

A BEAUTIFUL DREAM

by

Kimberly Britt

A BEAUTIFUL DREAM

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Cars are parked on either side of the narrow street, making it difficult for normal traffic to flow through.

The greatest concentration of cars is outside a huge 2-story model home.

Loud ROCK MUSIC echoes through the stormy night.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - PARTY - NIGHT

COLLEGE STUDENTS are crammed into the living room, dancing and drinking under multi-colored strobe lights.

The current song ends and an enthusiastic DJ dutifully replaces it with another crowd pleaser.

ALL (V.O.)
(chanting)
Nate! Nate! Nate! Nate!

KITCHEN

A group of JOCKS are gathered around the table where a drinking competition has commenced.

NATHAN STEWART (21) is one of the participants. His blue backwards baseball cap accentuates his equally blue eyes. He focuses intently on his opponent.

BILLY (21) sits across of him, looking determined, if not intoxicated.

They both raise their shot glasses and down the clear liquid.

Nathan SLAMS the empty glass down, unscathed.

Billy passes out.

The crowd erupts with laughter and congratulatory CHEERS.

LIVING ROOM

SAM GRIER (18), a petite girl with shoulder length wavy hair

and striking grayish-blue eyes, dances with the crowd.

She has a beer bottle in hand and, by the looks of her, it isn't her first of the night.

MATT STEWART, an exact replica of his twin Nathan, minus the jock apparel, walks up behind her, unnoticed.

MATT
(over music)
Have you seen Nate?

She grabs him and pulls him close.

SAM
Matty! Dance with me.

MATT
I promised our parents I wouldn't let him drink himself into a coma... not until they've made a couple million off him in the NFL.

SAM
He wouldn't dare die on me... not tonight. So you're off the hook.

Matt slides the beer bottle out of her hand.

MATT
Maybe I should be watching you. How many of these have you had?

SAM
A couple.

MATT
You're not supposed to be drinking.

SAM
I'm not supposed to do a lot of things.

Sam gets up on her tip toes and plants a long wet kiss on an unsuspecting Matt.

His first instinct is to kiss her back, then he pulls away.

MATT
What... was that?

SAM
I've always wondered if I'd be
able to tell the difference.

MATT
And?

A bubbly redhead, STEPH, gets in between them, clamping her
arm around Matt's and leading him away.

STEPH
You better come... quick.

He grabs hold of Sam and pulls her along into the

KITCHEN

Nathan faces a new opponent.

TRENT (20) is easily twice Nathan's size and significantly
less intoxicated.

Trent and Nathan finish their shots and SLAM down the
glasses with authority.

The crowd CHEERS.

Matt watches from the sidelines, arms folded across his
chest, jaw clenched, lips pursed into a stubborn line.

MATT
Damage control.

SAM
I'm on it.

Sam wraps her arms around Nathan's neck and kisses his
cheek.

SAM
C'mon, Nate, you owe me a dance.

NATHAN
Not now, baby. I'm in the middle
of something.

SAM
Do you love me?

NATHAN
Do I l-- What kind of question is
that? Of course I love you.

SAM

Then swallow your little male
pride, admit defeat and come dance
with me.

The room quiets down as everyone anxiously awaits his
decision.

Nathan looks from Sam to the guys numerous times before
getting out of his chair and taking Sam by the waist.

NATHAN

Sorry guys, my girl comes first.

The guys razz him as he leaves the room with Sam.

Matt sighs with relief. Disaster averted.

LATER

Nathan, Sam, Matt, Steph and another female, ROXY, lounge on
the living room floor.

Roxy rests her head against a wall with a bottle of wine in
her hand.

Nathan lies with his head in Sam's lap as she gently runs
her
fingers through his spikey hair. But her attention is on --

Steph who sits very close to Matt, leaning on his shoulder.

The other party-goers have long since left, empty beer
bottles, cans and cups in their wake.

ROXY

That was an awesome party.

She takes a drink of wine, a thin stream running down her
chin.

NATHAN

That was better than awesome. That
was... good.

STEPH

Nate, you're so wasted.

NATHAN

I'm not drunk. I'm just --

ROXY

Shit-faced.

STEPH

Okay, fess up. Who among us thought they would make it to graduation? Show of hands.

Matt and Sam are the only ones that hold up their hands.

STEPH

Nerds.

NATHAN

She's too sexy to be a nerd.

Nathan grabs her face with both hands and pulls her down for a series of long, tender kisses.

Matt watches their interaction with nothing less than jealousy in his eyes.

Steph puts her hand on Matt's knee, whispers in his ear.

He jumps to his feet.

MATT

We better get home. It's late.

STEPH

Don't be such a buzz kill. It's still early. And storming.

Matt pulls Nathan to his feet with exaggerated effort. Wraps one of Nathan's arms around his shoulder for support.

NATHAN

You sure? We'll wait.

With his back to Steph, Matt gives Nate a warning look.

SAM

We should get Nate home before he passes out.

Sam gets up, throws Nathan's other arm around her shoulder.

Matt and Sam move toward the door with Nathan sandwiched between them, barely coherent.

STEPH

You guys need help with him?

SAM

Nah, we're ol' pros.

Steph and Roxy follow them out onto the porch.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Matt and Sam step out into the torrential rain with Nathan, moving as quickly as possible.

ROXY
Drive carefully.

Nathan waves with the arm around Sam's neck.

STEPH
Call me, Matt.

As they walk to the car, Sam glances at Matt with a playful smirk.

SAM
Steph hearts you.

MATT
Stop. I'm blushing.

INT. MATT'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Nathan is sprawled across the back seat, mouth open and snoring.

Sam sits in the front passenger seat while Matt is behind the wheel.

A steady downpour inundates the windshield while the wipers work furiously to clear it away. Distant RUMBLING THUNDER and flashes of LIGHTNING make for dangerous conditions.

Sam turns to check on Nathan.

MATT
Still breathing?

SAM
Apparently, or he wouldn't be snoring so loud.

Matt remains focused on the road ahead. Not even as much as a smile penetrates his concentration.

SAM
So you and Steph...

MATT
What? No.

SAM
(knowing)
Okay, if you say so.

MATT
I know what you're doing.

SAM
Making conversation. Shame on me.

MATT
And I know why you're doing it,
too.

SAM
Enlighten me, Dalai Lama.

MATT
You're hoping once I'm with
someone I'll lose my appeal.

The playful smile on Sam's face quickly fades, replaced with mortification.

MATT
Sam, I was kidding.

He laughs in a feeble attempt to lighten her mood but it fails miserably. If anything, her worried expression deepens.

SAM
Matt, I --

MATT
It was a joke.

The air fills with an uncomfortable silence.

When she finally dares to look up, she finds Matt's eyes focused intently on the road again.

SAM
I love Nate.

MATT
I wasn't disputing that.

She glances over her shoulder to ensure that Nate's still asleep, which he is.

SAM
Even if I did have --

MATT
You're getting married, Sam.

She fidgets with the ring on her left hand.

Matt's intense concentration finally breaks to steal a peak at Sam.

MATT
You're about to have everything
you've always wanted. Or at least
everything you've always thought
you wanted.

Again he looks over to gauge her reaction.

She does her best to keep her emotions in check, but a small degree of sadness slips through the cracks.

MATT
So what if you have to sacrifice
little pieces of yourself to get
it.

Sam turns in her seat to look out the window, avoiding his accusing glare.

SAM
You don't know what you're talking
about.

MATT
You're graduating two whole years
early just so you'll be available
to run off to Florida with Nate so
he can be a big NFL star. That's
your youth. You don't get that
back.

She shakes her head in denial.

MATT
I love my brother, Sam. But I'm
afraid that you're gonna wake up
one day and realize you spent your
whole life chasing his dreams and
denying your own.

SAM
What do you want me to do?

She looks into the backseat, sees Nathan stirring. Lowers her voice accordingly. Bravely looks into Matt's eyes.

SAM
Call off the wedding? Break up
with Nate?

MATT
Not unless that's what you want.

A horn BLARES a firm warning.

Matt's and Sam's attention turns back to the road.

THEIR POV

HEADLIGHTS coming right at them.

Matt instinctively throws an arm across Sam.

MATT
Hold on!

He jerks the wheel to the right, then slams on the brakes.

The car comes to a sudden, SQUEALING stop.

He looks around to ensure his passengers are alright.

Sam looks shaken up, but unharmed.

Nate sits upright, holding his stomach, ready to blow.

MATT
Do not puke in my new car! I'll
kill you!

Nate fumbles with the door handle but can't get it to open.

Sam reaches for her belt buckle.

Matt stops her, putting a hand over hers.

MATT
Stay here. I'll take care of it.

Sam watches from inside the car as Matt gets out, goes around and opens the back door.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT

Nate spills out of the car into a heap at Matt's feet.
Starts vomiting.

Sam cracks the window, careful not to let any rain in.

SAM

Aww, come on. Do you have to do
that right there?

Matt takes his attention off of Nate to regard Sam. Just in
time to see --

A CAR HYDROPLANES through a large puddle of water and heads
right toward them, tires SQUEALING.

MATT

Sam!

CRASH!

INT. GRIER HOME - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: SIX YEARS LATER

Sam, now 24, trudges down the stairs dressed in baggy black
sweats and a hoodie. Her eyes are lifeless and shrouded by
dark circles. Her hair is longer and unkempt.

She has aged badly over the years and looks much older than
she should.

KITCHEN

JACKIE and PAUL GRIER (50s) sit at the table with RAINE (5).

Jackie moves her food around with her fork. Like Sam, she
has seen better days.

Paul reads the morning paper, dressed in a suit and tie, his
jacket slung over the back of his chair.

Raine lets the tips of her blond locks dip into her cereal
bowl as she picks up a soggy Cheerio with her fingers.

FOOTSTEPS in the next room catches Jackie's attention.

JACKIE

Sam? Sweetheart?

LIVING ROOM

Sam is a blur of black as she stalks out the front door, letting it SLAM behind her.

KITCHEN

Jackie looks to her husband who continues to read the paper, oblivious.

JACKIE

Raine, grab your backpack before
you miss the bus.

Raine picks out one last Cheerio then slides off her chair and exits the room.

JACKIE

Have you forgotten what today is
or do you just refuse to
acknowledge it?

Paul's attention never strays from his newspaper.

PAUL

Can you believe they're raising
gas prices... again? I'm going to
have to ride the bus to work.

Jackie clears the table and tosses the dishes into the sink with a loud CRASH.

Paul finally looks up, folding his paper.

PAUL

What I refuse to do is mourn an
alcoholic screw up just because my
daughter thought she was in love
with him.

He takes a sip of coffee while getting out of his chair. Slides his jacket on and grabs his briefcase.

PAUL

I'll be late. Don't wait up.

He hurries out the door, leaving Jackie staring after him.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Endless rows of headstones stretch as far as the eye can see. The light color of the stones are a stark contrast to the rich, green, manicured grass.

Sam sets down a colorful bouquet beside a headstone that reads:

BELOVED SON AND BROTHER
NATHAN STEWART 1982-2003

She sinks to her knees. Stares in stunned silence.

Removes a picture of Raine from her pocket and leans it against the headstone.

SAM
Looks like everyone else forgot.
Again.

MATT (O.S.)
I didn't forget.

Matt is now 27 and looks thinner and frailer than when we last saw him.

He stands behind her with a bouquet of flowers that puts hers to shame. He places them beside Sam's.

She looks up curiously, shielding her eyes from the sun.

SAM
What're you doing here?

MATT
Same as you. Remembering.
Mourning.

She turns her attention back to Nathan's headstone.

MATT
What, that's it? No "Hey Matt,
how are ya, whatcha been up to for
the last six years"?

Sam gets to her feet, looks at him long and hard, then walks away.

Matt stares at the headstone, then hurries after her.

MATT
Can I give you a ride?

She pauses long enough to size up the black sports car parked on the curb, then starts off in the opposite direction.

MATT
So that's a no then?

INT. GRIER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jackie has her head inside the oven, scrubbing vigorously with a scouring pad and rubber gloves.

A shuffling noise at the back door catches her attention.

She pulls off the gloves and opens the back door. Finds Sam digging in her purse and Matt standing beside her.

JACKIE
Matt?

Matt forces a smile, nodding toward Sam.

MATT
This belong to you?

JACKIE
Come in. Come in.

Jackie cheerfully ushers Sam and Matt into the house.

LATER

Matt, Sam and Jackie sit at the table, a cup of coffee in front of each of them.

Jackie sips hers.

Matt swirls the contents of his.

Sam sits with her arms folded across her chest, looks like she's being tortured.

JACKIE
How's Baltimore?

MATT
Good.

JACKIE
How're your parents?

MATT
Good. Both good.

He steals a look at Sam to find her completely disconnected.

JACKIE
How was your flight?

MATT
I drove.

JACKIE
That must've taken days.

MATT
Uh... three.

JACKIE
Is everything okay at home?

MATT
Fine.

JACKIE
Then why'd you... what made you...

Sam flashes her a warning look, imploring her to stop.

MATT
I came to...

He glances at Sam, stares into her despair-ridden eyes.

MATT
... visit.

JACKIE
Where are you staying?

MATT
A hotel. I guess. This was sorta
spur of the moment, so...

The front door opens and little FOOTSTEPS run across the living room floor.

Raine bursts into the kitchen, her curly pigtails swaying back and forth.

RAINE
Mommy!

Both Sam and Jackie look up at the sound of her voice, but it is Jackie's arms she leaps into.

Matt instantly picks up on the tension. Looks from Sam to Jackie and finally Raine. Puts it all together.

JACKIE
Hey, you. How was school?

Raine stares over Jackie's shoulder at Matt with raised eyebrows.

RAINE
Who's that?

JACKIE
An old friend of Sam's. His name
is Matt.

RAINE
(to Matt)
You don't look old.

MATT
That's grown up talk for we've
been friends a long time.

Jackie lovingly strokes the child's hair, kisses the top of her head.

JACKIE
This is Raine.

Raine holds up five fingers on one hand and a bent index finger on the other.

RAINE
I'm five... and a half.

MATT
Wow. Smart and pretty.

RAINE
Is he Sam's boyfriend?

Sam's chair SQUEALS against the marble flooring as she stands abruptly and exits the room.

Raine leans in closer to Matt, as if about to whisper top secret information.

RAINE
She has pictures of you all over
her room.

INT. GRIER HOME - SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

The dark and dreary room is covered with pictures of Sam and Nathan moving chronologically from left to right. Birthdays. Sporting Events. Graduation.

Sam is curled up in bed with her back turned to the door. There is a pained, far away look in her tearless eyes.

A KNOCK on the door.

HALLWAY

Matt waits patiently.

KNOCKS again.

Still no reply. He enters

SAM'S ROOM

She closes her eyes, feigning sleep.

Matt closes the door behind him and walks to the dresser. Picks up a framed photo.

INSERT - PICTURE

Nathan and Sam at a college football game.

One of the edges is ragged, like part of it has been ripped off.

BACK TO SCENE

He puts it down and picks up another one that looks similar.

MATT

I was in a few of these, wasn't I?

No reply.

MATT

It must've looked like I skipped out on you.

SAM

Didn't you?

MATT

I hope I can explain it to you... someday.

SAM

Don't bother.

MATT

Your daughter is beautiful. It would've been nice to know she existed before today.

SAM

Take it up with Jean. She knew.

The turn in conversation causes Sam to lay back down and turn her back to him.

INT. GRIER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jackie sits at the head of the table, sliding her food around on her plate with a fork.

Matt and Raine sit across each other, an empty chair beside each of them. They seem to be enjoying their meal more than Jackie.

Jackie occasionally glances up at the chair across from her which is empty as well.

MATT

Just us?

JACKIE

Paul works late.

MATT

And Sam?

RAINE

She never comes down.

Jackie dabs at her mouth with a napkin. Turns to Raine.

JACKIE

Raine, take your dinner into the living room and go watch TV.

RAINE

Really?

Raine leaps out of her seat excitedly and races from the room with her dinner plate.

Jackie watches her go, then turns to Matt.

JACKIE

She's been... distant ever since...

MATT

You mean she's still...

JACKIE

Don't get me wrong, it used to be a lot worse. But I'm worried I'll never have my old Sam back.

Jackie carries her plate to the sink and drops it in.

JACKIE

We've got an empty guestroom. It's yours for as long as you want it.

INT. GRIER HOME - GUEST BATHROOM - DAY

Matt towel dries himself after a shower. Looks at his reflection in the steamy mirror.

There is a long ragged scar just above the top of his jeans.

He quickly throws on a shirt. He picks up a comb and runs it through his damp hair.

There is another small scar in the middle of his forehead, just below his hairline.

ALL (V.O.)

Nate! Nate! Nate! Nate!

SAM (V.O.)

I've always wondered if I'd be able to tell the difference.

STEPH (V.O.)

Don't be such a buzz kill. It's still early. And storming.

ROXY (V.O.)

Drive carefully.

MATT (V.O.)

Sam!

A CRASH of metal and glass.

Matt finds himself hunched over, clutching the sink, his

knuckles white from the pressure.

A CHEERFUL RINGING snaps him out of it.

He picks up his cell and checks the caller I.D. Sighs loudly. Answers.

MATT

Yes, mom?... Yes, I got here safely... No, I haven't told her yet... it's complicated... yes, I will call with a complete report every hour on the hour... no, I'm not making fun of you... okay, maybe a little... listen, I have to ask you something... did you know that Sam was pregnant when we left?

Matt rolls his eyes, sighs loudly.

MATT

I'll take that as a yes.

He abruptly ends the call, slamming the phone down.

INT. GRIER HOME - SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam tosses and turns, having a nightmare. Her expression is tense and troubled. She GASPS, then bolts awake.

The room is relatively dark except for the sparse amount of sun that peeks through the blinds.

MATT (O.S.)

So this is what you do all day.
You sleep?

Sam sees Matt slouched in a corner of the room.

He gets up and draws the blinds. A disorienting amount of sunlight streams in.

She sinks back down and covers her head.

He pulls the blanket off her face.

She tugs it back.

A tug-of-war ensues, ending with Matt stripping the entire blanket away.

He rummages through her drawers, picking clothes at random.
A bra lands on her head, a shirt and shorts on her chest.

MATT
Get dressed.

SAM
Why're you doing this?

MATT
You can't go out in your... under-
things.

She realizes she is dressed in a skimpy tank top and boy shorts. Folds her arms self-consciously across her chest.

MATT
You can't hide out in your room
forever.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Sam stands rigidly in front of a tree with a deep gouge in it. Absently runs her hand over the mangled bark.

Matt watches in silence.

SAM
Why did you bring me here?

MATT
I thought it might help.

SAM
To bring me back to the place
where I lost everything?

MATT
You didn't lose everything.

SAM
If I had died, do you think Nate
would have gone to Florida?

MATT
You wanna play the "what if" game?
What if I had died instead of
Nate? Would you have married him?

Sam stares at him, contemplating, then heads toward the car.

MATT

Sam, don't --

He reaches for her arm, accidentally pulling up her sleeve.

An ugly scar extends from her wrist to her elbow.

She yanks her arm away, pulls down her sleeve and gets into the car.

EXT. GRIER HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

An intermittent CREAKING mingles with the light sound of rain.

Matt sits in an old porch swing, rocking rhythmically.

The porch light comes on.

Jackie steps out of the house.

JACKIE

You made quite an impression on Raine. You've been voted her new favorite person, right up there with Hannah Montana and the Bratz.

Matt is too lost in thought to reply.

Jackie sits on the swing beside him, momentarily pausing its rocking.

JACKIE

What happened today?

MATT

One step forward, ten steps back.

JACKIE

I know the feeling.

MATT

I saw her arm...

JACKIE

It was the first anniversary of... the accident. We thought she went to the cemetery.

(beat)

They found her in the same spot where Nathan... she almost didn't make it.

MATT
I shouldn't have left her.

JACKIE
She wasn't your responsibility.

Matt doesn't seem to agree as his eyes fill with regret.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MATT'S DREAM - NIGHT

Blood drips down Matt's nose from a gash in the center of his forehead. He crouches over --

Nathan's motionless body. His legs are twisted into an unnatural position. His arms are limp at his side.

Matt applies pressure to a wound on Nathan's head, his hands covered in his brother's blood.

The distant sound of SIRENS in the background.

MATT
You know, we'd be in bed right now
if you knew how to hold your
liquor.

Nathan lets out a low chuckle, then grimaces.

MATT
When you get out of the hospital,
it's gonna be months of double
shifts before you can afford to
fix my car.

Nathan writhes in pain.

MATT
Hang in there. Help's almost
here.

Nathan coughs up blood, choking.

NATHAN
Sam...

MATT
Sam's fine.

NATHAN
Take care of her.

MATT

Don't be melodramatic. You're not dying.

An AMBULANCE and several POLICE CARS pull up.

The PARAMEDICS rush out of their vehicle.

NATHAN

Promise me.

MATT

She's too high maintenance. Take care of her yourself.

NATHAN

You always took better care of her anyway.

Matt looks him over, recognizes that he's fading fast.

NATHAN

Please.

MATT

Okay.

Nathan's eyes go blank as his life slips away.

Matt's jaw tightens in anger as he pulls Nathan onto his lap and doubles over him.

INT. GRIER HOME - MATT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matt bolts up from his nightmare. His forehead is drenched with sweat. Bare chest rises and falls rapidly.

He takes a deep breath, then lies back down.

INT. DINER - DAY

Matt and Sam sit at a booth, two untouched plates of food between them.

MATT

Raine is amazing.

She picks up her fork and stabs at her food as a distraction.

MATT

She says "purnk" is her favorite color, which, according to her, is the color you get when you mix pink and purple. And that she wants to be a ballerina when she grows up, which is ironic considering how much of a tomboy you were.

Still no response from Sam.

MATT

Do you ever think about telling her the truth?

She takes a huge bite of food. Chews purposefully slow.

MATT

If you spent more time with her...

Sam drops her fork onto her plate. CLANK!

SAM

Every time I look at her, I see him.

MATT

What do you see when you look at me?

She picks up her fork and continues poking her food.

Matt's cell phone rings the same CHEERY RING as before. He gets it out of his pocket and checks the caller I.D. Sets it down unanswered.

SAM

Are you gonna get that?

MATT

It's not important.

The phone stops ringing, then immediately RINGS again.

SAM

Sounds important.

Matt powers down the phone, then shoves it back into his pocket. Leaves the booth.

MATT

I'm gonna pay our bill.

INT. GRIER HOME - MATT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Raine sits on the bed next to a sleeping Matt, tickling his nose with a feather.

He scratches his nose, still asleep.

She pries one of his eyes open, then moves to the other. About to pull it open when

Matt jumps to life, snapping his teeth and growling like a ravenous beast.

Raine SHRIEKS and dashes out of the room.

He gives chase. Down the

HALLWAY

allowing Raine a decent lead. Follows her down the

STAIRS

and eventually into the

LIVING ROOM

where he finally catches up. He lifts her off her feet and dangles her upside down.

She giggles infectiously as Matt tickles her.

Paul stalks down the stairs, frowning at Matt.

Matt lowers Raine back to her feet.

PAUL

I wish you wouldn't make her
shriek like that. It's giving me
a headache.

Dressed in his usual power suit with briefcase in hand, Paul hurries toward the front door.

Matt pouts like a child that has been scolded, much to Raine's amusement.

As soon as the door closes behind Paul, Matt tickles Raine again.

When the tickle assault comes to an end, Matt and Raine lie side by side on their backs, out of breath.

MATT
He works on Sunday?

RAINE
He works every day.

MATT
Even God took Sunday off.

RAINE
My dad probably makes more money.

Matt picks her up, positions her under his arm like a sack of potatoes and carries her into the

KITCHEN

His smile quickly fades as he sees an older woman and man sitting at the table with Jackie.

JEAN and TONY STEWART (50s) fall silent, as does Jackie.

Matt quickly returns Raine to her feet.

MATT
What're you doing here?

TONY
Don't look at me. It was your mother's idea.

Matt glares at his mother, finds her expression unapologetic.

EXT. GRIER HOME - PATIO - DAY

Matt, Tony and Jean sit at a table next to the pool.

Matt faces the back entrance to the house, smiling.

MATT'S POV

Raine stands in front of the glass door making fish faces.

JEAN (O.S.)
Could you at least look at me when I'm talking to you?

Matt takes his eyes off Raine to glare accusingly at his parents, his bitter expression returning.

MATT

Look at her. How can you not regret not being a part of her life?

JEAN

We made the necessary sacrifices.

JEAN

She's your granddaughter. My niece.

Jean focuses on Matt, her serious expression softening.

JEAN

I thought there would be time... later...

MATT

Why are you here?

JEAN

I'm concerned. We're concerned.

TONY

Don't involve me in this. I'm just here for the sun.

JEAN

You promised you wouldn't be gone long. You said you were just going to say your goodbyes to Sam and you'd be back. Then you stop taking my calls. You can't imagine what was going through my mind.

MATT

So basically you flew sixteen hundred miles to ask me to come home.

TONY

Actually, it was more like eighteen hundred. And then there was the three hour layover because your mother wanted to save fifty bucks.

Jean throws him an evil stare.

Tony puts his hands up, surrendering. Motions her to proceed.

JEAN

I came to remind you that --

MATT

I don't need a reminder. It's happening to me. It's all I think about. Every day I wake up hoping it's just a huge nightmare and I have to remind myself all over again.

JEAN

I'm worried about you, Matt.

MATT

I'm fine, as you can see.

JEAN

You're not fine. You're so far from fine that it keeps me up at night.

Matt folds his arms stubbornly across his chest.

MATT

I can be "not fine" here just the same as I can at home.

JEAN

You should be close to your doctors. What if something were to happen?

MATT

Something is gonna happen, mom. I'm gonna die. Does it really matter where I am when the time comes?

JEAN

Can you really do that to Sam? Put her through that again?

MATT

Don't pretend that you care about Sam or her feelings.

JEAN

You're right. I don't. But I know you do. It's inhumane. And the girl --

MATT
Her name is Raine.

JEAN
She won't understand when you
disappear on her.

Matt gets up abruptly, SLAMS his chair under the table.

MATT
Sorry, but we're doing things my
way for a change.

He starts for the house, then stops, turns back.

MATT
Why don't you come meet her?

JEAN
We have a return flight at noon. I
was hoping you'd join us.

His shakes his head as he walks back into the house.

MATT
Un-freaking-believable.

INT. GRIER HOME - SAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam awakes to the sound of high-pitched LAUGHTER. She goes to her window and looks down.

SAM'S POV

Matt and Raine cavort in the pool.

INT. GRIER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jackie stands in front of the sink washing dishes when Sam enters.

JACKIE
You're up. Want some breakfast?

SAM
What I want is some peace and
quiet.

JACKIE
Sam, she's just a little girl.

Sam gets a glass of water, her eyes wandering out the window. She stares a moment too long at Matt's wet shirtless torso.

Jackie notices, smirks knowingly.

Caught staring, Sam walks away.

JACKIE

Can you take these out to them?

Jackie holds out a tray with two glasses of lemonade.

Sam doesn't look enthusiastic about the idea.

EXT. GRIER HOME - PATIO - DAY

Sam sets down the tray of lemonade none too delicately on the poolside table. Attempts a hasty retreat.

MATT

Raine, look who's here.

Matt lifts the little girl out of the water.

Raine runs full speed at Sam, encircling her waist with her wet arms.

Sam stumbles back, arms in the air to avoid hugging her.

MATT

Wanna go for a swim?

SAM

I think I just did.

Matt climbs out of the pool and walks over to her.

MATT

You're barely wet.

He throws his arms around Sam and rubs his wet self against her.

She is adequately soaked now.

MATT

Let's go for a ride.

SAM

Because that went so well last time.

MATT
Point taken. How about a movie?

RAINE
Let's go to the carnival.

SAM
No!

MATT
Yes! It's right down the street.
We could walk.

SAM
I'm not up for it.

MATT
Remember that time you, me and
Nate got kicked out for winning
too many prizes?

Sam smiles briefly at the memory.

SAM
They thought you were cheating.

RAINE
Who's Nate?

The innocent question sends Sam back into her shell.

SAM
You two have fun.

MATT
Not without you.

RAINE
Please, please, please!

MATT
Raine, show her the face.

Raine curls her bottom lip over the top in a pout. Even the sad way her eyes squint implores Sam to give in.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY

A group of PEOPLE gather to watch their kids enjoying a mini roller coaster ride. Sam among them.

Raine and Matt wave as they go by. He is the only adult on

the ride. He and Raine raise their arms as they go over the little bumps.

The ride comes to an abrupt halt.

Raine
One more time!

Matt flashes a queasy smile as he hands the RIDE ATTENDANT more tickets.

LATER

Matt and Raine exit the ride.

Sam watches from the sidelines, holding a large stuffed dog.

Raine snatches the dog from her and cradles it to her chest. The toy is nearly the same size as her.

Sam
(to Matt)
It's hard to tell which one of you
is five.

Sam takes Raine by the hand and leads her away.

Matt hangs back, his mouth gaping in disbelief.

Matt
You gotta be kidding me. That's
the funnest ride ever.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Matt and Raine play a game of cops and robbers. Matt hides behind one of the game booths while Raine patrols the area with a toy gun and a pair of handcuffs.

Sam sits at a picnic table, nibbling a slice of pizza trying to look like she's not with them.

Matt makes a run for it and Raine opens fire, triggering a series of SHOOTING NOISES.

He falls to the ground, writhing in pain.

Sam looks from one staring person to another. Goes over to them.

Sam
Matt, get up.

Matt opens one eye.

MATT
(whispering)
Can't. I'm wounded.

SAM
I'm serious. People are staring.

Raine takes a seat on Matt's back and handcuffs him.

RAINE
He can't answer you. He's my
prisoner.

MATT
I'll make a deal with you. I'll
get up if you ride the
merry-go-round with us.

SAM
No deal.

Matt and Raine flash her matching pouts.

LATER

Matt, Sam and Raine sit on their own horses on the
merry-go-round.

Matt and Raine ride their horses like a couple of jockeys at
the Kentucky Derby.

Sam sits unwillingly on hers, handcuffed to it.

INT. GRIER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Sam enters, inundated by the sound of blasting MUSIC.

Matt stands at the stove cooking. His head bops to the
beat.

She shuts off the radio on the counter.

MATT
You're up early.

SAM
So is the entire neighborhood.

He flips a pancake into the air and catches it with the
frying pan.

SAM

Am I supposed to be impressed?

MATT

If you're as hungry as you are grumpy, we'll be in business.

He takes the pancake out of the frying pan and sets it on a tall stack. Hands the plate to Sam.

MATT

Just take one, though. The rest are for me.

She smirks, setting the plate on the table. Comes back to Matt's side.

SAM

What brand of torture do you have planned for me today?

MATT

I was thinking we could take Raine to Disneyland. If that doesn't put a smile on your face, there's something seriously wrong with you.

SAM

Ha ha.

MATT

I'm serious. Unless you have a good suggestion, we're going with mine.

SAM

I'll think about it over breakfast.

He turns his attention back to cooking.

MATT

Do you like onions in your omelette?

SAM

Sure. Why not?

He dices a peeled onion that sits on a cutting board.

Sam munches on a pancake, her back to him.

SAM
Where's my mom?

No response.

She turns to find Matt gripping the counter with both hands, knuckles white.

She stares at him a moment in stunned silence. Takes a step toward him.

SAM
Matt?

He holds up a hand to stop her.

He composes himself, then picks up the knife and continues chopping where he left off.

Sam's eyes are wide with alarm. Something isn't right.

MATT
She... Raine had to go... she had
a... they went to her doctor...

SAM
Appointment?

MATT
Yeah. Did you want onions in your
omelette?

Sam doesn't reply, her eyes focused on his hands as they furiously chop the onion.

MATT
Sam?

He turns to meet her worried gaze, taking his eyes off the knife.

The knife grazes his finger. Bright red blood flows.

He doesn't appear to notice, waiting for Sam's answer.

MATT
Onions?

SAM
You... cut yourself...

Matt looks down at his hand, sees his blood flowing onto the cutting board. Doesn't react.

Sam takes his hand and runs it under the tap water.
He watches his blood run down the drain, emotionless.
She watches him, her eyes filled with fear and confusion.

INT. GRIER HOME - MATT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Matt sits on his bed, talking on the phone. Back facing the door which is open a sliver.

HALLWAY

Sam hears his voice and stops to listen in.

MATT (O.S.)
No, just today... a couple days...

MATT'S ROOM

MATT
I'll be there.

He hangs up the phone and takes a deep breath before exiting to the

HALLWAY

Sam is no longer standing there.

EXT. GRIER HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Matt steps out of the house and heads quickly down the stairs, focused and in a hurry.

SAM (O.S.)
What's the rush?

He turns to find Sam sitting on the porch swing.

MATT
I have to go out for a little while.

SAM
Where to?

MATT
Just a quick errand.

Sam goes to the end of the porch, about to walk down the stairs.

SAM

I could use a change of scenery.

He continues on without waiting.

MATT

When I get back.

Matt rushes to his car and gets in, tires SCREECHING as he backs out of the driveway.

INT. DR. RENATA'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt sits in front of a cluttered desk. A plaque reads:
"LINDA RENATA, M.D."

He glances around at the posters all over the walls highlighting different parts of the brain and their function.

He stares at an ominous skull model on the desk. Picks it up for a closer look. The skull is cut at a cross section, revealing the brain inside, each lobe a different color.

He twists it around to get a better look and all the brain parts fall out into his lap. He tries to put it back together then gives up.

DR. RENATA (40s) enters, wearing a lab coat with her name embroidered across the right hand pocket. Smiles cursorily.

Matt stands to shake her hand.

DR. RENATA

Hi, I'm Linda Renata. You must be Matt.

MATT

Hi.

He sits back down, watching her go around her desk and have a seat on her task chair.

MATT

Well?

DR. RENATA

I had your oncologist at Johns Hopkins fax over your files, particularly your last MRI.

MATT

And?

Dr. Renata folds her hands across her desk.

DR. RENATA

I'd like to run a few more --

He shakes his head, put off by her obvious stall tactics.

MATT

I have an inoperable brain tumor that's killing me. Save yourself the trouble.

She sighs loudly, regretful.

DR. RENATA

It's a lot more aggressive than your doctors anticipated. It's nearly doubled in size since your last MRI.

Matt stares numbly. Fights back tears. Struggles to keep breathing.

MATT

They said six months. They said chemo and radiation wouldn't help enough... that I should just spend the time I had left with my family.

DR. RENATA

Brain tumors are very unpredictable. No one could have known --

MATT

I'm guessing the six months was too optimistic.

DR. RENATA

Matt...

MATT

How long?

DR. RENATA

One month. Maybe two. But you won't be fully functional for much longer. My suggestion would be for you to go back to Baltimore and get back on your regimen. It'll buy you a little more time.

Matt reels. Obviously not the news he was expecting or prepared for.

Once it has adequately sunk in, he gets to his feet, extending a hand out to her.

Dr. Renata hesitates solemnly, then stands up and shakes his hand.

DR. RENATA

I'm sorry I couldn't have better news for you.

He tries to pull away, but she squeezes his hand and puts her other hand on top.

DR. RENATA

I'm so sorry.

He pulls away abruptly and hurries out of the room.

INT. GRIER HOME - RAINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Every girly girl's dream bedroom. Light pink walls, pale lavender sheer curtains. Enough toys and stuffed animals to open a store, including her new carnival stuffed dog which has been given front row priority seating.

Raine is tucked into a twin sized canopy bed.

Jackie sits beside her, reading from a story book.

JACKIE

...and the Zillow on my pillow. I don't care if you believe it. That's the kind of house I live in. And I hope we never leave it. The End.

Jackie closes the book and puts it aside.

Raine doesn't seem interested at all.

JACKIE
 What's wrong? That's your
 favorite Dr. Seuss book.

RAINE
 Is Matt coming back?

INT. GRIER HOME - SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits on her window seat with her knees drawn up to her chest. Stares out the window into the dark night.

SAM'S POV

Heavy raindrops make little ripples in the surface of the swimming pool. Puddles form on the surrounding concrete and garden area.

FLASHBACK - SWIMMING POOL

18-year-old Sam and 21-year-old Nathan embrace in the center of the pool, their lips less than an inch apart.

NATHAN
 I love you.

SAM
 I love you more.

NATHAN
 How much more?

SAM
 I love you more than any woman has
 ever loved any man since the
 beginning of time.

NATHAN
 More than Juliet loved Romeo?

SAM
 Exponentially more.

NATHAN
 I was hoping you'd say that.

He lifts a hand out of the water and opens his tightly clenched fist to reveal --

A shiny DIAMOND RING.

Sam stares wide-eyed and mouth agape.

SAM
(whispering)
Oh... my God!

She tries to take it but Nathan snaps his fist closed like a clam would around a pearl.

Smiling deviously, he tosses it over his shoulder.

Sam's eyes nearly bug out.

SAM
Are you crazy?

NATHAN
We're gonna swim for it. If I get
it first, you have to marry me.
And if you get it first, I have to
marry you.

SAM
And what if the pool pump gets it
first?

Nathan and Sam exchange a look and both dive under water.

After a brief moment, Sam's hand breaks the surface, the ring proudly displayed around her finger.

Sam and Nathan surface, throwing their arms around each other, lips locked.

BACK TO SCENE

The pool is once again darkened by the night.

A dark figure stumbles across the patio, nearly falling into the water.

EXT. GRIER HOME - PATIO - NIGHT

Sam barrels through the darkness, immediately pummeled by huge, blinding raindrops.

She locates Matt sitting on the edge of the pool with his feet dangling into the water, beer bottle in hand.

SAM
It's almost midnight.

MATT
I didn't realize I had a curfew.

SAM
Are you drunk?

MATT
Numbness is a nice side effect.

He holds the bottle out to her.

She shakes her head, refusing to participate.

MATT
Awww, c'mon. Friends don't let
friends drink alone.

Sam takes the bottle and flings it across the pool. CRASH.

SAM
You drove like this?

MATT
I already have a mother.

Matt staggers to his feet, swaying unsteadily.

Sam reaches out to help him but he brushes her off.

SAM
You're gonna become an alcoholic
now? Is that the plan? Taking
over where Nathan --

MATT
Nathan is dead!

SAM
Because he cared more about having
a good time than keeping his
promises to me.

MATT
Bullshit.

SAM
That's your brilliant retort?
Bullshit?

MATT
The truth is you're given all
these rules on how to live: don't
drink, don't smoke, don't do
drugs, don't have unprotected sex.
What they don't tell you is none
of that matters when your ticket
is pulled. People die, Sam. All
(MORE)

MATT (cont'd)
the freaking time. Young, old,
sick, healthy. Some people don't
get six years to mope around like
a zombie cursing God and beer and
drunk drivers and anything else
that played a perceivable role in
them not getting their happily
ever after.

Sam stares at him, shocked and betrayed. The same look she
would have given him if he had slapped her across the face.

SAM
How could you say that to me?

MATT
It's all about the "me" with you,
isn't it? You're not the only one
that lost something.

He stumbles away.

Sam follows him into the muddy garden.

SAM
I never claimed to hold the
monopoly on grief.

MATT
Oh, we're allowed to miss him,
too? Thanks for your permission.

He picks up speed to put more distance between them.

SAM
That was a long errand.

He regards her over his shoulder, frustrated.

MATT
Why don't you just ask me where I
was and get it over with?

SAM
Where were you?

MATT
None of your business.

Sam slips and falls into the mud.

Matt turns, tries hard not to laugh. Fails.

SAM

When you're done laughing, can you help me up?

MATT

I give you my hand, you pull me in and I end up looking like you.

Sam scoops up a handful of mud and launches it at Matt. It splatters all over his shirt.

While Matt checks out the damage --

Sam tosses another mud ball.

He struggles to keep himself composed as he reaches a hand out to her.

She takes his hand and tries to pull him into the mud unsuccessfully. Pulls with her other hand as well.

Matt still won't budge.

She looks over her shoulder --

SAM

Raine, get back in the house!

Matt falls for it, turns, just as --

Sam pulls him into the mud beside her.

He takes a moment to gather himself then plants a gloppy ball of mud on top of her head.

An all out mud war ensues.

Matt and Sam are howling with laughter despite themselves.

A thick beam of light is suddenly trained on them.

They shield their eyes to see Jackie standing on the patio with a flashlight and umbrella.

JACKIE

What the -- ?

SAM

I fell.

MATT

Me, too.

INT. GRIER HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Matt searches through the medicine cabinet in the dark. Squints to make out the writing on the labels.

JACKIE (O.S.)
What do you need?

He glances over his shoulder at Jackie in the doorway.

MATT
Aspirin.

She steps up beside him and flips on the light.

Matt grimaces, a hand shooting up to cover his eyes.

JACKIE
Headache?

MATT
Yeah.

JACKIE
A hangover'll do that.

MATT
Not you too.

She takes a bottle of Aspirin out of the cabinet and pops the top. Shakes two tablets out into Matt's open palm.

He swallows them with a drink of water.

MATT
Thanks.

He tries to slip past her but she puts a hand on his shoulder.

JACKIE
I don't know how you did it, but
you brought her back.

INT. GRIER HOME - MATT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matt lies in bed, damp washcloth over his forehead and eyes.

A tiny KNOCK is heard.

He pulls the washcloth off and sits up.

Sam stands in the doorway. She steps in and closes the door behind her.

SAM
Any better?

MATT
Some.

Sam slips into the bed, positioning herself behind him.

He turns to see what she's up to.

She turns him back around.

She rubs his bare shoulders, her hands more delicate and purposeful than any masseuse.

Her fingers travel up his neck and then back down again, rhythmically.

It slowly evolves from therapeutic to sensual.

SAM
Can you promise me something?

MATT
Depends.

SAM
Don't disappear again without saying goodbye.

MATT
I'll try.

SAM
Not good enough.

He turns, bringing his lips almost against hers. Linger there for far too long.

MATT
I promise.

SAM
Thank you.

He returns to his previous position.

Sam picks up where her hands left off--

Rubbing. Stroking. Kneading.

Then she stops to wrap her arms around his waist. Rests her face against his back. Then her lips.

Matt's eyes close, head rolls back against her.

She works her kisses up to his neck before he turns to face her. She aims for his lips, but he pushes her away.

MATT

We shouldn't...

SAM

You don't want me?

MATT

Sam, I'm...

She waits expectantly for him to finish his thought, then grows impatient when he doesn't.

SAM

You're what?

MATT

I want you, Sam. God, I want you.
I just wish we had more time.

SAM

We have time. We've got all the
time in the world.

MATT

It's better if we don't get too
attached.

SAM

Too late.

Their lips touch for a brief moment then linger there, barely touching.

For a second it looks as though Matt is going to push her away and go running from the room, but instead --

He takes her by the back of her neck and crushes his lips against hers.

They kiss passionately, easing back onto the bed.

INT. GRIER HOME - MATT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam awakens from a nightmare, bolting upright. A hand shoots up to her heart, desperately feeling around. With relief, she looks down and realizes she is in one piece.

She turns to find the bed beside her empty. The wrinkled sheets being the only sign that Matt was once there. She looks around the room, panic slowly rising to the surface.

SAM

Matt?

She quickly gets dressed, then opens the bathroom door. No Matt. Goes to the closet and pulls it open to find --

All Matt's clothes are gone.

She opens the drawers.

Empty except for a small square piece of paper with the word "goodbye" on it.

EXT. GRIER HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Sam flies the front door open and rushes out onto the porch. Both relieved and confused when she sees --

Matt's car parked in the driveway.

She looks down at the goodbye note in her hand.

MATT (O.S.)

I see you found my note.

Matt sits on the porch swing, suitcase at his feet.

Sam attempts to conceal her relief with anger.

SAM

This isn't a note. It's a word.
On a piece of paper.

MATT

Isn't that the definition of a
note? Words on paper?

SAM

So why are you still here?

MATT

I don't know.

SAM

Can I tell you what I think?

She takes a seat on the porch swing beside him.

SAM

You don't really want to leave.
What I can't figure out is why you
think you have to. But I suspect
it has something to do with Nate.

Matt rests his head into his palms, frustrated.

SAM

For a while I thought his death
was my punishment... for
wondering...

She pauses for a reaction but his face remains buried.

SAM

That night I wondered... just for
a second... what it would have
been like if you and I...

He finally sits up, looks at her sincerely.

MATT

People don't get punished for
wondering.

SAM

I deserve to be punished. If I
couldn't have just been happy with
my life with Nate, then maybe I
don't deserve to be happy at all.
And maybe you feel that way, too.

MATT

If I did, I could live with it.

Matt laughs at the irony of his statement.

He tilts her chin up and edges toward her lips, then kisses
her forehead instead. Picks up his suitcase and walks
toward the stairs.

Matt reaches the bottom of the stairs without looking back.

SAM

After the accident, it felt like
my heart got ripped out of my
chest and broken into a million
pieces. It hurt so bad that I

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
thought I would die of the pain.
There were days when I wanted it
to consume me... when I prayed
that it would.

He continues on to his car. Pops the trunk and throws his
suitcase in. Turns to find --

Sam stands right behind him.

MATT
I'm sorry he died, Sam. But I
can't be him. And I can't absolve
you of your guilt.

He heads for the driver's side door and opens it, about to
get in --

SAM
You're gonna make me say it aren't
you? Okay.
(long beat)
I didn't fall apart because Nate
died.

Now she's got his undivided attention.

SAM
Yes, I loved him. Yes, I missed
him. But what I couldn't deal
with...
(crying)
... was losing you. That's the
guilt I feel. No one can absolve
me of that.

MATT
Remember that saying -- What
doesn't kill us makes us stronger.

SAM
Why does it seem like you've been
trying to say goodbye from the
moment you got here? Like you're
trying to prepare me... for
something.

MATT
I wouldn't leave unless I was sure
that you'd be okay.

SAM

Did you hear anything I just said?
It almost killed me when you left.
If I lose you again...

MATT

You're stronger than you think.

Matt gets into the car and tries to shut the door.

Sam holds it open.

SAM

If you won't stay, I'm going with
you.

MATT

I can't take you with me.

PAUL (O.S.)

He doesn't want you, Sam.

Sam and Matt turn in unison to find --

Paul descending the stairs, dressed for work.

PAUL

Can't you see that? He already
got what he came for.

He stops at Sam's side, staring accusingly at Matt.

MATT

This doesn't concern you.

PAUL

Anything that concerns my daughter
concerns me.

SAM

We're leaving.

Paul grabs her arm as she tries to get into the car.

SAM

Let go of me.

PAUL

As soon as you let go of him.

Sam struggles to get away from Paul.

SAM
I'm going.

PAUL
What about Raine?

SAM
We'll take her.

PAUL
For how long? How many times does
he have to walk out on you before
you get it?

Matt has had enough. He steps out of the car, approaches Sam and Paul.

MATT
Get your hands off of her.

PAUL
Get off my property before I call
the cops.

Matt pulls his fist back and punches Paul.

Paul stumbles enough to release his hold on Sam but quickly regains his composure. Grabs Matt by his shirt, prepared to deliver a blow of his own.

SAM
Dad, stop!

She gets a hold of Matt and pulls him away from Paul.

Matt takes her hand and leads her in through the passenger side door.

Paul watches them, rubbing his jaw.

PAUL
You better hope this is forever,
Sam.

Matt flashes Paul an angry stare as he crosses in front of the car and gets behind the wheel.

His car peels out of the driveway, tires SCREECHING.

INT. MATT'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Matt drives, his focus intense on the road in front of him, still visibly upset.

Sam sits next to him, staring out her window.

SAM

Any idea where we're going?

MATT

I knew where I was going. I didn't plan on company.

She stares at him long and hard, as if he's a complex puzzle she can't quite solve.

SAM

I wish I could figure you out.

MATT

I wish I could help.

SAM

You can. Tell me what's going on with you.

MATT

You have to go back.

Matt squints at the road, tightens his grip on the wheel.

Sam doesn't seem to notice.

SAM

Why did you bring me if you were just gonna take me back like some puppy you can't take care of.

MATT

I can't take care of you.

SAM

Maybe I'll take care of you for a change.

He really struggles to concentrate on the road now. He blinks repeatedly, focusing and re-focusing.

MATT'S POV

The road ahead is a blur.

MATT
It's not that simple.

SAM
Why can't it be?

MATT'S POV

The road ahead is barely discernible. Cars, brake lights, trees and structures all merge together into an unrecognizable blur.

MATT
Take the wheel.

Sam looks at him, only now noticing his clammy, pale face.

SAM
Why?

MATT
Take it!

She leans over and grabs the wheel. Tries to turn it to the right but Matt's fists are still dead locked on it, making her attempt futile.

SAM
I got it.

Matt's grip appears to tighten instead of release.

SAM
Matt, let go!

She holds the wheel with one hand while prying his fingers off with the other.

Finally freeing the wheel, she jerks it to the right, pulling the car into the shoulder lane.

SAM'S POV

The shoulder lane ends a few hundred feet ahead.

SAM
Brake.

Matt looks dazed and disoriented. No idea what's going on.

SAM
Brake!

SAM'S POV

The end of the shoulder lane approaches quickly.

Sam tries to reach her foot to the brake unsuccessfully. She unbuckles and practically sits on Matt's lap, slamming her foot down on the brake. Shifts the car into park.

Sam collapses back into her seat, out of breath. She gawks at Matt from where she sits.

Seconds pass.

Neither speaks.

The sound of her heavy panicked breathing fills the car.

SAM

I think you need to tell me now.

MATT

You don't want to know.

SAM

You can't imagine the things that are going through my mind.

MATT

It's worse.

SAM

Give me your cell.

MATT

Why?

SAM

You need an ambulance... or something.

MATT

No.

SAM

You just... we almost...

MATT

Do you see now why you can't stay? You're not safe with me.

SAM

It's too late. I can't go back even if I wanted to.

MATT

Jackie'll smooth it over.

SAM

I'm not going back. I want to be with you. No matter what.

MATT

I have a grade four brain tumor, Sam. There's no future for us.

Sam shakes her head in denial. Tears flood her eyes and slip down her cheeks.

MATT

And before that it was in my bones. That's why we left. That's why I stayed away for so long. I didn't want you to get stuck with damaged goods... which I guess is ironic considering that's exactly what happened anyway.

SAM

I wouldn't have felt that way. I don't now.

MATT

I'm not leaving you much of a choice, though, am I?

SAM

Do me a favor and don't ever second guess why I'm here. I don't feel guilty or obligated or anything else you might be thinking.

MATT

Only if you return the favor and spare me the "we're gonna fight it" speech. I've tried and I've failed.

SAM

Then we try harder. Chemo. Radiation...

MATT

It won't save me, Sam. It'll just make whatever time I have left unbearable.

SAM
So what's the plan?

MATT
I want to spend the rest of my
life with you. Loving you. For as
long as you can stand to be around
me.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sam leans against a sterile white wall, cell phone pressed
to her ear.

INTERCUT - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR/STEWART HOME

Jean paces back and forth with a phone in her hand.

Tony looks on from his recliner.

SAM
It got bigger. That's all I know.

JEAN
How much time does he have?

SAM
I don't know. They didn't say.

JEAN
For chrissake, Sam, would you put
Matt on or a doctor... someone
that actually knows what they're
talking about.

SAM
He didn't want me to call you,
Jean. He would be seriously
pissed if he found out.

JEAN
He doesn't know what's best for
him. He needs to be here, with
us, the people that love him --

SAM
I love him.

JEAN
The way you loved Nathan?

Sam pulls the phone away from her ear, sobs briefly then pulls herself back together. Continues her phone call.

SAM

I have to get back.

JEAN

If you really loved him you would do the right thing. Let him come home so he can die peacefully... in his own bed... surrounded by family. You owe him this, Sam. If it wasn't for him constantly cutting corners with his treatment so that he could hurry back to you then maybe --

SAM

You're gonna blame me for his cancer now?

JEAN

What hospital are you at? We'll come get him.

SAM

I'm not holding him hostage. This is the way he wants it. It's his disease. He should get to choose.

Exasperated, Jean hands the phone off to Tony.

JEAN

Would you please talk some sense into her?

Tony takes the phone and raises it to his ear.

TONY

Sam?

Sam takes a deep breath, mentally preparing for another tongue-lashing.

SAM

I'm here.

TONY

Take care of our son.

Jean stops her pacing to glare at Tony, outraged.

SAM

I will.

TONY

And tell him we love him.

SAM

Okay.

Tony hangs up the phone. Looks over at Jean.

Jean sobs into her hands.

He goes to her, pulling her into his arms.

BACK TO SCENE

Sam slides the phone into her purse and walks down the hall. Dries her eyes before entering

MATT'S ROOM

Matt lies in a hospital bed, hooked up to monitors. He looks frail and defeated.

An ER DOCTOR and an ER NURSE converse near the door.

ER DOCTOR

Dr. Hill will be here in the morning and we'll go from there.

ER NURSE

What's the most effective treatment option at this point?

Sam approaches them, shaking her head vehemently.

SAM

He doesn't want treatment.

ER DOCTOR

It was his idea.

Sam turns her accusing glance to the rightful recipient.

SAM

What're you doing?

MATT

I'm giving us more time.

SAM

But you said...

MATT

I realized I was being selfish.

SAM

I don't want you to give some doctor permission to inject toxins into your veins... not because you're afraid I'll jump off a bridge when you're gone.

The room falls silent, all eyes on Sam.

SAM

This isn't about me. What do you want?

MATT

I want to not be dying at 27. I want to marry you... have kids with you... watch those kids grow up and have their own kids. I want the impossible... what no one can give me. Not even you.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

An ORDERLY pushes Matt in a wheelchair to his car parked on the curb.

Sam gets out of the driver's side and meets the ER Doctor who walks a few paces behind the wheelchair.

Sam and the doctor watch as --

Matt waves off the orderly's help and gets into the front passenger seat on his own.

ER DOCTOR

Are you sure you won't consider hospice? Caring for a terminal patient is extremely difficult to do alone.

SAM

I'm sure.

ER DOCTOR

The headaches will continue. His eyesight will get worse. The seizures will increase in frequency and intensity. He might lose his speech or experience extreme personality changes and

(MORE)

ER DOCTOR (cont'd)
hallucinations. He'll eat less and
sleep more. It'll get harder to
wake him and one day...

SAM
Will it be painful?

The doctor takes a bottle of pills out of her coat pocket
and presses it into Sam's hand.

Sam turns the bottle to read the label. It's morphine.

ER DOCTOR
Those are very strong, so be
careful.

Sam buries the pills in her purse.

ER DOCTOR
My number is on the bottle. Call
any time, day or night.

SAM
Thank you.

The doctor takes Sam's hand and dries her tears.

ER DOCTOR
I know it's hard, but don't let
him see you cry. What he needs
most from you right now is your
strength.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Matt and Sam enter their hotel room carrying several
shopping bags.

Sam tosses her bags and the electronic key on a small table.

Matt heads straight for the bed and spreads out on his back.

SAM
Do you want the first shower, or
should...

MATT
No, you go ahead. I'm gonna lay
here until I think up a plan. You
know how OCD I am about plans.

He forces a weak smile which Sam does her best to return.

She goes into a shopping bag and removes some clothes.
Disappears into the

BATHROOM

where she quickly turns on the shower to disguise the sound
of her sobs.

LATER

Sam exits the bathroom wearing an oversized T-shirt.

Matt is in the same spot on the bed, watching TV.

She gets in beside him and takes the remote from his hand,
turning the TV off.

MATT

I was watching that.

She unfastens the top button of his shirt.

MATT

I can undress myself.

SAM

I know, but I want to.

She slowly undresses him. Runs her hands over his bare
chest.

She kisses the scar on his forehead. Hovers above his lips,
then moves on without kissing them.

Traces the scar on his stomach with her finger. Drags her
lips along it.

Her hands move to the button of his jeans.

Matt takes her arm as if to stop her, then kisses her scar,
from wrist to elbow.

MATT

Didn't we buy that shirt for me?

SAM

Want it back?

Matt helps her pull the shirt over her head. He studies her
naked form for a second before sitting up to press his lips
against hers.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Sam and Matt lay in bed together, her head on his arm.

Matt grimaces in pain.

Sam sits up alertly, ready to spring into action.

SAM
What is it, your head?

MATT
Sam, it was just a cramp.

She smiles sheepishly, sinking back down into bed.

Matt rests his head on her chest.

MATT
Do something for me.

SAM
I thought I just did.

MATT
Okay... do something else for me.

SAM
Anything.

MATT
I need you to be my power of attorney.

SAM
Why?

MATT
When the time comes...

Sam suddenly looks panicked at the mere mention of it.

He allows her a moment before restarting.

MATT
When the time comes, you're the only one I trust to do things my way.

She slides out from under him and gets dressed.

MATT
Is that a no, then?

SAM
I said anything, didn't I?

She gets the phone out of her purse and heads for the door.

MATT
I don't have any lawyers on speed
dial.

SAM
I do.

INT. GRIER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Paul lovingly rubs Jackie's back over uneaten breakfast.

She looks like she's been crying.

Contrary to every other time we have seen him, Paul is not
dressed for work.

A phone RINGS.

Paul takes his cell off his belt clip. Looks at the screen.

JACKIE
Is it Sam?

He's already on his way out of the room.

PAUL
Work. I'll be right back.

Jackie slouches back into her chair.

Paul walks into the

LIVING ROOM

and answers the phone.

PAUL
Where's my daughter?

INTERCUT - GRIER LIVING ROOM/HOTEL LOBBY

Sam stands near the check-in counter, on the phone.

SAM
Dad?

PAUL

Sam? Thank God. Are you okay?
Where are you? Do you need me to
come get you?

SAM

Dad --

PAUL

You know I didn't mean what I
said. You can always come home.
Even if it means... bringing him.

SAM

Dad --

PAUL

Your mother's been worried sick.
And Raine...

SAM

Dad! I'm okay. I need a favor.

PAUL

How much? Where do I send it?

SAM

I don't need money.
(long beat)
I need a power of attorney
document.

Silence on both ends of the line for what seems like an
eternity.

SAM

He's sick, dad. Really sick.

Paul looks over his shoulder to ensure privacy.

PAUL

Sam, listen to me. You get that
boy to a hospital.

SAM

No. That's not --

PAUL

Or better yet, take him home. Let
his parents deal with it.

SAM

That's not what we want.

PAUL
Sam, I can't... you shouldn't...

SAM
Don't worry about it. I'll find
another lawyer.

Paul sighs laboriously.

PAUL
I'll need a fax number.

Sam breathes a huge sigh of relief.

SAM
Thank you.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Sam lets herself back in and is immediately alarmed when she finds the bed empty.

SAM
Matt?

Before panic can set in, she hears the sound of Matt VOMITING in the bathroom. She quickly crosses the room and taps on the door.

SAM
Matt?

MATT (O.S.)
I'm fine. It'll pass.

She leans her back against the door and slides to the floor.

BATHROOM

Matt flushes the toilet then collapses back against the door.

MATT
(out of breath)
I think I figured it out.

SAM
What's that?

MATT

The vacation house... in
California. Remember? We could
hang out there... if you want.

SAM

Sounds perfect.

INT. MATT'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Sam drives while Matt snoozes against the window.

They pull up to a red light.

She adjusts the radio station, trying to find a song she
likes.

Matt's eyes flutter open. He watches --

A LIMO pulls up to a hotel and a BRIDE and GROOM exit.

MATT

We never went to prom.

Her attention is still focused on the radio as she replies.

SAM

Nate had the flu. He wanted us to
go together but we stood home and
wore those stupid surgical masks
and made him laugh all night.

MATT

We should go.

She looks up in time to see --

The rest of the wedding party arrives via a SECOND LIMO.

SAM

That's a wedding.

MATT

Wedding. Prom. What's the
difference?

SAM

You mean like crash?

MATT

Unless you're scared.

He says the words as if it is a challenge, then raises an eyebrow at her.

INT. FORMAL ATTIRE STORE - DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Sam stares at her reflection in a full length mirror. She wears a gorgeous burgundy chiffon gown with a beaded empire waist and double spaghetti straps.

Her hair is tucked into an elegant up-do and her face is tastefully made over, highlighting her natural beauty.

MATT (O.S.)

I'm going gray out here.

The smile returns to her face as she gives herself one last look-over.

SAM

Okay, okay. I'm coming.

She grabs her old clothes and walks out of the dressing room.

Finds Matt standing outside the door wearing a black tux, staring at her in awe. He motions for her to do a spin.

She complies begrudgingly. Then walks over to him to straighten his tie. Flashes him a look at the price tag dangling from her dress.

SAM

This little side trip is gonna cost you.

MATT

It's worth it.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - WEDDING RECEPTION - DAY

The BRIDE and GROOM, dressed in their ceremony attire, whisper conspiratorially from their place at the head table.

Other WEDDING GUESTS huddle in groups and whisper amongst themselves as well.

They are all focused on the dance floor where --

Matt and Sam slow dance.

She rests her head on his shoulder.

He holds her a little tighter than necessary, barely swaying.

SAM

You okay?

MATT

No, I'm dying.

She straightens up to look at him.

He flashes her one of his crooked smiles which does nothing to squelch her anxiety.

MATT

Just a little tumor humor.

SAM

Is something hurting? Do you want to go?

MATT

And miss seeing you take out twenty girls diving for the bouquet? Not a chance.

A smile finally brightens her gloomy expression. She lays her head back on his chest.

SAM

Everyone's staring at us.

MATT

The bride is trying to figure out why she doesn't remember her lovely childhood friend Sophia Parker. And the groom, he's just jealous.

He dips her dramatically, her head almost brushing the floor, then slowly reels her back in.

Their lips are just about to touch --

MATT

Ready to go?

SAM

But you just said --

He nonchalantly nods toward the bride and groom as they head their way.

He takes her by the hand and leads her away. They are almost home free when --

The bride and groom intercept.

MATT
(whispering)
Uh oh.

SAM
I got this.

Sam flashes an award winning smile at the happy couple who look less than impressed.

SAM
It was a lovely wedding. You look very happy. I'm glad you found each other.

The bride and groom's stony expressions seem to soften considerably with her heartfelt words. The bride nuzzles against the groom's chest.

SAM
Just... love each other every day like it's your last.

Both couples exchange smiles.

Sam and Matt continue toward the exit.

BRIDE
Wait. I'm about to throw the bouquet.

MATT
We have to go. But thank you.

The bride and groom watch in silence as Matt quickly leads Sam out of the ballroom.

INT. TAXI CAB (MOVING) - NIGHT

Matt and Sam sit in the backseat looking out their windows.

The CAB DRIVER glances at them in the rear view mirror.

Sam finally turns to Matt, something on her mind.

SAM
Let's skip dinner and go somewhere
else.

MATT
Like?

SAM
I was thinking... we got all
dressed up... and then the
wedding... and... I thought...

MATT
Sam --

SAM
We could find a justice of the
peace...

MATT
No.

The finality in his tone causes her to pause before
proceeding.

SAM
But you said you wanted to marry
me... have kids with me...

MATT
I said that I wanted to. Not that
we could.

CAB DRIVER
There's a courthouse ten minutes
from here. But I could get you
there in five.

MATT
Stay out of it.

SAM
See, even the cabbie thinks we
should do it.

MATT
He doesn't know us or our
situation.

CAB DRIVER
I know you'd have to be a damn
fool to turn down a girl as hot as
yours.

Matt looks like he's about to leap into the front seat and tear the driver's face off.

MATT
What'd you say?

SAM
He meant it as a compliment.

MATT
I can't stand up in front of a judge and promise to spend the rest of my life with you knowing that might only mean the rest of this month?

She sits back in her seat, staring out the window to avoid the hurt look in Matt's eyes.

MATT
That's not what I want for you. When you get married, I want it to be with someone that will be able to keep all his vows.

SAM
(to driver)
Can you pull over? I'm getting out.

Cab driver looks around.

CAB DRIVER
Lady, we're in the middle of no where.

Sam reaches for the door handle.

SAM
I'm getting out whether you stop or not.

CAB DRIVER
Okay, okay!

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

The cab comes to a SQUEALING halt at the curb. The back door opens and Sam comes barrelling out, SLAMMING the door after her.

The opposite door opens and Matt steps out.

Sam hurries down the sidewalk, investigating her surroundings.

An auto repair shop on one side of the street, a convenience store on the other. Both closed.

MATT

Get back in the cab. You're gonna get us mugged out here.

Sam increases her speed.

He struggles to keep up.

MATT

You're pretty fast for a girl on stilts.

She takes off her heels and launches them at him.

He shields himself from the projectiles, then turns back, laughing.

SAM

Oh, this is funny?

MATT

There are so many valid reasons for you to be angry yet you choose to go to war over my unwillingness to legally make you a widow.

SAM

I don't want to fight with you.

MATT

Finally something we agree on.

He holds out his hand.

She walks toward him, collecting her shoes. Then walks right past without stopping to accept his hand.

MATT

Hold on.

Matt takes her hand and spins her around to face him. Grabs her by the waist and gets down on one knee.

MATT

I, Matthew Stewart, take you,
Samantha Grier --

SAM

Now you're just mocking me.

His expression is completely sincere.

MATT

...to be my wife, my partner in
life and my one true love. I will
cherish our union and love you
more each day than I did the day
before. I will trust you and
respect you, laugh with you and
cry with you, loving you
faithfully through good times and
bad, regardless of the obstacles
we may face together. I give you
my hand, my heart and my love,
from this day forward for as long
as I live.

Sam stares down at him, at a loss for words.

MATT

Say something, quick, this hurts.

She helps him back up to his feet. Stares into his eyes as
endless seconds tick by.

SAM

I'm not sure what I'm supposed to
say. I didn't think this far
ahead.

MATT

Just skip to the "I do" part.

SAM

You know I do.

They kiss.

And kiss.

And kiss some more.

CAB DRIVER (O.S.)

You guys know the meter is still
running, right?

They separate like two teenagers caught in the act.

Sam tries to walk back to the cab but Matt pulls her to him.

MATT

Aren't you forgetting something?

He puts his arms out in a dance hold.

Sam smiles, taking his hand and easing against him.

They slowly sway, barely moving.

The cab driver watches with a smile on his face.

MATT

I suppose you want a ring now.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Upscale establishment with nearly every table occupied. Soft overhead lighting combined with candle centerpieces and ambient music sets a romantic tone for the diners.

Sam and Matt sit at a little table for two, right in the center of the main dining room.

Sam stares at the wedding ring on her left hand.

MATT (O.S.)

That waiter hasn't taken his eyes
off you since we walked in.

She glances over her shoulder at the WAITER serving a nearby table. Finds his attention on his customers.

SAM

He's not even looking over here.

MATT

I'm going over there.

Matt rises out of his seat but Sam yanks him back down.

SAM

Stop it. You're being paranoid.

The waiter approaches their table.

WAITER

How is everything?

SAM

Great. Thank you.

WAITER

Can I get you some dessert?

MATT

No, but you can get your hands off my wife.

Sam sighs loudly, mortified.

The waiter looks down at his hands folded in front of him.

WAITER

I'm sorry, sir, but --

SAM

No, we're sorry. It's just a misunderstanding.

Matt interjects loudly enough to attract the attention of most of the restaurant patrons and staff.

MATT

Don't apologize for me. You might not have a problem with his god damned hands all over you but I sure as hell do.

SAM

His hands aren't on me. He hasn't touched me, Matt. You're confused.

MATT

He's not hitting on you?

SAM

No.

MATT

So I'm... what... hallucinating?

She reaches for his hand but he pulls it away.

SAM

Dr. Rothman said it could happen, remember?

He turns in his chair to get a good look at the spectacle he's made of himself.

Everyone continues to stare like he's an escaped zoo animal.

The waiter bends over to whisper into Sam's ear.

WAITER

Is he okay?

Before she can respond, Matt lunges at the waiter, punching him hard enough to throw him to the floor.

Sam leaps to her feet, as does

MALE DINER 1 and 2

SAM

Oh, my God. I'm so sorry.

Male Diner 1 restrains Matt while

Male Diner 2 helps the waiter up.

MALE DINER 2

You okay?

Matt struggles with the man restraining him.

Sam positions herself between Matt and the injured waiter.

SAM

(to waiter)

He didn't mean it. He's sick.

MATT

Don't talk about me like I'm not here. I can speak for myself.

Waiter wipes his nose, looks at the blood on his hand.

WAITER

Good luck with that.

Waiter walks away.

Matt struggles even harder to escape Male Diner 1's hold.

MATT

What are you waiting for? Go after him. Don't worry about me. I know my way back to the hotel.

Sam flinches at the tone and volume of his voice. Goes into her purse and pulls out some money. Sets it on the table.

SAM

I'm sorry. He's not himself.

She grabs Matt away from Male Diner 1 and rushes him through the maze of tables filled with staring diners.

Once in the reception area, Matt turns on her, grabbing her forcefully by her upper arm.

MATT

Don't you ever undermine me in front of our friends again!

She is too stunned to form a response.

MATT

Do you understand me?

He squeezes her arm hard enough to make her yelp in pain.

SAM

Yes. I'm sorry.

He releases her arm and rushes out of the restaurant.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Different hotel room, this one less fancy than the last. Two twin beds, an older model TV and a small dinette set are among the only furnishings.

Sam sits up in bed, knees hugged to her chest, staring at the hand shaped bruise around her upper arm.

She gets out the cell phone and dials.

SAM

Mom?... No, I'm fine. Every thing's fine.

She struggles to hold it together, but fails more with every passing second.

SAM

It's good to hear your voice, too... Matt, no, he's asleep...

She glances at a second twin sized bed a few feet away that Matt sleeps peacefully in.

SAM

Could you just... hold on...

She covers the phone with her hand while some rogue sobs force their way out.

She quickly composes herself and gets back on the phone.

SAM
We're heading west... I can't
really say...listen, mom, can you
give Raine a message for me?
(long beat)
Tell her that I miss her and I'll
be back as soon as I can... no,
just that. Thank you.

Matt starts to stir and sits up, looking for Sam.

SAM
(whispering)
I have to go. I love you.

She quickly puts away the phone and turns her back to Matt,
drying her tears.

MATT
Sam?

SAM
I'm right here.

He finally locates her in the dark room.

MATT
I finally make an honest woman out
of you and you choose now to sleep
in separate beds?

SAM
I thought I should give you some
space.

MATT
I don't want space. I want you.
Come here.

Matt holds out his hand to her.

She hesitates then takes it.

He pulls her onto the bed, gives her somber expression a
thorough investigation.

MATT
What's wrong?

She shakes her head when no words will come.

MATT
You look... afraid...

She tries to hide the bruise with her opposite hand, but Matt catches a glimpse.

He pulls her hand away for a better look.

MATT
What happened?

Sam remains silent.

MATT
Did I -- ?

SAM
No.

Eyes wide with dismay, he stares at her arm a moment longer, then tries to get off the bed.

Sam grabs him and pulls him close.

SAM
It wasn't you. I know that. I'm not afraid of you.

MATT
I am. If I could do that... to you...

She takes his face between her hands, forcing him to look at her.

SAM
The only thing I'm afraid of is losing you. This, being here with you, it's just a beautiful dream. One day I'm gonna wake up and it'll be over.

MATT
When that day comes... when it ends, it won't be because it was all a dream. We really happened. We made what we could out of what we had.

He places a kiss on her forehead, then rests his forehead against hers.

MATT

I slept through our wedding night.

SAM

I forgive you.

He traces the dark circles under her eyes with his fingers.

MATT

You look tired. Get some sleep.

SAM

I'm not tired.

MATT

Well, I'm not letting you drive me around until you get some Z's.

He sinks back down into the tiny twin sized bed and Sam begrudgingly follows his lead. He cuddles up against her back, wrapping his arm around her waist.

SAM

How do you feel?

MATT

You're supposed to be sleeping.

SAM

Would you tell me if you felt sick?

He rolls her over to face him.

MATT

Yes. What is this? What's wrong?

SAM

Will we see it coming? Will it be gradual or will you just wake up one day and not be able to speak or stand up or give yourself a bath?

MATT

When this gets to be too much for you --

SAM

I can handle it.

She straightens up to look into his eyes.

SAM
I can handle it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Matt circles Sam's lips with the tip of a strawberry.

The sweet smell rouses her from her sleep. She takes a bite before her eyes are even open, then focuses on him.

Matt has a tray of assorted fruit in his lap.

A room service tray sits beside the bed, overflowing with food.

Sam sits up to get a better look at the spread.

SAM
You sure that's gonna be enough?

MATT
Eat up. We have to leave soon.

She glances at the alarm clock. 11:20 am.

SAM
Why didn't you wake me?

He feeds her another bite of the strawberry then pops the rest in his mouth.

MATT
You looked like an angel.

SAM
Think we can make it to Redding today?

MATT
It's a ten hour drive. I don't know if you're up to it.

SAM
That sounds like a challenge.

MATT
That's because it was.

SAM
You're so on.

INT. MATT'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Sam and Matt travel down a long stretch of road. An occasional set of headlights pass in the opposite direction.

Matt has his seat reclined and feet up on the dashboard looking nice and comfy.

Sam squints to read a sign as they zoom past it.

SAM

What'd that sign just say?

MATT

It said: "You're getting sleepy.
Very sleepy."

SAM

I'm fine. But we're about to run
out of gas. I hope you like
walking.

MATT

Oooh, can we hitchhike?

SAM

Let's just concentrate on not
running out of gas first.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

A black sports car pulls up to a gas pump. All four pumping stations are empty.

Sam gets out of the driver's side, sticks her head back in to address Matt.

SAM

I'll be right back. Stay put.

He obediently salutes her.

Sam slides a credit card into the appropriate slot, then starts pumping the gas.

INT. MATT'S CAR - NIGHT

Matt looks over a map as --

A cell phone RINGS.

He locates it in Sam's purse. About to answer it when --
A pill bottle sidetracks him. He picks it up for a closer look.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Matt's is the only vehicle outside the convenience store.

INT. MATT'S CAR - NIGHT

Matt and Sam snack on junk food.

Sam licks the chip residue off her fingers, then unfolds a map and studies it.

MATT
What're you doing?

SAM
Trying to find a shorter route.
This road, it just seems --

MATT
Why can't you just admit that
you're tired?

She puts down the map to gawk at him.

SAM
I'm not tired. I'm strategizing.

MATT
I've had a lot more sleep than
you. Why don't you just let me
drive?

She opens the map back up as a distraction.

SAM
You can't drive.

MATT
Why not?

SAM
Because.

MATT
You're making me feel pretty
useless right now, Sam.

The joking tone is suddenly gone from his voice.

SAM
Dr. Rothman said --

Matt rips the map out of her hands and crumbles it.

MATT
Fuck Dr. Rothman.

He throws the balled up map at her.

MATT
And fuck you.

He tries to get out of the car, but the door is locked. He struggles with the knob for a second before Sam opens the power locks with a CLICK.

He quickly exits the car and SLAMS the door.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Matt walks away from the car, fuming.

Sam joins him outside.

SAM
Was that a temper tantrum or the brain tumor talking? Because only one is forgiveable.

MATT
Take your pick, then.

SAM
You wanna drive?

She sticks her head into the car and comes back out a second later. Tosses the keys at him.

SAM
Drive. Kill us both. I don't care.

MATT
Either I have a seizure and crash the car or you fall asleep and run us off the road. What's the difference?

SAM

So now you wanna take me with you?

Matt laughs obnoxiously.

MATT

That's what you want, isn't it? To be with me... no matter what.

SAM

Listen to me, you're talking crazy right now. We'll sleep in the car tonight and start fresh in the morning.

MATT

What if I don't have 'til the morning?

SAM

Don't say that.

MATT

What if it's hours, or just minutes?

SAM

Why are you saying that?

MATT

I'm on borrowed time as it is. Today, tomorrow, the day after that... does it really matter when? The faster we get this over with, the quicker your life can return to normal.

SAM

What'd you do?

Sam glances into the car, sees her purse unzipped.

She dives into the car and comes back out a second later with her purse. Dumps out the contents onto the hood of the car. No pill bottle.

SAM

What'd you do?

She races around the car and starts patting down Matt while he fends her off.

SAM
Where is it? Give it to me!

MATT
Give you what?

SAM
I know you have it and I swear to
God if you don't give it to me
I'll get in that car and I'll
leave you here.

She continues to struggle with him.

SAM
I didn't get kicked out of my
house, abandon my daughter and
drive out into the middle of
nowhere just to watch you kill
yourself.

She finally reaches into the right pocket and comes back
with the bottle of pills. Takes a quick inventory.

Matt looks exhausted from the minor scuffle. Leans against
the car and slides to the ground.

MATT
It's all there. I couldn't even
if I wanted to. I just didn't
want you to have them.

She gets down on the ground beside him, right in his line of
vision, forcing him to look her in the eye.

SAM
You don't have to worry about me.
I'm gonna be fine. I have to be.
For Raine.

EXT. I-5 NORTH - CALIFORNIA - DAY

Cars move at a steady pace along the two lane road.

The bright, blue, cloudless sky provides a perfect backdrop
for the rich brown mountains on the horizon. Fields stretch
out as far as the eye can see.

INT. MATT'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Matt is asleep in the passenger seat, curled up against the door.

Sam drives in total silence, not even the radio on to distract her. Her attention is focused solely on the road ahead, except for taking an occasional sip of her energy drink.

There are four empty energy drink cans on the dashboard.

EXT. REDDING HOME - DAY

The black sports car pulls up in the driveway of a beautiful, contemporary 2-story home. It is surrounded by lush green lawn and tall trees.

Sam gets out of the car and goes around to open Matt's door.

Matt is still sound asleep.

She shakes him gently but he doesn't even stir.

SAM

Matt, wake up. We're here.

She shakes him with a little more force, causing his eyes to flutter open.

He looks around, confused and disoriented.

MATT

Where are we?

SAM

The vacation house... in Redding... remember?

MATT

Why'd we come here?

SAM

It was your idea.

Matt unbuckles and tries to stand up but finds himself weak and shaky.

Sam offers him a hand, but he brushes her off.

MATT

I got it.

He goes to the trunk to get his suitcase, then quickly gets frustrated when he can't get it open.

SAM
Just leave it. I'll get it later.

MATT
Why should you get it later when I
can get it now?

She comes over with the keys and pops the trunk for him. Watches as he hauls the large suitcase out and heads toward the front door.

INT. REDDING HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Sam kneels in front of a chest of drawers, unpacking.

Matt sits on the edge of the king sized bed, trying unsuccessfully to get her attention.

SAM
And when I'm done with this I
thought we could pick up some
groceries --

MATT
Sam --

SAM
And then you can take a little nap
while I cook dinner --

MATT
Sam --

SAM
And then after we eat and I clean
up, we could go out back and do
some star gazing --

MATT
Sam --

SAM
Do you think that old hammock is
still --

MATT
(louder)
Samantha!

She turns to him as if it were his first interjection.

He taps the bed next to him, suggesting she have a seat, which she does.

MATT

I want you to do something for me.

Fear spreads across Sam's face.

MATT

Scream.

SAM

What?

MATT

Scream. Yell. Get mad. Cry.
Just get it all out. You look
like you're about to explode.

SAM

I don't want to scream.

MATT

So you're not angry.

SAM

Yes, I'm angry, but not --

MATT

What are you angry about? I'm the
one that's dying.

Sam stares at him, trying to analyze his intentions from his facial expression. He gives her no clues.

SAM

What are you doing? Are you
trying to pick another fight?

MATT

I simply want you to tell me why
you're angry.

SAM

I'm angry because it's almost
dinner time and I don't have
groceries and instead of going to
the store, we're discussing my
feelings like I'm a child.

MATT

Good start. Keep going.

SAM

What is it you want me to say? Am I angry because you're sick? Yeah, I'm freaking furious. I'm angry that you left. I'm angry that you came back. I'm angry that you made me fall in love with you all over again knowing you were gonna die. I'm angry because I thought losing Nate was the worst thing I would ever have to endure. I'm angry that Raine never got to meet her daddy and that she got such little time with you. I'm angry that I have this ring on my finger but I'll never be able to sign my name as Mrs. Samantha Stewart.

Matt tries to put a comforting arm around her but she brushes him off.

She continues on with her rampage, the volume and intensity of her voice slowly rising until she's screaming the words.

SAM

I'm angry that I wasted six years I could've spent with you. I'm angry that neither of our parents want us together. I'm angry because even after everything that's happened, I don't think you get how much I love you. I'm angry at myself for not being the calm, patient, level-headed person that you need right now. I have no idea what I'm doing and I'm angry and scared and hurt and confused and I just want to run away and go some place where I don't have to think about headaches and seizures and mood swings and how I'm going to survive losing you.

Sam dissolves into a weeping mess.

Matt scoops her up into his arms and holds her.

When she's finally calmed down some...

SAM

I'm sorry.

MATT

Don't be sorry. Just tell me you
feel better.

SAM

A little bit. Yeah.

INT. REDDING HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam and Matt cook dinner together.

Sam moves around the kitchen efficiently, getting her share
of the work done quickly.

Matt moves sluggishly, the smallest task tiring him out.

She watches him struggle with a jar before opening it for
him.

He flashes her an appreciative smile.

EXT. REDDING HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Sam and Matt lounge together in a hammock staring off into
the dark, tranquil water of the lake.

They both laugh at an unheard joke.

SAM

Then there was that time your mom
caught the three of us skinny
dipping and we weren't allowed to
swim for the rest of the summer.

MATT

Oh, remember the time you got your
first, what was it my mom used to
call it...
(air quotes)
"monthly visitor" and you came out
of the bathroom and told me you
were dying.

Matt laughs but Sam doesn't seem as amused. She slaps him
playfully on the arm.

SAM

Stop it, that wasn't funny. I really thought I was dying. I grew up with two boys. No one ever told me that was supposed to happen. It was terrifying!

MATT

(mocking)

Matt, quick, dial nine-one-one.

SAM

I'm gonna flip you out of this hammock if you don't stop.

MATT

I'm glad you didn't go to Nate. He would've had an ambulance on the way before he figured it out.

She finally joins him in laughter. The sound echoes through the quiet, still night.

SAM

We better go. It's getting late.

MATT

What are we, a couple kids on a school night? We don't have a bedtime.

SAM

You're not tired?

MATT

Nope.

SAM

Good, you can help with the dishes.

Matt lets out an obnoxiously loud fake yawn, complete with outstretched arms.

Sam is midly amused as she pushes him forward to get out from under him.

MATT

See, I have this tumor...

SAM

Nice try.

She pulls him to his feet.

They walk back to the deck hand in hand.

Sam grabs the dirty plates and silverware off the patio table.

Matt collects the glasses and wine bottle and follows.

INT. REDDING HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam dumps the dishes into the sink.

A loud CRASH sends her running back out.

EXT. REDDING HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Matt is collapsed on the floor having a seizure. His body shakes violently, his face twisted in pain.

Sam rushes to him before she sees the broken glass everywhere. Falls to her knees beside him, inflicting numerous cuts to her legs.

As Matt's convulsions take him into the glass, Sam quickly clears it away with a sweep of her hand.

She watches him helplessly, trying to hold him but finding it impossible.

SAM

Matt?!

INT. REDDING HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matt lies in bed having his wounds tended to.

Sam has an open first aid kit in her lap. Her right hand is bandaged. Blood soaks through the thin white fabric.

SAM

This one still has glass in it.
Hold still.

She takes a pair of tweezers out of the first aid kit and carefully removes a small sliver of glass from a wound on Matt's shoulder.

Matt doesn't even flinch.

MATT

You should take care of yourself first.

He motions to her bloody knees and legs, but she doesn't stray from the task at hand.

SAM

I'm fine.

MATT

You're bleeding all over Jean's hand-knitted quilt. She's gonna be pissed.

SAM

Wouldn't be the first time.

She unwraps a bandage and places it over the wound she just cleaned out.

MATT

Remember that time she got really pissed at you for using her lipstick to write Nate a love note on his bedroom mirror?

She is focused. Doesn't respond.

MATT

I've never seen her face get that shade of red, and believe me, Nate and I did a lot of --

SAM

Can't you at least say "ouch" or something?

MATT

I don't feel anything.

SAM

It would really make me look better when I'm crying like a baby while cleaning my cuts.

MATT

I don't feel it. At all.

Sam looks up alertly.

SAM

What do you mean?

When he doesn't reply, she slides her hand into his left palm.

SAM
Squeeze my hand.

She waits, anticipating, but his hand doesn't move.

SAM
Squeeze my hand!

MATT
I am.

Her eyes go wide with alarm. She lunges for the phone.

MATT
Don't!

She turns to him, probably to argue, but can't.

MATT
We knew this would happen. It's part of the process. Just let it be. Unless you're done.

SAM
I'm not quitting on you. Don't you quit on me.

She picks up the tweezers and moves on to a new cut.

MONTAGE

1. Sam gives Matt a sponge bath, cleaning off the dry blood from his glass wounds. He has at least 20 bandages all over his torso.
2. Sam lies beside Matt in bed, showing him pictures on a digital camera. The serene water of the lake, a field of wildflowers, a rainbow in a half sunny/half cloudy sky...
3. Sam pulls Matt up into a sitting position. Sets a tray of food on the bed beside him. Sits on the other side of the tray. They have lunch together, Matt struggling to feed himself but refusing all help offered by her.
4. Sam and Matt play a card game, using Matt's bare chest as the "table".
5. Matt lies with his head on Sam's chest. She holds an open book in one hand and gently combs through Matt's hair with the other. She reads aloud from the book.

INT. REDDING HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Sam closes the book and sets it on the nightstand.

SAM
You sleeping?

MATT
Listening to your heart.

SAM
What's it saying?

MATT
Thump thump. Thump thump. Thump
thump.

SAM
That's what they all say.

They both chuckle at her dry joke.

Sam tries to sit up but the extra weight of Matt's body on hers prevents her from doing so.

SAM
I need to get up.

MATT
No you don't.

SAM
Yes, I do. I need to fix lunch.

He refuses to move, instead wrapping his right arm around her as tightly as he can manage in his weakened state.

MATT
I'm not hungry.

SAM
I am. And you will be too when
you smell it.

Matt sighs loudly, then rolls off of Sam and onto his back.

Sam kisses his forehead, then heads for the door.

MATT
Hurry back.

She smiles warmly, then opens the door to find

Paul, Jackie, Jean and Tony standing awkwardly in the living room.

SAM
What're you doing here?

JEAN
This is my house. I should be asking you that.

SAM
You need to go.

JEAN
Where is my son?

MATT (O.S.)
Sam... who're you talking to?

At the sound of his voice, Jean bolts toward the door Sam just walked through. Before she can get too close --

Tony grabs her arm in an attempt to stop her.

Sam steps back, blocking the doorway.

SAM
Don't go in there.

JEAN
Get out of my way.

Jean pushes Sam aside and proceeds undaunted into the
BEDROOM

where Matt lies in bed looking pale and weak. He eyes up Jean, trying to make sense of her presence.

Tears immediately begin to fall as Jean raises her hands to her mouth, shocked.

Sam steps into the room a second later.

Matt eyes her accusingly.

MATT
You did this?

SAM
No! They came on their own.
(to Jean)
Tell him you came on your own.

Jean takes a cautious step toward the bed, as if approaching a suicidal person about to jump.

JEAN

She's worried about you. We all are. You should be in a hospital where you can receive the proper care.

MATT

Get out.

JEAN

Matt, listen to me --

MATT

(to Sam)

Get her out of here!

Sam startles at the volume of his voice. Quickly leads Jean out of the room and shuts the door behind her.

LIVING ROOM

SAM

I called you....against Matt's will because I thought you deserved to know. I told you we were fine and I asked you to stay away. Why couldn't you?

JEAN

He's not "fine", Sam. What you're doing is irresponsible and stupid. He shouldn't have to die like this.

SAM

With me you mean?

JEAN

Without his family.

SAM

I am his family.

Jean sees Sam's wedding ring. She grabs Sam's hand for a closer look.

JEAN

(horrified)

Oh, my God! Tell me he didn't marry you.

Sam rips her hand away, refusing to answer.

JEAN

You can't love him better, Sam. He needs his doctors and medication.

SAM

He. Doesn't. Want. It.

JEAN

Did you try to convince him?

SAM

You mean manipulate him? No, I didn't try that.

Jackie comes between Sam and Jean like a lioness protecting her cub.

JACKIE

Why are you treating my daughter like the enemy when she's given up everything to take care of Matt?

TONY

They obviously don't want our help. We should just go.

PAUL

I agree.

Paul and Tony step to their wives' side to lead them away.

Jackie looks at Sam as if her heart is breaking.

JACKIE

I don't want to leave her. What if --

JEAN

Not if... when. When Matt dies she is going to break into a million little pieces.

SAM

No, I'm not. I can handle it.

JEAN

Like you handled it with Nathan?

Paul points a finger at her as a warning.

PAUL

Stop.

JEAN

Remember how he looked in that casket. Remember how it felt when you saw his face for the last time, right before they closed it.

TONY

Jean!

JEAN

Remember how it felt when he was eulogized by his family and friends. When his whole life was condensed into some words on a sheet of folder paper.

JACKIE

(through tears)

That's enough!

JEAN

Remember what it felt like when they lowered him into the ground and when you had to say your last goodbye. Because you're going to be doing it all again real soon.

SAM

Stop!

MATT (O.S.)

Sam!

Sam sprints into the

BEDROOM

with everyone else one step behind her.

Matt is curled up in the fetal position squeezing his head with his right hand. His arm and upper body trembles from the pressure he exerts.

The others hang back while Sam rushes to his side and cradles him in her arms.

JEAN

He's having a seizure.

SAM

No, he's not. He needs his meds.
Someone get my purse.

Jackie runs out of the room to comply.

Jean heads for the phone.

JEAN

I'm calling an ambulance.

SAM

No. Don't you touch that phone. I
know what I'm doing. He just
needs his medication.

Jackie races back in with Sam's purse. Hands it to Sam.

Sam gets a pill out of the bottle, puts it in Matt's mouth,
and helps him drink a sip of water from a glass on the
nightstand.

Matt buries his head against her chest. Grabs a handful of
her shirt and holds on tight.

Jean takes a brave step toward them.

JEAN

You're killing him, Sam.

MATT

I don't want them here.

Sam turns her attention to their parents.

SAM

Please go.

No one makes a move.

JEAN

Sam --

SAM

Get out!

Tony is the first to exit the room, followed closely by Paul
and Jackie. Jean gives Sam one, last, cold glare.

JEAN

I'll never forgive you for this,
Sam. Ever.

Jean leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

Matt continues to tremble slightly, holding on to Sam desperately.

Sam puts a hand flat against his forehead.

SAM
You're hot.

MATT
So are you.

Sam smiles fleetingly.

SAM
I need to get you a cool wash
cloth. I'll be right back.

She tries to get out from under him, but Matt panics, grabbing onto her even tighter.

MATT
No, you can't leave me! Please
don't leave me! Please!

She sits back down, trying to find a comfortable position.

SAM
Okay, okay, I won't. I'm right
here. I won't leave.

She gently smooths his hair, staring down at him with equal parts adoration and fear.

SAM
I didn't invite your parents here,
but maybe them coming wasn't such
a bad idea. Jean might hate me
with a passion, but she loves you.

MATT
That's why I need her to stay
away. Between Nathan's death and
my diagnosis and treatment...
she's been through enough.

SAM
What about you? Haven't you been
through enough? Isn't it time you
stop worrying about everyone else
and do what you need to do?

MATT
The hard part's almost over.

SAM
Don't say that.

A tear runs down Sam's cheek but she quickly clears it away, angry that she let it get past her defences.

MATT
I'm tired. Can you turn the TV
off so I can sleep?

Sam looks over at the TV which is off. Listens to the silence in the room for a moment.

SAM
Okay. I'll turn it off.

Matt snuggles against her, closes his eyes. Almost asleep.

MATT
You're so good to me.

INT. REDDING HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Sam places a glass of orange juice on a tray already filled with an assortment of breakfast foods. Picks up the tray and carries it out of the room.

INT. REDDING HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Morning sunlight streams in through the sheer curtains.

Sam sets down the breakfast tray and shakes Matt gently while whispering in his ear.

SAM
Wake up, sleepy head. Your
breakfast is getting cold.

Matt doesn't wake or as much as stir.

Sam shakes him harder. A look of worry slowly rising to the surface of her face.

SAM
You're gonna sleep the whole day
away.

She kisses his clammy forehead, then shakes him again.

SAM

Matt?

Her shaking becomes vigorous, almost violent.

SAM

Matt. Wake up.

Tears form in her eyes as the seconds tick by and still Matt doesn't wake up.

SAM

Don't do this to me right now.

She kisses him hard on the lips, shakes his face.

SAM

Matt?! I'm not ready yet. Please,
come back. Don't leave me
yet. Please. Matt!

She gets the phone out of her purse and dials frantically.

SAM

(bawling)

I can't wake him up. He won't get
up.

She lets the phone drop, then presses her face against Matt's. She kisses him over and over. Frantic. Crazed.

SAM

Do you have any idea how much I
love you?

MATT

(hoarse)

Sam?

The breath catches in her throat as she bolts up.

Matt's eyes are still closed. Body still motionless.

She stares at him, looking for any sign of life.

Then his eyes open. He looks directly at her.

MATT

Where are you?

SAM

I'm right here.

She moves her face closer to his. Takes his hand in hers.

MATT

That's okay. I remember your face.

SAM

I couldn't wake you. I didn't know what to do.

MATT

I told you I wouldn't leave without saying goodbye.

Silent tears roll down Sam's cheeks.

SAM

Are you saying it now?

MATT

I guess I am.

Sam lowers her lips to his, kisses him for the last time.

She breaks down in heaving sobs which slowly fade and is replaced with --

SAM (V.O.)

They were the best men I've ever known. One was outgoing and crazy, the other was selfless and brave.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Sam sits cross-legged in between two headstones.

A slightly older Raine sits on her lap holding two colorful bouquets of flowers.

SAM

And I had the unbelievable honor of being loved by them both.

RAINE

Is it time now?

SAM

Yep, go ahead.

Raine lays a bouquet on each headstone. One is Nathan's, the other reads:

BELOVED SON AND HUSBAND
MATTHEW STEWART 1982-2009

Sam gets to her feet, takes Raine by her hand and leads her away.

Up ahead in the distance there is a second car parked on the curb. The two front doors open and out steps Jean and Tony.

Raine's eyes light up at the sight of Tony and she takes off running.

RAINE
Grandpa Tony!

She leaps into his arms and he spins her around, beaming.

Jean hangs back, appears to be waiting on Sam.

Sam hesitantly approaches Jean.

SAM
Did you come to see the boys?

JEAN
No, actually, I came to see you.
(long beat)
I owe you an --

SAM
You don't owe me anything.

Jean turns her attention to Tony as he interacts with Raine. Both appear to be in absolute bliss.

JEAN
Would it be okay if we --

SAM
Sure.

JEAN
What are you doing now?

SAM
Actually, Raine and I are going
for some ice cream.
(beat)
You can join us, if you'd like.

JEAN
Thank you.

She pauses. This is hard for her to say --

JEAN
For everything.

Sam nods, then puts Raine into the back seat of her car, secures her into her booster seat.

She glances over her shoulder at Matt's and Nate's grave one last time, then gets in the car and drives away.

The second car pulls away from the curb and follows.

FADE OUT.