

SAM

Yeah, but that has nothing to do with this.

MISSISSIPPI

You're crazy!!

SAM

Move in with me for three days.
(suddenly super-psyched)
Move in with me for three days!

Sam goes to his desk and grabs a pen and paper. He brings it back to the bed and begins to write.

SAM (CONT'D)

You will stay here... with me... three nights. You live your life normally, but come bed-time... you are contractually obligated to lay your weary head... here... with me.

He finishes writing and hands the paper to her. She looks down at it. He has scribbled a kind of vague contract outlining the plan. There are underlined spaces for each to sign their names. He's already signed his.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sign it.

Mississippi stares at him, still unsure. They connect.
Something in her shifts. He hands her the pen.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sign it.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

The sun rises over Manhattan. The bagels start baking.
The commuters start commuting.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We follow the trail of discarded clothes up to Sam's bed
where we find Mississippi, smiling under the covers.

MISSISSIPPI

This is gonna be fun.

Mississippi climbs on top of Sam, who is looking up at
the ceiling, horrified.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

You like Southern food?

(seductive)

I cook.

Sam smiles weakly.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mary Catherine and Charlie are in bed. His eyes are
closed. Hers are open. She has one arm draped across
his chest, holding onto him for dear life. Suddenly, she
springs up out of the bed and runs to the bathroom. We
hear the sounds of her vomiting.

INT. IRA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Annie, clothed, is putting her turban/wrap on her head.
She's trying to not wake Ira and slip out quietly.

IRA

Where you going?

ANNIE

Work.

IRA
(lasciviously)
What, no breakfast?

Annie says nothing but continues preparing to leave.

IRA (CONT'D)
Hey.

ANNIE
What?

IRA
We should do this again.

ANNIE
You think?

IRA
Yeah. Like, a lot.

ANNIE
Uh-huh. Cause that always works out great.

IRA
Come on--

ANNIE
Ira. Why would I torture myself?

IRA
Come here.

ANNIE
I have to go.

IRA
(insistent)
Come here.

She goes to the bed tentatively and sits. He leans in and kisses her slowly, tenderly.

IRA (CONT'D)
You're worried you're gonna get hurt, right? But aren't we past all that? We're great together and we should just... go for it.

ANNIE
(seduced)
It's a *bad* idea.

IRA

Look.

Ira kisses her again and holds her face in his hands.

IRA (CONT'D)

I'm kind of seeing someone, which I think makes this... safe. We know we can't get too into it.

Annie is frozen.

IRA (CONT'D)

But we're not exclusive, so you and I can, you know... whatever.

She pulls away sharply and goes.

IRA (CONT'D)

Anne--

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Annie rushes down the street, fleeing Ira's apartment, her face streaked with tears.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Mississippi has finished getting dressed and is programming Sam's number into her phone.

MISSISSIPPI

5-2-0-6?

SAM

5-2-0-8. Fuck.

Sam is rooting through a dish full of change on his desk looking for keys.

MISSISSIPPI

What?

We get close on the dish and see the spare set of keys, which Sam subtly buries underneath the coins.

SAM

I thought I...

(turning to her)

You working tonight?

MISSISSIPPI
I'm singing.

SAM
Where?

Mississippi writes down an address on a piece of paper and hands it to Sam.

MISSISSIPPI
I go on at 10:00.

SAM
What time are you done?

Mississippi, momentarily hurt, doesn't let Sam see. She shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
Okay, I gotta get keys made, I'll call you later.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sam pokes his head out of his bedroom.

SAM
What's up?

Rasheen shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
That girl leave?

Rasheen nods. Sam flops down on the couch next to him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Did she say anything?

RASHEEN
No.

Beat.

SAM
You gonna do some drawing today?

Rasheen shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
You like French toast?

Rasheen nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

C'mon we'll make it together. We'll get
all Kramer Vs. Kramer.

They head towards the kitchen.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Annie is at work. She's looked better. She picks up the phone to make a call, but after dialing, she realizes she can't talk and hangs up.

SAM #2 (O.S.)

You okay?

Annie turns away from Sam #2, hiding her tears.

ANNIE

Yeah. Totally.

SAM #2

Can I... do anything for you?

ANNIE

No.

He hasn't left.

SAM #2

(innocently)

Weren't you wearing that yesterday?

ANNIE

Please go away.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Annie sits on Sam's bed. She's a mess. Sam patiently sits beside the bed, letting her go.

ANNIE

He's a fucking 29 year-old 12 year-old.
That's what he is. That's all I meet.
If there's a 29 year-old 12 year-old
within 100 feet of me, I will find that
motherfucker and sleep with him. It's my
one gift. I've had it.

Sam hands her a tissue.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm so sick of having to be *optimistic* all the time. It's exhausting.

She wipes her eyes.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

And where does it end? Where's my big reward for all this... *bravery?*

(looking up, imploring)

Come on. I don't need much. An uptick in self esteem, maybe. Or some great, loving guy. Or at the very least some fucking *eyebrows*.

She laughs and is surprised that she does.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(then, mocking herself)

"*Why can't I have eyebrows?*"

(beat)

Uch. What am I doing? I hate myself right now.

SAM

Come here.

(pulls her into an embrace)

I'll get you some eyebrows.

ANNIE

You will?

SAM

Of course.

ANNIE

That's so sweet.

Annie nuzzles into Sam a bit more. She seems to allow herself a moment of relaxation, feeling safe in his arms, then wipes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and gets up.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

My, what a refreshing lunch hour. I have to get back to work.

SAM

Feel better?

ANNIE

Not even a little bit. But I'll live.

She starts to go.

SAM

Anne.

ANNIE

Hmm?

SAM

You don't have to keep it together all the time.

ANNIE

Yeah. The world will love a bald girl who can't stop crying.

She wipes her eyes, plasters on an obviously fake smile, then goes.

EXT. STREET - DRUG STORE - DAY

Charlie is waiting on the street as Mary Catherine emerges. She stuffs a small plastic bag into her purse. Her T-Shirt reads: "I Date Down." They walk.

CHARLIE

You know I'm not... crazy about that shirt.

MARY CATHERINE

(looking down)

Why?

CHARLIE

I'm your boyfriend. That makes me "down." I don't want to be "down."

MARY CATHERINE

It's not about you.

CHARLIE

Who else are you dating?

MARY CATHERINE

It's just... nothing. Who cares?

Beat.

CHARLIE

Yeah, well what about the one that says "I Love Nerds?"

MARY CATHERINE

I do love nerds.

CHARLIE

Well, it makes me feel weird.

MARY CATHERINE

Well, Chuck, if you find the "My Man's a Hot Stud" T-shirt, Christmas is just around the corner.

Silence.

CHARLIE

I just don't understand what you're trying to announce. That's all.

MARY CATHERINE

My, it seems someone's lost their taste for irony.

Charlie takes this in.

CHARLIE

Well, I'd rather be irony-free and nice than sarcastic and rude.

MARY CATHERINE

To each his own.

They both then walk in silence for a few moments until Charlie sees something and stops.

CHARLIE

Perfect.

A homeless man is peeing on the side of a building. A steady stream of urine runs from the building to the street obstructing their path.

MARY CATHERINE

You gonna throw your jacket down over that, or what?

Charlie ignores her, steps over the river of piss and continues walking. Mary Catherine chases after him.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Funny funny. I was being *funny*.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Sam wanders through the cereal aisle. His phone rings, he looks at the number. He doesn't answer it.

INT. WEST VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Mississippi is on her cell phone as she walks. Like all young performing artists, she has a ton of bags.

MISSISSIPPI

Hi. Sam. It's Mississippi. 'Member me? The girl from... last night. I wanted to... remind you I go on at 10:00 tonight. I promise not to suck.

(nervous laugh)

No pressure. Anyway, haven't heard from you about the keys. I don't know...

(beat)

So... I'll see you later, I guess.

She hangs up, half-regretting the whole call. And possibly the whole night.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Sam puts his phone back in his pocket. We see Rasheen walking up the aisle towards Sam with his head nearly obscured by five boxes of sugar-filled cereals.

SAM

Whoa. Alright.

Sam takes the boxes and puts them in the cart, then surveys what they have.

SAM (CONT'D)

We should probably get some vegetables or something.

He reaches in and pulls out some ketchup.

SAM (CONT'D)

This counts, right?

(looks in the cart)

Okay, I think we're good.

Sam begins to push the cart. Rasheen grabs Sam's hand and holds it. Sam is taken aback but doesn't pull away. They continue through the aisle.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Charlie and Mary Catherine round the corner. They're really going at it, furious at each other.

MARY CATHERINE

Anytime life presents you with anything real or challenging, you freeze--

CHARLIE

No, I need time to process things, which is *normal*, but you're so insecure you think I'm leaving you every other week.

MARY CATHERINE

Maybe cause I'm the only thing you've ever committed to and even then you had to be *dragged*--

CHARLIE

That is total bullshit--

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping)

Kicking and screaming from this image of yourself where you're perpetually twenty-one, *stoned*, *fucking*--

(then)

I should have known. Dave was always gonna win out over me.

CHARLIE

What does Dave have to do with--?

MARY CATHERINE

Not the best gamble, I might add, to stake your future on a guy who once put hydrochloric acid on his *tongue*.

CHARLIE

On a *dare* when we were *fourteen* and the fact that you would even bring that up is so--

MARY CATHERINE

The guy can't even taste anything unless it's *jalepenos*, he's like a walking bad decision--

CHARLIE

Fuck this, I'm the mature one here. And I'm being punched in the face for being *human*, for weighing options-- You know? I think you want me to leave you.

MARY CATHERINE

Yeah, I want you to leave--

CHARLIE

Cause who would ever want to stay and put up with *this*, with you and your fucking--

MARY CATHERINE

Fuck you fuck you you're a fucking selfish asshole!!

CHARLIE

I do *not* have to take this! You're a bully and a--

Mary Catherine and Charlie, startled, immediately cease arguing. They've both suddenly seen a QUADRIPLÉGIC MAN sitting in a wheelchair outside a coffee shop. He is calmly sipping an iced coffee through an enormous flexible purple straw. The image is both tragic and somehow ridiculous. They slowly pass the man and find their way into the coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie and Mary Catherine join the rather long line, still silent. After a few moments, they grab/hug each other deeply, almost ravenously.

CHARLIE

I love you. I'm so sorry.

MARY CATHERINE

I'm sorry. I love you so much.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam and Rasheen walk. Sam carries a bag from a thrift store.

SAM

You gotta trust me on this: we got you some sweet T-shirts.

RASHEEN

I trust you.

As they walk, Sam notices a uniformed police officer walking towards them. As he approaches, the officer takes them in. Sam blinks back some panic and politely nods at him. The cop moves past them and Sam stops.

He looks back at the cop and then down at Rasheen. Sam takes Rasheen's hand and begins walking them quickly towards the police officer. Rasheen realizes what's happening, pulls his hand away and steps back.

SAM

Come on.

(beat, gently)

He'll help you, I can't--

Sam approaches and Rasheen pushes him back. Sam comes towards him again and Rasheen starts hitting him, hard. He's really wailing on him. Sam calmly takes it. Eventually, Rasheen runs out of energy and stares up at Sam, his eyes filled with tears. Sam's heart breaks.

SAM (CONT'D)

Alright. Let's go home.

They walk.

GREAT SONG.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mary Catherine is painting. Charlie comes up from behind and hugs her. Mary Catherine luxuriates in his hug.

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

Before her set, Mississippi is sipping a drink. Two other girls talk at her table but she's not paying much attention. The door to the club swings open. She looks to see who's entering. No one she knows.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rasheen and Sam sit on opposite sides of the couch watching Charlie Rose. Rasheen (who is now wearing a "LONDON CALLING" T-shirt) doesn't seem uninterested even though Charlie has on a panel of political experts. Sam looks at his watch.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary Catherine pokes her head out of the bathroom door and sees Charlie reading on the couch. She shuts the door quietly. She takes something out of the small plastic bag from the drug store, looks down at it. She takes a deep breath.

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

Mississippi is on stage about to start. The piano kicks in. She looks out at the audience, hoping to see Sam. He is nowhere to be found.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam continues watching TV with Rasheen. He's flipping through the channels and lands on FOX News where Trent Lott is shooting his mouth off about something. Sam notices the caption: *Senator Trent Lott, Mississippi (R)*. Seeing it ignites something in him. He stands up.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Annie looks down at the city from her apartment window. Sad, desolate. She takes a healthy hit off a pipe. The exhaled smoke is gorgeous in the light. So is Annie.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary Catherine sits on the toilet seat cover. She doesn't look great. She glances at her watch, then closes her eyes, perhaps offering up a small prayer. She then looks down at the pregnancy test.

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

Mississippi is getting set to leave when she's handed an envelope with her name on it. She opens it. She pulls out the signed contract from last night. Affixed to it is a post-it note that reads: "DON'T MAKE ME GET A LAWYER." She reaches in and pulls out a set of keys.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rasheen is asleep on the couch. Sam looks at the front door, glances at his watch. He then enters his room, quietly shuts the door.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie is asleep. Mary Catherine sits beside him. She hugs her knees to her chest, terrified, confused.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Annie stands in front of a mirror. She unwraps her turban slowly. She drops it and stares at her bald head. She touches it. She looks at herself from many angles.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam is asleep in his bed. We hear the unlocking, opening and closing of the front door. Footsteps. Sam's eyes pop open. We hear his bedroom door open, someone creep in, door closes. We see the silhouette of a woman by the bed, taking off her clothes. She climbs under the covers and grabs ahold of Sam. Sam closes his eyes, smiles.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The early morning sun is just poking through the blinds. Sam opens his eyes and notices Mississippi staring at him. They speak softly.

MISSISSIPPI

Hi.

SAM

Hi.

MISSISSIPPI

I'm here.

SAM

I see that.

MISSISSIPPI

I don't know... why exactly.

SAM

You didn't want to get sued.

Beat.

MISSISSIPPI

Did you hear me sing?

SAM

No.

(beat)

How did it go?

MISSISSIPPI
Don't worry about it.

Beat.

SAM
I'll come hear you sing.

MISSISSIPPI
When?

SAM
One day.

Beat.

MISSISSIPPI
Well... Here I am.

They stare at each other.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)
Hi.

SAM
Hi.

INT. SAM'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Later that morning. Mississippi studies her reflection in Sam's bathroom mirror.

MISSISSIPPI
(amused, baffled)
What are you doing here?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

On her way back to Sam's room, Mississippi, somewhat startled, sees Rasheen at the table, staring at her.

MISSISSIPPI
Oh. Hi.

Rasheen waves.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam's asleep. A hand reaches into frame and yanks the pillow from beneath his head. He looks up to find Mississippi. She's not pleased.

MISSISSIPPI

So I just had a little talk with Rasheen.

Sam sits up.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

I asked about you being his Big Brother and he had no idea what I was talking about.

SAM

Okay, wait--

MISSISSIPPI

(seething)

He said he just met you. On the subway. What the fuck's going on?

SAM

Wait, I'm... Hold on.

(beat)

Good morning.

MISSISSIPPI

Who is he? Why is he here?

SAM

He got separated from his-- He had nowhere to go.

MISSISSIPPI

How old is he?

SAM

Six.

MISSISSIPPI

And you-- Oh, my God, do you like little boys?

SAM

(disgusted)

No!

(quickly)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

He's in foster care, he's been in seven foster homes in six years, I think he was being abused, he says he won't go back--

MISSISSIPPI

Why didn't you go to the police?

SAM

I did. He-- Look, I realize I'm in some hot water here, but I don't know what to do. I'm letting him stay here for awhile until I figure something out.

MISSISSIPPI

How long has he been here?

SAM

... Three... Four days?

(then)

I didn't make him sign a contract, just so you know.

Sam offers a slight smile. Mississippi responds by reaching into her purse and pulling out the contract. She rips it in half and tosses it at Sam.

MISSISSIPPI

(outraged)

You find a six year-old boy on the subway and think you can just keep *him* without telling anyone where he is?

(putting it together)

And you-- He was just here last night, alone, while you were out--

Mississippi sits down on a chair and covers her face. She might be crying. Sam can't tell.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I have the worst taste in men.

Suddenly -- CRASH!! They run out of the bedroom to find--

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Rasheen standing over a broken glass. Shards of glass and milk are everywhere. He starts to walk towards them.

MISSISSIPPI

(to Rasheen)

Wait, honey, don't move.

(to Sam)

(MORE)

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

Grab him.

(Sam doesn't move)

Pick him up!! He doesn't have any shoes on.

SAM

Neither do I.

Mississippi walks over to Rasheen and picks him up and brings him over to the couch. She looks down at his feet and brushes some glass off them. Sam notices his toe is bleeding.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've got some... Hold on...

Sam runs to the bathroom. Mississippi brushes Rasheen's forehead lovingly, takes a deep breath. Sam returns with some neosporin and bandages and hands it all to her.

SAM (CONT'D)

Can you...? I have a blood thing.

Mississippi gives him a look: "Congratulations. You've just become the most unattractive man in the world." She takes the bandages and begins to clean Rasheen up.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Annie comes back to her desk with a cup of coffee. She notices a business envelope on her desk that wasn't there when she left. She sits, opens it. She pulls out a stack of black-and-white photographs. They are all shots of her, at various moments around work.

Except for the one where she is trying to bite the lid off the aspirin bottle, she looks quite beautiful and relaxed in all of them. They were clearly shot through a loving gaze. She is stunned, seeing herself differently than ever before.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam is sweeping up the glass and milk. He looks over to the couch. Mississippi has finished bandaging Rasheen's foot. She has a tender touch with him.

MISSISSIPPI

I think you're gonna live.

Rasheen smiles. Sam then goes back to cleaning up. When he looks up, he sees Mississippi standing by his bedroom door, glaring at him. He goes to her.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam walks into his bedroom. Mississippi closes the door.

MISSISSIPPI

You have to let someone know where he is.

SAM

I will.

MISSISSIPPI

Today.

SAM

He's...

MISSISSIPPI

He's six.

Beat. Sam goes to the door, opens it a crack and calls out to the living room.

SAM

Hey, Rasheen. You wanna go back home?

RASHEEN (O.C.)

No.

SAM

Where do you want to stay?

RASHEEN (O.C.)

Here.

SAM

What will you do if I try to make you leave?

RASHEEN (O.C.)

Run.

Sam looks back at Mississippi - "See."

MISSISSIPPI

You think six year-olds should be able to decide what's best for them?

SAM

Yeah. This one, maybe.

Sam walks out of the bedroom for a few moments. He returns with the stack of Rasheen's drawings and hands them to Mississippi. She looks them over.

MISSISSIPPI

Who did these?

SAM

The six year-old in the living room.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mississippi walks out the front door of Sam's apartment with all her bags. Sam catches up to her.

SAM

You're really leaving?

MISSISSIPPI

Yes.

SAM

Why?

Mississippi stops walking and turns to him.

MISSISSIPPI

I'm not a babysitter.

SAM

He's totally mellow, you won't have to--

MISSISSIPPI

I was talking about you.

Beat. Sam looks genuinely hurt. Mississippi softens.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

I can't get involved with this right now, Sam... I'm trying to get my life together not fuck it up more. And I don't trust you, which is--

SAM

I'm sorry I lied to you. But I'm... a good person. Really. I'm trying to do the right thing here.

MISSISSIPPI

You're gonna take care of him?

SAM

For now. Until I...

MISSISSIPPI

You're a mess.

SAM

Maybe.

(then)

What, you don't need a project?

Mississippi cracks a smile.

MISSISSIPPI

I'm a mess, too, Sam. Trust me.

SAM

So let's... clean each other up.

Beat. Mississippi studies Sam. Why is she so charmed by this guy? It's infuriating.

MISSISSIPPI

Why are you--?

SAM

I have no idea.

They laugh. They don't know why.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know what I'm doing.

MISSISSIPPI

That's clear.

SAM

But I know I like you. I do. Two hours ago, you liked me. Remember? The good old days?

(beat)

You don't have to sign anything. We'll go... moment to moment. I need practice at that anyway.

Mississippi is stone-faced. Sam can't read her. She takes Sam in one last time.

MISSISSIPPI

Bye, Sam.

Mississippi turns and walks about ten feet. She then stops and pulls the spare set of keys out of her purse. She turns and tosses them to Sam. He catches them. Beat. He tosses them back and she catches them. Beat. She tosses them back. He catches them. They're now smiling. Sam does a fake toss and gets her to flinch. He then throws the keys. She catches them.

Sam flings up his arms as if to say "Don't throw them back, they're yours," and walks back to his apartment. Mississippi goes. Sam has reached the door, but realizes he has no way to get in. He looks to Mississippi just as she rounds the corner then looks up to his opened window.

SAM

Rasheen!!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mary Catherine is trying to get down the stairs to the subway but she's swimming upstream - there is a huge crush of people headed the other way. She fights the crowd for a bit, but eventually gives up and lets herself get swept downstream and spit back out onto the sidewalk.

And there, she impassively stands, getting bumped by pedestrians like bumper cars. She hasn't the energy left to fight any of it. Urban madness swirls around her. She doesn't move.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Annie sits across from Sam #2. They're mid-conversation.

ANNIE

See but when I'm happy, I'm always worried that it won't last long, so I never fully enjoy it. And when I'm depressed, I feel like it'll never lift.

SAM #2

(considering this)

Hmm. That's really true.

ANNIE

So I'm trying to let go of this idea that we have to, I don't know... pay for our joy with sorrow or tragedy, that there has to be some sort of karmic balance. But it sure feels that way. You know what I mean?

SAM #2

Absolutely.
 (then)
 You're very smart.

Annie blushes, takes a drink. She's having a nice time.

ANNIE

I do this thing...
 (beat)
 I can't believe I'm telling you this.

SAM #2

Hey, anytime you want an embarrassing story about me, let me know, I got tons.

Annie smiles, then decides to press on.

ANNIE

Okay. About a year ago, I was in this cab and the driver, this Indian guy, started telling me all sorts of... stuff. He was just looking at me in the rear view mirror and he said, "Bliss. Bliss is your birthright." And I was like, "Um... 45th and Madison?" And he said, "You have great potential in this lifetime, but the key to your life is gratitude. You do not give enough thanks." So I said, "Well, how do I do that?" And he said "Simple. Say 'Thank you.'" And I said, "When?" And he said "All the time. Right now." And then he said after I say 'Thank you,' I should say "More, please."

SAM #2

"Thank you. More, please?"

ANNIE

Yeah. That with gratitude, the universe is eternally abundant. So I've been... giving gratitude a shot.
 (looking upward)
 "Thank you. More, please. Thank you. More, please. Thank you. More, please."
 How crazy am I sounding here?

Sam #2 doesn't answer. He's totally enthralled.

SAM #2

Have you noticed a difference?

ANNIE

No.

(laughs)

I mean, yes. I don't know. The whole thing is odd. I mean, who am I even talking to? God? What the hell is *that*? Anyway...

(moving on)

What got you interested in photography?

SAM #2

Oh, I wouldn't call it photography.

ANNIE

What would you call it?

SAM #2

Taking pictures.

ANNIE

Okay. Why do you... take pictures?

SAM #2

I see something I like looking at... I get to keep looking at it.

This hangs in the air for a moment.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

You have any hobbies?

ANNIE

Bad decision making.

SAM #2

(amused)

Oh.

ANNIE

Yeah. I practice a lot.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam and Rasheen enter and see the table has been set, candles are burning. Mississippi emerges from the kitchen carrying dishes. She smiles at Rasheen, then locks eyes with Sam.

MISSISSIPPI

Wash up.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sam #2 and Annie walk slowly. Annie seems to be enjoying herself. Sam #2 seems entirely and blessedly different from the awkward fellow we first met in the office.

SAM #2

No, seriously. They're intense. My dad once tried to get my sister to unionize her junior varsity volleyball team.

She laughs.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

Yeah. But they're great, you know?
(then)

This one time, in second grade, we all got these pictures of Santa Claus that were left blank and we were supposed to color them in. So I colored in Santa's clothes the way I wanted and my teacher, Mrs. Porter -- this miserable woman -- grabbed the paper off my desk and held it up for the class and said: "Samuel here colored Santa's pants blue. Everyone knows Santa's pants are red." And she ripped up the paper and gave me a blank one and made me start over.

ANNIE

(shocked)

Mrs. Porter.

SAM #2

I know. So I came home from school crying, told my parents what happened and my dad came to school with me the next morning, barged into the teacher's lounge and started screaming at Mrs. Porter, "Who says Santa's pants have to be red?"

ANNIE

Go, Dad.

SAM #2

Yeah. So for years, that was like this non-conformist battle cry in my house. "Who says Santa's pants have to be red?"

ANNIE

Yeah, who says?

SAM #2
 So. There you have it. My pops.
 (beat)
 What about your dad?

ANNIE
 Great.

SAM #2
 Mom?

ANNIE
 Oy.

Sam #2 laughs.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Lovely but oy.
 (then)
 This is me.

They've reached Annie's apartment. Annie turns to him.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 This was really nice.

Annie extends her hand.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Thank you.

Sam #2 takes it.

SAM #2
 Thank you.
 (beat)
 More, please.

Annie has no idea how to respond.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

After dinner. Sam and Mississippi make their way through a bottle of wine. Rasheen is drawing at the table.

MISSISSIPPI
 You shouldn't be flattered that I came back.

SAM
 No?

MISSISSIPPI

It's a bad sign. It means you're horrible and... cruel. The only men I trust are gay guys. The rest are *bad*.

(Sam smiles)

Seriously, I'd trust you so much more if you had sex with men.

SAM

Alright, I'll do it.

Mississippi laughs. Beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're here.

Mississippi says nothing. Sam looks over at Rasheen.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hey, Rasheen. Do you know how to spell 'Mississippi?'

RASHEEN

Yeah.

SAM

I don't believe you.

RASHEEN

I can.

SAM

Prove it.

Rasheen calmly pushes his chair back, stands, backs a few feet away from the table to give himself some space. He then proceeds to spell 'Mississippi' thusly:

RASHEEN

EM / EYE / crooked letter crooked letter
EYE / crooked letter crooked letter / EYE
hump back hump back / EYE.

He has a choreographed dance that accompanies the whole thing, acting out the 'crooked letters' and 'hump backs.' It is the oddest, cutest, and most hysterical thing Sam or Mississippi has ever seen. Upon it's completion, Rasheen sits back down and calmly resumes drawing.

INT. ART SUPPLY STORE - DAY

Mary Catherine is stacking brushes at the art store. Sam walks towards her with Rasheen trailing.

SAM
Hey. I need your help.

MARY CATHERINE
With what?

SAM
(obvious)
Art... art supplies.

Mary Catherine sees Rasheen, then pulls Sam away.

SAM (CONT'D)
(to Rasheen)
Wait here.

MARY CATHERINE
Are you crazy? Why is he still with you?

SAM
I'm helping him.

MARY CATHERINE
Well, I talked to my friend Jill who's a social worker and according to New York State law, you've kidnapped him.
(beat)
Look, I get that this is killer material for a novel--

SAM
You actually think--

MARY CATHERINE
Whatever, it's a big deal. You can't just keep him. He's not a goldfish. You need to let someone know where he is.

Beat.

SAM
Are you gonna help me or not?

MARY CATHERINE
You can be a real moron, Sam.

SAM

Thank you.

MARY CATHERINE

But you're also really smart. Think about this.

Sam pulls a few of Rasheen's pieces out of his knapsack.

SAM

Look at these.

INT. ART SUPPLY STORE - DAY - LATER

Mary Catherine, carrying a basket of art supplies, leads Sam and Rasheen to a large selection of paints.

MARY CATHERINE

Okay, pick your colors.

Rasheen smiles as he gets to work. Mary Catherine notes the joy this is giving him. She looks at Sam. Beat.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I called you a moron. It came from love.

Sam nods. No hard feelings.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Please fix this. Your mom would be so upset.

Rasheen has picked out his paints. Mary Catherine looks in Rasheen's basket.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Okay, I think you're good.

SAM

Rasheen, say thank you.

RASHEEN

Thank you.

SAM

(to Mary Catherine, sincere)
Thank you.

Mary Catherine smiles. They start to go.

MARY CATHERINE

Hey, Sam.

SAM

Yeah?

MARY CATHERINE

You've spent some time in Los Angeles.

SAM

Yeah.

MARY CATHERINE

You like it?

SAM

It's okay.

MARY CATHERINE

(hopeful)

Would you ever want to live there?

SAM

No.

Of course. She nods. He goes.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam is finishing laying out all the art supplies on the table, which is covered in newspapers. Rasheen sits patiently in front of a small canvas. When it's all laid out, Rasheen smiles at Sam, who then backs up from the table a few steps and gives a kind of "go forth" gesture.

SAM

Go.

Rasheen picks up a brush.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Rasheen is painting away at one end of the table while Sam writes on his laptop at the other. Curious, Sam gets up and peers over Rasheen's shoulder. Whoa. The kid can paint. Sam sits back down at his side of the table. After a few moments, Rasheen says:

RASHEEN

Sam?

SAM

Yeah.

RASHEEN

I like you.

Rasheen smiles then resumes painting. Sam is stunned. This kid is breaking his heart.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

How long has he had him?

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

Since Annie's party, right before you got back.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Mary Catherine and Charlie sit staring at a magazine.

CHARLIE

What the hell's he thinking?

MARY CATHERINE

Who knows? Wexler's heart bleeds like no other. He was the kid in high school who couldn't bear to dissect the frog.

We now see they're staring at the New Yorker back-page cartoon-caption contest, racking their brains. We should see a shot of the cartoon.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I got nothing. You?

CHARLIE

Nope.

MARY CATHERINE

These things drive me *crazy*.

They stare at it a moment longer.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

What was your great one?

CHARLIE

When?

MARY CATHERINE

With Superman on the therapists's couch?

CHARLIE

Oh. It was: "Sometimes I think everybody'd be better off if I was a bird or a plane."

Mary Catherine laughs, then her laughter abruptly turns into tears.

MARY CATHERINE

Sorry.

She quickly goes to the bedroom. Charlie feels terrible.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

Sam and Annie sit on the steps outside Sam's building.

SAM

So why not?

ANNIE

Cause.

(beat)

He's not what I'm looking for, okay?

Sam looks at her like he's going to need some more info.

SAM

Oh. I get it.

ANNIE

What?

SAM

He's not hot enough for you.

ANNIE

Oh, don't give me that shit, Wexler. After the ten-year parade of little hotties I've watched you pine after.

(disdainful)

With the belly-button rings and the lower-back tattoos, half their lives spent in spinning classes.

SAM

No, it's fine, do what you want.

ANNIE

He looks like he should be making balloon animals at birthday parties. Why do I have to be with balloon animal guy?

SAM

You don't have to do anything. He just sounds great. That's all.

(then)

And his name's Sam. That's a strong name.

Annie looks up towards Sam's apartment window.

ANNIE

Are you sure it's okay to leave him up there alone?

SAM

He's fine. I put on some Leonard Cohen, I'm sure it knocked him right out.

ANNIE

(beat, gently)

Sammy, I know you like this kid, but I thought you were gonna--

SAM

I know, I know, I'm-- I will.

Beat.

ANNIE

What's Alabama have to say about all this?

SAM

Mississippi.

ANNIE

Whatever. Red states.

SAM

(smiling)

She's... I don't know.

ANNIE

Congrats, Sam. Not everyone can get a spouse and a kid in one week's time.

SAM

Impressive, right?

ANNIE

Yeah, well don't go to prison. I need you here for my breakdowns.

MISSISSIPPI (O.S.)

Hi.

They turn and see Mississippi, standing a few feet away.

SAM

Oh, hey.

(introducing)

Uh, Mississippi, Annie. Annie... the famous Mississippi.

They shake hands. Annie turns to Sam.

ANNIE

(quietly)

I'm not famous?

SAM

(ready for it)

Shut up.

ANNIE

So nice to meet you.

MISSISSIPPI

You too.

Beat. Pretty awkward.

ANNIE

I'm going... to leave now.

Annie stands up.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

'Bye.

MISSISSIPPI

'Bye.

She crosses behind Mississippi and as she leaves, she gives Sam a look, mouths "*She's hot!*" Sam smiles. Mississippi sits down next to him. She tries to give him a small kiss, which lands more on cheek than lips. Beat.

SAM

Hi.

MISSISSIPPI

Hi.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door swings open and Charlie and Mary Catherine enter, kissing. She's still trying to carry on their conversation while he kisses her neck.

MARY CATHERINE

People shouldn't be allowed to give him so much shit. The guy's made some of the best films of all time.

(then)

He just makes too many. Every year. Why not one every two years?

Charlie has begun to pull off the light sweater she is wearing and it gets stuck around her face. She helps him with it's removal but keeps talking.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Take some time to recharge, right? Spend some quality time with the wife-slash-daughter. Get out there. Live a little.

CHARLIE

Marry me.

MARY CATHERINE

What?

CHARLIE

Let's get married.

MARY CATHERINE

What?

CHARLIE

Marry me. Be my wife.

MARY CATHERINE

(beat)

What?

CHARLIE

I'm serious. Let's do it.

Charlie goes towards her but she backs away.

MARY CATHERINE

Wait, I... You're asking me to marry you?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Mary Catherine doesn't know what to say.

MARY CATHERINE

We just saw a movie.

CHARLIE

Yes, we did.

MARY CATHERINE

I just wasn't expecting a proposal tonight, you know? I would've worn something totally different.

CHARLIE

You look amazing.

(beat)

So?

Mary Catherine has to sit down, which she does. She still can't believe what's happening.

MARY CATHERINE

You want to marry me?

CHARLIE

Totally.

MARY CATHERINE

Marriage?

Charlie nods. Mary Catherine lets this sink in for a long moment then looks up at Charlie.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I don't buy it.

CHARLIE

What?

MARY CATHERINE

Something's off about this.

CHARLIE

What are you talking about?

MARY CATHERINE

Did this just *occur* to you? Sixty seconds ago? "Let's get married?"

CHARLIE

No. I've been... giving it a lot of thought. And I think... we should do it.

MARY CATHERINE

Uh-huh.

(beat)

You got a, you know... *ring?*

Whoops.

CHARLIE

Well... I will. I mean, you will. Get one. I didn't know you'd be a stickler for protocol.

(smiling)

I didn't ask your dad for permission either, just so you know.

Mary Catherine says nothing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Come on, we're not those people. Just say yes.

MARY CATHERINE

If we're not those people, why even get married? We make fun of married people. And, wait. Didn't I tell you, like *first thing*, that I didn't think I should ever get married?

(prompting)

That I...

CHARLIE

Come from a long of div--

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping)

I come from a long line of divorced people, that's right. I'm not genetically wired for it. And you said you felt the same way. So why this? Why now?

Beat.

CHARLIE

Love?

Mary Catherine laughs, then buries her face in her hands.

MARY CATHERINE

Wow. You really want out, don't you?

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

Beat. Mary Catherine stares at him sadly, then walks into the bedroom and shuts the door.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - STAIRWELL - DAY

Sam is walking up the stairs, sifting through the mail. He sees one of those mass mailings about missing children. He stops walking, studies the faces.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mississippi and Rasheen are on the couch. Rasheen smiles at Sam when he enters.

SAM

I'm sorry, man, you can't stay here anymore. I gotta call someone.

Sam goes to the phone and dials the operator. As he waits, Rasheen suddenly runs out the door. Sam throws down the phone and races after him.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rasheen tears out of Sam's building and runs down the street. Sam isn't far behind. He catches up to him, scoops him up, flings him over his shoulder, and heads back towards his apartment. Rasheen doesn't resist.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie enters, exhausted, defeated. Mary Catherine is on the couch.

MARY CATHERINE

Hey.

(beat)

What's wrong?

He goes into the bedroom.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

We hear Charlie talking. Mary Catherine quietly enters.

CHARLIE

(on phone)

Uh-huh. Yeah. Okay. Well, I can let you know in a day or so, but...

He notices Mary Catherine.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 It's looking good.

They stare at each other.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Seventh floor. Sam #2 sits at his desk, reading, eating a sandwich. Just as he makes a ridiculous face biting into the sandwich - FLASH! He turns and sees Annie holding a small disposable camera. She sticks her tongue out at him, then hurries off. He watches her go, smiling.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam is pacing, on the phone, on hold. He pokes his head out the door and sees Rasheen with Mississippi. Someone comes on the line. He quickly shuts the door.

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)
 Hello. What's this in reference to?

SAM
 Um, hi, I have some questions about...
 foster care?

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)
 Yes.

SAM
 Well... I might be interested in...
 taking someone in or on or whatever.

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)
 Fine. Let me just take down your name
 and we can set up a time for you to come
 in and talk with someone.

SAM
 Okay. It's, uh, Sam Wexler. W - E - X
 as in marks the spot - L - E - R.

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)
 How's 2:30 this coming Thursday?

SAM
 Well... I think that'd be fine, but I
 should tell you, I don't know how any of
 this works, but I'm interested in taking
 someone in who's been in foster care.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

He's been staying with me and I think the situation he was in wasn't great--

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)

Wait. You have this child with you now?

SAM

Yeah.

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)

A child who was in foster care in the state of New York?

SAM

Yeah, but--

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)

And he's living with you, yet you're not his legal guardian? Why is that?

Sam freezes.

SAM

No. No. No, I meant, I know of someone who should probably... There's no one... here with, with me... now. I just had some questions about the whole... deal.

CHILD SERVICES (V.O.)

Where are you calling from?

(then)

Mr. Wexler, you should probably come down here as soon as possible.

Fuck. Sam hangs up.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

One of Annie's co-workers, BETH, watches as Sam #2 leans into Annie's ear and whispers something. She laughs loud. He goes. Beth comes over to Annie's desk.

BETH

Jesus, does that guy do any work?

ANNIE

What do you mean?

BETH

He's down here constantly. Do you have the number for that guy at Idegy?

Annie looks through her Rolodex, writes down the number.

BETH (CONT'D)

He used to always try to talk to me.

ANNIE

Here you go.

BETH

I had to be completely rude to him before he got the idea.

ANNIE

Oh, no, he's a... really good guy.

Beth stares at Annie, who's blushing ever so slightly. She smiles.

BETH

Oh, I didn't realize. You two are having a *romance*.

ANNIE

No, that's... we're not.

BETH

Well, you better clear that up with *him*.
(holding up the paper)
Thanks.

She goes.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam and Rasheen are having a chat. And some pudding.

SAM

"The Pushcart War?"

Rasheen shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

"Where The Wild Things Are?" "Curious George?" Doc *Seuss*? Nothing?

(again, "no")

Dude, we got a lot of work to do.

(beat)

How's you foot?

Rasheen shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't bleed anymore, okay?

RASHEEN

Okay.

They turn to the door as they hear some keys turning. Mississippi enters. She and Sam connect. Something deeper is brewing between them.

RASHEEN (CONT'D)

Hi, Mississippi.

Mississippi smiles.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam closes the door and turns to Mississippi. She pulls a bound manuscript from her bag, hands it to Sam.

SAM

You thief.

She smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

You read them?

MISSISSIPPI

Most of them.

SAM

And?

She throws herself into his arms, kisses him ferociously.

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

You remember what you said to me the first night we kissed?

Sam and Mississippi begin to undress each other.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

No.

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

I was wearing this little black cocktail dress. It was way too nice for the bar we were at, but I thought I could pull it off, you know, like "Oh, yeah, just threw this little number on, no big deal."

Sam and Mississippi fall onto the bed, out of frame.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mary Catherine and Charlie sit, talking. A bottle of wine is open. A sadness hangs in the air.

MARY CATHERINE

And you came to meet us, I was all excited to see you. And you sat down next to me at the table and -- you don't remember this?

Charlie shakes his head "no."

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

You looked at my dress and said, "Where are you going? Prom?"

CHARLIE

(smiling)

Sorry.

MARY CATHERINE

No, it was perfect. Cause finally here he was: the guy who wouldn't let me get away with anything. I always thought of that as the moment you came into focus. Like, ahh, there you were.

(beat)

And now....

CHARLIE

What?

MARY CATHERINE

It's like you're... out of focus all of a sudden. Ever since you got back, just... fainter and fainter. To me. And I'm...

(very choked up)

Just sad to see you go. That's all.

Charlie leans into her.

CHARLIE

I don't know if I'm going to go.

Mary Catherine kisses him tenderly.

MARY CATHERINE

Yes, you do.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam and Mississippi lie in bed, breathing heavily.

SAM

Wow. I'm gonna have to write more. Look what it does to you.

Mississippi laughs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell me some more how great I am.

MISSISSIPPI

... You are really smart and funny and--

SAM

Needy? What about needy?

MISSISSIPPI

Super needy.

(they laugh)

So I read your stories. You gonna return the favor?

SAM

What do you mean?
(then, getting it)

Oh.

Beat. Mississippi studies Sam.

MISSISSIPPI

You're really that scared I'll be bad?

SAM

I think I'm scared you'll be good.

Beat. She opens her mouth, threatening.

SAM (CONT'D)

No, don't do it.

She opens he mouth wider, about to sing a note. Sam covers her mouth playfully.

SAM (CONT'D)

No!!!

They wrestle a bit and then share a tender kiss. Mississippi grabs his face and holds it in her hands.

MISSISSIPPI

Be brave.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - FRONT STOOP - DAY

Sam and Rasheen sit. Sam has a beer. Rasheen sips on a juice box and wears a "Replacements" T-shirt. Mississippi, bags draping off her, stands in front of them, very excited, but in a hurry.

MISSISSIPPI

And get there kind of early I'll try to reserve you a table but it can get crowded and I don't want you guys to have to stand so get there kind of early. And you're sure you know where you're going?

SAM

The city's on a grid. So, yeah.

MISSISSIPPI

Okay.

(beat)

I'm excited. 'Bye.

She goes. Sam takes a sip of his beer, then kind of exhales wearily. Rasheen then mimics him perfectly but with his juice. He also exhales wearily.

SAM

What do we say if she's terrible?

Rasheen thinks for a moment.

RASHEEN

Tell her she looked pretty?

Wow. The kid really is a genius. They clink glasses. Beat. A police car pulls up in front of the building. Sam puts his beer on the step behind his back. An officer emerges from the car and begins walking towards them. Sam gets a bit nervous.

POLICE OFFICER

Sam Wexler?

SAM

Yeah.

The officer picks him up off the stoop and turns him around.

POLICE OFFICER

You have the right to remain silent. If you give up that right, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney... [etc.]

The cop hand cuffs Sam rather violently. Sam winces. Rasheen looks terrified. Neighbors stop and look.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The officer has put Sam in the back of the squad car. He's holding the front door open for Rasheen, waiting for him to get in. Rasheen looks up at the cop.

RASHEEN

He didn't do anything bad.

INT. SQUAD CAR - DAY

They ride in silence, Rasheen up front, Sam in back. Sam finally speaks.

SAM

Hey.

Rasheen turns to look at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Read lots of books. And don't ever stop painting. Okay? Just keep doing it.

(beat)

Promise.

Rasheen nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

And then I'll come to one of your shows in twenty years and I won't be able to afford anything, but you'll, like, sketch something on a napkin for me and that'll be my retirement fund. Okay?

RASHEEN

Okay.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Rasheen watches the officer removes the handcuffed Sam from the back of the car. The three of them walk up the steps towards the station.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Sam is being led to an interrogation room. Rasheen is seated beside an officer's desk. Their eyes meet. Sam tips his chin up at Rasheen the way he did on the subway. Rasheen waves goodbye.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Some time later. Sam, no longer hand-cuffed, sits at a table. The door opens and in walks Sam #2.

SAM #2

Sam? Sam.

They shake hands.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Sam emerges from around the corner. Sam #2 has his arm around him. He's lawyered him out of there, for the time being. Annie is waiting for them. She hugs Sam deeply.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam enters the apartment. Mississippi sits on the couch, arms folded. She looks like she's gearing up for a fight until she sees the look on Sam's face. Neither one says anything. He goes to her, lies down on the couch, puts his head in her lap. She strokes his hair.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY/NIGHT

We should see something that shows some time passing.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mississippi is finishing laying out a full breakfast for Sam. He comes out of his bedroom.

She smiles at him, presents the breakfast with a small flourish. He gives no reaction, heads to the couch and falls down on it.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Annie returns to her desk. A Post-It Note is affixed to her computer screen. It reads: "WHOOPS! FORGOT TO TELL YOU - WE'RE HAVING DINNER TOMORROW NIGHT - 7:30 S #2" She smiles, then deflates.

INT. GYNECOLOGIST'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mary Catherine absent-mindedly flips through a magazine. She can't concentrate and flings the magazine down. A nurse comes out.

NURSE

Mary Catherine?

MARY CATHERINE

Yes, hi.

Mary Catherine grabs her bag and follows her.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam lies in bed, staring up at the ceiling. Mississippi hovers by the door. She eventually sits on the bed.

MISSISSIPPI

You know, my mom always told me it's easier to act your way into a feeling than feel your way into acting.

Sam speaks with a kind of narcotized quality.

SAM

What the hell does that mean?

MISSISSIPPI

It means... you know what it means... Nothing's gonna change by itself. You've gotta change something.

Beat.

SAM

You should write self-help books.

He turns away and faces the wall. She leaves.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sam #2 sits across from Annie, looking at the wine menu.

SAM #2

Red, white, what are we feeling?

ANNIE

Sam.

He looks up at her.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

We need to talk.

He knows exactly what's coming.

SAM #2

You mean the talk where you tell me how great I am but you can't get involved right now and it's not me it's you and you're damaged and wish you could and
(as if choking on the words)
argughhhhhh....

Annie smiles, then kind of frowns. Sam #2 notes this.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

Well, I refuse to have that talk. Red or white?

ANNIE

Sam.

(beat)

I'm not... good for you.

Sam #2 won't say anything. He's just staring at her. It unsettles Annie.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

What?

SAM #2

Are you happy?

(beat)

Answer me. Are you happy?

ANNIE

(obvious)

No, I'm not happy.

SAM #2

I could make you happy.

(beat)

Come on. Let me make you happy. It's time.

Annie rolls her eyes.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

Hey, look. It's not like you don't have options. Go on some of those fancy pills everyone's on. Or even better: let me love you.

(then)

Seriously, let me love you. I am totally up to the task.

(then, matter-of-fact)

Actually, I've already started.

Annie can't take it anymore. She backs her chair up.

ANNIE

I have to-- I can't...

SAM #2

Hey. Don't walk out of this before it's even started. Look at me.

(an order)

Look at me.

She does.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

I get it. I'm not the guy you had in mind. But what if you don't know what's best for you?

ANNIE

And you do?

SAM #2

I believe I do.

Annie can't believe this guy.

ANNIE

Where did you come from, Sam Number 2?

SAM #2

Westchester.

Annie laughs, in spite of herself.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

Hey. You want to know why I hang out on the fifth floor?

(beat)

The first time I saw you, I thought, "Her. Girl with the funny head wrap. I want to be near that girl."

(leaning in to her)

Trust me, I don't usually talk this way, Annie, but I am... gone over you--

ANNIE

(can't bear it)

Shut the fuck up.

(beat)

Seriously, stop.

SAM #2

Why?

ANNIE

Cause it's not... Just stop.

SAM #2

No. I won't. You can hear this.

(beat)

Close your eyes.

Annie looks at him like he's crazy.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

Close your eyes. I just want you to listen to me. Do it.

(beat)

Humor me.

She does. He leans closer to her.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

It's not easy to be adored. You, in particular, have a tougher time with it than most. I get that. But I'd like you to give it a try. Think of it as an experiment.

(then)

I promise I'll be very wonderful at adoring you. It's an area where I feel I have a great deal of talent.

(beat)

And you are worth that adoration.

(MORE)

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

The fact that you don't believe that has nothing to do with whether or not it's true. It's true for me and that's all that matters...

As Sam #2 continues to speak, we move in close on Annie. A GREAT SONG will probably obscure his words as he goes on, but all the information we'll need will be on Annie's face as she reacts and softens. Even though her eyes are closed, we get that what he's saying is totally landing. It's a life-altering moment for her. At some point she opens her eyes. There he is.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The superintendent from earlier is walking by Charlie and Mary Catherine's apartment. He hears them shouting at each other behind the door, rolls his eyes.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

You don't think I'm giving this decision every ounce of energy I have?

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

You don't know everything.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

What do you mean I don't know everything?

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

MARY CATHERINE

You think you know, but you don't...

CHARLIE

What don't I--?

Mary Catherine barrels through all of this. She can't stand still. Charlie has a hard time keeping up.

MARY CATHERINE

Cause I have the trump card. I have the trump card, Charlie, and I'm scared to use it.

CHARLIE

Trump c--?

MARY CATHERINE

(continuous)

I don't want you to stay here or with me if you want out. I want you to be happy, even if I'm miserable. I can't be the one who ruins your life--

CHARLIE

Katie, I'm--

(beat)

What are you talking about?

MARY CATHERINE

And shackles you to a city

or... a woman you don't

want.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Uch, it just feels so awful, like this grand manipulation, when it should be a happy thing, maybe perhaps, but I'm just totally freaked out and I don't know who else to tell but you're my best friend in the whole world and --

Charlie grabs her arms.

CHARLIE

Would you breathe please?

She does.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Good. Now tell me what's going on.

MARY CATHERINE

I can't.

(tearing up)

I'm afraid of what will happen when it hits the air.

Charlie grabs her face.

CHARLIE

Hey. You can say anything to me. You threw a vase at my head three years ago and I stayed, didn't I?

She smiles, but cries a bit harder.

MARY CATHERINE

You ducked.

CHARLIE

I have great reflexes. That's what I'm saying. I can take it.

She shakes her head. She can't say it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Whisper it to me.

Beat. Mary Catherine leans into his ear. She whispers. She stays close to his ear for a few moments then rests her head on his shoulder. We can't see Charlie's face. After a few moments, Mary Catherine pulls back and looks at Charlie. He has tears in his eyes. Finally, he says:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I will live wherever you want.

MARY CATHERINE

I'll move to L.A.

CHARLIE

I'll stay in New York.

MARY CATHERINE

We can move to Los Angeles.

CHARLIE

We can move to Iceland.

(overjoyed)

Fuck it, let's move to Poland. Beirut, I don't care.

Charlie picks her up and twirls her around.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam sits limply on the couch. Mississippi comes out from the bedroom with all her bags. She lets them fall to the floor. She's had it.

MISSISSIPPI

You gonna say anything?

He doesn't.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

Say something.

(beat)

I'm going. For good. You get that, don't you? You're going to be alone.

(beat)

Say something.

(beat)

Say something.

(MORE)

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

(beat)

Speak!!

Mississippi, furious, picks up a pillow from a chair by the door and flings it at Sam. He doesn't react. She grabs a stack of newspapers and tosses them at him. He stares at her but says nothing.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

Coward.

She grabs her bags and goes.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

We see a tight shot of a woman's bare belly. Charlie's face comes into frame and kisses it tenderly.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is a mess. Sam is curled up in a fetal position on the couch. Alone.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

A delivery man reaches Sam's apartment. There's an envelope taped to the door which reads "LEAVE THE FOOD BY THE DOOR." The delivery man opens the envelope, takes the cash, puts the food down by the door and goes.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Sam rides the subway. It's rush hour. He barely notices the body parts crowding him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam is numbly walking along. He spots a small black child from behind at an intersection. The kid is with an overweight black woman. He races to the intersection and catches up to the them, panting. It's not Rasheen.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam sits in front of the TV. The sound is off. The glow and flicker from the screen lights his haunted face.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam is walking home, still not doing or looking great.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Wexler!!

He looks towards the voice and sees Charlie across the street, waving. Charlie walks towards him.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Charlie and Sam sit at the bar, each has a pint. There's a nice ease between them.

SAM

This writer that I know once told me that life was just a continuing series' of realizing what an asshole you were five years ago. Like every five years, he'd go, "Man, I was such an asshole five years ago."

Charlie laughs.

SAM (CONT'D)

But every five years he says it. So if we accept this, that means everything we think and feel and say now, in five years will just be... embarrassing.

CHARLIE

This conversation...

SAM

Humiliating.

CHARLIE

The worst.

They share a small laugh. Sam stares into his beer. His despair is not lost on Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Did you play sports when you were a kid?

SAM

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Remember "Walk it off?" No matter what happened, right? Your eyeball could be, like, hanging out of it's socket, coach would run over, pick you up--

(ala Coach)

"Walk it off"

SAM

(smiling)

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Well, I'm sure that a few of those times, I was legitimately hurt. But just having this concept - "Walk it off" - as a way to, I don't know, heal myself... It worked, you know? I just walked that shit off.

(beat)

I've been feeling lately I'm maybe more resilient than I had thought.

(then)

Of course, maybe I'll feel different in five years.

Smiles. Sam takes this in. They clink glasses.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam walks. He walks and walks. His demeanor seems to lighten a bit the more he moves. Walk it off.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Sam has taken a shower. He studies his face in the mirror. He tries to locate some life behind his eyes.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The phone is ringing, but Sam, slumped on the sofa, makes no attempt to answer it. Finally, the machine picks up.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Alright. I'm guessing you're there but you're in your numb-can't-be-bothered-with-people phase. But I have a tale to tell, Samuel, and you need to hear it, so listen up. The scene: Dinner with #2. Trying to cut him loose. No such luck.

As she speaks, we pan around and see that Rasheen's paintings have been displayed around the apartment.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So get this: You know how everyone's always saying beauty's on the inside? Well, that's total bullshit. Beauty is on the outside. And I love me some beauty. Who doesn't? But here's the crazy thing, Sammy Boy. I'm listening to Sam #2 - listening cause he made me CLOSE MY EYES (so hot) - and he's making a total case for me and him to be an item. And as he's talking it's like the molecules on his face must have... rearranged themselves, cause I open my eyes and suddenly, I'm in front of this beautiful, gorgeous man. Like a total hottie. Who knew? Sammy 2. That rhymes. And you were right, by the way. It is a strong name.

Sam smiles.

ANNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So here's what I have to say to you before the damn beep cuts me off: Sadness be gone. Let's be people who deserve to be loved... who are worthy. Cause we are worthy. You've told me that for years, and now I get to spit it back at you. Yeah, I know. I'm totally gonna get nominated for a Sincerity Award. Fuck it, I don't care, I want to win it. You're a good man, Sam Wexler. Go get yourself loved. That's all I got.

She hangs up. Beat. Beat. Beat. Sam's eyes blink back to life. Something has been awakened. He suddenly runs out of the apartment.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - STAIRWELL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

We see Sam tearing down the stairs, fast, just like at the start of the movie.

EXT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sam bursts out the front door and immediately begins trying to hail a cab. Nothing. He starts running.

We cut to Sam, wide-eyed, astonished. As the song gathers momentum, Mississippi sings with greater and greater depth and urgency. It's like she's singing to save her life.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

*Play me a madrigal about trips to the
moon
Or some old ballad all about two eyes
shining
It can't be loud enough or a moment too
soon.
Sing happy*

We see some quick cuts of the others alternating with shots of Mississippi singing:

--Charlie and Mary Catherine, like goofy tourists, are on a whirlwind tour of famous New York sights, culminating in the splitting of an enormous pastrami sandwich at the Carnegie Deli.

--We see Annie posing for Sam #2 as he takes pictures of her. Her head is completely uncovered. Her poses are joyful, sexy, and unself-conscious. She's found herself in his gaze.

--And then: A child's small black hand painting something spectacular.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

*No need reminding me how it all fell
apart
I need no lyrics singing of stormy
weather
There's quite enough around me that's
breaking my heart
Sing happy.*

And we're back on Mississippi as she brings the song, and our film, to it's rousing conclusion.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

*Give me a hallelujah and get up and shout
Tell me the sun is shining around the
corner
Whoever's interested in helping me out
Please keep it happy*

We see some rapid-fire shots of Charlie, Mary Catherine, Annie, and Sam #2 - kissing, in love, all smiles.

MISSISSIPPI (CONT'D)

*I'm only in the market for long loud
laughter
I'll let you serenade me 'til dawn comes
along
Just make it a happy
Keep it a happy
Song*

And back on Mississippi as she absolutely nails the last note. She finishes - drained, exhilarated, defiant - and soaks in the thunderous applause. We end on Sam, his face sliding up into a wide and grateful smile.

THE END