

TOM WILD
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INT. SURBURBAN STREET- LATE AFTERNOON

A quiet neighbourhood. Rows of modest houses, driveways filled with sensible cars.

SAM WILDER (MID 40'S) overweight, unshaven, receding hairline, jerks his aged WORK TRUCK into his driveway. On the side: **TV KING-"DONT WORRY, EVERYTHINGS UNDER CONTROL"** (with a remote control graphic next to it).

The car door creaks as he climbs out. His shirt stained, his tool belt sagging off his waist. He rubs his belly, scratches his head. This is a man who's let himself go.

Across the street, a sleek BLACK BMW, glides into the driveway. **GARRY BRYSON, 45, fit, corporate, smart suit**, steps out adjusting his tie.

GARRY

Man, this thing still running- thought it gave up last week.

SAM

(pats his truck)
Nah, she just needed a little pep talk.

GARRY

Pep talk?

SAM

Yeah.
(admiring truck)
"Listen sweetheart, you and me, we've been through so much...you're not quitting on me now are ya?. Didn't think so."

GARRY

So this is how you kept Linda all these years, sweet talking her.

SAM

That and the fact I got a little Volt Vixen on the side...

He swings open the garage door revealing a sleek midnight silver metallic TESLA MODEL S.

GARRY

No!

SAM

Oh yeah. She's the full package.
Practically drives herself.

GARRY

(inspects the car)
You're cheating on your first love?

SAM

Can't help who I'm attracted to.

GARRY

Damn man. Tell me you didn't dip into
somebody's college fund??

Sam hesitates for a beat, just a beat, then scoffs.

SAM

They'll be fine. Scholarships, student
loans. Hey look at me, I never went to
college and I turned out just great.

GARRY

Fantastic case study.

SAM

It's not just a car Garry- its a
Tesla. An *investment*. Self driving,
saves on gas- it practically pays for
itself.

GARRY

You gonna say that to your daughters
when their bagging groceries to pay
for school.

Sam pops the doors open.

SAM

You wanna know what this smells like
Garry...the future.

GARRY

Or a mid-life crises.

SAM

No, no, this is called balance. You
work hard-you get to treat yourself.

GARRY

You repair televisions Sam.

SAM

I bring jot into peoples homes Garry.

A modest SUV pulls up outside. Sam's wife, **LINDA WILDER, early 40's exhausted, hair in a messy bun**, steps out carrying two bottles of wine. She doesn't look at Sam or the Tesla.

SAM

Wine huh? Thought we were out of beer honey?

LINDA

You're out of a lot of things Sam.

She disappears inside.

GARRY

Uh ohh. You better hope that self driving feature works when she's chasing you down with a knife.

SAM

Poker starts at seven, don't be late.

GARRY

I haven't been late in fifteen years.

Garry heads into his home as Sam turns to admire his car. A look of pride, then a brief flicker of doubt.

INT. SAMS KITCHEN - DAY

Sam sits at the kitchen island scrolling his phone, grinning. Linda uncorks a bottle of wine, pours an extra large glass.

SAM

Whoa- I can't believe it, that influencer just tagged me, got me an extra hundred followers on Tik-Tok.

LINDA

That's great Sam, a hundred people who know what your face looks like, but don't know a damn thing about your life.

SAM

It's called branding, visibility.

LINDA

How about you start showing up for

your kids. We've got a family
remember.

SAM

Hey, what's that suppose to mean. Are
you saying I'm *unavailable* for my own
children...I'm *shallow*?

LINDA

You're insecure Sam. Social media just
makes you look shiny. I get one
morning kiss- from a man who gives ten
to the camera, and I'm not even
competing- I hate social media, but
somehow I'm in the way...

SAM

Honey, that's not true, what the
hell's gotten into you?

She brushes past him, slips upstairs.

SAM

(shouts up)
Can we talk?

It's only now, does he notice the stack of dirty dishes piled
up in the sink. He opens the fridge-nothing but a half carton
of milk, expired yogurt and one single beer.

A flicker of worry crosses his face.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

The room is noticeably untidy. Socks and dirty laundry still
stacked in the wash basket. Linda is sprawled on the bed,
wine glass in hand, watching a romantic movie.

Next to her, **two daughters AVA (11) soft, sensitive and JENNY
(7) loud mouth, no filter**, curled up on their I-pads, earbuds
in, barely acknowledging their dad as he enters.

SAM

(rips off work clothes)
Hey, don't suppose you could order
pizza's for me and the guys?

LINDA

(doesn't look up)
You've got a phone, you can do it.

SAM

Yeah but you always do it. Just get our usual.

He tosses her his phone. She scoffs.

LINDA

Your usual? You mean the same thing you've been eating every Friday night since phones were invented.

As he goes to stuff his work pants into the laundry basket he notices the overflowing.

SAM

It works.

Infuriated, she taps a few buttons fast, robotic, throws it back.

LINDA

All done, extra dip. You're welcome.

She returns to her movie as the couple on screen kiss passionately. Linda barely reacts.

AVA

Mom, are you okay?

LINDA

Fine sweetheart.

Sam stares at his wife's dull face.

SAM

Do anything with the kids today?

LINDA

Stopped off at Target.

JENNY

We had Mac & Cheese!

SAM

Oh yeah...

(kneels to Jenny's cute face)

You're gonna turn into a massive macaroni pasta cheese ball you know that-

(kisses forehead)

you're obsessed!

AVA
(remembers)
Hey, don't forget my games at nine
dad.

SAM
(throws on sweats)
Of course. Mommy's day off. I got it.

Sam disappears downstairs into the--

BASEMENT - NIGHT

Empty pizza boxes, beer cans.

Sam, Garry and another neighbour **WILL (mid 30's)** play poker.
Sam takes another shot of McCallan. Garry gives him a look.

GARRY
You alright man.

SAM
Mmm'fine.

GARRY
Spit it.

SAM
It's nothing. Just the last couple
weeks Linda's been acting funny.
Lippy. You know...fresh. And then the
house, it's usually always clean.
Spotless. Today- it looked like
frickin Saddam Hussein let off a bomb
inside my kitchen. Dishes in the sink-
barely anything in the fridge?

GARRY
Uh oh.

SAM
What.

WILL
Oh shit.

SAM
What?

WILL
Let me guess. Dirty clothes still in

the laundry basket. No hot meal on the table after work.

SAM

I mean, I guess its not that big of a deal...right?

GARRY

(smokes his cigar)

Let me ask you this Sammy Boy...as far as the romance department goes, has that gone dry too?

SAM

If I was to describe my sex life using a movie title, it would be Home alone.

WILL

Gone in 60 seconds.

GARRY

Fast and furious.

Oh boy.

SAM

Maybe its just early menopause.

Will looks at Garry, like he knows a secret.

GARRY

No Sam. It's not. From my experience-
(lightning strikes outside)
This is how it all begins...

SAM

How what begins ?

GARRY

(drinks a shot)

Well- first you start noticing things around the house. Bed doesn't get made anymore, no morning kiss before work.

Sam starts to sweat.

GARRY

Small gesture's turn into little argument's...and then-

SAM
(freaked out)
What, THEN WHAT?!

WILL & GARRY
The maid arrives.

SAM
(close up)
Maid? I don't want no stranger in my house- Linda does all of that stuff.

GARRY
Sammy boy, what I've come to realise in this bazaar, unpredictable life, is that marriage is a lot like playing cards. In the beginning you got two hearts and a diamond.
(holds up 2 hearts & diamond)
By the end, you wish you had--
(holds up club & spade)
a club and a spade.

That bad huh. Sam looks at Garry confused.

SAM
I think you picked me up wrong man, I'd be lost without Linda. She's my sweetheart, my angel, I'm gonna stop complaining.

GARRY
Hey, do you remember when I told you I got a three month work transfer to Madrid.

SAM
Yeah, you came back with that nice tan.

GARRY
Sunbeds Sam. I lied. Lisa kicked me out so I spent three months in my mother's basement.

SAM
You lied?

GARRY
Small white one.

WILL
And Sam...

SAM
What?

WILL
I didn't spend eight weeks helping my
brother renovate his house
either...Michelle kicked me out too.

SAM
Okay...so Lisa and Michelle lost it
for a couple months. It happens. You
guys bounced back. Right.

GARRY
Right.

WILL
Right.

SAM
Oh come on guys. I'm sorry I said
anything in the first place. Me and
Linda are fine. Just fine.

INT. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS - MORNING

Ava bounces her football end of the stairs while Jenny plays
with her doll.

AVA
Dad, we gotta go!

MASTER BEDROOM

Sam looks like death as he rolls out of bed.

SAM
(mumbles)
Two minutes...

He pops two painkillers, holds up two T-shirts, one red, one
blue.

SAM
Which one is better honey, red or
blue?

Linda's right eye cracks open.

LINDA
Why don't YOU decide Sam!

He throws on the red and rushes out.

EXT. SOCCER PITCH - MORNING

PARENTS line the side lines cheering on their kids, while Sam slumps over in a folding chair, sunglasses on, scrolling his phone- his new Tesla parked right behind him.

COACH ALLEY 30's, young, hip, focuses her gaze on Ava.

COACH ALLEY
That's great Ava, move it forward,
that-a-girl!!

Ava scores, but Sam doesn't even notice as he takes a call on his cell.

SAM
(down the phone)
Yeah, we also mount TV's, we do
anything from sixty five inch to three
hundred inch, depends on the size of
the wall too-

JENNY
Daddy look, Ava scored a goal!

SAM
Great honey, just give daddy a second,
this call is important.

Ava looks over mid-celebration. See's her dad completely checked out. Her face falls.

INT. SAMS TESLA - DAY

Sam tries to make eye contact with Ava through the rear view but she's having none of it.

SAM
I said I was sorry.

AVA
(so hurt)
Why did you even come? Why stand there
pretending to support me when you
don't even give a crap!

SAM
Ava, no cursing!

JENNY
What's a crap daddy?

He pulls into CVS. Parks the Tesla.

AVA
(under her breath)
Why can't you be like the other dads
who actually pay attention to their
daughters?

SAM
(spins around)
Have you any idea how expensive this
soccer club is?

JENNY
Hundreds of dollars--

SAM
That's right Jenny-- hundreds--wait,
how do you know that?

JENNY
Mommy told nanna.

SAM
Daddy works very hard to give you
girls everything.

AVA
(emotional)
Mam was right. You always turn it
around and make it about you.

This stings. He climbs out with Jenny.

SAM
Get out of the car Ava.

AVA
No.

She means it, she doesn't budge.

SAM
Ava, I'm not leaving you in the car.

AVA
I'm eleven years old, what do you
think will happen.

The hatred she holds in her eyes breaks his heart.

SAM
Fine. When I close the door, tap on
the touchscreen to lock up okay...and
don't talk to anybody.

She locks the doors by touchscreen as they disappears into
CVS.

INT- CVS PHARMACY - AFTERNOON

Sam and Jenny stand in line for collection. Jenny pulling a
his leg.

JENNY
Daddy, I gotta go pee.

PHARMACIST
Sam Wilder?

SAM
Yes. Hi.

JENNY
Hurry daddy...it's getting bad!

SAM
Two minutes.

PHARMACIST
This prescription should cover you for
the next two months--(conversation
fades)

SAM'S TESLA

Ava climbs into the drivers seat, presses SAT NAV.

AVA
(out loud)
Navigate home!

The screen lights up, the car whirs to life as the Tesla
slowly pulls out of the spot, then onto the road.

For a moment she's amused, barely seeing over the wheel.

Then, at a JUNCTION, the car veers too far right almost COLLIDING with an oncoming car. She reaches for the screen but too late- it swerves onto the sidewalk-CRASH!

The Tesla slams into a tree, shattering glass. Ava jerks forward, smashing into the airbag.

BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Ava sits on a hospital bed, her forehead bandaged, eyes heavy from pain meds. Sam sits beside her, guilt written all over his face. Jenny too young to process anything plays with her doll by the window.

Linda- Silent, seething.

DOCTOR FLYNN (female, 40) enters with x-ray results and a YOUNG MALE NURSE (20'S)

DR FLYNN

She's lucky. Mild concussion but no fractures. I'd suggest to keep an eye on her for any dizziness or nausea.

Linda nods, but her eyes are locked on Sam who's searching for something- comfort, forgiveness.

LINDA

Thank you Doctor.

Doctor Flynn leaves.

AVA

Mom, can we go home now?

LINDA

Yes baby, lets go.

The nurse leads Ava down the hallway towards the main doors.

MALE NURSE

That's it, take it real slow.

Sam and Linda lingering behind with Jenny. Tension thick as hell.

SAM

So uh, guess she won't be playing soccer for a while.

LINDA

(cold as ice)

Are you kidding me? She could have died Sam! That stupid car, that goddamn toy you just had to have.

Continues out the main doors towards her SUV.

SAM

I feel terrible.

LINDA

For which part? Giving our eleven year old child the keys to your tesla? For trying to impresses your buddies and social media followers at the expense of her safety. Or for being so focused on playing "cool dad" that you forgot to be an actual parent.

SAM

First of all, I didn't give her keys to the car, she insisted and staying put! And secondly, I'm not trying to impress anybody- haven't you ever wanted nice things, a diamond necklace or a nice purse?

LINDA

Grow up Sam, you're not a teenager anymore. You've got two daughters and a wife who's ben holding everything together while you pretend life's one big highlight reel.

SAM

I said I was sorry.

LINDA

How dare you risk our daughters future.

She clicks the SUV open and the nurse helps Ava inside while Jenny climbs in the back.

SAM

Linda please...I made a mistake.

She jumps into the drivers seat, window down.

LINDA

So did I...

SAM

What? What do you mean?

LINDA

I want a legal separation Sam.

SAM

(scoffs, laughs)

What, come on, you don't mean that.

She drives off.

SAM

Linda....LINDA???

INT. GARRY'S HOUSE - SUNRISE

Garry's wife LISA (late 40's) the queen of suburban espionage, chats on the phone to **Will's wife MICHELLE (mid-40's) a chronic over sharer** still in her pyjamas and hair rollers.

Across the street, Sam's tesla sits in his driveway a little dented.

LISA

Somethings going on over there.

MICHELLE

You saw Ava covered in bandages yesterday right. What if its domestic.

MICHELLE

Lisa!

LISA

I'm just saying. Linda looked pissed.

Sam emerges form his house, carrying two suspicious looking duffle bags. Throws them in the work truck.

LISA

(eyes narrow)

Wait-wait-Sam's up early.

MICHELLE

What's in the bag?

LISA

How am I supposed to know. Wait-
look...that's body bag behaviour.

MICHELLE

Don't say that.

LISA

Well where's Linda? And the kids?

Sam clocks both ladies by their window.

LISA

Gotta go. Bye.

MICHELLE

Bye.

Click. Click.

INT. SARAHS STUDIO - DAY

A small loft space, filled with half finished paintings,
dried sage bundles and stacks of tarot cards.

**SARAH WILDER late 41, effortlessly beautiful (a scar under
her left eye)** stands barefoot swirling blue and gold paint
together. Her phone BUZZES. Glances at the screen. Its Sam.

SARAH

Shit.

She grabs the phone smearing blue paint across her cheek.

SARAH

Sam?

INTERCUT WITH: SAMS TRUCK - DAY

Sam drives, duffle bag on the passenger seat, eyes puffy from
no sleep.

SAM

Hey.

Sarah can already hear it in his voice.

SARAH

Oh boy. What wrong?

SAM

Do you have room on your couch for a few days?

SARAH

What did you do Sam?

SAM

Why do you assume I did something?

SARAH

Because you're my brother, I know you.

SAM

Got any of that-hippie tea?

SARAH

Its called chamomile, dumbass.

SAM

On my way.

Click.

INT. SARAH'S STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Sarah's living room space is cluttered but cosy. An old Persian rug, fairy lights draped over book shelves and a half drank bottle of wine on the coffee table.

Sam and Sarah chat.

SAM

I'm telling you, Linda has lost her frickin mind!

SARAH

(raises eyebrow)

Linda's lost *her* mind? What are you gonna do, couch surf and wait it out?

SAM

It's temporary. She's just being emotional. She'll cool off.

SARAH

Sam. You didn't just change the Netflix password. She kicked you out of the house.

SAM

Relationships go through things Sarah.
We'll work it out. I mean we're been
married for fifteen, years, you don't
just throw that away.

SARAH

So just a rough patch.

SAM

Tiny minute issue.

SARAH

So you don't think... you may have
checked out, before all this happened?

SAM

Me? You're joking right...no, no,
Linda's the one who's been acting
funny. She's the one *checked out*.
She's drinking more, the house is a
mess, I think she might be having a
mid life crises.

SARAH

And none of this at all has anything,
to do with you?

Sam takes a water bottle from the fridge, swallows two
prescription pills from his bag.

SAM

No. She's clearly going through
something I don't know anything about.

SARAH

I thought you'd stopped taking those.

SAM

My back is out again, *mom*.

SARAH

(serious)

Ava could have died Sam.

SAM

I know I fucked up. The whole thing is
a disaster.

Sarah lights some candles, opens a 2nd bottle.

SARAH

I always tell you not to fuck up and
you go fuck up.

(beat)

You think she'll hit you with a
divorce.

SAM

Why would you say that word???

SARAH

Sorry.

SAM

Don't you think *I* would know if there
was something seriously wrong with our
marriage? Surly she'd tell me.

SARAH

I don't know, is that how it works. I
thought married folks usually hit
breaking point and just...leave.

SAM

(big baby)

It all started when she stopped making
me coffee in the morning.

(beat)

And the only time we have sex is when
I ask for it?

SARAH

Don't all couples after that long,
just start doing their own thing?

SAM

Who's side are you on left eye? You
know what, I'm sorry I came here and
even asked for your support!

SARAH

Now you're being childish.

He leans back, stares at the ceiling, sighs.

SAM

I just...don't get it. I do everything
for her. I take out the trash, do my
best with the girls, I work my ass
off- I mean okay, sure, I bought a
Tesla with the girls College money but

it's not like I never spend money on
her!

SARAH
Wait what? Oh shit.

SAM
I'll put it back.

SARAH
Jesus fucking Christ Sam. You spent
their college fund money on a car?!

SAM
Oh come on, it's not that bad.

SARAH
Try convince yourself that.
(beat)
You wanna know the truth Sam?

He frowns. Clearly no.

SARAH
You've been running from something
your whole life.

SAM
Oh stop, you sound like those stupid
YouTube guru's you always listen to.

SARAH
I used to think you were just born a
selfish asshole, but maybe its
something worse.

He throws her the ANGEL CARD PACK from the side table.

SARAH
Can you pull me an angel card, I think
I'm starting to hyperventilate.

She shuffles the cards, pulls one which reads- **A YEAR FROM
NOW.**

SARAH
Fuck.

SAM
What? WHAT?

SARAH
Nothing, nothing, it's good.
(reads card)
*The problem you are facing will
resolve... within one year.*

SAM
A YEAR!! Oh. Hell. No.

SARAH
(continues reading)
*During this time out, you're
encouraged to stay optimistic and to
continue with self care activates.*

SAM
This is bullshit, pull another one!

SARAH
(serious)
No Sam...stop...

It suddenly his him like a tonne of bricks.

SAM
(emotional)
Garry and Will were right- they
predicted this whole thing would
happen.

Now in the kitchen- Sarah makes the hot tea.

SARAH
By the way, hot water's out, which
means only cold showers- sorry.

SAM
Excuse me? You want me to die from
hyperthermia? You're kidding right.

SARAH
Apparently cold showers boosts your
immune system and improves overall
health.

SAM
(walks to her)
But you're gonna cook for us right, on
the stove?

SARAH
I'm not your babysitter Sam.

Sam looks around. His face scrunched up, pure dread.

SAM
I forgot you were a struggling artist.
(panics, rushes to the door)
I can't live like this. I need to go
over there.

SARAH
Sam, wait! You'll only make things-

But he's already out the door.

SARAH
--worse...

EXT. WILDER HOUSEHOLD- NIGHT

Sam's truck screeches onto the street, parking right outside.
He climbs out barefoot, holding a six pack of gas station
beer and stumbles to the front door.

As he attempts to unlock the front door, his keys don't work,
she's already changed the locks.

He starts throwing pebbles at her window.

SAM
(shouts up)
Linda....LINDA!! Look at me! I can't
live like this! I CAN'T! Not without
YOU! Please baby, let me come home!

INT. LINDAS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda pauses the TV, opens her window a crack.

LINDA
Are you kidding me right now?

She quickly dials 911.

911 OPERATOR
911, what's your emergency?

BACK ON LAWN

Sam, now on his knees.

SAM

I'm sorry! I know I've been a fool, I know that! And I will spend the- rest of- my- life- making it right, I promise!

Across the street, Lisa and Michelle have their noses glued to their windows as they chat on the phone.

LISA

(gasping)

Oh. My. God.

MICHELLE

Is he....serenading her??

LISA

He's got a six pack of beer and wearing no shoes?? Maybe he regrets killing her.

MICHELLE

She's in the window dummy. I'm getting my robe.

They rush to their front door to get a better look.

LINDA

(out window)

Go home Sam!

SAM

What do you meeeaan? I AM HOME!

LINDA

Would you shush, the kids are sleeping! You wanna wake them is that it??

SAM

I need to talk to you. Face to face.

LINDA

Tough--I don't wanna talk to you, you're embarrassing yourself!

Sam spreads his arms wide open.

SAM

Then let me embarrass myself FOR YOU!

Garry and Will wearing night robes and slippers approach Sam on his lawn.

SAM

Garry-Will!! I need your help- she's already changed the locks, tell me what to do??

GARRY

(lights a cigar)
If the locks are already changed and she's blocked your number-there's nothing you can do my friend.

SAM

(checks his phone)
Blocked my number??

Yep. He's blocked.

SAM

She can't block my number right? We have children together??

GARRY

Mother in law's are great mediators.

WILL

Welcome to the club buddy.

RED and BLUE lights come up the street towards him.

SAM

OH COME ON!!!

Lisa and Michelle meet on Michell's front lawn.

LISA

This is better than the Real Housewives.

BACK ON SAM.

SAM

Now what do I do?

GARRY

(hides his beer, throws him gum)
Nothing, just stay calm.

OFFICER RYDER (female, 50'S) approaches with a flashlight.

OFFICER RYDER
Fella's...little late to be having a
picnic on the lawn.

(to Sam)
Sir, I need you to step off the
property please.

SAM
(gesturing wildly)
But this is *MY HOUSE*!

OFFICER RYDER
(takes out her cuffs)
Sir. Step. Off. The property.

Sam stares up at Linda, his heart snapping in two.

SAM
(sighs)
Officer, there's really no problem. My
wife and I are going through, you
know--a mild separation.

OFFICER RYDER
Your wife has just requested you not
show up *uninvited*.

GARRY
Don't worry officer, our friendly
neighbour is in full recovery mode,
patching things right up.

Sam walks to his truck.

GARRY
Absolutely officer- see, everything is
just fine.

Officer Ryder slowly drives off.

WILL
Thanks for stopping by.

Garry and Will approach Sam's window as he reverses.

GARRY
Well that was a thing.

WILL
Hell of a performance man.

GARRY

Listen buddy...I got this guy who helps dudes in your situation. Divorce coach type.

SAM

Will everybody stop saying that word!

Garry hands Sam a business Card with the name GANG CHENG.

GARRY

Give him a call...or don't. Up to you, but we really want ya back on the street soon buddy.

Sam's speeds off.

WILL

He's handling this well.

GARRY

Yeah Will, real picture of stability.

Garry and Will connect with their wives, returning to their homes.

EXT - MOUNTAIN ROAD - EVENING

Sam's work truck RATTLES up a steep winding road, headlights flickering. The deeper he drives into the dense forest, the more ominous and surreal it feels.

He glances at his GPS.

GPS

FIFTY. FEET. TO. DESTINATION.

SAM

This better not be some tent in the woods...

As he rounds the final bend- BOOM. A mansion emerges, massive, bizarre and completely out of place. Imagine a cross between a Medieval Castle, an imperial Zen Temple and a Bond Villain's lair.

Sam parks in the driveway next to a giant golden gong, flanked by stone lion statues. The lake behind it reflects the moon, eerie and perfect.

SAM
What the hell kind of coach is this?

He kills the engine, steps out and -GONGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGG

A large intimidating figure steps into view from the shadows.
This is **HAI. 6"5, built like a tank**, wearing a fitted black suit. His expression unreadable.

They stare at each other for a beat.

HAI
(flatly)
Hai.

SAM
(nods)
Hi.

HAI
No. Hai.

SAM
(blinks, confused)
Oh you're high? Nice, yeah. No I
stopped smoking the doobie couple
years back.

A painful silence. Hai's face remains stone cold.

HAI
My name, Hai.

SAM
(awkward chuckle)
Ohhh. Got it. My bad.

From nowhere, a figure dressed in a flowing black robe steps into view. Tall, bald, long white beard. This is GANG CHENG.

Gang Cheng says nothing. Just studies Sam.

SAM
Hey, eh, Garry sent me...said you help
guys like me?

A long beat. Gang Cheng finally nods once and gestures inside the massive entrance doors.

GANG CHENG
 (calm, cryptic)
 Leave your shoes. Leave your ego.

Sam blinks. Gestures to his sneakers.

SAM
 But these are my only shoes?

GANG CHENG
 (evenly)
 Then you have much to learn.

SAM
 (under breath)
 Tough crowd.

And with that Sam enters over the threshold to-

LARGE FOYER

Zen influenced architecture with large ceilings, Asian trees swaying against each other and soothing sounds of windchimes.

They keep going, into the-

TRAINING ROOM

A zen infused space with wooden panels and dim lanterns.

FIVE MIDDLE AGED MEN, ONE WOMAN, slouch in their seats, each looking like they'd rather be at a sports bar.

RICHARD, 50's, balding, expensive watch, sighs heavily like a bad smoker.

BRIAN, 40's, dad bod, nervously picking his nails.

MICHAEL, LATE 40'S, thick rimmed glasses, business casual, smiles at Sam.

ADAM, 50's, long pending divorce, cynical.

FRANK, 40's, loudmouth, always cracking jokes.

PAULINE, 50's the only woman, fiercely independent, but clearly lost.

Sam scans the room confused, then slides onto a seat.

SAM
So...we just sit here, and talk about
our feelings?

MICHAEL
(grinning)
Oh this ain't therapy man. More of a
secret club.

SAM
Oh yeah? Do we get matching jackets?
Maybe a decoder ring.

Gang Cheng faces them, calm, poised, unreadable.

SAM
(whispers to Michael)
I'm pretty sure my neighbours set me
up. This feels more like a cult.

He stands to leave when-

THUNK! A sword STABS into the door- inches from Sam's face.

SAM
(shouts)
HOLY SAMURAI!!

Gang Cheng calmly removes the sword. Examines it with
reverence, then looks at Sam.

GANG CHENG
In ancient Chinese history, bows-
arrows, common weapons of war. But
sword-sword held power.

SAM
(still stunned)
Looks more like a machete to me.

GANG CHENG
Sword not juts for battle. It teaches
control. Restraint.
(beat)
One swing. Can wound. can kill. No
different words from mouth.

A heavy pause. Sam exhales. The other men nod knowingly.

FRANK

(grumbling)

Words can definitely cut like a knife.
My mother in law has knives for teeth!

The group laugh, except Gang Chung.

GANG CHENG

This is problem. You cry about pain,
"she say this-she do that" Always her
fault.

(gesturing to sword)

But who holds weapon?

Room falls silent.

SAM

(defensive)

So what, I'm the bad guy now?

GANG CHENG

You want truth-hear truth.

(beat)

Born alone. Die alone.

The guys react with eye rolls, groans.

BRIAN

Oh come on man, this is depressing as
hell!

ADAM

We came here to fix our marriages, not
write our wills.

GANG CHENG

(dispassionate)

All of you-big baby syndrome.

Room goes silent again.

GANG CHENG

First lesson. Acceptance. Must learn
new life skills. Must give spouse
freedom.

BRIAN

Hey Gang, what if your wife tricked
you? Man, all mine ever wanted was
babies, so I gave her five! And now,
I'm useless!

Group murmur in agreement. Gang looks Brian dead in the eye.

GANG CHENG

First come passion. Then distraction.
If spouse feel no peace, no harmony,
she start dislike you.

BRIAN

But I thought true love lasted
forever?

GANG CHENG

Seasons to everything- including
marriage. Wiser, more mature you
become, easier to accept outcome.

SAM

That doesn't sound positive. I want to
know how to fix this, not just accept
it.

GANG CHENG

Want wife back. Must step into
masculine role. Cannot expect miracle
with big baby syndrome.

PAULINE

I just wanna know how to make my man
happy. He's miserable *all the time*.

GANG CHENG

Spouse tired of bullshit.

Silence.

GANG CHENG

Must make *self* happy first. Must learn
fundamental skills to survive without
spouse. Take food. Bad relationship
with food-bad relationship with wife.

SAM

Huh?

BRIAN

Aw com on, I love Wendy's!

ADAM

Yeah, Taco Bell's my life!

PAULINE

I hate to say it but, I've never
cooked a romantic meal in my life.

MICHAEL

But you're a woman?

PAULINE

AND???

FRANK

Guys stop! I think Gang's trying to
tell us we gotta get our sexy back.

Gang walks to a whiteboard, flips over a chiselled picture of
a male model, perfect abs, teeth, crisp designer suit.

GANG CHENG

Say hello to...new persona.

GUYS

WOAH!

SAM

You want us to become *THAT*?

GANG CHENG

New improved version of self.

RICHARD

(Suddenly excited)

Hey, can we give ourselves alias
names?? I wanna be called *Turbo Master*
so bad.

ADAM

(grinning)

Peter Panda!

FRANK

Dirty Sanchez!

PAULINE

Paige Turner!

MICHAEL

Would it be okay if you called me
Archangel Michael. I'm into astrology.

SAM

Tom wild!

Everyone looks to Sam.

SAM
You know like, TOM CRUISE, only
Wilder.

GROUP
Ahhhhh.

BRIAN
Alias name? what are we twelve!

GANG CHENG
This coming week, must do *nothing*.

SAM
Do nothing?

GANG CHENG
Wife must feel your energy *disappear*.

Hai opens a secret door and Gang Cheng disappears behind it.

PAULINE
He means go ghost Dumbo's.

SAM
I can do that.

MONTAGE

Brian is in his parked car wearing sunglasses and a fake mustache. His wife casually walks by, taps on window and says-

BRIANS WIFE
You're sick you know that!

Pauline, in full camouflage gear, delivers a giant teddy bear to her husband's doorstep, rings the bell, then hides in a bush. Her husband opens the door, sighs, looks around, then kicks the bear over.

Frank is hanging from a tree branch, trying to see into his wife's house while she's taking a bath. The branch suddenly snaps and he falls past her window, scaring her to death.

Richard gets caught by security cameras leaving cupcakes on his wife's car hood, only for the morning mailman to pick them up and take a bite.

INT. WILDER HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

Linda and her mom PEGGY (mid 60's) are having morning coffee in the kitchen. Sam sneaks under their window to have a listen, binoculars hanging around his neck, green leaves taped to his baseball hat and jacket.

PEGGY

It's been awful quite around here. Are you sure Sam's okay?

LINDA

Oh I'm sure. He's probably off somewhere convincing himself that he's the victim.

PEGGY

Oh, he's just passionate honey.

LINDA

No mom. He's angry. You call it passion because that's what you always called dad's anger too.

PEGGY

That's not fair.

LINDA

You want to talk about fair? You sat me down on my wedding day and told me to be a good wife. To be patient. To understand Sam-

PEGGY

Because marriage takes work. You don't just walk away when things get hard.

Desperate for a better view, Sam crawls along the grass towards a tree and slowly climbs.

LINDA

Hard? Mom you have no idea what it's been like. Sam yells, he throws things, he punches walls -

(removes plate hanging on wall)

This- *Sam!* Then, he turns around and makes me feel like I'm the problem.

PEGGY

Sweetheart...I didn't know any of this was going on. Why didn't you tell me?

LINDA

It's easy to play happy family when you're scared to lose it. For years I believed I was too sensitive, too difficult, too much. Because that's what you taught me.

PEGGY

(tearing up)

I did?

SAM'S POV THROUGH BINOLCULARS - Linda sitting at the island with her mom, both in deep conversation.

LINDA

Yes, you did. You looked the other way my whole childhood when it came to daddy. You told me to always keep the peace, to always stay quiet, to be the bigger person. And now I'm thirty nine years old, sitting here wondering how the hell I turned out just like you.

(sobs)

I'm just so unhappy mom. I'm just so unhappy.

PEGGY

(tears up)

I'm sorry. I honestly thought you guys were happy.

LINDA

I was but...

(beat)

Now I don't think I can love him the way he needs.

PEGGY

What he needs is a kick up the backside.

Rustling noises come from outside the back garden.

PEGGY

What was that?

LINDA

Probably just a coyote.

PEGGY

Coyote??

Linda checks out her kitchen window and see's him. Sam falling from the tree almost breaking his back.

LINDA
OH MY GOD!!

She rushes outside, mortified, mom right behind her. Both women glaring above his stupid black painted face.

SAM
Oh hey Peggy. Love the new haircut.

LINDA
Don't sweet talk my mother Rambo! How dare you spy on us, uninvited! Come on mom, we're not entertaining any of this.

Linda ushers her mom back to the door, but Sam desperate, pulls at he leg.

SAM
Linda wait- please, I just want to talk.

LINDA
No, get out of here Sam. I mean it.

Linda and Peggy retreats inside the house slamming the door in his face.

INT. SARAHS STUDIO - NIGHT

Sam lays on Sarah's couch, head bandages up, drinking hippy tea, chatting on his cell with Ava and Jenny.

AVA
Mom cut down our favourite tree dad.

SAM
She did, I wonder why...

AVA
Something about hungry coyotes.

SAM
You can never be too careful honey.

AVA
(saddened)
I loved that treehouse. Especially in

the summer.

SAM

Don't worry, we'll find other spots.
How's the arm by the way?

AVA

Not as sore as it was.

JENNY

Daddy when are you coming home??

SAM

Aunt Sarah just needs my help for a
little longer.

JENNY

Miss you.

SAM

(heart cracks open)
Miss you too. I'll call you girls soon
okay. Love you.

AVA & JENNY

Love you daddy.

CLICK. Sarah enters dressed up, heels clicking on the floor.

SAM

Wait--where are you going? *You're
leaving me?*

SARAH

It's one night Sam.

Sam picks up a framed abstract painting, inspecting it like
its alien life.

SAM

What the hell is this anyway?

SARAH

Not hell. Art.

SAM

Yeah but, what does it *mean?*

SARAH

It's an expression. My thoughts,
feelings. Kind of like my own

language.

SAM

Why don't you just sell all of this stuff and buy a house, get a mortgage.

SARAH

(deadpan)

What, and turn out like you?

A beat. Ouch, this stings.

SARAH

I'm sorry.

SAM

What's happening to me Sarah. Feels like I'm being punished.

SARAH

You're not being punished.

SAM

Please sis, don't go out. We can order in, watch old 80's movies, just like-

SARAH

(grabs her coat)

Sam...my therapist says happiness depends on ourselves. Tonight, I want to feel happy.

SAM

I never knew you went to therapy?

SARAH

Guess there's a lot you don't know about me.

She opens the door.

SAM

So who's *the* guy?

SARAH

Some hot 29 year old Brit off hinge. Super casual.

SAM

A little young don't you think. You are 41.

SARAH

Yeah well, sometimes getting attention
from a guy you know will never marry
you is just what a girl needs.

She exits. Sam pulls out his phone to check his home security system. ON HIS SCREEN- the feed from his front door showing Linda in real time, stepping out, heels, dressed up, climbing into a cab.

SAM

(panics)

Friday night? She never goes out
Fridays?

His stomach drops.

INT. IRISH BAR - NIGHT

Linda chats to friend CARLY (40's) in mid-laugh, when she looks up and stiffens. Her POV- Sarah seated across the bar with her Brit date RUSSELL (29). Their eyes lock. neither knowing what to do.

CARLY

(oblivious)

What's wrong?

LINDA

Of all the bars in the city Sam's
sister would have to be here...dammit.

Sarah heads straight for Linda.

LINDA

Oh god, here we go.

SARAH

Linda! Wow, hey.

LINDA

(dry)

Hey.

Painful silence. Sarah shifts on her heels, clearly trying to gauge Linda's mood.

SARAH

Girls night?

LINDA
Yeah. This is my friend Carly.

SARAH
Hi, I'm Sarah, Sam's sister.

CARLY
Nice to meet you.
(awkward beat)
Love your dress.

SARAH
Thanks. It's Russel's favourite. So far.

LINDA
Another Tinder date?

Sarah gestures over her shoulder to Russell, who watches from the bar, raising his whiskey glass with a casual smile, effortless cool and confident.

SARAH
No, I've actually gone up a level, we matched on *Hinge*.
(awkward)
Look Linda, I know things are weird right now-

Russell appears, smirking.

RUSSELL
My ears were burning. I feel like I'm being discussed.

Cut to OUTSIDE-

MAIN STREET

Sam crawls his truck down the strip, scanning through bar windows. He comes to a lively Irish bar: Inside, Linda drink in hand chatting to Sarah.

He parks, storms inside.

INSIDE BAR

BAM- door burst open. Linda's POV-as she see's Sam, *his eyes wild*, scanning the room heading straight for her.

LINDA

Oh, you have GOT to be kidding me.

SAM

What are you doing here?

LINDA

Excuse me?

SAM

You don't go out Friday nights?

SARAH

Sam! What are you *doing here*???

SAM

She doesn't go out Friday nights.

LINDA

And? I need your permission now?

SAM

(leans in, desperate)

Why won't you talk to me? Why are you treating me like this?

LINDA

I've spent ten years talking, it didn't change a damn thing.

Sam cracks. The rejection hits him hard.

LINDA

Get him out of here Sarah, I'm not doing this.

SARAH

Sam lets go.

SAM

No. I'm gonna say this. Have you any idea how tough these last couple weeks have been? Away from the kids. Casting me out of the house like I'm some kind of stray dog?

LINDA

God, you really don't get it do you.

SAM

You don't get to do this Linda!

LINDA

Stop it, you're creating a scene!

SAM

Act like I'm some *monster*, while you pretend to be this perfect wife who did everything right!

LINDA

(grinds teeth)

Lower your voice.

SAM

(out loud)

You don't think I *remember* all the nights you *denied* me!

(emotional)

All the times you held back your love when I needed you the most! But suuuure, lets make it all about saint Linda- the long suffering wife who had to endure me for soooo loooong.

LINDA

Damn right I suffered.

RUSSELL

(steps in to Sam)

Hey, hey mate, take a breath.

SAM

I'm sorry, who are you?

SARAH

(mortified)

Sam- what's wrong with you?!

Sam storms out, knocking over drinks on the bar.

CARLY

(To Linda)

You okay???

SARAH

(to Russell)

Rain check? I'm so sorry.

RUSSELL

It's okay. I'll call you.

Sarah rushes out after Sam.

OUTSIDE BAR

Sarah finds Sam sobbing.

SARAH

Sam...that was a complete disaster.

SAM

Just leave it Sarah, just everyone
leave me the hell alone!

Sam stumbles down main street alone.

EXT. WILDER HOUSEHOLD- MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Sam waits in his work truck as a cab pulls up outside. Linda
step out, shoeless, exhausted, physically, emotionally, heads
to her front door. As she digs for her key she senses it, a
presence. She looks up.

It's Sam.

LINDA

Shit, you scared me.

SAM

I don't know what happened to me
earlier, *I'm sorry.*

LINDA

I can't keep doing this Sam. I need
space.

SAM

I need to see the kids, this is
torture.

LINDA

Fine...but now here. Its best you get
your own place Sam. This isn't going
to be fixed overnight. I need time
before I make any decisions.

He freezes and we hear his heart sink. His breath catches in
his throat, like she's just punched the air out of his lungs.

SAM

I thought this was a little
separation. Now, you want to live
without me? I don't understand, just
tell me what I did wrong??

She looks away. Her expression unreadable.

SAM

Please, I don't think I can live one more day like this. Not without you.

LINDA

You need to change Sam.

SAM

Change what? Tell me what to do and I'll do it...

(falls onto front step)

I just wanna come home.

She sits next to him and for the first time there's no anger, just memories.

LINDA

Remember that weekend in Florida, right before we got married.

SAM

Of course, like it was yesterday.

LINDA

You promised me you'd be the happiest husband, said nothing would break us.

Sam swallows hard, his throat stuck with emotion.

LINDA

But it's you that's not happy Sam...and I can't fill that void.

He winces, like she's struck a nerve he didn't know he had.

SAM

Void? What are you even talking about?

(turns to her)

I love you.

He stares at her, praying she'll say it back. Searching her face, in complete denial.

LINDA

I don't think I love you the way I use to Sam.

SAM

But we both made promises to each

other, remember??
 (into her eyes)
 I'll see you over the rainbow bridge,
 remember??

LINDA
 (opens door, steps in)
 Goodnight.

Door gently clicks shut and for the first time, he faces the possibility of losing her.

INT. MR CHENG'S MANSION - SUNSET

Gang Cheng and Hai observe Sam and the group as they slouch at their desks, down on their luck.

Frank enters with a box of donuts looking completely defeated.

FRANK
 I brought donuts.

PAULINE
 What's up Dirty Sanchez?
 (nervous)
 Dog get run over?

FRANK
 Do I come here every week to talk
 about my *dog* Pauline?
 (pulls out crumpled manila
 envelope)
 Wife sent me *post* this morning.

PAULINE
 Oh. Shit.

He grabs a powdered donut, takes a miserable bite.

FRANK
 Its time to face it fellas, our wives
 are never coming back.

Room falls silent as they exchange uneasy looks.

SAM
 You guys know what this means.

FRANK
 Yeah, I should have bought her more

flowers!

SAM

No dummy. It means we're next!

FRANK

(points to gang Cheng)

This guy is nothing but a phony!

(take another bite)

How am I suppose to live without my Mary?

Gang Cheng picks up the donut box, completely unfazed.

GANG CHENG

You eat because you miserable.

FRANK

(face stuffed)

No, I eat because I'm starving, I haven't had a home cooked meal in two weeks!

GANG CHENG

You eat to fill *emptiness*.

Frank swallows hard, looks away.

FRANK

Yeah, well...maybe I am empty!

The floodgates open and the group crumble, whining, ranting, tearing up. Pauline marches back and forth.

PAULINE

You guys are pathetic!

BRIAN

Eh, okay Paige Turner! Aren't you in the exact same boat as us?

PAULINE

Yeah, maybe I am, but at least I'm not sitting here waiting for my Ex to come crawling back.

(leans into Frank)

You think you're wife left you because you didn't buy her enough flowers? Fuck no. She left-because you turned into *this*. A sad sack of shit who eats his feelings.

Frank looks down at is half eaten 4th donut. Feels exposed.

FRANK

Aren't you being a little cold towards me.

PAULINE

(slams fist down)

Reality is cold Sanchez. That's why I'm here-to get my shit together. Not sit around crying into a box of pastries.

SAM

I mean, I see her point, but if I'm honest too guys- my situation doesn't look good either. My wife suggested I get my own place.

GROUP

Aww, maaaaan!

SAM

I don't even know how to choose what clothes to wear in the morning, let alone live by myself.

GANG CHENG

Must show spouse-okay without companion.

FRANK

Com-pan-yon-less....oh god, why does that word sound absolutely terrifying.

GANG CHENG

(looks down at Sam)

Boy on inside - scared to death.

Franks jaw tightens.

FRANK

(triggered, snapping)

Why does it feel like a punch in the gut when you say that. Of course I'm scared. I'm not afraid to admit that.

SAM

(begins spiralling)

Either am I! This whole thing feels like I'm in some bad horror movie.

House on the hill with a group of rejects.

SAM

What's happening to us? My kids are suffering real bad guys. My eldest daughter is having night terrors because her daddy is no longer in the house. I'm the one who's supposed to protect them, the one who's suppose to tuck them in at night!

PAULINE

I never could have children, so I don't know how that feels.

SAM

It feels like my gut is twisted inside out! Their an extension of you. Your heart, your soul.

(turns to gang)

I took vows goddammit. If you don't give me some sound advice in five seconds I'm outta here!

Gang grabs his by his shoulders.

GANG CHENG

Five seconds, too long. We go now.

He points Sam to the door.

SAM

Go where??

GANG CHENG

To see truth.

EXT. FOREST LAKE - SUNSET

The group follow Gang and Hai down a winding pathway to a STILL LAKE.

The air is cool, environment peaceful- a stark contrast to the chaos in their lives.

Gang walks to the edge of the water, tosses a pebble in, the ripples spreading outward.

GANG CHENG

This you...your pain, your anger. You

want control but control...*illusion*.

The group observes as the water settles.

GANG CHENG

More you fight against ripples, worse they become. But you let them be...what happens?

SAM

(something stirs)

They fade....

GANG CHENG

Lesson one. Accept what is. Not what was. Not what if. Only now.

FRANK

(frustrated, emotional)

That's easy for you to say Gang but we're talking about our families!

Hai pulls out a thick wooden board from a bag, offers it to Gang, who then holds it up on front of Sam.

GANG CHENG

STRIKE!

SAM

Eh... scooze me?

GANG CHENG

You feel angry yes. Let it out-STRIKE!

Sam hesitates, then swings hard, his punch barely denting the wood.

GANG CHENG

(to Hai in Asian)

Weak. Not because he is weak, because his mind is weak.

Hai grunts.

SAM

Hey, don't speak in code. Say what you wanna say.

GANG CHENG

BRAINDEAD. MOR-ONIC. Must hit like a

man who DESTROYS FOR TRUTH! Not for
WIFE, or KIDS, but for YOU!

Sam's nostrils flare.

GROUP

Come on buddy- you got this! Focus!

Sam SMASHES through the board with ferocious strength. The
guys cheer.

MICHAEL

Wait guys, stop. Doesn't acceptance
mean... *giving up*?

GANG CHENG

Acceptance means, no more fight- for
what already lost.

Hai leads Gang back up pathway leaving the group to ponder.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING- DAY

Sam enters his new place carrying some moving boxes. He pulls
out an old photo of him and Linda- a memory from better days.

Then Sarah's voice - yelling from the laundry room.

SARAH

Sam come!

LAUNDRY ROOM

Sarah is already switching out the load as Sam stares at the
machine like some beast.

SARAH

Alright, the basics.

She hands him detergent bottle.

SARAH

Go on, pour it in.

He dumps half the bottle in the machine.

SARAH

Sam! That's enough to clean a horse!

SAM

What am I doing, I don't wash clothes!

SARAH

Who's gonna wash them for you, not me.

KITCHEN

SARAH

Newsflash Sam- you're not ten years old anymore.

SAM

Wish I was. When it was just me, you and mom. Why don't they tell you what being an adult is really like.

SARAH

Because they'd ruin the surprise.

(opens fridge)

Now...I got you some fruit, some vegetables, every condiment under the sun. Most of them super healthy. And some frozen--

(opens freezer shocked)

PIZZA??

SAM

Grown men eat pizza.

Sam rests to the island with a stack of mail from the house. He opens a bill from the hospital.

SAM

I thought we paid for Ava's accident.

(begins reading)

THERAPY?? Linda's being doing therapy since...APRIL? What the f--

SARAH

Don't get triggered. Deep breaths.

Sarah finishes the letter as he sinks into himself.

SARAH

Six month sessions- wow she must talk.

SAM

We only separated three weeks ago, which means, she's been planning this dirty little secret for months!

SARAH

Hardly dirty, I mean it's not like

she's cheated.

SAM

She lied to me, what's the difference.

Opens two beers.

SARAH

She needed to talk to somebody.

SAM

Talk to *ME*, your husband, not some stranger.

SARAH

I got an idea. How about we get you some plants. Hang some nice pictures on the wall...turn this place into a real home.

SAM

(a real moment)

What will I do without my best friend.

SARAH

There's only one thing to do.

INT. PET STORE - DAY

It's the weekend. The first time Sam has the girls. Ava and Jenny scales through some cute kittens. Meanwhile Sam is barely present, still crushed over Linda.

Jenny points to a cute RAG DOLL KITTEN, a scared one at the very back of the cage.

JENNY

Dad, what about this one??

AVA

Yeah, the one in the back.

SAM

I see it. Hey little guy. What you doing all the way back there on your own.

SHOP GIRL (20), picks him up, places him in Sam's arms. Its SHARP SEA BLUE EYES looking straight at Sam.

SAM

Wow, feels like he's looking straight through me.

SHOP GIRL

He tends to do that.

AVA

What's he called?

SHOP GIRL

We usually leave that to the parents.

The kitten starts sniffing Sam's neck.

AVA

He likes you daddy.

SHOP GIRL

Cats have scent glands around their ears. They do that to identify something familiar and comforting.

JENNY

He's perfect dad, can we get him, please??

SAM

How old do they live to?

SHOP GIRL

A Birman- lifespan is usually 16 years.

AVA

Come on, its a no brainer.

Sam smiles, something he hasn't done in a while.

SAM

Looks like you've found yourself a new home buddy.

At the register., Sam throws in some fluffy toys.

AVA

What should we call him dad?

JENNY

How about MAC. Like Mac and Cheese.

AVA
(eye roll)
Yeah, you're the cheese.

SAM
(content)
I like it. *Just Mac.*

MONTAGE OF MAC MOMENTS

LAUNDRY ROOM-Mac bolts through the laundry room, the girls chasing after him in giggles.

KITCHEN- Sam leaps under the kitchen table, trying to catch him.

SAM
Mac! Mac! Don't you dare, you little--

Mac leaps onto the counter, knocking over a cereal box all over the floor and Sam's head.

BATHROOM- Sam steps out of the shower, towel around his waist. Mac sits by his feet, staring up, waiting.

SAM
(softly smiles)
You're really attached huh?

LIVING ROOM- Sam notices Jenny and Ava curled up on the couch, both sleeping, snug under a blanket as Mac sleeps on Ava's lap. Something about this makes his heart ache. He quietly adjusts their blanket, then heads to the-

BEDROOM-Sam changes his sheets. Mac sits perched on the dresser dead serious, judging him.

SAM
You wanna help or just stare?
(mac blinks)
Didn't think so.

Sam opens the bedside drawer, pulls out a photo of him and Linda on their wedding day. Smiling, younger, happier. His thumb brushes over her face. He glances up. Finds Mac sitting beside him on the bed looking up.

SAM
That's my wife Mac. Beauty huh.

Mac just stares.

SAM

Hates me. I mean *really* hates me.

(beat)

That was me back when I was super buff. Six-pack. Could bench a lot in those days.

(pets macs stomach)

God knows she loved the pecs...that's for sure.

Eyes widen. Like a light bulb moment.

SAM

Pecs. She loved the pecs!

Mac blinks.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE TOM WILD TRASNFORMATION BEGINS.

INT. GYM - DAY

Pain and humiliation as Sam struggles under a barbell, veins popping. He glances over to Richard, Brian and Michael next to him, all benching, equally useless.

PAULINE

Come on boys. Stop being little romance novels and turn the damn page!

Adam-AKA/PETER PANDA attempts pull ups. He gets one.

SAM

(mocking)

Thought you could fly Peter Panda!

ADAM

(straining)

Panda's...don't...fly!

Richard-AKA- TURBO MASTER sprinting on the treadmill-faceplants.

FRANK

Damn. The Turbo Master ran outta gas real fast.

Frank -AKA-DIRTY SANCHEZ goes to bench press. Struggles-turns red.

FRANK
(wheezing)
I think Dirty Sanchez needs....CPR...

Michael-AKA ARCHANGEL MICHAEL just tries stretching.

SAM
Ain't archangels suppose to be divine
or something?

MICHAEL
(pulls a muscle)
Guess we don't stretch too much in
heaven.

Linda exits a SPIN CLASS, spots Sam, hides behind a vending
machine.

LINDA
What the...

Dials her mom Peggy.

INTERCUT

EXT. PEGGY'S GARDEN - DAY

Peggy tends to her rose bush when Linda calls.

PEGGY
Sweetheart, everything alright?

LINDA
(whispers)
Mom! You'll never guess what?

PEGGY
(whispers)
What?

LINDA
I just came out of my spin class and
Sam is here!

PEGGY
Your Sam? Working out?

LINDA
It's definitely him!

PEGGY

What is he doing, asking for directions?

LINDA

Lifting weights. Struggling but trying.

PEGGY

I just can't see it honey, are you sure it's Sam?

LINDA

Positive. He looks, so...dare I say determined.

PEGGY

People do crazy things for love sweetheart.

LINDA

Or desperation. God only knows what else he's been up to.

CLICK.

INT. BEAUTY SALON - DAY

The beauty upgrade. Cringe alert as group sit under UV lights, grinning in pain getting TEETH WHITENING.

ADAM

Feels like my gums are melting.

Frank and Sam emerge from two tanning booths like red lobsters.

SAM

Sanchez, looking more like burnt toast than sun kissed.

FRANK

You can talk. You're totally cooked.

Both look in the mirror.

SAM & FRANK

AHHHH!!!

INT. TATTOO PARLOR- DAY

Pauline -on her arm "Only God can judge me"

Frank- "Baby, I'm back"

Sam- A bold tribal tattoo that he instantly regrets.

SAM

Aw, shit!!

EXT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

All of them exit onto main street in sunnies, looking like 90's boyband rejects.

PAULINE

Lets write a new chapter bitches.

EXT. MR CHENG MANSION - EVENING

Sunset.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - EVENING

Hai stands tall next to Gang as the group arrive back looking like discount male models. Proud. Bright. Cringe.

Gang just stares. And stares.

SAM

Hello...Gang it's us, Tom Wild.

GANG CHENG

Who?

PAULINE

(proudly, flipping her hair)

We go by different names now Gang.

RICHARD

Turbo Master.

ADAM

Peter Panda.

FRANK

Dirty Sanchez.

MICHAEL

Archangel Michael.

PAULINE

Paige Turner Gang. I look like a real lady huh.

Gang blinks, swift eyes to Hai, shaking his head.

GANG CHENG

This...tragedy.

INT. COOKING LESSON - NIGHT

Gang demonstrates how to chop vegetables, while rice simmers in a boiling pot.

Sam butchers an onion, almost losing his finger. Blood everywhere. Eyes roaring red crying.

GANG CHENG

Disaster.

Hai offers Sam a bandage.

SAM

Hai. Thank you.

GANG CHENG

First time cooking, always comes with little pain. Just like, first time love.

SAM

Great. Any idea what Happens next? I lose a hand, a leg?

GANG CHENG

You learn. Get better. Next time, onion cries more than you.

Makes sense.

LATER:

The group place a large chicken in the oven.

GANG CHENG

Must cook slow. With love. Talk to food. Give thanks. Respect ingredients. Only then, will respect you back.

While chicken cooks, they boil soup broth on the stove with

their chopped vegetables.

FRANK

I don't get how a chicken can respect me, if I'm roasting it for dinner?

SAM

(whispers)

I think its a metaphor buddy.

GANG CHENG

Nourishment is key. Learn to use fire to cook...learn to heat up soul.

SAM

(excited)

So food is life. Yeah I get it.

GANG CHENG

Food is food. But man who cooks with soul, never starves.

The group are starting to understand. Smiles all round.

MOVEMENT LESSON

Gang moves his arms using energy with slow fluid precision.

GANG CHENG

All of you. Out of shape.

RICHARD

(whispers to Pauline)

I heard tummy tuck's are going for half price in Miami.

GANG CHENG

Underneath- is *dragon*.

PAULINE

(brows raised)

Now what's he doing?

MICHAEL

(whispers)

Looks like Kung Fu panda.

ADAM

(whispers back)

No, I think those moves are out of Karate Kid.

RICHARD
(whispers)
Maybe he's related to Bruce Lee.

SAM
(whispers back)
Yeah Bruce Lee's older wiser brother.

GANG CHENG
Ancient healing exercise. Five
element. Wood. Fire. Earth. Metal.
Water.

Gang waves his arms, his breathing carefully controlled.

GANG CHENG
Emotions stored in body, direct energy
to organs.
(moves hand over Adams face)
Your life- miracle in slow motion. Go
too fast, learn nothing. Too slow,
miss everything.

Adam moves his hands, but looks ridiculous.

RICHARD
Beats running on a treadmill.

MICHAEL
(leaps in the middle)
Polar bear coming through!

GANG CHENG
Heart--fire. You desire to connect
with spouse- must connect with heart
first.

SAM
(move's slowly)
My wife's heart is gone stone cold.

GANG CHENG
Heart turns cold when mind turns
bitter. Happy ever after- not
fairytale, but choice. What you allow
into head, can contaminate heart- turn
toxic. Must have movement, flow, or
heart fails.

SAM
Why does this lesson have to be so

morbid.

ADAM

Because your marriage is dead bro.

ADAM

(grabs his crotch, smug)
But this organ ain't dead!

GANG CHENG

(stops moving, squints at Adam)
Even wonky has bad energy.

ADAM

(looks down)
It does??

GANG CHENG

(resumes slow movement seriously)
Man wastes energy on cheap pleasure.
But drains spirit. True power- self
control. Sexual energy-sacred. Fire-
meant to warm house, not burn down
village.

The guys exchange uncomfortable glances.

MICHAEL

So what, we gotta be monks now?

GANG CHENG

No. Just less monkey. More dragon.

FRANK

Bro, if this is what it takes to her
my baby back, I'd say we start
breathing fire.

The group moves around in unison in a circle as new dragons.

INT. SAMS NEW BATHROOM- NIGHT

Sam dumps a six pack of cold beers and prescription pills
down the toilet. Mac watches from the sink.

SAM

Next few weeks I might get a little
restless Mac, so bare with me.

Stares into mirror.

SAM

Forty and alone. I really thought I was a good husband, a good father.

He crawls into bed. Stares at Linda's picture.

SAM

She couldn't wait to marry me.

(emotional)

We went on so many adventures. During high school I wasn't the best kid. Got into a whole lot of trouble, start dinking, smoking weed. But after I met Linda, my whole life opened up. Our first trip together was to Thailand, but I kinda boo boomed. Made us take an anxiety pill, you know, for the flight. She was fine but I had a real bad reaction, freaked out, was taken of the plane by medics. After they brought me to the hospital, doctors told me I was having a mental breakdown. Guess whatever was in that pill triggered my nervous system, my brain just couldn't handle it. Anyway, so I told her I understood if she wanted to cancel our trip, go back home, but she just held my hand Mac, and told me to trust her, that we'd be safe.

(beat)

She was so brave.

(beat)

One night we got so drunk on the beach, we made love under the stars and made a pact with each other, a promise, that whoever passed away first, would wait for the other at the rainbow bridge up in heaven.

(tears flowing)

Now, I'm not sure if she'll even be there...

MAC

(snuggles his face)

Meow.

SAM

Don't wanna be alone either huh. Don't blame you. Its a tough world Mac.

(knocks light off)

At least we have each other.

EXT. GIRLS SCHOOL - DAY

Sam pulls up outside the school in his sleek Tesla, windows down, aviators on, stepping out looking like a completely different man. Ava grabs Jenny's arm wide eyed.

AVA
Jenny...who's that?

JENNY
I think that's...daddy.

They rush towards him but PAUSE- looking at him like he's ten heads.

SAM
What, no hug for the old guy?

AVA
What happened to you?

SAM
Oh just some minor upgrades. Nothing major.

JENNY
Your skin looks burnt.

SAM
No honey, that's just a little tan.

AVA
How'd you get you're teeth so white.

SAM
Easy, just stopped drinking coffee.
Hey, forget about me, I was
thinking...since its Friday, how about
we hit up the mall?

AVA & JENNY
Huh???
(to each other)
THE MALL??

SAM
Yeah, a daddy/daughters kinda day out.
Hop in.

Ava jumps up front, Jenny in the back with MAC.

JENNY

Mac!

Sam winks at Ava. Things are looking up.

Jealous kid watch3s them speed off.

JEALOUS KID

Wish my dad was that cool.

INT. THE MALL - LATE AFTERNOON

Ava and Jenny strut through the main level holding cute PINK SHOPING BAGS and wearing new sunnies.

Other young girls their age stare.

AVA

Why is everyone looking at us?

JENNY

Because we're on FLEEK!

SAM

(slows)

So girls, what do ya think of my new look? Hip? Cool? Lit?

AVA

(sighs)

Don't ever say that word lit again dad.

JENNY

Yea, you're trying way too hard.

SAM

Got it.

They strut towards the food hall in their element.

EXT. SOCCER PITCH - EVENING

An empty field, floodlights glowing. Mac watching from his Cat basket on the side lines as Sam stands in goal, while Ava and jenny take shots.

SAM
(diving for a save, misses)
Was close! Super close...

AVA
You're suppose to *move* before the goal
gets past you.

JENNY
Okay dad, penalty kick!

AVA
If you save it, you win.

SAM
Bring it Jenny Lopez!

Jenny runs up, fakes left, taps ball right. Sam flings
himself the wrong way. SCORE.

JENNY
Yes!

AVA
Jenny wins, Sam loses.

SAM
Did you just call me Sam?

Uncomfortable beat. All three huddle by the gate with Mac.

SAM
You know girls, I hope you don't mind
me saying this, but, I used to think
winning was everything. Like if I
wasn't the best who came out on top,
there was no point...but recently,
life has been kinda funny.

JENNY
Do you mean the way you look?

SAM
No. But thanks. I mean, I was putting
all my energy into my work, into
trying to prove something, so you
girls could have nice things, a dad
who people respected. But the whole
time the two most important things in
my world were right on front of me,
waiting for me to show up.

Girls glance at each other. They know deep down he was never there.

SAM

(to Ava)

I'm sorry I left you alone in the car bubs, that was irresponsible as an adult, a stupid action that could have ruined all our lives.

AVA

I'm sorry too. I just really wanted you to watch me play.

SAM

Guess I was so busy trying to win at other things, that I didn't realize I was losing, you two.

AVA

You haven't lost us dad.

JENNY

Yeah, you just suck at Soccer.

He tickle chases them to the car.

SAM

Is that right. Excuse me but I let you win missy!

JENNY

Did not!

INT. WILDER HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Sam and the girls pull up outside the house. The girls unbuckle, hesitating before getting out. All of it just hurts.

AVA

Mom cried looking at your picture the other day.

SAM

(unsure what to say)

Guess crying helps. Especially when you miss someone.

JENNY

But then she set fire to it.

AVA

Jenny!

JENNY

She also said that you were de-loo-sha-nal. Whatever that means?

AVA

Jenny get out of the car NOW!

Jenny climbs out, looking like she needs to pee again.

SAM

Anything else I should know?

Ava shakes her head no.

AVA

We just want you to come home dad.

SAM

That's all I want too sweetie.
(kisses her goodnight)
Tonight was fun.

AVA

(climbs out)
You'll come to my game next week
right.

SAM

Wouldn't miss it. Goodnight.

AVA

Night dad.

Girls enter the house through a tiny crack in the door.

INT. GIRLS BEDROOM- NIGHT

Linda tucks the girls into two separate beds, same room. The pink shopping bags tucked in the corner.

LINDA

No more night terrors okay.
(forehead kiss)
You're safe.

AVA

Mom...do you still love dad?

LINDA
 Love doesn't disappear honey.
 (walks to the door)
 Goodnight.

JENNY
 Mommy, do you and daddy have sex?

LINDA
 (almost chokes)
 Sweetie, where on earth did you hear
 that...word??

JENNY
 A boy in my class says his mom and dad
 have sex every night?

LINDA
 That little boy should really keep his
 mouth shut. How's that. Now *goodnight*.

AVA
 But we'll be a family again, right
 mom?

LINDA
 (heart cracks)
 We'll always be a family honey.

She shuts the door half way and retreats to her --

MASTER BEDROOM

Linda sits on the edge of the bed, glass of wine in hand, staring at her phone. She checks her emails, one from SAM with a photo attached of all three in the mall, shopping bags and big smiles.

But she knows behind those smiles they're all hurting. A rage erupts, then slight jealousy, then just plain sadness. She removes her wedding ring. Pops it back on again. Then removes it once more, throwing it into her side drawer.

She pulls out an old hidden box in her closet. Inside: their *WEDDING DVD and USB*.

She pops it in her laptop. Presses play. On the screen a younger happier Sam, nervous but beaming as he gives a toast to his younger blushing bride Linda.

MONTAGE- them cutting the cake, chatting to friends and slow

dancing, cheek to cheek, both equally in love, promising each other the world.

CUT TO-the vows.

YOUNG SAM

And through thick and thin, just know,
no matter what we may go through, I'll
always be waiting for you over the
rainbow bridge.

YOUNG LINDA

(kissing his face)
Don't you dare go first!

Linda freezes. Catches her breath as she watches her and Sam sway dance whispering promises of their undying love.

She shuts her laptop, lays her head down on her empty pillow, stares at Sam's empty side, a choked breath escaping as she cries herself to sleep.

EXT. MR CHENG MANSION - DAY

The group (Minus Frank) wait in Gangs mansion foyer looking grim. Pauline storms in, dishevelled, slamming a stack of divorce papers on the table.

SAM

Pauline? Everything okay?

PAULINE

(deadpan-eyes puffy)
Worst day of my life fella's.

Sam picks up the papers, his gut twisting. He stares at them like his own fate is staring back at him.

SAM

First Frank, now you?

PAULINE

I just came to say goodbye. I hope you
guys get everything you want.

(turns to Gang)

Thank you Gang. For teaching me I'm
not some worthless chunky fat cow with
no self esteem. At least now, when I
look in the mirror, I'm proud of what
I see.

Pauline takes her papers, walks to the door.

SAM

(urgent/refusing to let go)
So that's it? You're just gonna give
up?! You're not a quitter Pauline,
you're Paige Turner for God's sake!

PAULINE

I didn't quit Sam. He quit on me.
(beat)
At least now I can walk away knowing I
turned over every rock.

SAM

You're a real diamond. We'll miss you.

PAULINE

(one last look)
See ya fellas.

She exits. A heavy feeling lingers.

GROUP

(somber/nodding)
Bye.

SAM

(to Gang)
For a minute I really believed you
wanted us to win.

The sun sets out the window. Gang stares directly at it.

GANG CHENG

Wu wei. Sit quiet.
(beat)
Do nothing.

SAM

But if we do nothing, we lose
everything.

GROUP

Yeah...

GANG CHENG

When met spouse- *knew self*. Lost
spouse- *lost self*. All unconscious.

The guys absorb his words, somewhat clicking.

ADAM

I was a goddamn king back in the 90's.
What the hell happened to me?

MICHAEL

Two kids and a mortgage, that's what.

RICHARD

(snapping)

Would you listen to yourselves. Gang
never promised us shit. He's not our
mom or dad, he's just a guide, trying
to pull us out of this dark hell hole.
It's on us to walk forward, like real
men.

BRIAN

(realization, stepping forward)

He's right, we're not boys anymore.
We've fought in wars, built rocket
ships, composed symphonies!

ADAM

Pauline's right. If you guys want your
book to be some romance novel, go
ahead- but mine- it's gonna be about
superhero's. About fella's who
overcame every obstacle, just to get
back to where they belong.

The energy shifts.

SAM

So what's next?

GANG CHENG

No lesson today. Only suggestion. Go
fill up life.... with *fun*. Laughter.
Friends. Must continue to light up
soul...every time.

EXT. THE ZOO - DAY

Busy day full of happy families. Sam leans on a railing
watching a monkey eat a banana.

SAM

You know, I get it buddy. Just sitting
there eating alone, waiting for
someone to throw ya a bone...life's
wild huh?

The monkey throws the banana peel at Sam's face.

SAM
Cool. Real mature.

RAMDOM KID
(staring)
Are you talking to that monkey dude?

SAM
No. Course not.

KIDS MOM
(pulling him away)
Come on honey, lets give that man some space.

SAM
(casually walking away)
Having fun. Having lots of fun.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Sam stands in front of an Abstract painting- just staring.

SAM
(to himself)
You see the black streaks represent pain. Red-passion. White- lots of hope.

NEARBY WOMAN
Actually its just a painting of spaghetti.

SAM
(nodding)
Right, that's exactly what I was gonna say.
(shuffles away awkwardly)
Having so much fun.

EXT. RIVER BOAT RIDE - DAY

Sam is strapped on a romantic boat tour, sitting alone next to a cute couple.

SAM
(to himself)
There's no way I was doing this alone.

GIRL
(to boyfriend)
This is just like Venice, remember
baby?

BOY
How could I forget.

The couple tongue each other passionately.

SAM
Hmm. Love. Good stuff.

The girl stops, embarrassed.

GIRL
Oh. Sorry- we shouldn't, you're here
alone.

SAM
Oh no, no. My soulmate is right here.

Sam opens his jacket to reveal MAC hidden inside.

BOY
Come on honey, lets move seats.

SAM
Having fun, having so much fun.

EXT. SOCCER PITCH - MID MORNING

The soccer field is buzzing with 11 year olds gearing up for their game. Chipper parents set up fold out chairs and a distant smell of burgers fills the air.

Linda pulls up in her SUV with Ava and Jenny, stepping out in leggings, a fitted zip-up jacket and fresh sneakers. She looks noticeably slimmer, her hair lighter, more put together, but more guarded.

Ava jogs towards her team as Linda and Jenny heads towards the soccer moms, including neighbours Lisa and Michelle.

AVA
Got this in the bag mom!

LINDA
Yes you do honey!

Neighbours Lisa and Michelle analyse Linda as she approaches.

MICHELLE

Would you look who the cat dragged in.

LINDA

Michelle, Lisa.

LISA

How've you been Linda.

LINDA

Good. You?

LISA

Same. Real good.

MICHELLE

So, nothing you wanna share huh.

LINDA

Nope.

MICHELLE

Oh come on. No texts, no calls, no wine nights. Blinds shut all day. We thought you were dead.

LINDA

That's a little dramatic don't you think.

MICHELLE

Not when your Facebook page goes ice cold.

LINDA

Give it a rest okay. You know damn well what's been happening. Do you want me to spell it out.

MICHELLE

Linda...we've been where you are now, both of us. We know it's not easy.

LISA

Except the part where you have the house to yourself.

LINDA

Look, I'm a private person okay.

MICHELLE

Okay, so...are you two reconciling
anytime soon.

Linda stiffens. That's too far.

LINDA

I said I'm not here to discuss my
personal life.

(eyes the burger stand)

In fact, I'm gonna go grab a burger.

Linda heads towards burger stand with Jenny.

MICHELLE

Are those extensions?

LISA

Forget the hair, what about those
lashes. Who is she right now.

BURGER STAND

Garry and Will are flipping burgers. Linda approaches with
Jenny.

GARRY

Would ya look who it is!

WILL

Damn Linda- you're alive?

She grabs a beer from the cooler.

GARRY

Hi Jenny, haven't see you in a while
sweetie. How've ya been?

JENNY

Why you always gotta ask questions.

GARRY

Because that's how we communicate
sweetie. How's school?

JENNY

Why do you care?

LINDA

Jenny!

GARRY
(fake smiling)
And you're *dad*?

JENNY
Why don't you go back to flipping
burgers, nosy parker!

Jenny rushes back to the soccer moms.

LINDA
I'm sorry-I don't know what's gotten
into her lately.

WILL
So, how is Sam?

GARRY
Yeah, um, we haven't seen our buddy in
like, three months.

She takes a sip of her beer, looks at them flatly.

LINDA
You're telling me he hasn't called you
in three months?

GARRY
That's what we're telling ya.
(hammers down spatula)
Starting to think you buried him out
the back garden.

LINDA
Maybe you should check under the
patio.

Linda returns to the moms, when suddenly all eyes turn to the
parking lot as Sam's Tesla pulls up at full speed.

He steps out looking golden. Fresh tan, haircut, white double
denim clothes. The man looks like a god damn MOVIE STAR.

Jaws drop- specially the soccer moms. Linda gasps as she
observes the ladies gawk over Sam.

WILL
What the actual fuck-

Soccer moms all stand...

LISA
Is that...Sam??

Sam struts past the soccer moms glowing, happy, his eyes glistening in the sun.

MICHELLE
Can't be...Sam's *fat*.

Sam arrives at the -

BURGER STAND

SAM
(confident-not cocky)
Fella's.

Garry and Will are speechless, trying to process his transformation.

SAM
What, something on my face?

WILL
SAM??

GARRY
(Circles him)
Jesus, you look like you've just walked off David Beckham's yacht.

WILL
Or a man's skincare commercial.

GARRY
How's it going man?? Linda was just here a second ago.

SAM
It's going. Had to disappear for a while. Sort some shit out.

GARRY
I take it you went to see G.A.N.G.

SAM
(glances over his shoulder)
Eh, yeah, we had a sesh or two.

GARRY
Happy for ya buddy. So when ya coming

back?

SAM

Soon. Excuse me, games about to start.

Sam makes his way over to Linda just as the whistle BLOWS.
Game starts.

Lisa and Michelle fumble's as Sam arrives.

SAM

Michelle. Lisa. Nice to see you
ladies.

MICHELLE & LISA

You too Sam. Yeah, you too.

Sam and Linda move a a few feet away. Linda almost catching
her breath, reminding her of the old Sam when they first met.

LINDA

You're tanned.

SAM

Needed some vitamin D.

LINDA

You look nice.

SAM

Thanks. You too.

Ava takes the ball upfield.

SAM

GO AVA!!

Linda cannot believe how invested Sam is in the game.

LINDA

She's really come along this season.

SAM

Yeah she has. At least now she knows
it's not about winning.

This confuses her a little but turns to some nostalgia.

LINDA

God, remember when we used to race
each other to the car after every

game.

SAM
(smirking)
You'd cheat every time.

LINDA
I was strategic.

They share a soft chuckle but her smile quickly fades.

LINDA
Can't get the past back can we.

A beat. Sam's face. He knows what she means. He goes to say something but takes a breath.

LINDA
(mood shifts as she stares across
he pitch)
So, you've been taking the girls
shopping.

SAM
Yeah, its kind of our weekend thing.

LINDA
As long as you're not buying their
love.

SAM
That's not what I'm doing.

Ava attempts to score, misses.

SAM
(shouts across field)
That's okay Ava. Nice call!

LINDA
Oh, and heard about your new cat.

SAM
Yeah. He's really lifted my spirits.

LINDA
(folds arms. Old hurt creeping in)
Right. Cuz that's what was missing, a
cat.

SAM
You'd be surprised how much
unconditional love he's shown me.

Linda feels this dig. Dammit he shouldn't have said that.

A tense silence. Then-

SAM
Why don't you come over for dinner
Saturday. Sarah will be there with her
new boyfriend. No pressure of course,
just super casual.

A long beat. Her face hardens.

LINDA
I don't want to confuse the girls.

A beat. He doesn't want to push.

SAM
I'm sober three months. Making those
changes.

LINDA
For who?

SAM
Me. Our family.

Linda takes a long beat, gives half a smile.

LINDA
What time Saturday?

INT. SAMS APARTMENT - EVENING

Candles are lit, soft ambient music plays while hot soup
cooks on the stove. Sam is barefoot, dressed in casual white
linen trousers. He moves slowly and fluidly through his
living room doing a Qigong exercise sequence.

On the couch, Mac, perched, watching.

SAM
What do ya think Mac. Finally getting
into the flow. A mix of martial arts
and spirituality, called Qigong. Cool
huh.

Mac blinks unbothered.

SAM

Yeah, thought so too. At first I was like, no way am I the toxic one. But then Gang hit me with the whole "life is a reflection thing"

(beat)

Guess I was always the taker, the needy one. Doesn't make much sense I know but I was too blind to what Linda needed. Which then made me angry. But this, this helps me master those emotions.

MAC

Meow.

SAM

Exactly. Inner peace.

DING DONG. Sam centres himself, then opens to find Sarah, flanked by Russell, her new boyfriend. Also Linda, with Ava and Jenny.

AVA & JENNY

(bored in sync)

Hi dad.

SAM

Hi girls. Shoes off, coats up.

They shuffle inside, Sarah lingers for a beat studying Sam.

SARAH

Bro...you look great. Wow. Nice tan.

LINDA

That what I said.

SAM

Please, come in, let me get you a drink.

Linda removes her coat, heads to the living room with the girls.

SAM

(to Russell with a handshake)

Russ, good to see you. Apologies for anything I may have said last time.

RUSSELL

Water off a ducks back mate. Happy to be here.

He offers him a cold beer, grabs wine for Sarah and Linda and everyone settles into the -

LIVING ROOM

Brief silence before--

SAM

So Russ....ever been married before?

RUSSELL

(glances at Sarah smiling)
Nope. Been waiting for the right person.

SAM

So the age gap, still doesn't matter?

SARAH

Sam!

SAM

Oh come on. I'm joking. Russ knows me.

RUSSELL

That's okay. I think we're well past that part.

JENNY

I'm seven and a half!

RUSSELL

Great age. So what will you be when you grow up?

JENNY

A mommy with lots of babies.

RUSSELL

Ambitious. I'm sure you'll have no trouble finding a suiter.

(to Ava stuck in her phone)
And what about you?

AVA

I'm into science. But being a popstar would be cool too.

SAM

How about you Russ, want a family one day?

SARAH

(tries to shift mood)

More wine? Actually lets eat. I'm starving.

KITCHEN

Everyone is seated at a round table while Sam serves bowls of steaming hot Chinese soup- a far cry from his usual processed meals.

JENNY

What is this daddy?

SAM

A very healthy bok choy soup. A little garlic, scallions, an egg and shiitake. Made with love.

JENNY

What is shit-takey?

Linda mid-bite nearly chokes.

LINDA

Jenny...it's a mushroom honey.

SAM

Found in east Asia.

Sarah and Linda both raise an eyebrow.

RUSSEL

I love a good soup, top tier Sam, delicious.

SAM

If I want my girls to have healthy guts, I thought I'd invest in some cooking lessons.

JENNY

What's a gut daddy?

SAM

Your gastrointestinal system. Helps you absorb nutrients, fight disease,

and keeps your mind sharp-

Linda and Sarah stare at Sam like an alien has landed. Then a brief look to each other.

JENNY

I want mac and cheese, this us yucky!

AVA

Me too, this is grose. Can I get chicken nuggets mom?

SAM

No. Nuggets are processed garbage. You might as well eat cardboard.

Now Linda is completely shocked.

AVA

Okay, can I have cardboard.

LINDA

Ava. Just eat some bread please.

SAM

From now on, we treat ourselves kinder, with healthy meals.

LINDA

Has Jesus himself come visit you lately or what?

Sarah can't help but giggle into her wine glass.

SARAH

I was thinking Gandhi.

RUSSELL

Babe, let the man enjoy his shiitake.

SAM

Now that you mention it, yes, recently I've been worshiping in a beautiful church.

Nothing left is said. Sarah watches Sam carefully, concern secretly building. Something just feels...off.

LATER IN KITCHEN

Linda helps Sam with the dishes while Sarah and Russell watch

TV with the girls.

LINDA
Tonight was different.

SAM
Yeah. It was.

LINDA
You're different.

She means it. It's not just about the soup or the patience with the kids. Its the way he holds himself.

LINDA
The way you're showing up for the girls, I'm proud of you.

Sam's throat tightens, he doesn't know what to say. All he knows is, he needed to hear that.

SAM
Thank you.

LINDA
I just don't want to give you false hope Sam. I've been talking to my therapist, not just about you, or us, but about my own issues, father issues, things I'm only starting to deal with now-

SAM
You don't need to explain. I'm glad you're talking to someone.

She pauses. Is this *her Sam*?

LINDA
You are?

SAM
Of course. We all heal in our own time, yours was just different to mine.

LINDA
So this, isn't all an act?

SAM
Linda, no, I didn't just wake up and

try be better, not for you, the kids.
I had to learn how to be better for
me.

A long pause as she studies her former husband. Who is his
man and can she really believe it.

SAM

Look, I'm sorry how I acted the last
couple months. Begging out of
desperation is really not my style...

(squirms inside)

There's no more guiltting you, no
trying to make you feel something you
don't.

(beat)

I didn't know it but in the bar but I
was gaslighting you...

She blinks twice utterly perplexed, staring right at him
because she knows the old Sam would never admit this.

LINDA

So you're in therapy too?

SAM

Eh. Yeah. I've had a few sessions.

(lying through his teeth)

Look, lets not push it. Lets just see
if we gravitate back towards each
other naturally...and if we do-

Meets her eyes, steady and sure.

SAM

Then we still get to wait over the
rainbow bridge.

Her chest tightens. Because she knows this is his whole
strategy. Letting her go but not really.

LINDA

I knew it, I knew it. This was all
part of your strategy.

(to girls)

Goodnight my loves. See you Sunday.

GIRLS

Night mommy, love you.

SAM
Linda wait...

LINDA
Sarah, Russell, enjoy your evening.

SARAH
Goodnight, drive safe!

Linda disappears. Sarah meets Sam as he falls onto his chair.

SARAH
(gulping her wine)
Shit, what happened?

SAM
She still see's the old me.

SARAH
No, she sees the new you, she's just
afraid it won't last.

Peeks over her shoulder and whispers-

SARAH
Hey listen, what's with the linen
pants? The soup philosophy? Feel like
I'm in some twilight zone version of
your new life.

SAM
I'm healing.

SARAH
But are you really Sam? I *know* you.
You feel *rejected* now she's gone.

SAM
I don't understand, I worked on this
so hard with Gang.

SARAH
Gang, what gang?
(beat)
Look. So what if she didn't buy the
whole Jesus buck choy act, we regroup
and try something else.

SAM
This ain't an act Sarah. I've done all
this work but it's still not enough.

SARAH

This is what she always does, she runs away and it makes you feel like shit.

SARAH

I mean, what do you expect inviting her over here? Did you think she was gonna kiss and make up?

(total despair)

Look, I'm no expert but I do know this. If you don't heal this rejection wound, whatever this is you're feeling...it's gonna haunt you for the rest of your life. No matter who comes and loves you.

Sarah kisses him on the forehead, grabs her and Russel's coat.

SARAH

Russ...

RUSSELL

(at the door)

Thanks for dinner mate.

Sarah and Russell slip out. Ava and Jenny Stare at their dad knowing he's upset.

AVA

Maybe you should cook steak next time.

SAM

(deeply hurting)

What do you mean, tonight was a great success.

(emotions bursting from his gut)

You guys watch a movie, I'm just gonna send an email.

Sam swiftly retreats to his--

BEDROOM

Cries on his knees cuddling Mac.

SAM

I've lost her God. I know I have, *I just know it*. She doesn't even look at me the same anymore.

Mac stares up at Sam.

SAM

You love me, don't you Mac?

Mac blinks. Sam lets out a sad chuckle, half amused, half broken.

SAM

Oh what, you expect me to love *me* all by myself? I don't know *how*. Nobody taught me how to do that. Not my mom and certainly not my dad.

Sam stares up to the night sky for desperate for answers.

SAM

God please help me. If you can't make my wife love me, show my cat how to love me.

(to Mac)

My only friend.

A long beat. Mac just stares. Like he understand him but won't give him an answer.

SAM

Why are you looking at me like that?

Sam blows his nose pathetically.

SAM

I don't know the answers to anything Mac. If I did I wouldn't be here living this stupid life all alone. I'd have my house back, with my two kids. I'd be enough.

A silence so thick it hurts. Mac scratches at his door to be released out. And suddenly mac isn't just a cat. He's *one more thing leaving him. One more rejection.*

SAM

What first Linda- now you? Fine, go!

He opens the door and Mac slips out.

Ava's face on her dad.

AVA

Who ya talking to?

SAM

Ah- just going over some house rules with Mac. He's got a real sense of independence these days. You noticed that?

Ava looks at him funny and retreats to the bathroom.

INT. PET STORE - DAY

Sam strides through the isle with a manic determination, pushing past dog toys, fish tanks. He scans the isle until -BINGO...A METAL ARMOUR SUIT FOR CATS- with MATCHING CHAIN.

SAM

We're gonna be inseparable now buddy.

Female sales assistant MANDY (20's) approaches.

MANDY

That one came in from china today.

SAM

China? I'll take medium, he's put on a little weight.

She slides a medium size silver full metal jacket over Mac.

SAM

Perfect.

EXT. BEACH PROMENADE - DAY

Sam and Sarah jog side by side down the promenade. The ocean stretching out beside them, waves crashing, sky purple at sunset.

Mac, in his metal armpit suit jacket attracts a few curious stares from pedestrians.

SAM

(frustrated-mid rant)

I just thought that if she saw how I was now, being my authentic self, being better with the girls, that maybe she'd take me back, but no she has to gaslight me and turn it around--

SARAH

Sam....sam....

Sarah slows, exhausted, falls onto a bench mentally drained.

SARAH

I know...because I was there,
remember.

SAM

(falls onto bench)
I sound like a broken record. Just
shoot me.

SARAH

I know you expect me to chime in with
comfort and validation but instead of
venting to me, I need you to ask you,
what do you want Sam...

(beat)

what do you *really* want?

SAM

I want my old life back.

SARAH

Russell asked me to marry him.

Sam's heart drops. A crack of a smile.

SAM

What?

SARAH

Last night.

SAM

After two months- are you insane?

SARAH

Knew you'd say that.

SAM

Sis, you don't even know this guy.

SARAH

Well, what's the right amount of time
then Sam, because according to you,
love is just a long con until somebody
leaves.

Sam scoffs, looks away. That hurt.

SAM

I just don't want you to make the same mistakes I did.

SARAH

You really think marrying Linda was a mistake?

SAM

Well what do you call the mother of your children takin an oath, promising she'll never leave and then breaking that?

SARAH

That's called life Sam. God, you really believe Russ is gonna fuck me over and leave me don't you.

SAM

People leave Sarah! That's all they do, dad left, mom checked out. Linda--

SARAH

Don't you dare. You have no idea what I went through.

Sam falters, taken aback by the weight in her voice.

SAM

What?

SARAH

Dad didn't just leave Sam.

SAM

What do you mean?

She stares at him, jaw clenching, years of resentment bubbling over.

SARAH

You were just a baby. I heard them screaming, so I ran in and he had her on the floor, his hand around her neck, she was turning blue.

SAM

What?

SARAH

I tried to pull him off her but-
 (voice cracks)
 -the knife in his hand.....cut my
 face.

SAM

You told me it was an accident?! That
 was the story?!

Sam is speechless, completely shattered. He stumbles for
 words, then looks down but Mac is gone.

SAM

Wait, where's Mac??
 (instantly panics)
 Mac?? MAC??
 (looking in all directions)
 Where are you buddy??

SARAH

Mac??

Then- he see's him. Across the street, mac sitting in the
 middle of the road. Still. Calm. Almost like he's waiting.

The world slows as a MASSIVE TRUCK ROARS TOWARDS HIM.

SAM

Mac NOOOOO!!

Sam bolts forward to save him but--SMASH.

Sarah screams.

Silence.

Sam falls to his knees, lifting mac into his arms. He knows
 instantly- Mac is gone. But his body is warm. Like he's still
 there. Sarah stands frozen, tears spilling, hands to her
 mouth.

And then - something strange.

A peace floods Sam- a knowing.

Because deep down, he realizes- Mac saved him. And maybe mac
 knew this was always the plan.

Sam cradles him, pressing his forehead to Macs, a whisper
 only Mac can hear-

SAM
Thank you...

And maybe just maybe Sam finally understands what it means to let go.

EXT. ANIMAL CREMATION BUILDING- DAY

Sam, Ava and Jenny stand before Mac's small casket at his cremation unit. Linda right behind them.

AVA
It's okay dad. Goodbyes are hard.

JENNY
(Strokes mac's fur one last time)
Bye mac and cheese. Thanks for making
my daddy find his heart again.

AVA
(places flower down)
I'll miss you Mac. See ya.

SAM
If you girls wouldn't mind giving me a
minute.

LINDA
Come on...

Linda takes the girls to her SUV.

Sam crouches down beside Mac, one hand resting on his still body.

SAM
Well, this is it buddy. The end of our
little adventure. I just wanted you to
know, you were a real support system.
My best friend. I can't help but think
how I let you down, how I couldn't
protect you. Of all the ways you could
have gone, this is probably the worst-
so for that I'm sorry.

(beat)
Caring for you gave me tremendous
purpose. I was so damn lonely-and then
you came along, and somehow you took
all that pain away. And you never
judged me, not once...and when I had
nobody to talk to, you'd always

listen. Its almost like-
 (glances up at the sky)
 you were heaven sent.

He presses a final kiss on Macs forehead and whispers...

SAM
 I don't want to let you go mac...but
 that's what I have to do. Bye buddy...

Mac is gently slid into the cremation chamber. Door closes.
 Flames are lit. A big exhale from Sam. Almost relief and for
 the first time Sam knows he *must* let go.

EXT. MR CHENG MANSION - DAY

Sam parks, rushes to the front door only to met by Hai, Gangs
 right hand man, arms folded. Richard and Michael are already
 at the door.

SAM
 Guys- where is everybody?

RICHARD
 Gone man. They didn't make it.

Sam swallows hard. Didn't make it?

SAM
 Hai...we need to talk to Gang. Please.

Hai studies all three. Something about their hopeless
 posture.

HAI
 Come...

They follow Hai through the back garden, down the winding
 pathway to a --

CLIFFTOP

Gang stands near the edge, hands folded behind his back,
 gazing over the river below.

SAM
 I'm at the end of my rope Gang.

GANG
 You want to jump. Do it.

SAM

(walks to edge)

Wouldn't be the worst thing.

(sighs)

Nothing's worked. Your ways of healing, getting my wife back-backfired. I'm still an asshole, in fact, I think I've always been one. Especially to the people I love.

RICHARD

Me too.

MICHAEL

We need you Gang. Help us.

GANG

Listen...

They fall silent. A flock of birds erupts from the trees, disappearing into the sky. The stream rushes below. Life continues to move.

SAM

My marriage is unsalvageable. I'm unsalvageable. This whole Tom Wild façade- the shiny face, the nice clothes. I'm a phoney! Tom Wild ruined everything. And now, all he wants is booze and pills, because this pain just won't go away.

(emotional)

I stood at that altar, on front of friends, family, God, and now it's all gone. And I've let my sister down too which makes it even worse.

(softens)

I've never spoke about it because men don't do that, but, the truth is, everything traces back to my father and how his absence has actually effected me... and on top of that, my cat just died.

RICHARD AND MICHAEL

Sorry man.

SAM

Rag doll. Cutest whiskers.

A soft wind comes in, almost like a whisper of the divine.

GANG CHENG

Pain does not destroy- pain
transforms...it is law.

RICHARD

No offense, but I'm starting to really
despise these stupid life quotes man-
our lives are in the toilet!

MICHAEL

I'm out of prayers too Gang. There's
nobody coming to the rescue.

GANG CHENG

Walk with me.

The men follow him deep into the forest.

INT. FOREST- NIGHT FALLING

Gang, Hai, Sam, Richard and Michael reach the soft flowing
stream.

GANG CHENG

Before you were damaged- you whole.
Father fucked you up, left mother- now
you spend every moment looking for
somebody to save you.

This hits hard because its truth. Gang steps into the stream
barefoot, the icy water swirling around his ankles.

GANG

You believe since father failed you,
you fail your kids. Not true. What
father did-that is his shame, not
yours.

Gang walks across the stream, Hai right behind him.

GANG

Children- are like water. Resilient.
They adapt. And *always* forgive.
(orders)
Cross.

RICHARD

We can't cross over that, it's too
freezing!

MICHAEL

Yeah man, come on, unless there's like
a million dollars on the other side.

GANG CHENG

Choose to not cross-stay trapped in
past forever.

Guys stare at the rushing water.

SAM

You sure there's no bears or rattle
snakes?

GANG

No anaconda. Just big baby syndrome-
MOVE IT!

They remove their shoes and charge across the water like a
bunch of shrieking kids.

DEEPER IN WOODS

They reach three strange looking twisted tree's and park up.
Gang sparks a fire with two small rocks. No lighter, no
matches.

RICHARD

Hey, how'd you do that?

GANG

Nature provides everything we need.

Hai offers Gang a TRAY WITH A TEA POT and FOUR SMALL CUPS.
Gang scoops water from the stream, adds herbal leaves and
places the pot over the hot fire.

A distant howl echo's from the trees.

SAM

What was that? You hear that??

GANG

Only wild beast- you.

The men stare into the flames.

SAM

My father left when I was twelve.
After that I became a different child.
There was no real guidance, no role

model. I became so angry at the world.

RICHARD

Not your fault man...

SAM

Every time Linda would pull away, I felt rejected. But it wasn't her, it was him. Those memories of being alone in that house. Of him walking out that door and never coming back. For a long time I thought he left because of me. From that moment on I feel like I didn't deserve love, so when Linda came along and wanted to love me...I guess I was always waiting for that day when she would leave me too. Which lead me to heavy drinking, all kinds of substance abuse. By the time I realized how damaged I was and how I was the one who was broken, it was too late.

GANG

There is wound that never heals, in heart of abandoned child. But as adult-it is responsibility to love yourself enough- so you can love another.

SAM

(breaks down)

Why can't I let her go...why??

Tears falls. Michael and Richard, hardened men, start to cry too.

GANG

Letting go...greatest act of love. The love you hold for Linda, must override all pain. All resentment. Was not her job to heal you...it was yours.

Sam wipes his tears away, comes back.

GANG

Every time you get triggered freighted boy inside, needs your love, your compassion. Must return to him. Again and again and again. Tell him...he is safe.

SAM
Little Sam is safe.

RICHARD
Little Richard is safe.

MICHAEL
Little Michael is safe.

Gang offers them the three cups of hot tea.

GANG
Before drink- release what must leave
you. What no longer serves you.

The guys dig deep.

RICHARD
My guilt.

MICHAEL
My fear.

SAM
My anger.

They drink the tea and bond over a symbolic cleansing.

GANG
Tonight, we do not fight. We do not
run. We surrender.

Gang reaches into his satchel, pulls out a small pouch of
earth, sprinkles it into the flames. The fire hisses shifting
to a deep red as Gang closes his eyes.

GANG
Let go-let in. Forgive- begin.

MEN
Let go- let in. Forgive- begin.

Silence.

Nothing but trees- a whisper.

The winds shifts. The men start to chuckle because somewhere
deep inside they feel like they've let go of the past.

Then: a low growl rumbles behind them.

A WOLF stands a few feet away watching. Waiting.

Sam freezes.

Richard and Michael's heads snap up-the WOLF stands just a few feet away.

RICHARD AND MICHAEL
(sprinting up trees)
HOLY SHIIITT!!!

Gang, he doesn't even blink.

Sam freezes, his eyes locked with the wolf's gaze.

SAM
(whispers)
Oh fuck.

GANG
Fear- is just an illusion.

Sam holds. A little longer. Just a little longer.

Then the wolf tilts his head-sniffs the air and turns away, padding back into the forest.

PHEW! Gang lets out a deep joyful laugh. And in the thankful moment Sam joins him.

For the first time in Sam's life, the boy inside surrendered.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Dawn breaks. Gang and Hai are gone. The men awake scratching their heads like it was some weird dream.

RICHARD
Guess we should head back.

MICHAEL
If we remember the way...

But first: at their feet- three small plant pots. With three small envelopes attached.

Sam picks up his first, opens note and reads-

SAM
"THE PAST DOES NOT DIE- IT TRANSFORMS"

Out falls a small seed onto Sam's palm.

Richard and Michael follow suit, each receiving the same quote and seed.

A wow moment.

Richard and Michael begin their walk back, more grateful, more aligned. Sam a little behind, silent, alone.

Then he see's it- the same LONE WOLF in the distance.

But now instead of running in fear, Sam bows his head in trust, in faith, a changed man. The wolf disappears into the wild.

EXT. PROMENADE - DAY

A small wooden bench, the spot where Mac took his last breath. Sam kneels in the fresh soil, carefully placing a young sapling. Ava and Jenny help, small hands pressing soil over fragile roots.

JENNY

Will it grow daddy?

Sam looks at the tree, then up at the sky.

SAM

Yeah honey, it will.

He cradles his two daughters. A faint rainbow glowing on the horizon.

INT. ENGAGEMENT PARTY- AFTERNOON

Sarah and Russell are surrounded by friends. The room is lively, filled with flowers, live music and some of Sarah's art work displayed.

Sam shows up, flowers in hand. Russell spots him, waves, gestures Sarah to meet him by the door.

SARAH

Was wondering if you'd show up.

SAM

I'm not gonna stay long but I wanted to give you these...nobody deserves this happiness more than you Sarah. Congratulations.

She accepts.

SAM

I'm sorry Sarah. I've been so lost in my own mess that I never took the time to be present, for you...I'm just glad I get to witness your epic love story unfold.

SARAH

Sarah's finally getting married.

Sam's eyes soften as he hugs her tightly. Knowing this moment is crucial.

SAM

Little Sarah deserves this love.

SARAH

You too Sam.

SAM

So listen, I always knew this whole wife thing would suit you, but just remember, whatever you do-

SAM & SARAH

Don't fuck up...

Sarah kisses Sam goodbye and returns to Russell on the dancefloor.

INT. RUSTIC COFFEE HOUSE- DAY

Sam sits on a leather sofa near a window. The sun finds his face, eyes closed and for a fleeting second, he absorbs every ounce of warmth, like a man thawing after a long winter.

Linda arrives with Ava and Jenny. The light catches her face and their eyes meet.

GIRLS

Hi dad.

SAM

Hey.

AVA

We're just gonna be over here. See ya Sunday mom.

LINDA

Bye honey.

Linda waves goodbye as Ava and Jenny make their way towards the air hockey table.

LINDA

Hi.

SAM

Hi. Have a seat.

The girls game starts behind them, a rhythm, a heartbeat, the sound of their daughters joy born from them.

SAM

Thanks for meeting me.

LINDA

You said you wanted to talk?

SAM

Just hear me out.

He takes a breath, the kind when you're ready to finally tell the truth.

SAM

I've been chasing a lot of things
Linda, success, money, you. And I
thought if I could just fix
everything, I thought I'd
finally....I'd be enough.

(beat)

But I realized something. I wasn't
chasing you because I loved you. I was
chasing you because I didn't love me.

Her face softens-this is the man she always knew was there.

SAM

Truth is-deep down, I think I knew.
We've been holding on for so long
thinking the next version of us would
be the one that worked. But...

(beat)

I was so busy needing you to fill my
cracks, I never saw yours. I never saw
how you were hurting too.

Her eyes glisten- a truth she never expected to hear.

SAM

I don't blame you for not being able to love me the way I wanted, but I see now...you were just trying to survive your own battles. And I'm sorry- for expecting you to heal mine.

Now Linda's crying. He takes her hand.

SAM

I know our love story over. I just needed this time to accept it.

He slides an envelope across the table.

SAM

The tesla's sold. The money's in here. For the girls future. Ain't no way my girls are packing groceries.

LINDA

So no more quick fixes, fake tan, bok choy soup?

SAM

I can't promise you *that*.
(smiles)
But seriously, thank you.

LINDA

For what?

SAM

Breaking my heart. You didn't just make me a better man. You helped me find him.

She stands and they hug, noticing a piercing diamond earring in his left ear.

LINDA

Well- happy to finally *meet* him, whoever he is.

SAM

Tom wild, of course.

LINDA

(at the door)
Tom who?

SAM

Oh and if you're TV ever breaks-

A flicker of a smile, laced with twenty years of history.

LINDA

I know who to call.

The scene holds-two lives, one big chapter closing- reminding us some connections win or lose, never break.

EXT- SAMS TRUCK - MAIN STREET- DAY

Sam, Ava and Jenny drive down main street in his work truck- bruised, battered but real. No ex wife, no crazy cat. Just the three of them.

JENNY V/O

Where's the Tesla?

SAM

That old thing? Some things, you can live without.

AVA

Was beautiful while it lasted.

SAM

(smiling with good memories)

Yes it was.

(beat)

Now who's for pizza?

GIRLS

MEEEEEE!!!

FADE OUT : Sam drives into the future...Tom Wild still in there somewhere.