

# 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 than 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 points 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 headache. 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 "Whatever".

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 to 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