

THE INVINCIBLE MAN

by

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INT - HOTEL ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Dustin Graves, MD (44) sits alone atop a bed still made. Next to him is a blank stack of legal pads and a bottle of prescription pills. The pens are individually packaged and the pills neatly arranged in rows of two. He swallows two pills with a glass of water, then takes a pad from the stack, opens the first pen from its package, and writes.

GRAVES (V.O.)

To whom it may concern. I ask you which is worse: to die without ever knowing the meaning of love, or knowing love, to lose it, and be forced to live in the gloomy shadow of its absence? I lie alone in a rented room atop my death bed and as I remember times gone by, it is this question to which I persistently return. At forty-four, I have known the sorrows of lifetimes, and the joys, but more sorrows than joys, and I am tired and heartbroken. For one such as I, who cannot grow old, who cannot except by his own hand die, forever is a long time. All that I am left with are these pages to fill, and enough pain medicine to help me bear them. And at the end of these three days, when it is done, I will set down my pen and sleep the eternal sleep, for I believe I have already answered my question.

INT - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (THREE WEEKS EARLIER)

A lavish banquet hall. The guests sit at tables of twelve, the women adorned in their best jewels and gowns, the men in tuxedos, flushed with drink and merriment. On the table scattered among champagne flutes and wine glasses are the remnants of a magnificent feast. On the stage the Master of Ceremonies takes a spoon to his glass to get the attention of the guests.

MC

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my outstanding pleasure to present to you this year's Nobel Laureate for Medicine, Dr. Dustin Graves.

Seated behind the podium, Graves is flanked by his wife, Gertrude, and by his friend and business associate, Kyle Morgan.

Our reluctant hero slowly makes his way to the microphone. He is broad-shouldered and trim, and his movements are strong and sure. He looks much younger than his forty-four years, but wincing under the light his face strikes us as careworn and his eyes are dimmed as if by secret sadness.

GRAVES

Thank you.

AUDIENCE

Speech!

GRAVES

To take the seed of death and transform it into the source of eternal life might seem the stuff of fairy tales. In ancient times, there were those who tried to turn common metals into gold. Alchemists, as these men were known, sought the elixir of life, that they may cure all disease and prolong life indefinitely. These twin pursuits defined the alchemist's struggle from an imperfect, ephemeral state toward everlasting life, with the help of the philosopher's stone, an essential substance necessary for both. The goal of medicine, and all of science, is the goal of the man of ancient times, and the essence of the search is from ignorance to awareness through the light of spiritual truth, which is love.

Applause.

GRAVES

I stand before you now as a man of science, but I wasn't always such. As a wayward youth I courted death. I lived a reckless life, without rhyme or reason. Without conscience or consciousness. I was killing myself slowly, and in my body's last gasp for life, cancer was created. Call it a slacker's greatest achievement.

Laughter.

GRAVES

I would have died but for a man, an amazing man, a philosopher and sorcerer, who made me his willing guinea pig. Gently and at times not so gently but always by example he showed me that in the seed of death lay the key to immortality. He was indeed a modern day alchemist. And this is as much his award as it is mine. On behalf of the late Dr. Longfellow Adams, I thank you very much. And to his daughter, through whom I knew love. Also I would like to thank my wife and business partner, Gertrude Graves. Thank you.

INT - BANQUET HALL - LATER THAT SAME EVENING

Graves moves to the portable bar shaking hands along the way and finds the bartender with her back turned to him. He reaches for a bottle of water in the side ice chest. She turns and slaps his hand. This is Amy Dean. She is a young, natural beauty, brisk and energetic. Her face reads irritation until she sees it is the man of the hour.

AMY DEAN

Hey! Oh, it's you. Trying to get out of a tip?

GRAVES

Just lending a hand.

She pours him a water.

DEAN

Wow. Some speech. Some life. Wow.

GRAVES

Thank you. There was much I left unsaid.

DEAN

The best parts?

GRAVES

And the worst.

DEAN

Well, maybe you'll tell me the rest someday? Over drinks?

GRAVES

Sorry. I'm not much of a drinker.

She shrugs good-naturedly and turns to help another guest. Graves starts to move off but a guest detains him with congratulations. He looks at Dean, a glimmer of recognition lighting his eyes. Dean faces him expectantly.

GRAVES

Do I . . . ?

DEAN

Do you what, know me? You wouldn't be coming onto me, not after you just shot me down. That's kind of bass ackwards, don't you think?

GRAVES

I'm sorry.

Graves turns away.

DEAN

I'm sorry too, you know? I'm usually not so thin-skinned. It's just, your speech. Having cancer, curing cancer. It really moved me. Gave me hope, you know? Made me want to do something really spectacular.

GRAVES

(intrigued, innocent)
Like what?

DEAN

Like not be a temp at a catering company, for starters? Like maybe change the world?

He laughs.

DEAN

I'm serious!

GRAVES

Change the world. Maybe narrow it down a bit?

DEAN

I dunno. Just be me. Be an actress?
I'm not sure.

GRAVES

Here's what I tell my patients when they say they want to change the world. I tell them start by changing yourself.

(beat)

But you seem fine just the way you are.

DEAN

(genuine)

That is the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me.

Graves extends his hand. They shake. She opens her hand to find he has transferred a large bill.

DEAN

I can't accept.

GRAVES

Think of it as random kindness.

DEAN

Okay, but only if you let me buy you a drink.

Gertrude appears and takes her husband by the arm.

GRAVES

This is my wife, Gertrude.
Gertrude, I'd like you to meet--

DEAN

Amy.
(to Gertrude, all
business)
What may I get for you?

GERTRUDE

I'll take my husband back, thank you.

She leads Graves away.

INT - BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Graves and wife sit on opposite sides of the bed, back to back. Graves unbuttons his dress shirt before the dresser's mirror. Gertrude, attractive in a precise, restrained way, sits on the bed and lets her hair down in sumptuous curls. As she removes her stockings, we get a glimpse of her body which at thirty-nine is still nice to look at.

GERTRUDE
(nonchalant)
That girl at the bar. Who was she?

GRAVES
Just some girl. Never seen her
before in my life.
(beat)
Tennis tomorrow?

GERTRUDE
Can't. I'll be away. Baby shower,
remember?

GRAVES
(slightly irritated)
No, but okay.

INT - BEDROOM - LATER

Graves and his wife lie side by side in bed, their backs facing. Neither sleeps.

GERTRUDE
In your speech, when you mentioned
that man?

GRAVES
Dr. Adams.

GERTRUDE
How come you never told me about
him?

GRAVES
There wasn't much to tell.

GERTRUDE
Not much to tell? The man saved
your life!

GRAVES
Yes, well...that was a long time ago.

GERTRUDE
It makes me wonder, in ten years of
marriage, if there are other things
you've kept secret from me. Are
there?

Graves kisses his wife on the cheek.

GRAVES

I love you, honey. Good night.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN ON:

EXT - HOSPITAL - DAY (TWENTY-TWO YEARS EARLIER)

At the front entrance of a small charity hospital in Los Angeles stands Dustin Graves, twenty-two. Other than his striking blue eyes, he bears little resemblance to the man he later becomes. His face, pale and gaunt, is twisted in pain. He is dressed in ill-fitting, threadbare flannel shirt and blue jeans. His right hip bulges and juts out at a very unnatural angle, even through the jeans. In his right hand he leans on a cane, in his left he holds the entrance railing.

GRAVES (V.O)

On the day I received my death sentence, I was given the gift of true love.

A man passing on the way into the hospital stops and hands Graves a dollar, as though mistaking him for a panhandler. Graves tries to give the money back but the man, embarrassed, moves on.

GRAVES

(more to himself)

I'm not a bum! I'm just dying!

Graves turns to see Amethyst Adams (eighteen). She wears a nurse's whites and a hospital badge. He quickly hides his cane behind his back and manages a smile. She returns his smile as she passes.

GRAVES

Wait! I'd like to ask you out on a date. Would you?

AMETHYST

That's sweet, but I'm spoken for.

GRAVES

Don't you know you should never let anyone speak for you? They may get it wrong.

AMETHYST

(charmed)

I'll try and remember that.

GRAVES

Please, I don't have much time. I mean, my ride is almost here.

AMETHYST

It was nice to meet you.

She extends her hand. He takes it in his, inadvertently transmitting the stranger's dollar donation.

AMETHYST

What's this? Random kindness?

GRAVES

(embarrassed; fumbling)

Yes, I mean no, not mine. A stranger's. Of course, I'm a stranger to you, but I'd like not to be? What I'm trying to say is, someone gave it to me, but now it's yours. Don't spend it all in one place?

AMETHYST

I'll buy something sweet and remember you.

This pleases Dustin. A car horn announces his mother's presence. Transferring his cane to the front to keep it out of sight, he walks to his mother's car, a look of intense concentration one would assume were he trying his best not to limp or wince. He enters the car, turns and sees Amethyst still standing where he had left her.

MRS. GRAVES

Who was that?

GRAVES

I wish I knew. I wish I know.

INT - MOVING CAR - LATER

Mother and son drive in silence. Mrs. Adelaide Graves is in her 60's, and might be pretty if she applied a little less make-up and updated her helmet hairstyle and paisley-print dress. But she doesn't care: This is a woman who lives for her son.

MRS. GRAVES

(tries to appear natural)

There's this young lady I'd like for you to meet. Gertrude? She just started with us.

(MORE)

MRS. GRAVES (cont'd)
 She'll be behind the register until
 school starts back up in the fall.
 Very nice girl. Good with money,
 too. Would you like to meet her?
 (beat)
 Maybe you can come into work and
 ask her to a movie or some ice
 cream? My treat?

Dustin's lips are tight. He stairs straight ahead.

GRAVES
 (not present)
 Mmmm-mmmm.

EXT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DAY

The car pulls into the driveway of a lovely Bel-Air estate. Graves exits gingerly, favoring the left leg. He goes to a rose bush, picks a bloom, cuts his finger. As his mother comes around the car he hands it to her.

GRAVES
 It's not right. A son should not
 die before his parents. I'm sorry I
 let you down.

His mother's face wells with emotion.

MRS. GRAVES
 Oh my, I've almost forgotten. It's
 your birthday, son. Happy birthday.

They hug, and she can hold back the tears no longer.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - DAY

In the darkness of his small room, Graves kneels by the side of his bed, brooding. In one hand a 40-oz. bottle of Mickey's Malt Liquor. He drinks from the bottle. The other hand feeds his mouth perpetual puffs of a cigarette.

His mother calls through the door.

MRS. GRAVES (OFFSCREEN)
 Dustin, please open up. Your father
 is here.

GRAVES
 My father is dead!
 (in a whisper)
 So is my mother.

He reaches for a photograph. It is worn and faded. Pictured is a pretty young couple standing next to an old Volkswagon, arms around each other. They wear floral prints and bell-bottoms and smiles that almost light the room. Clearly, they were very much in love.

Dustin smiles over the picture, a brief moment of happiness. Then, he winces and grabs his hip. He slips his jeans down over his hip to reveal a mass of flesh, as if someone had implanted a bowling ball beneath the flesh.

GRAVES (V.O)

They told me the tumor in my hip was the size of a small fruit. The irony was I always hated fruit. I refused surgery. I didn't want to spend life in a wheelchair without a leg or a large intestine. They gave me six months, even with radiation. The worst thing about it was how I'd die. My lungs, they said, would fill up with fluid and I'd suffocate. I could think of no worse way to go. So what did I do? I locked myself in my room and drowned myself in drink. More irony.

As the hours wear on, Dustin drinks more, throws up into a wastebasket, scrapes the bowl of a Graffix bong for the residue of weed. Then, a knock at the door.

GRAVES

(slurring)

Please go away.

KYLE (THROUGH THE DOOR)

Let me in psycho!

GRAVES

(brightening)

Kyle?

Dustin seems to come to life. Moving faster than we've seen him, he kicks his cane under his bed and smooths his shirt in front of the mirror. He opens the door to see Kyle Morgan, twenty-two. A living Ken Doll with blond hair. The two could not be more different, and the admiration in Dustin's eyes as he looks up at the taller Kyle is unmistakable. These two have been friends long enough to have perfected their own handshake, which they perform in a few flashes of movement. Dustin staggers a bit.

KYLE

Man, you look like shit, and it smells like . . . what died in here?

GRAVES

Nothing, yet.

KYLE

Your moms says you've been cooped up in here for days.

GRAVES

(concerned)

She tell you why?

KYLE

Nah man, but I found out. I went by your work. They told me you got canned. You flicked a customer off?

GRAVES

Yeah, well, I didn't like that job anyway. You want a beer?

KYLE

Gotta pass. I'm in training.

GRAVES

Nah, really?

Miami drafted me, man. Third round. I'm going pro, dude. NFL, baby!

Dustin rises to get a beer from his mini-fridge, winces.

KYLE

You don't seem all that thrilled.

GRAVES

I am. It's just . . . hey we should celebrate.

(again offering the beer;
again Kyle declines)

When are you leaving?

KYLE

Manana, man. Means tomorrow. I'm trying to learn Spanish. Lots of Puerto Riquenas in Miami.

GRAVES

I thought you were engaged?

KYLE

Was engaged. Now I'm hitched.
Knocked up little Miss Cindy, but
it don't matter. Ignorance is
bliss, right?

GRAVES

(spits on the floor)
How long you been in town?

KYLE

Couple weeks.

GRAVES

And you come see your best bud on
your last day?

KYLE

Forget about that. Hey, I know this
girl. She'd be perfect for you.
Name is . . . starts with a G.
Gretna, Gerbil. Some granny's name.

GRAVES

Gertrude.

KYLE

Maybe. Yeah. We'll double. Do you
good to get out of this hell hole.
Meet us in town.

GRAVES

Can't. Don't got a car.

KYLE

What? Where's your ride?

GRAVES

Wrecked it.

KYLE

How you get to class?

GRAVES

Flunked out.

KYLE

What the hell you been doing then?

GRAVES

Fuck if I know.
(suddenly; brightening)
I met a girl.

KYLE

(amused; not buying it)
 Nah! Yeah? Nah! Where's she at?
 (Dustin looks down,
 shrugs)
 Didn't think so. Listen, I gotta
 jet. Clean yourself up. Look alive.
 Dress to impress, and all that.

GRAVES (V.O.)

Kyle never returned that night, and
 the date was to wait another
 fifteen years.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Graves lying in bed.

GRAVES (V.O.)

That night I had a dream. I dreamt
 the next six months of my life, all
 at once.

MONTAGE - DUSTIN'S DREAM

Dustin sits alone in his room, drinking. Then he is at the
 foot of his mother's bed in the middle of the night, kneeling
 alongside his sleeping mother's feet, his eyes blood-shot,
 his face lined with agony.

Now he is at the entrance to the house, leaning on the sofa.
 On his knees he receives visitors. He is thinner, his ribs
 showing through his white t-shirt, his legs swollen, his
 movements sluggish. People stand around him, crying. The air
 is heavy with grief.

Next, he fights with orderlies who force him onto a gurney
 and wheel him into a spare bedroom. His mother now sponge
 bathes him, now holds a vial of morphine to his lips.

Then, Graves asleep in bed, deathly still. Silence, then a
 gasp of breath, followed by a gargling sound. And silence.

Later, his face a mask of death. Mrs. Graves comes into the
 room, kneels by him, her head against his chest as she
 silently weeps. Through the window a star shoots through the
 sky. It is done.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Graves gasps to life in bed, looks around wildly.

INT - HOSPITAL - DAY

Graves sits in an examination room while a group of doctors crowd in front of a lit viewer on which are tacked MRI images. Among themselves, they discuss the findings in hushed tones without looking at their patient.

GRAVES

I'm still alive, you know. You
don't have to ignore me!

One of the doctors approaches him.

DOCTOR

I'm afraid the tumor has grown.

INT - HOSPITAL UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

Dustin sits in the driver's side of his mother's parked car. Alone, he silently weeps. He turns the car's ignition on, then off again. He sees the keys in the ignition, and attached to them, a pocket knife with the words "Graves Textiles" stenciled in gold. He takes the knife from the keychain, unclasps it to reveal the blade, runs his finger over its rusted, dull border.

He rolls up his shirt sleeve and slices away at his wrist. At first nothing, then the bluish ooze from a vein. Wincing, he carves deeper, finally nicking an artery and blood spurts, in rhythmic pulsation with his heart. He swings his arm away from the seat and onto his lap. He tries to staunch the flow but he's bleeding profusely now. He looks around, his eyes frantic for a moment, then more relaxed as he stares into the blackness of the garage.

GRAVES

(softly)

Help me.

He closes his eyes. Outside the car, Amethyst passes, sees Graves, and his bloodied shirt, squints as she comes closer.

INT - EMERGENCY ROOM HOLDING AREA - DAY

Graves, in a hospital gown, lies in bed. He opens his eyes to see Amethyst standing over him.

GRAVES

(weakly)

Am I dead? Am I dreaming? Are you
an angel?

AMETHYST

(smiles)

Hardly. I'm Amethyst.

GRAVES

Amethyst. That's a real pretty name.

AMETHYST

Thanks. I was named after my birth stone.

GRAVES

(thinking)

You must be Aq-Aquarius?

AMETHYST

I am! Not many know that. Pretty impressive.

GRAVES

I'm June. Gemini. Dustin, I mean.

He extends his hand, sees it is heavily taped, and it all comes back to him.

AMETHYST

It wasn't a dream, I'm afraid.

GRAVES

No, but you're still an angel.

They shake hands.

GRAVES

You're cold.

AMETHYST

That tends to happen when you lose a lot of blood.

Dustin sees the bag of blood feeding into his circulation. It registers.

GRAVES

You?

AMETHYST

Didn't have a choice. The ER had run out of your blood type. It's very rare. One in a million.

GRAVES

So you're one in a million, too?

AMETHYST

I guess I am.

Graves notices the breakfast tray beside his bed.

GRAVES

Please take something, anything.
 (hands her the cup of
 o.j.)
 Please.

Amethyst accepts it and sips.

AMETHYST

Well, I should get going.

GRAVES

Wait. Can I make it up to you, like
 maybe take you to dinner? As
 friends. It's the least I can do.
 Say, Friday?

Amethyst thinks, then takes a pen out of her purse and
 scribbles down her number.

AMETHYST

(handing it to him)
 Okay. Maybe then you'll tell me
 what made you try something so
 silly. That is, if they ever let
 you out of here.

GRAVES

(on cloud nine)
 It's only Tuesday. I got all the
 time in the world!

AMETHYST

(leaving)
 You haven't met Dr. Fink.

INT - HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Seated facing Dustin is Dr. P.H.D. Fink, the psychiatrist who
 scowling in his top hat and tweed looks like a constipated
 Ivy League Professor with an unidentified Freudian complex.

GRAVES (V.O.)

I hadn't met Dr. Fink.

Fink is scribbles feverishly into his notepad. Graves sits
 before him, relaxed, a twinkle in his eye. Fink sets down his
 papers. He's made a decision.

DR. FINK

I can see no other alternative but to commit you.

GRAVES

Commit? What?

DR. FINK

Hospital policy with suicides, I'm afraid. Until we feel you are no longer a threat to yourself, here is where you stay.

GRAVES

I'm no threat. I couldn't hurt a fly.

DR. FINK

In light of what you've said here today, I'm inclined to disagree.

GRAVES

Come on, I was just having a laugh! Look, I'm sorry I called you a freak in tweed. And I'm not going to eat your flesh. That was a movie reference, man. Silence of the Lambs? Lecter? I was just having a laugh. It was for kicks. Help! Mom!

As two orderlies cart Graves away...

GRAVES (V.O.)

I suppose I should have been a little less cocksure.

INT - PSYCHIATRIC WARD - DAY

Graves, in restraints, is now in his new room alongside another patient that looks like a ghoul from one of your worst childhood nightmares.

In voice-over, Graves narrates what we see.

GRAVES (V.O.)

For three days I was a prisoner of the system, and but for a bad case of the shakes, I'd be there till the end. My drinking had finally caught up with me. The nurses grew suspicious once I complained about the dogs barking at the foot of my bed. Then I saw my biological parents, dead since my birth.

(MORE)

GRAVES (V.O.) (cont'd)

The doctors rushed in and asked me if I drank. I replied, 'Every day since the age of twelve and twice on Sundays, and sorry for leaving that out.' They had to transfer me to the medicine unit to monitor my vital signs. There, under minimal surveillance, I prevailed upon a nurse who said I reminded her of her son. She retrieved my things and looked the other way while I made my escape. I had to. How else was I supposed to keep my date?

EXT - STREET - DAY

Graves in street clothes, looking conspicuous in blood-stained flannel and jeans, limps down the street.

INT- BUS - DAY

Now he sits in a bus, ducks at the sight of a passing police car.

INT - BEL-AIR - DAY

And now he hitches a ride.

INT - CAR - DAY

The stranger notices his swollen leg but says nothing. Graves catches him looking.

GRAVES

Just excited to see you.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves enters the house through a side door and creeps into his room.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - DAY

He smells his armpits and frowns in disgust. He goes to the bathroom and is about to turn on the sink faucet when he hears something and stops. He creeps to his bedroom door and listens to his mother on the phone with Dr. Fink, who is on speaker.

DR. FINK

(on phone)

We have reason to suspect he escaped and he'll likely return home.

(MORE)

DR. FINK (cont'd)

Mrs. Graves, your son is a suicide risk and as such requires intensive medical care. With your permission I can be at your residence within the half hour. I'll bring two armed guards. He may need to be put down.

MRS. GRAVES

O dear me, O I suppose, if that's what you think is best.

Graves looks at Amethyst's phone number in his hand and he tightens his mouth, determined. He grabs a bag and throws a toothbrush, cologne and some random articles of clothing into it. He goes to his closet to find it in disarray. The only thing hanging is a wool suit. He frowns and stuffs this in the bag. He waits until he hears his mother walk past his bedroom and then he cracks the door open to verify she is out of view before exiting his room.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - MOTHER'S ROOM

Graves enters his mother's bedroom. Locating her purse in her dressing area opens it and takes her car keys and cash - small bills and not many of them - from her wallet.

EXT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DRIVEWAY

Graves enters his mother's car and starts the engine. He gives it too much gas and backing out hits a trash can. He cringes, wheels around, puts the car in drive and motors down the street.

INT/EXT - CAR/STREET - DAY

He checks the rear view to see his mother running down the driveway waving her arms at him. He drives faster. He turns the corner and sees a Lincoln town car approaching. Dr. Fink sits in the back seat. Behind it, an ambulance. Behind the ambulance, a police car. Graves ducks, passes them, checks the rear view as the distance between them widens. He's in the clear.

EXT - PARK - DAY

Graves is at the payphone. He fishes through his pocket for change, dials Amethyst's number. After several unanswered rings, he hangs up.

INT - NICE RESTAURANT - DAY

Graves checks the menu against the cash in his hand, his brow wrinkling as he makes basic calculations. He approaches the reservation desk.

GRAVES
Table for two, please. Your best.

INT - FLORIST - DAY

Graves browses the roses of various colors, all in bouquets, all pricey. He chooses the least expensive item, which happens to be a corsage.

FLOWER LADY
Prom night?

He smiles sheepishly.

EXT - PARK - DAY

Graves back at the payphone, trying Amethyst again. This time she answers.

GRAVES
(on phone; breathless)
Hey! So, dinner?

AMETHYST
Hi. I didn't hear from you, so I made other plans. I'm sorry?

GRAVES
No way! You don't know what I've been through! Would it make any difference if I told you I broke the law three times to be here talking to you?

AMETHYST
I'm really sorry?

GRAVES
Fine. I guess it's been nice knowing you. See you in another life.

The phone asks him to deposit another quarter. He hesitates before punching in his last coin.

AMETHYST
Wait. Okay. Say around seven?

GRAVES
(nonchalant)
Seven works. Seven's good. Seven I can do.

AMETHYST

I'm on Eventide Way. It's in Topanga, off the PCH. You're familiar with the area?

GRAVES

(faking it)

Um, yeah?

AMETHYST

(onto him)

So you already know how to get here? So I'll see you then?

GRAVES

Wait. Well, kind of. You could, I mean if you really wanted to, tell me?

AMETHYST

Okay. Here take down my address. It's--

The line goes dead. Graves hangs up. He searches his pockets but is out of change.

INT - PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

Graves stands in front of the bathroom sink. He is now wearing a suit. It's a size or two too big but not bad. On the bathroom mirror is carved the following: "If you must needs fall in love, love thyself, and be always loved in return." He frowns, perplexed. A drunk in an adjacent stall mumbles to himself and passes gas.

INT - CAR - DAY

Graves sits in terrible traffic. I-405 on a Friday afternoon. He grimaces at the sun, sweating, slams his palm against the air conditioning console, checks his watch, shakes his head in frustration.

INT - CAR - LATER

Graves winds through the canyons, a Thomas guide in his lap. He's been reading it upside down, throws it against the windshield in disgust.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

Miraculously, he pulls onto Eventide Place. It is now dark. Sweat bleeds through his suit. He parks, reaches for his cane, then tosses it into the backseat.

EXT - STREET - NIGHT

Graves walks down the street, lost. He comes to the street's end and standing before a dead end sign, shakes his head. His head sinks in despair, then he looks up determined.

GRAVES
(yelling)
Amethyst!

She taps him on the shoulder and he turns to see her looking lovely in a light blue dress to match his light blue shirt.

AMETHYST
You look lost.

GRAVES
You look beautiful.

He hands her the corsage. She takes it.

AMETHYST
It's daffodil. Did you know it was my favorite? Pin it on me?
(he struggles, then gets it)
Looks good, don't you think? Come. I want you to meet my father.

GRAVES
No. I mean, I'm not really good with fathers.

AMETHYST
Then you'll get along just fine. Daddy's not really good with my dates.

She holds out her hand. He shakes his head, takes it.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Amethyst leads Graves up the gravel path to the front door. They enter.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE

AMETHYST
Daddy?

PROFESSOR (OFFSCREEN)
I'm here.

They walk into the living room to find a woolly mammoth of a man seated atop the sofa. He puffs on a prodigious pipe. He has a full beard, a dense mane of black hair, wears a robe of red velvet that can hardly contain his bulging muscles. This is the Professor. He is seventy but you wouldn't put him a day past forty-five, fifty tops. Seeing them he leaps to his feet and charges at Graves.

AMETHYST

I'd like you to meet-

PROFESSOR

(roars)

So this is the idiot!

AMETHYST

Dusty, daddy. His name is Dusty.

PROFESSOR

I demand to know why in the name of the saints you tried to take your life?

AMETHYST

(as Dustin retreats)

Daddy doesn't believe in pleasantries.

PROFESSOR

Please dear girl, let him speak! What gives you the right, young man?

GRAVES

(quietly)

Because it's the only right I have left.

The Professor is silent. Something about the boy impresses him though he's not sure why.

AMETHYST

There daddy, you asked to meet him. You met him. Now we must be on our way.

She takes Graves by the arm. As they exit the Professor's booming voice follows them.

PROFESSOR

Be reckless with your own insignificance, sir!

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

You dare take my daughter's life
into your hands with so much as one
libation and you'll wish for the
mercy of hell!

EXT - STREET - NIGHT

As they walk to the car, Graves is visibly shaken.

AMETHYST

Please excuse daddy. He's a
scientist. Spends all day cooped in
his lab. Not so good with people,
and one of the world's worst
tempers, when things don't go his
way. But he's a teddy bear, really.
His bark is worse than his bite.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

On Grave's face rages a sea of emotion. He bites his lip.

AMETHYST

Wasn't that our exit? Is there
something wrong?

He pulls over and burying his face in his arm starts to sob uncontrollably. She puts her arms around him and takes his head in her hands, making soothing sounds until he calms down but asking no questions. He sniffs and looking at her gratefully pulls back onto the road.

INT - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The two sit at a small table at the back of the restaurant, by the servers' station with its banging plates and employee babble. Definitely not the best seat in the place, but quite possibly the worst. They stare at their menus in silence.

The waiter arrives at the table. Pony tail, bronzer and lisp. Euro-trash once removed. He doesn't even look at Graves but devours Amethyst with his eyes.

GRAVES

Excuse me? Over here? I reserved a
booth by the window, with a view of
the ocean?

WAITER

You were late. This is what
remains. It's either this or the
hot dog vendor down the street, but
for the lady, the best seat in the
house.

The waiter pats his lap lasciviously. Ignoring this, Dustin studies the menu, which is in French.

GRAVES

The lady will have the nico-nicus
salad.

The waiter laughs.

WAITER

Salad nicoise, you imbecile. Why
don't I take it from here.

He sweeps his arm around Amethyst. Frustrated, Dustin reaches for his water glass and knocks it over. The waiter snickers.

LATER

It's the end of the meal now. The
waiter serves coffee. He continues
to ignore Graves and lavish
Amethyst with attention. Dustin
abruptly rises and throwing down
his napkin excuses himself.

INT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Graves fixing his hair. Reaches in his pocket - perhaps for a comb? - and comes up empty handed. No comb, no wallet, nothing. He's frantic.

INT - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dustin returns to the table. The waiter is still flirting with Amethyst. In fact, he's taken it a step further and seated himself in Dustin's chair. Amethyst tries to be polite but looks at Dustin helplessly and shrugs.

WAITER

(to Graves)

Your fly is down. Made you look!

As he cackles away Graves rears back as if to strike him or maybe just posture and as he does so bumps into the waiters' stand, bringing dishes and glasses crashing to the table and ground, and onto the waiter. His neatly pressed shirt is splattered with the remnants of the meal. The manager rushes over.

MANAGER

Out! The both of you! This instant!

Amethyst and Dustin scurry away as the manager grabs the waiter by the ear and leads him a way.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

They drive in silence. Amethyst looks over at Dustin and begins to laugh. He laughs too. He turns up the music, looks away, smiles.

LATER

They arrive in front of Amethyst's house.

AMETHYST

Well, that was . . . eventful.

GRAVES

Let me walk you to the door. It's the least. You know what I'm trying to say.

EXT - STREET - NIGHT

They exit the car and as they stroll toward her house..

AMETHYST

It just occurred to me. We spent the last two hours together and you haven't spoken two sentences to me the entire time. I'm not being picky, but is this how you impress all your dates?

GRAVES

You'll have to let my actions speak for me, then.

AMETHYST

You wouldn't want that, 'cause if I did, that would make you an absent-minded klutz with a short fuse who, um, doesn't tip well.

GRAVES

Woah. That's pretty harsh.

AMETHYST

Truth is I'm used to it. Pretty much describes my father. Puts you in good company.

GRAVES

(ironic)
Lucky me.

They arrive at the front door.

GRAVES

(blurting it out)

Thing is I haven't been on many dates and I won't be on many more because I'm terminal.

AMETHYST

You're what?

GRAVES

I have cancer. I'm dying. There, so now you know.

AMETHYST

You better not be joking because-
 (reading his look)
 --you're not joking. Oh my. And here I thought you were just a bit on the sensitive side. This changes everything. Wait right here.

She turns to face the door, thinks, then turns back to Dustin.

AMETHYST

On second thought-
 (she kisses him full on the mouth)
 -wait right here.

She leaves Graves looking like he's just been struck by lightning and enters the house closing the door behind her. Through the door we hear her talking to her father. Dustin cringes in preparation for the inevitable second coming. The door opens, the Professor's wild eyes appearing on the other side.

PROFESSOR

Is this true?
 (Dustin nods)
 A miracle. Thank you God! Please come in. But first, let me see your tongue.
 (Dusting sticks out his tongue)
 Your condition is fairly advanced. We have an uphill battle, don't we?

He ushers Dustin inside.

INT - ADAMS HOUSE - NIGHT

The Professor and Dustin face one another. Amethyst looks on.

PROFESSOR

Tell me, my son, do you wish to live?

GRAVES

(looking at Amethyst;
meaning it)

Never wanted anything more in my entire life.

PROFESSOR

Then come in.

GRAVES

I am in.

PROFESSOR

So you are. Then sit down. We must begin at once.

INT - ADAMS LIVING ROOM - LATER

Dustin is seated on the sofa as before him the Professor paces the room, beard in one hand, pipe in the other.

PROFESSOR

Your history is a very intriguing one. Survived a fatal car accident that took your parents from this world before you were even in it. Congenital heart defect - patent atrial septum, I presume - that required open heart surgery at age three. Massive brain surgery at puberty. Unsuccessful suicide attempt, not to be taken literally. Committed to a life of dissolution, and yet you go on living. As I see it, everything points to one conclusion. You are alive for a reason. A very grand purpose.

GRAVES

(deadpan)

To live for six months.

PROFESSOR

No, no. Don't you see. I wish I could be so lucky! Cancer is the seed of immortality. It is eternal life. Albeit misdirected, as hate is misdirected love. But eternal, everlasting life. I'm talking about forever, son!

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

(Dustin grunts)

I'm deadly serious. Did you know that cancer cells do not die? They are programmed to go on living. The organism - yours - make them as a last ditch effort to survive. Your body became a factor of forever, because you were dying, but not from cancer. Don't you see?

GRAVES

I'm sorry. I don't.

PROFESSOR

How to put it in your terms? You like night life, yes? You've seen Dracula? Think of cancer as a lover of the night. A vampire, as it were.

GRAVES

A blood sucker.

PROFESSOR

Precisely. Doomed to go on living, it feeds on those around it. If we could turn the vampires around, reeducate them, as it were, make them share their immortality with surrounding normal cells, for the good of the host, do you know what we'd have? Infinite regeneration. A being free from common ailments. Impervious to disease. Forever young. Do you understand?

(off Dustin's blank stare)

No time to delve deeper. Right now we must act!

GRAVES

Why are you so interested in helping me? I have no money.

PROFESSOR

And I have no need of more money. I am independently wealthy. Work in the traditional means to an end sense is a superfluity. I don't have to work another day in my life, should I live fifty times over, as will you.

AMETHYST

Daddy produced a patent.

PROFESSOR

Several in fact, but beside the point.

GRAVES

Then why help me?

PROFESSOR

Let's just say I have a score to settle.

AMETHYST

(matter of fact)

My mother had cancer-

PROFESSOR

Please, do not speak her name! It is sacred to my soul. But yes, it is true. I have devoted my life that Matilda's death not be in vain! To defeat her killer in another's body. Convert, I should say. In any event, now there is you. Sent to me like a dove of promise!

GRAVES

Look, I may be a lot of things, but I'm no dove.

PROFESSOR

I meant in the symbolic sense. Beacon, if you prefer.

GRAVES

(amused)

I don't even know what that means.

PROFESSOR

Listen to me. I've given my life - the past ten years, to be more precise - to discovering a cure. To redirect the deviant cells. In decades past I was astrophysicist, chemist, existential philosopher, and psychopathologist - or clinical psychologist, it makes no difference - each in turn, but for these past ten years, nothing but disease has been my domain. Alas, by a cruel twist of fate, despite my years I am healthy, at seventy easily more vigorous than a man half my age.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

And so I needed a guinea pig.
Someone afflicted, in the throes,
as it were, on whom to test my
theories. And now there is you, my
beacon!

He goes to embrace Dustin who dodges him. Dustin and Amethyst exchange a smile.

PROFESSOR

I must know at once, are you in?

GRAVES

(stands at attention; mock
serious)

Tell me what you need me to do. Say
the word, and I serve.

PROFESSOR

Then you must move in immediately,
and stay here until you are cured,
or die, whichever comes first. A
joke. It will be the former. Must
be. It can't be any other way. What
say you?

GRAVES

As you wish. Wait. My mother. I
borrowed her car without asking. I
needed to have it back like an hour
ago.

PROFESSOR

Excellent. We have our first
hurdle. I welcome strife. Necessity
is the mother of all invention.
Leave this to me. On second
thought, come with me. Both of you.
I'll devise a plan whose execution
will likely need your assistance.
We need to return your mother's
vehicle and engineer your escape
from death's den.

GRAVES

Death's what?

PROFESSOR

We need to get you out of that
house. Out of that life. Should you
go back there for any substantial
period, you do so to die. All ties
with the past must be severed. It
is essential to your cure.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)
 Today, my young friend, is the
 first day of your life!

GRAVES
 Is he serious?

AMETHYST
 Daddy always is. Except between the
 hours of eight and ten, when he has
 his brandy.

PROFESSOR
 Cognac! Brandy is for peasants!

GRAVES
 What time is it now?

AMETHYST
 Just past twelve.

GRAVES
 So he's serious. And you're okay
 with this?

AMETHYST
 With daddy? I love my daddy.

GRAVES
 With my moving in.

AMETHYST
 It can't be any other way.

PROFESSOR
 Now tell me once and for all. Are
 you in?

GRAVES
 (looking at Amethyst)
 All the way.

EXT - STREET - NIGHT

The Professor leads the way in Dustin's mother's car. Dustin and Amethyst follow in the Professor's Cadillac Deville. As they reach Dustin's street, the Professor motions for them to come up alongside him.

PROFESSOR
 Follow my lead. Park at some
 distance. Sneak into your room and
 take from it only that which is
 absolutely necessary. Here, use
 this.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)
 (hands Dustin an empty
 knapsack)

And remember, come away from
 death's den with only that which
 you cannot live without.

GRAVES
 What's your plan?

PROFESSOR
 I haven't devised it as of yet. I
 derive my inspiration from the
 moment. Which is now. Follow my
 lead.

The Deville follows the Professor as he pulls into the Graves
 driveway, exits the car and introducing himself to the two
 officers that wait at the gate, gesticulating violently,
 manages somehow to gain admittance to the Graves estate.

Dustin parks several houses down and he and Amethyst make
 their way to his house on foot. She distracts the officers as
 he slinks along the perimeter of his house and through the
 back way.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Graves creeps into the side door. He peeks into the kitchen
 to see the Professor explaining himself to Mrs. Graves and
 Dr. Fink. He listens to the conversation.

PROFESSOR
 (pouring it on)
 The boy, I'm afraid, has made for
 Mexico. He is determined, my
 attempts to dissuade him
 notwithstanding, to live out
 whatever days the good Lord wishes
 to grant him in the splendor of the
 sun, or under the shade of palm or
 whatever indigenous trees abound in
 those parts, possibly strumming
 guitar, likely on the arm of one or
 more sun-soaked señoritas, as I
 believe the young pretties are
 called in those parts, and though
 it pains me to tell you this, but
 boys will be boys, dictated by the
 thrust of hormonal urges, as it
 were. . .

Dustin shakes his head, amused, and moves to his room.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

He looks around, drops the knapsack on the bed, and sits. He sees a ring, takes it in his hand, holds it up. He hears his mother crying in the kitchen. He sees a vial of morphine by his bed. He sets down the ring and picks it up. Holding the morphine, he moves toward the kitchen, sways as one might while overlooking a ledge from a towering height.

We hear the ruffle of pages. Dustin turns to see Amethyst seated atop his desk, reading from his journal.

AMETHYST

In pain lies happiness?

GRAVES

Sounds twisted.

AMETHYST

(holding up his journal)

Your words.

GRAVES

I can't take credit. Old song lyrics. Metallica, I think.

AMETHYST

Doesn't change their truth.

GRAVES

How would you know? You're, like, perfect.

AMETHYST

How can you be so careless? You're not the only one who lost someone he loved.

GRAVES

I'm sorry. Pretty thoughtless of me.

She holds up the picture of his parents.

AMETHYST

Mom and dad?

GRAVES

Never knew 'em, but yeah.

She sees the ring.

AMETHYST

And that?

GRAVES

My mom's engagement ring. They planned to elope but died on the way. Wanted to honeymoon in India. Never got there either.

AMETHYST

(charmed; off picture)
They were hippies.

GRAVES

I wish I could be that free. Mom liked to study the stars. Dad believed in past lives.

AMETHYST

Pretty ring. What's the stone?

GRAVES

(getting it)
It's...Amethyst.

Amethyst jumps off the desk to get a closer look. As she does, a book topples onto its side.

MRS. GRAVES (OFFSCREEN)

What was that? Is someone here?

AMETHYST

We need to go. Where are your things?

GRAVES

(gesturing around the room)
These are my things. This is my life.

AMETHYST

The life you're leaving behind.

GRAVES

I'm afraid.

AMETHYST

It's okay. You're facing the unknown. But you're not alone. There's me.

She holds out her hand. He sets the morphine down beside the ring and takes her hand. They disappear just as the two officers enter the room.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - MATILDA'S STUDIO - NIGHT

The studio is sparsely furnished, with full length windows for walls, through which we get a glimpse of the Topanga wilderness. Scattered about are paintings depicting the sun at dawn and at dusk in various settings - over the water, above mountains, reflecting off skyscrapers, etc.

Dustin sits stiffly atop the bed, holding his hip in pain. The Professor stands with his back to Dustin, examining the trees that rustle against the panes of glass.

PROFESSOR

I trust you'll be comfortable in this room. It belonged to my late wife. She used it as her studio. Horizons were all she would paint. Life with her was an eternal sunrise, and one long sunset in the end. If only I knew then what I know now. Alas, every man's plight. Damn my fate!

GRAVES

When did she die?

PROFESSOR

(recovering)

It will be ten years in December.

GRAVES

December. Doctors gave me til then.

PROFESSOR

Then this Christmas will bring true cause for celebration.

GRAVES

You really think you can help me? The doctors said there's no cure. Nothing short of a miracle.

PROFESSOR

Modern medicine knows nothing. They've lost the forest for the trees. You see, doctors are trained only to detect disease, and they almost missed it in you. You'll have your cure. And I don't believe in miracles - except for you.

Graves looks at the Professor quizzically, then:

GRAVES

Look I appreciate what you're trying to do for me-

PROFESSOR

But?

GRAVES

But how?

PROFESSOR

Leave the details to me. But let this be your mantra: The seed of death is the source of eternal life. Say it.

GRAVES

The seed of death is the source of eternal life.

PROFESSOR

You will not grow old. You will not die. Of course, you will still feel pain. With nerves that constantly regenerate, your pain will be intense.

GRAVES

And the pain of a broken heart?

PROFESSOR

Out of my realm, I'm afraid. Perhaps one day you'll find such a remedy, if one exists.

GRAVES

You talk like I'm already cured.

PROFESSOR

In a sense, you already are. You see, everything exists in the present. It's all here. All you have to do is open your eyes and see.

GRAVES

Sorry, my vision isn't all that great. I should be wearing glasses but they got busted, just like everything else in my life.

PROFESSOR

Give it time. In the meanwhile, open your mind.

The Professor places his hand over Dustin's hip and holds it there for a moment. Dustin's features, perpetually distorted in pain, relax if for a moment.

PROFESSOR

All that life, pulsating inside
you.

(beat)

Now, get some sleep. We have a lot
of work to do. Oh, and don't mind
my wife if she pays you a visit.
Her spirit is a mischievous one.

The Professor leaves the room. Dustin regards his hip as though for the first time.

INT - STUDIO - LATER

It is late and the room is dark. Dustin lies in bed. The trees bang persistently against the glass. He gets up from bed, goes to the window. The breeze, if there was one, has disappeared. He looks down into the wooded garden to see the Professor in robe and hiking boots, walking toward the mountains and disappearing beneath the trees.

INT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dustin searches the cabinets, finds a bottle of cognac. He considers it, then the rustling of the trees again. He sets it back in the pantry.

INT - AMETHYST'S ROOM

Dustin turns on the light. The room is empty. On her bedside table lies a copy of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. As he enters, the rustling of the trees again. He turns off the light and exits.

INT - STUDIO - NEXT DAY

Dustin opens his eyes to find the Professor seated at the foot of the bed holding two mugs of beer, the glasses still frosty.

PROFESSOR

Top of the day to you, my good man.

He hands Dustin a mug of beer. Dustin stares at it in disbelief.

GRAVES

What time--

PROFESSOR

High noon. What, you don't like beer?

GRAVES

I never met a brewski I didn't like, but is this supposed to be good for me?

PROFESSOR

Don't be so self-conscious. Doubt is the destroyer of dreams. Drink, my young friend. Drink like a dying man in the desert, thirsting for life.

He swigs from his own glass. Not to be outdone, Dustin downs his beer in one gulp, wipes his mouth.

GRAVES

More!

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves and the Professor are seated outside on the steps leading from the back of the house to the expansive back yard giving out onto the Topanga wilderness. Several empty beer bottles lie at their feet. The Professor lights up his pipe, takes from his bathrobe pocket a back of Marlboro Reds, hands them to Dustin, gives him a nod as if to say, "It's okay."

GRAVES

Don't mind if I do.

EXT - WOODS - DAY

They walk through the forest, talking. Dustin laughs, drinks.

EXT - CEMETERY - DAY

They stand at the gates of an old cemetery regarding the century-old tombstones. Dustin smokes and drinks.

PROFESSOR

Here lies death.

Dustin's look darkens. It's too much for him. He teeters, vomits. The Professor braces him.

GRAVES

I think I need to eat.

INT - TAVERN - DAY

The two sit at a table. Before Graves is a 16-oz., four-inch thick steak. He devours it greedily, washing it down with beer. The Professor watches him closely, his eyes lit in mischievous glow as he picks at a salad of sprouts and nuts, sips water.

INT - BATHROOM - DAY

Graves can be heard vomiting in the stall as the Professor washes his hands at the sink.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - DUSTIN'S ROOM - EVENING

The Professor carries Graves into the room, tucks him in.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

The birds are chirping. The window lets in the early wisps of morning light. The Professor shakes Graves into consciousness.

PROFESSOR

How do you feel? Be specific.

GRAVES

Like death. Why did you let me drink so much?

PROFESSOR

Would you have drunk any less if I had tried to stop you? Take responsibility for your actions. A man is defined by them.

GRAVES

My aching head!

PROFESSOR

I want you to remember this feeling. Brand it in your mind. Every time you want to smoke, or to drink, or to eat animal flesh, think about how you feel now. Take this.

He hands Graves a glass of thick greenish-blue liquid.

PROFESSOR

Drink up.

GRAVES
 (wincing in disgust)
 What is it?

PROFESSOR
 It is good for you.

Graves holds his nose and takes a big swig, trying not to taste it.

PROFESSOR
 What time do you usually wake up?

GRAVES
 I dunno. Ten? I'm more a night owl.

PROFESSOR
 And what do you usually have for breakfast?

GRAVES
 Sausage. Bacon and eggs. Milk. The usual.

PROFESSOR
 You see. It's not yet seven in the morning and already you've changed two habits. Change the habits, change the man. Change the man, change his fate.

(as Dustin downs the rest of his shake)
 Are you ready?

Dustin nods, then promptly vomits into his own lap. The Professor chuckles.

PROFESSOR
 Let the mind lead, and the body will follow. Give it time.

EXT - WILDERNESS - DAY

The Professor and Graves sit along the rocks bordering a stream. Graves restlessly tosses rocks into the water as the Professor basks in the sunlight.

PROFESSOR
 As Hippocrates, Father of Medicine, so concisely put it: the recipe for health consists of sunlight, fresh water, and air.
 (MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)
 I've added to this list a few ingredients to neutralize the products of the industrial revolution and . . . would you please quit disturbing your surroundings!

Graves stops tossing rocks, glumly regards his bulging hip.

GRAVES
 (to himself)
 Yeah, well. Hippocra-whoever never met me.
 (louder)
 Any idea when Amethyst-

PROFESSOR
 Focus, my friend. Breathe.

Graves closes his eyes, takes a deep breath in, coughs.

PROFESSOR
 Sunlight, fresh air, water. Be in your body.

GRAVES
 That's where I am. I have no choice in the matter.

PROFESSOR
 There's always a choice. Drink.

Graves bends to the stream and tries to sip water but a fish jiggles by his nose.

GRAVES
 I can't drink anymore. Water is for fish, and for toilets!

PROFESSOR
 Eat.

He hands Graves a wooden bowl of sprouts and other greens and nuts.

GRAVES
 This is like what they give cows. What do they call it, cud?

PROFESSOR
 You mean what they give horses and gorillas, and would you look how strong and swift they are!

Point taken. Graves morosely picks at the food.

GRAVES
You know if Amethyst were here then
maybe-

PROFESSOR
Maybe what?

GRAVES
Dunno. Just like saying her name.

PROFESSOR
Stop living for the future and be.

GRAVES
Be what?

PROFESSOR
Just be.

Dustin shakes his head, tosses a rock.

EXT - WOODS - DAY

The two walk in the woods, side by side. Graves' eyes are closed, and his arms are out alongside him, like wings as the Professor looks on.

GRAVES
I can't see shit!

PROFESSOR
That's the point. I want you to
trust yourself. Be in your body. Be
part of your surroundings.

As Graves is about to walk into a tree, the Professor guides him back onto the path.

GRAVES
I can't. My leg hurts.

The Professor shushes him.

GRAVES
Have you called my mother and told
her where I am? What I'm doing? You
promised, you know. She must be
worried sick. Sick!

PROFESSOR

What have I told you about that word? Sick is no longer in your vocabulary. Now just keep going.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

He tosses and turns in bed. He sits up and throwing off the covers, inspects his hip, which looks more swollen. The highly vascularized tissue pulsates and throbs.

A knock at the door and he limps across the room, opens the door, sees Amethyst who doesn't look herself: Her eyes are dull and sunken. She smiles wanly.

GRAVES

It's you! I mean, hey.

AMETHYST

Did I wake you?

GRAVES

No! I mean, it's fine. Are you all right?

AMETHYST

I just wanted to say good night. Daddy's not being too hard on you, is he?

GRAVES

I'm dealing.

AMETHYST

Well, then. Goodnight, my little lamb of God.

(kisses his cheek)

I meant little in a cute way.

She walks off leaving Dustin looking perplexed.

GRAVES

Lamb?

A SERIES OF SCENES

GRAVES (V.O.)

Each day was a lifetime in itself, dedicated from sunup to sundown, to health.

Graves in his daily activities: working in the garden, sunning by the stream, cooking meals, meditating cross-legged, talking to the Professor, walking with his eyes closed, trying to run.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

Cancer starts in one cell. One cell that through mutation does not age, and does not die.

The Professor in his laboratory, a morass of machinery, taking blood samples from Dustin's arm, tissue samples from his hip, analyzing them under the microscope, letting Dustin take a look.

PROFESSOR

Think of the body as a vessel. A ship. Sensing that the balance between degeneration and regeneration has been tipped and vitality (water) was spilling out too rapidly, the ship (your body) creates a super cell with the ability to live indefinitely, instructing it to divide endlessly. But in the frenzy of survival the instructions weren't completely transmitted, and the mutant cells fail to specialize, so they take over the normal cells, of your kidney, liver, and so forth, without assuming their function. In other words, the body's disorganized, desperate attempt to go on living is to kill itself. Its last gasp for life is suffocation!

GRAVES

Mutiny, in other words.

PROFESSOR

Precisely!

GRAVES

So how do we turn those rebels around?

PROFESSOR

I haven't figured that out yet. But look around you. I'm hoping the answer lies somewhere in all this metal.

GRAVES (V.O.)
 The Professor did a lot of
 explaining, except when it came to
 my mother, so I had to take matters
 into my own hands.

INT - TAVERN - NIGHT

Dustin is at the payphone, looks over his shoulder and dials.

GRAVES
 (on phone)
 Hello mom? Hi. I can't talk, but I
 just want you to know I'm doing
 fine. No I'm not in Mexico. L.A. I
 can't say exactly. No I can't give
 you the address. I'm not even
 supposed to be on the phone.
 Professor won't let me. I'm not
 supposed to even...there are very
 specific rules. What to eat, drink,
 think, sleep. Everything. I have a
 very strict schedule. And I can't--
 (listens to mother crying;
 gives in)
 10600 Eventide Place. But you can't-
 don't come here. Mom? Mom? Hello?

He hangs up.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - NEXT DAY

A taxi pulls up to the house. Mrs. Graves exits. The trunk
 pops open and she extracts two large suitcases. She wrestles
 them out of the car with amazing strength, refusing the cab
 driver's assistance. She marches up the gravel path,
 teetering with the weight of the bags, but managing. Graves
 goes out to help his mother. She drops her things and gives
 him a massive hug, not letting go.

INT - KITCHEN - DAY

Graves helps his mother inside the house. The Professor
 enters.

PROFESSOR
 What's the meaning of this?

MRS. GRAVES
 You! You lying scoundrel. Do you
 know I actually went all the way to
 Mexico?

PROFESSOR

If I misspoke I'm afraid it was for your son's own good, madame.

MRS. GRAVES

What do you know of his own good? I'll tell you what will do him good. To have his mother with him during his final days.

GRAVES

Mother please-

MRS. GRAVES

No! This beastly man needs to hear what I have to say. And since my son insists on staying here, then so will I.

PROFESSOR

Out of the question, entirely!

She charges forward and stands toe to toe with the Professor. The sight of this Chihuahua of a woman barking up at a human Great Dane is comical and Dustin giggles despite himself.

MRS. GRAVES

(to Professor)

Either that or I phone the police directly. I'll have you charged with kidnaping and--

(to Dustin)

--you carted back to the hospital, which is where you belong. You're not right in the head, or the hip.

(to both)

What say you to that?

PROFESSOR

(giving in)

You can avail yourself of the shed out back.

GRAVES

(pleading)

The shed, Professor?

PROFESSOR

What? It has all the amenities a woman of taste might wish for. Hot water, stove. It is without a loo, I'm afraid, but the bushes are within walking distance.

MRS. GRAVES

The bushes?

PROFESSOR

I use them myself. Good for the foliage. I trust you've heard of manure?!

MRS. GRAVES

(beside herself)

Manure?

GRAVES

It's okay, mom. You can use my bathroom.

MRS. GRAVES

As long as I can be near my loving son. And don't think I don't have my eye on you. I don't know what you're trying, but it smells fishy.

PROFESSOR

Nothing fishy in this house. We're all vegetarians.

MRS. GRAVES

We'll see about that.

(to her son)

Show me to my quarters. I've had a long drive and emotionally I'm not right. What you've put your poor mother through!

PROFESSOR

(to Dustin)

When you're finished with that...I'd like a word with you.

MRS. GRAVES

And Dr. PHD Fink would like a word with you!

The Professor does not reply. She pulls Dustin along and out of the kitchen.

INT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the dinner table somberly sit the Professor and Mrs. Graves. Neither looks at the other. Dustin serves them each a plate of mixed greens.

GRAVES
 (proudly; to mother)
 I hope you enjoy. Made it myself.

MRS. GRAVES
 (disgustedly)
 Needs a woman's touch. Which way to
 the market?
 (rising)
 Don't you boys move. I'll be back
 in a heartbeat.

INT - KITCHEN - LATER

Dustin and the Professor sit in silence, rooted to their chairs. The Professor is gravely displeased. Dustin picks at the remnants of his mixed greens.

GRAVES
 (apologetic)
 My mother-

PROFESSOR
 Silence! My digestion is already
 ruined for the evening. Your
 comments can only make things worse

Mrs. Graves returns, carrying two bags of groceries. She sets them on the counter and begins unpacking them. In succession appear French bread, sausage, cold cuts, butter, etc. It seems she bought out the local delicatessen.

MRS. GRAVES
 Give me just a moment, I'll make
 you boys a meal to knock your socks
 off.

Dustin shakes his head, bracing for what's to come.

INT - KITCHEN - LATER

Mrs. Graves serves her saucy, meaty concoction to her unwitting son and the hapless Professor.

GRAVES
 Mom, there is meat in this. We're
 veg--

MRS. GRAVES
 It's not meat. It's lamb. I know
 how you love my stew.

Amethyst enters wearing her nurse's uniform and a book bag.

AMETHYST

Oh, hi!

GRAVES

I'd like you to meet my mother.
Mom, this is Amethyst.

MRS. GRAVES

(reserved)

Charmed, I'm sure.

LATER

They are at the table, Amethyst is digging into the stew with relish. Mrs. Graves looks on approvingly. Dustin and the Professor haven't touched their plates. They exchange a miserable look.

AMETHYST

(genuine)

This is delightful, Mrs. Graves

MRS. GRAVES

(pleased)

Call me Adel.

GRAVES AND PROFESSOR

(in unison; rising)

I'm done.

Mrs. Graves cheery expression sinks.

INT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Mrs. Graves sits alone by the unlit fireplace, morosely chewing her food. Dustin watches her from the doorway, but says nothing.

INT - BACK YARD - DAY

GRAVES (V.O.)

Despite the minor setback, my mother proceeded to take over.

Mrs. Graves oversees a group of gardeners as they plunder the soil. The Professor runs out, inspects the damage to his herb patch.

PROFESSOR

(holding up a shriveled plant)

Rosemary.

MRS. GRAVES
Well they looked like weeds!

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - PROFESSOR'S STUDY - DAY

Mrs. Graves instructs the housekeeper, Marta, in the manner of dusting. They dust the desk, sending papers flying. The Professor enters.

PROFESSOR
This is aristocratic dust, women!
Confine yourselves to the shed!

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dustin sifts through a stack of clothes his mother left on his bed. He winces and rubs his hip. He pulls back the bedding to see a vial of morphine. He takes it in his hand. His mother comes into the room.

MRS. GRAVES
I couldn't help but notice you'd left it.

GRAVES
Ma, I don't need it.

MRS. GRAVES
You're in pain.

GRAVES
I'm fine. I'm getting better.

MRS. GRAVES
You're not fine! You're not! When are you going to learn to trust me? I am your mother. I have your best interests in mind. You are my son. Take some. It will do you good.

She pushes the morphine to his lips. He drinks. She strokes his hair. The Professor walks by the open door and seeing this charges in. He seizes the vial from Dustin's hand, inspects it, and hurls it against the wall, shattering it.

MRS. GRAVES
(recovering)
That's all right, my loving son. I have more. Come home with me and we will get you some. It's not right that you suffer so.

Graves looks at the Professor, cringing.

PROFESSOR

(calm)

Choose to live or choose to die. If you leave, never return.

MRS. GRAVES

Stop your nonsense. Can't you see he's already dying? There is no choice!

PROFESSOR

He's alive. He's never been more alive.

MRS. GRAVES

How will you forgive yourself when he dies?

PROFESSOR

Even if he dies, he goes down with a fight, not on his knees, as you would have him, surrendering to disease.

MRS. GRAVES

Please, Dustin.

PROFESSOR

Choose now.

GRAVES

(softly)

Mom, I think you need to leave.

MRS. GRAVES

What? After all I've done for you, this is how you repay me? When you couldn't even speak my name, I rescued you! Who took you from the orphanage, paid for your heart, fixed your head. You'd be dead if not for me!

GRAVES

(over her)

Because of you! I'll be dead because of you. Please leave.

MRS. GRAVES

Dustin!

GRAVES

And don't come back.

Her face drained of color, Mrs. Graves leaves.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Mrs. Graves waits at the curb. The taxi pulls up. Dustin runs out to her. He tries to help her with her bags.

MRS. GRAVES

Leave them! From this point on, you are dead to me. Do you hear me? I don't care if you live a thousand years, I never want to see you again.

INT - PROFESSOR'S STUDY - NIGHT

Graves approaches the Professor, who sits at his desk smoking a pipe.

GRAVES

I'm sorry I let you down. I only wanted to make her happy.

PROFESSOR

You did what you had to. It is done. Go to bed. We start early. After this setback, we have our work cut out.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dustin lies in bed, eyes open, the weight of the day's events on him. A knock at the door. He opens to see Amethyst. She's all dressed up.

AMETHYST

I'm going out. Wanna join me?

GRAVES

I shouldn't. It's past me bedtime. I'd love to!

AMETHYST

K. Meet me out back. I'll take care of daddy.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

Dustin and Amethyst sit in the Professor's Deville.

GRAVES

If your dad finds out about this--

AMETHYST

I told you I took care of daddy.
And he won't find out. I do it all
the time.

GRAVES

Okay, so where to?

AMETHYST

I dunno. To have fun?

Graves puts the car in drive and motors down the street. They
drive for a while.

AMETHYST

I'm sorry about your mom.

GRAVES

It's okay. It can't be any other
way.

AMETHYST

That's pretty big of you.

GRAVES

Thanks. Learned it from a friend.
So where do you usually go on a
Friday night?

AMETHYST

(testing him)

I'm usually at the library by now.

GRAVES

I'm not much of a reader.

AMETHYST

Then you better let me drive.

LATER

Amethyst driving, Graves white-
knuckling the passenger seat as
they careen around corners at
dizzying speeds. Then the Deville
screeches to a halt in front of a
club.

AMETHYST

We're here.

GRAVES

Thank God.

AMETHYST
You ready to have some fun?

GRAVES
(smiles)
I already am.

EXT - CLUB ENTRANCE

They reach the front of the line.

BOUNCER
It's ten dollars. The lady gets in
on me.

Graves fishes through his pockets.

AMETHYST
(paying)
Allow me.

INT - CLUB

The music assaults the eardrums with throbbing persistence
and with the flashing lights the effect is very disorienting.
Amethyst leads Dustin into the swarm of people.

AMETHYST
Wanna get some ex?

GRAVES
(going along)
Um . . . okay?

She approaches a guy, gives him money, comes back with two
tabs and hands one to Dustin.

AMETHYST
To . . . whatever!

They swallow their pills.

AMETHYST
You wanna dance?

GRAVES
I'm not much of a dancer. Maybe
later?

AMETHYST
Okay, but I wanna dance now.

Amethyst disappears into the crowd.

LATER

Graves wanders around the club, his eyes bulging out of their sockets. He doesn't look well. He approaches the bar

GRAVES

Water?

The bartender hands him a cup. He drinks, winces.

GRAVES

It's vodka.

BARTENDER

It's all we have.

He sets it down and continues wandering. He sees Amethyst on the dance floor. She's like a butterfly among a swarm of hornets. She dances in turn with several guys, all of them thuggish, scruffy guys you wouldn't want to meet on a dark street. Graves goes to her, inadvertently cutting in. The thugs aren't happy.

GRAVES

I think I need to leave.

THUG

(challenging)

What you say?

Graves turns to him.

GRAVES

I said-

He throws up all over the thug, who rears back and lands one flush on the face. He goes down.

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

At the club's back exit feeding onto an alley, Graves lies on the ground, his head in Amethyst's lap. A welt has formed beneath his left eye. She strokes his hair.

AMETHYST

(to herself)

I never shoulda brought you here. I never shoulda wanted to come.

Graves comes to.

GRAVES
 (remembering)
 I thought you had a church retreat?

AMETHYST
 This was the church retreat. Daddy
 wouldn't understand.

GRAVES
 Well, it's nice to know you're
 human.

AMETHYST
 Believe me, I'm no saint.

GRAVES
 Still are my angel.

Amethyst smiles, then grimaces and throws up on the street
 alongside them. They both laugh.

GRAVES
 Looks like we're in the same boat.

AMETHYST
 (handing him the keys)
 You drive the boat home.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

Graves drives, looks over at Amethyst, who leans her head
 outside the car and vomits again. She holds her stomach and
 groans. She's as pale as her white blouse.

GRAVES
 You don't look well.

AMETHYST
 I'm fine.

GRAVES
 I think we should go to a hospital.

AMETHYST
 You kidding? Daddy would kill me!

GRAVES
 Better him than whatever is going
 on inside you. Besides, I thought
 his bark was worse than his bite?

AMETHYST
 Then he'll bite me. Happy? Now
 please just drive!

LATER

The car pulls onto Amethyst's street and comes to a stop in front of her house. She is sleeping now. Dustin leans over to her, looks at her tenderly. She wakes up.

AMETHYST

I had the strangest dream. We were at this horrible place. I don't ever want to go back. I'll never go back.

GRAVES

We're home.

AMETHYST

What time is it? I'm not tired. Let's go for a walk? That way I won't feel like I lied to daddy.

INT - WOODS - NIGHT

The moon is full and so the woods aren't as dark as they might be in the middle of the night. An otherworldly incandescence illuminates their steps as Dustin and Amethyst walk.

AMETHYST

You know I've been taking daddy's car since I was in the eighth grade? Daddy always says, 'A wise girl learns from her father's mistakes.' I guess I had to make some of my own. I don't know why I've gone on attacking the night for so long.

GRAVES

Maybe 'cause it was forbidden?

AMETHYST

I guess I'm a lot like Eve.

GRAVES

Then this must be the Garden of Eden.

AMETHYST

And you're my Adam. I'm sorry I took you there.

GRAVES

You kidding? I'd walk barefoot
through the dessert to be by your
side.

AMETHYST

How poetic of you. Let's sit down
for a while?

They lie down in front of a stream and look up at the stars.
Amethyst settles into Dustin's arms. He covers her with his
jacket.

GRAVES

The stars remind me of a song. Not
a song really. A lullaby, or a
fairy tale maybe. My grandma used
to sing it to me. It's about a boy
and a girl.

AMETHYST

Sing it to me.

GRAVES

I can't sing. Besides I forgot most
of it, except the first part.
'Here's a tale I give to you, it
starts as stories do. Once Upon the
Great Beyond, in a place where
dreams come true. There once was a
boy with blah blah hair, there once
was a maiden fair-' That's all I
remember. But the gist of it was
that they met, fell in love and
then got separated, and the boy
searched everywhere for her, spent
his life roaming the Earth, but
never found her. And when the time
came for him to die, he realizes
that in searching for her, he loved
her in some ways deeper than he
could if they spent their whole
life together.

AMETHYST

Moral of the story: It's better to
have loved and lost than never to
have loved at all?

GRAVES

Yeah well I don't agree. It's seems
kinda sad. But the end part was
really pretty. Wish I could
remember it.

AMETHYST

'And when they died, to rise up
high, she was Venus, and he her
Mars. And from above true love they
shared, two twinkles in the sky.
Stars bright white to light the
night they bore to serve as guides.
And that is how they spent their
days, together till times' demise.
Side by side in the star-filled
sky. In Lover's Paradise.'

GRAVES

You know it!

AMETHYST

My mom used to read it to me. That
leaves the middle part. I forget
it, though. We could make it up?

GRAVES

I'm no good with rhymes.

AMETHYST

We could try.

They give a few half-hearted attempts at rhymes before giving
up in a fit of laughter. Dustin leans over to kiss her,
hesitates.

AMETHYST

What?

GRAVES

Nothing. Just wish I had some gum
or maybe a mint?

AMETHYST

It's okay, remember? We're in the
same boat.

They kiss. Then, they sit in silence, gazing up at the night
sky suffused with light.

GRAVES

(perfectly content)
I could die right now.

AMETHYST

(shoots up)
Please don't talk that way.

GRAVES

I meant like the lullaby. I'm just saying--

AMETHYST

(earnest)

You can't die. You have to live. Do you hear me?

GRAVES

(playing along)

Why? Got big plans for me?

AMETHYST

The world does! You are going to live and go on and do something really great.

GRAVES

Fine by me. And what about you?

AMETHYST

(lightens up)

Me? I'll be content to watch. I love you, Dustin Graves. Never forget that.

GRAVES

I want to thank you, for saving my life.

AMETHYST

And thanks for saving me tonight.

She lies back in his arms and closes her eyes.

EXT - WOODS - NIGHT

Graves carries the sleeping Amethyst through the woods back to the house.

GRAVES (V.O.)

That night, with her in my arms, it was the strongest I have ever felt.

EXT - WOODS - NEXT DAY

Graves runs alongside the Professor, arms out like wings, eyes closed, like a bird flying through the air.

INT - PROFESSOR'S LAB - DAY

The Professor analyzes a tissue sample under the microscope. Graves sits alongside him.

PROFESSOR

Amazing. Restore a body's harmony, replenish its reserves, convince it that it is no longer on the verge of death, then it has the leisure to educate the immortal cells on the ways of etiquette: dividing is good, specializing is better. And those cancer cells now function like the primordial germ cells. They go to the joints, and no arthritis, to the bones, no osteoporosis, to the brain, and dementia ceases to be. Do you know what you have?

GRAVES

(shrugs)

The Invincible Man?

PROFESSOR

A fortune in useless machinery! Look around you. All these gadgets, built for the complex purpose that your body is able to accomplish on its own, scott free!

GRAVES

Look, I think I'm beginning to get it, but still, what you're saying, it's just words.

PROFESSOR

(holding up syringe;
menacing)

Words? I'll show you words! Give me your wrist.

Dustin hesitates. The Professor grabs Dustin by the wrist, pulls up his shirt sleeve to expose the remnants of Dustin's suicide attempt, where a thick, pale, tendril-like scar has formed. Before Dustin can protest the Professor stabs the scar with the syringe and plunges its contents therein. Dustin's wince changes to awe as he watches the scar disappear almost instantaneously.

PROFESSOR

Convinced now?

GRAVES

(still shocked)

So these, er, cells. Could you give them to other people, so they'd be, um, invincible too?

PROFESSOR

I know what you're thinking, or of whom you're thinking, but no. You see, these delightful little miracles of nature are your own, made especially for you, with surface proteins that identify them as such. Give them to another and they will be rejected as foreign. I'm afraid there can only be one Invincible Man.

GRAVES

(getting it)

So that means I'm special. The Invincible Man. Kinda has a ring to it.

PROFESSOR

A modern day super hero.

GRAVES

Don't expect me to put on no cape. No tights, either.

PROFESSOR

Of course, in theory, you could desensitize your cells, or neutralize the surface proteins of donor cells, and thereby introduce into your body the characteristics of another organism. Give yourself the cells of a cheetah and run like the wind. Better still, those of the eagle, and fly. See what I'm getting at?

GRAVES

I can share my invincibility!

PROFESSOR

No! Simply, that you won't need tights or cape.

GRAVES

Why not desensitize someone's cells to mine?

PROFESSOR

(frustrated)

Look, this is all in theory. I'm talking about years ahead. Light years, perhaps. Your time frame, not mine. I'll be long gone.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

I may wear my dreams on my sleeve,
but I have a pragmatist's heart.

(returns to the
microscope)

Speaking of which, there is the
matter of a certain winter formal.

GRAVES

Amethyst mentioned it.

PROFESSOR

I think you should attend.

GRAVES

I thought you said I couldn't go
out.

PROFESSOR

Exceptions to every rule, my
friend.

EXT - WOODS - DAY

Graves and Amethyst sit by the stream. She studies her
reflection in the still water.

GRAVES

That day at the hospital, when you
found me. Did you look at my file?

AMETHYST

If you're asking if I knew you had
cancer, then no. The most they let
us volunteers do is take blood now
and then and maybe sit with drunks
until they sober up.

GRAVES

And you gave me blood and sat with
me until I came to. You went above
and beyond.

AMETHYST

I was just at the right place at
the right time.

GRAVES

Lucky me.

AMETHYST

Lucky me.

(off her reflection)

I hope I always look like this.

(MORE)

AMETHYST (cont'd)
I never want to grow old. Am I
being vain?

GRAVES
You'll always be young to me.

AMETHYST
You'll always be young. While the
rest of us grow old and gray.

GRAVES
Well then, you'll always be
beautiful to me.
(she smiles)
School's almost out?

AMETHYST
Next month. Then it's onto college.

GRAVES
Where to?

AMETHYST
Far, far away.

She hands him a book: Paolo Coelho's *The Alchemist*.

AMETHYST
Read to me?

GRAVES
I told you I'm not much for books.

AMETHYST
Dusty, to be a doctor means loving
books.

GRAVES
I thought you wanted to be a nurse?

AMETHYST
I meant you, silly.

GRAVES
Me? It took me till twenty just to
make it out of high school.
Besides, I hate doctors. They think
they know everything and don't. I
don't trust them.

AMETHYST
Be the type of doctor you'd trust.

GRAVES

Are you always so sure of yourself?

AMETHYST

No, but I dreamt it. And my dreams
always come true.

GRAVES

What else do you dream?

A darkness comes over Amethyst's face.

AMETHYST

Just read to me?

She hands him the book. He takes it, opens it, and reads, her
head in his lap. But before he starts:

AMETHYST

I was thinking, if you had to come
back.

GRAVES

Come back?

AMETHYST

You know, other lives, like your
father believed.

GRAVES

Reincarnation? Is that even
possible?

AMETHYST

Let's pretend. What would you come
back as?

(Dustin shrugs)

I'd be a dog. A big hairy dog. Get
my belly rubbed all day.

GRAVES

I'm already a dog. I mean my
initials. DOG. Middle name's
Oliver.

AMETHYST

Dustin Oliver Graves. I like
Oliver. Well, dog is God spelled
backward, you know.

GRAVES

So I'm in good company?

AMETHYST

Exactly.

GRAVES

(suddenly)

I'd come back for you.

She smiles, rises and kisses his mouth.

AMETHYST

Now you can read.

SERIES OF SCENES

The Professor fits Graves in a tuxedo, slips him some cash with a knowing nod. Amethyst comes out in a lovely gown. The Professor snaps a photo.

EXT - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Dustin and Amethyst arrive at the entrance to the ball. Amethyst searches in her purse.

AMETHYST

I must have forgotten the tickets.

GRAVES

I have money. I'll buy us some.

AMETHYST

You need a student ID. Think I forgot that too.

GRAVES

What do we do?

AMETHYST

We sneak in.

She leads him around the back.

INT - HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - BACK ENTRANCE

Dustin and Amethyst enter through the back way as some students exit. The gymnasium is festooned and scattered about are round tables where students are seated. A band plays. A smattering of students dance. Amethyst looks around, locates a couple of empty seats. They sit. Dustin smiles at the other students. They return his gesture with uninterested frowns.

GRAVES

(whispering)

These your classmates?

AMETHYST

I've never seen them before in my
life.

A slow song comes on.

AMETHYST

Would you dance with me?

Reluctantly Graves lets himself be led to the floor, holds her in his arms. She seems fragile. Her dress reveals her shoulders and clavicles which protrude from the flesh. The slow song ends.

ANNOUNCER

And now the moment you've all been
waiting for. This year's king and
queen of the ball.

AMETHYST

(whispering)

They mean you and me. The king and
his queen.

As they walk back to their seats...

AMETHYST

I feel . . . not myself. Would you
mind if we left?

They exit before the court is announced.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

Dustin and Amethyst wind through the hills, along Mulholland Drive, which affords a magnificent view of the city at night, a mirror image of the star-strewn sky. Amethyst is entranced by the lights, the Twin Towers of Century City, Hollywood, Downtown, the airport with its departing planes, the beach's pier, all united in their line of vision. As they drive...

AMETHYST

So pretty. Like we're at the top of
the world. Or stars in the sky,
gazing down. Let's stop?

They pull over.

GRAVES

What was that back there? Was that
even your school?

Amethyst looks at him innocently.

GRAVES

You confuse me.

AMETHYST

It's the way it has to be. I'm cold. Let me lie in your arms?

Graves cannot resist. He opens his arms and Amethyst nestles into him, falls fast asleep. He starts the car and pulls onto the road. Amethyst doesn't stir.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

They arrive home. She wakes up. He helps her out of the car. She staggers as if drunk, leans on him for support.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

He helps her to her room. In the doorway, she turns to him, seems on the verge of swooning, catches herself.

AMETHYST

What now? What next?

GRAVES

I'm not good at this.

They look at each other in anticipation. She falls forward, he catches her. They remain in embrace.

AMETHYST

(weakly)

If I could die right now-

GRAVES

If you died, I couldn't live. Don't go far away?

AMETHYST

I'll always be watching you, just like I promised.

GRAVES

(confused)

But you won't go too far, will you? And we'll see each other often?

AMETHYST

Just think of me, and I'll be with you always.

She seems to regain her strength, enters her room and closes the door.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - MORNING

Dustin wakes up, steps into his jeans, slips his hands in the pockets and comes out with an appointment slip dated December 18. He checks his watch. Today's date.

INT - HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Dustin is seated as the radiologists once again study films of his hip. On the viewer are films dated in June next to the most recent films with December's date. They look at one another and then at Graves in disbelief.

RADIOLOGIST

We need to run more tests.

INT - PATHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Dustin is now seated in front of the pathologist, who from behind his desk looks into the microscope at a sample of cells from his hip. He looks up at Dustin, removes his glasses, and stares.

GRAVES

What, a miracle?

PATHOLOGIST

Impossible. I don't know how you've done it, but you have. A miracle.

His shock gives way to a smile. Dustin jumps up in excitement. As he moves to the door...

PATHOLOGIST

(handing his card)

Please, take it.

Dustin stuffs the card into his back pocket and is out the door.

PATHOLOGIST

(calling out)

Perhaps you might tell me how, in God's name?

EXT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DAY

Dustin pulls up to his mother's house in the Professor's Deville. The driveway is empty.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DAY

Dustin finds the side entrance open, enters. He calls out to his mother. No response.

INT - DUSTIN'S ROOM - DAY

He sits at his desk, writing a letter. It reads, "Mom. Cured of cancer. Hope this makes up for it. Miss you. Love you. Your son." He sets the pen down, satisfied. He sees the engagement ring. He takes it.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - EVENING

Dustin enters to find the Professor over the stove.

PROFESSOR
You took my car. I trust your
errand was imperative?

Dustin tries to contain his excitement, hands him the pathologist's report. The Professor's eyes scan it.

PROFESSOR
(reading)
Impression: normal bone cells.

Dustin swings his arms around the Professor, almost knocking the big man to his knees.

PROFESSOR
The Invincible Man! You did it.

GRAVES
We!

They turn to see Amethyst. Though it is late in the day, she wears a robe and slippers. She does not look well.

AMETHYST
(softly)
Congratulations. I'm so proud of
you.

GRAVES
This is just the beginning.

PROFESSOR
A celebration is in order. Let us
repair to the tavern!

GRAVES
(to Amethyst)
You coming?

AMETHYST
You go. I'll stay and rest.

PROFESSOR

It seems my daughter has come down with a nasty stomach virus. Have some broth my dear. It will do you well. Then perhaps you might join us at the tavern and indulge in the disinfectant properties of ethanol. Let us, gentle sir!

Amethyst reads Dustin's hesitation.

AMETHYST

Go.

GRAVES

You sure? Bring you back anything?

AMETHYST

Just a good night kiss.

They kiss. Amethyst puts her arms around both men.

AMETHYST

My two men. I love you more than life itself.

PROFESSOR

Enough sentimentality. My boots are sticking to the floor. We go!

INT - TAVERN - NIGHT

Dustin and the Professor sit side by side at the bar, drinks in front of them. They sip in silent contentment. Dustin takes the ring from his pocket and sets it on the table.

GRAVES

I wanted to ask your permission before, you know--

PROFESSOR

(understanding)
You have it implicitly. Bartender, a round for the house. To my son to be! Truth is, I already consider you a son, but after tonight, it will be official.

GRAVES

Then you think she'll say yes?

PROFESSOR

The only logical conclusion. You have doubts?

GRAVES

She hasn't been herself. Herself.
Who is she? She gets sick. She
laughs inappropriately, has no
appetite, then there are the
stomach cramps, and the things she
says that make no sense.

(pause)

I think she may be pregnant.

The Professor almost spits out his drink.

GRAVES

Not by me. I mean, we've never. Not
by me.

PROFESSOR

(amused)

Then who on Earth with, pray tell?

GRAVES

I don't know who. I don't know
Amethyst. She's a total mystery. I
hardly see her. Where does she
spend her days?

PROFESSOR

Hospital. School. Church. One to
the other and back again in endless
refrain.

GRAVES

I'm not convinced.

PROFESSOR

Well then, let us hear your theory.
Go on, unravel it, as a scientist
would. Inference, evidence, to
arrive at fact.

GRAVES

Okay, inference. I think she leads
a double life. She might not be as
innocent as . . . all that.

PROFESSOR

Evidence?

GRAVES

Okay, evidence. Well, um, we took
your car out and went to a party.
She's done that a lot. Inference: I
don't think she's a nurse.

PROFESSOR

You haven't seen her at the hospital, in nurse's garb, with badge?

GRAVES

I have, but . . . inference: I think she's a patient and they let her play nurse as part of her therapy.

The Professor breaks out laughing.

GRAVES

Crazy, huh? Saying it aloud, I'll admit it does sound crazy.

PROFESSOR

Fact! Your theories tell me nothing about my daughter, and everything about you.

GRAVES

So I'm crazy.

PROFESSOR

Since we're trading stories, I'll tell you one that I can assure you is one hundred percent true. I told you I once practiced clinical psychology? In the seventies and early eighties, I ran a clinic for battered women. This is where I met Amethyst's mother, the late Matilda. She was my patient. And she was already pregnant. She didn't know who the father was. There were many potentials.

GRAVES

So Amethyst is an orphan?

PROFESSOR

Of sorts, yes. Like yourself. I supervised the birth, vowed to raise her as my own. I made no attempt to conceal my feelings for Matilda. The hospital was outraged and dismissed us. I brought them here, to treat her.

GRAVES

What did she suffer from?

PROFESSOR

They called it schizophrenia, but I resisted the label. You see, mental illness has no cure. So science says.

GRAVES

They say that about cancer and we proved 'em wrong there!

PROFESSOR

Thank you. She responded to treatment, but as her mind improved, her body wasted away. I had no medical knowledge and so was powerless to do aught but sit by dumbly while disease ravaged her. But I've had my revenge. You gave me that. Thank you.

GRAVES

(still preoccupied)

So Amethyst could . . . doesn't mental disease run in families? She could have multiple personalities!

PROFESSOR

My boy, give it a rest. You're grasping at shadows to fill the void.

GRAVES

She drives me crazy! I don't know what to think!

PROFESSOR

You know what I think? It seems to me she shares your diagnosis.

GRAVES

I don't get it.

PROFESSOR

She has all the symptoms of true love.

The bartender approaches.

BARTENDER

Your daughter's on the line.

The Professor rises.

BARTENDER
 (points to Dustin)
 She's asking for you.

PROFESSOR
 As it should be.
 (as Dustin moves to the
 phone)
 Her ears must have been ringing.

Dustin picks up the phone, speaks into it. No answer. He hangs up, redials, gets a busy signal. He returns to the Professor.

GRAVES
 Line went dead.

PROFESSOR
 Well we should be on our way. We have had our merriment, and you have a long night ahead of you, should things go well.

He puts his arm around Dustin and they head out into the rain.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The Professor and Dustin enter through the kitchen door. All is dark and quiet. The Professor flicks the light switch several times.

PROFESSOR
 Must be a short, with the rain.
 That would explain the phone.

He lights a candle, calls his daughter's name. Dustin follows him up the stairs. They arrive at the door to Amethyst's room. It is closed. The Professor knocks.

PROFESSOR
 Darling girl?

GRAVES
 She must be sleeping. We shouldn't wake her.

PROFESSOR
 Nonsense, lad. Didn't you say you had a matter of pressing business to discuss?
 (hands Dustin the candle)
 I'll leave you two alone . . . with my blessings.

He walks off humming Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night."
Dustin enters.

INT - AMETHYST'S ROOM

In the dimness he sees Amethyst lying atop her bed. The window is open and the wind and rain lash violently at the curtains. Intermittent bursts of lightning illuminate the room. He sits beside her, watching her silhouetted form. He rubs himself. It is cold. A gust of air blows out the candle. He rises and closes the window, returns to his position beside her. He takes the ring from his pocket and holding her hand in his, he slips it on her finger.

GRAVES

With this ring, I thee wed.
(kissing her brow)
Goodnight, my angel.

A flash of lightning illuminates her features. There is crimson wetness at the side of her mouth, a deathly calm about her face. Dustin feels her neck.

GRAVES

Professor!

INT - AMETHYST'S ROOM - LATER

The two men sit on either side of the bed in dark stillness, immobilized by shock.

GRAVES

Shouldn't we do something?

The power comes on. The image of his daughter's lifeless face is too real; the Professor covers Amethyst's face with a sheet. Dustin leaves the room.

INT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dustin is on the phone. In his hand is the pathologist's number

GRAVES

(into phone)
Please come quick.

EXT - AMETHYST RESIDENCE - NEXT MORNING

Paramedics cart Amethyst's body into their vehicle. The Professor runs after them in protest. Dustin stops him.

GRAVES

Let them.

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

Dustin sits in a rocking chair by the phone, in darkness. The phone rings.

GRAVES
(into phone)
Yes?

The Professor rushes out of his study and snatches the phone from Dustin, almost ripping it out of the wall.

PROFESSOR
(into phone)
Tell me everything. Do not mince.

PATHOLOGIST (ON PHONE)
Your daughter, I'm afraid, had what's known as Meigs tumor. Meigs is-

PROFESSOR
Defined by the trilogy of ovarian carcinoma, abdominal ascites, and hydrothorax. Go on, what killed her. Immediate cause of death, I mean!

PATHOLOGIST
With certain cancers, the blood becomes hypercoagulable. Clots form faster than the body can clear them. The Trousseau Phenomenon.

PROFESSOR
(the scientist in him takes over)
Of course, named for the scientist who diagnosed his own disease, even predicted his cause of death. But these clots usually form at the site of previous injury.

PATHOLOGIST
Our records indicate your daughter gave blood recently? They used one of the veins in her leg to access her circulation. It may have been injured in the transfusion. A clot formed, and-

PROFESSOR
Lodged in her mainstem bronchus. Dear God. Death by suffocation.

GRAVES
 (all he hears)
 Suffocated?

PROFESSOR
 (becoming the father
 again)
 My sweet child. She was in the
 bloom of health. How could I not
 know? Answer me this?

Silence. He lets the phone drop, staggers to his room.

LATER
 Dustin stands outside the
 Professor's study, knocks at the
 door.

GRAVES
 Please Professor.

LATER
 Dustin in the rocking chair. He
 goes to the door again. This time
 he opens it.

INT - PROFESSOR'S STUDY

The Professor sits at his desk in the darkness. He hands
 Dustin a folder.

PROFESSOR
 Take it. My last will and
 testament. Leave me now.

As Dustin leaves . . .

PROFESSOR
 Prove-them-wrong.

EXT - ADAMS HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Dustin digging in the yard.

GRAVES (V.O.)
 The Professor once said to me,
 'There is only one sickness. It is
 sadness. Its only cure is love.' He
 died the next day. Cause of death:
 cardiac arrest. But the truth is,
 he had lost the will to live. He
 died of a broken heart.

A series of images as Graves narrates:

GRAVES (V.O.)

He left me everything, but what I wanted I could not have. I traveled the globe in constant mourning. I visited the shrines of holy men, to fulfill the dying wish of my parents. I wrote love poems which I never read. Old habits set in. I drank, and procured all sorts of illicit substances. In a vain attempt to erase her memory from my soul, I knew many women and felt nothing. I was robbed, beaten, left for dead. And in my wretchedness I was rescued by the kindness of a little girl.

Dustin digging through trash in an Indian bazaar, wearing rags. He is approached by a young fresh-faced girl who hands him coins. He falls to his knees, crying. She strokes his hair. Her parents come over.

FATHER

Are you an American?

Dustin nods. They help him to his feet.

EXT - WOODS BEHIND THE HOUSE - DAY

Dustin is back in Topanga, walking through the woods. He stops by the stream, looks into the water, thinks he sees Amethyst's reflection behind him. He turns and sees nothing.

INT - PROFESSOR'S STUDY

Dustin wandering through the rows of leather-bound books. He picks one up. Introduction to Medicine. He opens it.

EXT - CITY COLLEGE

Dustin walks through the campus, carrying a back pack laden with books.

INT - CLASSROOM

Dustin sits with a group of students as their teacher writes chemical equations on the black board. He's clearly uneasy in these unfamiliar surroundings. The Professor asks a question. As the hands of those students around him shoot up, Dustin cowers, wanting to disappear.

INT - LIBRARY

Dustin amidst a stack of open books, falls asleep in his hands.

EXT - WOODS

Dustin lying by the stream, reading The Alchemist.

INT - CLASSROOM

The Professor returns Dustin's assignment. Grade of D.

INT - LIBRARY

Dustin frowning over expressions, writing so hard that he breaks the pencil lead. He takes up a new one.

INT - CLASSROOM

Dustin getting another paper back. This grade: B+. The teacher smiles approvingly.

INT - HOSPITAL - DAY (FIFTEEN YEARS LATER)

Dr. Graves is now in white coat, stethoscope round his neck, looking over a patient's chart before entering the room. On the chart he reads the name: Kyle Morgan. He enters.

INT - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Kyle Morgan sits on the exam table, fifteen years older than last we saw him, and looking much the worse for wear. Paunchy and baggy-eyed, his face leathery and lined, his features marred by pain. Dustin stands before him. A real role reversal.

GRAVES

Kyle?

INT - BAR - DAY

The two old friends sit facing one another at a local watering hole. Kyle cradles a beer pitcher in his workman's hands. Dustin nurses an Evian.

KYLE

I can't believe it, man. It's really you? How far you've come. Cancer? And now this? Look at you, all professional. You know I ran into your mom. Long time back. She never mentioned any of it. How's she doing?

GRAVES

She's no longer with me.

KYLE

I'm sorry. Anyway listen. I was thinking, you could make a fortune. Think about it. You're a walking miracle. Attach your name to any product on the market and it's an instant success. I can be your P.R. guy. You're lucky I'm available. Of course, you'll need an agent. I know the perfect chick. Granny's name, though.

A SERIES OF SCENES as Graves narrates:

GRAVES (V.O.)

The girl with the granny's name turned out to be the same girl from before, the one from the night that never was. And what's more, the very girl that my mother wanted to introduce me to. After three dates, Gertrude and I were married. It was in part a gesture to my mother's memory. I wanted to make her happy, if only in death. Gertrude proved to be an efficient business partner, and a conscientious wife. I could not give her the children she wanted. The radiation to my hip had left me sterile. But she seemed to understand.

SERIES OF SCENES

Graves in Amethyst's rooms, stuffing books and photos and journal into a black trash bag, then at the front of her house, with the trash bag, locking up and giving the key to a man in a suit. He gets into his car and drives away, looking back once.

Now he's with Gertrude and Kyle, breaking ground on a new medical school, opening a wellness center, at book signings, on talk shows.

GRAVES (V.O.)

I threw myself into work, and we built an empire. And for a time, I almost forgot, and we were happy.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves locks the front door and entrusting the keys to a man in a suit, enters his car and drives away. He looks back once, but only briefly.

GRAVES (V.O.)
Until she came.

INT - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Dr. Graves and Amy Dean as we first saw them, shaking hands at the bar.

INT - CLINIC - PRESENT DAY

Dr. Graves enters to see Amy Dean at the receptionist's desk. She is on the phone and does not look up. He moves past her quickly and enters the office.

INT - GERTRUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Gertrude is on the phone. Graves enters. She quickly hangs up.

GERTRUDE
What's the matter? You look like
you just saw a ghost.

GRAVES
That girl at the desk-

GERTRUDE
The intern?

GRAVES
Who is she?

GERTRUDE
What do you mean who is she? She's
a fill in. A temp. You know we've
been through three receptionists in
as many weeks. It's getting
ridiculous. I just hope she works
out. Oh and by the way, I know we
were set to do dinner. But with
this terrible weather . . . how
about a rain check? Pardon the pun.
Honey?

GRAVES
It's fine. I'm staying late. I'll
pick up something on the way home.

GERTRUDE
 (gathers her things)
 I knew you'd manage. Bring me
 something sweet?

Graves seems distracted.

GERTRUDE
 Darling?

GRAVES
 (mechanically; his mind
 elsewhere)
 Of course. Comfort food. As you
 wish.

She moves past him. He goes to kiss her but she is gone.

EXT - CLINIC - NIGHT

It is raining cats and dogs. In the parking lot a smattering of cars. It's late. The security guard lets Dr. Graves out, bids him good night. He opens his umbrella and starts toward his car. He stops and sees Amy Dean standing on the curb, her back to him. She is without a raincoat, a sopping newspaper over head, dress clinging to her smooth legs. Graves takes in the image.

GRAVES
 Excuse me. You there.

She sees him. Runs over, deftly dodging the puddles. He shields her from the downpour.

DEAN
 Hello. Hi.

GRAVES
 Car trouble?

DEAN
 Maybe. If I had a car. Bus,
 actually.

GRAVES
 Not many run at this time. Not
 around here. I'll be happy to take
 you.

DEAN
 You sure? I live kinda far.

GRAVES
It's fine. As long as there's a
market on the way.

She smiles.

INT - GRAVES' CAR - NIGHT

Amy sits in the passenger seat wearing Dustin's raincoat. She snuggles into it. He turns on the heat. She settles into the warm air.

GRAVES
Dustin Graves, by the way.

DEAN
How could I forget? I'm Amy, and in
your debt.

GRAVES
Don't mention it. Lead the way?

DEAN
How about that drink? I know this
cute little bar. Real cozy.
(off his hesitation)
A man should always keep his
promises.

Graves smiles and motors onto the road.

LATER
They drive in silence.

GRAVES AND DEAN

On second thought--

GRAVES
You first.

DEAN
Stop at the market?

GRAVES
My thought exactly.

Graves pulls into a supermarket parking lot.

DEAN
Great. Wait here. I won't be a
minute.

LATER

Graves waits in his car, engine running. Amy Dean comes back to the car, paper bag in hand. It has stopped raining.

DEAN

How bout we nix the bar?

She pulls out a bottle of wine, then a 40-ounce bottle of Mickey's Malt Liquor

DEAN

For old time's sake?

She hands him the bottle. He takes it, rolls it in his hand.

GRAVES

I haven't drank that in, seems like-

DEAN

Lifetimes? I know this great place, and what a view. I haven't been there in lifetimes.

GRAVES

Okay, but I need something from the market. I'll just run in.

Amy pulls out chocolate covered strawberries, smiles.

DEAN

Comfort food.

GRAVES

How'd you know?

DEAN

I overheard you and your wife. It's okay. You can say they're from you.

Amy tosses the strawberries into the back seat as Graves pulls onto the road.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

They are driving. Amy puts her feet onto the dashboard, luxuriating. She looks over at Graves.

DEAN

Turn here.

EXT - THE VIEW - NIGHT

It is exactly how Graves saw it years ago, the city lights flashing, all of Los Angeles united in its sparkling splendor. Graves pulls into a nook, cuts the engine.

DEAN

Isn't it beautiful?

She opens the wine, hands him the beer. They toast, drink. She cuddles up to him.

GRAVES

We can't stay long. My wife--

DEAN

Shhhh. Do you know how long I've been waiting for this moment?

GRAVES

Waiting for what?

DEAN

To be here with you . . . again.
After all this time.

GRAVES

It can't be that long. We've only just met.

DEAN

Guess again.

GRAVES

When was the banquet. A week ago?

DEAN

Wrong by a long shot. More. Much more. Try harder.

GRAVES

How old are you?

DEAN

I'm as old as I was when you met me. As old as I've always been. Same age.

She comes closer to him.

DEAN

Here's a hint: I've been waiting for you my whole entire life.

(MORE)

DEAN (cont'd)
Remember how strange I was, the
last time we were here?

GRAVES
I should call my wife. She must be
worried.

He dials. No signal.

DEAN
Why worry?

GRAVES
Look, I don't know what's going on
here.

DEAN
(out of character)
What's going on? We are having
drinks, that's all. God, lighten
up!

GRAVES
I'm sorry, it's just . . . who are
you?

She edges closer to him, lips on lips. They almost kiss, but
not quite.

DEAN
I think you know.

Snuggling into him, she falls asleep on his shoulder. He sits
in silence alone with his thoughts. He starts the engine,
moves off into the night.

EXT - AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Graves drops Amy off:

DEAN
Don't forget to comfort your wife.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Graves enters to find his wife asleep in bed. The lights
are out. He crawls in beside her, kisses her cheek.

GERTRUDE
Honey? What time is it? You okay?

GRAVES
It's late. I'm fine. Just took the
new hire home.

GERTRUDE
(yawns; stretches)
That's nice dear. Good night.

She rolls over onto her side and falls back asleep.

INT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Dr. Graves awakens in bed and looks at the empty other side. Gertrude enters putting on earrings. She is wearing an elegant dress and heels.

GRAVES
Look at you. It's always shorts and hiking boots when we go to the mountains.

GERTRUDE
We aren't. You are. Don't you remember. I have that thing. You know, the baby shower.

GRAVES
I must have forgotten. But the big unveiling. You'll miss it.

GERTRUDE
I just end up holding your arm all night.

GRAVES
Still. Who's going to do that?

GERTRUDE
I called the new girl. She's agreed to stand in.

GRAVES
Who? The temp?

GERTRUDE
Amy.

GRAVES
I wanted to talk to you about her.

GERTRUDE
No time. She'll be here any minute. You better get some clothes on. Oh, and thanks for the strawberries.

She throws open the blinds and leaves. Graves squints in the morning light.

LATER

Graves hastily dresses. A knock at the door. He goes to the door, opens to see Amy Dean wearing a skimpy sun dress and straw hat, more ready for the beach than the mountains.

DEAN

I hope I'm not underdressed?

GRAVES

You look as fresh as spring, but it's more like winter this time of year up north. I'll bring one of my wife's--

From her bag she pulls out a knit sweater, the same one we saw Amethyst wear.

DEAN

You like? Oh and I brought you something.

She takes out a copy of *The Alchemist*, hands it to him.

DEAN

Maybe you'll read some to me, for old time's sake?

INT - CAR - DAY

As Graves speeds along the canyon roads, Amy won't take her eyes off him. Then she leans back, dozing, rests her hand on his. He doesn't move.

INT - CAR - NIGHT

Graves drives as Amy sleeps. She opens her eyes, catches him yawning.

DEAN

Where are we?

GRAVES

About two hours from the Oregon border.

DEAN

Want me to drive?

She yawns.

GRAVES
Maybe we better stop.

EXT - MOTEL - NIGHT

The car pulls into the lot.

INT - MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

They stand before the night clerk.

GRAVES
Two singles please.

DEAN
(over him)
One double.
(off his look)
I don't mind if you don't.

INT - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Graves sits stiffly on the stiff bed. Amy exits the bathroom in a bathrobe. She lets it fall to reveal the bikini and beneath it the body of a gymnast.

DEAN
How about a midnight dip?

GRAVES
I didn't bring a suit.

From behind her back she tosses him a pair of shorts with the tag still on.

DEAN
You're lucky you brought me.

EXT - SWIMMING POOL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The sign reads "Closed at 10," but the gate is unlocked. Graves checks his watch, hesitates. Amy takes him by the hand, leads him in.

EXT - SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

They set their towels down at adjacent chairs. Amy wastes no time and dives in.

DEAN
Water is delish. Join me?

Graves gingerly enters the water. Amy swims to him, floats on her back.

DEAN

Hold me up?

He swings his arms beneath her delicate from.

DEAN

Look at the stars, smiling down on us. Reminds me of a lullaby my mom used to sing. 'And when we die and rise up high. Side by side in the star-filled sky. Lovers Paradise.' I can only remember snippets.

GRAVES

Please tell me who you are.

She turns to him, nestles in his arms.

DEAN

(whispering in his ear)
I'm from the Great Beyond.

INT - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Graves and Amy Dean make love in bed.

A series of scenes: The next day, the car flies through the canyon, top down, their hair blowing in the wind. Then, they sit atop a rock overlooking the coast at sunset. Amy is in Graves' arms. Now they are on the beach, drinking champagne, a picnic basket beside them. He feeds her a strawberry, kisses the juice from her lips.

GRAVES (V.O.)

We never made it to Oregon.

INT - CAR - DAY

They drive home, looking pleasantly spent.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - EVENING

Graves enters the house alone, sets down his things. He calls to his wife. No answer.

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Graves sits on the bed. It's late. He picks up the phone, dials. No answer.

INT - BEDROOM - LATER

Graves lies in the darkness, tossing. The phone rings.

GRAVES
 (into phone)
 Gertrude?

KYLE (ON PHONE)
 Dusty! Hey man! Didn't think I'd
 get you.

GRAVES
 Kyle?

KYLE
 You all right? You sound beat up.
 Must be that mountain air. How was
 your trip?

GRAVES
 Fine. What time--

KYLE
 Late, or early, depending. Listen,
 I'm calling for your . . . um,
 wife. She wanted me to tell you she
 had too much to drink and is
 staying with a friend.

GRAVES
 Do you have the number where's she
 staying? I've been trying her phone
 all night.

KYLE
 She'll call you tomorrow.

GRAVES
 I'd like to speak to her now, Kyle.

Kyle hesitates.

KYLE
 She'll be right over.

The phone goes dead.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - ENTRY WAY - NIGHT

Graves in rumpled dress shirt and slacks pacing the floor by
 the front door. Gertrude enters, sets her purse down.

GRAVES
 You had me worried.

She laughs bitterly.

GERTRUDE

And you?

GRAVES

Can I get you something?

GERTRUDE

It's my house. I'll serve myself.

She goes to the kitchen, returns with a bottle of vodka and a glass. She pours herself out a big drink, gulps half it down, then sets it on the table, sits down and fixes her eyes on her husband.

GRAVES

We never made it to Oregon.

GERTRUDE

So I take it she came to you? Who she is. Who she reminds you of?

GRAVES

Why did you encourage me? Why?

GERTRUDE

I didn't tell you to go fuck her!
Did I? Answer me!

(calmer)

Will you see her again?

GRAVES

I'm not sure. If it were up to me,
then yes.

GERTRUDE

Do you love her?

GRAVES

This is moving very fast. I'm
confused.

GERTRUDE

Do you love this girl?

GRAVES

I love what she represents. She
says things, does things . . .
There is much I never told you.

GERTRUDE

Please leave.

As Graves rises, she moves to her purse and extracts a thick envelope from her purse and hands it to him.

GERTRUDE

While you were busy getting laid, I had a lawyer draw these up. Look over them. I think you'll find the settlement fair. If you do, sign them and it is done. We can both move on.

GRAVES

(taking them)

Then you already knew?

GERTRUDE

How could I not know? I called the hotel. They said you never showed. Either you both died in a car wreck or . . . I checked the news and called every hospital from here to there. No sign. You could at least have called.

GRAVES

My cell. I must have misplaced it.

GERTRUDE

You are reckless and inconsiderate. A terrible man!

Gertrude cries. He tries to console her but she recoils.

GERTRUDE

Just get out!

He walks past her and out the door.

EXT - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Graves enters his car, flings the divorce papers onto the passenger seat, starts the engine and screeches away.

EXT - STREETS - NIGHT

Graves speeds through the desolate roads, turning constantly. His convertible top is down and the packet blows into the wedge between the passenger seat and the center console. He pulls it out, and with it comes his cellular phone. He holds it up, thinks.

EXT - BEACH - DAWN

Graves has parked. He watches the sunrise from his car. The image is not unlike that rendered in the paintings of the late Matilda Adams. Dustin picks up his phone, dials, hears Amy's voice.

DEAN (ON PHONE)

Hello?

GRAVES

(into phone)

Hi. It's me. May I see you?

DEAN

I'm kinda busy.

GRAVES

My wife filed for divorce. She expelled me from the house.

DEAN

What, am I supposed to feel sorry for you?

GRAVES

What-no! It's just. This weekend left a lot of questions unanswered?

DEAN

Look, I have a lot of shit I gotta get done today. Come over now and we can talk but only for a minute.

The phone goes dead. Graves stares at it in disbelief.

EXT - STREET - DAY

Graves drives by Amy's apartment, parks on the street out front. He looks at the divorce papers, frowns, stuffs them in his back pocket. He exits the car and goes to Amy's door, knocks. She appears in a bathrobe, hair askew, toothbrush in her teeth, coffee mug in the other hand. She hands him the mug, moves aside for him to come in.

INT - APARTMENT

She gestures to the sofa. Graves takes in his surroundings. The place is dark, small, and cluttered. He moves aside a pile of newspapers and seats himself on the sofa. Instantly two cats emerge and pounce on his lap.

DEAN

They fancy you.

GRAVES

They must know I'm allergic.

He sneezes but makes no attempt to shoo the beasts.

GRAVES

I'd like to talk about some of the things you said to me over the weekend.

DEAN

(uninterested)

Hmmm...mmmmmm.

Amy disappears into the bathroom, turns the water on loud.

DEAN (OFFSCREEN)

(brushing her teeth)

I'm listening. Go on.

Graves makes a few feeble attempts at questions and as he does so.

DEAN (OFFSCREEN)

(not hearing; not caring)

Interesting...keep going...you don't say...really? Wow...

Amy reappears wearing a slinky dress. She seats herself at her dressing area, her back to Graves, and applies makeup. She cakes it on and looks at him through the mirror.

DEAN

I hear all you're saying, but you gotta understand, I'm a busy girl. I got enough problems of my own.

Graves regards her in her slinky dress with her make-up and her duplicity with undisguised disdain.

DEAN

(off his look)

What? You seemed to like it okay last night!

She rises and taking her purse heads for the door.

DEAN

Look, I'm going out. If you wanna stay awhile till you get back on your feet, fine, but I expect you to kick in for rent. Later skater.

She leaves, slamming the door. Graves sits there. He takes a sip of the coffee, winces, looks miserable in last night's clothes, unshaven, with clogged sinuses and cats crawling all over him. He watches the clock.

LATER

He tidies up, washing dishes, vacuuming, passing the time, making himself useful, playing fetch with the cats, sneezing, dozing.

LATER

It is night and he is asleep on the couch, a cat under each arm. The front door opens and Amy enters with a nice looking guy in his twenties. She turns the light on and frowns when she sees Graves. She claps her hands loudly in front of his face. He awakens, wipes his mouth, sits up, takes stock of his surroundings.

DEAN

You're still here?

He stands to introduce himself to her male friend, but before he can say anything:

DEAN

(to young guy)

My ole man has a really annoying habit of getting shit-faced, wandering over, and passing out on my couch . . . but he was just leaving. Weren't you?

GRAVES

We need to talk.

DEAN

Don't forget your coat, daddy!

She hands him his coat and pushes him out the door.

EXT - STREET - NIGHT

Graves arrives to where his car had been parked to find empty space.

EXT - PARK - NIGHT

Graves walks down the street, head hanging. Approaches a city park. He finds a bench and lies down, covering himself with his coat and checking his watch. He falls asleep.

EXT - PARK - MORNING

Graves awakens without jacket and watch.

EXT - STREET - MORNING

Graves stumbles down the street, wincing in the morning light, the worse for wear.

EXT - AMY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Graves stands across the street from the apartment, watching as the young man from the night before exits, enters his car, and drives away. Graves fidgets for a moment before going over and knocking on the door. Amy opens and the smile disappears when she sees him.

GRAVES

My car is gone, so is my watch and my jacket. I lost my career, wife, house, and reputation, all because of my weekend with you. I'm not blaming you, but I deserve an explanation.

DEAN

You got the divorce papers?

GRAVES

What? Yes.

He pulls them out of his back pocket.

GRAVES

It's the only thing I still have, is the irony.

DEAN

Any money?

He shakes his head.

DEAN

I got some. Let's go eat.

INT - MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Amy and Graves sit facing one another in a virtually empty Mexican cantina. It's still early but before her are two Marguerita glasses, one empty and one filled. She downs the full one.

DEAN

(to waitress)

I'll have another one, and a tequila shot for him.

GRAVES
No, thank you.

DEAN
Yes, bring him it!

The waitress leaves. Amy sits back, letting the buzz wash over her as Graves fidgets.

GRAVES
So . . . ? Out with it.

DEAN
Watch it, mister! You'd think you were doing me the favor!

GRAVES
I'm sorry.

DEAN
Promise me you'll sign those papers and go straight to your ole lady-er, ex-whatever's place after this. It's the only way I get the rest of what's coming to me.

The drinks come. Amy takes a big pull, sets her glass down sloppily, spilling some.

DEAN
Your wife hired me.

GRAVES
I know that.

DEAN
So you know she paid me to seduce you? I didn't think so. She paid me cash. Lots. To wait in the rain that night. But you didn't bite. So then came our weekend retreat. 'Make him fall,' she said.

(to waitress)
We'll have some food. Two of whatever's most expensive.

GRAVES
I'm really not hungry

DEAN
(over him)
It's fine, I can afford it.

She pulls out several crumpled notes and lets them fall onto the table in front of her. She smiles viciously.

GRAVES
When did this happen?

DEAN
First, drink.

He does.

DEAN
That night you gave your speech.
She came up to me when I was back
behind the bar.

GRAVES
Before or after you and I spoke?

DEAN
Before. No after. Oh I don't
remember. What's the difference?
She said she'd pay me two grand for
one night's work. Half then, half
later. Just for pretending to be
someone else.

GRAVES
Did she tell you who?

DEAN
No. Just showed me pictures, and
made me read a lot of stuff. Poems,
diaries. All about a girl.

The food comes. Amy takes a bite and then pushes the plate away in disgust.

DEAN
(remembering)
It was after we met. She called it
a business opportunity.

GRAVES
She's a business woman.

DEAN
She's a bitch. Either that or you
musta made her mad.
(thinking)
Now I get it. All that stuff . . .
you wrote it, didn't you? You loved
that girl. Damn. Don't I feel like
the bitch. Look, I'm sorry. Really.
(MORE)

DEAN (cont'd)

And if it makes you happy, sleeping with you wasn't . . . I mean, I threw that in, just don't tell my boyfriend. He's got a real jealous streak.

GRAVES

I don't feel right. I'd like to leave.

EXT - CAR LOT - DAY

Amy drops of Graves at the front gate of an open air car lot.

GRAVES

You didn't have to tell me anything. I appreciate it very much. I'd like to give you something, but I have nothing left.

DEAN

I'll take an IOU. I'm kidding. Thank you is fine.

He exits the car.

DEAN

Hey mister, you think I got what it takes? You know, the gift. To make it in the biz. Hollywood, I mean.

GRAVES

You fooled me, for whatever it's worth.

DEAN

Thanks, I guess. Hey, don't look so glum. Just when the caterpillar thought life was over, he became a butterfly. Fly, fly.

He watches her motor off.

EXT - GRAVES RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves walks up to what until recently had been his house. He arrives at the gate, presses the security button. Gertrude's face appears on the monitor.

GERTRUDE

Well?

He holds up the divorce papers for her to see. She buzzes him in.

INT - GRAVES RESIDENCE

A group of women are seated around the dining room table drinking tea and playing cards. They look up as Graves enters. He says hello to a couple of them by name and they look down, embarrassed. Gertrude appears and leads him into an adjacent room.

INT - STUDY

The room is bare except for a chest of drawers.

GRAVES

Where are my things?

GERTRUDE

My things. Or didn't you read what you signed?

(taking the papers)

You did sign?

GRAVES

Every dotted line.

GERTRUDE

Now, if you'll excuse me?

GRAVES

Not so fast. You may do me the courtesy of telling me why. Check that. I know why. I've just come from Amy's place. I just want to hear you say it.

GERTRUDE

I don't owe you anything.

GRAVES

Just say it.

Gertrude goes to the chest of drawers and takes out a large black trash bag. She empties its contents onto the floor. Photos, journals, other memorabilia spill out and land in a heap.

GERTRUDE

It's all here. Just like I found it.

GRAVES

I'm sorry that you had to find those things. It was thoughtless and irresponsible of me.

These words soften Gertrude and she gives into the emotion that has been building up for a very long time.

GERTRUDE

You have no idea. Finding out the man you've been married to for over a decade is in love with a ghost. How could I compete with that. I tried, how I tried to love you for who you were, for who I thought you to be. You didn't love me with passion, the way I've always wished to be love, but it was okay. You weren't that type of man. You lived in your head. You couldn't give me the kids I wanted so they became the patients we'd treat. But then, I found all this. You are not the man I married. It wasn't you. You are capable of such great love. A soul love. And it came to me. It was me. You didn't love me! Not that way. What I wouldn't give! I deserve to be loved like that.

GRAVES

I could try-

GERTRUDE

I'm pregnant. It's Kyle's. You know I've always been fond of him. Long before there was you. But he never took any notice of me . . . until I became a successful business woman. You helped me with that.

GRAVES

Pregnant? How could I not know?

GERTRUDE

Your mind was elsewhere. Take your things and leave.

Graves bends down and from the pile of memories takes his mother's engagement ring, nothing else.

INT - ENTRY WAY

As Gertrude leads him out.

GERTRUDE

Don't think what I've told you gives you any leverage in the divorce.

She holds up the divorce papers.

GRAVES

I never really wanted any of it.
I'm sorry for what I put you
through. Sorry I wasn't more to
you.

GERTRUDE

(softening for the first
time)

You were all you could be. You just
should have let me in.

Graves nods. She lets him hug her. He touches the bump on her belly tenderly, smiles.

EXT - GRAVES RESIDENCE

Graves walks down the driveway to the front gate. Kyle pulls in a sports car too new for plates. Graves ducks under the shade of a tree, not wanting to be seen. Kyle bounds out of his car and runs over, a look of embarrassment and apology on his face.

KYLE

Dusty, there's the man! Hey!

GRAVES

Save it, Kyle. She told me.

KYLE

Yeah, well. You should thank me.

GRAVES

Really? Why's that?

KYLE

I took her off your hands.

Graves stiffens, almost gives into rage but it passes as quickly as it appears.

GRAVES

Well, Kyle, if there had to be
another man, I'm glad it turned out
to be you. And congratulations.

KYLE

Can you believe it? We're having a
boy!

GRAVES

I should get going.

KYLE

(opens arms wide; takes in
house, cars)
Thank you for all this. Thanks.
Never coulda done it without you
man.

He smiles guilelessly and springs into the house. Graves
watches him go, his look one of acceptance.

EXT - STREET - DAY

Graves at an automated teller. He checks his balance:
\$335.00. He withdraws the entire amount.

INT - HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Graves stands at the front desk.

GRAVES

(to receptionist)
I'd like a room.

RECEPTIONIST

How long will you be with us?

GRAVES

(to himself)
Till it's done.

RECEPTIONIST

Sir?

GRAVES

Three nights should do.

INT - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Graves sits atop the bed where we saw him at the beginning.
Aside him are the stack of pads, filled with the words of his
story. Next to them, pens drained of ink, and next to them,
the pain pills. Several remain. He writes.

GRAVES (V.O.)

And so I come to the end of my
story.

INT - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Now the page is in the pathologist's hands. The pathologist
is twenty years older than we last saw him, and the years
have not been as kind to him as to his colleague, but the
kindness remains in his eyes.

He stands in the hotel room by the bed on which Graves had previously lain, reading the final words.

GRAVES (V.O.)

Science tell us that the revolutionary changes that shape a new species occur not over millenia as once was believed, but in milliseconds, in short rapid bursts of incalculable power. So it is with the evolution of the soul, and so it is, with understanding.

EXT - STREET - DAY

Graves car exits the hotel's parking lot, and with a roar of the engine and a shriek of tread, it speeds away.

INT - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The pathologist hears the boom of the engine, goes to the window and from high above watches the car speed down the street, follows its course as it meanders through the windy roads and into the canyons and up and around the hill and far away, going so fast as almost to fly.

GRAVES (V.O.)

In times sweeter than these Amethyst used to call me Dusty. I hated it. 'Dusty rhymes with rusty and musty and it means dirty,' I'd tell her. She'd laugh and call me it again, over and over until I smiled. And I'd always smile.

We see images of Amethyst and Dustin together as through a kaleidoscope: when they first met, in the woods, dancing, laughing, as he held her, carried her in his arms, put the ring on her finger, cried over her. We see Dustin at aged 22 gazing into the stream and Amethyst's reflection looking over his shoulder. He turns but she isn't there.

EXT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves pulls up to the house, exits the car. Lets himself in the door.

INT - ADAMS RESIDENCE - DAY

Graves walking through the dark house, for the first time in years.

EXT - WOODS - DAY

Graves, the doctor of 44, walks in the woods, arrives at the stream where he had spent so many days as a young man of 22.

GRAVES (V.O.)

And I would call her Amee, which in certain Romance languages means I love, but in the past tense. I loved. Yes I did. And I do. And will always. And in my memory, Amethyst lives, and I in loving her.

He bends and sees his reflection, and beside his, the reflection of the young man he was at 22. There is little difference. It seems he has not aged. And then appearing over these twin images as seen through the water is Amethyst, as young and pretty as the day they met. It seems she is forever young, too. He turns and this time she's there, in the flesh. They embrace.

GRAVES (V.O.)

Forever is a long time. I think I'll stick around and watch it happen.

THE END