

41-A

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FADE IN:

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

A busy interstate is surrounded by scenic countryside, rustic homes interrupting the otherwise uniform landscape of trees, fields and gently sloping hills.

Further away from the interstate is a lonely highway, once the main artery of a community, now largely unused. A sporty SUV moves along the bare road, searching for signs of life.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - CONTINUOUS

The SUV pulls into the isolated gas station as SAM, mid-40s and weathered, but smiling, and TED watch from the porch, decorated by a single rocking chair and an old refrigerator. Sam sits rocking in the chair.

The SUV halts by a lone gas pump. KELLY, a fit 30ish brunette in high priced hiking shorts and shirt, and her boyfriend, MARC, similar in age and attire, step onto the dusty parking lot.

SAM  
(standing)  
Howdy. Help you folks?

Kelly approaches the porch.

KELLY  
I hope so. Where are we?

MARC  
(from the SUV)  
We are not lost.

Kelly shoots a look over her shoulder.

MARC  
We're not. This road is just not on the map.

SAM  
Wouldn't be. Not many people use it anymore since they built the interstate.

KELLY  
Are we close to the interstate?

SAM  
About half an hour further down the  
road. Same way you were pointed.

MARC  
See, I told you we weren't lost.

KELLY  
Great. Guess we just need a little  
gas, then.

SAM  
Help yourself. You wanna beer?

KELLY  
Oh, no thanks.

SAM  
What about your navigator over  
there?

Marc stares at a bullet-riddled highway sign reading "41-A."

KELLY  
He's fine.

SAM  
Suit yourself.

Sam opens the fridge, stocked with cheap beer and cracks one  
open.

KELLY  
So, just start pumping?

SAM  
Yep, all self-serve these days.

KELLY walks back to the pump. Pausing, she wipes the grime  
away from the analog fuel display, revealing "Unleaded - \$.89  
9/10."

KELLY  
Marc, look at this!

MARC  
Same prices as five years ago.

SAM  
Same gas.

MARC  
What?

SAM  
 Like I said, since the new  
 interstate was built, not many  
 folks coming by for gas.

KELLY  
 Is it still good?

MARC  
 I don't know.  
 (to SAM)  
 Hey, you!

SAM  
 It's Sam.

MARC  
 Okay, Sam, does gas go bad?

SAM  
 Still works in my pickup.

KELLY  
 (whispering)  
 What do you think?

MARC  
 I think this guy's brain is cooked.  
 But, I also think we are almost out  
 of gas.

Kelly shrugs and walks back to the porch.

KELLY  
 So, Sam, if there's no customers,  
 what do you do out here all day?

SAM  
 Sit, mostly. Listen to the radio.  
 Ted and I talk a bit. Watch a  
 little tv.  
 (tips his beer at her)  
 Get a little rowdy sometimes.

KELLY  
 I mean, how do you stay open with  
 no business?

SAM  
 Dad owned all this free and clear  
 when he died. Left it all to me.  
 Pretty good run til the  
 construction.

(MORE)

SAM(cont'd)

But, I still keep it open. Old man would have hated to see it closed.

KELLY

That's sort of sweet.

SAM

(winking)

Maybe. Or lazy, haven't decided which yet.

MARC

Kelly, I got \$10 worth. Can you pay him?

Sam waves her off as she digs in her pockets.

SAM

My treat. You folks have a safe trip.

KELLY

Thank you, Sam.

SAM

Yes, Ma'am.

MARC

Thanks, man! Come on, Kelly!

Kelly waves warmly and turns to her SUV. Dust shoots over the pump as they head down the road.

SAM

Well, Ted, they seemed nice enough.

Beat.

SAM

Don't give me that, I was not flirting with her. I was... being polite.

Ted is revealed as a baggy-eyed hound, sitting motionless on the porch.

SAM

Okay, fine, she was cute.

Sam settles back in his rocker.

SAM  
No, you're right, not nearly as  
cute as her. 'Bout time for our  
visit tomorrow, right, Ted?

Ted is still, save for one brief thump of his tail on the  
porch.

SAM  
Yeah, I'm excited, too.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - EVENING

Sam and Ted are motionless as the sun sinks, then sets and  
the buzz of the station's lone sign flickers to life.

SAM  
One more before bed?

Sam rises from his chair and walks to the fridge. Opening  
the door, he notices a flicker. He taps the naked bulb,  
continuing in its staccato signals.

He removes a beer and shuts the door.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is respectably clean, littered with memorabilia  
from his father's days in the army, magazines and several  
books on philosophy.

Sam heads to the kitchen, flips on a light and opens a  
cabinet containing, among other things, bulk rolls of paper  
towels, toilet paper, and light bulbs. He shakes a bulb free  
from a box and returns to the porch.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - CONTINUOUS

Sam shows the bulb to Ted.

SAM  
Always prepared.

Sam opens the fridge, unscrews the flickering bulb and tosses  
it in the garbage can at the edge of the porch. He quickly  
places the new bulb and stands back admiring his handiwork as  
it shines brightly.

SAM  
See, Ted, a man to do a man's job.  
And I am surely a man-

The bulb begins flickering as it had before.

SAM  
Damn!

Sam peers at it, watching the bulb flash on and off intermittently. Fast, fast, fast...slow, slow, slow... fast, fast, fast.

SAM  
You see that?

Sam watches as the bulb continues the pattern.

SAM  
I'll be damned. Dot, dot, dot...  
dash, dash, dash... dot, dot, dot.  
SOS.

Sam hurriedly shuts the door.

SAM  
Ted, I think our beer fridge is  
possessed.

Ted's tail thumps once and lies still.

SAM  
Lots of good you are.

Sam opens the door again to see the same pattern repeated. He slams it shut very quickly.

SAM  
My fridge is talking to me in Morse  
Code. Well, that's it, then. I am  
crazy.

Ted chuffs and stands, lumbering inside.

SAM  
Good idea. My delusion can wait  
til morning.

Sam enters the house and shuts the door. All is still on the porch, until-

Sam opens the door, reaches a hand to the side and unplugs the fridge. The front door closes again, Sam and Ted tucked away for the night.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - MORNING

Sam steps onto the porch in his pajamas (sweat pants and a ratty tee). He stretches and yawns, looking out over the empty parking lot and road.

Sam eyes the fridge suspiciously. He moves towards it, arm outstretched to open the door, pauses. He turns his back to it, stepping back into the house.

SAM

Not before lunch. Ted, wake up!  
Time to eat!

Growing closer, a flicker of light around the lip of the fridge's seal can be seen, pulsing over and over again...  
SOS, SOS, SOS.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - DAY

Sam's tired red pickup pulls into the hub of Sparta, a small town city square. The centerpiece is the county courthouse in the center, a towering white wood and brick monument, surrounded by real estate offices with plywood walls, shops with specials advertised on the windows in shoe polish and a restaurant with the words 'CITY CAFE Est. 1917' emblazoned in white across the large front window.

Sam pulls into a parking spot in front of the cafe and hops out, craning his neck around the side of the building.

In the alley, a small blue, battered import, long past its prime, is parked in the alley between two newer vehicles.

Sam scratches Ted's head as the dog sits up in the bed of the truck, yawning.

SAM

She's here. Be back in a bit.

INT. CITY CAFE - DAY

Sam enters as a bell rings over the door.

A large, matronly woman with dark hair up in a bun, SHERYL, shuffles past behind the counter, holding two plates up high on their way to a pair of the many patrons lined at the counter.

SHERYL

Busy today, Sam, have you a seat in a minute!

SAM

No worries, Sheryl. It's feast enough to see you today.

SHERYL

(winking)

Oh, I know better than that. I'll let you know when a table opens up in her section.

SAM

Oh, that's not important.

Sheryl drops off her plates and pauses.

SHERYL

I've heard that line enough to quote it like scripture.

Sam assembles a response, but Sheryl has disappeared into the kitchen.

An older, wrinkled patron, BUD PARKER, rises from the seat nearest Sam and offers a kindly nudge, adjusting the weathered hat in his lap.

BUD PARKER

Why don't you take that pretty girl out?

SAM

Who, Sheryl? Why, Bud, I figured you'd have me strung up if I so much as looked twice at her.

BUD PARKER

No, dummy, not Sheryl... her.

Sam follows Bud's finger to the far tables where KATIE CHAPMAN refills a cup of coffee, her back to them. Long dark hair falls down her back and over her shoulders.

She turns towards them, revealing a woman in her mid-thirties, lines at the corners of her eyes from smiling, but a face that holds onto its youth tenaciously.

KATIE

Sam! I'll have room in a minute!

BUD PARKER

Hey, Katie, what about me?

KATIE

Bud... what would Sheryl say?

BUD PARKER

Same thing as always... I don't tip her enough.

KATIE

Well, she's right. Give me a minute.

Katie goes about her business at her tables and rushes into the kitchen. Bud turns away as Sam's eyes remain fixed on the point in space he last saw her.

BUD PARKER

That girl is going to waste waiting on you.

SAM

Come on, Bud, who says I'm even interested?

BUD PARKER

Me, Sheryl, Sally, Bill Prater at the barbershop, Trey Mansfield...

SAM

Okay, okay... but ask them what a girl like that would want with a lazy thing like me.

BUD PARKER

I will next time I see 'em.

SAM

Thanks, Bud.

Sam turns to Bud fully.

SAM

Bud, you been here all your life, right?

BUD PARKER

So far.

SAM

What's the weirdest thing you ever heard of?

BUD PARKER

Here in Sparta?

SAM

Yeah.

BUD PARKER

I guess when Ben Carpenter thought aliens were stealing his cows. Turned out that they'd just run off after he left a hole in his fence.

SAM

No, I mean really, honestly, truthfully strange.

BUD PARKER

I don't know... what's going on, Sam?

SAM

Well, I think something weird happened to me last night.

BUD PARKER

Probably that fridge full of beer on your porch is what happened.

SAM

It's strange you should say that, Bud, cause-

Katie waves at Sam across the cafe.

KATIE

Got a space, Sam! Hurry!

SAM

(to BUD)

I'll talk to you later, Bud.

Sam rushes to the table as Sheryl reemerges from the kitchen.

SHERYL

Talk any sense into him, Bud?

BUD PARKER

Ah, hell, no. Man doesn't get any real sense til his sixties, anyhow.

SHERYL

By then, not much use to us women.

BUD PARKER

Well, by then you women aren't much use to us men, either. 'Cept maybe to argue with.

SHERYL

Well, you got that down pat.

BUD PARKER

You, too, my dear, you, too.

Sam seats himself at the empty table, littered with the debris of the previous patron.

Katie professionally scoops it up and wipes off the table.

KATIE

So, where's your better half today?

SAM

Out in the truck.

KATIE

We'll have to get him something too, then.

SAM

Katie, you spoil that damn dog.

KATIE

He's a sweetie. Coke, Sam?

SAM

Please.

Katie bustles away, arms full. She quickly returns with his coke.

KATIE

Here you go. Country ham, today?

SAM

You know me too well.

KATIE

Already told Jim to put it on the grill. So, anything new at the station?

SAM

Fridge on the porch is on the fritz. Had a real live customer yesterday.

KATIE

Oh yeah? Bet you told them not to pay you, too.

Sam shrugs.

KATIE

When are you going to stop giving everything away?

SAM

Soon as you stop overfeeding Ted. Besides, anytime money gets involved, it screws everything up.

KATIE

Tell that to the electric company. You know, Sam, there's a new movie opening up Friday at the theater. I was thinking of going.

SAM

Oh, well... I'm not much of a movie person.  
(quickly)  
Tell me how it is.

JIM (O.S.)

Katie! Order's up!

Katie turns to the kitchen without a word in reply. She returns with Sam's meal.

SAM

I'll be quick, Katie. I know you're busy.

KATIE

Take your time, Sam. You always do.

Katie turns and leaves Sam to his meal.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - SUNSET

Sam turns the pickup into the station and gets out, bag in hand. Lowering the tailgate, Ted drops to the ground and hops on the porch. Sam empties the contents of the bag - several slices of ham and gravy - into Ted's bowl.

Ted sniffs once and begins devouring the contents. Trashing the bag, Sam opens the door of the fridge, grabbing a beer, noting the flickering light. He shakes his head and pops the top, taking a sip on his way indoors.

Sam pauses, regarding the beer

Sam looks down at the three-pronged plug snaked on the wooden porch, inches away from the outlet. He rushes inside.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sam runs his fingers along the spines of old military manuals from his father's service. His finger pauses on one entitled 'US CODE HANDBOOK.' He snatches it from the shelf and hurries back outside.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - CONTINUOUS

Sam sits before the open fridge, flipping the code book open to a section on Morse Code.

Ted looks up and regards him lazily.

SAM  
I know, I know. Crazy, right?

Ted chuffs and returns to his bowl.

SAM  
Thanks.

The bulb still flickers, signalling SOS. Then, stops.

SAM  
Oh, come on! Don't stop now.

Nothing.

SAM  
Great. I'm finally prepared for my delusion and it up and quits.

Ted finishes his meal and pads over, slumping to the porch beside Sam.

SAM

What am I doing? I'm sitting in front of a fridge filled with warm beer, waiting for it to talk. I must be crazy.

Ted yawns.

SAM

And speaking of crazy, what was that with Katie today? She asks me to the movies and I say 'I'm not much of a movie person.' Why can't I say something reasonable, like 'Would you like to come out and have a cup of coffee on me some time?' Am I shy or deficient?

Ted raises his head and barks.

SAM

You stay out of this. Remember who feeds you.

Ted gets to his feet, barking towards Sam.

SAM

What has gotten into-

Sam's attention is drawn back to the fridge, where the blinking has returned in earnest. This time, the pattern is unfamiliar.

Sam grabs a pen hurriedly from his pocket, head bobbing between fridge and book as he jots the translation in the book's margins.

SAM

T... E... L... L...

FADE OUT.

EXT. KATIE'S HOME - NIGHT

The house is a small, unassuming two bedroom house with several slightly tacky yard decorations, but the overall impression is one of care.

Sam pulls into the gravel driveway quickly, kicking up dust and loose rock.

By the time he makes it to the front door, Katie has it open.

KATIE

Sam, what are you doing here?

SAM

Katie, I hate to bother you so late, but something really weird is going on around here.

KATIE

I don't have time for this, Sam.

SAM

Katie, just listen...

KATIE

Sam, your truck.

SAM

What?

Katie has disappeared into the house and returns, dragging TERRY, her neighbor, a mid-20s single mother, her face streaked with tears.

KATIE

Sam, we need your truck. Now, go inside and get Kevin. He's laying on my couch, but be careful, he's running a hell of a fever.

SAM

I don't-

KATIE

Something is wrong with my car, Sam... We have to get him to the hospital right now. Go!

Sam ducks inside and returns quickly with the boy, KEVIN, Terry's 7-year old son, hair tussled and face flushed with fever. He opens up his truck and lays the boy down in the back seat. Sam climbs in the driver seat while Katie and Terry slide in the front. Terry leans over the seat to rest a cool washcloth on Kevin's head.

The truck reverses fast and speeds off into the night.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Katie and Terry hold hands in their chairs, while Sam sits across from them, silent.

A young DOCTOR emerges from the hallway.

DOCTOR  
Miss Holling?

TERRY  
Yes?

DOCTOR  
I'm afraid your son has had an acute attack. His appendix is about to burst and we have to take it out right away. It has already begun to hemorrhage. We don't know the extent of the damage, yet, but it is imperative we get it out before he suffers further internal trauma. Do you understand what I've just said?

TERRY  
You have to get my son's appendix out before it kills him.

DOCTOR  
Yes.

TERRY  
Then why are you talking to me? Go help him!

DOCTOR  
I need your permission.

TERRY  
For chrissakes! Go save my boy's life!

The Doctor retreats quickly.

Terry's tears come quick, as Katie holds her.

KATIE  
Would you like some coffee, Terry?

Terry nods.

KATIE

Okay, Sam and I are going to be back in just a sec, all right? Kevin's going to be fine, hun.

Terry nods again.

KATIE

Sam, will you join me for a minute?

SAM

(rising)

Sure.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks silently beside Katie as she pulls her hair back in a ponytail.

KATIE

Sorry to drag you into this, Sam, but you were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

SAM

Don't mind.

KATIE

That reminds me, what were you doing at my house at almost ten o'clock?

SAM

Seems insignificant now. Maybe some other time.

KATIE

Well, it's a good thing you came along when you did. Terry lives behind me, you know, and doesn't have a car of her own. So up the hill she comes with Kevin in her arms, just wailing. We got him inside and on the couch, and that's when I noticed his fever. Jesus, he was burning up.

SAM

What happened to your car?

KATIE

My clutch went out today. I have to get it towed to the garage in the morning. Just the grace of God that you came along when you did.

SAM

I suppose so.

They stop at a coffee machine in the hallway. Sam digs in his pockets and drops change into the slot.

KATIE

Thanks, guess I forgot my purse.

SAM

My pleasure.

Katie offers him a genuine smile.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katie and Sam return with Terry's coffee. She rises in her chair to sip it.

TERRY

Thank you. Thank you, Sam.

Sam waves her off.

Just as the mood begins to lighten, the Doctor reappears, all but running towards them.

TERRY

(standing)

What is it? Is Kevin okay?

DOCTOR

There's been a complication. Kevin is hemorrhaging from his appendix and there appears to be blockage of the intestine. It doesn't happen frequently, but it does happen and it is treatable. We have him stabilized, and we have a specialist coming in from Atlanta. In the meantime, I just want you to stay calm. He's in good hands.

TERRY

Oh my boy, my boy...

The Doctor looks to Katie and Sam.

DOCTOR  
Will you be staying with her?

KATIE AND SAM  
Yes.

Katie looks at Sam and smiles, taking his hand and offering a squeeze.

DOCTOR  
I'll be back when I have more news  
to report.

KATIE  
Thank you, Doctor.

Doctor exits.

TERRY  
Thank you both, but you can go  
home, I'll be fine.

KATIE  
Don't be stupid. We're staying.

SAM  
Of course we are. Ted has the  
station, now. Frankly, he's better  
at running it than I am.

TERRY  
Your son?

SAM  
My dog.

Terry laughs shallowly.

Sam rises and seats himself beside Terry.

SAM  
Terry, I think I need to tell you  
something. I got a sort of...  
message, I guess. I'm not sure how  
to describe it. Anyway, the  
message was, "Tell her the boy will  
be fine." I think I was meant to  
give you that message.

TERRY  
I- I don't understand.

SAM  
That makes two of us. But I  
believe it. He's gonna be just  
fine.

TERRY  
Thank you, Sam. You're a good man.

SAM  
I think I'm going to get some  
coffee of my own. Would anybody  
like anything?

TERRY  
No, thank you.

KATIE  
Mind if I join you?

Sam stammers and nods, gesturing to the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Katie walk side by side.

SAM  
I thought I might see if the gift  
shop is open, get the kid  
something.

KATIE  
Sam, what the hell was this about?

SAM  
Oh, you're right, I guess the gift  
shop would be closed.

KATIE  
That's not what I'm talking about.  
Why did you tell Terry that story  
about the message you got? That's  
irresponsible, even if it is well-  
meaning. What is that?

SAM  
It's the truth.

KATIE  
I appreciate your optimism, Sam,  
but neither of us know what is  
going to happen with that little  
boy.

SAM  
I'm not saying I know, either,  
Katie, Jesus. What I do know is  
that I did get a message and I do  
believe it is for her.

KATIE  
And where did this message come  
from?

Sam pauses in front of the coffee machine and deposits two  
quarters.

SAM  
I'd rather not say.

KATIE  
Oh, no you don't. You've gone this  
far, let's have both barrels.

Sam takes a long, slow sip of coffee from the machine-  
dispensed brew.

SAM  
My fridge.

KATIE  
What?

SAM  
The fridge on my porch.

KATIE  
Your beer fridge?

SAM  
Yes.

KATIE  
Oh, this is great. I always  
thought you were a little flaky,  
Sam, but you have just stepped over  
a very important line.

SAM  
You think I'm flaky?

KATIE  
Damn it, Sam!

SAM  
What?

KATIE

You just told a woman her son in surgery will be just fine because your beer fridge told you to.

SAM

Sure it sounds bad when you put it like that. But if you had been there...

KATIE

Oh, God, Sam, why don't you just go home.

Katie spins on her heel, but Sam catches her by the elbow.

SAM

Hey, wait one second. You think I feel great about telling you that my refrigerator is sending me messages to deliver to mothers in hospital waiting rooms. I think it stinks, frankly, because I know how crazy it sounds, but that is exactly what happened.

KATIE

You really believe this, don't you?

SAM

Of course I do. I am not, by nature, an imaginative person, Katie. I don't daydream, hell, I don't even remember dreaming at night, and I do not take hallucinogens while sipping beer on my porch. A couple of times in college, but that's it.

KATIE

This just gets better and better.

SAM

And, furthermore, I do not appreciate being called flaky.

KATIE

Okay, how about certifiable?

SAM

That's not fair.

KATIE

How about delusional?

SAM

Godamnit, Katie, I would really like it if you could allow, for one second, that you may not be right about everything ever. Imagine this is one of those times when you are wrong.

KATIE

Oh, Sam, I wish it was. Everyone knows my mistakes, they are practically in the town brochure. And I wish this was one of them. But, I think you should just go home now.

SAM

Fine. Call me if you need a ride home from the hospital.

Sam turns and strides angrily down the hall.

KATIE

Sam?

A door slams.

KATIE

Thanks for the ride.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - DAY

Sam sits on the porch, sipping a beer and absently stroking Ted's head.

He finishes the beer and tosses it in a garbage pail with the word 'RECYCLING' written in broad black paint.

Standing, Sam walks inside, past his beer fridge now wrapped shut tight with duct tape.

While he's gone, Ted's ears perk up as Katie's Honda pulls into the dusty lot.

She steps out as Sam returns to the porch.

KATIE

Hey, Sam.

SAM  
Hey, yourself. See they fixed your clutch.

KATIE  
Yeah. Sorry to stop by unannounced.

Sam shrugs.

KATIE  
Oh, shit, Sam, don't give me that.

SAM  
What?

KATIE  
The 'shucks-I'm-hurt' stuff. I came by here to apologize.

SAM  
How's the boy?

KATIE  
Fine. Better than fine, actually. The doctor said it was a small miracle that he survived. And he said it was a huge one that he's up and around already, like it never happened at all.

SAM  
Well, it's a crazy world.

KATIE  
All right, damnit.

Katie storms up to the porch in a huff.

KATIE  
Look, I'm sorry for implying that you were crazy last night, but I was upset and-

Katie notices the fridge taped shut.

KATIE  
Did you tape your fridge shut?

SAM  
Yes, I did.

KATIE

Okay. Why?

SAM

Because I don't want anyone else to look at me the way you did last night.

KATIE

And how was that?

SAM

Like a freak. You know full well that when you looked at me after I told you... well, after I told you what I told you, that you thought I was absolutely bonkers.

KATIE

I won't deny that it was strange.

SAM

So, that's why the fridge is taped shut. I would rather walk a few extra feet for my beer than to have that damn light blinking at me all the time.

Katie steps onto the porch and sees the Morse code book, along with pad and paper. On the pad is written, "TELL HER THE BOY WILL BE FINE."

KATIE

That was the message?

SAM

Yes.

KATIE

So, how did you know that the message was for Terry.

Sam shrugs.

SAM

I just did. It was weird, like the whole thing led up to me telling her.

KATIE

You know that sounds nuts.

SAM  
Here we go again.

Sam plops heavily back in his chair.

KATIE  
I just don't believe in things like  
this.

SAM  
You mean God.

KATIE  
Are you serious? You think God is  
giving you messages?

SAM  
It wouldn't be the first time. I  
mean, look at Noah. Or Moses. Or  
Joan of Arc.

KATIE  
Sam, they could have all been  
kooks.

SAM  
Or, they could have been people  
charged with a special destiny.  
Given purpose to their lives by  
God.

KATIE  
Is that what this is about? Oh,  
Sam, your life has purpose.

SAM  
I know it does, that's why I think  
maybe this was a one-time message.

KATIE  
So, why the tape?

SAM  
Just in case it wasn't.

Sam and Katie eye the fridge.

KATIE  
That's it.

Katie marches back to her car and opens the door.

SAM  
Katie, don't go.

KATIE  
I'm not.

She shuts the car door and marches back to the porch. In her hand, she bears a pair of scissors and gives two quick snip-snips.

SAM  
What is that for?

KATIE  
Just what you think it's for.

Katie slices and cuts down the edge of the fridge until the tape is severed.

SAM  
Katie, maybe you should-

Katie swings the door wide.

KATIE  
Oh my God!

SAM  
What?!

KATIE  
I can't believe you have nothing  
but light beer in here.

Sam rushes over and looks inside at the rows of cans in the fridge, illuminated by a steadily burning bulb.

SAM  
I'll be damned.

KATIE  
See, Sam. No blinking lights. No  
messages. No higher power  
communicating through appliances.  
Just a fridge full of cheap beer.

SAM  
Well, like I said, maybe a one-time  
thing.

A beat.

SAM

Want a beer?

KATIE

No, I have to get to work. I just wanted to make some peace. Thank you for getting us to the hospital last night, Sam.

SAM

No problem.

KATIE

You really are a sweet man.

She leans up and kisses him on the cheek, then hurriedly hops from the porch and jumps in her car. Offering a little wave, she starts the car and drives off.

Sam absently touches his cheek where Katie kissed him, then turns his attention to the fridge.

He opens it once, bulb still burning. He closes and opens it very quickly, trying to catch it off guard with the same result.

SAM

One time is fine with me.

He retrieves a beer and cracks it open.

INT. CITY CAFE - DAY

Katie goes about her work as Bud Parker looks on and tips her a wink. Katie smiles and moves on.

Terry enters, looking frantic but happy. Spotting Katie, she hurries over.

TERRY

Katie, have you talked to Sam?

KATIE

Yes, why?

TERRY

Well, I just wanted to thank him for his kind words, and... well, I wondered if he had anything else to tell me.

KATIE

Oh, not you, Terry. You can't really believe that Sam got a message from God.

Bud Parker spins on his stool and Sheryl leans over the counter.

BUD PARKER

What's this, now?

KATIE

I'll fill you in later, Bud.

BUD PARKER

I'm always the last to know anything...

TERRY

Sam drove us to the hospital.

SHERYL

I know that part, hon, get to the good part.

TERRY

While we were sitting in the waiting room, Sam came up to me and told me that Kevin was going to be all right. That he got a message that said the boy will be fine, and, sure enough, Kevin is good as new.

BUD PARKER

Well, I'll be.

KATIE

What you'll be, Bud Parker, is as crazy as Sam if you start buying into all of this nonsense.

BUD PARKER

Katie, you are a pretty girl, and smart as a tack, but you still got a lot to learn about what is and what is not nonsense.

KATIE

And you have a lot to learn about keeping your nose out of where it doesn't belong.

SHERYL  
Okay, that's enough. Katie, want  
to help me in the kitchen a minute.

KATIE  
I really need-

SHERYL  
In the kitchen. Now.

Katie exits the dining area through the swinging doors and  
Sheryl retreats back with her.

BUD PARKER  
Guess we'll see who stays out of  
whose business.

INT. CITY CAFE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Amidst a COOK and a DISHWASHER, Sheryl corners Katie.

SHERYL  
You want to tell me what that was  
about?

KATIE  
Nothing. Bud just gets under my  
skin sometimes.

SHERYL  
Never has before.

KATIE  
He was overdue, then.

SHERYL  
Katie, come on, this is me, now.  
What is wrong?

KATIE  
I just can't stand all this  
mystical bullshit, Sheryl. It's  
like I'm the only one living on  
planet earth lately. Sam thinks  
he's getting messages from God,  
Terry thinks he all but healed  
Kevin and now Bud is going to have  
it all over town what happened.

SHERYL  
I see.

KATIE

What?

SHERYL

You don't believe that there is such a thing as God, do you, Katie?

KATIE

That's sort of a personal thing...

SHERYL

I'm not going to turn you over to the baptists if you say no, but level with me, okay?

KATIE

Okay. No, I don't.

SHERYL

All right. But a lot of us here do.

KATIE

I know, Sheryl, and I'm sorry for making a scene. I used to believe. I really did.

SHERYL

What happened?

KATIE

Louis happened.

SHERYL

That boy you met at college, right? The one you were engaged to?

KATIE

Yes. You know why I didn't marry him? You know why I moved back here?

SHERYL

The southern hospitality?

KATIE

(smiles)

No. Louis had leukemia.

SHERYL

Oh, sweetie, I never knew that.

KATIE

I never told anyone. We found out right after we got engaged. He started losing all this weight, and then there were the treatments that got rid of all his hair. And I stood by him, Sheryl. When he was too weak, I bathed him, put his clothes on for him... wiped his ass for him when he couldn't. And the whole time, I prayed for him. I asked God to take me instead, or to take it away altogether. He was only 24 years old, Sheryl.

SHERYL

Oh, honey.

KATIE

You know what the answer to my prayers was?

Sheryl shakes her head.

KATIE

I got to watch him wither away like a plant in the shade. I watched him puke up blood and drift away from me. When he died, I watched him get buried and I had to listen to that shit about God's divine plan, how Louis was just a thread in the great fabric of life. Well, he was my thread, and no God would take away a man like him. After the funeral, I came home, and I swore I would never speak another word in prayer.

Sheryl opens her mouth to speak when a loud commotion comes from the dining area.

The pair exit.

INT. CITY CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Katie and Sheryl rush to the dining area to see Sam surrounded by a throng of people, not the least Terry, who clutches Sam's arm as though for dear life.

SAM  
It hasn't happened again! Let me  
go! It was a one-time thing!

Katie makes her way through the mass of people to Sam and leads him towards the door. Shouts and questions follow him out, all pleading for a glimpse of the future or healing, etc.

EXT. CITY CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Katie tugs Sam onto the street.

SAM  
What the hell was that all about?

KATIE  
Let's get home and we'll see if we  
can't figure something out.

INT. KATIE'S CAR - DAY

Katie steers as Sam absently plays with the radio. Static fills the car as he makes his way through the band, then a voice from nothing.

VOICE  
Milwaukee.

Just as quick, it is gone.

SAM  
Did you hear that?

KATIE  
Hear what?

SAM  
Nothing. Thought I caught a  
station.

KATIE  
Will you leave that alone for a  
second?

SAM  
What?

KATIE

What? I just pulled you away from  
a near mob, walked off my job...  
Oh no, I just walked of my job.

SAM

Sheryl will understand.

KATIE

She might. But what about me?

Katie begins to cry.

KATIE

I don't understand any of this,  
Sam. I like my life, you know?  
It's quiet and it's simple, and  
there are no complications. I go  
to work, I go home, and on Sundays  
I cook out with Sheryl and her  
kids, and now I'm driving the  
getaway car for the messiah.

SAM

Look, Katie...

(softly)

I never said I was the messiah.

Katie slams on the brakes.

KATIE

That's it! I am done with this. I  
am going to take you to your  
station, drop you off, go home and  
call Sheryl. I may even go back to  
work today.

SAM

That sounds reasonable.

KATIE

Yes, it does.

SAM

God forbid you should do anything  
that wasn't reasonable.

KATIE

Okay, you don't get to sound all  
wise and knowing. You do not know  
me half as well as you think you  
do, so don't start.

SAM  
Fine. Sorry.

KATIE  
Okay.

Katie drives on in silence.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - DAY

Katie's car pulls up to the porch and Sam steps out of the passenger side. Stooping, he leans back in.

SAM  
Anything you want to talk about?

KATIE  
No. Thank you.

SAM  
See you later then?

KATIE  
I think it would be best if you didn't come by the cafe for a while.

SAM  
I have to...

KATIE  
No, you don't. And no more surprise visits to my house for a while, either, okay?

SAM  
Okay.

Sam steps back and shuts the door.

Katie offers a thin wave before sliding the car into drive and leaving Sam behind her.

Sam sighs and steps onto the porch where Ted waits, prone as usual.

Sam glances over to see the fridge door open again. Inside the bulb blinks.

SAM  
Shit.

Sam goes inside and quickly returns with his code book and pad and pen. Time passes as he sits before the fridge and finally sits back to look at the message fully: 'MILWAUKEE'

SAM  
Ted, looks like I may have to take  
a trip.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sam piles clothes into a battered suitcase. On the television, a religious program plays...

SAM  
Bet that guy never had to go to  
Wisconsin.

The television seems to grow larger until it is all that may be seen, swelling into-

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

MYROM HOLLIDAY marches across a grand stage, a chorus in purple and gold robes behind him. He is a squat, red-faced man with fire in his blue eyes as he looks out on the faithful crowd.

MYROM  
We are in trying times, my friends.  
There are forces of evil at work in  
this country. The liberals...

A ROAR from the audience.

MYROM  
The gays...

Another ROAR.

MYROM  
Then again, hard to tell the  
difference between those two.

Riotous laughter from the crowd, followed by applause.

MYROM  
They want to mock us. They want us  
to turn our backs on the things  
that made this country great.  
Family values. Prayer in schools.  
(MORE)

MYROM(cont'd)

They even want us to take God out of the pledge of allegiance. Is that what this country was founded upon, my friends?

CROWD

(in unison)

NO!!!

MYROM

It is so good to be in a room like this. You can feel the spirit moving in here today.

Organ music begins playing.

MYROM

That's right, my friends, the spirit of Jesus moves among us. Can you feel it? I can feel it. I feel something coming on.

The applause, along with the music, grows louder.

MYROM

Bring up the first, Jessie...

JESSICA, a young, pretty assistant dressed in a demure dress, brings a young crippled boy, Andy, to the stage, struggling with the braces supporting him.

Jessica leads him to Myrom in the center of the stage.

MYROM

What is your name, son?

ANDY

Andy.

MYROM

Andy, it is so nice to see a boy as young as you walking in the light of Jesus. And what happened to your legs, son?

ANDY

(shrugging)

Just always been this way.

MYROM

Would you like to throw those braces away forever?

ANDY

Yes, sir.

MYROM

I want you to close your eyes and pray real hard, Andy, just like the people here and the people at home will be praying for you.

ANDY

Okay.

Andy squeezes his eyes shut.

MYROM

Then by the power of Christ, I say... WALK!!!

Myrom grabs the boy's legs and shakes them, as though rattling the bars in a cell. He releases the boy's legs.

MYROM

Now, Andy, I want you to step out of those braces.

Andy looks questioningly at Myrom, who nods, then unclasps the braces. Like a newborn doe, the boy staggers briefly, then takes several shuddering steps forward. The crowd explodes.

The image freezes.

INT. MYROM'S OFFICE - DAY

Myrom is revealed in his office.

The office is opulent, full of expensive dark wood and classic design. The television is an enormous plasma screen, the image of the crippled child walking frozen in place.

MYROM

My, my, my, that was classic. How long did that boy walk?

Jessica enters from an adjoining office. She is dressed plainly, but it is clear that she possesses a seductive figure beneath the modest clothing. She is easily half the age of the evangelist.

JESSICA

Almost five minutes after we got him backstage. He was a trooper.

MYROM

Five minutes. That is a miracle.  
And how much did we collect?

JESSICA

Pete's still doing the counting,  
but it looks like about twenty  
thousand.

MYROM

Pitiful.

Jessica opens a cabinet, hidden as part of the office wall,  
revealing a small bar and fine crystal glasses.

JESSICA

You want anything?

MYROM

Scotch and soda, please. And for  
God's sake, tell Peter to quit  
buying that cheap stuff. Gives me  
heartburn.

JESSICA

Awww... Poor thing.

Jessica finishes making them each a drink and slinks over to  
Myrom in his chair.

JESSICA

Anything I can do to help?

Myrom raises an eyebrow and smiles.

MYROM

Jessie, if I ever forget to tell  
you, you are the most wanton little  
thing I have ever run across in all  
my years.

Jessica slides down to her knees before Myrom as we focus on  
a look of contentment spreading across his face as he sips  
his drink.

MYROM

Praise Jesus.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - EVENING

Sam hums absently to an old blues tune as he glances up to  
see a road sign that reads 'WELCOME TO MILWAUKEE.'

SAM  
Well, I'm here. I guess that's something. I don't know what it is, but it's something.

EXT. VOLCANO MOTOR LODGE - NIGHT

As rain falls against the plate glass office, we see Sam pulling wadded up bills out of his pocket to hand them across the counter to an oily DESK ATTENDANT.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sam drops his battered suitcase on the ratty carpet and collapses onto his back on the bed. Letting out a long sigh, he takes in the tattered wallpaper, the peeling paint on the ceiling, the steady drip of the bathroom faucet.

SAM  
Better than wandering through a desert, I guess.

Sam collapses onto the sagging bed and glances over at the dingy rotary phone on the night stand. He stares at it, focusing more and more, until...

INT. KATIE'S HOME - NIGHT

A similar rotary phone rings in the darkness. Katie remains prone on the bed, eyes open, staring at the phone.

She sighs and turns over in bed, her back to the phone.

EXT. VOLCANO MOTOR LODGE - MORNING

Sam steps out of his room, an ice bucket in his hand. He looks up and down the cement walkway on the second floor, searching for the machine.

He spots it near the stairwell and, dressed only in boxers and a tattered white tee, he quickly pads in bare feet to the machine.

He digs in the machine with a broken scoop, allowing him only a few cubes at a time, when he is surprised by a voice.

MIKE  
That's not a very good scoop.

Sam rises quickly, banging his head on the open door of the machine.

MIKE  
Wow, you really hit your head.

SAM  
I sure did.

MIKE  
Is it bleeding?

SAM  
I don't know. Why don't you check for me?

Sam leans down his head to the boy, no more than seven, wearing a shirt that is too small and pants that are too big.

MIKE  
I don't see any blood.

SAM  
I guess I may make it after all. Good thing I had you here, just in case, though.

MIKE  
Yeah. I'm pretty good in emergencies.

SAM  
Is that right? You sound like a good man to know.

Sam stretches out his hand to shake the boy's.

SAM  
My name is Sam Kimball.

Michael cocks his head like the Victrola dog and eyes the hand suspiciously.

SAM  
I don't bite, I promise.

MIKE  
Mama says I should be careful around strangers.

SAM

Good advice. Very good. But seeing as how you almost saved me from this ice machine, I guess that kind of puts me in your debt. And I have never been in the debt of a stranger.

Michael seems to think this over. He takes Sam's large hand in his own and gives it a crisp shake.

MIKE

I am Michael Taylor. Mike, for short.

SAM

It is nice to meet you, Mike for short.

Michael laughs.

MIKE

No, just Mike, silly.

SAM

Of course. Mike, then. You and your mom and dad just passing through?

MIKE

Just me and my mom. And we've been here a long time.

SAM

I see.

MIKE

But Mama says we should only be here another month or two before we can get a real apartment.

SAM

Oh.

A young woman, SANDY, in her mid-twenties, approaches from behind Sam, listening. She wears cut-off denim shorts and a tank top that would be flattering if it were new. Now, much like Sandy, it is tired and thread-bare in places, but clinging together still.

MIKE

Mama says I can go swimming today if I'm good.

SAM  
They have a pool here? I didn't  
notice-

SANDY  
They have one next door. At the  
better motel.

Sam spins on his heel to face the young woman, surprised by her youth and common beauty still shining through the cloak of poverty that surrounds her like a corona.

SAM  
I may have to take a dip myself,  
then.

Sam extends his hand to her.

SAM  
My name is, Sam, Ma'am. I guess  
this is your boy?

Sandy ignores his gesture.

SANDY  
Yes, it is.  
(to MIKE)  
And he knows better than to talk to  
strangers around here.

Michael shrinks a bit behind Sam.

SAM  
I'm sorry, Ma'am, I think I  
provoked him by hitting my head on  
that machine door. If it hadn't  
been for Mike's quick  
intervention... I shudder to think  
what could have happened.

A small smile creeps at the corner of Sandy's mouth.

SANDY  
He seems to carry accidents with  
him, I swear.

SAM  
When I was his about his size, I  
spent a whole summer with a cast on  
my arm and my leg. One on each  
side. I had to hobble around all  
summer. And learn to write with my  
left hand.

MIKE

No!

SAM

Honest.

MIKE

What happened?

SAM

Climbing a tree. Turns out gravity works, even if you don't know what it is, yet.

MIKE

Did it hurt?

SAM

Like the devil. But what was worse was the itching. It started at my elbow all the way up my arm. And my leg, hoo boy! It felt like...

Sam looks to the sky as though searching for the right word, tapping his chin.

SAM

This!

Sam unleashes a flurry of tickles on Mike's belly, causing him to explode in laughter.

Sandy manages a full smile.

SANDY

Careful, Sam, I think he has lice.

MIKE

(still howling)

I do not, Mama!

SAM

No, I think I see one. And it's laying eggs!

MIKE

No! Get it out!

SAM

Okay, if you say so. The only way to get rid of them is by shaking them out!

Sam gently swings Mike around, both laughing. Their laughs slowly subsiding, Sam sets Mike back on his feet and straightens his shirt.

SAM  
All better.

SANDY  
Thank you, Sam, but I'm sure you've got things to do.

SAM  
Not sure, yet.

Sandy looks at him quizzically.

SAM  
Long story.

SANDY  
Well, if you don't have plans, we have a little efficiency downstairs. I was making some chicken and rice tonight. You're welcome to some.

SAM  
Are you sure?

SANDY  
Yeah, I think so. Room 132. About 7:30.

SAM  
Well, then, I accept. And I appreciate it. I'm a little far from home right now.

SANDY  
Aren't we all...

SAM  
I guess we are a lot of the time. Maybe too much of the time.

Understanding passes between them. These are both people whose futures are uncertain.

SAM  
What can I bring?

MIKE  
Cake!

SANDY

No cake.

MIKE

Awww...

SANDY

I know, Mikey, your mother is cruel and inhuman.

MIKE

You can say that again.

SAM

(grinning)

How about some soda or something?

SANDY

Sure, that'd be nice. Well, scuba boy, let's get you dressed for the pool if you want to swim.

SAM

Have fun, you two.

The mother and son stroll down the steps, waving behind them.

Sam looks at his half-filled bucket and heads for his room.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - DAY

Katie's car pours dust over the landscape as she pulls in hurriedly and slams on the brakes.

On the porch, Sheryl looks up from filling Ted's bowl with food. Sheryl waves as Katie opens the car door and storms onto the porch.

KATIE

What the hell are you doing here?

SHERYL

I'm feeding Ted.

KATIE

I see that. I mean why are you here doing it and where is Sam?

SHERYL

I am doing it because Sam is not here.

(MORE)

SHERYL(cont'd)

And I don't think he's giving Ted enough meat. Oh, And Sam's in Milwaukee.

KATIE

What?

SHERYL

He's in Milwaukee.

KATIE

I heard you. Why is Sam in Milwaukee?

SHERYL

He said he just knew that's where he had to go.

KATIE

This is absolutely crazy. Did you try to talk him out of it?

SHERYL

No, of course not.

KATIE

Of course not. You people are driving me crazy. And why did he ask you to feed Ted? He knows I would have done it.

SHERYL

How would he know that, Katie?

KATIE

Well, he...

SHERYL

You've been pretty rough on him lately. I think he was a little hurt. Truth is, he was worried you would say no if he asked, so I offered to do it.

KATIE

Why didn't you tell me?

SHERYL

Because I have been called crazy enough in my life without you joining the choir.

KATIE

Sheryl, I don't think you're-

SHERYL

I believe him, Katie. I do. Every word of it. And, even if it's not true, even if Sam is totally off his nut, I hope it's true.

KATIE

But, why?

SHERYL

Because, I like the thought of living in a world where someone that I serve beef stew to in Januaries might get a personal message from God. And that he actually listened, because his dumb, sweet heart believes that it's possible, too.

Katie stares flatly at her older friend as she gives Ted a pat on the head and makes her way off the porch.

Sheryl pauses before Katie.

SHERYL

Katie, sometimes believing is hard. And I don't recommend it if you don't really feel that it's true. I just wish you did, because I feel better than I have in years. See you back at the diner.

Sheryl slips into her car and drives off, leaving Katie at the steps of the porch.

Katie slumps down on the steps. Ted pads over and sniffs Katie's cheek.

KATIE

Thanks, pal.

Ted offers a long lick on Katie's cheek. She hugs the dog's neck and sits.

INT. ROOM 132 - NIGHT

A knock comes on the door and Sandy comes rushing to the door, pausing before the broad mirror facing the beds to check her carefully drawn make-up.

She opens the door to reveal Sam, carrying a two liter bottle of soda and a bottle of wine. He holds both up.

SAM  
I didn't know what you'd be  
serving.

INT. ROOM 132 - LATER

Sandy pulls a casserole dish out of the oven and sets it on  
the small oven top.

Mike busily trails Sam, showing pictures he has drawn that  
day.

MIKE  
This one is a shark.

SAM  
You don't say?

MIKE  
I do say. It's going to try to eat  
that guy, but it turns out that  
that guy knows the best way to  
protect himself is to hit the shark  
in the nose.

SAM  
He sounds smarter than me.

SANDY  
(to SAM)  
He likes the shark specials on the  
Discovery channel.

MIKE  
I'm right here, Mama, you don't  
have to whisper.

SANDY  
Sorry, sorry. Go wash your hands,  
scuba man. Dinner is almost ready.

MIKE  
(to SAM)  
She cooked special for you.  
Usually we just have hot dogs and  
stuff.

SANDY  
Michael Taylor!

Sam can't suppress his smile.

MIKE  
Okay, okay. I didn't know it was a  
secret...

Mike exits to the bathroom.

SANDY  
Sorry.

SAM  
Don't be. It looks wonderful.

SANDY  
It looks cheap. We don't have much-

SAM  
Sandy, right now, that looks like  
the best dinner I've seen in a  
while. It's great.

Sandy looks at Sam for a beat.

Mike returns, stomping like a soldier.

MIKE  
All clean and reporting for dinner.

Sandy turns to get plates and the moment between her and Sam  
is gone.

SAM  
You don't suffer from a shortage of  
personality, do you?

MIKE  
Mama says I have too much,  
sometimes.

SANDY  
What I said was, you have enough  
for you and two other people.

SAM  
There are worse things in life,  
Mike. You could be boring.

Mike twists his face in a grimace.

MIKE  
Yuck.

SANDY  
Let's hope you don't say the same  
thing about the chicken.

Sam wordlessly helps with the food over to a small table by  
the door.

Despite the grimness of the motel drapes and furnishings,  
there is something golden about the moment as the scene:

FADES TO BLACK.

INT. ROOM 132 - LATER

Sandy flicks a light off near one of the beds, pulling a  
blanket over Mike's sleeping form.

SANDY  
(whispering)  
He's out cold.

SAM  
(matching her tone)  
Sixty to zero in no time. Want to  
open the wine?

SANDY  
God, yes. Okay if we take a walk  
while we do it?

SAM  
Sure.

Sandy grabs a key, complete with oversized ring and room  
number on it, and quietly opens the door, leading Sam into  
the cool night.

EXT. VOLCANO MOTOR LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Sam opens the wine with a corkscrew from his pocket knife.  
Popping the cork, he looks around helplessly.

SAM  
No glasses.

SANDY  
I must have given you the wrong  
impression with that elaborate  
dinner, pal.

Sandy takes the bottle and takes a sip.

SAM  
Now, that is a sight I am all too familiar with.

Sandy giggles spilling a bit of red wine down her chin and onto the white shirt she wears where the wine blossoms like blood.

SANDY  
Sorry about taking it outside, but I never drink in front of Mike. His dad did that plenty.

SAM  
I think I understand.

SANDY  
No new story there. Met him young, got pregnant, got married, got to see the real man, got divorced. To his credit, he never did hit Mike or me, but that's about all I can say for the guy.

SAM  
I'm sorry to hear that.

SANDY  
It's okay.

They walk quietly a moment, pausing in front of the pool with its greenish glow. The pavement is cracked and riddled with weeds.

SANDY  
The pool side view of the slightly better motel next door.

SAM  
Lovely.

SANDY  
Yes.

A beat.

SANDY  
I'm sorry, I feel nervous.

She takes another pull from the wine and Sam does like wise.

SAM  
Why?

SANDY

Because you are the first nice guy  
I have met in a long, long time,  
and I want you to think I'm an okay  
person.

SAM

What? I think you're great!

SANDY

That's nice of you to say. But I  
can step outside myself and look  
through your eyes for a second, and  
I see what I am. Poor, used to be  
pretty, with a kid that she barely  
looks old enough to have, living in  
a motel that is certainly no place  
for a child.

SAM

Sandy.

SANDY

I'm a wreck half the time. And so  
damn tired all the time. Jesus.

SAM

Sandy, that's not what I see.

SANDY

No?

SAM

No. I see a woman who has managed  
to endure a lot of trials to get  
where she is. She has a boy who is  
happy and smart and funny, and a  
she has a spirit that shines past  
the walls of a cheap motel.

Sandy stares at Sam, eyes brimming.

SAM

I see a woman who has so much ahead  
of her, so many wonderful things,  
and she deserves every one of them.

Tears fall.

SANDY

Do you mind if I kiss you?

Before Sam can respond, Sandy leans into him, the wine bottle between them, and kisses him lightly on the lips, where she pauses, then rests again on her own feet.

SAM

Wow.

SANDY

(smiling)

Thank you.

SAM

Sandy, I should tell you...

SANDY

Oh my God, you're married!

SAM

No, no. But there is a woman. A great woman, who couldn't care less about me right now, but it would feel... weird.

SANDY

Oh, I'm sorry, Sam.

SAM

It's fine. Really. I mean... I wish...

SANDY

You love her?

SAM

I don't know... we never kissed or... Yeah. Yeah, I do.

SANDY

That's great, Sam. I mean it. I won't take back that kiss, though, and I won't apologize for it. But I hope we can sit here and talk and finish this bottle of wine without you feeling weird about it. Because as much as I liked kissing you, Sam, I could really use a friend.

SAM

I don't think that would be weird at all.

SANDY

Good. Now that you know my sordid past, what about you?

SAM

I got a message to come here. I just have to wait and see what comes next.

SANDY

Who did you get the message from?

SAM

Sort of a long story.

SANDY

We have a lot of wine left.

SAM

Well, okay. It started with my beer fridge...

FADE TO:

INT. MYROM'S OFFICE - DAY

Myrom sits at his desk, making notes on a sermon.

Jessica enters and drops a stack of papers on his desk.

MYROM

What the hell is this?

JESSICA

Your latest numbers from Nielsen and Gallup.

MYROM

How do they look?

JESSICA

Nielsen's are up in the Midwest, static on the west coast. East is interesting.

MYROM

How so?

JESSICA

After the last terror threat, your numbers jumped three points.

Myrom launches to his feet, graceful despite his corpulence.

MYROM

I knew it! You find what the people want to hear, Jess, and they will come in droves! And when they come...

Myrom grabs Jessica like a dancer and dips her.

MYROM

So does the money.

JESSICA

You want to let me up?

MYROM

Do you want me to?

JESSICA

Yes. I can smell your makeup from the show. It stinks.

Myrom releases her and struts to the bathroom.

MYROM (O.S.)

That girl downstairs never gets this shit off right. I swear, her incompetence is absolutely ruining my pillowcases.

JESSICA

(under her breath)  
God forbid.

MYROM (O.S.)

What was that?

JESSICA

I said I'll have a word with her.

Myrom reenters, toweling off his damp face.

MYROM

Please. Anything else?

JESSICA

Yes. We added two dates to the travel ministry.

MYROM

What's that?

JESSICA

Milwaukee on the 26th and St. Paul  
on the 29th.

MYROM

They're both shitholes, Jess, can't  
we double up in Boston or  
something?

JESSICA

Afraid not. Besides it's two weeks  
away. You'll warm up to the idea  
when you're on the road. You  
always do.

MYROM

What can I say, I'm a people  
person.

JESSICA

All heart, Myrom, that's you.

Myrom is across the room and pressing Jessica against the  
wall in a breath.

MYROM

You're goddamn right that's me.  
And don't ever crack wise with me,  
Jess. I know where you come from.  
I pulled you out of that hellhole  
you were turning tricks in and made  
you respectable. You understand  
me?

JESSICA

Y-yes.

Myrom relaxes his grip.

MYROM

Good girl. Now let me get some  
rest.

Jessica moves to exit, then stalls at the door.

JESSICA

You know, Myrom, I get the feeling  
sometimes that I'm doing what I did  
then. I just have a different  
boss.

MYROM

Yeah, maybe you're right, Jess.  
But at least now there's just one  
guy you have to screw to get paid.  
Get out. I said I was tired.

Jessica exits and slams the office door closed.

Myrom grins and reclines in his chair, draping the towel over  
his face. From behind the towel, he chuckles.

EXT. ROOM 132 - EVENING

Sam carries a bag of groceries and knocks with a knuckle, his  
arms full.

The door opens and Sandy grins.

SANDY

Hey! What's in the bag?

SAM

Dinner. Figured I'd return the  
favor, but I didn't have anything  
to cook on.

SANDY

Come on in. Mike should be out of  
the shower in a second. He'll be  
thrilled.

Sam steps inside and the door closes.

INT. ROOM 132 - LATER

Sam and Mike play a game of Monopoly while Sandy looks on.  
She turns and does the dishes as the sounds of their play  
drapes a smile over her face.

MIKE

Oooh. You landed on Park Place.  
And I have a hotel there.

SAM

What do you say you just give me a  
pass this time around, Mikey.

MIKE

That would be cheating.

SAM  
No, it's just being an  
understanding landlord.

MIKE  
Mo-om? Is it cheating if Sam  
doesn't pay after he lands on my  
spot with the hotel?

SANDY  
A little, Mike.

MIKE  
See?

SAM  
All right, here you go you money-  
grubber.

Sam hands over the majority of his small stack of money.

SAM  
How about we play something else?

MIKE  
Okay. How about Clue?

SAM  
All right, but I should warn you...  
I'm pretty good.

Mike giggles.

SAM  
What's so funny about that?

MIKE  
Nothing.

SANDY  
I'm going upstairs for some more  
ice, guys. Be good til I get back.

MIKE  
Okay, Mom.

Sandy brushes the boy's hair as she passes.

She grins at Mike, mouthing the words 'Thank you.' He drops  
a wink.

Sandy exits.

SAM  
Okay, I'll get us some sodas, you  
put away all the game stuff.

MIKE  
Awww...

Mike grudgingly begins cleaning up.

Sam stands, wearily and stretches, his knees popping like gun blasts as he rises. As he makes his way towards the kitchen for a soda, a series of booming thumps comes from outside, a sound not unlike a large sack of potatoes being rolled down the steps.

Then, silence.

MIKE  
What was that?

SAM  
I don't know. Wait here a second  
okay?

MIKE  
All right. I'll get the board set  
up.

SAM  
Yeah, good idea.

Sam's legs carry him to the door, and dread clouds his face.

EXT. ROOM 132 - CONTINUOUS

Sam carefully shuts the door behind him, even as a voice carries through the poorly-lit hall to him.

MAN #1 (O.S.)  
Oh my God! Somebody call an  
ambulance.

Sam breaks into a run towards the voice.

SAM  
Sandy?!

Sam reaches the bottom of the steps leading to the second floor where the ice machine is located.

At the bottom of the steps is the ice bucket Sandy carried, small cylinders of ice scattered around.

Sam follows the trail of ice to the broken body of Sandy, her form prone on the cold cement, her head twisted at an impossible angle.

SAM  
Oh, Jesus! Sandy!

Sam rushes to her, even as the MAN backs away.

MAN #1  
Did you- do you know her?

SAM  
Yes! Now shut up and get a goddamn ambulance!

The man slowly backs away, then turns and runs to the office for a phone.

More PEOPLE are gathering in a semi-circle around the body as Sam kneels beside Sandy.

Her face is already pale, her lips bluish in hue. He collects her in a wide hug, her head lolling madly as he lifts her.

SAM  
Oh no, no.

Sam lifts her head gingerly, as though he does not mean to hurt her, to correct the angle of her neck. He rights her head.

From behind, the porch lights outside the rooms flicker. A breeze kicks around loose fast food wrappers and styrofoam cups.

The CROWD notices the unusual energy surround them and glance nervously about, as one light burns suddenly brighter, then fades, followed by another, coming closer to where they stand. Finally, a single over head light burns white-bright, impossibly bright, but never bursts.

Sam sees tiny sparks leaping from his hands and arms, arcing across his flesh to Sandy's. Her wide, dead eyes gaze up at the light, unmoving.

Then, she blinks.

Sandy coughs hard, like choking up seawater. Her hands reach for Sam, even as he scrambles backwards, his legs pushing him away from her, even as Sandy slowly lies down, coughing and licking her lips.

WOMAN #1  
She's alive!

MAN #2  
That's impossible! You saw her  
neck!

WOMAN #1  
Look at her!

Sandy slowly turns to her side, facing Sam as he looks on in wonder and terror. Her neck is whole again.

Her mouth opens, and her voice is raspy, and haggard.

SANDY  
I think I dropped the ice.

We move up and away, even as a voice carries up with us.

WOMAN #1  
It's a miracle!

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN

The first reddening of the sky is visible through the slats of industrial hospital venetian blinds. The room illuminated is standard fare, cold, practical, without the warm touches of flowers or cards on the small wooden night stand by the bed.

Sam stares at Sandy's sleeping form from a safe distance, chewing absently on his thumb.

Sandy's eyes flutter open, and her arms stretch wide as she yawns. When she settles back into the bed, she notices Sam across the room.

SANDY  
Hey.

Sam stops chewing his thumb at stares at her for a long moment.

SAM  
Hey.

Sandy's eyes take in the unfamiliar room, and as she starts to rise, she is forced back down by a pain in her head, one hidden by bandages that she fingers like a blind person might, tracing each layer.

SANDY

What happened? Where's Mike?

SAM

He's fine. He's down in the cafeteria, trying to talk your doctor into giving him his stethoscope.

Sandy sighs, relieved.

SANDY

So, what happened to me? I remember getting ice, then slipping on that first step. Am I okay?

SAM

Yes. Doctor says it's a concussion. Probably have a headache for a couple of days, but nothing too serious.

Sam absently chews his thumb again.

SANDY

God, Sam, if that's all, why do you look so scared?

SAM

Just scary, is all. You took quite a fall.

SANDY

Well, it did wonders for my sleep life. You know I don't think I remember a single dream since Mike was born, but damned if I didn't have the most vivid dream after that fall.

SAM

Really?

SANDY

Yeah, and were you ever in it.

She laughs.

SANDY  
Well, you weren't in it exactly,  
but it was all about you.

SAM  
You don't say.

Sam doesn't want to hear it, he's had enough of the mysticl.

SANDY  
Don't you want to ask me about it?

SAM  
I don't know.

SANDY  
Oh, you're no fun. So, I'm just  
going to have to tell you, anyway.

Sam stands, crossing to the window and looking out at the dawn.

SANDY  
I was talking to this guy. Older,  
but good-looking, like a cowboy or  
something, but he was dressed like  
a construction worker you know?  
Flannel shirt and jeans and boots.  
Everything but a thermos of coffee.

Sam says nothing.

SANDY  
He asked me if I knew you, and I  
said I did. And he asked me what I  
thought, and I told him, 'I think  
Sam is a good man. Not like a good  
man in the mashed potatoes are  
good food way, but really good, you  
know. A man who can carry a  
weight.'

SAM  
And what did he say?

SANDY  
He said, 'That's what I thought,  
too.' Isn't that funny?

Sam crosses the room, quickly, and exits wordlessly.

SANDY  
Sam?

Sam is gone.

SANDY  
Shouldn't I be the cranky one?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam paces the waiting room, his body tense. His glances return again and again to the telephone on the table littered with magazines about celebrities.

Decisively, he removes the receiver from the cradle and dials.

INT. KATIE'S HOME - MORNING

Katie lies in bed, her breathing slow and even, fast asleep.

The phone RINGS and her body jerks awake, her hand fumbling for the phone. She groggily drags the phone across the bed to her ear.

KATIE  
Hello?

OPERATOR  
Collect call from Sam Kimball.  
Will you accept?

Katie's eyes slam open. She is awake.

KATIE  
Yes.

SAM (V.O.)  
Katie?

KATIE  
Sam, what is it? Are you all  
right?

SAM (V.O.)  
Yeah, fine. I think so. I'm sorry  
to call you so early.

KATIE  
That's fine, Sam, just tell me what  
happened.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

Sam's knuckles are white as he presses the phone hard to his ear.

SAM

I know you don't believe me about all this god stuff, Katie. Maybe I didn't completely believe it before, either, but something's happened. I know what you think, and if you say no, I'll understand. But, can you come here? Can you help me? Please, Katie?

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

Katie's car flies by, the nose headed for Milwaukee.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

As a NURSE wheels Sandy to the curb, Sam pulls up in his truck, Mike in the passenger seat. Sam hurries to Sandy's side and offers the nurse a tip, who awkwardly declines the gesture.

Sandy climbs into the cab and Sam points them back to the motel.

EXT. VOLCANO MOTOR LODGE - DAY

Sam pulls into the parking lot, momentarily oblivious to the commotion near the office.

Parked, he hurries to open the door for Sandy and help her out of the truck, even as a mass of REPORTERS approach from behind.

SANDY

What are they doing here?

Sam looks over his shoulder to see a handful of print and a single television reporter rushing towards them.

SAM  
Jesus. Okay, we're going to get  
inside fast. Mike, grab your  
mother's bag and grab my hand.

SANDY  
What's going on, Sam?

SAM  
I'll explain when we get inside.

PRINT REPORTER #1  
Are you the man who saved her life?

TV REPORTER  
Mr. Kimball? Are the reports true?  
Did you bring this woman back to  
life?

Sam slams the truck door, gathering Sandy and Mike close to  
him, rushing towards the motel steps.

PRINT REPORTER #2  
Ms. Taylor! Were you truly dead?

SANDY  
What are they talking about, Sam?

Sam wordlessly pulls the mother and son along, forcing them  
ahead, up the stairs towards his room.

PRINT REPORTER #1  
What did you see when you were  
dead?!

Sam quickly opens the door to his room and pushes Sandy and  
Mike ahead of him inside.

TV REPORTER  
How did you bring her back?

Sam slams the door.

INT. ROOM 216 - CONTINUOUS

Sam leans his back against the door.

Sandy clings to her son, stroking his hair intently, eyes  
wide.

SANDY  
Sam?

SAM

Sorry.

SANDY

What were they talking about, Sam?  
What happened?

SAM

This isn't something we should  
discuss right now...

Sam nods to Mike.

SANDY

Mike, I want you to go to the  
bathroom for a minute and shut the  
door, okay?

MIKE

Why, Mama?

SANDY

Because Sam and I have grown-up  
things to discuss for a second, and  
then maybe we can all go out and  
get some ice cream, how does that  
sound?

Mike looks skeptical.

MIKE

It sounds like a bribe.

Sandy laughs, her guard down, briefly.

SANDY

It is. Now go.

Mike manages a glance to Sam, then trudges into the bathroom  
with leaden feet. The door finally clicks closed.

SANDY

What are they talking about, Sam?

SAM

They're just reporters... You know  
they never get anything right.

SANDY

What part did they get wrong, Sam?  
The part where I died? Did they  
get that wrong?

Sam opens his mouth, but cannot speak.

SANDY

Answer me, damnit! Are you trying  
to tell me I was dead? Is it true?

Sam opens his mouth, interrupted by another knock at the door.

SAM

Damn. Sorry.

Sam crosses and peeks through the peephole.

SAM

Oh my God.

He opens the door wide, to reveal Katie, standing at the door with a small travel case in one hand. She looks tired, but happy.

Until she looks past Sam to Sandy, still sitting on the edge of Sam's bed.

SAM

Katie!

KATIE

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt. I mean you did call me out of the blue, and I did drive all night to get here, just to find some strange woman in your room, so maybe it would be better if I come back when I don't want to smack you.

SAM

What is wrong with you women?

KATIE AND SANDY

What's wrong with us?

The two women regard each other smokily.

SAM

Sandy, this is Kate. Katie, Sandy. Mike is the little boy peeking from behind the bathroom door.

They offer quiet hellos. Katie waves to the cracked door which promptly shuts.

KATIE

Am I interrupting something?

SAM

Katie, please come in. I have something to tell you. And...  
(looking at SANDY)  
...this is what really happened.

INT. ROOM 216 - LATER

Katie runs a glass of water for herself and Sandy in plastic cups in the small bathroom. She takes one to Sandy, who now lies on the bed rubbing her head, just awake from a nap.

SANDY

This headache is killing me.

KATIE

Well, just lay back and let me get some aspirin from my bag.

Katie opens her travel case and starts nosing through the pockets along the lining.

SANDY

Where's Mike?

KATIE

Sam took him for waffles. Not sure how he managed to sneak down, but the reporters didn't catch him.

SANDY

He's got an angel on his shoulder.

KATIE

Something like that. Do you believe what they're saying?

SANDY

About bringing me back to life?

Sandy is matter-of-fact.

SANDY

Yeah, I guess so. As strange as it sounds, it just *feels* like the truth. And I believe Sam.

Katie pauses from her search.

KATIE

You do?

SANDY

Absolutely.

KATIE

And you don't think he's crazy?

SANDY

I wouldn't have kissed him if I didn't.

Katie frowns, then bristles at her own jealousy.

SANDY

Just once, and I caught him off guard. I mean, it's obvious he loves you.

KATIE

What? Come on...

SANDY

Oh, please, Kate, he called you in the middle of the night because he needed you. Not just for kicks. Trust me.

Sam reenters. Mike opens and closes his hand, still sticky from the syrup.

SAM

No blood on the walls, that's a good start.

Katie and Sandy trade a look of sudden conspiracy.

SAM

The bad news is that there is now a lobby full of people in the motel office that are trying to figure out where we are.

SANDY

I think you should just go talk to them.

SAM

What?

SANDY

Yes, go talk to them. What you did, Sam, was an honest to goodness miracle. I'm no virgin saint, that much is clear. But, I feel different, now. Like everything's better. If god has used you to help me, well, maybe I'm not the only one you're supposed to help.

Mike lays against his mother who attempts to clean his hands with a wipe.

MIKE

Mama's right.

SAM

Don't you start, too. Look, I'm just a guy. I own a gas station that has four costumers a week. If there's a detour. And now I'm supposed to be some priest?

SANDY

Not a priest, dummy, a holy man.

SAM

That's much better. I drink, I swear, I have sex outside marriage...

Sam sees Katie's questioning glance.

SAM

I mean, I used to. But, when I did, I never felt bad about it. Face it, I'm a sinner.

SANDY

So was Moses.

SAM

Oh, Jesus. See!

MIKE

I think you use too many swears.

SAM

You're not helping.

MIKE

Yes, I am.

SAM  
Katie, what do you think?

KATIE  
I think you and I should take a  
drive.

EXT. MILWAUKEE STREETS - DAY

Sam and Katie ride in Sam's pickup, passing the bleak winter  
cityscape.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Katie and Sam ride in silence, careful not to look each other  
in the eye.

Sam finally breaks the thick silence.

SAM  
I haven't told you how happy I am  
that you came.

KATIE  
Surprised?

SAM  
A little.

KATIE  
Why?

SAM  
Well, I didn't leave on the best  
terms.

KATIE  
I was so mad at you.

SAM  
I could tell. I'm sorry.

KATIE  
It wasn't your fault. It's not all  
your fault, anyway.

SAM  
That's a relief. What is it, then?

KATIE

I'm not ready to talk about that,  
now.

SAM

Okay. So why the drive?

KATIE

I wanted to tell you to be careful.

SAM

And we have to go on a drive for  
that?

KATIE

I wanted you to really listen.  
Pull over there.

Sam pulls the truck into the cracked parking lot of a  
discount grocery store.

A large billboard faces them, announcing the coming of 'Myrom  
Holliday's Spiritual Awakening Tour.'

SAM

Okay.

He puts the truck in park, and turns to Katie.

KATIE

I'm afraid for you, Sam.

SAM

I'm a little freaked out, myself.

Katie waves his words away.

KATIE

That's not what I mean. What I'm  
saying is that things could get  
very intense. You are being  
hounded by reporters who think you  
brought a woman back to life. You  
know who did that last? Jesus.  
And you know what happened to him.  
There are a lot of religious nuts  
wandering around.

SAM

You think someone's going to  
crucify me?

Sam chuckles.

KATIE

We have better ways to get rid of people like that these days, Sam.

Realization sweeps over Sam's face.

SAM

You think someone might try to shoot me?

KATIE

I don't think it's that farfetched, do you? Really?

SAM

Oh my god.

KATIE

I don't want you to get hurt, Sam. And if you start talking to cameras and telling people that you think you actually brought this Sandy back to life...

SAM

Sandy.

KATIE

What?

SAM

Not 'this Sandy.' Just Sandy.

KATIE

Oh, I see.

SAM

She's had a rough time of things. You should go easy on her.

KATIE

Do you have feelings for her?

SAM

No, not like that. She's been a good friend. I don't think of her like I do... well, not like that.

KATIE

What were you just going to say?

SAM

Nothing.

KATIE

Are you sure?

SAM

Yes.

Silence spreads between them.

KATIE

Well, I've said what I wanted to.  
We can go back now.

SAM

All right, then.

Sam drops the truck into gear and backs out of the parking lot as the reflection of Myrom Holliday washes over the windshield.

INT. MYROM'S JET - DAY

Myrom looks out the window, looking down on the clouds.

MYROM

It really is a miracle these things  
stay up in the air.

JESSICA

Yes, sir.

Jessica reads through stacks of newspapers.

MYROM

Anything interesting?

JESSICA

Not much. Same as usual.  
Unemployment will be solid. I  
think you should probably hit on  
the war, too. That always plays  
big for you.

Myrom nods, quietly.

JESSICA

Also, someone's been setting fire  
to tenement apartments in  
Milwaukee, leaving many of the  
poorest in the city homeless.  
Maybe play the angle of hell on  
earth, reward in heaven...

(MORE)

JESSICA(cont'd)

'Out of the flames shall come eternal reward.' Something like that.

MYROM

You do have a way with words.

JESSICA

Thank you.

MYROM

No, I mean it.

Myrom leans forward in his seat and absently places a hand on Jessica's knee.

Jessica drops the papers into her lap.

JESSICA

You can't be serious?

Myrom settles back into his chair, grinning.

MYROM

You're too uptight, Jess. You really should relax more. Besides... screwing on an airplane is an absolute toe-curler.

Jessica raises the papers back up.

JESSICA

If you weren't so rich, that would be disgusting.

MYROM

Funny how that makes a difference, isn't it? Well, enough chit-chat. I need some sleep if I'm going to be full of religious fervor when we land. Unless of course you want to test my theory of flight?

JESSICA

(dismissively)

Maybe later.

MYROM

Your loss.

Myrom reclines his plush seat and closes his eyes, a satisfied smile on his face.

INT. ROOM 216 - DAY

Sandy sits on one side of the room, Katie on the other.

Sam looks out the window at several news crews in the parking lot as Mike peers down at the gathering throng. Several witnesses from the night of the resurrection are being interviewed there, along with others who have just come to watch.

SANDY  
I think you should do it.

SAM  
What?

SANDY  
Just go down there and get it over with. We can't stay up here forever.

MIKE  
Here comes another one!

SANDY  
Shut the blinds, baby.

Mike draws the blinds and curtains and crosses to his mother.

SAM  
This is crazy.

SANDY  
Maybe so, but we're going to have to start dealing with it.

KATIE  
We?

SANDY  
I was the dead one, after all.

Katie grows quiet as a rap comes on the door.

REPORTER (O.C.)  
Mr. Kimball? Could you come out?  
We just want to ask a few questions.

Sam sighs.

SAM

You're right. I have to do something. This isn't going to go away.

REPORTER (O.C.)

Mr. Kimball?!

SAM

Well, I'm not going to talk to just anybody.

SANDY

Maybe you should just open up the door and talk to whoever's on the other side.

KATIE

No, Sam's right. He can't trust just anybody. What he needs is someone who doesn't believe him.

SANDY

What?

KATIE

Someone who is skeptical. Sam sits down with this guy, tells him that it was nothing extraordinary. Maybe just gave you mouth to mouth or something. Something normal. Then, Sam can get on with his life.

Sam regards Katie, thinking it over.

SANDY

No, no, no. I think we are not talking about the most important thing. It did happen. It was a miracle.

KATIE

Not this again...

SANDY

Maybe you don't believe in god or miracles or any of the rest of it. But you cannot change what I know.

KATIE

It doesn't matter what I believe, Sandy, it matters what will happen to Sam.

(MORE)

KATIE(cont'd)

If he goes in front of a camera and tells the world that he brought someone back to life, he will never have another day of peace as long as he lives.

Katie shoots Sam a glance.

KATIE

He will be hounded by everyone with a sick child, or a bad leg, even people who are just sad, and need something to believe in. Sam won't be a person anymore, he'll be a... a...

SAM

Messiah.

Katie and Sandy stare at him.

SAM

I'm not stupid. I know what will happen. But I believe that I can't dismiss this. You don't think I want to be back on my porch with Ted right now? Having a beer? But I can't deny that something is happening to me, and I have to follow it to the end of the line, whatever it is.

KATIE

Sam, what we talked about-

SAM

I know. I know what may happen. Sandy, you ever watch the news around here?

SANDY

Sometimes.

SAM

Who does the best local news?

SANDY

WBIR. They're pretty good. And there's one reporter who does all these stories about the city ripping people off. He might be good.

SAM  
Okay. Let's give him a call.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Sam sits in a simple wood and foam-stuffed chair, opposite FRANK ZIEGLER, the watchdog reporter for WBIR News. Ziegler's face is haggard, too many years on the local beat, too many stabs at celebrity only to come crashing down.

Between them is a table resting on soft blue carpeting, an oasis amidst the hard gray floors littered with wires and cables, three cameras placed at angles around them.

ZIEGLER  
Want some water or something before we get started?

SAM  
I'm okay, thanks.

ZIEGLER  
We have a minute before they cut to us. You okay?

SAM  
Fine, thanks.

Ziegler grins.

ZIEGLER  
You look nervous as hell. That's okay. That will make you more believable.

Sam is silent.

ZIEGLER  
Hang on... Okay, get ready.

A CAMERAMAN holds up three fingers, then steadily counts down til he points at Ziegler, indicating that the cameras are rolling. A red light blinks to life atop the camera.

ZIEGLER  
There is almost no need to introduce the man across from me.  
(MORE)

ZIEGLER(cont'd)

Since Tuesday, talk around the water coolers has inevitably strayed to the miracle of Milwaukee, the tale of a man who brought back to life the victim of a fatal fall. Sam Kimball.

SAM

Thank you, Mr. Ziegler.

ZIEGLER

Sam, let's cut right to the chase. Did this really happen the way people have described it?

SAM

To be honest, I haven't heard the way it's being told. What I can tell you is what I saw...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katie watches from behind a bank of terminals and screens. Sandy stands beside her, her hands on Mike's shoulders.

A PRODUCER watches the monitors, directing the camera changes, etc.

KATIE

He looks nervous.

PRODUCER

Are you kidding? The guy's a natural.

Sandy and Katie exchange a somber look.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

SAM

... I followed the ambulance to the hospital. The doctors said she was fine.

ZIEGLER

Incredible. And what do you believe really caused the remarkable recovery?

SAM

God.

ZIEGLER

God?

SAM

Yes. I think he led me here just for this. Now that that's done, maybe I can go home.

ZIEGLER

Has God ever given you messages before?

SAM

No, not until recently.

ZIEGLER

Sam, you realize how this sounds.

SAM

Sure. I sound like a nut.

Ziegler laughs.

SAM

And I know some people will believe I am, no matter what I say.

ZIEGLER

So what do you hope to get out of all of this?

SAM

Nothing. I just want to go home, now.

ZIEGLER

Thank you for sharing your story with us. Sam Kimball, reluctant savior. I'm Frank Ziegler, and that's the word on the street.

CAMERAMAN

We're clear.

ZIEGLER

Well done, Sam.

SAM

Thank you.

ZIEGLER

Good luck. And I think you have  
some folks waiting for you  
upstairs.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam steps inside to a smattering of applause from the  
technicians.

SAM

(bashful)

Thanks.

SANDY

Sam, you were wonderful!

MIKE

You're on tv, Sam! You're going to  
be famous!

KATIE

Yeah, Sam. You're going to be  
famous.

Sam lifts Mike into his arms as the weight of Katie's words  
settles on him.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Sam's interview plays on a television as Myrom looks on,  
sipping a bourbon on the rocks.

MYROM

Bullshit. Jess?!

The door to the adjoining suite open and Jessica enters,  
dressed in sweats and a tee, her hair wet from a shower.

JESSICA

What is it?

MYROM

Have you seen this?

He motions with the glass towards the screen.

JESSICA

It was on in the room. So what?

MYROM

Maybe nothing. Still, I want to know what his story is.

JESSICA

Fine. I'll get on it in the morning.

MYROM

I want to know by 'in the morning,' Jess. I have thousands of the faithful scheduled to flock to me with their hard-earned dollars in less than a week, and I don't want some rube with a psychosis fucking that up. Understand?

JESSICA

Yes, Myrom.

MYROM

Good.

Jessica turns to leave.

MYROM

And Jess?

Jessica pauses at the door.

MYROM

Leave that door unlocked.

Jessica hesitates, then closes the door. There is no sound of the bolt.

Myrom grins, a grin that fades as he looks again at the image of Sam on the screen.

EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - EVENING

Sam sits on the porch of the gas station, music playing softly on the wind through the open screen door.

Ted rests his head in Sam's lap as Sam idly scratches the dog.

A pair of headlights shine against the growing darkness and point towards the porch as the car pulls into the station.

A TRAVELLER steps out of his sedan and crosses to the pump, lifting the lever to begin the flow of gas. He notices Sam on the porch.

Sam raises a hand in greeting and stands, stretching. He strolls over to the pump to collect money, or perhaps just let the man go on for free...

SAM

Hiya.

TRAVELLER

Evening. Not much traffic.

SAM

Not since the interstate.

TRAVELLER

Am I far from 41-A?

SAM

You're on it.

The Traveller pauses and regards Sam carefully.

TRAVELLER

Aren't you that guy-?

SAM

Yes, I'm him.

TRAVELLER

You were practically famous.

SAM

I guess I was.

TRAVELLER

That was some story they told about you.

The fuel pumped, the Traveller reaches into his wallet for money.

TRAVELLER

Let me ask you something...

SAM

Was it true?

TRAVELLER

Yeah.

Traveller removes a ten from his wallet and hands it over to Sam.

SAM

Yes.

TRAVELLER

You really think that God was working through you?

SAM

I do.

The Traveller regards Sam coolly.

TRAVELLER

Me, too.

He raises from his side a REVOLVER and fires. The sound is a loud BOOM that echoes as Sam falls, resounding until-

INT. ROOM 216 - MORNING

The BOOM fades into knocks at the door.

Sam sits bolt upright in bed, glancing at the clock. 7:13.

SAM

Holy shit.

The hammering at the door continues.

Sam, clad only in shorts and a ratty state college tee shirt, stumbles to the door and peek out the peephole. He opens it and turns away from the door as Katie enters.

KATIE

Nice outfit.

SAM

Well, it is after labor day.

KATIE

Have you been outside, yet.

Sam presents himself to Katie.

KATIE

I guess not.

SAM

Why?

KATIE  
Put on some clothes.

Sam nods and grabs jeans from the pile of clothes on the other unused single bed. He staggers into the bathroom.

Katie walks to the bathroom door and talks to Sam through the thin wood.

KATIE  
You know how you did that interview so you could just put the story to rest and go home?

SAM (O.C.)  
Yes?

KATIE  
Okay. I just wanted to be clear with you that that is why you did it.

SAM (O.C.)  
Why do you think I did it?

KATIE  
I don't know, Sam. Your behavior lately hasn't been exactly predictable.

SAM (O.C.)  
Why do you think I did it?

Sam opens the door, shorts replaced by jeans.

KATIE  
I don't know, Sam. Doesn't matter. Just come with me.

Sam follows her to the door.

SAM  
Of course it matters. I don't want you to think I'm some kind of publicity hound.

Katie opens the door and steps outside as Sam follows.

SAM  
I'm not one of those actors who can't go a week without being on the cover of a magazine, Katie, I'm not-

Sam looks over the second floor balcony of the motel.

Revealed is a mass of people, larger than the small flock of reporters. It is a crowd, news vans with national news logos and average people, all gazing up at him. They grow quiet with his appearance.

FLASHBULBS blaze like small explosions, and the silence of the crowd is unnerving.

Katie takes Sam's hand and leans into his shoulder.

KATIE

I don't think there's any going home from this, Sam.

SAM

Oh my God.

The crowd explodes with cheers and reporters shouting questions. Sam stands before them, above them on the balcony, in stunned silence.

Several in the crowd of brought signs, all religious in nature, most implying that Sam is a savior, a saint, an icon.

KATIE

It'll be okay. We'll figure something out.

CROWD

Say something! Help us! Can you help my son! Etc.,

Sam looks down at them and sighs.

INT. ROOM 216 - LATER

Sandy is on the phone in the motel room as Mike eats cookies and milk.

Katie kneels before Sam, whose expression is still, but pale.

SANDY

He's not sure, yet. Yes, he will be making a statement soon. Yes, you will be the first to know. Goodbye.

Sandy hangs up the phone.

SANDY

This is so exciting. I feel like I'm the secretary for the president or something.

Katie shoots her a stern look.

SANDY

What? This is the most amazing thing I've ever seen.

MIKE

It is pretty cool, Sam.

Sam turns his head to Mike and offers a weak grin.

KATIE

How do you want to do this?

SAM

I don't know. I thought they would go home.

KATIE

You've been saying that for two hours. You can't hide in this room, Sam. They are not going to go away.

SAM

I know that.

SANDY

You should have a press conference or something. Or maybe go on a talk show. We've had one offer from that late night guy. I don't think he's very funny, though.

MIKE

He sucks.

SANDY

(to Mike)

Watch your language, Mike.

(to Sam)

But he does suck, Sam.

KATIE

You have to make a decision, Sam. What are you going to do?

SAM  
I don't know.

Katie stands in frustration.

KATIE  
Fine. Let's just kick back and  
watch tv, and maybe the whole thing  
will go away.

Katie hits the power on the tv, and as the screen flickers to  
life, we see that the image is of the hotel.

KATIE  
Oh my God.

A REPORTER stands before the camera with his back to the  
balcony and facade of the motel.

SANDY  
Turn it up.

Mike comes around to watch.

REPORTER #2  
Hundreds if not thousands have  
flocked here to see the man that  
some are calling Saint Sam. A man  
who, days ago, is credited with  
restoring to life a young single  
mother. He has appeared only  
briefly at his door once today, but  
that has not discouraged those who  
believe. And those who have given.

A Shot on the screen of a large crate, filled with money,  
just under the balcony.

REPORTER #2 (O.C.)  
In this crate, people have dropped  
dimes, quarters, and bills of all  
denominations. When one man was  
questioned about it, he replied, "I  
am tithing. That's what you do  
when you go to praise God."

Back to image of REPORTER #2.

REPORTER #2  
Some estimate there is almost ten  
thousand dollars in the crate by  
now, but only one person knows for  
sure.

(MORE)

REPORTER #2(cont'd)  
(eyes up at the sky)  
And neither he, nor Saint Sam, are  
saying. With Priority National  
News, I am-

The tv clicks off.

SANDY  
Did he say ten thousand dollars?

KATIE  
Yes. Yes, he did.

Sam rises and heads to the bathroom. From inside, ALL can  
hear him being sick.

SANDY  
That would not be my first  
reaction.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Myrom looks out over the grim Milwaukee landscape.  
Surrounding him at his impromptu travel desk are brochures  
and flyers that promise his coming to the Milwaukee Civics  
Center.

A KNOCK at the door.

MYROM  
Yeah?

Jessica pokes her head in. Myrom waves her inside.

JESSICA  
Morning.

MYROM  
I see that. What have you found on  
the rube?

JESSICA  
You're not going to like it.

MYROM  
I didn't ask for what you do or  
don't think about the information.  
Just give me what I asked for.

JESSICA  
Fine. Sam Kimball. Age 36.  
Single all his life. No arrests.  
Some college.

(MORE)

JESSICA(cont'd)

Owens a gas station that makes no money, but a trust fund and residuals from his father support it. Dog owner.

Jessica looks up from the paper she holds.

MYROM

And?

JESSICA

And that's it. The guy's clean, Myrom. He's just some guy.

MYROM

So, what's his angle?

Myrom swings back to the window and looks outside.

JESSICA

I guess you saw the latest news on the guy? Estimates say that he has received something like thirty grand in contributions from the good people of Milwaukee.

MYROM

I saw.

JESSICA

Maybe the guy's legit.

Myrom spins and is on his feet in a flash. He is in Jessica's face in a flash. She cringes, no stranger to these sudden storms.

MYROM

What does that mean?

JESSICA

Maybe he really did what they say. Brought a woman back to life.

MYROM

Bullshit. Just like the cripples in the front rows of all the halls we play. Just like the little old ladies with their arthritis that stretch out their fingers. It's all bullshit. It's what people want to believe that makes him happen, and he's about to get his payday. Money that is mine, Jess. I put in the hours for this.

(MORE)

MYROM(cont'd)

I am the one who spoon-fed these yokels with salvation and brotherly love. I am the way and the light, Jess. And I am the one who prays all the way to the bank.

Jessica is flinching away, terrified of his rage.

Myrom settles, smoothing his shirt under his bright suspenders.

MYROM

Find me something on the guy.  
Something humiliating.

JESSICA

There's nothing, I even called the mayor of this-

MYROM

I don't care if it's true, Jessica. Jesus, how dense are you? Make it up, leak it, get the reporters talking about it.

Jessica is stunned.

MYROM

I'd start with the single mom he saved. Maybe the resurrection wasn't the first little miracle between them. Let your imagination run wild, Jess. Have fun with this. If anyone knows sordid, I would think you do.

Jessica flinches at the implication.

JESSICA

How long are you going to keep throwing that in my face?

MYROM

I don't know, Jess. How long will you be a former whore?

Silence between them.

JESSICA

I have work to do. You have an interview with local press at three.

Jessica exits.

Myrom returns to his gaze out the window, satisfied.

INT. ROOM 216 - DAY

Sam stares out the window to the grim Milwaukee landscape. His gaze dips to the throngs of people still holding vigil in the parking lot of the motel.

He notices with distaste the souvenir stands that are already cropping up at the fringes of the crowd.

Mike sits at his elbow.

SAM  
What am I going to do?

Mike shrugs.

SAM  
I have to talk to them.

Mike nods.

SAM  
What do I say?

Mike shrugs again.

Sam looks at Mike.

SAM  
Thanks.

Mike grins.

Sam looks over his shoulder. Katie and Sandy are napping on the single beds.

SAM  
Screw it. I'm going out.

Mike looks up at him as Sam stands.

SAM  
And don't ever say what I said.

Sam takes a breath and opens the door.

EXT. MOTEL BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Sam stands at the edge of the railing, looking down. The crowd comes alive at the sight of him. Cameras whir, bulbs flash.

Sam waves, timidly.

Unsure of what to do, Sam proceeds down the steps into the crowd.

INT. ROOM 216 - CONTINUOUS

Katie stirs at the roaring of the crowd outside. She sees Mike looking out the window.

KATIE  
What's going on now, Mikey?

She looks around the room.

KATIE  
Mike, where's Sam?

Mike looks at Katie and points to the window.

KATIE  
Oh my god! Sandy, get up!

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sam wades through a sea of people, who part for him as he walks among them. Hands reach out to touch him as he walks.

OLD WOMAN  
I have cancer!

YOUNG WOMAN  
My boy is sick!

MIDDLE-AGED MAN  
I lost everything! Help me!

CROWD  
Help us! Etc.

Sam turns in the midst of the crowd, a small circle formed around him.

He looks up at the door to his room, where Sandy, Katie and Mike stand.

His arms outstretch and hands reach for the tips of his fingers.

Katie traces a hand to her lips.

SAM  
Everyone! Everything's going to be  
okay!

There is a buzz in the crowd, a sense of electricity as Sam stands among them. Cameramen start looking at their failing equipment.

CAMERAMAN #2  
Kevin, I'm losing power here! What  
the hell's going on?

Similar shouts come from other NEWS CREWS.

SAM  
(to KATIE)  
Can you feel it?!

Katie looks down on the crowd, and the clamoring for Sam has abated, people looking from one to another as the air practically crackles with potential.

Katie nods, her hands still to her face.

SAM  
Something's going to happen!

The CROWD now displays both eager excitement and a touch of fear.

News crews are stepping back. One news van's horn begins to blare. Followed by another. And another.

The cacophony reaches a fevered pitch, then silence. The CROWD is still.

A wave like a sonic boom resonates from Sam into the crowd, strangers clutching each other as the wave of energy washes over them.

There is no panic. Laughter, good, wholesome laughter and tears of relief from the crowd. The news crews look on in awe.

Sandy and Mike hug, giggling.

Katie stands, her back to the motel door, crying. She dries her eyes with the backs of her hands, and looks down at the CROWD.

KATIE

Sam?!

Sam is nowhere to be seen.

Katie comes fast down the steps.

KATIE

SAM?!

She rushes to the semi-circle that still surrounds Sam, who half-sits on the ground, looking pale, and blood has clearly run from both nostrils. He looks up at Katie, on the verge of collapse.

SAM

Boy, that was exciting, wasn't it?

Katie's tears run anew as she nods.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Myrom wanders the stage built for his praise and worship meeting the following night.

It is grand, stacks for choirs behind, several microphones up front, guitars on stands, the whole stage draped in a royal blue.

A production designer, JOHN, walks with him, dictating notes as Myrom talks.

MYROM

The blue really is lovely, John,  
you have done fine work.

JOHN

Thank you, sir.

MYROM

The chairs up front here, you have  
left plenty of room for the  
wheelchairs?

JOHN

Yes, sir.

MYROM

Good. Can't have a good old fashioned healing revival without a few folks in need of healing. Has the control room been set up?

JOHN

Yes, sir.

MYROM

I'll make my way up later to check it out. Last month in Detroit I could barely hear the calls from upstairs. Almost brought a real cripple on stage.

JOHN

Yes, sir.

MYROM

I like you, John. Very agreeable fellow.

JOHN

Yes, sir.

Myrom grins, in genuinely good spirits.

Jessica enters the hall from the rear, her heels clacking on the hard floor as she approaches the stage through the sea of plastic seats.

JESSICA

Myrom!

Her voice echoes in the hall.

Myrom squints against the house lights being tested and sees Jessica approaching.

MYROM

(to JOHN)

Why do I feel like her approach prophecies my anger?

JOHN

I don't know, sir.

MYROM

It was rhetorical, son, but that's all right.

(loud)

What is it, Jess?

JESSICA

You know our little local problem?

MYROM

Yes, and I was under the impression that you had taken care of this.

JESSICA

I have, but there's a new... wrinkle.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark and cramped, with impromptu screen set up to observe the seating areas and wireless radio sets.

Jessica has pulled one screen upright and found local news.

The image shows Sam descending from his second floor balcony into the crowd. Then the picture goes out.

MYROM

What happened?

JESSICA

That's the thing, Myrom, no one knows. This guy walks into the crowd, raises up his arms, and everything electrical, including tv cameras, is gone. When the equipment starts working again, the guy is gone, apparently back to his little cabana, and you have a thousand people who say they just 'feel better.'

MYROM

Feel better? What the hell are you talking about?

JESSICA

No one can explain. People who are sick, I mean deathly sick, just feel better about it. They say they felt God, and he told them it would be all right.

MYROM

Well, this is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

JESSICA

What if this guy's for real?

MYROM

What are you talking about?

JESSICA

What if he is a legitimate instrument of God?

MYROM

Jess, let me let you in on a secret. No such thing. Never has been, never will be. All we are is animals who realized they were going to die, so we made all this shit up thousands of years ago.

JESSICA

That's pretty cynical.

MYROM

It's the way it is. And if I make a few bucks off the people who would rather believe in an invisible, all-powerful superdad, so be it. They feel better, I get my plane.

(sighing)

Nonetheless, this is a problem we have to deal with sooner, rather than later. Get in touch with the guy. Invite him here. Soon as possible.

JESSICA

What about the pictures?

MYROM

Well, that will be our little surprise for him, won't it?

INT. ROOM 216 - EVENING

Katie, Sandy and Mike keep vigil around Sam as he rests. He wears the same clothes from earlier.

SANDY

You think he's okay?

KATIE

I think he will be.

SANDY

I checked the window a minute ago.  
The crowd's back, bigger. More  
news people, too.

KATIE

I would think so. We just saw the  
religious equivalent of the Beatles  
showing up and doing a few songs in  
Milwaukee.

SANDY

Mike, can you go get me something  
to drink from the kitchen?

MIKE

Coke?

SANDY

That's fine.

Mike rises and heads for the kitchen.

Sandy speaks in a low voice, so Mike does not hear.

SANDY

I know you're Sam's friend, but I'm  
sick of you making jokes about  
what's happening here.

Katie is taken aback.

SANDY

What's happening with Sam is real,  
whether you like it or-

KATIE

I know.

SANDY

What?

KATIE

I know it's real. I felt it. I  
heard it.

Sandy frowns.

SANDY

What did you hear?

KATIE

You first.

SANDY  
It was sort of private.

KATIE  
I think we all heard something. I saw on the news one woman say she heard her dead son talking to her.

SANDY  
Then why all the teasing?

KATIE  
Because I don't know what else to do.

Sam stirs.

KATIE  
Sam?

He grunts and rolls over, a smile on his lips.

SAM  
I don't think I've ever been this tired.

KATIE  
I'm not surprised after that stunt you pulled outside. How do you feel?

SAM  
All right. Worn out, but okay.

KATIE  
Do you want something to eat?

SAM  
No, no, no. Just some water.

SANDY  
I'll get it.

Sandy joins Mike in the kitchen.

KATIE  
I was really worried about you for a second, pal.

SAM  
You were?

KATIE

I sure was. So, don't scare us like that anymore. Okay?

SAM

Okay.

KATIE

So what's next? Water into wine?

Sam laughs.

SAM

Not sure. I guess we'll find out together. Not even sure why I went down those stairs. Just seemed like the right thing to do.

KATIE

Well, you're definitely getting some attention.

Sam moans in protest.

SAM

Part of me loves this. I think I helped some people.

KATIE

You did.

SAM

The other part of me is sick about how many people there are who need it, you know?

KATIE

You'll do what's right.

SAM

How do you know?

KATIE

Did I ever tell you about being engaged?

SAM

No. When was this?

KATIE

A long time ago. Before I'd ever heard of you or the diner.

SAM  
What happened?

KATIE  
Doesn't matter. What does is that  
it's okay now. I'm done with it.  
He's okay.

SAM  
I don't under-

Katie cuts him off with a kiss.

KATIE  
I want to thank you.

Sam is stunned.

KATIE  
And I want you to know that I  
believe in you, in all of this, and  
I won't leave your side til it's  
done.

SAM  
I still don't-

KATIE  
Oh, shut up.

Katie kisses him again, longer.

The phone rings, the pair unaware.

Sandy grabs the phone from across the room.

MIKE  
What are they doing?

KATIE  
Something they should have done  
before he ever got to Milwaukee.  
Now, make a sandwich.

MIKE  
Why am I the one who makes all the  
food...

KATIE  
(into phone)  
Hello?

(MORE)

KATIE(cont'd)

He's occupied at the moment, and he doesn't want to do any more interviews... Oh. Oh, wait a minute...

Katie puts a hand over the receiver.

SANDY

Sam!

Sam looks up, Katie's smiling face beside his.

SAM

Take a message.

SANDY

It's that preacher.

SAM

Who?

SANDY

Myrom Holliday. That guy who's having the big thing at the convention center.

SAM

What does he want?

SANDY

I don't know. Wants to talk to you.

Sandy holds the phone to Sam.

Sam groggily gets up and takes the phone.

SAM

Hello?

JESSICA (O.C.)

Mr. Kimball, my name is Jessica with the Myrom Holliday Ministries. We were wondering if you could see fit to join us here tomorrow night?

SAM

Well, I'm not sure what-

JESSICA (O.C.)

Reverend Holliday has been most interested in you, and would very much like you to come and be part of our praise and worship service.

SAM  
Well, I don't know if-

JESSICA (O.C.)  
A car will be around at five  
o'clock tomorrow for you. Thank  
you so much, we are very excited  
for you to be part of this.

SAM  
Um, okay.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Jessica roams through the empty seats, cell phone in hand.

JESSICA  
Goodbye, Mr. Kimball.

She flips the phone shut and surveys the room, populated only  
by technicians setting up for the event tomorrow.

JESSICA  
Damn it.

Jessica flips open the phone again and hits a speed dial  
number.

JESSICA  
It's Jess. He'll be here. I just  
want you to know, I feel really  
shitty about this... Right. Why  
would you care?

She flips the phone shut again.

A WORKER approaches.

WORKER  
Excuse me, Ma'am.

JESSICA  
Yes?

WORKER  
Is Mr. Holliday going to be here  
tonight?

JESSICA  
No, he isn't.

WORKER  
That's too bad.

JESSICA  
(drily)  
Isn't it.

WORKER  
I just wanted to tell him thanks.  
Maybe you could pass that along.

JESSICA  
Sure, and may I say why?

Worker looks around for eavesdroppers, and, finding none, continues.

WORKER  
I'm part of the Born Again program.

JESSICA  
The drug thing. Right.

WORKER  
Yes, Ma'am. If it hadn't been for that... I guess I might never have found a real job.

JESSICA  
I will pass the message along.  
Guess some people do get second chances, huh?

WORKER  
Ma'am?

JESSICA  
Nothing. Thank you, I'll let him know.

Worker turns to resume work, then pauses.

WORKER  
Everyone gets second chances, you know.

Looking up, startled.

JESSICA  
What?

WORKER

We all get second chances. No one gives it to you, you just decide you need one, and get it. Just like any chance. You just take it. Lord helps those who help themselves and all.

Worker pauses, too much said.

WORKER

Sorry, you just looked like you needed someone to say something like that.

JESSICA

Thank you. Maybe, I did. What's your name?

WORKER

James.

JESSICA

Mine's Jessica. Nice to meet you, James.

WORKER

You, too. Better get back to it.

JESSICA

Yeah. Keep up the good work. And thanks again.

Worker smiles and shrugs, heading back to his job.

Jessica looks up to the rafters.

JESSICA

Mysterious ways, huh?

EXT. VOLCANO MOTOR LODGE - DAWN

The sun crawls over the horizon and lights the parking lot. Many people camp there and vendors have moved in hawking souvenirs, food, drinks.

The sun climbs higher as people mill about rapidly, time flowing quickly til the sun bends around again and dusk approaches.

INT. ROOM 216 - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam buttons up a shirt that has seen better days. He checks himself in a bureau mirror and shrugs.

Katie steps from the bathroom, dressed to the nines.

SAM

Wow.

KATIE

Why thank you. You look very low-key.

SAM

I didn't have much to wear.

KATIE

Here...

Katie approaches and buttons up his shirt once more, smoothing the collar of the shirt.

SAM

I wish I had a tie you could straighten.

KATIE

You look nice, Sam.

SAM

Thanks.

They stare at each other.

SAM

When all of this is over with, and we can go home again, do you think...?

KATIE

We'll burn that bridge when we come to it, okay?

Katie leans up and softly kisses Sam.

KATIE

Be careful tonight, huh?

Sam nods.

A KNOCK at the door.

KATIE  
That's probably the car.

Sam nods.

KATIE  
Well, let's go, you goon.

Sam smiles and follows Katie to the door.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Jessica sits across from Sam and Katie, smiling pleasantly.

Sam fidgets, alternately rolling down and up the tinted windows.

JESSICA  
Are you too warm, Mr. Kimball?

SAM  
Sorry...

JESSICA  
It's fine.

KATIE  
He's nervous.

JESSICA  
I wouldn't blame him.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

A crowd mills into the convention center.

The limo curls around to a rear entrance.

Sam and Katie step out, hurriedly ushered in by ATTENDANTS wearing earpieces.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Katie step into a long hallway, cinder block and plain. The noise from the floor is thunderous.

Jessica leads the way.

JESSICA  
We are so glad you could make it,  
Mr. Kimball.

SAM  
Glad to be here.

JESSICA  
You'll have to come with me, now.

SAM  
What about my friend?

JESSICA  
She'll be lead to the floor. We  
promise she'll get a good seat.  
She won't miss a thing.

Katie nods and kisses Sam on the cheek.

KATIE  
Don't be nervous. I'll be right  
out front, I promise.

Sam holds her hand, and their arms stretch between them,  
until Sam breaks contact and disappears down a remote hall.

ATTENDANT  
This way, Ma'am.

Katie looks after Sam as she is led towards the floor of the  
convention center.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Sam sits in a chair, a STYLIST applying make-up for the  
lights and fussing with Sam's hair.

SAM  
Is this necessary?

STYLIST  
It is if you don't want to look  
like a corpse under those lights.

SAM  
All right.

Myrom enters, along with his entourage, including Jessica.

MYROM

Mr. Kimball, we are so pleased you made it.

SAM

Thanks for inviting me. Your assistant didn't tell me much. What do I do to-

MYROM

We'll call you on stage and you just come out and tell your story. You seem to be good with a crowd. Is that all right?

SAM

I suppose so.

MYROM

Mr. Kimball, you have made quite a name for yourself very quickly. What is it exactly that you expect to get out of all of this?

SAM

I don't know.

MYROM

Come on, you can tell me, Mr. Kimball. Money? Women? Power?

SAM

No. It's not about me.

MYROM

It's not? Then what on earth is it about?

SAM

The god's honest truth, Mr. Holliday is... I don't know. I feel like I'm on this train that's rolling, and the brakes are broken, and all I can do is ride it to the end of the line.

MYROM

Well, Mr. Kimball, maybe there I can be of some assistance. I have to get ready, sir. See you on stage, Mr. Kimball.

Myrom leaves, entourage in tow, except for Jessica, who lingers.

JESSICA

Mr. Kimball, all those things that the news said, all the things that were reported. Did they happen like they said?

SAM

Pretty much.

JESSICA

When you think about that, think about the fact that God may have been working through you, how do you react to that?

SAM

To be honest, Ma'am, it scares the hell out of me. So does doing this tonight. Too late to back out?

JESSICA

Afraid so. But maybe it will all work out and you can go home after this.

SAM

If you're right, there's nothing I'd like better. Me and Katie sitting on the front porch of the station with my dog. That's my idea of perfect.

Jessica regards Sam for a long beat.

JESSICA

Thank you, Sam.

SAM

For what?

JESSICA

Thank you's enough. Break a leg.

Jessica exits.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER MAIN HALL - LATER

Every seat is filled. The lights go down and stage lights come up as music fills the hall.

Katie is led by ATTENDANT #2 to her seat, very near the front, but behind two rows of wheel-chair bound attendees.

She sits and watches the show.

Myrom comes on stage amidst rising music and a chorus of singers.

The AUDIENCE rises to its feet.

MYROM

Thank you! God bless you! Thank you!

The music settles and the crowd settles back into their chairs.

MYROM

Thank you so much for blessing us with your presence tonight. On behalf of everyone with the Myrom Holliday Ministries, I want to say thank you. Tonight is going to be special, yes it is. Can you feel it?

Scattered 'Amen's from the audience.

MYROM

I said can you feel it?!

Louder response.

MYROM

We are going to see healings! We are going to see miracles! And, most of all, we are going to see justice!

AUDIENCE roars.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Sam watches the show from the wings. He is in awe of the spectacle.

He holds onto the curtain rope and does not notice as a small blue spark slips from his fingers to the metal pulley.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is in a frenzy of music and watches enthralled as a woman led on stage in a wheelchair is touched, then rises from the wheelchair, cheered by the crowd.

Jessica stands at the back of the room as the Technician from earlier watches from the other side of the hall entrance.

Glancing at her, the Technician strolls over.

WORKER  
Some show, huh?

JESSICA  
It sure is.

WORKER  
You get a real feeling that something could happen. You know, something miraculous.

JESSICA  
I suppose you do.

WORKER  
I think so, anyway.

JESSICA  
Something's gonna happen all right. Not sure if you'd call it a miracle.

WORKER  
So, what is it, then?

JESSICA  
The end of the line. Unless somebody does something about it. Oh, fuck it, I'll be back.

Jessica makes her way down to the front, struggling against the standing worshippers until she finds Katie.

JESSICA  
I have to talk to you!

KATIE  
What?!

JESSICA

I have to talk to you! Come with me!

Katie looks at Jessica warily, then follows.

The two women rush outside to the lobby.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Katie and Jessica stand before the open doors, where the sights and sounds of the show spill out.

JESSICA

You have no reason to trust me, but I have to tell you something. Sam was not invited here tonight to be part of a praise meeting. He was invited here to blindside him.

KATIE

What are you talking about?

JESSICA

The woman at the motel. The mother. There are pictures of her and Sam.

KATIE

But they never...

JESSICA

I know they never. I helped doctor the pictures. Myrom is going to pull Sam on stage and show those pictures. It will ruin him.

KATIE

Son of a bitch.

JESSICA

You have no idea. I'm sorry.

KATIE

Save it. How do I get to Sam? I have to get him out of here.

MYROM (O.C.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the moment you have all been waiting for...

(MORE)

MYROM(cont'd)

The man who has captured the attention of the world in the past days...

KATIE

Oh, shit.

Katie and Jessica rush into the hall.

INT. CONVENTION HALL STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Myrom whips the crowd into a fervor.

MYROM

Here he is! Sam Kimball!

Sam humbly strolls onto the stage, offering a slight, embarrassed wave.

Katie rushes down the aisle, her voice swallowed by the crowd.

KATIE

Sam! Sam!!

Sam approaches a microphone.

SAM

Hello, everyone.

Wild cheers.

MYROM

Listen to them, Sam! Listen to the love, the reverence. They see you as a leader, Sam.

SAM

Thank you, everyone. Reverend Holliday.

MYROM

Well, Sam, I have something to share with you, too. I mentioned justice, earlier, Sam. You believe in that, don't you?

SAM

Of course.

MYROM

And you believe that those who have sinned should pay for those sins?

SAM

Well...

MYROM

Of course you do, as any God-fearing man or woman does. But the sins are far more grievous when they are committed by those who claim to be spiritual leaders, aren't they?

SAM

I don't understand where...

MYROM

I believe I can help you understand. Bill, can we show those slides on the screen behind me?

INT. CONVENTION CENTER CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BILL, the director, barks orders to the assembled control room operators.

BILL

Let's get the projector up and running please. On two... one...

TECHNICIAN #2 flips a switch. Nothing.

BILL

What the hell?

A blue spark arcs across the control panel.

INT. CONVENTION HALL STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Myrom approaches Sam as the lights dim.

MYROM

(quietly)

Don't ever fuck with my business again, Sam.

SAM

What is this about?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The TECHNICIANS and OPERATORS stand suddenly back from the panel as blue sparks leap all over the control panel.

INT. CONVENTION HALL STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The lights raise.

MYROM

Bill, what is going on up there?  
Sorry, folks, just a temporary  
delay.

A spark flies from one of the cameras near the stage to light rigging. Then another camera. Soon, the electronic equipment is singing with blue sparks.

MYROM

What is going on here? Ladies and  
gentlemen, what you were going to  
see were pictures of this self-  
proclaimed religious man  
fornicating!

The CROWD looks on in hushed and confused silence.

MYROM

That's right! Fornicating with the  
unwed mother he claimed to save!  
What did he save? Not her soul!  
He led her down a path of sin! A  
path of damnation!

Sam reels. The CROWD's faces are slowly turning to those of righteous rage.

MYROM

This man is a liar! A false  
prophet!

SAM

No, I...

MYROM

A charlatan!!

Blue electricity seems to bleed from the electronic equipment. The room is getting brighter.

SAM

I never...

Sam legs seem wobbly beneath him.

MYROM

This man should confess his sins!  
But will he before all of you true  
believers?

SAM

I didn't...

MYROM

No! He will deny his sin!

SAM

I don't...

Sam's eyes roll up and he is flat on his back as Myrom's tirade continues and the world washes white...

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Sam opens his eyes, still flat on his back. He raises onto his elbows and looks around at the rising yellow sand dunes surrounding the oasis he lies in.

He is shaded by a grove of palm trees, and a small pool of clear water sits to his right.

Sam stands and looks around, confused.

STRANGER (O.S.)

Good, you're up.

Sam spins to see the STRANGER.

The Stranger is dressed in faded blue jeans, a red flannel shirt. His face is weathered, but soft with kindness.

STRANGER

You okay?

The Stranger bends to the spring with a canteen. He fills it and offers it to Sam.

SAM

I'm not sure.

STRANGER

Well, you had quite a fall.

SAM  
Where am I?

STRANGER  
With me.

SAM  
Where's that?

STRANGER  
Just away. For now.

SAM  
Am I dead?

STRANGER  
(chuckling)  
No.

SAM  
Am I dreaming?

STRANGER  
Funny thing about that. Here, take  
some water.

Sam does.

STRANGER  
All dreams are is people  
remembering that they are capable  
of absolutely anything. Then, they  
forget again as soon as they wake  
up. Damnedest thing.

SAM  
Who are you?

STRANGER  
The one who got you into all this.

SAM  
Okay, so what am I doing here?

STRANGER  
Just giving you a break. You were  
getting it on the chin from that  
Holliday. And what he says may not  
be true, but some people will want  
to believe it's true. So, I think  
you've pretty much lost  
credibility.

SAM

You're not as supportive as I'd hoped you'd be.

STRANGER

That's foolish. I've supported you every step of the way. One pair of footprints and all that.

SAM

So, what's next?

STRANGER

You decide. This isn't a train that's speeding out of control, Sam. It's your life.

SAM

Then, what was all this? All the miracles? Why did you do that to me?

STRANGER

What did you want, Sam? Before all the rest started, what did you want?

SAM

Just to be left alone.

STRANGER

Nonsense. Think back. What did you want?

SAM

I don't remember.

STRANGER

You are thick-headed, sometimes, Sam, but that's one of the reasons I like you. Why did you go to that diner all the time? Why sit at the same booth?

SAM

Katie.

STRANGER

Bingo.

SAM

All this was for a woman?

STRANGER

No, Sam, all of this was for Katie. You called me, though you may not have ever done it consciously. I just gave you a nudge.

SAM

What about Sandy and Mike? What about all the people that day at the motel?

STRANGER

You are full of questions, aren't ya? Well, to be fair, some of that was selfish. You woke up a lot of people to me, Sam. A lot of people who were lonely, people who had forgotten that life could be good again. So, I sort of killed two birds with one stone.

The Stranger stands.

STRANGER

Time to go, now.

SAM

What happens when I get back?

STRANGER

Close your eyes. Then, go home. I'll take care of the rest.

SAM

I guess I should say thanks.

STRANGER

Nah. Thank you, Sam. You take care, now. And take care of the ones you love. All I ever really wanted from anyone. Remember, keep your eyes closed when you get back. You'll know when to open them. See you later.

Sam waves as the Stranger strolls off, away from the oasis, into the desert.

The Stranger holds up one hand in acknowledgement.

SAM

No one's going to believe this...

Sam shuts his eyes tight, and the world goes white again...

INT. CONVENTION HALL STAGE - CONTINUOUS

... and Sam lies on his back, his eyes screwed tightly shut.

MYROM  
A blasphemer!

We see only the blackness of Sam's closed eyes.

MYROM  
What is...? Oh my god...

A flash of light, even through the veil of closed eyes, then weeping.

There is silence.

Sam opens one eye, then the other.

The room is silent, as the CROWD looks on in wonder and awe.

Sam looks over to Myrom who kneels on the stage, sobbing.

MYROM  
I never knew... I never knew...

Sam looks to the crowd, where Katie holds her eyes closed.

SAM  
Katie?

Katie slowly opens her eyes.

KATIE  
Sam? Sam!

Sam hops off the stage, rushing into the arms of Katie.

They kiss, passionately.

SAM  
We should get out of here.

Sam takes her by the hand and they rush out, out of the lobby and into the night.

INT. FUEL'N'SIP - DAY

A television plays in the foreground.

## ANNOUNCER

Stories from the event last week are conflicting. One thing is for sure, Myrom Holliday has donated the largest sum ever received to more than twenty charities. And as for the mysterious man responsible for the Miracle of Milwaukee? Your guess is as good as ours. No one seems to remember a name or a face. He has disappeared, just as he came. For more on this...

The television snaps off.

Sandy drags Mike away from the screen.

## SANDY

That stuff will rot your brain, kiddo.

## MIKE

Aw, Mom.

## SANDY

I know, I know... Take Ted outside.

Mike grudgingly rises and pats his side.

## MIKE

Come on, boy.

Ted thumps his tail against the ground and follows Mike to the porch.

## EXT. FUEL'N'SIP - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Katie sit on the steps holding hands as Mike and Ted come outside.

## SAM

Hey, Mikey!

## MIKE

Mom says no more tv.

## SAM

How about you take care of the guy pulling up.

Mike looks to the road where an old sedan pulls into the dusty station.

Mike steps onto the dirt and strolls over as the car parks and a YOUNG COUPLE open their doors.

MIKE

Hi!

YOUNG MAN

Hi, yourself. We accidentally got off at the wrong exit. How far are we from the interstate?

MIKE

Just up there.

YOUNG MAN

Thanks. Where are we anyway?

Mike looks around, to the porch where Katie and Sam sits in each other's arms. Ted wags his tongue happily.

Sandy steps onto the porch, holding sodas for them all.

MIKE

Heaven.

Music plays as the car pulls away, onto 41-A, towards the interstate.

FADE OUT.