

SAM'S HIDDEN PIECES

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EXT. RURAL PENNSYLVANIA STREET - NIGHT

A patch of smoke, fresh wreckage of an old car crashed into a birch tree. The ambulance and police car's red lights flicker in the haze making the figures of an OLDER WOMAN and YOUNG EMT out of focus.

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)  
Foolish person!!! Does your job no longer require common sense or higher education? I told you, I'm capable of walking on my own.

YOUNG EMT (V.O.)  
Please, would you just lie down on the stretcher? We need to get you to the hospital.

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)  
Weren't you in my English Lit class?

YOUNG EMT (V.O.)  
I was.

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)  
Did I flunk you?

YOUNG EMT (V.O.)  
You did.

OLDER WOMAN  
Explains a lot.

YOUNG EMT  
Please, Mrs. Sands.

OLDER WOMAN  
Foolish person.

The blurry EMT finally gets the old woman on the stretcher.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD, COMMERCIAL SET, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A PRO FOOTBALL PLAYER, 20s, handsome and uniformed, drops back to pass, football in one hand, glass of milk with a straw in the other. He becomes confused and panics.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
CUT!!!

Behind the camera, the director, SAMANTHA SANDS, (50's) a beautiful, African American woman, pops up.

SAM

Cut!

She walks over to the player. Removing his helmet he hands her the milk.

SAM (CONT'D)

Please don't cut the scene. I cut the scene.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

I called an audible.

SAM

Don't.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

This doesn't feel realistic.

SAM

It's a milk commercial.

Awkward.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)

We need 5 minutes.

SAM

Why?!

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Video village.

Sam shakes her head. Turns back to the quarterback.

SAM

Don't think, DO. Set up, sip the milk, drop the glass, pat the ball, throw.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

Pat the ball?

SAM

Isn't that what quarterbacks do?

FOOTBALL PLAYER

In 1986.

SAM

I knew one who always did that before he threw.

A green light to flirt?

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
So, you've known a lot of  
quarterbacks?

Not a green light.

SAM  
No.

This kid's no quitter.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
After we wrap, maybe the two of us  
could grab a drink at The Long  
Island Bar. Hear it's pretty dope.

SAM  
It was in 1986.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
I see how you did that. Nice.

SAM  
Thanks.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
You wanna?

SAM  
I do not.

AD EXECUTIVE, 30s, all nerves, walks up to Sam, looking like  
she's about to announce a plague outbreak in sotto voce.

AD EXECUTIVE  
Listen, the clients are concerned  
about the color of the milk.

SAM  
It's white.

AD EXECUTIVE  
They're concerned the white straw  
makes it look sort of "taupe-ish".

SAM  
"taupe-ish"?

AD EXECUTIVE  
Yes.

SAM  
Would a blue straw help?

Slumping less, the ad exec is slightly encouraged.

AD EXECUTIVE

It might.

Sam suppresses an eye roll. Walking over, the gruff ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, 40s, does not.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

We close?

SAM

Need a blue straw for the milk.

AD EXECUTIVE

Make it red. It's their brand color.

The AD starts to growl but Sam cuts him off.

SAM

Don't ask, get the straw. Red.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(on his walkie talkie)

Someone get me a red straw, now.

To the crew.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

FLYING IN A RED STRAW!!!

(back to Sam)

Two minutes, Sam. FYI, we're an hour behind.

SAM

OK.

Sam looks assuringly at the ad exec, who briefly has the weight of the world off her ass-kissing shoulders.

Away from the camera and crew, Sam clandestinely reaches into pocket and pulls out a Xanax. A pill on her tongue. A bitter taste of relief.

Wash it down with the milk? Nah. Pulling out a small silver flask, she takes a healthy swig when her cell rings.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello...This is Sam...Is she alright? Can I speak with her?...When she wakes up, please tell her I'm on my way. Thank you.

MONTAGE:

A sparse, acoustic guitar song. CREDITS roll over shots of Sam's car speeding down bucolic, autumn highways. Leaves turning, life turning, a Pennsylvania Fall from grace.

EXT. RURAL PENNSYLVANIA FREEWAY - DAY

Sam drinks a large coffee to keep alert, past the Amberwood city limit sign. Past her old high school where a football game just ended. Barely 20 kids on the gridiron and less people in the stands.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A worn-out scoreboard shows a lopsided loss against a polished opponent. A group of players, give even less of a shit now than before. Head Coach, RUSS CLAYTON (50's, white) hobbles off the field. HANNAH AYCOCK (40's) hugs him.

HANNAH

Sorry. Teddy just couldn't hold on to the damn ball, coach.

RUSS

It wasn't his best Hannah, but hell, he carried us all season.

HANNAH

Sucks his last game had to go that way, boy ain't been himself lately.

Russ flashes a painful smile.

RUSS

Been goin' around.

HANNAH

Tough end to a long ride, Coach. We sure appreciate all you've done.

RUSS

Probably not all of it.

HANNAH

Most of it.

A nod from Russ. He can accept that. It's over.

EXT. SMALL RURAL PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE - DAY

A quaint, well kept home in a timeless Pennsylvania neighborhood. Rustic Thanksgiving decorations on the door, porch and walkway. Rooting through her backpack, Sam pulls out an old set of keys. She opens the door.

SAM

Mom?

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Been a minute since Sam walked into this foyer, past the living room, down the hall. Her old paintings hang throughout. Familiar scent of books, cloves and consistency. A simple home with style.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A bright bedroom, Mama's place, real wood. Leaning over, Sam kisses her mother, DARLENE SANDS (70's), a stately Black woman, in bed. Tense, in transition.

Darlene's leg is elevated in a soft cast. Her face is scraped and bruised. Her soul intact. Mother looks at daughter and no time has passed. A NURSE finishes up.

DARLENE

A stranger in our midst. Home for Thanksgiving?

SAM

Home to see you, Ma. How you feel?

DARLENE

Slightly better than I look. You?

SAM

Fine. Concerned.

DARLENE

No need for concern, foolish person.

(nodding to the nurse)

You can see I'm being well taken care of. She's Asian.

SAM

I see that.

DARLENE

You look a bit...*tired*, shall we say?

She inspects Samantha's eyes. A mother's scrutiny.

SAM

Tired?

DARLENE

Euphemism for shitty.

SAM

Got *that*. I'm fine, mother.

Sam takes her mother's hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm with you until you're feeling better.

DARLENE

God forbid, not a moment longer, right, Samson?

SAM

Let's not do this right outta the gate, Ok?

DARLENE

You really didn't need to interrupt your studies to come down here and old bitch-sit.

SAM

Interrupt what? What do you mean?

DARLENE

Your studies or whatever it is you do with your time.

SAM

What I do is make commercials.

DARLENE

You used to make paintings. You *were* an artist, remember?

SAM

I remember and the only art I actually sold is hanging on your walls.



DARLENE

Beautiful pieces but I'd prefer to spend more time with the artist than the artwork.

SAM

I'm here now, Mom.

DARLENE

You are, thank you. Maybe we can enjoy a retrospective of your erectile disfunction or tampon art films, that *have* made you money, when I'm feeling a bit stronger.

NURSE

Alright, Ms. Sands. I'll check in on you again, tomorrow. Feel better and rest.

Finished her work, the nurse smiles warmly at Darlene, squeezes her hand and leaves.

SAM

Please, let me walk you out. I'll be right back, Mom.

Sam follows the nurse out.

INT DARLENE'S HOUSE FOYER - DAY

At the front door, Sam extends a hand.

SAM

I'm Samantha Sands, by the way.

NURSE

Nice to meet you. Ann Nomura.

SAM

Appreciate all the good care you're giving my mother, Ann.

ANN

My pleasure. Her leg will be Ok, ligament tear, MCL, that will take time. Her face is starting to heal already but she does seem to be struggling cognitively.

SAM

What do you mean? Did the doctor mention that?

ANN

Doctors specialize. They can miss issues outside their fiefdom.

SAM

This is your fiefdom?

ANN

I'm a serf. No fief, I take care of people. Some suffering with Dementia and Alzheimers. Darlene strikes me as somebody who may be experiencing the beginning stages of that. Have you noticed anything?

SAM

Was a little strange what she said about my studies. I haven't been in school for decades. Otherwise, haven't noticed anything but we really don't speak much.

Ann looks a bit concerned. Nods without judgment.

ANN

I see. I'm not a doctor. It could have something to do with the trauma of the accident. Don't know but might be worth looking into.

SAM

Yes, of course.

ANN

Nice meeting you Ms. Sands.

SAM

Sam.

ANN

Sam.

(a reassuring smile)

I'll check back in tomorrow. Meds and instructions are on the kitchen counter. See you then.

SAM

Thank you.

Samantha shuts the door. Worry.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Russ sits in a small corner booth at the Diner, been his for years. Drinks coffee, barely touches his meal. Reads sports on his phone. A YOUNG WAITRESS tops off his joe, stares, makes him uncomfortable.

WAITRESS

Something wrong with the salad?

RUSS

It's fine, Megan. This is Italian dressing, right?

Pissed, she picks up the plate, smells the salad a tad too close to her nose. Puts it down a tad too hard.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about the other night.

MEGAN

Whatever. I know it happens to guys your age.

RUSS

Not just guys my age.

MEGAN

Uh-huh.

RUSS

There are many ages that it can happen to, for chrissakes.

MEGAN

I hear there's a helluva Viagra problem at the colleges.

RUSS

You don't have to be shitty about.

The blank stare of a bitchy waitress.

MEGAN

I gotta work.

Looking around, Russ shakes his head, the only soul in the diner. The waitress saunters away.

RUSS

It's a little warm in here, could you lower the heat a bit?

MEGAN

Sure, no worries.

Right past that thermometer. No intention of lowering it.

RUSS

And this is not Italian.

Back to his phone, switching to a 50+ dating App. Pictures of wholesome looking women his age. Wannabe models for Hallmark. He's uncomfortable with this strange method of mating. Frustrated and dismissive, clicks back to the sports page.

The diner's too damn stuffy. Closed in. Where's the air? Heart beats fast. Can't take a deep breath. Perspiring, he rushes to the men's room.

INT. DINER MEN'S ROOM - EVENING

Russ unbuttons his collar. Splashes cold water on his face. Deep breaths, goddamnit, steady yourself! Drink water from cupped hand, calm the fuck down. A look in the mirror. Sigh.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Composed, Russ sits back down and picks at his salad, NOT ITALIAN. Screw eating. Looking up, SAMANTHA-FUCKING-SANDS picking up a to-go. What?! The past. He drops his money on the table. Gets up to get to her.

Not seeing Russ, Sam grabs her cell and bolts, side stepping a handsome man in trendy jock attire holding the door for her. BRIAN HICKS (30s) smiles. He and his WIFE (30s) come in.

Russ, Brian and some unavoidable eye contact. Old coach, new replacement, discomfort and an awkward handshake.

BRIAN

Coach Clayton?

RUSS

Russ.

BRIAN

It's good meeting you, Russ. I'm Brian Hicks.

Russ is distracted, craning to see Sam.

RUSS

I know who you are.

More discomfort. Brian's nervous. Russ not so much.

BRIAN  
I'll be doing my damnedest to  
follow your act, Coach.

RUSS  
The last act of a desperate man or  
a worn out Vegas act?

BRIAN  
The act of a good, goddamn coach.

His directness, takes a bit of the edge off.

RUSS  
Sure you'll do a great job, Coach  
Hicks.

BRIAN  
Means a lot coming from you.

RUSS  
Not gonna lie. It's a challenge out  
here these days. Parents don't  
want their kids playing the sport  
anymore.

BRIAN  
Out here? You know I went to  
Newhall, right?

Russ looks at Brian, searching. A flash of recognition, then  
sees Sam getting in her car.

RUSS  
Excuse me, need to catch someone.  
We'll talk tomorrow at school.

BRIAN  
No worries. Hey, you did all you  
could this year, coach.

RUSS  
I'm sure you will too. Hope it's  
enough.

Rushing to the parking lot. Russ is too late. Sam drives  
away. He watches, there she goes.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Shit.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Sam sets the take-out on the table. Darlene surprises her, hobbling into the kitchen on crutches. Tough old bird.

DARLENE  
Thanks for picking that up, Sam.

SAM  
No problem.

DARLENE  
You get Cole Slaw? You know I can't eat Chili without Cole Slaw.

SAM  
(looking in bag)  
I think so. Chili with Cole slaw, really?

THE "Darlene" look...

SAM (CONT'D)  
No, I forgot that.

DARLENE  
Too much abuse on that old noggin of yours, huh?

SAM  
What's that supposed to mean?

DARLENE  
Means, I saw your eyes when you got here.

SAM  
I'm fucking exhausted, OK? Had a long day at work, dropped everything to drive here to be with you. That's what you saw in my eyes!

DARLENE  
Uh-huh. Okay.

SAM  
Look, it's just goddamn Cole slaw. I can go back.

DARLENE  
Got nothing to do with the slaw, kiddo. It's fine, don't bother.

Sam sets the table. Places a spoon by her mother.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
I use a fork with Chili, not a spoon. Hope you will too. I can't stand the slurping.

SAM  
(correcting the utensil)  
I don't slurp Mama and yes, I remember. Here's your fork.

Pours iced tea for Mom. Gets a beer out for herself.

DARLENE  
A beer with dinner? Since when?

SAM  
Since shortly after puberty. Is that a problem?

DARLENE  
No problem. I'm no prude.

They sit down to eat, strained and quiet.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
What have you been up to lately?

SAM  
The usual, doing a milk commercial right now with that star quarterback from the...

Darlene, unaware or uninterested?

DARLENE  
(interrupts)  
I can't teach my juniors Hamlet this year because they haven't been adequately prepared. The new Freshman Lit teacher is vapid.

Sam, concerned and confounded, plays along to see where her mother's heading.

SAM  
Vapid, huh?

DARLENE  
A word that would sail right over her pretty little head. Chambers hired her based on cup size. Boobs over brains.

Sam studies the old woman's visage, doesn't understand her comments, out of time and place.

SAM

Mom, you're retired 10 years now.  
What are you saying?

Confused and embarrassed, Dar collects her thoughts. Chuckles defensively.

DARLENE

Of course, foolish person. I'm just remembering all that nonsense.

Uncomfortable.

SAM

Mom, what happened with the accident?

DARLENE

I hit a tree. The tree won. Is this dinner conversation?

SAM

Suppose not.

Stone quiet again. Concern. Sam steals quick looks, studying her mother. Downing the beer, doesn't put a dent on the edge.

EXT. AMBERWOOD STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Russ jogs. A broken warrior with his yellow Lab, BAILEY. Crisp, beautifully clear, a Pennsylvania morning. The daily ritual of dog and master.

Past the WaWa, packed with people getting coffee and Krimpets for the morning commute to Philly. The pooch jams on the breaks to scoff up a sidewalk, soft pretzel. He tugs her along.

RUSS

Let's go, Bailey.

They run to the front of a provincial cemetery, stopping suddenly at the gates. An unseen force will not allow entrance. Dog and human stop instinctively at the same time. They've done this before.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Come on, girl.



Picking up the pace Russ and Bailey amble away from the boneyard.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The morning sun streams in. Sam wakes to the sound of quiet, steady hammering from the yard. Looks out her window. Russ working on the fence. Surprise. Sam opens her purse, takes out a Xanax, pops it in her mouth. Breakfast of Champions.

EXT. DARLENE'S BACKYARD - MORNING

Russ hammers the last slat to the old fence. The back door opens. Sam.

SAM  
Russell Clayton???

He stops hammering. It's SAM! The morning light emphasizes the beauty, he's spent years trying to remember or forget.

RUSS  
(flustered)  
Sam. How are you? Wow, you look...great seeing you.

SAM  
Been a couple millenniums.

Sam's uneasy and happy to see him. Time stops.

RUSS  
You living here, again?

SAM  
Just here for a while, taking care of Mom.  
(points to the fence)  
What are you doing?

RUSS  
(still nervous)  
I'm doing Ok. You know same shit.

SAM  
No. *What* are you doing, with the fence?

RUSS  
I promised your Mom I'd finish this up for her.

SAM  
Nice of you.

RUSS  
She's a pain in the ass.

SAM  
Could've said no.

RUSS  
I did. She's a pushy, pain in the  
ass.

Sam chuckles.

SAM  
You just figuring that out, now?

Russ smiles.

RUSS  
Wanted to knock it out before I  
headed to the school. Didn't wake  
you did I? I was trying to hammer  
quiet.

SAM  
Nah, it was good, quiet hammering.

Uncomfortable moments you wish would last forever.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Like some coffee?

RUSS  
Sure.

SAM  
I'm just not 100% sure where the  
coffee-maker is, though.

RUSS  
I know.

Samantha is puzzled.

SAM  
You do?

RUSS  
I help Darlene with her groceries  
sometimes.

SAM  
You're quite the Eagle Scout.

Russ laughs.

RUSS  
Not quite. We're practically  
neighbors, besides, the old bird  
helped me when I started at the  
school, way back when. Just trying  
to repay her. Or get her back.

SAM  
Judging by the looks of that fence,  
mission accomplished.

RUSS  
(laughing)  
You sure as hell haven't changed.

SAM  
Really? I think I've cultivated my  
bitchiness to a more sophisticated  
level.

RUSS  
Sure as hell prettier than ever.

SAM  
Eyes are the first thing to go,  
huh?

RUSS  
I know someone who may argue with  
that.

A long, awkward look.

SAM  
Come in, coffee.

Russ nods and puts down the hammer.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Reaching for cups and sugar, Sam and Russ get too close and  
accidentally bump heads. Laugh. Sparks. The same.

RUSS  
That was pretty stupid.

Sam points to his forehead.

SAM

Think you got a mark there, Coach.

Russ touches the spot.

RUSS

I get the bruise. You come out  
clean. Just like old times.

Pointed words hit the target.

SAM

Sorry to hear about Jenna.

RUSS

Thanks Sam. She fought hard.

SAM

Always did.

RUSS

You should know.

SAM

Opposite sides of the track.

Ironical chuckles.

RUSS

Yup.

(then)

Saw that Super Bowl commercial,  
pretty cool stuff.

SAM

Thanks, I guess.

No sense of accomplishment from Sam.

RUSS

Don't sell yourself short.

A nod of resignation.

SAM

I don't, just don't give it much  
thought.

RUSS

I get that.

Naturally they move side by side, leaning against the  
counter. Guarded now. Sam abruptly moves away. Russ pivots.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Your Mom, Ok?

SAM  
Leg's gonna take time to heal. But  
she's hard as led.

Sipping that coffee, Russ agrees.

SAM (CONT'D)  
I keep asking about the accident.  
She keeps avoiding the subject. Say  
anything to you about it?

RUSS  
Haven't had a chance to speak with  
her. Stopped by the other day. She  
was sleeping. My buddy down at the  
station said Dar mentioned sun in  
her eyes. Hit the gas instead of  
the brakes. Hit the tree on 3rd.

"And the devil appears". These two together? Jesus Christ!  
Samantha immediately straightens up, creating more distance  
between her and Russ. An old woman's razor thin disapproval.

DARLENE  
Clayton, how'd you get in my  
kitchen?

RUSS  
Broke in. Tried to rob you but  
Sam's been fighting me off.

DARLENE  
(pointed look at Sam)  
I can see that. Looks like she's  
fightin' real hard. You finish my  
fence?

RUSS  
Finished!

DARLENE  
Thank you, owe you a 6 pack.

RUSS  
Absolutely not.

DARLENE  
Absolutely YES. What kind?

RUSS

Jim Beam.

Darlene laughs but with a clear agenda to move him along.

DARLENE

Jim Beam it is, now get on your way. You've got better things to do with your time, than be my half-assed handyman.

The old woman is now practically pushing Russ out the door.

RUSS

I'm a total ass, handyman! How you feeling?

DARLENE

Tits. Now go away.

She literally pushes him out the door.

RUSS

Alright, I see how it is. Don't forget my bourbon, crazy lady. Good coffee, Sam. Good company too.

Russ takes one more sip. Sam let's the compliment slip.

RUSS (CONT'D)

OK, I'm out. You need anything, Dar, call someone else.

DARLENE

If I want it done right, I will.

He stops and looks. Love and respect for the old woman.

RUSS

Really, If you need anything, lemme know.

DARLENE

Please, we'll be fine, Russell.

RUSS

Feel better, Lady Bug.

Russ squeezes Dar's hand. Turns to Sam, one more look. Uncertainty, then a soft embrace. Eyes close, Sam melts into the hug. Not pleased, Darlene observes, face tense and uneasy.

Sam opens her eyes to Mama's disapproving glare. Body tightens. Russ feels the change as Sam gently pushes away.

SAM  
(collecting herself)  
Good seeing you.

RUSS  
Sure is. I'll check in again, soon.

DARLENE  
I'm sure you will.

Russ leaves. Darlene shoots the icy "mom" gaze at Sam. Respecting her mother's condition, she bites her tongue and swallows hard.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Still on a "Sam" high, Russ hurries into the locker room equipment cage. TEAM MANAGER and new coach are there already. Loud PLAYERS, line up, handing in their battle gear. Brian logs in the returns and stores them away. Pandemonium.

RUSS  
Sorry gentlemen, I got hung up.

Skinny kid, BRUNO VALENTINE, 16, claps his hands coach-style.

BRUNO  
You're late, Clayton. Gimme 10!

Players laugh, Russ guffaws.

RUSS  
How 'bout I give you 5 across your lips?

A collective, elongated, "Oh!!!"

BRUNO  
Damn Coach, don't hate. That kinda talk can get you "cancelled".

RUSS  
Too late, I was born cancelled.

More troop laughter. Stepping in Russ opens his laptop

BRIAN  
(to the kids)  
Enjoy the giggles while you can  
'cuz playtime's over.  
(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Crying time starts Monday when we  
hit the weights. Nothing funny  
about 1-9!

Russ looks at Brian. Was that a shot? Senior star, TEDDY  
AYCOCK (17), steps to the cage and sadly hands in his gear.

TEDDY

Coach.

RUSS

Seems like just yesterday I was  
fitting you for a helmet on the  
Frosh squad. Who knew the kid who  
couldn't put on his shoulder pads  
would end up ALL-COUNTY.

TEDDY

You Coach.

A smile, Russ likes this kid.

RUSS

'Suppose I did. I'm good that way.

Quick, clumsy taps on the laptop.

TEDDY

Coach C, you gotta minute?

RUSS

Gotta finish up, bud. Can't now.

TEDDY

Kinda important.

Looking up, that got the old man's attention.

RUSS

Come by my place tonight around 8.

TEDDY

Thanks, Coach.

A nod as the teen moves out of line. Brian watches.

BRIAN

If he's got any chance of playing  
college, that boy better know D-1  
coaches won't be holding his hand.

RUSS

Never held a player's hand in 30  
goddamn years on the job.



BRIAN

Whoa, that's not what I said.

RUSS

Sure as hell sounded like it.

BRIAN

I'm not putting it on you, Coach.

RUSS

This ain't my first pool party. I know the drill.

BRIAN

You're taking it wrong. I heard how you were there after his father died. I respect that. I'm just saying what we both know are the facts of college ball, that's all.

Tense. Had enough.

RUSS

Let's just move on and get this shit knocked out, Coach.

EXT. AMBERWOOD STREETS - DAY

Sam drives yesterday's streets. Nothing's changed but the cars. She pulls in. Is this a new market? Squinting, she tries to place what it was.

SAM

The feed store?

The gut punch of being back where she does not want to be, hits her hard.

SAM (CONT'D)

Lord, help me.

Parks away from the cars. Pulls out an old Kodak film container and the half smoked joint inside. Lights up, puff, puff again and puts it out. Head on the wheel, eyes closed.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Sam wanders the aisles trying to get her bearings. Slightly stoned, clearly out of place. She's watched by a woman her age. LAURIE MACSHANE (50's).

LAURIE  
Samantha Sands?

Sam doesn't expect to hear her own name.

SAM  
Do we know each other?

LAURIE  
Laurie MacShane. We went to school together.

Sam tries to place her, hiding she cannot.

SAM  
Right, Laura?

LAURIE  
Laur-eee.

SAM  
Laurie.

Laurie nods.

LAURIE  
You don't remember me.

SAM  
I do.  
(giving up)  
I don't, I'm sorry, been a while.

LAURIE  
About 20 pounds ago. Gym class, I shot a lay-up, ran into the iron pole under the basket. Smashed my nose, eye, cheek, lip, lotsa blood. You...

SAM  
Helped you to the nurse's office. Shit, I remember. Your hair was bigger, puffy, curly.

LAURIE  
I had a perm, like Cher.

SAM  
Right, just took me a minute. I cut a lot of gym classes.

LAURIE  
You're back, now?

SAM  
Temporarily. Helping my mom out.  
She...

LAURIE  
(interrupts)  
Got in a wreck. My wife, Ann, is  
her nurse. Small town.

SAM  
Ann's your wife? Guess I forgot  
just how small it is.

LAURIE  
Too damn small in *many, many*  
*wonderful* ways.

SAM  
Truth.  
(then)  
Ann's doin' a great job with mom.

LAURIE  
She's the best. Been together 8  
years. There's like 1000 people in  
Amberwood, two Lesbians over 35. Do  
the math.

Urgh, small talk.

SAM  
Makes sense. O-K. Great seeing you  
again.

LAURIE  
Lemme know if you need any help.  
I'm the bank manager. Very exciting  
shit. You're impressed, hell, who  
wouldn't be? Dial it back, sister.  
I'm just like you.

SAM  
I can tell and I'm past the initial  
speechless admiration.

Laurie smiles, appreciating a good wise-ass.

LAURIE  
Just two strong bitches keepin' it  
real in the cereal aisle.

SAM  
Fuck yeah.

LAURIE

You know where to find me.

SAM

The bank or the cereal aisle.

Wheeling away her too fucking loud cart, Sam turns again to Laurie, also wheeling loudly in the other direction.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's the gluten-free bread?

LAURIE

New York. Why ya wasting your time with that shit? Carbs is carbs just ask my ass.

SAM

Didn't your mother ever tell you, help people the way they want to be helped?

LAURIE

Nope. But you're shit outta luck here with gluten. We've got Italian, white bread and more white bread.

SAM

Like the population.

Kindred spirits...

LAURIE

Atta girl.

Sam does a faux-curtsy.

SAM

White it is.

LAURIE

Aisle 3. Talk soon.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Brian and Russ walk silently to their cars. What's with the old coach? Remnant anger? Melancholy? Both?

BRIAN

Gonna miss it?

RUSS

Don't know. Do know it's time to move on. Hell, not even sure they'd have had me back.

BRIAN

They would have.

RUSS

Not sure they should have.

BRIAN

Hope you're not taking what I said back there, personally. Just trying to light a fire under their sorry asses, nothing to do with you.

RUSS

Who the fuck knows? Probably did have a shit ton to do with me. I'll get over it.

BRIAN

Wouldn't have taken the job if it wasn't your decision to go. I played against you in the conference championship 19 years ago. Always respected you. Hell, everyone did.

RUSS

"DID" is the operative word here.

BRIAN

Come on, Coach, I don't believe that bullshit. You know how good you are.

RUSS

Thanks for saying but it's time. I can let it go.

Brian puts out his hand. They shake.

BRIAN

We good?

RUSS

Except for you gaining 300 yards in that goddamn game.

BRIAN

But y'all won. Needed a badass coach to beat me that day.

RUSS

Don't fuck up, 1 and 9 is a bitch  
to improve upon.

In his car, Russ smiles and drives away. Still a cool mofo.

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The last glimmer of sunset knifes through the window. Sam sits at an aging easel in a timeless room. Dark wood, classic furniture. Her old workstation still intact.

A breath, finally relaxed for the first time back in this house. Looking at mother's upright piano, Sam notices something hidden behind it. She cranes to get a better view, then approaches, curiously.

SAM

What the hell?

Sam strains to fit her arm behind the piano.

SAM (CONT'D)

Whatcha hiding back there, Dar?

Pulls out an old canvas, it's surface, charcoal gray. She remembers this forgotten and unfinished piece. She brings it to her easel. She hesitates.

Opens the old leather doctor's bag, smells the paint, pulls out the brushes and rags. Don't move, just sit and stare at the gray abyss. The faint sound of a family across the street laughs, plays board games.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let's see whatcha got.

Determination, then hesitancy before she dives in. Mix the silvers and the marigold. A celestial combination. Shut up and paint.

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The sun's now faded and so has Sam, frustrated and blocked, after just painting the base with hints of light and stardust. Murky purple is applied but there's no form.

A mellow piano breaks the silence. Darlene sits awkward on the stool, leg sideways, working the keys. A familiar piece, calm, searching for a resolve it never finds. Daughter looks at mother. Slight smiles, old rituals of detente.

SAM

Reminds me of when we'd get back  
late from visiting Daddy at the VA.  
You'd play piano and let me draw  
until I got sleepy.

Darlene strains, unable to recall? Willing to forget?

SAM (CONT'D)

Remember?

DARLENE

Course, I remember, foolish person.  
I'm old not stupid.

Sam feels Dar's mental strain. Recalcitrance from her mother  
or a bigger problem?

SAM

Bringing Daddy those Paydays. He  
always made sure I ate as many as  
him.

Nothing strikes a chord of recognition. Frustrated, a mental  
roadblock of the past, then, a rush comes flooding back and  
Darlene blurts it out like a revelation.

DARLENE

You'd end up sick all night! Sick  
and crying about having to leave  
your Daddy. I remember.

A somber wave hits Sam. Stares at the canvas, unable to look  
at her mother, fearing the worst.

SAM

He'd start to get sad and tired and  
just stop talking.

DARLENE

Wasn't easy.

Sam's face harbors old disappointment, seeing Darlene, callus  
to the memory staring stoically at the piano keys.

SAM

Never hear you talk about Dad or  
those times. Ever think about it?

DARLENE

I don't dwell on the past. Nobody  
should, waste of time. Today's got  
enough problems. Those red eyes of  
yours tell me, we both have plenty.

Another shot, but screw it. Sam's overcome. Sympathetic for a struggling mother with a tough past, she strains to recall.

SAM

What's going on, Mom?

Sam crosses the room like a vapor, kisses Darlene's head.

DARLENE

I'm just tired.

SAM

Me too, mama. Think I'm going to bed. You need help to your room?

Darlene waves her off.

DARLENE

Don't you patronize me, girl. I'm fine, gonna play a bit longer.

SAM

'Night.

INT. RUSS HOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Sipping a beer, finishing the dishes with the TV news droning inaudibly, Russ tosses the dog the last of his sandwich.

RUSS

Alright Bailey, that's it with the hoagie. I gotta sleep with you tonight.

A warped doorbell rings. Russ opens the front door to a cold, Fall night, Teddy and his girlfriend, AMANDA (17).

RUSS (CONT'D)

Come on in.

Settling in the kitchen. The usual place for player visits. Russ shuts off the TV. Dries the last dish.

RUSS (CONT'D)

You wanna soda?

TEDDY

We're good, coach.

Bailey loves Ted, who pets her while she licks his face. He picks up a picture of Russ, fresh out of high school, with his buddies at a concert in front of the old Spectrum. He looks more like Sid Vicious than a football coach.



TEDDY (CONT'D)  
Damn, Coach, punk rock!

RUSS  
Definitely a punk.

TEDDY  
Tight look.

RUSS  
Thinking about bringing it back. A  
little geriatric angst.

Russ plops up on the counter, gets to the point.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Enough bullshit. What's up?

Ted and Amanda look at each other. A nervous laugh.

TEDDY  
(to Amanda)  
You tell him.

AMANDA  
Just tell him.

RUSS  
Somebody tell me...  
(smiling)  
Wait, you get the scholarship?

TEDDY  
No.

RUSS  
What then?

AMANDA  
I'm pregnant.

Russ is caught way off guard. His face can't lie.

TEDDY  
We're both turning 18 after the  
first of the year. Thinking about  
getting married and moving to East  
Stroudsburg, maybe walking on.

AMANDA  
We can both work, go to school,  
take turns with the baby.

RUSS

Ok.

TEDDY

Thing is we haven't told our folks yet. What do you think, Coach?

RUSS

Think you need to tell to your folks.

TEDDY

What do YOU think, Coach?

RUSS

Don't know what to tell you, not my place. But that's a big goddamn slice of life.

Russ looks at Teddy. Teddy's looking for more.

TEDDY

Level, Coach.

RUSS

I think, you're both young and I think it's a pretty bad idea.

AMANDA

Teddy's always done a lot more than most of the kids our age.

RUSS

He sure as hell gonna have to now and so will you.

AMANDA

After his dad died, a lot was on him but he still played ball, worked, helped his mom with his brothers and sisters. He can handle it.

RUSS

True but maybe he deserves a chance to be free of all that for a while, especially if he wants to try and play college.

TEDDY

I'm up for it.

A long, skeptical study of the young man's face.

RUSS

You better be, because this is  
extra large "grown-up" shit.

(to Amanda)

How 'bout you, ready to be a  
mother, Amanda? You got younger  
siblings. You know what it's like  
for your mom.

This hits home, Teddy catches her waiver. Steps in.

TEDDY

It's gonna be great. We're excited.

RUSS

Amanda?

AMANDA

(less convinced)

Excited. We love each other a lot.

An absent nod.

TEDDY

You don't think we can handle it?

RUSS

I didn't say that, Ted.

TEDDY

You thinking it?

RUSS

Yes, I am. But you both seem to  
have your minds made up AND you  
shouldn't until you talk to your  
folks. This ain't football, this  
is a human life. Not just one but  
three.

A dismissive smile, can't cover the young woman's doubt.

RUSS (CONT'D)

See what *they* have to say.

TEDDY

I got that. That's the plan but it  
ain't gonna change how we feel.

Teddy turns abruptly to Amanda.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Right, baby?

AMANDA  
 (less sure)  
 Of course.

A long silence.

RUSS  
 If there's anything I can do, and  
 I'm not sure what the hell that  
 might be, lemme know.

TEDDY  
 Just be happy for us, Coach.

An absent head bob of resignation.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the bed, on her laptop, on the spot. Sam edits her milk opus. Last tweak, hits play.

INSERT: *A WIDE RECEIVER jumps over two defenders, hauls in a perfect spiral for a TD. STUD QB, sits on the ground, battle weary players around, helmet pushed up, sips his milk. Self satisfied. Why not? MILK CAPTION APPEARS.*

Sam, both creator and witness, shakes her head. Self satisfied? Fuck no. Picks up her cell.

SAM  
 It's me. Made the tweaks...Ready as  
 it's gonna be. Sending it now...  
 She's hanging in...Gonna be awhile.  
 All good, just wiped. Lates.

Tossing the cell, Sam pulls out the silver flask from her hoody pocket, runs her fingers over the initials "H S", engraved on it. A big swig. A small pill. She loads a new file in the editing bay.

INSERT: *Old Super 8, Ektachrome 100D film, flickering images and colors from another time. A LITTLE GIRL on the back of a small horse, cries. HANDSOME SOLDIER, 20, in uniform, grasps her waist, keeps her safe.*

*The little one keeps crying, until the man lifts her off the animal, hugs her, kisses away her tears.*

Shut the damn laptop! Pulls out another pill. The green one, this time. Pops it in, washes it down with another pull from the flask. Numb. Sam turns off the lamp. Darkness.

INT. DARLENE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Darlene opens her eyes, looks at the alarm clock. 5:10 am, still dark.

DARLENE  
Shit! I overslept.

She gets up and gets dressed. Struggles to get her work clothes on. Damn leg.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
A staff meeting at seven o'clock.  
Ridiculous.

EXT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Darlene stumbles out of the house into the dark morning. It's hard to move with a damned cane and leg brace. Frustrated, she bulls her way into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - EARLY MORNING

Where the hell are the keys? Remembering. THE SHELF. Lifting an old polish can, reveals the hidden spares. Pissed and cold, Dar gets back in her car, oblivious to it's smashed hood from the accident. NEGLECTS TO OPEN THE GARAGE DOOR.

She tries to start it. Again, again, AGAIN! Why won't the damn thing start? Mistakingly, she hits the horn.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sam bolts straight up. Instinctively, runs to her mother's room. She's gone.

SAM  
Mom!?

INT. GARAGE - EARLY MORNING

Another attempt to start the car, then another. Finally, the damn piece of shit turns over.

INT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Sam hears the car roar in the garage. Connects the dots, runs for the door.

SAM

Oh, God.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Bursting into the garage, Sam barely stops her from throwing the old car in reverse and crashing it through the door. The garage is full of pale blue car exhaust. Sam turns off the Buick and yanks Darlene out into the yard.

EXT. DARLENE'S BACKYARD - DAWN

Frazzled and dismayed, Darlene does not understand.

DARLENE

What do you think you're doing? I'm gonna be late for work, there's a damn meeting!

SAM

There's no meeting. No work. You been retired for years. Understand?

Darlene struggles to put it all together.

SAM (CONT'D)

Mom?!

DARLENE

What are you talking about?

Fear. Confusion on Dar's face. Sam's seen enough. Drained, taking her mother's hand, she leads her back to the house.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY

Dar looks small on the edge of the exam bed. Sam's by her on a chair. Pecking info into his Apple is a DOCTOR (35). Signed photo of him and Fauci on the wall. He turns to Darlene and hands her pictures of a clock with no hands drawn in.

DOCTOR

Please, draw in the hands for 9:00.

DARLENE

Are you kidding me? I'm a teacher.

DOCTOR

I know, please, Mrs. Sands.

Reluctant, resentful drawing.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Ok, now 2:30.

Festering impatience. The old woman starts to draw again, then has to stop and think. Finally hands it to the doctor, take the goddamned paper! He looks at the image.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
What were the three words the nurse gave you to remember?

Full frontal annoyance now.

SAM  
Go ahead, Mama. Seems ridiculous but just tell the doctor.

DARLENE  
Banana, yellow. Wait. Doorway? Yellow, or I don't know. This is asinine. I can tell you, that's a picture of you and Dr. Fauci on the wall and I don't know which one of you I like less.

Doctor shoots a look to Sam, then a weak smile at Darlene.

DOCTOR  
That's fine Mrs. Sands. These are just preliminary tests but you did struggle a bit with them. Let's get you to the specialist and go from there.

DARLENE  
Why?!

DOCTOR  
To be sure. That's why.

DARLENE  
Sure of what? You're quite the politician. Cut the shit, spit it out.

DOCTOR  
Mrs. Sands it could be a lot of things. Post Concussion Syndrome? Maybe. Could also be the beginning stages of Dementia. But it's much too early to go there. Let's have the specialist take it from here.

DARLENE

I don't have Dementia. It's all about the damn concussion.

SAM

That a strong possibility?

The doctor chooses his words carefully, of course.

DOCTOR

Possible? Maybe. Probable, I don't know. The nurse will give you a referral for the specialist. Let's not jump to any conclusions.

DARLENE

No, God forbid, you make an informed decision. "Maybe", "probable"? I could get that from my mechanic. Just to pass it on to someone with better malpractice insurance, huh?

Sam looks over at Darlene, who sits stiff necked and stoic. The doctor gets up to leave.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry you feel that way, Mrs. Sands. We'll talk soon.

The doctor shuts the door. Sam gathers her mother's things.

DARLENE

Complete bullshit.

SAM

We'll go see the specialist.

Daughter and mother lock eyes.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm here for you.

Big ironic chuckle.

DARLENE

You're here for me now? Gonna be in my life, take care of me, now?

SAM

Mom, you're upset. Understandably. Let's not do this.



DARLENE  
Just think it's funny. Been  
avoiding me since you ran away. But  
now you're "here"?

SAM  
I didn't run away. I was sent away.

DARLENE  
You were supposed to come back.

Sam felt that but lets it go.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Get me the hell out of here.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Russ is lost in "Russ World" walking out of the bank. Laurie  
walks in, cheesesteak take-out and soda in one hand,  
Tastykake chocolate cupcakes in the other.

RUSS  
Eating light?

LAURIE  
It's diet soda.

RUSS  
Nice. You check on that second  
mortgage for me?

LAURIE  
Why the hell you wanna do that? You  
got money.

RUSS  
I told you, I might want to travel.

LAURIE  
Where to Scranton?

RUSS  
Get me the numbers, OK?

LAURIE  
Stupid idea.

RUSS  
Indulge me.

LAURIE  
You, alright?

RUSS  
I'm fine, why?

LAURIE  
You look not fine.

RUSS  
I'm good.

Laurie's not buying.

LAURIE  
(singing with a twang)  
You got that faraway look in your  
eyes, baby.

RUSS  
It's gas. Your singing makes it  
worse.

LAURIE  
You're not really thinking about  
leaving are you?

RUSS  
Maybe. Not 100% sure yet but it's  
looking that way, possibly.

Knitted eyebrows, a tough book to read.

LAURIE  
You're one decisive son-of-a-bitch.  
(then)  
Samantha Sands is back in town.

RUSS  
I'm aware.

LAURIE  
Been a while, old man. Should get  
back out there.

RUSS  
I'm out there.

LAURIE  
I'm not talking about your  
personality.

RUSS  
Funny.

LAURIE  
Ya know. *Samantha Sands*.

RUSS  
You said that. I talked to her  
already, a couple of days ago.

LAURIE  
(feigning surprise)  
You talked to a girl?

RUSS  
Please stop.

LAURIE  
Inside info. I'm gonna bring a  
Bundt Cake over for them tonight.

RUSS  
A Bundt cake?

LAURIE  
Yawp.

RUSS  
You're baking it?

LAURIE  
I am. Using genuine "Bundts".

RUSS  
So cruel. How do you live with  
yourself?

LAURIE  
I'm going to ignore that, enjoy my  
healthy meal and maybe, just maybe,  
I'll see you tonight if you care to  
bring over a dessert wine.

RUSS  
You can't invite someone to  
somebody else's house.

LAURIE  
Just did. DESSERT WINE.

RUSS  
Jim Beam?

LAURIE  
Perfect.

RUSS  
I don't know, she seemed less than  
interested.

LAURIE

That's only because you're less  
than interesting. DON'T BE A PUSSY.  
I'm a lesbian and actually find you  
strangely attractive.

RUSS

Thanks?

LAURIE

You're invited. Period.

Takes a big sip from her straw, flicks it like a cigarette  
and does her best, Olivia Newton-John, Grease voice.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

See ya later, stud.

Russ gives an unsure chuckle of "maybe".

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Looking through the cabinets. Got to make dinner. Sam's  
pretty face is vacant, worried. One gulp, she downs a glass  
of Bordeaux, pours another. Just hold it in! Nope, eyes tear.

INT. RUSS CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

STUDENTS shuffle out. Russ shuffles paperwork. Stops,  
contemplates, picks up his cell. Dials.

RUSS

Sam, It's Russ. I was thinking  
about stopping by on my way home,  
check in on the old bird. Maybe  
fix that leaky pipe under the sink.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam listens, uncertain, intrigued.

SAM

Which one?

RUSS (V.O.)

How about both, wise ass.

Finally a smile.

SAM  
That's really sweet of you, Russ  
but I don't know. Mom's resting  
right now. Been a shit day.

RUSS (V.O.)  
Everything OK?

SAM  
Yeah, I mean, no. Lots going on.  
Trying to put it all together.

INT. RUSS CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Russ spins a football in his hand. Nervous habit.

RUSS  
I gotcha. Need to talk, you've got  
my number. Take care, send the old  
girl my best.

Hangs up the phone. Damn, knew I shouldn't have called.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam's thinking hard, puts a pill on her tongue, thinks more.

INT. RUSS CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Getting up, Russ gazes out of his classroom window. Trapped.

CELL PHONE RINGS:

Checks the number. Picks up.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam wipes a tear. Knocks down more wine. Talks on her cell.

SAM  
How about I order pizza?

RUSS (V.O.)  
I'll get the pie. It's on me.

SAM  
You sure?

RUSS (V.O.)  
See ya in an hour.

SAM (V.O.)  
Thanks, Russ.

RUSS  
You bet.

Sam hangs up. Feels better. Just a little.

INT. RUSS CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stuffing papers in his old leather case, Russ is feeling it. He's out the door. Not quite. Teddy and Amanda pop in.

TEDDY  
Coach?

RUSS  
Guys. How's things?

On edge, Teddy sits on the edge of the desk.

TEDDY  
We spoke with our folks.

The boy's face tells the tale. Russ knows what's coming.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
They're freakin' out a little.

Amanda's quiet, complicit, complication's got her tongue.

RUSS  
I figured as much. Now what?

TEDDY  
Sticking with the plan. Hoping maybe you could talk to them. Especially mom. She likes you.

RUSS  
Me?

TEDDY  
Why not?

RUSS  
T, you know how I feel about this. Even if I thought it was a good idea. Not my place.

TEDDY

Still got faith in me, right,  
Coach? You could let them know  
that. Ease their minds.

RUSS

Faith's got nothing to do with it.

Teddy looks to Amanda. Picks up the ball from the desk. Looks  
for comfort. No dice.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Give yourselves a chance to live  
your lives. To grow.

TEDDY

We can still grow.

RUSS

Come on, goddamnit, this ain't  
football. This is a baby. You gotta  
be responsible all the way.

It's getting too real for Amanda. Russ sees that. Teddy takes  
charge.

TEDDY

What do you suggest?

RUSS

Options. Lot's of great people out  
there, can't have kids. People at  
a "more ready" place, than you two.

TEDDY

You sound like my mother. What the  
hell?

Teddy's unraveling, making Amanda's even more uneasy.

RUSS

Son, you need to calm down. We're  
concerned that's all.

TEDDY

Fuck the concern. I'm asking for  
support, not concern.

RUSS

You're asking me to bullshit you  
and your parents. Not gonna happen.

TEDDY

Fuck it and fuck you, don't need  
your help.

Amanda's tear-gates burst wide open.

AMANDA

Teddy! Stop, right now. Apologize.

The teen knows he's done it. Now *she's* upset. WTF?! Breathe.

RUSS

Ted, we're all just trying to...

TEDDY

It's cool. Shouldn't have come  
here. Sorry I cussed you out. We  
got this.

(to Amanda)

Come on, babe.

Grabs Amanda's hand, hits the hole, runs for daylight.  
Drained and helpless, Russ pines "have I failed again?"

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Sunnier now, Samantha cleans up her art station and  
straightens. Darlene walks in, looks around, seems confused,  
hmmmm, what's up?

DARLENE

What are you doing?

SAM

Cleaning up my mess. I wake you?

DARLENE

No. And the mess doesn't bother me.  
Glad to see you painting again.

SAM

Really not painting. I figured I'd  
tidy up a bit. Russ is bringing by  
pizza for us.

Dark clouds forming fast.

DARLENE

Why?

SAM

*Why?* Just a nice gesture.



DARLENE

Nice my ass. I know what it is.

SAM

Stop, alright?

DARLENE

The man's been through enough, Sam.  
Leave him be.

SAM

He called, wanted to help, that's  
all.

DARLENE

I know what he wants, so do you.

SAM

Quit making this a big deal.

DARLENE

Quit thinking only about yourself.

SAM

That's rich coming from you. In  
case you haven't noticed I'm 54 and  
I don't need to hear this shit,  
anymore! I came here to help you  
and that's what I'm trying to do.

DARLENE

How's helping me involve Russ  
Clayton?

SAM

You're the one having him fix your  
fence, help you with groceries. I  
didn't think it was a problem.

DARLENE

Bullshit. That's different and you  
know it.

SAM

Look ma, If he's not welcome, we  
can...

DARLENE

(interrupting)

It's got nothing to do with *him*!  
It's about you AND him. Hear me?

A deep breath. Just let the waters calm and clear up.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Get off the booze and Xanax, girl.  
Get your head out of your ass.  
You're too old to keep making the  
same mistakes.

SAM

What's your excuse?

DARLENE

(yelling and red faced)

I've got no excuse! I've done my  
best. I can sure as hell admit it  
hasn't been good enough but at  
least I don't let the same damn dog  
bite me twice!!!

Darlene's shaking with anger.

SAM

I don't want to upset you. I'll  
get someone over here for you. Russ  
and I'll just go out.

DARLENE

I don't need anyone over here, not  
you, not anyone! I can take care of  
myself. Forget it, you never learn  
do you?

Darlene hobbles out of the room, leaving Sam, uncertain.

INT. RUSS' TRUCK - EARLY EVENING

Russ pulls his truck over. Dar's house is ahead in the  
distance. Sam's always been in the past but not now. Looks  
down at the pizza box. Anxiety. What the hell am I doing?

INT. DARLENE'S FOYER - NIGHT

DOORBELL RINGS

Sam opens the door. Russ hands her the pizza box like a  
bouquet of flowers. A moment. A look. Both overwhelmed, both  
relieved, both completely uneasy and unsure.

Caution be damned, Russ hugs her. A reassuring squeeze. Sam  
gives in. Holds on, long. Eyes closed. Lets go. Both  
embarrassed. Turned on. Pulling back, Sam composes herself.

RUSS

You must really like pizza.

Sam laughs.

SAM  
Imagine if you brought lobster.

RUSS  
Something to consider.

They head to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Russ opens the wine. The smell of oregano and tomato. One Philly pizza, three place settings, two people.

RUSS  
Where's Darlene?

SAM  
Sleeping. She's pretty drained.

RUSS  
What's up?

SAM  
Saw her doctor, today. Wasn't the greatest news.

Sam kills the wine. Pours herself another. Russ watches.

RUSS  
Sorry to hear that, Sam. Hope it's nothing too serious.

SAM  
Don't know yet. Possibility of Alzheimers, maybe Dementia. Gonna see a specialist. Have you noticed any changes?

Russ weighs his words.

RUSS  
Hell, don't know. Maybe little things. Repeating herself. Don't see her everyday, you know. Seemed like normal aging stuff to me.

SAM  
There's been a couple incidents since I got here that's gone beyond that. We'll get it checked out to be safe.

RUSS

Good idea. *She* think it's a good idea?

SAM

You know Ma. She don't play. She's already giving the doctor hell and her daughter, too.

Russ sees the flicker of pain in Sam's pretty face. Not pushing, he bites his pizza, sips his wine, shuts the hell up, leaves space for her to fill in. She does not. It's comfortably quiet, then...

SAM (CONT'D)

Mama ever talk to you about me?

RUSS

Little motherly bragging, some motherly bitching, but for the most part, no.

More wine, then Sam drifts.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Things Ok with you guys?

Sam doesn't answer. That's the answer.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Sorry, this is where I need to mind my own business.

SAM

No, you're good. It is, what it is. We clash on a lot of shit. One thing we agree on is not diving too deep.

RUSS

Sometimes that's for the best.

SAM

You believe that?

RUSS

Not sure. Done it that way a long time. Maybe too long.

An uncomfortable truth.

RUSS (CONT'D)

One thing I do know is, it's damn good seeing you again.

Sam likes the compliment. Loves it. Weighs if reciprocating would be the best thing to do?

SAM

It's good. Very good.

RUSS

Damndest thing, it's so easy. Like  
35 years never went by.

She soaks in the deep, handsome lines of his older face. Russ, now. Nods in agreement. He gives her hand a warm touch. Leans over, kisses her cheek, softly. She doesn't respond.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Probably should not have done that.

Still, she studies him closer. What now? Kisses him back, lets go, loses herself. Floods of emotion. Desires held back for years. Held back no more. Passionate kissing. Sam STOPS abruptly. Concern.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Sorry. You Ok?

SAM

Don't be sorry, it's just-

The doorbell RINGS. A little jump, both slightly unnerved.

SAM (CONT'D)

Who the hell's that?

RUSS

Think I know.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Sam opens the door. Laurie and Ann. Laurie, looks upbeat, holds a bewildered looking bundt cake. Ann's bewildered too.

ANN

Sorry to intrude. Laurie insisted  
we drop this off before we head to  
the movies.

Russ emerges from the kitchen. Laurie is surprised. Russ is actually here. Good on him! She now wants to extract herself as quickly as possible. A good pal.

LAURIE

We should be going. Just wanted you  
to have this.

A proud presentation of her mis-cake. Russ steps in to  
observe the sweet wreckage. He motions towards Ann.

RUSS

Smart of you to bring a medical  
professional in case anyone  
actually eats this.  
(clarifying)  
Cake?

LAURIE

Bundt, my man. Bundt.

SAM

You know each other.

LAURIE

I help him make brilliant  
investments and great improvements  
on his still shite golf game.

Russ laughs.

SAM

If you have time, please come in.  
We have pizza.

LAURIE

We should go.

RUSS

Yes, "we" should go.

Sam's doesn't trust herself alone with Russ.

SAM

Please, come in.

Laurie, picks up something, looks to Ann who remains  
hesitant. Always polite. Laurie steps into the house, anyway.

LAURIE

Sure, why not a little, quick pizza  
amongst friends, then we're off.

As Sam closes the door, Darlene appears from the hallway.

DARLENE

My, my, my, a party. Friends from  
school, Samantha?

SAM

Mom, it's Russ. Laurie from the bank and you know Ann, she's helping with your knee, right?

Darlene plays off her memory struggle.

DARLENE

Sorry. I'm half asleep. Long day. Please, make yourselves at home.

She leads them to the living room. Been a minute since she's played host. Sam's perplexed by Dar's sudden congeniality.

ANN

Don't want to be any trouble. My friend, Laurie, just wanted to drop off this cake for you. How are you feeling tonight Mrs. Sands?

DARLENE

It's Darlene. I'm feeling better, thank you and thanks to you.

ANN

Glad to hear that.

DARLENE

Friend? She's your wife, right? I know Laurie from the bank.

Laurie steps in.

LAURIE

Yes, you're quite right, Ann and I are married. She's one lucky lady.

DARLENE

Sure as hell hope you didn't think that would offend *me*. I was marching for civil rights, when you were an embryo.

The old woman chuckles, pats Ann reassuringly on the shoulder and sniffs the air.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

I smell pizza. Let's eat, I'm hungry.

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

It's a party! Dar's at the piano with Ann by her side. Sam leans against the upright sipping wine, all singing "You Are My Sunshine". Russ's on the arm of the couch, where Laurie gives him a beer, a wink and a nudge.

LAURIE

Sorry 'bout earlier. I tried to bail. Cock-blocked you with my bundt cake, huh?

Russ deadpans.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Dude!? Didn't think you'd actually show up and early too. Nice.

A sarcastic thumbs up from the coach.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Everything cool with Sam? She was acting a little sketch before.

RUSS

Not sure.

Russ takes a pull on his beer.

LAURIE

Sorry for the blockage, pal. Gonna make it up to you. Got ya covered.

RUSS

Don't need your help.

LAURIE

Who you shitting? You need all the help you can get. Follow my lead.

The wide-eyed expression of "NO" from Russ is too late as Laurie leaves the room. Sam floats over. Sits by him, warm and close. Maybe the wine, who cares? She's more relaxed now.

SAM

Glad you're here. This is pretty nice in a pretty absurd way.

RUSS

Nice and absurd. And quite pretty.

Russ touches her face. Takes her hand. Darlene looks over, not pleased.



Sam sees her disapproval, doesn't want to upset her but is tired of being watched like a teen. Feeling the vibe, Russ lets go of her hand.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Sorry.

SAM

Nothing to be sorry about.

Laurie' back, motions to Russ to look in her open handbag where two rolls of toilet paper are stuffed in. She nods knowingly to Russ, his face reads "What are you doin?"

LAURIE

Samantha, hate to be "that" gal BUT you folks are out of TP.

SAM

How embarrassing. Sorry, thought there was plenty in there. Really?

LAURIE

All out.

Mouth agape, Russ leers at Laurie in disbelief.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Russ, be a dear, run up to the market and pick some up, won't you?

RUSS

"Be a dear"? What are you Betty Davis in a 1940's movie?

Laurie motions with her head, like a spasm for them to go.

LAURIE

Get the damn toilet paper. People have to pee you know. Go together.

Darlene darts another dagger across the room.

SAM

I'll go, be right back.

RUSS

I'll take you, no problem.

LAURIE

Do that. Oh, there's a cool little bar, just opened right next to the store. You two grab a nightcap.

SAM  
Don't know if I should leave Mom.

LAURIE  
Come on, her nurse is here, free of  
charge. We got you.

Sam looks at Russ. Russ nods, why not?

SAM  
(to Darlene)  
Just running up to the store. We'll  
be right back.

The old woman plays the piano, quiet. Seething.

ANN  
Let's play cards, Darlene. We'll  
have fun. Rummy 500?

DARLENE  
(reluctantly)  
Fine.

Darlene cranes her head with deep concern to watch Russ and  
Sam leave. Her worst fear realized.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Surprise. Small town, hip pub. Almost empty, accept for Russ,  
TP under his arm and Sam, laughing at the sight of that.

SAM  
Could've put that in the truck.

RUSS  
It's my style. How I roll.

SAM  
"Roll"? Well played. Been a while  
since you done this?

RUSS  
Yes. What exactly is this?

SAM  
A mini-date. How 'bout that?

RUSS  
Cool. How about a pseudo-dance?

Russ takes her hand. Old Soul plays on the juke. They dance.

EXT. BAR - LATER

A mellow time, the two leave the pub, laughing. Getting in the pick-up, Russ throws the TP in the back seat.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - NIGHT

Laughter fades to soft smiles, sweet and easy. Russ leans in, kisses her softly on the mouth.

SAM  
Definitely a date.

She kisses him back. More heat. Real heat. A tap on the window. Bruno, the skinny kid from the football team.

BRUNO  
Coach?

Embarrassed, Russ tries to be authoritative. Hard when you're hard.

RUSS  
Bruno.

Bruno stares blankly.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
YES?

BRUNO  
Forgot to turn in my hip pads today. OK if I do it, Monday?

RUSS  
Fine.

The boy glances at Sam, then back at Russ. "Attaboy, Coach".

BRUNO  
Dope.

Bruno doesn't move.

RUSS  
Bruno?

BRUNO  
Yeah, Coach

RUSS  
You fuckin' mind?

BRUNO  
Oh shit, my bad.

Bruno drops and give him ten push-ups.

RUSS  
Don't need to do that, just go.

The kid pops up, does a spin with a smile, then goes.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Not gonna miss that little bastard.

A gentle laugh and one more kiss from Sam

SAM  
Gotta go.

RUSS  
...Before any more players or  
faculty drop by.

Starting the truck, they drive.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Pulling in the drive, gravel crackles, headlights flash.  
Russ gets out, walks Sam to the door. She pulls out her key.  
He puts down the toilet paper. The house is quiet. So is Sam.  
Distant and cool once again. Now what?

RUSS  
Everything, OK?

SAM  
Fine. Little buzzed and tired,  
that's all. You wanna come in?

Picking up what she's putting down.

RUSS  
Nah, looks like the party's over. I  
should get rolling.

SAM  
Had fun.

RUSS  
Me too.

Comes in closer, kisses her. Nice kiss. Deep, real but still  
sadness from Sam under it. Russ shoe-gazes then "Sam"-gazes.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Night.

SAM

'Night Russ.

It's gotten cold as Russ heads to his car. Sam feels the heaviness. Better judgment says don't but she does.

SAM (CONT'D)

You alright?

He turns. Too tired, too.

RUSS

Conversation for another time.

SAM

What's up?

Should I? Shouldn't I? Fuck...

RUSS

When Jen and I broke up and you and I were together, what happened? We seemed cool, then you don't answer my calls. One day your mom says you're up north spending time with family, and that's it. No letter, no nothing.

Sam's off-guard, uneasy.

SAM

Long time in the past, Russ.  
Probably best just left there.

RUSS

Ok, want to say, it felt, feels like it meant more to me than maybe it did to you. True?

SAM

No.

Gut shot.

SAM (CONT'D)

I mean, yes it meant something.

RUSS

Why no call?

SAM

Because. It's. Too much to get into  
right now. Just a different time.

RUSS

It was. Doesn't matter.

SAM

It does matter.

RUSS

Just not that much?

SAM

That's not what I'm saying.

RUSS

What are you saying? Or what aren't  
you saying?

SAM

What the hell's that supposed to  
mean?

RUSS

Means I got hurt last time and I'm  
getting too old for that kind of  
hurt. Ain't "easy come, easy go"  
anymore.

SAM

Never was "easy come, easy go".

RUSS

Felt like it.

SAM

That's the rap, not the facts.

RUSS

What are the facts?!

Getting loud. Sam's cornered. A full-court press.

SAM

Needed to get out. Guess I knew I  
wasn't a lifer here, you know?

RUSS

Like me? "Hometown Russ, the  
fuckin' lifer"?

SAM

It's not that. *I* needed more than the small town thing. Everyone up each others ass. Works for some not for me. I needed more, understand?!

RUSS

More than you might think. Gotta go. Sorry. Shouldn't have brought it up. 'Night Sam.

Into the truck and into the night. Sam's left watching, bewildered, with self-doubt and four rolls of toilet paper.

SAM

SHIT!

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Insomnia leads Sam into the living room. Old bed clothes, old issues too. Low light, high anxiety. Overwhelmed. She looks at the painting she started. Work on it? Hell, no. Hesitant, she kneels by a small antique chest near the piano.

Knows *that* chest. Open it? Don't? Undoes the latch. Flips the lid. The past. Pictures. Dar, young, pregnant, by the Super 8 man with Sam's eyes. "March '66" written on the photo. More photos, Sam as a baby. A little girl in a costume. Teen, Sam.

...Then a BIRTH CERTIFICATE:

**BABY: No Name Given**

**DOB: June 14, 1984**

**MOTHER: Samantha Sands**

**AGE: 17**

CUT IN CLOSER:

**FATHER: Russell Clayton**

**AGE: 17**

Jesus Christ. Sam looks back at the unfinished painting.

EXT. RUSS' HOUSE - MORNING

A knock. Coffee in hand, Russ opens the door. Sam. Silence.

SAM

Mom's at Physical Therapy. Wanted to stop by and say sorry.

RUSS

Nothing to be sorry about, Sam. I'm an asshole bringing up shit from the Reagan administration.

SAM

There's a lot going on. I'm a fucking mess, Russ, really.

RUSS

We're all fucking messes, Sam.

SAM

Nope. Some of us aren't.

RUSS

Just none of us on this porch.

SAM

This is one fucked up porch.

They laugh, relieved.

RUSS

Why don't you tell me about some of that mess?

SAM

Wouldn't even know where to start.

A sweet, inviting nod.

RUSS

Start in here.

INT. RUSS' HOUSE, FOYER - MORNING

Russ leans against the wall. No words. Cautious looks...

RUSS

Wanna sit down?

Sam won't make eye contact. Afraid, searches for what to say.

SAM

I care for you, always have but I don't want to drag you down, complicate your life.



RUSS  
That's my decision not yours.

Her lip quivers, fuck these emotions.

SAM  
Maybe it's not such a good idea we  
go any further.

RUSS  
Maybe it's not but I've got nowhere  
better to go. Since you're here,  
don't think you do either.

Russ pulls Sam tight in his arms. Her soft eyes look up.  
Passionate kisses. Falling against the wall, it escalates.  
Clothes and inhibitions fly off on their way to the bedroom.  
Closing the door, they make love.

INT. RUSS' BEDROOM - LATER

Laying in bed. Beautiful calm. A respite. She starts to say  
something but stops. Russ takes in her beauty.

RUSS  
What?

SAM  
Nothing and nothing feels pretty  
damn good right now.

Another kiss. She looks at her phone.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Shit, I gotta get Mama.

Sam starts dressing.

RUSS  
When's Dar seeing the specialist?

SAM  
Driving her to Philly, Monday.

RUSS  
No you're not. I'm driving.

SAM  
Russ, I don't think...

RUSS  
I think.

SAM  
You have work. Don't wanna impose.

RUSS  
Not an imposition. Haven't taken a  
sick day in 4 years. My students  
will be thrilled.

Sam's touched and torn. Weighs the offer. Gives in. Leans in,  
gives him another long, sweet kiss. Starting to leave, Russ  
grabs her hand and touches her soft pretty face. Smiles.

SAM  
I GOTTA GO!

RUSS  
Go!

Sam opens the door, stops and scratches the dog's head.

SAM  
(to the dog)  
He's all yours. For now.

A little wave.

RUSS  
Call ya, later.

He watches her go, wow, breathes deep. Things are changing.

EXT. RURAL PENNSYLVANIA HIGHWAY - DAY

Russ's old truck cruises down beautiful, rustic, back roads.

INT. RUSS' TRUCK - DAY

Looking out the window at the foliage, auto-motion  
meditation. Old jazz on the radio. Dar's in the back seat,  
stretching her leg, working out an unknown mental equation.

Russ quietly touches Sam's hand. Darlene can't see the  
gesture but picks up the vibe. Studies them, suspiciously in  
the rearview.

DARLENE  
Mind if I ask you a slightly  
personal question?

Sam and Russ exchange glances.

RUSS

No.

DARLENE

No, don't ask or no you don't mind.

RUSS

Never stopped you before, old girl,  
ask away.

DARLENE

Are you and Jenna planning on  
having kids, anytime?

Stunned. Russ wide eyes Sam.

RUSS

Dar, we lost Jen a few years back,  
remember? She's passed.

Dar stops, looks back out the window, searches for the time  
her mind's lost, then braves past her embarrassment.

DARLENE

Lord, how could that slip my mind?  
I'm sorry, Coach.

Russ checks her in the mirror. His heart tugs.

RUSS

We all forget things.

Looking outside and faraway, speaking to herself...

DARLENE

Yes, we do.

INT. MEDICAL MRI ROOM- DAY

On the bed, eyes wide, uncertain, Darlene waits to be fed  
into the clanking MRI monster. Sam's next to her.

DARLENE

Kiddo, no need to stay in here. I'm  
fine.

Taking in this behemoth of technology, Sam then looks over at  
her mother. The tough bird, more fragile than ever.

SAM

You sure?

Strength, determination, Dar. Nuff said.

DARLENE  
Stop being dramatic, gimme some  
peace and quiet with my big friend  
here. I'm fine. Go.

Sam complies. Staying would only be a condescension.

INT. MRI TUBE - MOMENTS LATER

Darlene slides abruptly to halt in the tube. Thunderous, grinding, mechanical sounds. Eyes dart rapidly, then settle on a spot above. A small tear tip toes down her face.

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY WAITING ROOM - LATER

Sam and Russ on a small couch. Her head on his shoulder. No words. Do life's biggest moments really unfold on an orange naugahyde love seat? LAB TECH emerges, looks at Sam. She straightens. Russ rubs the small of her back.

LAB TECH  
Ms. Sands, the test's over. The  
doctor would like to talk with you  
and your mom after she's dressed.

SAM  
How'd it look?

LAB TECH  
I can't say. You have to talk to  
the doctor.

SAM  
You can't say or you won't say?

LAB TECH  
The doctor will talk to you. You're  
free to come back and help her if  
you like.

Russ kisses her hand, reassuringly.

RUSS  
See ya in a shake.

A worried Sam gives a thankful nod and goes with the Tech.

INT. RUSS' TRUCK - LATER

The ride home. Concerned glances. Darlene takes it all in. The changing leaves, her changing life. Silence and then...

DARLENE

I feel fine. None of them know what  
the hell they're talking about.  
It's a concussion, from the  
accident. I remember *that*, don't I?

Fighting tears, Sam puts on a sure face.

SAM

Yes, Mama.

Russ is a silent observer. Bad memories of a sick loved one.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE, FOYER - NIGHT

They help Darlene through the door. She turns to Russ.

DARLENE

Thanks for the ride, Coach.  
Appreciate all the things you do  
for me.

RUSS

Appreciate you, too.

DARLENE

(to Sam)

I'm gonna change and read my book.

SAM

I'll help you.

DARLENE

Don't start fussing over me. I'm  
not a damn child.

Sam's stands, helpless. Darlene walks off, proud.

RUSS

She's upset. Taking it out on you.  
Ain't easy, been there.

SAM

Jen?

Russ nods yes.

SAM (CONT'D)

Must have been hard.

RUSS

Dealing with the loss may have been  
easier than dealing with her anger.  
You wanna help, can't do shit.

Now he's the one shut off, distant. Sam touches his cheek.

SAM

Wanna stay, watch a movie?

RUSS

Like to but I need to get back for  
Bailey. Take her for a run.

SAM

A boy and his dog.

She tries to lighten things. He chuckles absently.

RUSS

Something like that...We still on  
tomorrow night?

SAM

You know it. You're not going to  
try any funny business are you?

A forced smile.

RUSS

Nothing funny about it.

She pulls his sleeve. They kiss. Feels different.

SAM

Thanks for today, meant a lot.

RUSS

No sweat. See you, tomorrow.

Sam's off-balance. Looks towards her mother's room. Sighs.

EXT. AMBERWOOD STREETS - LATE NIGHT

Late in a small town. Empty roads. Blue glow of TVs flicker  
from windows. Russ runs with Bailey. Usual route, by the  
graveyard. Anxiety grows with each step. Again, they stop at  
the cemetery gates. Pacing, mind racing. The dog's confused.

A burst, Russ sprints through the gates to Jen's stone. Looks  
down at her. Loses balance, catches his breath. Turns, takes  
in all the stones, lives that never made it out of Amberwood.

Back to Jenna. Just keep running, faster, out of the gates.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Bolting onto the field, man and dog stop on the 50 yard line. Trying to breathe, to drive himself past the panic. Near the point of tears. Russ falls on the grass. Looks up at the night sky. A moment of decision or indecision?

Bailey licks his face, rousing him. He gets up. Body groans. So does his soul. He walks, then jogs stiffly into the night.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam's prepares tea. The ritual. Pouring steaming water from a crying kettle, she settles at the kitchen table. Lost in thought, she doesn't hear Darlene come into the room. Startled, Sam jumps, spills.

SAM

Lord, you scared me.

The mother shuffles to the sink, fetches an old wash rag, cleans the spill off the table.

DARLENE

Little jumpy, Sam?

Darlene gets her rose-trimmed teacup and saucer, places a tea bag inside, pours the hot water. She refills Sam's, as well.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Don't blame you. Been on edge, myself. I *am* sorry about earlier.

She lays vanilla cream cookies on a plat. Sits next to Sam.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Didn't mean to snap at you. Yes I did but I just shouldn't have.

SAM

A lot for you to process right now.

DARLENE

For you too.

Daughter smiles sadly at her mother.

SAM

A lot under our collective bridge. Things I'd like to understand.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)  
Things I haven't been able to  
figure out.

DARLENE  
Trying to get that info before I'm  
too far gone to remember?

A small ironic laugh.

SAM  
Come on, Mom, it's not like that.

DARLENE  
Relax, Samson, I *am* kidding. Losing  
my memory not my sense of humor.

Sam's eyes search the room like a way to ease way the  
conversation might be hidden in the cupboard.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
What's on your mind?

More reluctance.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Sam?

SAM  
Let's not do this right now.

Dar stiffens.

DARLENE  
Let's.

SAM  
Thinking about telling Russ about  
the baby.

DARLENE  
What?! Why would you do that?

SAM  
He has the right to know.

Darlene sits up like a shot, agitated, her mind slips.

DARLENE  
That little girl must be 5 or 6 by  
now. What if he tries to find her?  
Damn it, you think that's fair to  
me, to anybody?!  
(MORE)



DARLENE (CONT'D)

I did a lot to get her placed with  
the right family, to fix things.  
You gonna undo all of that?!

SAM

Mother, she's not 6 years old, that  
child is an adult now, in her 30's.  
Maybe she would want to know us.

Darlene is briefly confused by the time jump.

DARLENE

Thirty!!??...what?

Old weary eyes darting, searching to make sense of it all.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Yes, right...but maybe she  
wouldn't. You think about that? You  
can barely deal with your own  
problems, girl. Not a good idea,  
just leave it be. You hear?

SAM

I left it be. You made sure of that  
35 years ago.

DARLENE

YES-I-DID. What was I supposed to  
do? You didn't want to abort that  
baby. I didn't want you to either.

SAM

I wanted to *keep* that baby.

DARLENE

You were barely SEVENTEEN. I'd have  
been taking care of that child, you  
and your father!

Tears, anger, fire dislodging the past, then SHOCK.

SAM

What?!

A sheepish look from the mother.

SAM (CONT'D)

Daddy was long gone by then, you're  
not thinking, clearly. You're  
mixing it up, not remembering it  
right, Mama!

DARLENE  
I remember it perfectly!..remember  
it just fine, Samantha.

The room is a vacuum. Mother sits in the witness chair.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Something you need to know about  
your father, while I still can tell  
you.

SAM  
(confused and concerned)  
What's that?

The old woman struggles to unburden herself.

DARLENE  
Been hard, so hard keeping this  
from you, my girl.

Sam, frozen, anxious.

SAM  
What about Dad?

Darlene goes mute, unsure the confession should proceed.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Is it because we stopped going to  
see him? That why he left us, why  
you two got divorced?

The mother gathers, trembling to free the words in her mouth.

DARLENE  
We got divorced because the son-of-  
a-bitch didn't want to see us  
anymore, didn't want us to see him.

Taken back, Sam's eyes glaze with disbelief.

SAM  
What are you talking about?

DARLENE  
Talking about a selfish man.

Shock. Sam sleepwalks to the cabinet. Takes down the bourbon.  
Takes a shot. Takes another.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Don't do that.

Another.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Stop that, please.

SAM  
Don't you think I had a right to  
know? Especially as an adult?

DARLENE  
What difference would that have  
made? Why hurt you?

SAM  
Like the hurt I went through not  
having a father?!

DARLENE  
A selfish man! A foolish person.  
The only decent thing he did was  
make sure his money went to you, to  
this house. His bullshit way of  
showing he loves you, Sam.

SAM  
LOVED me! Not *loves* me.

Hurt, anger, tears, feel as futile as her life to her, now.

SAM (CONT'D)  
All those years, I might've had a  
chance to feel that love, maybe  
change his mind. They're gone.  
Can't come back. Because of you!  
That was not your decision to make.

Dar's confused eyes well, shocked by her own admission. Still  
raging, Sam feels for her afflicted mother. Both women  
compose, gather. Touching her daughter's hand, she gets up,  
pours herself a drink and swallows it like poison.

DARLENE  
*Loves* you, Samantha. Your father is  
still alive.

The house shakes to the roots.

SAM  
What?

DARLENE  
He's still alive Sam, goddamn it.

SAM  
Bullshit. He went back to Florida.

Darlene shakes her head.

SAM (CONT'D)  
When he died you said he was  
cremated. We couldn't go to the  
service because it was done right  
away. That's what you said. THAT'S  
WHAT YOU FUCKING SAID!

DARLENE  
I know what I said but it wasn't  
the truth.

Sam collects herself in denial. This can't be happening. It's  
just not. Be calm, reassure this ailing old woman.

SAM  
Mother, this is part of the  
illness. It's not how it is. Your  
condition's playing tricks on you.

Darlene walks to an old wooden desk. Pulls out an envelope.

DARLENE  
It's no trick.

Sam's exhausted mind reels. Dar places the envelope in front  
of her, points to the return address and post date.

It reads:

**HANK SANDS  
CROMWELL ASSISTED VA LIVING  
147 OAKLAND AVE.  
CHESTER, PA**

Postmarked:  
**OCTOBER 16, 2023**

Shock flashes across Sam's face. Flooded, trembling, crying.

SAM  
What is this mother!?

DARLENE  
I had no choice, Sam. I know it's  
hard. Please try and understand.

SAM  
I do NOT understand! What the hell  
is this?! He's ALIVE?!  
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)  
(slamming her hand down on  
the letter)  
What the hell?

DARLENE  
He's alive and just as big a  
bastard as he ever was.

SAM  
You're the one to talk. Fuck You.

DARLENE  
I'm sorry. I was trying to protect  
your feelings from getting hurt all  
over again.

SAM  
You were trying to protect, YOU!!!  
How could you keep this from me?  
You're just as bad as he is. Worse.

Sam snatches the envelope and rushes out on a ill wind,  
that's now a gale force. Dar's left in it's morbid wake.

INT. SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Russ knocks on a half opened door that reads PRINCIPAL. The  
office as cluttered as it's occupant. Behind a beat-up desk  
sits CHIP LINDSTROM 42, sipping on a juice box.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM  
Hey Coach, how are ya?

Russ looks for a place to sit. Chairs overwhelmed by clutter,  
so is the principal.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM (CONT'D)  
Come in, sit.

He does and on something sharp, abruptly popping back up,  
Russ tosses an old rotary phone off the chair.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM (CONT'D)  
I know, you love what I've done to  
the place. It's a gift.

A half-assed attempt at humor meets a half-hearted chuckle  
from a skeptical Russ.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM (CONT'D)  
Joking aside, I want to talk to you  
about tonight.

RUSS

What about tonight?

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Really hoping to make an announcement at the banquet. About your staying on as AD. Given it any more thought?

RUSS

Some.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Make up your mind?

RUSS

I'm gettin' there.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Anything we could discuss that might help out your process?

RUSS

Cut the bullshit. You mean speed up my process?

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Russ, don't make this harder on me than it already is. I've got a school to run. I can't keep doing both fucking jobs. People aren't killing themselves to work here.

RUSS

I get that. I'm just not there yet, Chip. You get that?

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Any idea when you might arrive "there"? I'm in over my goddamned head here.

RUSS

I can see that. Been thinking about taking a leave of absence.

Chip's caught off-guard, per usual. Pressure backfired. An unwanted answer. A hasty retreat.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

What do you mean leave of absence? For sure?

RUSS

No, but if your pushing for an answer right now, that's my "right now" answer.

Chip trying to keep positive gets desperate.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

What about the History Department, Coach, who would head that?

RUSS

Can't say. That would be your call. Why you get the big bucks.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Big bucks? Funny.

RUSS

That's not my job. I'm barely scraping by trying to do my job. Poorly, I might add.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Not true.

RUSS

Like hell it's not. 1 and 9. You shitting me? I may be proud but I'm not stupid. I can help you look for a temporary replacement or they could stay in the position permanently. Doesn't matter.

Chip grovels for a glimmer.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

No need to make up your mind "right now". I was just asking. Let's just leave *that* door open.

RUSS

Ok Chip, see you tonight.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Tonight's the night. I'll be there. See ya there, Coach.

Russ gets up travailing the shit jungle out of the office.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

By the way, what's the deal Teddy Aycock wanting to take his GED and leave early? Said he's leaving town in the next couple weeks?

Russ is surprised, dead in his tracks.

RUSS

The hell are you talking about?

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

He didn't mention it to you?

RUSS

Nothing about it.

PRINCIPAL LINDSTROM

Maybe you talk to him tonight?

RUSS

I will.

Russ turns to leave, his face concerned and uncertain.

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM/FOYER - EARLY EVENING

Sipping a beer, Laurie helps Sam get ready in a mirror. Futility. Fumbling with dress straps. Darlene stoically works the piano keys. Haydn and tension hang in the air.

LAURIE

So glad Russ's taking you to the Prom, Sam, you look beautiful.

In no mood. A razor look, then back to the damn strap.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Nobody asked me. These local boys shy away from 55 year old lesbians.

SAM

Their loss.

LAURIE

Yeah, it is.

A frustrated gale-force sigh, fuck this strap.

SAM

Can't do this.



LAURIE  
The dress or the date?

Sam ignores the question. The doorbell rings. Laurie opens the door. Russ cleans up nicely in a sharp suit, bearing flowers. Convivial. Concealing something.

LAURIE (CONT'D)  
Wow, maybe this is the prom.

Russ ignores Laurie. She's getting used to it.

LAURIE (CONT'D)  
Oh Sam, Greg Brady's here. He brought you flowers.

RUSS  
Move aside, Gilligan.

Russ and Sam kiss. He takes in her elegant face and her upset eyes that see the distance in his.

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| RUSS (CONT'D)       | SAM                 |
| Everything alright? | Everything alright? |

Both laugh. Best faces and brave fronts.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Great.

RUSS  
Look very pretty.

She touches his shoulder, lightly.

SAM  
And you're quite dashing in that suit, Coach Clayton.

Russ has another smile with a dash more covering up.

RUSS  
Thank you fair lady but alas these flowers are for another.

Walking to Darlene, still lost in her piano, Russ hands her the roses with a kiss on the cheek. Her heavy eyes move from the keys, to the flowers. A smile.

DARLENE  
Russell that's very sweet of you, thank you.

LAURIE  
Nothing for me?

RUSS  
Bundt Cake's on the way.

LAURIE  
Just as long as I didn't bake it.

An agreeable nod from all.

RUSS  
Better get rolling, don't want to  
have to do push-ups for being late.

Going out the door, no goodbyes are exchanged between mother  
and daughter. Russ and Laurie, don't miss it.

SAM  
Thanks Laurie, appreciate your  
hanging out with mother.

LAURIE  
No problem. I need to win some  
money back from the Rummy 500  
hustle queen over there.

Sam barely hears the joke, leaves like ghost. Russ and Laurie  
exchange looks. Perplexed.

RUSS  
(to Laurie)  
Thanks.

Laurie gives the "ain't no thang" wave.

LAURIE  
Get going Prom King.

RUSS  
(louder to Darlene)  
See you in a bit, Dar.

Darlene paints on a smile, waves like a parade politician  
then turns back to stone when she resumes playing piano.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - EVENING

A high school gym. Bad paper decorations. Cafeteria tables.  
Pizza. Cupcakes. Punch. Potato chips. An old podium next to  
Russ and Sam. Assistant coaches, Brian and his wife.

The senior table. PLAYERS screwing around. Lewd noises, testosterone and bad cologne. Teddy's somber. Russ glances over. Ted's oblivious. Russ takes it all in for the last time. Bittersweet. Sam puts her arm around the coach.

SAM  
Gonna miss it?

RUSS  
Don't know. Guess I'm about to find out.

Sam hears him, words that have a meaning for her too.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - LATER

A couple certificates and trophies remain next to Russ, at the podium, glasses on, reading from a card. Checking out.

RUSS  
Our "Most Improved" award goes to Bruno Valentine.

Stragglng cheers.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Had a long way to go but got there.

The skinny drugstore boy gets up to receive his plaque. Looks at Sam. Another "at-a-boy" thumbs up to coach, shakes his hand, gives him his delinquent hip pads.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
(handing the award to Bruno)  
Nice going, son.  
(then)  
Next award comes as no surprise.  
This young man epitomizes everything you want in an athlete. In a person. Been doing this a long time. Everyday's a blessing. Every kid you get to teach is a blessing but every now and then, you're "extra" blessed to coach someone like this.

Russ looks at Teddy, still in a bad place. His teammates pat him on the back. He barely reacts.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
 The backbone and spirit of the  
 Amberwood Spartans, our MVP.  
 Theodore Aycock.

Players chant "speech, speech". Tearing up, Teddy hugs Russ,  
 gathers his trophy and his emotions. Motions to another  
 FOOTBALL PLAYER who brings something up covered with a towel.

TEDDY  
 Thanks. Damn hard year in lots of  
 ways but I'm thankful.  
 (turning to Russ)  
 Having you here, Coach, always  
 helped us get through the tough  
 times and believe in something  
 better. Know you won't be coaching  
 next year, wanted to give you  
 something to let you know, what  
 you've been to us.

Ted removes the towel, hands Russ a granite rock mounted on  
 an oak base. A 14k gold placard fastened to the base reads  
 "Our Coach". Russ is touched, fights tears.

RUSS  
 Been my privilege, thank you all.

Ted hugs the old coach. Crying, embarrassed, he bolts out the  
 gym door. Russ quickly wraps up.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
 Enjoy the food. Have a nice night.

Russ leans to Sam.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
 Gonna check on him, you ok here for  
 a minute?

SAM  
 Of course.

She kisses him. He needs that. Makes his way out.

EXT. SCHOOL QUAD - EVENING

Ted sits on a metal quad table. Trophy in hand. He's  
 composed himself. Russ walks over, sits next to him, still  
 holding his Granite award.

RUSS  
Looks like we both got "lovely  
parting gifts" huh?

Teddy's looks away, vacant.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
You Ok?

Shakes his head "No".

RUSS (CONT'D)  
What's up?

Fighting tears, the kid stammers.

TEDDY  
Amanda decided she didn't want to  
have the baby. Went to the clinic  
yesterday. It's over.

Russ is shook, By the young man's reaction and the news.

RUSS  
Shit, I'm sorry.

TEDDY  
You said it, Coach. Maybe it  
wasn't the best idea, to me it felt  
like the right one. Guess not to  
her.

Looking down at the trophy, Russ thinks "some rock I am".

RUSS  
T, hope my goddamned opinion had  
nothing to do with it. Just  
couldn't bullshit you.

TEDDY  
Who knows? My opinion sure as hell  
didn't.

RUSS  
It's a scary thing for someone your  
age to become a parent. Any age.  
I'm sure it was an impossible  
decision for her. Shitty odds of  
making it work.

TEDDY

Like the odds of a 115 pound  
Freshman, who never played football  
becoming a two-time All Conference,  
MVP?

RUSS

Maybe worse.

TEDDY

To me, my God's bigger than odds.

Russ nods sadly.

RUSS

Well, you got that, which a lotta  
people can't say. I'm sorry, kid.

TEDDY

Me too.

Ted straightens, gets up, paces in the cool night air.

RUSS

What now?

TEDDY

Take my GED, move to East  
Stroudsburg.

RUSS

You and Amanda?

TEDDY

Just me for now. She's gonna stay,  
work in her Pop's office for a  
while. Already found a cheap place  
to live. Gonna focus up, train  
hard, walk-on come Summer.

RUSS

Coach Kelly's on that staff. He  
sure as hell knows what you can do.

TEDDY

He hasn't seen shit yet.

RUSS

I believe that. Wouldn't bet  
against you.

TEDDY

Don't.

Russ feels loves for the kid. Ted feels a sense of resolve.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
What are you gonna do, Coach?

Ironical laugh.

RUSS  
There's a question, this old rock's  
trying to figure that out.

TEDDY  
Wouldn't bet against you.

Russ shakes his head, smiles, pats the rock.

RUSS  
You never know. Let's go crash this  
party.

He puts his arm around Ted. They head back, together.

INT. RUSS' TRUCK - NIGHT

The couple's drive is quiet. Uncertainty is hell for two  
people looking for answers. Finally...

SAM  
He know she was going to the  
clinic?

RUSS  
Didn't say. Judging by his  
reaction, I get the feeling she  
decided on her own.

SAM  
You don't think she told him?

RUSS  
Don't know, would suck if she left  
him in the dark about it.

Hits deep at home. Sam nods a guilty agreement. Looks over at  
Russ. Both edgy, caged.

SAM  
Let's go to your house.

INT. RUSS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Barely through the door, tension and frustration erupts into passion. Kissing, intense, hungry like never before. Takes his hand, pulls him to bed like pulling him from danger.

INT. RUSS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Attraction overpowers caution. Making fervent, desperate love, knowing their lives are about to change. Uncertain how.

INT. RUSS' BEDROOM - LATER

After, the quiet of night. Laying next to each other, hands entwined. A soft kiss. Sam looks up at Russ. Beautiful painful eyes that speak, don't speak.

RUSS

What is it?

Her words try to hide. She can't find them. Russ touches her lips, kisses her again.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I love you.

Sam's shocked and relieved by his three words.

SAM

Russ.

She wants to say it. Her eyes do say it. But she can't.

SAM (CONT'D)

You don't know me. I don't want you to love me.

RUSS

Too late. I always have, Sam. Just not too sure about our timing.

Sam, spins. Concerned. Torn. A long breath.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Been feeling untethered. Sure as hell not the rock they think I am.

SAM

You may not think so but you are for a lot of people, babe.



RUSS  
Not for myself.

SAM  
You are for me.

Russ exhales a confession.

RUSS  
Sometimes the anxiety gets so big.  
It grabs me, makes me nauseous. Can  
barely function.

Sam leans on an elbow, looks at him. Touches his hair.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
So I run. Run away from it. But  
it's fast, always catches me.  
Loving you has slowed it down. Made  
it better. Things were different  
with Jen, they were never right.  
For either of us.

SAM  
I had no idea.

RUSS  
We hid it well. Being together  
kinda defined us. Like being a  
coach. Staying in Amberwood. But,  
always felt like there was some  
piece missing. Like my life was  
going on out there and I lost the  
invitation. When Jen got sick I  
felt guilty because I know she  
must've felt the same way. Feel  
like I wasted her time. Wasted her  
life.

He searches her face for an answer. Overwhelmed, he grabs  
her, kisses her deeply.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Because of this, you and I. I've  
almost forgotten about all that for  
just a minute. A perfect, fucking  
minute, then it sneaks up on me  
again and I still feel like there's  
*something*, some part I'm supposed  
to be playing, just haven't figured  
out. Think I owe it to US to do  
that. Because I love you and I  
don't want to waste *your* life.

Sam pulls him close to her breast, kisses his worried head. Moves to the edge of the bed, puts on her shirt. Gathers her thoughts. Her words. The right way to say them. No more spinning. A breath. Now's the time.

SAM

Something I need to tell you.

She wipes a tear. Nervous as hell. Trembles.

RUSS

What is it? It's Ok, baby.

SAM

It's not okay Russ. It's what my family does but it's far from ok.

RUSS

Say it.

Picking up her phone, Sam texts.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Sam?

Time to spill. Fear, says no.

SAM

My father. My mother lied to me. He's alive.

RUSS

What?!

SAM

He's alive, at an assisted living place. I'm going to see him tomorrow.

RUSS

She never told you?

SAM

No.

RUSS

How the hell could you keep something like that from someone you love for so long?

That stings. Can he see through me, now?

SAM  
Don't know how. It's complicated.  
Maybe she just lacks the strength.

Russ gets up, Holds her. She stiffens in self-disgust. Backs away to the door.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Gotta go.

RUSS  
Hang on, I'll drive you.

Russ follows her. She feels stalked by his decency.

SAM  
I called for a ride. They're almost here. Stay. Been a long emotional day. Call you when I get back.

Leaning on the wall, Russ is exasperated. Why the mood shift?

RUSS  
I'll take you home.

SAM  
It's no big deal. Get some rest.  
See you in a couple days.

Her phone vibrates. One more kiss. Headlights flash in the driveway. Sam rushes to the waiting car. Russ looks lost.

INT. DARLENE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Backpack on her shoulder, Sam's in a surreal haze. Dar's in a good place, somewhere in the past, putting warm biscuits and honey on the table.

DARLENE  
Better eat, gonna be late for school.

Sitting at the table, Sam's anger towards the old woman helplessly relents to compassion for her condition.

SAM  
Not going to school. I'm going to see Daddy, today.

DARLENE  
You're doing *WHAT?*

SAM

Ann's coming over. Going to see my father.

DARLENE

Your father's dead, foolish person.

SAM

Mom, you told me. Remember? I know.

Cobwebs clear from Dar's mind. She does remember, PANICS.

DARLENE

What I tell you?

SAM

You told me everything. I'm going.

DARLENE

You will not.

SAM

I will and I am, Mama.

Darlene's world's coming apart. One she's held tenuously together for so long. Too long.

SAM (CONT'D)

Need to straighten things out.  
Can't keep living this way.

Unchecked worries are hitting Darlene like rabbit punches.

DARLENE

When you were with Russ last night?  
You didn't tell him about the girl,  
did you?!

SAM

I did not.

A gasp of relief from the old woman.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I will.

DARLENE

Like hell you will. You hear me?!

SAM

Daddy removed himself from my life  
46 years ago. His choice, not mine.  
His! And you said nothing.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

When I was too young to decide, you forced me to give up my baby. Your choice not mine! Spent my whole life since, ignoring you, avoiding you, being the worst daughter I could be to get back at you. Can't let go. Can't have a normal relationship. No more, things need to change, now. That's my choice. You hear me? Mine!

DARLENE

You have any idea what your doing to this family?

SAM

What the hell kind of family is this?

DARLENE

Screwed up and needing forgiveness, like all of them.

SAM

Gotta figure my shit out before I can do any forgiving!

The doorbell rings...

SAM (CONT'D)

That's Ann. I'm gone, mother.

DARLENE

You ungrateful little bitch, don't you dare!

SAM

Going! That's it and that's all.

Sam bolts. Dar's maternal head drops in defeat.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA ROAD - DAY

On the pike, Sam's car blends with the maroon, orange countryside. Brisk. Autumn leaves changing. Life changing.

INT. SAM'S CAR - DAY

She turns on classical music. Calms down. Vivaldi scores the landscape. Loses herself. Finds herself. In thought. Drives through the picture postcard foliage, through time.

EXT. ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY - DAY

Quaint, small town place, HANK SANDS, (70's) waits in his wheelchair on a homey porch. A faded snap shot, out of time. His strong, handsome face altered by scars and operations.

Sam walks slow. Mixed emotions, overload. Father and daughter lock eyes. A tear on Sam's cheek? Apprehension. Brave fronts. Hank's unsure, Sam too.

The old man reaches out then thinks better of it. Hardness on his face. Unable to look his daughter in the eye. Strangers who can't believe this is really happening. Sam the artist examines the subject. He's uncomfortable under scrutiny.

HANK

There you are.

SAM

Here I am.

HANK

Why?

SAM

Goddamned foolish question.

HANK

I'm a foolish person. Ask your mother.

SAM

That would make two of us.

She smiles. Don't smile goddamnit. He looks closer. Is this is trick of the imagination?

HANK

I know that smile. That's my smile.

A nod.

SAM

Been a minute, Pop.

HANK

It has.

SAM

Why's that?

HANK

For good reason, Samson.

SAM  
Really? What reason?

Don't press an old bastard.

HANK  
My reasons. Shouldn't have come  
here, should have let this be.

Sam brushes past the comment, unflinching, determined.

SAM  
Chilly out here, old man. Let's go  
inside.

Hank considers the wisdom of this, then without a word, he  
leads her in.

INT. HANK'S SUITE - DAY

Hank's space is a well-seasoned black iron pan. Rich with  
Sam's old paintings, clippings and pictures. Aromas of old  
cooking. Hank's kept them close, where he can control it all,  
on his terms.

SAM  
(points to her paintings)  
Art lover?

HANK  
More about the artist.

SAM  
Yeah?

A skeptical, awkward silence. What's next?

HANK  
Proud of you, Samson. Don't make it  
a big deal.

SAM  
I'm not. Forgot how you used to  
call me Samson.

HANK  
A name of strength and pride.

A small ironic laugh.

SAM

What part of me you most proud of?  
My drug dependency or my complete  
inability to have a real  
relationship. Mostly because of you  
or because of "no" you.

HANK

Don't know anything about that.

SAM

You sure as hell don't.

He's had enough.

HANK

I get it. You got a right. Say your  
peace and be on your way.

SAM

Don't have shit to say. Why should  
I?

HANK

I get that.

SAM

Was hoping you had something to  
say.

HANK

Not gonna make any excuses, Sam.

SAM

Fuck excuses. How about an  
explanation.

HANK

That what you want?

SAM

Don't know what the hell I want. I  
can't fill in the blanks. I'm not  
the one who bailed.

HANK

Alright. Whatcha wanna know?

SAM

How 'bout the truth for a change.

Hank nods. It's time.



HANK

Truth can be a motherfucker. Here goes. When I got back, I didn't know who or what I was. Felt like a ghost in a dream. Had this pretty young wife, beautiful daughter, I couldn't take for walks or horse rides, or show how to dance before her first formal. Thought I couldn't take care of you and the thought of you taking care of me, was too hard to think of. So, in weakness and in pain I decided best to extricate myself from your life. Told myself it was for you, truth is, was for me, cuz I was too weak to handle it. We all feel that sometimes don't we, girl?

Sam locks on the old man. Nods yeah.

HANK (CONT'D)

So I decided to end it. Every day, started hiding half my pain meds. After a while, I'd have enough to dose out.

SAM

That was around the time Mama and I used to come see you?

HANK

That's right. Knew what I was planning and felt so much shame seeing the little girl I was about to leave with no Daddy, the wife I was about to leave a widow. I was a ghost.

SAM

I used to bring you candy to cheer you up.

HANK

Paydays.

SAM

Yup.

HANK

Hated them. Let you eat most of them.

SAM

Thanks, ended up with a belly ache.  
Climb up in your lap, nice and warm  
until I fell asleep.

Hank pushed back the tears. He's used to that.

HANK

Remember being worried, it'd scare  
you I had no legs but you paid it  
no never mind. Should've known  
you'd be strong enough to handle  
it. You always been strong. Not me.

SAM

I'm not strong. I'm broken.

Hank sees his reflection and freezes.

HANK

I see that, know what that looks  
like.

His pain softens Sam up.

SAM

What happened then?

HANK

One day, after your mama and you  
went back home. I took all those  
pills with a fifth of Jack, my  
buddy snuck in for me. Could've  
killed a horse, not me. When I came  
around, they watched me so closely,  
knew the only way to save you from  
being saddled with a broken down  
bastard like me was to remove  
myself from your life. Thought I  
was doing the right thing. Look how  
wrong you can be.

SAM

Yes you can. You were wrong and I  
was fatherless. Think you got the  
best of that deal.

HANK

It was hell for me, but yeah, worse  
for you.

SAM

So then what? You couldn't have fixed it? Swallowed *your* pride stepped up?

HANK

I could've but I didn't because the longer I kept away, the harder it'd been on you if I came back. So if I couldn't kill myself physically, I'd do it hypothetically. Each year became more impossible to let you know. To explain the lie.

Hank wheels over to one of Sam's paintings.

HANK (CONT'D)

I love them all but this one best.

A brooding painting of storm and confusion. Behind dark wind-blown clouds, a gold moon shines hopeful but out of reach.

HANK (CONT'D)

That one says it all.

Fighting tears, Hank wipes his watering eyes with disdain.

HANK (CONT'D)

Been paralyzed in a lot of ways. I can't change that but here you are and here I am. Don't expect your forgiveness. I do want you to know I love you and I'm sorry.

Sam is numb. Quivering. Looking down, she composes herself.

SAM

You know about my little girl?

HANK

I do. Not so little anymore.

SAM

No. See, I let her go, too. Long time ago. Guess that shit runs in the family. I feel "paralyzed" about finding her. Even though she's a grown woman, might have kids of her own. Don't know if I even have the right. If I'd even be welcome after all these years.

Truth and revelation for daughter and father.

HANK  
Don't know Sam, am I welcome in  
yours?

Sam thinks a long second. Reaches into her bag, pulls out a  
Payday, places it on the arm of Hank's wheelchair.

SAM  
Don't know, right now.

HANK  
Then I guess we understand each  
other.

SAM  
Maybe we do.

HANK  
Getting tired. Need to lay down.

She gets up to leave. Looks over her shoulder. His eyes  
drift, broken and vacant like Sam's stormy painting.

SAM  
Take care.

HANK  
You too, Samson.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Sam pulls into the driveway. Turns off the headlights. Weary,  
walks the familiar path to the house. Deja Vu.

INT. DARLENE'S FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

She drops her keys on the table. Ann steps from the kitchen.

SAM  
Thanks, Ann. How is she?

ANN  
Quiet, kept to herself.

Ann studies Sam's beaten face.

ANN (CONT'D)  
You need to get some rest.

Sam nods as her friend gathers her things and leaves with a  
warm smile.

Alone, leaning on the wall, Sam places a pill on her tongue. Closes her eyes. Hobbling in from the hallway, Dar stops and reads her daughter.

DARLENE

Good day?

SAM

Not really.

DARLENE

You know I love you, girl.

SAM

I know. Love you, too.

Darlene disappears back down the hall. Sam pulls out her cell phone, texts Russ.

"JUST GOT BACK. QUITE A DAY. TELL YOU ABOUT IT WHEN I SEE YOU. COME OVER FOR THANKSGIVING, TOMORROW?"

The dots, then Russ' text:

"DON'T KNOW, SURE I WON'T BE INTRUDING?"

"I'M SURE."

"OK, WHAT SOULD I BRING?"

"JUST YOU. I'M PICKING US UP TURKEY DINNERS FROM THE DINER."

Puts down her phone. A smile of dread. Thinks about tomorrow, drained, she heads to bed.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Russ, Sam and Dar finish their turkey. Mother and daughter barely touched their plates. Russ did, tension makes him hungry. A Philly tradition, like football droning on the TV in the background through dinner.

RUSS

Didn't like the turkey?

DARLENE

Used to my own Thanksgiving meal.  
Just not up to it this year.

RUSS

Understandable.

Sam's quiet. Looking deep inside for the storm coming.

DARLENE  
Can I get you some coffee or pie?

RUSS  
Maybe later. Full as hell.

Dar gets up, looks at Sam. Oh boy. Here it comes.

DARLENE  
Feeling a bit tired. Gonna head to bed. Happy Thanksgiving, Coach.

RUSS  
Appreciate you having me. Happy Thanksgiving.

Darlene nods, gently puts her hand on Russ's shoulder to rise to her feet or maybe to brace him. Shuffles out. Russ peruses Sam, touches her hand, gives it a squeeze.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
How'd it go?

SAM  
Hard. Pretty damn surreal. Not sure what's next but glad I went there.

RUSS  
You and the old girl, alright?

SAM  
We'll get through it.

Russ picks up the storm warning in Sam's eyes.

RUSS  
Good. Something up?

A deep serious breath. A look down. A lip quiver.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Oh, boy.

Sam pulls out a folder. Hands it to him. He's confused.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
What's this?

SAM  
Open it up.

Russ opens it. Numbers and addresses are scribbled on one sheet of paper. The other a birth certificate. He reads it. Reads further down. Eyes widen. **FATHER NAME: RUSSELL CLAYTON.**

RUSS  
What is this?

SAM  
What it looks like, Russ.

RUSS  
You saying, 35 years ago, that you,  
that we...

Can't get the words out. Mute disbelief. She nods.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
And you didn't tell me anything?

Her eyes flood.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Are you fucking serious?!

Louder than bombs, Russ catches himself. Not wanting to wake Darlene, he lowers his voice to a muttering rage.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
All these years. Nothing. How could  
you not say anything?

Russ springs up, face beet red. Accidentally knocks over a glass of water before flying out the door. Sam quickly picks up the folder to keep it from getting wet. She runs after him.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Russ simmers in the driveway. His breath an angry vapor in the cold night air. A full panic attack hits him. Unbuttoning his collar, he tries to breathe. It's a bad one. Sam rushes to him, then freezes. Never seen him do this.

SAM  
You Ok?! What's going on?

Can't answer, light-headed. Dying, not dying. Christ!

SAM (CONT'D)  
Should I call 911?

Russ steals a breath. Walks to a tree, sits against it. Calm the fuck down, please.

SAM (CONT'D)  
You alright?

RUSS

Yeah. No, I'm not fucking alright,  
Sam.

Composing. Freaking out. Sam drifts too close.

SAM

Panic attack?

RUSS

I'm Ok. What happened to her?

Sam freezes.

RUSS (CONT'D)

What happened to OUR daughter? You  
know her?

Shakes her head "no".

RUSS (CONT'D)

Why the hell not?!

SAM

Too scared, felt bad for letting  
her go.

RUSS

Letting her go to who?

SAM

She was adopted through the place I  
stayed while I was pregnant.

RUSS

That's why you went up north?

SAM

Yes.

RUSS

What the hell? Why didn't you tell  
me? How could you not say a damn  
thing?

SAM

I should've. But after time went  
by, it didn't seem right. You were  
with Jen. Didn't want to complicate  
shit.

RUSS

Shit's fucking complicated now.



SAM

It is.

Afraid, she hands him the folder again.

SAM (CONT'D)

I know you're pissed. You got every right to be. Take this. If you wanna try and connect, this paperwork's all we got.

He takes it, reluctantly. Shakes his head in disgust and disbelief.

RUSS

Gotta go.

SAM

I'm sorry.

Turns his back. Walks to the truck. Slams the door. Drives off. Sam's crushed. Not surprised.

INT. DARLENE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darlene sits in her chair. Reads the last page of her book. Closes it, Amen. Looks faraway. Tries to workout what she can't put together.

A knock, brings her back. Sam comes in, eyes puffy. Leans over close to mother. Closer than she's been in years. Sits on the edge of the bed. Picks up the book.

SAM

"Pride and Prejudice"?

Darlene pats her weathered edition.

DARLENE

An old friend, I haven't visited in a while.

Sam nods with a crushed smile. Dar sees her and through her.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

What's the word?

SAM

Regret?

DARLENE

That word. Not one of my favorites.

SAM  
Me either.

Sam leafs through the pages.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Told Russ.

Darlene hears her. Says nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Didn't take it well. You were  
right, Ma.

Holds Sam's hand.

DARLENE  
I was not.

Relieved, Dar is in the "Now". More lucid than ever. The  
woman from before. Free from her curse. Her voice, strong.  
Commanding. Kind. The noble voice of a teacher.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
If you two are gonna be something.  
It starts by being honest. Good you  
told him.

SAM  
Don't know, mama.

The old woman squeezes her hand.

DARLENE  
I do.

SAM  
That's a 180.

Darlene's knowing smile.

DARLENE  
Maybe it's just the 'Pride and  
Prejudice' talking. I lost my  
Darcy. Lost you. Don't let your  
last chapter be without love. Don't  
give up Sam, that's not like you.

SAM  
Suppose not.

DARLENE  
*SUPPOSE* not?! You're one tough  
bitch, child. Own it.

Sam smiles. Feels whole for just a second.

SAM  
I'm owning it.

DARLENE  
Good.

Sam walks to the door. Turns.

SAM  
Love ya, Mama.

Darlene opens her book.

DARLENE  
Love you too, my girl.

INT. RUSS'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Russell sips his coffee, looking out the window he's spent years looking out of. The warm sunlight feels different now. The closed folder sits in front of him.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sleeping later than usual, that same morning sun streams through Sam's window. It gets up, starts her routine.

LIVING ROOM:

Sam opens the curtains. Opens the window a crack. Lets in the crisp, morning air. Notices the canvas with its plush, purple and brown base. Takes her brush, paints a small, sweet figure in gold. A little girl.

Painting with purpose and determination, Sam's brush peels away invisible layers, revealing what lies beneath. Stops. A bit too much right now, she puts down her brush and prays.

INT. RUSS'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

After jotting down information on a small pad, Russ picks up his cell and dials.

RUSS  
My name is Russell Clayton. I'm  
the History teacher at Amberwood  
High School.

(MORE)

RUSS (CONT'D)

Not quite sure how to go about this  
but I'm hoping to possibly reach  
out to a woman I believe is my  
daughter. Was wondering if you  
could help?

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sam walks down the hall. Knocks gently on Darlene's door.

SAM

Therapy this morning. Need to get  
moving.

DARLENE'S BEDROOM:

The old girl's still in bed. The room's warm, comfortable.  
Sam opens the window a bit, best way to wake up Dar, who's  
grown fond of sleep in retirement.

SAM

(imitating her mother)  
Ok, young lady, get your butt  
going!  
(back to her own voice)  
I like this. Tables are turned.

She moves in closer.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let's go, princess.

Looks at Darlene. The book next her mother's hand, rests in  
a strange position. Sam notices the light on the lamp stand,  
still on.

A closer look at her mother. A dart of realization. Sam  
touches her hand. Cold. Gently, she tries to shake her.  
Vacancy on the old woman's face. Darlene has passed away.

SAM (CONT'D)

Oh, Mama. No.

INT. RUSS'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Russ's cell rings. Sees Sam's name. Stops dead in his tracks,  
not sure he wants to answer. Not ready, not yet. Something  
tells him to pick up anyway. A hesitation, then...

RUSS  
Morning Sam...

His face drains.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

A small group of townsfolk stand as the ceremony concludes. Hank keeps a respectful distance, a strong face holding back. Wheeling closer, he takes Sam's hand. Laurie and Ann give her a hug as the remaining mourners offer condolences.

Russ hangs back under an old maple, not far from where Jenna lies. Sam and him make eye contact. He makes his way over to father and daughter.

RUSS  
Mr. Sands. Sorry for your loss. I  
thought the world of Darlene.

HANK  
I know you, you're Russ Clayton.  
Remember you tearing up the Pony  
Leagues way back when.

RUSS  
Way back, sir.

HANK  
Dar always spoke highly of you,  
son. Sam too.

Samantha and Russ, try in vain not to look at each other.

HANK (CONT'D)  
You two young'uns have some  
history, don't ya?

RUSS  
History, yes. Young? Maybe not.

HANK  
Young to me. History teaches us a  
lot. You're a History teacher,  
right?

RUSS  
I am.

HANK  
There ya go. Expect to be seeing  
more of you, Coach.  
(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Moving back in the Spring, to look after Darlene's place. She carried the load a long time. Hate to see it go to strangers.

Sam's surprised.

SAM

Really?

HANK

That's what I'm thinking.

SAM

Guess it's your place too.

HANK

Nah, it's her place, and yours. So, is that Ok with you?

Tears.

SAM

It's Ok. How it should be.

Hank nods, smiles. Sam leans down and kisses his stubbled cheek. The old man motions to the transport driver who walks over to wheel him to the van.

HANK

I'll check in with you soon, Samson. Merry Christmas.

The father extends his hand to Russ. A warm handshake of mutual respect.

HANK (CONT'D)

Take care of yourself, young man, don't be a stranger.

RUSS

I won't, sir.

HANK

Be nice to see more of each other, Sam, if you wouldn't mind.

Sam leans in and holds him tight, no rush to let him go.

SAM

I don't mind...Dad.

Now Hank can let those tears go.

HANK

Been waiting a long time to hear  
you call me that. I do love you.

Sam nods. Wheeling away, Hank gives a wave before being  
helped into the van. Just Russ and Sam, now.

RUSS

I'm sorry, Sam.

SAM

Where'd you park?

RUSS

Walked.

SAM

Walk me home?

RUSS

I can do that.

EXT. AMBERWOOD SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Back to the old house. Christmas lights. A short walk, not  
far from the cemetery. Holding hands, saying nothing.

RUSS

Leave it to Darlene to want a small  
send-off.

SAM

First thing in her instructions.  
Small and in the morning, "so folks  
can get on with their day".

RUSS

The pragmatist.

SAM

Occasionally the romantic.

They keeping walk, quiet again.

SAM (CONT'D)

I want you to know how sorry *I* am.

RUSS

Don't need to go there. Just lost  
your mother, been a rough time.

SAM

Think I lost my mother a long time ago. We lost each other. Then we got a second chance. For that, I'm thankful.

Russ gives her a hug.

RUSS

A good thing.

SAM

What's worse? Finding out you been lied to by someone you love. A lie that stole something from you for so many years. Years you can't get back. Or not knowing you were lied to, never having the chance to have it back at all.

They get to the house. Quaint Christmas decorations trim the place. Sam turns to Russ.

SAM (CONT'D)

The last conversation Ma and I had, she told me how much she hated the word "regret". Must've felt a lot of that.

RUSS

Don't we all?

SAM

We do. But when you have a chance to do something about it. I guess you should. So I did. Just a little too late.

She starts to tear up but takes a deep breath, instead.

SAM (CONT'D)

I would cry if there were any tears left. But I don't think it's time for tears anymore. Think it's time to be strong. To be straight. To get rid of regrets.

She kisses Russ softly, finally.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm not sorry I told you. Sad for what we lost. What we could have had but not sorry for telling you.

(MORE)



SAM (CONT'D)

Just for keeping it from you for so damn long. Hope you can forgive me, one day.

Russ looks away, nothing more to add.

SAM (CONT'D)

And I gotta forgive myself. Which ain't gonna be easy 'cause I've cost myself a lot.

She touches Russ' face and motions to the front door.

SAM (CONT'D)

Come in for just a second.

RUSS

I dunno, Sam.

SAM

Just a second.

They walk inside.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sam heads to a small Christmas tree. Russ follows, cautiously. On it, he spots a PICTURE ORNAMENT. An old photo of a much younger Sam, Darlene and Hank in happier times. He gently tilts it up for a look.

RUSS

Nice.

SAM

Like the Radio Head song. "Fake Plastic Trees"

RUSS

Thought it was real.

She takes his hand. Eyes lock.

SAM

So did I.

Lets go.

SAM (CONT'D)

Leaving for New York. Guess I'll be back in Spring to help Dad get settled in.

Searching for words. Wanting to say more. Not wanting the moment to end.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Got something for you.

Sam pulls a painting from behind the tree. Hands it to Russ. A purple and brown background, a small girl shines peacefully in radiant gold. Simple, beautiful, hopeful. Studying the painting, Russ moves to the door, points to the girl.

RUSS  
She's out there. Maybe meeting the real one would be a good thing.

SAM  
Maybe. Just not ready for that right now. Easier to paint her.

Russ looks at Sam one last time, then to the painting. Opens the door, nods, smiles and fades away.

RUSS  
See ya, Sam.

She watches him leave for a long time. It's over. A strengthening breath. A closing door.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Only thoughts now. Visiting memories have gone back home. Looks at her pieces on the walls. Floats to the living room. Sits at Dar's piano. Pecks the fractured notes of "You Are My Sunshine". Closes the piano cover over the keys. Tears.

Why is there a blank canvas on the easel? Perplexed. Shakes her head, doesn't remember putting that there.

INT. RUSS' HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Russ walks in the house after a long run with Bailey. Out of breath and answers. His clothes wet with perspiration. Sam's painting sits on the floor next to a small table. He picks up his cell. Check for messages. None.

Anxious as hell, he goes to the kitchen. Gets a glass of water. Rinsing his face and neck doesn't help. Bailey's wagging tail doesn't help.

Desperately trying to fight off this attack, he goes to a drawer, grabs a hammer and nail and hangs the painting. Pacing, with each step sinking deeper.

RUSS  
Damn it, man...this is bullshit!

THE BATHROOM

Russ splashes himself feverishly with water to no avail. His heart races even faster, blood rushes to his face. Faster, urgent, useless breaths. Trying to catch a deep one. He swings violently, knocking shit off the counter.

RUSS  
ENOUGH!!!! Enough of this...

Smashing his hand against the door. Exorcising his last of anxiety demons. He STOPS.

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Fucking enough.

Calmer, he starts picking up the broken pieces of everything he's knocked on the floor.

PHONE RINGS

Picks up his cell...

RUSS (CONT'D)  
Hello. Yes, this is Russ Clayton.

His face changes so intensely, it brightens the room.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam lays in bed reading "Pride and Prejudice". Glances at her phone, thinks about calling. Doesn't. Distracted. Detached. Closes the book. Holds it close. Turns off the lamp. Blue moonlight fills her room. Shuts her eyes. Hopes for sleep.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Laurie and Ann cover the last of the furniture. Sam puts the final piece of the tree in it's weathered box.

LAURIE  
Leaving on New Year's, quite dramatic, Ms. Sands.

SAM  
Thanks guys. I'll need more help when I come back in April for Dad.

LAURIE

Wise chick once told me, help  
people the way they want to be  
helped.

Sam smiles. Ann points to the easel and blank canvas.

ANN

Cover this too?

SAM

Leave it Ann. I'll take care of it.

LAURIE

(looking around)

I think that's it kiddo. Anything  
else we can do?

SAM

Avoid running into basketball poles  
till I get back.

LAURIE

No promises there.

Sam covers the last chair, turns and puts her arms around the  
two women. Walks them to the door.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY

The air's cold. Hearts warm. Eyes all misty.

LAURIE

No blubbering. Be seeing you in a  
few months right?

SAM

Right.

LAURIE

I'll bake a cake.

SAM

Something to look forward to.

Sad smiles and hugs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Thanks for being good to me and  
mom.

ANN

Of course, Sam.

LAURIE

Go eat your damn gluten free  
bagels, bitch.

They get in, close the car door. Laurie blinks a silent "love you" and waves.

SAM

Love you guys. Happy New Year.

As they drive off, Sam walks back to the house. Takes it in.

INSIDE DARLENE'S HOUSE

Everything's covered, except Sam's easel, canvas and a couple old feelings. She opens her old doctor's bag. Brings out some paint and a brush. Covers the canvas with a sky of brilliant yellow, orange and gold.

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The painting's bright, radiant and hopeful backdrop, waits to be filled with whoever or whatever will live in it's new world. Satisfied, Sam leaves it for another day. Picks up her backpack, takes one last look around.

In the tree box, she see's the ornament of her and her folks still on a plastic branch. She removes, places it in her bag with a kiss. Turns off the lights, walks out the door.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - DAY

Sam strides, head down to her Mustang. Looks up. Surprised. Russ Clayton, backpack and Bailey by his side, leaning on the hood. Slick, chrome American prince. Broken down, field general. Maybe both, maybe neither. He *is* hers.

RUSS

Truck's been giving me problems.  
Need a lift to New York. There's a  
woman there, named Sophie, teaches  
dance to children in Brooklyn, said  
she'd like to meet me and you too.  
You ok with that? Couple extra  
riders?

Sam, *THE* one. Drops her bag. Tears stream. The one that didn't get away. She *is* his. A deep kiss. 50 years of life, passion and struggle. 35 years of history together.

SAM

Think we can work something out.

RUSS

I think we already have.

A wide open future. Oh, and one more kiss.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Happy New Year.

Sam and Russ get in that Mustang and drive away into a crisp, wintery, Pennsylvania morning.

FADE OUT.

**THE END**