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?
\[3.\]

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
Damnit, 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.
Here we go again.

Sam plops heavily back in his chair.

I just don’t believe in things like this.

You mean God.

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

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

Sam, they could have all been kooks.

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

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

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

So, why the tape?

Just in case it wasn’t.

Sam and Katie eye the fridge.

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 whither 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 off 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)
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

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
ting 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 mystic.

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 aspiring 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...

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)
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.

Thank you, Mr. Ziegler.

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

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.

He looks nervous.

Are you kidding? The guy’s a natural.

Sandy and Katie exchange a somber look.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

(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)
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.

\[
\text{SAM}\\
\text{Everyone! Everything’s going to be okay!}
\]

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

\[
\text{CAMERAMAN #2}\\
\text{Kevin, I’m losing power here! What the hell’s going on?}
\]

Similar shouts come from other NEWS CREWS.

\[
\text{SAM}\\
\text{(to KATIE)}\\
\text{Can you feel it?!!}
\]

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.

\[
\text{SAM}\\
\text{Something’s going to happen!}
\]

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
Damnit.

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)
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
(quietenly)
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 acre, 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.