

Shattered Melodies

by

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FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Rural and cozy, daylight filters through the window like a prism highlighting the room in color.

A young family of three await an unknown diagnosis, each hindered by the weight of it.

MELODIE (17), eyes bright, angsty, hides her long hair under hoodie. She draws flowers with a dry erase marker onto the wood arm of a chair.

ERIC (48), the kind of everyman you might have a beer with on occasion, reads a magazine from the clump stretched out on a coffee table.

ISABELLA (45), an older mirror image of Melodie but with intense anxiety, paces in a hot mess of tears.

MELODIE

Do I really have to be here for
this?

Melodie wilts and pulls the hoodie revealing a pale glow to her skin and headphones to drown out everything else.

ERIC

Come on, Belle. Can you just sit
down?

She pierces him with a glare.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Her last check up was fine.

Eric slaps down the magazine then anchors himself in front of Isabella.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Stop.

ISABELLA

You have no idea how this feels.

The DOCTOR, gentle but serious, knocks and enters.

ERIC

Slow down. Breathe.

ISABELLA

This is too soon.

Isabella peers through the doctor to get a read. Nothing.
Melodie readies herself, already expecting the worst.
They all peer silently at each other.

ERIC

Well?

The doctor sighs then with a deep breath.

DOCTOR

She's going to need a transplant.

Isabella breaks down as the crushing words hit her.
Eric rushes to comfort her but is pushed away.

QUICK FLASH - ISABELLA'S MEMORY

Melodie as a baby.

Melodie as a toddler taking first steps.

Isabella guides Melodie at six years old through finger
scales on a piano.

Melodie gleefully smiles teeth brimming ear to ear.

Melodie, at eight, performs on school stage in front of small
group of parents.

Melodie sings around the house at twelve years old.

BACK TO:

Melodie, apathetic, draws a tombstone between the flowers.

ERIC

How long do we have?

The Doctor shrugs unable to give him an answer.

Eric, pleading with his gaze, relents to desperation.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Would I be able to donate?

ISABELLA

NOT HERE.

DOCTOR

Non-paternal matches seldom work.

Panic and surprise splash across Melodie's face.

MELODIE

What?

Melodie, about to erupt, stares down both of her parents.

ERIC

We didn't think it would matter.

MELODIE

It kinda does!

Isabella, unable to speak, trembles.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

This is how I find out?

Melodie explodes out the door to dead silence.

FADE TO:

SUPER - ONE YEAR LATER.

INT. HOUSE - MELODIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Happy eighteenth birthday balloons float aimlessly around the room to read eighty-one.

Melodie slouches on the bed encompassed by the same hoodie now tattered and torn. She scrolls through her phone to send a text.

Melodie (TEXT): **She's on the moon today. Can you pick me up?**

Melodie shakes a variety of kidney and headache medications on the top of a dresser.

She scoffs as she chokes a couple down.

PHONE PING!

Eric (TEXT): **I'm already waiting outside.**

The horn from Eric's old truck chirps in the distance.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Melodie tiptoes past another bedroom before her eyes connect with Isabella.

Isabella weeps quietly onto the pillow then turns away.

Melodie wipes the door casing clean with her sleeve then draws a crescent moon in dry erase marker.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EARLY MORNING

The steep mountain peaks conceal this small town in the middle of nowhere Colorado.

Eric blasts the heat in his old Ford F150 truck. He studies a GoFundMe page that says "A Transplant for Melodie". Eric taps the donation page then a link that says "Share".

Melodie hurries to avoid the cold air.

ERIC

Did you want to drive her today?

She jumps in the truck with a slam of the door, oblivious.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Hey, easy on the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Eric, annoyed, taps her shoulder.

Melodie shrugs.

Eric yanks out her ear bud with a quiet resolve.

MELODIE

What.

Melodie packs her ear bud away with a sarcastic snap.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

Happy?

ERIC

It's a start.

Melodie motions for him to get the truck moving.

Eric hits the gas pedal and they're off.

INT. TRUCK - TRAVELLING - EARLY MORNING

Eric plays with the radio. A familiar song comes on. He hums to the beat.

ERIC
I remember this. Still singing it?

MELODIE
It's just a song.

The radio crackles.

ERIC
Maybe.

Melodie hides a wry smile.

Silence fills the truck followed by static pops of the radio teetering back to life.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Maybe we can go to her concert.

MELODIE
Yeah, that's likely to happen.
There is YouTube anyway.

ERIC
That isn't the same.

MELODIE
(Softly)
It's all I have.

ERIC
I'm still here.

He holds out a pinky for a swear.

MELODIE
I'm not six anymore.

Melodie taps her foot as she finds the rhythm and words. She exhales onto the window then draws a Sun in the condensation.

Eric enjoys the moment.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - EARLY MORNING

A brick building, the largest in the town, stands three stories tall with patches of paint to cover old sign placements.

The old F150 stops in front.

ERIC
You need to practice driving.

The "Eww." on her face is difficult to hide.

MELODIE
I'd rather walk. I need to "Keep
Active." anyway.

She exits with another slam of the door.

ERIC
Really.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

The DIALYSIS MACHINE hums.

Sound blasts from Melodie's ear buds as she scribbles into a wire-bound college ruled notebook.

Tubes creep up her sleeve covered by her hoodie.

The notebook is plastered with random thoughts and ideas from edge to edge. Yet, she finds more space to write.

VANESSA (58), the nurse wearing scrubs that have a few buttons with positive quotes that reflects her wise old owl vibe, taps Melodie's shoulder.

VANESSA
Hey, how are you?

MELODIE
I'm still here.

Melodie hides her arm.

VANESSA
Let me do my job?

MELODIE
It still hurts.

Vanessa points to a button on her scrubs that says "B+".

Melodie turns away with a grimace.

Vanessa rolls up the sleeve, examines the tubes, then rolls it down.

VANESSA
It's fine. Won't stop you from
playing. Any word?

MELODIE
Still waiting.

VANESSA
Updates?

MELODIE
(Under her breath)
Still dyin'.

Vanessa taps her shoulder to break the mood.

VANESSA
Still writing?

Melodie lights up, excited.

MELODIE
Yeah.

VANESSA
When are you going to play
something for me?

MELODIE
I don't know.

VANESSA
Please? I want to be able to say I
knew you when.

MELODIE
I have to make it. Right?

Vanessa points to another button that says "You Got This".

VANESSA
I just want to be on the guest
list.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - ROOF - DAY

Melodie's breezes onto the roof with a rare smile. The town can be seen from its vantage point with the view of the mountains making it feel really small.

Melodie moves a chair into place then studies the words on her notebook. She closes her eyes and mimics playing a piano.

EXT. SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN - AFTERNOON

Music blares over the sounds of the town.

Melodie breaks her walk into small segments as each step becomes more labored then the next. She looks into various shop windows.

Most people ignore or deliberately avoid her.

A girl roughly her age purposely steps away.

Melodie plays dead, tongue out and head lolled back.

TEENAGE GIRL
That's not funny.

EXT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

It's an old coffee shop with aged counter tops and not many visitors just outside of town.

OLLIE (52), a cook with all the grease in the kitchen wiped onto his apron, notices Melodie passing by. He beckons at a window.

Melodie waves for him to come outside.

Ollie's hollers through the window instead.

OLLIE
She's not calling out is she?

A shrug of her shoulders says "I don't know."

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Melodie enters to eerie quiet.

Dirty dishes fill the sink.

MELODIE
Mom?

She tiptoes through the house to the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Melodie peeks into Isabella's bedroom.

Nothing has changed.

MELODIE
Don't you work tonight?

She snaps on the light and draws a sad face emoji onto the casing under the crescent moon.

EXT. THE LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

JAMES (22), shy, quiet, boyishly cute, and hardened by life experience tunes an old acoustic guitar.

An open guitar case, layered in stickers, sits a few steps away.

The most noticeable sticker is a custom-made "Ava & J" in complex lettering like a tattoo.

James strums the guitar for a small crowd of onlookers. He plays a song with a noticeable talent.

A few onlookers dump coins and bills into the case. Others don't even acknowledge he's there.

OFFICER DANIELS, a seasoned police officer, listens intently for a few moments, surprised.

QUICK FLASH - JAMES'S MEMORY

James, distraught, pushes tears from his face in an apartment as Officer Daniels talks with other officers.

BACK TO:

OFFICER DANIELS

Do you have a permit to be out here?

James nervously strums and stares at the ground.

OFFICER DANIELS (CONT'D)

Remember me?

James shrugs his shoulders.

OFFICER DANIELS (CONT'D)

You're talented. But you look like your one bad night from something terrible.

JAMES

Like you really give a shit.

James packs his guitar then scatters change, bills, and photos across the floor.

Officer Daniels picks up some of the bills and photos. He pulls out another \$200.00 from his wallet then places the money in James's hand.

OFFICER DANIELS

I do.

James reluctantly accepts it but struggles to give it back.

JAMES

I don't need your charity.

OFFICER DANIELS

Just take it.

Officer Daniels picks up a photo of beautiful young woman. He hands it back to James.

OFFICER DANIELS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Officer Daniels steps away with his partner.

James, dejected, reflects on the picture. He packs the guitar and sits onto the concrete as tourists pass.

EXT. THE LAS VEGAS PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

James finds his Jeep. The 1990's Wrangler hardtop stands out from the Teslas and posh cars with heat damaged paint and tires that don't seem to match.

James hops in with a slam of the door. He wipes tears from his face.

James finds his phone and searches GOFUNDME pages. He swipes a few pages that don't engage his interest. Then, it hits him. "A Transplant for Melodie." Her photo resembles the beautiful young woman.

James reads the details noting her blood type. He glides his fingers to his wrist to feel a bandaged cut and a bracelet.

A medical alert bracelet that reads "James J. Asthma. Rescue inhaler needed. Blood type - O Negative ICE - Ava Richards." hugs his wrist.

JAMES

Colorado.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Isabella wipes the counters in circles over and over.

Eric watches for a moment then rests at the main counter.

ERIC
Can we talk?

Isabella glares at him.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Don't be like that.

Isabella wraps silverware into napkins.

ISABELLA
Don't blame me for this.

ERIC
Can you stop?

ISABELLA
I'm busy.

Eric surveys the nearly empty coffee shop.

Her pace accelerates.

ERIC
Please, what can I do?

ISABELLA
We don't need to be rescued.

ERIC
Are you sure about that?

Isabella dumps the silverware onto the counter and rushes to the restroom.

Ollie pops his head through the two-way door.

OLLIE
Leaving me a fuckin' hurricane?

Eric, disappointed, trudges away.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Isabella rushes into a stall and dials a number trembling from anxiety.

ISABELLA
Come on. Pick up.

INTERCUT

INT. VANESSA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa wakes with the vibration of her phone rattling on the nightstand. She views the caller ID.

VANESSA
I'm just a nurse.

ISABELLA
I don't know who else to talk to.

VANESSA
That's why I gave you that book.

ISABELLA
It isn't helping.

VANESSA
I don't know what else to tell you.

ISABELLA
Really?

VANESSA
I get it. But you gotta figure it out like everyone else. You got this.

ISABELLA
It's just easier to focus on someone else.

VANESSA
What does that do for you?

Isabella takes deep breaths still erratic.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Tell Ollie to stop burning my hash browns.

INT. HOUSE - MELODIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Isabella rattles chairs and vacuums the living room.

Melodie pulls back the hoodie to listen. With a push of her ear buds into place, she tunes it out.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Isabella cleans and organizes literally covering the same spots over and over. She stops at the drawings on the door jamb, her expression softens.

Melodie's door rustles.

Isabella rushes back to the living room.

Melodie stops to change the drawing.

Isabella catches her, the questioning driven by her mania.

ISABELLA

How are you? Is everything ok?

MELODIE

I'm fine.

ISABELLA

Do you want me to make breakfast?

MELODIE

I'm okay.

ISABELLA

Let me wash that hoodie and fix that tear.

MELODIE

MOM. I just washed it the other day.

A honk from outside grabs their attention.

ISABELLA

Why is he here?

MELODIE

Why do you think?

Melodie rushes out the door.

Isabella wipes the drawing of a raincloud complete with lightning, rain, and wind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

A beautiful landscape of trees towers over the coffee shop. A large mountain looms behind it. There's a small path outlined through the trees down to a river not far away.

The Jeep Wrangler parks and James jumps out to catch his breath. He gasps with high altitude air unable to fill his lungs.

JAMES

Here we are.

James hears a gentle river splashing not far away and walks to it. When he's at the edge, he throws an Asthma inhaler into the river like skipping a rock.

James reaches for his bracelet but stops when a whitetail fawn thrashes in the water unable to raise itself above the edge. It calls out distressed.

James races to pull the fawn from the water.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Come on. It's ok.

He sights a growing rapid in the distance.

The fawn's mother huffs at James still holding the fawn. James sets the fawn down and it jumps away.

The mother locks eyes with James.

The sound of a piano in the distance spooks it away.

James searches for the sound then peels off the mud and debris.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - DAY

The stage, hidden behind some old curtains, seems forgotten in time with dust on a piano and other musical equipment.

Melodie props her phone onto a stand carved out of discarded Styrofoam. She grabs two stress balls from the piano to squeeze and stretch her fingers.

Melodie lifts the fallboard and presses a few keys to check the tune then opens her notebook to play.

MELODIE

I can do this.

She presses record on the phone then begins.

(Note: This song should be an original that is reflective of Melodie's creative spirit. Inspiration for this moment is a the song EET - BY Regina Spektor.)

Melodie stops abruptly wincing in pain. She moves to the open back door then leans against the opening. Melodie massages her wrist, shakes her fingers, then heads back to the piano.

She writes a few more lines into the notebook. With a deep breath, she restarts.

The piano can be heard across the stage through the open doors of the high school gymnasium.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

The back of the stage has a set of steps for access.

Music echoes into the yard.

The sound draws James in ascending the steps to the edge of the door. He quivers with emotion.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Melodie fights through the pain to complete the song.

She crosses her arms over her chest then taps to match her heartbeat. Her breathing calms and demeanor relaxes.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

James, lost in memories, turns to descend but stops. He ponders a moment then removes his dirtied hoodie and ties it around his waist.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

There's a knock on the door.

Melodie wildly jumps to her feet.

MELODIE
HOLY SHIT BALLS!!

JAMES
I didn't mean to scare you.

MELODIE
You know this is a school, right?

JAMES
I know. I just heard the music.

James struggles breathing and coughs. He recognizes Melodie from her photo.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That was you?

Melodie steps back then plants herself next to the piano.

JAMES (CONT'D)
May I?

Melodie holds her ground as James steps close to examine the piano. He touches a few keys lost in thought.

She holds a grin then notices his bracelet.

MELODIE
Cool bracelet.

James hides it.

JAMES
Thanks.

MELODIE
Do you play?

JAMES
Not really.

James finds her phone recording and hands it to her.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Do you post anything?

MELODIE
Never. Who'd want to listen?

JAMES
I would.

Melodie smiles then she reviews his cute features.

MELODIE
New to town?

JAMES
Just passing through.

MELODIE
Staying long?

JAMES
I hope not.

MELODIE
Probably a good thing.

He half smiles then heads back to leave.

JAMES
Thanks.

MELODIE
For?

JAMES
I didn't expect that.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - NIGHT

It's a little outlet for drivers to rest then get back onto the road. The school is visible in the distance.

The Jeep hides at the end of the row. The bad suspension rocks from movement inside.

James, reclined in the passenger seat, shivers unable to sleep with the sound of the piano echoing in his head.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James, eyes closed, rocks to the beat playing guitar. He opens to see.

AVA (22), the woman from the picture, a beautiful piano player with soft features and delicate hands plays across from him and smiles.

The music stops for an intermission.

AVA
You're not worried.

James shrugs off the worry.

AVA (CONT'D)
There is almost no one here.

JAMES
So?

AVA
It's starting to stress me out.
What if they close the show?
(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)
What if they fire us? What if we
can't find work?

JAMES
Slow down. I've got you.

AVA
Promise?

JAMES
Of course.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Melodie tiptoes through the hallway to peer into Isabella's bedroom.

The room is empty and the house is quiet.

The door casing has been cleaned.

Melodie bites her lip then draws a happy face with a question mark next to it.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabella quietly reads a book on coping with anxiety. She seems tempered and even keeled.

Melodie cautiously glides to the door

ISABELLA
Hey. You're up.

MELODIE
That's what typically happens when
I WAKE up.

ISABELLA
How are you feeling?

MELODIE
I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Is your wrist ok?

Isabella reaches for Melodie's arm.

She pulls it away.

MELODIE

I told you I'm fine. What we really should be asking is if YOU'RE fine.

ISABELLA

Sometimes I'm a little moody.

MELODIE

That's what you call it?

ISABELLA

You have no idea.

MELODIE

Then explain it to me.

ISABELLA

You don't know what it's like for me.

MELODIE

Clearly.

Melodie pushes in her ear buds and rushes out the door.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James seats himself at the lunch counter. He places down a wire bound college ruled notebook similar to Melodie's then picks up a menu. James examines his wallet to see only a few dollars.

Isabella, careful to approach, keeps a distance. Her observant gaze notices the few dollars in his wallet, a rumpled appearance, dried dirt on his clothes, and a soft sadness behind his eyes.

ISABELLA

Can I help you?

JAMES

Coffee and some pancakes?

ISABELLA

Decaf?

James points to the regular coffee.

She pours a cup then gently slides it over.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything else?

JAMES
No. I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Just some pancakes Ollie.

OLLIE (O.S.)
Coming up.

James reaches for his notebook. He writes with much more structure and organized intent.

He struggles to breathe.

ISABELLA
Are you alright? You look a little...

JAMES
Sorry. There was a deer that fell into the river.

ISABELLA
You jumped in the river?

JAMES
There was this fawn that couldn't find it's way out.

ISABELLA
No need to explain.

James notices an old photo hanging behind the counter of a younger Isabella and another woman. He intently studies the photo.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Did you know her?

James dismisses the question.

JAMES
No. I've never been here. You both looked happy.

ISABELLA
For a time.

JAMES
A time?

ISABELLA
Long story.

The order bell rings and Ollie slides a plate of pancakes under a heat lamp.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Syrup?

James nods.

Isabella squeezes the syrup then slides the plate.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Here you go.

Isabella goes back to work.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - LATER

James fights to keep his eyes open but they get heavier. His head droops as he falls asleep at the counter.

Isabella cleans relentlessly.

Ollie knocks in the kitchen pass-through. He throws a cleaning towel at her.

OLLIE
Hey.

Isabella looks back.

ISABELLA
What?

OLLIE
Don't rub the counters to the floor.

ISABELLA
What are you talking about?

Ollie point to the countertop.

Isabella realizes the counters have been worn in circles like they've been cleaned over and over.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I did all this?

Ollie holds his hands out like he's not going to get into it then steps away from the window.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Don't run away from me.

OLLIE
I didn't say anything.

ISABELLA
Why haven't you said something?

OLLIE
Why do you think?

Isabella steps back, disappointed. She notices James asleep.

OLLIE (CONT'D)
He can't sleep here.

ISABELLA
Shut up.

OLLIE
Wake him up.

ISABELLA
Don't worry about it. It looks like
he needs it.

Ollie drops a pot in the kitchen.

James, startled, knocks over a coffee cup.

JAMES
Shit.

ISABELLA
Let me help you.

Isabella, with a moist towel, wipes down the counter top.

JAMES
Sorry.

ISABELLA
It's okay. It's not your fault.

Isabella cleans the mess then throws the towel into the kitchen.

OLLIE (O.S.)
Missed me.

James looks up questioning.

ISABELLA
He saw you falling asleep.

Isabella, apologetic, steadies herself.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
But really, you can't sleep here.

JAMES
It's alright. I'll leave.

James yawns and stretches.

ISABELLA
There's a motel 6 about ten miles
from here if you need to get some
sleep.

JAMES
How much do I owe you?

ISABELLA
Don't worry about it.

JAMES
That isn't how it works.

James pulls the last of his money and lays it on the counter.

Isabella reaches for his notebook.

ISABELLA
My daughter has something similar.

JAMES
I hope not.

ISABELLA
I'm really sorry.

JAMES
Why? You aren't kicking me out.

ISABELLA
I just feel like I am.

JAMES
Don't worry. This is a coffee shop
not a motel. I get it.

Isabella watches James walk to his Jeep.

ISABELLA
You're such a jerk.

OLLIE
What? You kicked him out.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James focuses back into the coffee shop from his Jeep. He writes into his notebook.

JAMES (V.O.)
It's a thousand cuts. Small little
breaths that cry out. How long will
this take?

James turns the ignition but the Jeep sputters and stops.

Again, he tries.

Again, it sputters.

James taps at the gas gauge that reads empty.

His eyes droop tired and off to sleep.

JAMES
Please.

James coughs wildly again.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Isabella channels meditation exercises.

The sound of Eric's truck breaks hard into the driveway.

Isabella watches him rush from the truck through the front door.

ERIC
Mel!

ISABELLA
What the hell are you doing?

ERIC
Is Mel awake?

ISABELLA
Why?

ERIC
We have to go. There's a kidney.
Mel!

ISABELLA
Why did they call you?

ERIC

Let's not get into that right now.

Mel, half asleep, shuffles in.

Eric grins ear to ear.

MELODIE

What?

ERIC

There's a kidney.

MELODIE

Are you kidding?

ISABELLA

We're not ready.

MELODIE

How ready do we really have to be?

ISABELLA

Washing that sweatshirt would help.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Isabella paces nervously around the room.

Eric anchors himself in front of her.

ISABELLA

I can't believe they called you.

ERIC

That's what's bothering you right now?

Isabella smirks dismissively.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You have a lot going on.

ISABELLA

I can manage this.

ERIC

Then why does she text me?

Isabella barely holds her anxiety together ready to rip into him.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Look, I don't want to fight. Just
imagine, we'll be able to take her
to a movie or concerts.

ISABELLA
And expose her to all those people?

ERIC
Like you're one to talk.

ISABELLA
You know why.

ERIC
Just because we couldn't help
someone years ago doesn't mean you
got to make things even.

ISABELLA
I was with her that day. She
couldn't breathe, and I just froze.
I think about it all the time. If I
had just done something
different...

ERIC
Who really has a savior complex
here?

Eric stares at Isabella in silence.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - DAY

The doctor's and nurse prepare for a transplant surgery.

A nurse wheels in Melodie on a gurney.

DOCTOR
Excited?

MELODIE
You have no idea.

DOCTOR
Let me just walk you through it.
The kidney will arrive and we'll
examine it before we start.
Naturally, you'll be out before
that happens. When you wake up, it
should feel different.

MELODIE
Do we know..

DOCTOR
Don't ask those questions. Just
focus on you.

Melodie, emotional on the table, churns.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I want you to start counting
backwards...

The anesthesia takes effect and Melodie is out.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The transplant team arrives with the organ secured in its container.

The doctor carefully removes the organ to examine it.

A surgeon enters gloves on and hands ready to work.

SURGEON
We ready to go?

NURSE
Just waiting for you.

SURGEON
Let's take a look.

The surgeon examines Melodie readied for the transplant. He looks for his incision points.

DOCTOR
Wait!

The team all stops like an orchestra waiting for it's conductor.

The doctor slumps their shoulders.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
There's a lot of damage. I don't
know if we can use this.

The surgeon does an examination of the kidney then shakes his head "No."

SURGEON
Nice catch.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Melodie, groggy but anxious, awakens. She pushes her hand down to feel the bandage but doesn't feel anything.

She watches the doctor speak to her parents through the window.

Eric, scared and angry, pleads with them.

Isabella, tuned out, paces in a heap of tears.

Eric turns to hold Isabella but she pushes him away and down the hallway.

The doctor enters the room.

MELODIE
What happened?

DOCTOR
There was an imperfection with the kidney.

MELODIE
You said...

DOCTOR
I know.

MELODIE
You said I'd feel better.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry. We had to make a determination. We all agreed.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

James, tired and weary, strums his guitar on the tailgate of his Jeep. He notices a family with a single child enjoying a meal in the coffee shop.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

It's several years earlier and James, roughly ten years old, tears through Christmas presents.

The Christmas Holiday lights and a tree engulf the apartment with color.

PETE (45) and FLORENCE (42), very much in love, dote on young James.

Florence glances at Pete to grab the last gift.

FLORENCE

We have one more for you.

Pete places the gift down, which is obviously a guitar, in front of James.

He tears it open in a flash of paper and ribbon.

Florence encompasses Pete in a hug and kiss.

James looks on excited at both his parents and the guitar.

BACK TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

James packs the guitar back into the case.

Piano music filters through the air.

James cracks a smile.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - DAY

Melodie practices different finger exercises on the piano, tears dripping on the keys. She massages her wrist between movements.

James knocks.

The piano stool falls over as Melodie jumps to her feet.

JAMES

Sorry. I didn't want to scare you.
Again. Would it be ok if I came in?

Melodie considers it but is hesitant.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's ok. I'll go touch grass.

James turns.

MELODIE
I'm sorry. I haven't really played
for anyone.

JAMES
Why?

MELODIE
Why do you think?

JAMES
Just trust yourself.

Melodie replaces the stool and relaxes at the piano.

MELODIE
Come in.

She nervously taps at the keys.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I only write songs. So, I don't
know many.

JAMES
Play what you know.

MELODIE
Would you play something for me?

JAMES
I can't.

MELODIE
Please.

JAMES
I don't have my guitar.

Melodie points to a case not far away.

MELODIE
There's a guitar over there.

JAMES
I'll only play after you post
yours?

A moment of fear overtakes Melodie.

MELODIE
Why would you make me do that?

JAMES
Just, trust me.

MELODIE
Have you posted anything online?

JAMES
Not in a while.

MELODIE
Share your Insta with me?

James hesitates.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'll post my song. Shake on it?

Melodie covers her hand with her sleeve and shyly reaches out.

James returns his hand.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'm Mel by the way.

JAMES
James.

Melodie scans through her notebook.

James grabs the guitar case then finds a seat.

MELODIE
Don't judge.

Melodie breathes deeply in and out to calm herself, hits record on the phone, and with some hesitation plays.

{Note: These songs will be original songs. Melodie's song is hopeful but has a hint of despair behind her words. James's song is shaped by loss and feels like he's singing about an ex-girlfriend. The tone should be close to Older Than I Am - By Lennon Stella and Arms Around You by Jamie Grey.}

Stunned by her talent, James applauds.

Melodie blushes and smiles ear to ear.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Your turn.

James removes the guitar and tunes it. He strums it to check the sound.

JAMES
Don't judge.

James plays a song that's equally as good. He coughs and destroys the vocals at the end.

MELODIE
Some finish?

JAMES
You like the heaves at the end?

MELODIE
That was amazing till you blew the last few parts. I was going to stand up and clap but... you know the coughing kind of killed it.

JAMES
Yeah.

James packs the guitar and sets it aside.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Keep it up. You could be really great.

MELODIE
Right.

JAMES
I mean it.

MELODIE
Leaving so soon?

James pauses at the door.

Melodie holds out her phone.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Your Insta?

James hesitates.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
We shook on it.

James views her Instagram screenname and types it into his phone.

JAMES
It's not much.

MELODIE
Will I see you again?

James turns back then pushes his head down to leave.

JAMES (O.S.)
You have my Insta.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

A few guests are scattered across the coffee shop.

Isabella enters with an extra apron.

ISABELLA
Hey, Ollie?

OLLIE
Yeah? What's up?

ISABELLA
Has that Jeep been out back all day?

OLLIE
I don't know. I've been working.

ISABELLA
Has the guy from the other night been in?

OLLIE
No. Why?

ISABELLA
No reason.

OLLIE
You know, Eric's going to be mad if you take in another stranger.

ISABELLA
I don't care.

OLLIE
I'm just saying.

Isabella tosses Ollie a clean apron.

ISABELLA
What would people do without me?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - AFTERNOON

Melodie closes the fallboard on the piano.

She reviews her video.

MELODIE
Here goes nothing.

Melodie hits post on a YouTube profile.

She switches over to a notification on her Instagram.

Melodie hits play.

ON THE VIDEO - James and Ava perform.

JAMES
Sure you don't want to be in this?

AVA
This is your audition.

{Note: This song is James playing guitar with lead vocals and Ava playing piano off camera.}

The screen glows in Melodie's eyes. She smiles in amazement.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

Isabella fixates on her side work then attends to guests.
When she has a moment to rest, her emotions run hot and cold.

Vanessa finishes her food at the counter.

VANESSA
Ollie! You burned my fries.

OLLIE (O.S.)
You mean extra crispy.

James enters and finds a booth to lay low.

Ollie pops his head out of the kitchen to get Isabella's attention.

OLLIE (CONT'D)
Hey. Belle. You called it.

VANESSA
What are you talking about?

Isabella recognizes James at one of the booths. He blankly stares out the window.

ISABELLA
He was in the other night. Ever
just get a feeling about someone?

VANESSA
Not like you.

Vanessa pays and exits.

Isabella, slow to approach, steps to James's booth.

ISABELLA
Sorry about the other night.

JAMES
No need to apologize.

Isabella grabs a clean glass and a pitcher of water to bring to the booth.

ISABELLA
Coffee and pancakes?

JAMES
No thanks.

ISABELLA
Water?

James nods.

Isabella pours a glass.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I felt I was being mean.

JAMES
I was really tired. It won't happen
again.

ISABELLA
Are you sure I can't get you
anything?

James shakes his head "No" then sips the water.

Isabella returns the pitcher back onto the counter.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James strums his guitar.

Ava races out of a backroom in a panic. She moves erratically around the pit.

James carefully sets down the guitar.

JAMES
Hey. Calm down. What's wrong?

AVA
There's no more work. They're going dark.

JAMES
We'll get through this.

AVA
How? We can't just wait and hope.

JAMES
We'll get through this.

Loud knocks on a door snaps James to attention.

BACK TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - LATER

James sips at the water to enjoy the warmth of the building.

ISABELLA
Is that your Jeep?

James stares off into the distance.

Isabella waits for an answer.

JAMES
Yeah. Is it ok to be parked out there?

ISABELLA
I'm sorry. I was just curious.

James doesn't respond.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Are you staying with someone?

Eric enters and sees Isabella with James.

Ollie, spatula in hand, looks ready to start a fight.

OLLIE
Are you here to cause a mess?

ERIC
I ordered a special. Who's the kid?

OLLIE
Fuck if I know. But, he's been here
a couple of days this week and
hasn't ordered shit today. Better
watch out. She might take in
another stray.

Eric rushes to interrupt her conversation.

ERIC
Can we talk?

Isabella glares at Eric then pushes away.

Eric chases down Isabella at the lunch counter.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Ollie tells me he hasn't ordered
anything?

ISABELLA
He just did.

ERIC
Belle.

Isabella pulls a plate of food from under the heat lamp and
yells through the kitchen pass-through.

ISABELLA
I need another special.

ERIC
You just can't help it. Can you.

Isabella steps around Eric to reach James's booth.

ISABELLA
Here's your order.

James looks befuddled.

She smirks and a look back at Eric.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Compliments of him.

Isabella reverses back to Eric.

James watches.

ERIC
I get that you need to do this
sometimes. But...

ISABELLA
I should just let him go sleep in
his car tonight?

ERIC
You don't know that.

ISABELLA
I need to keep doing this.

ERIC
You can't give people a free pass.

ISABELLA
Watch me.

Their voices are muffled to James as he strains to listen.

Isabella points at the door and Eric finally leaves. She
returns to James.

JAMES
Are you ok?

Isabella, taken aback, questions herself to answer.

ISABELLA
No one has really asked me that in
a while.

Isabella still keeps a careful distance between herself and
James.

JAMES
Is there something wrong? I can
leave if you don't want me here.

ISABELLA
No, nothing like that. I'm just
cautious.

Isabella peers into James's eyes.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Running from something?

JAMES
I don't know. I got into my Jeep a
couple of days ago and just felt
like...

ISABELLA
Getting away?

James nervously eyes the exit.

JAMES
I'm not used to being questioned.

Isabella rolls silverware into napkins.

ISABELLA
More water?

JAMES
Sure.

Isabella pours James another glass of water.

CUT TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Isabella, years younger, brings water to a table.

ISABELLA
Can I get you anything else?

The woman from Isabella's photo works the breakfast rush with her. She struggles to breathe with her lips almost blue from hypoxia. The woman reaches for a water glass that slips out of her hand.

The sound of glass breaking echoes.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Ollie!

Isabella, panicked, freezes almost unable to react.

BACK TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James shivers and holds his arms close to keep warm.

Isabella approaches with a gas can.

James lowers the window.

ISABELLA

It's going to get cold out here.

James brushes it off.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

I have a place you can sleep.

JAMES

Why would you do that?

James debates with himself to accept.

Isabella pushes a gas can to him.

ISABELLA

What other options do you have?

James slowly accepts the offer by taking the gas can.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Have you ever had the measles or chicken pox, COVID?

JAMES

You're not a germophobe. Are you?

ISABELLA

Just cautious.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Melodie's phone glows in the darkness. The music blares in her ears.

Isabella clicks the lights on.

MELODIE

You're home early.

ISABELLA

It's almost midnight. You should be in bed.

Isabella searches a drawer.

MELODIE
What are you looking for?

ISABELLA
The cabin keys.

Melodie storms off.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
It's not what you think.

INT. CABIN - MIDNIGHT

It's a simple cabin with a few amenities such as a heater, television, a small desk, and a sofa bed.

Isabella starts a small coffee maker.

James hauls in his guitar case and backpack then sets them next to the door.

ISABELLA
How long have you been playing?

JAMES
A while.

ISABELLA
I played piano. I tried to teach my daughter but... We kind of lost interest.

Isabella cleans a few places with a rag and moves around some cushions for the sofa.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
There isn't much. But, there's a pull out bed. Coffee in the nook over there and a full bathroom.

JAMES
Do you ever stop?

ISABELLA
What?

JAMES
Working.

Isabella forces herself to stop still restless.

ISABELLA
She leaves this place a mess.

James examines the sofa. He notices a few doodles on the walls. He points to them questioning.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
She doodles.

Isabella moves the cushions on the sofa to remove the pull out bed.

James stops her.

JAMES
I got it.

James coughs with a few labored breaths.

ISABELLA
Sometimes it takes a couple of days
to acclimate to altitude.

JAMES
We'll see.

ISABELLA
See you in the morning.

Isabella exits.

James looks over the cabin. He stops the coffee pot from it's brew.

JAMES
Why?

James searches his backpack to find his notebook. He sets it on a table to write. James reviews the GOFUNDME page on his phone.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What now?

EXT. CABIN - EARLY MORNING

Melodie spies outside the cabin. She quietly places the key into the lock.

The knob turns and the door opens.

Melodie, startled, steps back from the door to see James.

MELODIE
Are you following me?

JAMES
Hey. I'm not. Your mom offered me a
place to sleep. Do you need to come
in for something?

MELODIE
I'll come back.

INT. CABIN - TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Melodie views a notebook on the table. She nearly pushes
James out of the way to reach it.

MELODIE
What the hell! You're here one
night and start reading all my
shit?

Melodie smothers it with her arms.

JAMES
That isn't yours.

MELODIE
Like hell it isn't.

JAMES
Take a look.

Melodie examines the notebook. She places the book onto the
table and searches her hiding spot to find her notebook where
she left it.

MELODIE
Sorry.

JAMES
I wouldn't have read it.

Melodie, embarrassed, rushes to the cabin door.

MELODIE
I thought I wasn't going to see
you.

JAMES
Me either.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

Melodie searches through her notebook but seems distracted.
She draws stars onto the edge of the chair.

VANESSA

What's on your mind this morning?

Startled, Melodie snaps to attention.

MELODIE

It's nothing.

VANESSA

I heard Belle took in a guy.

MELODIE

You already know about that?

Melodie smiles embarrassed.

VANESSA

Hey, I was wondering if I'd ever see one of those.

MELODIE

What do you mean?

VANESSA

I love it when you smile. You must think he's cute.

MELODIE

It's just nice to meet someone new who doesn't know all about me. I played a song for him.

VANESSA

He gets a song and I don't?

MELODIE

I posted it online.

VANESSA

I want to see.

Melodie turns over her phone to Vanessa and hits play.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

See. You already have likes and shares. How long ago did you post it?

MELODIE

Yesterday.

VANESSA

All of this in one day?

MELODIE
I know, right.

VANESSA
I would love to see you on a stage.

MELODIE
Do you really think that could
happen?

Vanessa points to a button that says "Anything is possible".

VANESSA
It's not about what I think.

Melodie considers it eyes hopeful.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Beats just surviving.

Melodie smiles.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
How's your mom doing?

MELODIE
Don't ask.

VANESSA
Is she reading that book I gave
her?

MELODIE
She was reading something.

VANESSA
She cares. Maybe she just needs a
little push to see things clearly.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Isabella slowly prepares more coffee but appears weepy and tired.

James quietly waits.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry about this morning.

JAMES
It's not your fault.

ISABELLA
Not exactly.

JAMES
You must have been a good teacher.

ISABELLA
What?

JAMES
The piano. I saw her practicing a couple of days ago. I just assumed.

ISABELLA
Really? I haven't given her lessons in years.

The coffee machine brews. Isabella pours a cup for James.

JAMES
You don't need to go out of your way for me.

ISABELLA
It's okay. If I don't make it for you, it'll just go to waste.
Let me show you around.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - DAY

Autumn leaves sprinkle the ground from the weather change. The cabin hides down the driveway. A couple of large trees mark the edge of the property. Chunks of a tree stump remain scattered next to the cabin.

ISABELLA
This has always been home. Where are you from?

JAMES
What do you need done?

ISABELLA
I need the yard cleaned. Firewood. It snows pretty bad sometimes in winter.

JAMES
It snows in Vegas like once in a blue moon.

ISABELLA
Vegas?

James turns away.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Well, if you stay here long enough,
you'll see plenty.

JAMES
Perhaps.

ISABELLA
What brought you here?

James discomfort grows.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I'll stop with the questions.

JAMES
Is it hard for you to stop
sometimes?

ISABELLA
I don't know what your taking
about.

JAMES
Sorry. You just seem restless is
all.

ISABELLA
I don't think I'd call it that.

JAMES
Maybe it's just me.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - ROOFTOP - DAY

Eric opens the door to find Melodie writing into her notebook. He steps gingerly trying to not look over the edge.

MELODIE
How are you still scared of
heights?

ERIC
There are harnesses for that. I
want you to practice driving the
truck.

MELODIE
Why? You planing to fall off the
building.

ERIC
You'll need to drive at some point.

MELODIE
Right.

ERIC
Let's go.

MELODIE
You know, I'll crash it.

ERIC
That's why you need to practice.
Beats playing air piano.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - DAY

James cleans all the fallen branches and debris from the front of the house. He moves slowly and appears pale from the activity.

The truck pulls up in heap of bad turns and white knuckles.

Melodie hops out the driver side with a slam of the door.

ERIC
Not that side too.

Eric sighs and shakes his head when he sees James.

Melodie, wilted and worn out, trudges to James.

MELODIE
You don't have to do this.

JAMES
It was the deal.

ERIC
What is this?

JAMES
I'm just cleaning the yard.

James continues to pick up the branches.

Eric looks over to Melodie.

ERIC
Get some rest. Go back to the house
before you get sick out here.

Melodie slumps and walks to the house then looks back through the window.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Listen. Don't take advantage of this.

JAMES
I didn't plan to.

ERIC
I mean it.

JAMES
I understand.

Eric races to the door.

He looks back at James, disappointed.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eric enters without knocking.

The noise spooks Isabella from her daze.

ISABELLA
You can't just keep barging in here.

ERIC
What are you thinking?

ISABELLA
Do you think I'm crazy? Like I can't just help someone in need.

ERIC
You said it not me.

ISABELLA
I'm done with this.

ERIC
Is that really what you want?

ISABELLA
Yes.

ERIC
That means no more rides. It means no more texts in the middle of the night.

ISABELLA

Out.

Eric pulls back surprised.

Melodie listens from the kitchen.

Eric finds her.

MELODIE

She didn't exactly say it.

Eric holds back from saying more then rushes out the door.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

James rests on the sofa. He drinks water like he can't get enough into his body.

Melodie watches him from the kitchen.

EXT. SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN - DAY

Melodie and James walk through the town looking into the windows of various shops.

JAMES

You going in?

MELODIE

I like looking through the windows.

JAMES

What do you see?

MELODIE

Another life. Possibility.

JAMES

What would you do if you could get out of this place?

Melodie lights up.

MELODIE

No one has ever asked me that.

JAMES

Well?

MELODIE

I'd live.

JAMES
What's stopping you now?

James notices various people stepping around them.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

MELODIE
For what?

James acknowledges his dirty clothes.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
It's not you. I can wash them for you.

JAMES
Would you?

MELODIE
Of course.

Melodie pulls out her phone to show James some news.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I posted it.

JAMES
I know.

MELODIE
Are you getting people to share it?

JAMES
If people are sharing, it's because it's really good.

MELODIE
Did you really think it's that good?

JAMES
I know it is.

MELODIE
Where have you played?

JAMES
Mostly small venues.

James nervously shuffles.

MELODIE
That would a dream. Wouldn't it?

JAMES
It could.

MELODIE
Could you help me with something?

JAMES
What.

MELODIE
I have this song I've been trying
to work out. Could you play the
guitar for me?

JAMES
I should get back.

MELODIE
Please?

Melodie begs with sad kitten eyes.

INT. STAGE - DAY

James pulls a chair next to the piano as Melodie readies herself to play. He readies the guitar with a quick tune.

Melodie places her phone onto the Styrofoam.

MELODIE
Can you hit the record button for
me?

JAMES
So what am I playing?

Melodie hums the chords for him.

James plays it back for her.

MELODIE
You catch on quick.

Melodie hesitates as she opens her notebook.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
The rest of the chorus goes like
this.

She hums a version of the chorus.

JAMES
Easy enough.

He plays it back.

Melodie moves the notebook for James to read it. She points to the verses and chorus on the page.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I thought you didn't want me to
read it.

MELODIE
Things change.

JAMES
How come she doesn't think you
still play?

Melodie shrugs her shoulders. She grabs the stress balls to stretch her fingers.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Why is your mom helping me?

MELODIE
Honestly, I don't know.

JAMES
She seems a little manic. Doesn't
she?

With a quick glare, Melodie presses hard onto the piano key then finds her rhythm. She nods for James to start playing.

(Note: This song shows more of MELODIE's growing vulnerability and hope to connect with James.)

They match each other note for note.

Melodie sings and the music echoes through the stage.

James sings backup and Melodie harmonizes with him.

When the song finishes, they sit in silence the air ripe with possibilities. The connection palpable between them.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Thanks. I thought I'd lost that.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - AFTERNOON

James struggles through more yard work.

Isabella sheepishly strides over.

ISABELLA
How's it coming?

JAMES
It's coming.

ISABELLA
You don't have to do it all today.

JAMES
A deal is a deal. Is there
something I should know between you
two?

Melodie watches from the window to listen in.

ISABELLA
I can't really say.

JAMES
Mothers and daughters fight all the
time. Don't they?

ISABELLA
It's not a fight.

JAMES
Did you have it any different at
her age?

Isabella reflects on the question.

ISABELLA
My mom died young.

JAMES
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

ISABELLA
It's ok. I'm just trying to help
her manage her life.

JAMES
Perception has a funny way of
skewing things. If I asked her
about it, what would she say?

ISABELLA
She'd probably turn up the volume
on her headphones.

Isabella contemplates his words.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Melodie seethes with anger as she listens to music on the sofa.

As Isabella enters, Melodie erupts into confrontation.

MELODIE
What the hell. Are you gonna give
him my whole life story?

ISABELLA
I can't do this right now.

MELODIE
I don't need him feeling sorry for
me. It's hard enough.

ISABELLA
I'm trying to protect you.

MELODIE
From who? Everyone avoids me
anyway. Meeting him made me feel
normal.

ISABELLA
I can't give you normal.

MELODIE
Clearly.

Melodie storms to her room with a slam of the door.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Isabella, laid out across the sofa in an expressionless daze, doesn't acknowledge James's attempt for her attention.

JAMES
Hey. Anyone playing in there?

Just before he reaches for her shoulder to shake her, she snaps back.

ISABELLA

I'm fine.

James reaches to help her up.

Isabella blocks it.

He steps back, cautiously.

She works up the energy to lift herself.

JAMES

Which one is your room?

ISABELLA

First one to the right.

James rushes to the door.

Isabella falls onto the bed and rolls to her side.

James pulls the blankets up. He returns to the hallway and sees an image on the door jamb. It's a half moon with one side weeping.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

James knocks on Melodie's door.

There is no answer so he knocks harder.

Melodie answers expecting a fight. She sees James.

MELODIE

What the fuck!

Melodie closes the door but James stops it.

JAMES

No. You aren't going to ignore this. Your mom went NPC on the sofa.

James points to the other room.

MELODIE

Oh that? That's pretty normal for her.

JAMES

And?

MELODIE

Some days she's sunshine and rainbows. Other days she's like she's on the moon or something. Don't step into something you don't understand.

JAMES

This isn't hard to understand.

MELODIE

Why would you care?

JAMES

You can't avoid it. I've seen shit go bad if you do.

MELODIE

There isn't anything I can do.

JAMES

Spoken like a true spectator.

MELODIE

She doesn't listen to me.

JAMES

Fine. I don't need this anyway.

MELODIE

What did you just say?

JAMES

I think you heard me just fine.

James turns to leave and rushes out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - AFTERNOON

James carries his guitar and backpack to the Jeep.

Melodie stands in front of the Jeep door.

JAMES

Get out of my way.

Melodie, vulnerable, open and honestly lets out her emotions.

MELODIE

You're right. But, I don't know how.

JAMES
Do you think I do?

MELODIE
She's helping you.

JAMES
I'm not here for her.

MELODIE
Maybe she'll listen to you.

JAMES
Maybe she won't.

MELODIE
Please. She's drowning. I don't
know if I can keep pulling her up.

James places down the guitar and backpack then rests his hand on Melodie's shoulder.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

Melodie investigates Isabella's bedroom.

Isabella weeps quietly into a pillow. They make brief eye contact. Isabella smiles before she turns away.

Melodie closes the door, wipes off the door jamb with her sleeve, then draws a stick figure with a parachute.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - THE NEXT DAY

James places all the branches into one big pile. He pulls out the bigger pieces that might make good firewood then tosses them to the side.

Melodie places on work gloves and races over.

JAMES
How's your mom?

MELODIE
Sleeping till forever at the
moment.

JAMES
Where's your dad in all this?

MELODIE

The last year has been kind of weird.

JAMES

He seems like he cares for you. So, why would that matter?

MELODIE

I found out he's not my paternal dad. We've needed to search for a blood relative.

Melodie jumps in to separate the wood.

James stops her.

JAMES

I got this.

MELODIE

I'm sick. NOT FRAGILE.

JAMES

I just want you to throw the little pieces over there. I don't think you're fragile.

James points at the smaller branches while he pulls out larger ones for firewood.

Melodie acknowledges.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What did you mean?

MELODIE

She didn't tell you?

James stops working to give his attention.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

I thought for sure she did.

JAMES

She just said you two were having issues.

MELODIE

There is a little more to it than that.

JAMES

How so?

MELODIE
Can you promise me something?

JAMES
What?

MELODIE
If I tell you, you can't look at me
different.

JAMES
Why do people say that? Either I
will or I won't.

MELODIE
Because you will.

JAMES
I'm not going to treat you like a
sick girl if that is what you're
thinking.

Melodie draws the courage to show James her left wrist. Her
wrist has a medical device that is widening the vein. This is
typical for a hemodialysis patient.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What am I looking at?

MELODIE
It's for my dialysis.

JAMES
I've heard people live a long time
on dialysis.

MELODIE
I was suppose to have a transplant
a couple of days ago. But, they
found an imperfection.

JAMES
An imperfection? How perfect does
it really need to be?

MELODIE
I have stage five CKD. So A LOT.

JAMES
How many stages are there?

MELODIE
Five.

JAMES

So if you don't get it, you'll die?

A shrug of her shoulder says it all.

MELODIE

I'm on a wait list. Again.
Somewhere?

JAMES

Your mom can't be a donor?

MELODIE

She got a transplant from my
grampa.

JAMES

And your dad isn't biological.

MELODIE

Nope.

JAMES

Is that why she worries about
getting sick?

James stops working. He coughs and steps away from Melodie.

MELODIE

Where are you going?

JAMES

I don't know if I can do this.

MELODIE

You promised.

James rushes away to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

James searches for a cup to pour some water. He
hyperventilates then drinks the water to calm his breathing.

He opens the GoFundme page on his phone with Melodie's
picture highlighted on it.

JAMES

Why did you think this would work?

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James and Ava sit in silence.

JAMES

Let's leave this place. We don't need to be here.

AVA

Where are we going to go? We don't have any money. We can't even busk for change. I can't live like this.

JAMES

We can find a way.

AVA

I'm scared.

JAMES

We can make it work.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - ISABELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Isabella lays in bed silent but awake.

Melodie enters and lays on the bed next to Isabella. Melodie cuddles her arms around Isabella and holds her tight.

MELODIE

I'm so sorry.

Melodie cries and searches for comfort.

Isabella holds on.

INT. CABIN - EARLY MORNING

Melodie looks around the cabin. She watches James sleep but have difficulty breathing. Melodie reads from his notebook open on the table.

JAMES (V.O.)

Is it natural to be this afraid?
Travelling into someone else's
disaster? Why did I choose to come
here? I should have just jumped
into that river. I should have just
crashed the car on the road.

(MORE)

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But, I've chosen a slow painful
burn. Was it really for her? Or me?

James turns in the bed.

MELODIE
What's wrong?

Melodie gently rubs his cheek. She wipes away a tear then nudges on his shoulder. Melodie reads the medical bracelet on James's wrist.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Asthma? O Neg?

James wakes to see Melodie next to the bed.

JAMES
Why are you here?

MELODIE
I just need a ride into town. I
have dialysis this morning.

JAMES
What about your dad?

MELODIE
He isn't coming.

JAMES
You know, I can't stay here.

MELODIE
I just need a ride to the doctor's
office. Is that do hard?

JAMES
Where's your mom?

MELODIE
Still on the moon.

James realizes that she isn't going.

JAMES
This is the part when you go
outside.

Melodie sees the guitar case by the door.

MELODIE
Wow. This yours?

James hops out of bed and to the bathroom.

JAMES (O.S.)
Be careful with that.

Melodie finds the guitar case and opens it to admire the guitar.

MELODIE
Cool stickers.

She traces the "Ava & J" sticker with a touch of her fingers.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'm still learning. It's hard to
play with my wrist.

JAMES
You play piano just fine.

James packs all of his belongings into the backpack. He closes the open notebook with a look back at Melodie.

MELODIE
That's different. I don't need my
wrist as much.

JAMES
Close that up.

MELODIE
You're really leaving?

JAMES
I can give you a ride but it's now
or never.

James rubs his temples to relieve the pressure of a head ache. He finds an aspirin bottle and pops a couple.

MELODIE
You know those aren't breath mints.

INT./EXT. JEEP - TRAVELLING - MORNING

They drive in silence.

Melodie waits for a moment to break it but James beats her to it.

JAMES
The mountains sure do make you feel
small.

MELODIE

I like to think I'm bigger than the mountain.

James questions her with a look to explain.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

It's lonely. Apathetic, like it doesn't have a purpose. I have control over what I do. I can affect what happens to me.

JAMES

Are you sure? The machine your on says otherwise. Besides, the mountain may have purpose. It just changes slower than us.

MELODIE

What are you trying to say?

JAMES

For someone that says they can control what happens to them, it seems like a lot happens TO you.

MELODIE

That's not what I mean.

JAMES

Then what do you mean?

MELODIE

I mean I can control how I choose to deal with it.

JAMES

Yeah maybe. We still can't change anything.

MELODIE

Why are you being like this?

JAMES

I shouldn't be here.

MELODIE

You said you'd help.

JAMES

I know what I said. But, I am not your guy for this.

MELODIE
She won't listen to me.

JAMES
Have you really tried?

MELODIE
Please? I don't want to be a
spectator.

JAMES
You're asking me to involve myself
into your mom's mess. Your mess.

MELODIE
And you're just trying to avoid it
even though you act like you want
to do something.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - WAITING ROOM - MORNING

James reviews pamphlets and other reading material as he
waits on a sofa. He finds one on a bipolar medication.

As he reads, a recognition of symptoms sets in.

QUICK FLASH - JAMES'S MEMORY

Ava paces back and forth anxiety rippling off her.

Ava cleans the kitchen of an apartment over and over.

BACK TO:

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

Melodie quietly watches television as the dialysis machine
runs. She searches through channels for something to watch.

Vanessa attends to Melodie's wrist.

VANESSA
Is that the guy?

MELODIE
That's James. He WAS staying in the
cabin.

VANESSA
Not anymore?

Melodie frowns and shakes her head.

There is a tap on the door before James enters.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I'll leave you two.

Vanessa notices the bracelet on James's wrist. She sees hints of hypoxia setting in.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Breathing ok?

JAMES
I'm fine. I have an inhaler.

VANESSA
Asthma?

James nods.

Vanessa winks at Melodie before she leaves.

JAMES
Hey, how long does this thing take?

MELODIE
About four hours.

JAMES
You could have warned me.

Melodie shrugs her shoulder as if saying "What ever.".

JAMES (CONT'D)
Mind if I sit?

James finds an empty chair to plop into. He notices the stars drawn across the edges of Melodie's chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
So, what does this machine do?

MELODIE
It filters my blood. I don't know how it works.

JAMES
How often do you have to come here?

MELODIE
Three times a week.

JAMES
That's like every other day.

MELODIE
Pretty much.

James carries a pamphlet and gives it to Melodie.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
What is this?

JAMES
I was reading this pamphlet in the waiting room. It sounds a lot like her.

MELODIE
Sounds sus.

JAMES
Take a look.

Melodie looks over the pamphlet and recognizes many of the symptoms.

MELODIE
This is legit.

JAMES
The pamphlet is about this medication you can take for it.

MELODIE
This is exactly right.

JAMES
You should show her this.

MELODIE
We need to talk to her.

JAMES
It's not an easy thing to bring up. People think it's about being crazy. They just have challenges.

MELODIE
This is why I'm asking for your help. I can't say it like you just did.

JAMES
You're family. It doesn't have to be perfect.

MELODIE
I can't do it alone.

JAMES
I am not your guy.

MELODIE
Like it or not you are.

James stands and opens the door to leave.

JAMES
I don't know.

MELODIE
Don't run from this.

James looks back but says nothing.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - MORNING

James rushes out in search of his Jeep. He looks back to the building.

VANESSA (O.S.)
She still has an hour or so.

Vanessa, at the edge of the building, hides a cigarette.

James finds her voice.

JAMES
Can you call her dad to pick her
up?

VANESSA
Why?

JAMES
Please?

VANESSA
She likes you.

JAMES
I can't.

VANESSA
She's got over a thousand likes
now.

JAMES
Good for her.

VANESSA

You should see some of the comments too. I think one guy wants to produce her music.

JAMES

She should be careful of people.

VANESSA

That's why she needs you.

JAMES

She doesn't need me.

VANESSA

Perhaps, but that girl puts in the work. She's not all flashy and watch me about it. She won't ask for help. But, she needs it. This last year has been tough on her.

Vanessa extinguishes her cigarette and walks over to James.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Walk with me?

James fidgets anxiously.

JAMES

I need to go.

VANESSA

What's a couple of minutes?

James calms and gives in to her request.

JAMES

What's with all the buttons?

VANESSA

Just random quotes. Little messages of positivity.

JAMES

Don't you think it can be dangerous to hope?

VANESSA

What other choice do we have?

JAMES

I can't do this.

VANESSA

She's starting to believe there is more out there for her beyond a kidney. Maybe you can help her navigate it.

JAMES

It shouldn't be me. I would just destroy it at some point.

VANESSA

Don't. Be a partner to support her.

JAMES

Why me?

VANESSA

I think you need this as much as she does.

JAMES

You don't know anything.

VANESSA

Come here.

Vanessa removes the stethoscope from around her neck and places them do her ears. SHE places the other end to his chest to monitor his breathing.

JAMES

What are you doing?

VANESSA

What's it look like? Breathe in.

James breathes in then out. He coughs.

JAMES

I have my inhaler.

VANESSA

Are you using it?

James chides her with his eyes.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

This shit is real. Hypoxia is no joke. I can already hear it. Either you do something about it or I'm going to have to wheel you in here.

JAMES

I will.

Vanessa chides him right back.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's why I need to leave.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

James, by the river's edge, skips rocks across the water. He coughs more uncontrollably than before.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - NURSES STATION - DAY

Vanessa hesitates a moment to make a phone call then dials anyway.

It rings.

INTERCUT

INT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - CONTINUOUS

Eric answers the phone after checking the number.

ERIC
Is there something wrong?

VANESSA
Nothing's wrong.

ERIC
She got there?

VANESSA
With time to spare. You may need to come get her though.

ERIC
Isabella's not there?

VANESSA
It was James. But I guess he's leaving.

ERIC
I'll get there as soon as I can.

VANESSA
Hold that thought.

Vanessa notices Melodie lugging James's guitar. She covers the phone.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Where'd you get that?

MELODIE
It's his. Is it ok?

Melodie points up to the roof.

VANESSA
It's fine.

Melodie heads to the stairs.

ERIC
How much time does she need?

VANESSA
Actually, she's going to be fine.

ERIC
I should be there.

VANESSA
Let this one play out. She needs
this.

ERIC
Are you sure?

VANESSA
Let her work it out.

Eric struggles to let it go.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
She's got this.

EXT. JEEP WRANGLER - DAY

James presses the keys into the Jeep's ignition. He
contemplates then searches the Jeep for his guitar and
backpack.

The guitar is missing.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - ROOF - DAY

Melodie relaxes in the director's chair with James's guitar.
She draws a broken heart with stitches to hold it together in
permanent marker.

Approaching footsteps.

Melodie blows on the drawing like a kiss. She touches it lightly with a finger to assure it's dried.

James opens the door then walks over to the ledge careful to not look down.

Melodie strums the guitar.

JAMES

Vanessa told me I'd find you up here.

Melodie focuses on her notebook while she continues to work out the music.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What do you write in yours?

MELODIE

Stuff.

Melodie strums the guitar like it fits her perfectly.

JAMES

I thought you said you were still learning.

MELODIE

What do you think?

JAMES

If you hold it a little differently, you can make it easier on your wrist.

James holds out his hands for the guitar but she tightens her grip.

MELODIE

I can figure it out.

James, careful to not provoke her, finds a comfortable place to sit.

JAMES

I shouldn't be involved.

MELODIE

You're already involved.

JAMES

You don't want me anywhere near this.

MELODIE

Why won't you help me?

JAMES

You can't just dive into someone's shit and expect them to be happy about it.

MELODIE

Why did you come here?

JAMES

What do you want me to say? I have my reasons. My life is messy.

MELODIE

Whose isn't?

JAMES

My choices aren't what you need right now.

MELODIE

I think that's really pessimistic. You ended up here. There has to be a reason.

JAMES

What if, there is no reason or purpose? As you put it. What if, it is as pointless as that mountain. You're pushed into existence. You didn't choose to be here. You just... ended up here.

MELODIE

I'm not going to buy into any of your suicidal bullshit.

JAMES

Excuse me?

MELODIE

Don't treat me like I'm stupid. I see it. The headache. The coughing. You're dehydrated. I know what you are trying to do.

Melodie taps her wrist to acknowledge his bracelet.

JAMES

You don't know shit.

James grows uncomfortable.

MELODIE

I read your little notebook. It's kind of chicken shit. I'm here dying for real. And you're-

James's anger boils to the surface.

JAMES

You don't know what it's like.

MELODIE

What do you think I have to live with?

JAMES

You have people that care about you.

MELODIE

I am in pain every day.

JAMES

We know. She knows. She's been there.

MELODIE

At least you can do something about your shit.

James stands onto the ledge.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

I've got news for you. I've more reason to jump than you.

JAMES

You don't know my life. There's no repeat. No lyric that's gonna magically put things back together.

MELODIE

And you don't know years of hospital rooms and kidney stones. You've barely gotten a glimpse of my shit. You don't know what it's like FOR ME.

JAMES

You're not the first person to have those issues.

MELODIE

And you are not the first either.
The world doesn't revolve around
James and his shit.

JAMES

How far is it to the street?

MELODIE

I'm not looking.

JAMES

How far!

MELODIE

I'm not going to watch this.

JAMES

What if I was your match and that
was my purpose? What if you could
have a new kidney today? All I
would need to do is jump.

MELODIE

I'm not going to watch you do this.

JAMES

Would you stop me?

MELODIE

Don't.

JAMES

This is for you. This is what
you're hoping for. If someone has
to die to let you live, why can't
it be me?

James holds his arms out and looks into the sky. He leans
back ready to fall.

Melodie wraps her arms around him to pull him back.

James grabs onto a pole to stop their fall. He has to use all
his strength to pull them back to safety. James can feel
Melodie tremble in his arms.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

The emotion runs through her and she cries like never before
on his shoulder.

MELODIE
I'm scared.

JAMES
I know. I am too.

Melodie gently grasps onto this his wrist with the medical bracelet and caresses it with her fingers.

MELODIE
Do you believe in fate?

JAMES
I only believe in what I can see.

Melodie removes a bracelet from her hoodie pocket. She holds it next to his to reveal matching blood types.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I already know.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Ava and James watch on opposite ends of a sofa.

JAMES
It's going to get better.

AVA
What if it doesn't?

Ava, stressed, scratches at her wrist.

James doesn't notice her anxiety.

JAMES
It will.

He leaves.

AVA
Stay with me.

James, already on his way to the bedroom, doesn't hear her.

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ava lingers over him. She kisses him on the cheek

AVA
I'm sorry.

James, sound asleep, feels it and smiles.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The lights flicker on and James finds a mess of broken dishes on the floor. He carefully walks through the debris.

MELODIE
And the day just gets better.

JAMES
She did this?

MELODIE
Ya think? But, new dishes. Yay.

Melodie sarcastically mimics a cheerleader.

JAMES
Do you really think this is the
best time to talk to her?

MELODIE
When will it ever be a good time?

JAMES
I get it.

Melodie feels a pain in her side then rushes to the bathroom.

James recognizes the agony in her demeanor.

MELODIE
I'm fine. Just gotta...

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melodie, scared, splashes water onto her face then pats it with a towel.

MELODIE
It'll pass.

A flush reveals a hint of blood in the toilet water.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Melodie returns, a little more pale, hiding her concern behind a sheepish grin.

JAMES
Tomorrow?

MELODIE
Tomorrow.

James breathes in but can barely hold it. He appears pale and there is a blue tinge in his lips.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Do you have your inhaler?

JAMES
It's in the cabin. I'll be good.
You?

MELODIE
Peachy.

Melodie picks up the shards of broken dishes.

James searches for a broom to clean up the mess.

INT. HOUSE - MELODIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melodie presses at her side, the pain becoming more unbearable. She searches the top of the dresser for more pain medication. The tears stream down her cheek.

Melodie (TEXT): **Movie night??**

Eric (TEXT) : **Can't now.**

Melodie (TEXT) : **Tomorrow?**

Eric (TEXT) : **Belle gonna be ok with it?**

Melodie (TEXT) : **idk. Just want to.. Get away for a bit.**

Eric (TEXT) : **Would love to.**

Melodie (TEXT) : **Luv you dad.**

Eric (TEXT) : **(Happy Crying emoji)**

Melodie (TEXT) : **wut.**

Eric (TEXT) : You called me dad again.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Loud knocks on the front door wakes James from his sleep. He looks over to see the other side of the bed empty.

JAMES

Ava?

More loud knocks.

James finds some pants to put on.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm coming.

More knocks.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ava?

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James rushes through the apartment but sees no signs of Ava. He answers the door.

At the door are two LVPD Officers. The lead, Officer Daniels, glares at James. They look as if they've had a long night because their eyes have bags and their COVID masks are stretched thin.

OFFICER DANIELS

Does Ava Richards live here?

JAMES

She does. What can I do for you officer?

OFFICER DANIELS

We are here for some information.

JAMES

She's not here at the moment.

OFFICER DANIELS

Yeah, I know. May I come in?

JAMES

Why?

OFFICER DANIELS
I'd rather not do this on your
porch.

James shows them in.

The officers enter and stand in strategic places of the room.

JAMES
What's this about?

OFFICER DANIELS
What's your relationship to her?

JAMES
She's my fiancée.

OFFICER DANIELS
Would you have her family contact
information?

JAMES
I do. What's going on?

OFFICER DANIELS
Can you take a seat?

JAMES
I prefer to stand.

James recognizes a note on the counter with his name on it.

Officer Daniels pauses a moment because he's about to deliver the worst news. He hates this part but pushes through the expression to explain.

OFFICER DANIELS
Last night we found.....

James already knows what's coming before Officer Daniels can even finish his sentence. His ears ring and fade to silence as he screams out in agony.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - ISABELLA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Isabella lays in silence on the bed. She clutches a picture of Melodie.

James slowly enters the room.

JAMES
Hey. Are you awake?

Isabella doesn't respond and James slowly closes the door before she snaps together.

ISABELLA
It's okay. I'm awake.

JAMES
Can we talk?

ISABELLA
Sure.

Isabella slowly rises from the bed.

JAMES
Would you mind coming into the kitchen?

Isabella, visibly depressed, composes herself.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Isabella, draped in a robe, sits at the table and watches Melodie make breakfast.

ISABELLA
Did you go to dialysis?

MELODIE
Yesterday.

JAMES
It's all good. You don't have to worry.

Isabella looks around the table to see toast, cereal, and some cut fruit.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry.

MELODIE
It's okay mom.

Melodie serves some eggs onto a plate and brings them over.

Isabella wipes the tears from her face. She takes deliberate breaths to relieve her anxiety.

ISABELLA
I'll be fine.

JAMES
Can we talk about this?

ISABELLA
Why?

JAMES
Mel's concerned.

Isabella blushes embarrassed.

ISABELLA
I don't know what came over me.

JAMES
That's the problem.

MELODIE
You need help and don't see it.

ISABELLA
I can't worry about you?

JAMES
Do you think that breaking dishes
is about Mel?

ISABELLA
You don't know the stress I'm
under.

Melodie feels a sharp pain in her side but plays it off.

JAMES
I can understand your stressed.

ISABELLA
No. You can't.

JAMES
Take a look at this objectively.
What else would you call this?

Isabella closes her eyes as the stress builds up.

ISABELLA
I'm not crazy.

JAMES

We're not saying you are. But you have to recognize that your mind works different than others.

James taps Melodie to bring her focus back the conversation.

MELODIE

How do we get better?

JAMES

By acknowledging something's wrong.

Isabella stands as the mania grows then paces across the kitchen.

ISABELLA

If you're such an expert, tell me why you stranded yourself here.

JAMES

This isn't about me.

ISABELLA

It isn't?

MELODIE

Mom. Let's focus on you.

ISABELLA

No. You two don't get to decide that I'm the one the needs help.

Isabella races outside in a mess of tears.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Isabella throws chunks of wood against the cabin. Chipping away at the exterior.

Melodie and James come racing after her.

MELODIE

MOM STOP!

JAMES

Do you think this is healthy?

ISABELLA

You know nothing about me. You've been here what.. A couple of days and think you're some therapist.

Isabella continues to throw wood shards that snap and splinter.

James snaps back at her.

JAMES

I've seen what ignoring this can do.

ISABELLA

Why would you bring him into this?

MELODIE

Because you don't listen to me or Dad.

ISABELLA

So, I have mood swings. And you come to this town like some scared kid talking to me like you know better.

JAMES

You're right. I'm not an expert.

ISABELLA

You can leave. I'm not going to have you talk to me like I'm the one that needs help when you clearly need it yourself.

MELODIE

Mom. He didn't have to do this. I asked him to.

ISABELLA

Why?

James boils over with emotion but holds it like a volcano ready to pop.

JAMES

I lost someone close to me.

ISABELLA

Get over yourself. Just because someone pushed you away doesn't mean that's going to happen to me. I have this under control.

MELODIE

NO. YOU DON'T.

Isabella stops silent the anxiety still rippling out of her.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
You think this is normal? Why do
you think Vanessa gave you that
book? Or why Ollie avoids making
you mad? Or why dad has to take me
to dialysis.

James, emotional and stuck in his grief, quivers.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Who did you lose?

JAMES
My fiancée took her own life.

Isabella realizes the power of his words.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She struggled with stress and
anxiety. Just like you. She made a
choice. I get to live with it.

MELODIE
I'm so sorry.

Isabella shakes with anxiety.

JAMES
I want to die. That's why I'm here.
For you. Mel sees you. She sees you
in a way you can't.

Melodie embraces James and can feel him shiver with
vulnerability.

MELODIE
You're shaking.

Melodie removes the hoodie, her armor, and offers it to
James. She stands vulnerable hopeful he'll accept.

James slides on the hoodie and Melodie hugs him. She grips
the tear on the lower back of it.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I didn't know.

JAMES
How could you?

MELODIE
Mom. I need you. No matter what
happens to me. I need you to be
alright.

Isabella watches James and Melodie still embraced.

MONTAGE

Isabella pushes Eric away.

Watches her hands shake.

Smashed dishes.

Nervous paces.

Rubs counters till the varnish wears.

Endlessly moves furniture around the house.

END MONTAGE

Isabella slowly reaches for them.

Melodie grabs her hand.

JAMES

Ask for help.

Isabella responds with a simple head nod in agreement.

Melodie releases from James and envelopes Isabella in her embrace.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

James strums his guitar for Melodie. He sings a familiar song and she duets with him.

Isabella watches from the kitchen.

MELODIE

Thank you.

JAMES

It's up to her now.

James recognizes Melodie awkwardly holding her side.

MELODIE

I'm fine.

JAMES

Right.

MELODIE
Shouldn't you be asking yourself
that?

JAMES
The inhaler is in my things. I'll
be fine.

MELODIE
You don't look it.

JAMES
Isn't your dad coming?

MELODIE
Don't change the subject.

JAMES
Don't dodge it either.

INT. CABIN - EVENING

James packs his things.

There is a knock on the door.

James opens the door to find Melodie waiting.

MELODIE
I have something else I wanted you
to hear.

JAMES
Now?

MELODIE
Why not? I heard you packing.

JAMES
You know I can't stay. Right?

Melodie shrugs it off. She hands him her phone and ear buds
then hits play. It's another amazing original.

She steps in close enough to kiss him.

James removes the ear buds and gently stops her.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I can't.

The honk of Eric's truck pierces the tension.

Melodie slumps, disappointed, then leaves.

James packs all of his things into the backpack.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I can't let her watch this.

James coughs extremely violent. He collapses to the floor, turns pale, and his lips tinge blue. James passes out.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Eric and Melodie relax in a booth. Empty plates pushed forward.

She draws a jumping stick figure man onto the window.

Melodie wilts into the booth, tired, then hides the marker.

ERIC
Feeling ok?

MELODIE
It's nothing.

OLLIE
Hey. I haven't seen you in a while.
Your mom let you out of the
dungeon?

MELODIE
Hey Ollie.

OLLIE
Dinner's on me today.

MELODIE
Isn't it always on you.

OLLIE
I take that back then.

Ollie smiles and winks at Melodie. He turns to Eric and sneers at him before leaving.

MELODIE
Mom agreed to get some help.

ERIC
I'm glad to hear it.

MELODIE

Just give her the space to get better. She'll come back around.

The enjoy the silence for a moment.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

You never told me how you met my mom.

ERIC

She didn't tell you?

Melodie shoots him a sly grin "Really?".

ERIC (CONT'D)

I think you were about two at the time. Your grampa hired me to build the cabin.

MELODIE

What was she like?

ERIC

Amazing. Less frantic. We just connected. I think I fell in love with you both instantly. I watched you a lot.

MELODIE

Why?

ERIC

She was sick just like you. Your gramps gave her a kidney.

MELODIE

I know that. But why didn't you tell me about being my dad?

ERIC

I don't know. I could lie and tell you we wanted to. But life kinda of got in the way. Honestly, she doesn't remember much about him. She was going through a lot when you're nana passed knowing she was getting sick too. She just ended up with this snowbird.

MELODIE

Snowbird?

ERIC

It's what we used to call the tourist. Having you changed her though.

MELODIE

I made her more frantic?

ERIC

No. That happened later.

MELODIE

How?

ERIC

She lost a friend about ten years ago. Neither of us saw she had asthma. The altitude was too much for her.

MELODIE

Asthma?

ERIC

If you're not careful, it can make you hypoxic.

MELODIE

Is that why she tries to help everyone?

ERIC

Ya think?

MELODIE

If you had Asthma, you'd need to be using your inhaler. Right?

ERIC

Definitely.

MELODIE

I need to get back.

ERIC

So soon?

Melodies nods. She holds her side hiding her pain.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Eric pulls into the driveway.

ERIC
Call if you need anything.

MELODIE
I will.

Melodie, labored, exits the truck with a gentle close.

ERIC
Easy...Oh.

Eric backs and pulls away from the driveway.

Melodie looks to the stars with a moment of hope. But, just then, her pain grows. Blood drips down to her ankle.

MELODIE
Really? Now?

Melodie, faint, rushes to the cabin door then knocks as hard as she can. She falls to the ground with a smack of her head on the concrete.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The hard knock wakes James.

James stands and rubs his temples because of a headache.

Out the front window, James finds Melodie passed out on the steps. He quickly opens the door.

The situation is dire. Melodie lays unconscious as a pool of blood forms under her.

James yells but can't find enough air in his lungs. He picks Melodie up and races to the Jeep.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Isabella sees James frantic around the Jeep. She runs out to the driveway.

ISABELLA
What happened?

JAMES
I don't know. I just found her on the steps.

ISABELLA
Where's the blood coming from?

JAMES
I don't know. A kidney stone I think.

ISABELLA
We need to get her to the hospital.

James reaches for his keys but can barely maintain himself.

They get Melodie into the front seat.

Isabella hops in the back.

JAMES
Where do we go?

ISABELLA
The clinic.

James starts the Jeep and steps on the gas.

INT./EXT. JEEP WRANGLER - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

James speeds through traffic.

He looks down to the dashboard to notice he's on empty.

JAMES
We have to make it.

James coughs and almost loses control.

ISABELLA
Be careful.

JAMES
I can make it.

The altitude sickness alters his vision and the road looks smaller.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Please.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James barely holds onto consciousness. He coughs nonstop and can't breathe. James slams the breaks by the front entry.

Isabella rushes inside for help.

James steps out woozy to open the door for Melodie

Vanessa and a couple of orderlies rush out with a gurney.

JAMES
They need help.

James steps back from the door as they move Melodie to a gurney.

VANESSA
What's going on?

ISABELLA
Another stone.

VANESSA
She's losing a lot of blood.

They rush her inside.

Vanessa examines James. She sees all the signs of hypoxia.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I need oxygen stat.

James falls to the ground.

ISABELLA
What?

VANESSA
Where's his inhaler?

Isabella, about to lose it, holds on to the moment.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
He can't breathe.

ISABELLA
What can I do?

Another gurney is rushed out. She helps load James onto it and into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - DAY

Melodie sleeps quietly as the dialysis machine hums next to her. A unit of blood flows down a tube into one arm as the other gets filtered by the machine.

Isabella rests in a chair next to the bed. She opens James's wallet. She finds the picture of Ava.

A nurse enters.

NURSE
He's waking up.

ISABELLA
Thank you.

She rushes to the other room.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - MORNING

It's a common hospital room with two beds and a TV bolted to the wall close to the ceiling. The sun shines through the window.

James wakes to find himself attached to an oxygen machine and an IV in his arm.

He removes the oxygen tubes attached to his nose.

Isabella reaches for his hand to stop him and places it back.

ISABELLA
No, don't. They said you'd been
suffering from altitude sickness.

JAMES
I know.

ISABELLA
You need help. Just like us.

James turns reluctant to believe.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
What was it you said last night?
The first step is asking for help.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - DAY

Eric waits next to the window. He watches the traffic below sipping a cup of coffee.

Isabella walks over to him then places her hand on his shoulder.

Eric looks at her surprised then down at her hand.

ERIC
What happened?

ISABELLA
Another stone. But this seems worse.

ERIC
Why do always do that?

ISABELLA
Experience.

Isabella steps away ready to run but fights through her growing anxiety. She turns back.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
It's my fault.

Eric reaches for her but stops expecting to be pushed away.
Isabella reaches back and pulls him in tightly.

ERIC
It's no one's fault.

ISABELLA
I did this to her.

ERIC
All you did was have a great kid like thousands of other people do.

ISABELLA
I never wanted to put her through this.

ERIC
We did the best we could. That's enough.

The hold the embrace for a few moments.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

The doctor enters to talk with Eric and Isabella.

ERIC
What's happening to her?

DOCTOR
She's going into renal failure. There's no more waiting. We put her on a high priority list for a transplant. All we can do now is hope.

The Doctor exits.

Eric turns disappointed and leaves the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa enters.

Eric races by and he can see the fear and anxiety in his eyes.

VANESSA
Can we talk?

JAMES
Is she ok?

Vanessa shakes her head.

JAMES (CONT'D)
No positive quote for that one?

VANESSA
Why are you here?

JAMES
I think you already know.

VANESSA
But why stay? Or even try to help?

JAMES
I don't know.

Vanessa examines the James's medical chart.

JAMES (CONT'D)
How likely could it be for me to be
a match?

VANESSA
Rare.

JAMES
I already know we have the same
blood type.

VANESSA
There's more to it than that.

James questions her with a look.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 Blood type compatibility, tissue typing, HLA matching to determine immune system compatibility, and a crossmatch test to ensure the recipient's blood won't attack the donor kidney.

JAMES
 Skeptical all of a sudden?

Vanessa questions him with her eyebrows raised.

VANESSA
 Are you beginning to hope?

Vanessa points to a button on her scrubs that says "Believe."

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

James stares out the window as the sun sets. The afternoon light is a glow of orange and amber.

The Doctor pulls the privacy curtain then places themself close to the bed.

DOCTOR
 The nurse said you called for me?

JAMES
 Thanks for coming. I want you to test me to see if I'm a match.

DOCTOR
 There is a lot of risk involved.

JAMES
 I don't care about the risk.

DOCTOR
 It's recommended that you be in prime health to even be considered.

JAMES
 Please, just test me. I need to know if I even can help her.

DOCTOR
 That's asking a lot.

There is awkward silence as James ponders his words.

The doctor pulls back the curtains and walks over to the nurse waiting for them in the doorway.

The Doctor whispers into the nurse's ear.

JAMES

Please?

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Melodie stretches herself toward Isabella on the other bed. She tosses her phone and ear buds next to her.

Isabella sleeps on the other bed of the room.

The phone has a sticky note that says "Play me".

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa comes in to serve James dinner. She raises the bed.

VANESSA

Are you ready for dinner?

JAMES

Have my tests come back yet?

Vanessa shrugs then sets up a dinner tray and pushes it close to him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Can you do me a favor? I want to see her.

VANESSA

You're not supposed to be out of bed.

JAMES

We may not have time.

VANESSA

I'll see what I can do.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off except for the night light next to Melodie's bed. She writes a few thoughts down on a piece of paper.

Vanessa wheels James in on a wheelchair.

JAMES

Thank you.

She places him close to Melodie then winks at her before leaving.

MELODIE

Hey, how are you?

JAMES

I'm doing okay. You?

MELODIE

I'm just writing a few things down.

JAMES

Another song? Why haven't you told her that you're still playing?

MELODIE

It's my secret. I've been teaching myself to play for years. You can find a lot on YouTube. I've learned guitar, piano. I wanted something that was completely mine. Even when everything else wasn't. I was building memories for her. Like a little treasure trove of things she could find if I ever...you know.

JAMES

You shared it with me.

MELODIE

That was unexpected. You just gave me the courage. Do you want to hear this one?

JAMES

I'd love to.

MELODIE

This song... it's everything I've been wanting to tell you.

Melodie grabs her scrap of paper to sing the lyrics.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

I don't have a piano to play it on.

JAMES

It's okay. I'll imagine it.

Melodie moves her fingers into place as if playing a piano then sings quietly to not wake Isabella.

(Note: This original song encapsulates hope, meaning, and depth of Melodie's character reaching out to James to find his.)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT

The hospital room changes to the Las Vegas stage James knows well. He envisions Melodie playing the piano and singing this song in front of a large audience.

As the song finishes, the scene fades back into the hospital room.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James's emotions burst. He slowly rises from the chair to sit next to her.

Melodie embraces him.

MELODIE

You have to promise me something.

James acknowledges with a nod.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

Promise me. Keep fighting. The
world is better with you in it.

James cries onto her shoulder and holds her tightly.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Isabella wakes to see Melodie asleep. She feels the phone pressed against her and reads the note. Isabella taps the phone and it unlocks without a pass code.

There's a video paused on the screen.

She presses play.

MELODIE

(On the video)

I've heard that in musicals on TV
or in movies, the characters sing
because there is no other way to
express how they feel. This is for
you.

MONTAGE

- Melodie practices the piano.
- Melodie smiles on the stage.
- Song after song play.
- James strums a guitar unaware she's recording.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - MORNING

James sleeps comfortably while the sun shines onto his face.

Isabella, cuddled up on the chair beside him, sleeps with
tissues spread across the floor and Melodie's phone in hand.
James reaches for Isabella to wake her.

JAMES

Hey, what are you doing here?

Isabella's eyes are noticeably red. He realizes that she's
cried herself to sleep.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

ISABELLA

It's ok.

The Doctor knocks and enters.

DOCTOR

Can we have a moment?

ISABELLA

I'll be just outside.

JAMES

Stay. Please?

DOCTOR

I'd rather we speak alone.

JAMES
Am I match or not?

The Doctor, hesitant, responds.

DOCTOR
You are. But..

Isabella almost jumps to her feet.

JAMES
But what?

DOCTOR
I don't recommend it.

JAMES
Isn't it my choice.

DOCTOR
Partially. Yes. But, I have to sign
off on it.

JAMES
I get it. You don't think I'll make
it.

DOCTOR
I don't.

JAMES
But, she won't either.

DOCTOR
I can save one of you.

JAMES
If I do this, you can save both.

DOCTOR
Give me a reason.

JAMES
I need to do this.

DOCTOR
I need something better than that.

JAMES
Anything.

DOCTOR
You're not going to like it.

MONTAGE

James meets with different doctors and professionals including a transplant nephrologist, surgeon, donor advocate, donor social worker, pharmacist, nutritionist and financial coordinator.

He takes a series of physical tests.

James slumps in a chair drained from the activity.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
This isn't helping your case.

James stands, wearily.

JAMES
What's next?

INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

The mental health profession waits for James to answer.

James silently looks over the room which looks overdone to provide comfort.

JAMES
Is there like a designer that you go to get all this?

THERAPIST
Therapist r us.

JAMES
Sarcasm. I get it.

THERAPIST
What do you get?

JAMES
You're looking under the hood to see if I'm alright. Trying to connect with me. Be on my level.

THERAPIST
This isn't about what I'm trying to do. You're making a serious decision here and what I see is a man deflecting his trauma.

JAMES
You gotta be blunt too?

THERAPIST

You know we don't have the time for games. Physically. You can be a donor. Mentally. I don't know.

JAMES

What can I say that will change your mind?

THERAPIST

Honestly, nothing. What can you say your change yours?

JAMES

You want me to let her die when I can help her?

THERAPIST

No. I want to know why you'll die to let her live.

James, muted by the question, tosses and turns in his chair.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

You drove to a city knowing that it could kill you. Good thing is that it's treatable. By why take the chance? You're here because of a website. Why?

James breaks down emotionally.

JAMES

I needed to find a reason to hope again.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - DAY

Melodie and James lay on operating tables across from each other.

The doctors and nurses prep each of them for the transplant.

Melodie and James make eye contact as she smiles at him.

MELODIE

You promised.

Their eyes close as the anesthesia takes effect.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The surgeons finish the last bit of the operation.

Melodie and James remain unconscious on opposite tables, stable.

The rhythm of heartbeats on electrocardiograms sound like music.

James's heartbeat erratically flutters then crashes.

A flatline of the electrocardiogram fills the room as doctors and nurses rush to bring him back.

They start chest compressions.

A nurse unpacks an AED device to attach to James.

DOCTOR

Clear!

The shock of the AED convulses James's body.

More chest compressions. A bone cracks under the pressure.

They reset the charge.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

CLEAR!

James's body convulses again.

MELODIE (V.O.)

Promise me.

FADE TO:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MONTHS LATER

The bright Summer sun shines through the windows and highlights the room in golds and yellows.

Isabella calmly reads a book on coping with anxiety. She practices breathing exercises.

MELODIE

Is it working?

ISABELLA

Mostly. Everyday is still a challenge.

MELODIE

You're putting in the work. It counts.

ISABELLA

The medication helps. It feels different. You?

MELODIE

Yeah. I feel stronger everyday. But, I miss him.

ISABELLA

I know me too. Are you ready for your first show?

MELODIE

Super.

EXT. HIGHWAY, TRAVELLING - DAY

James, recovered, drives through an open landscape in his Jeep.

INT. SMALL MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

It's a pack house. The crowd rumbles in anticipation for the performance.

Eric, Isabella, Vanessa, and Ollie wait anxiously and optimistic in the front row with passes that say "Guest".

INT. SMALL MUSIC VENUE - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Melodie, as beautiful as ever, waits to go on stage.

MELODIE

Are you ready?

JAMES

Are you?

James settles in next to her, new guitar in hand, ready to play.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I've been anxious to write this moment into my notebook.

MELODIE

Me too.

As the new guitar comes into focus, a drawing in permanent marker depicts a Sun, Moon, Heart, and Star in perfect orbit.

They are close enough to embrace.

FADE TO BLACK