

The Guardian

by

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INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

SAM, a 24-year-old boy, leans against the wall in the corner of a dirty, poorly-lit room. He puts a cigarette into the ashtray that sits on the radiator. A window is above him, letting in a shaft of sunlight as he reaches for a box between his feet. Inside the box is a tourniquet and a syringe. His fingers are nicotine-stained, his nails dirty.

He wrestles with the tourniquet and pauses to take another hit off the cigarette in the ashtray. He runs his hand through his hair and rubs his eyes. He turns to look at a 9-year-old boy who is curled up on a mattress on the other side of the room, sleeping.

Focusing on the tourniquet, he picks up the syringe and inserts it into his arm. He's instantly less tense as his body slacks against the wall and radiator.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door bursts open as the frame splinters, letting in more light. CAMERA is unsteady and slightly dizzying. NICKY and two other THUGS enter with guns drawn. They're dressed in leather and jeans. LEO, the boy in the corner, wakes up frightened and backs against the wall.

NICKY

(singing)

Sammy....where are you?

SAM looks up, wearily.

Come on, Sammy, Sammy, Wake up!

SAM tilts his head, unsure of what's happening.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

NICKY

Sammy, I tried being a nice guy. I tried to let you have the benefit of the doubt here. You told me Wednesday and I gave you until Wednesday. And this was two weeks after you were supposed to have my money. Do you know what day it is?

SAM

(Running fingers through his hair)

Fr-friday?

NICKY

That's right, Sammy. Friday. And because I'm such a nice guy, I'm even making a house call--

SAM

(laughing)  
...house call...

NICKY

(louder)  
--a house call to ensure you pay me my money. That's fifteen thousand, Sammy. Plus another G for the extension and my thoughtful delivery service.

SAM

(Clearing his throat,  
trying to snap out of it)  
I-I know, Nicky. Was so nice of you to show up here.

The tourniquet snaps from his arm. NICKY and the THUGS look at it.

NICKY

I can't keep being nice when you disrespect me like this. And I'm not gonna wait for my money any longer.

SAM

(slurring, sing-song)  
You're gonna have to. Because I don't have it.

NICKY

(angered)  
I think I've been patient enough.

Nicky pulls the slider back on his baretta and pushes it forcefully into Sam's forehead. LEO starts crying and inches back harder against the wall. Sam looks up at it, startled at first, but then chuckles.

SAM

(chucking)  
Uh oh...

NICKY

(to the THUGS)  
Look at this, boys.  
(MORE)

NICKY (cont'd)

He doesn't even realize he's gonna die.

(pauses to think, while turning the gun on Sam's forehead)

See the problem here, is that Sammy here doesn't seem to care.

(crouching close to Sam's face)

And if he don't care, I don't get my money. And if I don't get my money, I can't afford to be such a nice guy...making house calls...giving extensions...

SAM

(quietly laughing)

...house calls...

LEO whimpers.

NICKY

So what I need to do is make him care.

(to SAM)

I'm gonna make you care.

NICKY stands up abruptly and spins around the room. He aims the gun at LEO. And puts his finger on the trigger.

NICKY

(to self)

Oh, you're gonna care, all right.

Blam!

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

SAM wakes up to see his brother, LEO, lying against the wall, dead. There is a bullet hole going through the pocket on his pajamas. He's sitting in a puddle of blood with his head slumped over to the right.

SAM stands up slowly, gaze locked on LEO, and shuffles toward him.

He reaches out and touches the boys cheek. LEO doesn't move.

He crouches down in front of the boy and touches his shoulder. LEO doesn't move. He reaches out and pulls LEO to him from around LEO's neck. The boy slumps against him. SAM's eyes start portray a range of emotions, ending in grief. Tears slip down his cheeks and into LEO's hair.

SAM stands up and backs away from LEO. He puts his hand on the back of his neck and rubs as he shakes his head slowly, still crying.

He backs against the window and turns suddenly to look out it. He pulls up the sill and sits back against it.

SAM  
 (Shaking his head,  
 muttering)  
 I'm sorry, Leo. I'm so sorry.

His face becomes calm and his expression resolved. He pushes himself backwards out the window.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SAM'S APARTMENT - VIEW FROM BELOW

Sam's body tumbles into a dive. We see his back approaching the ground, his arms are out.

EXT. TRUCKDRIVER'S VIEW IN ONCOMING TRUCK

We see the body descend, as reflected in the TRUCK DRIVER's sunglasses. It disappears below the frame of the glasses and we hear a heavy THUD. A woman screams as the TRUCK DRIVER SLAMS on his breaks. The TRUCK DRIVER loses control and we see the truck veer and slam into a cafe table where a bunch of patrons are eating outside (including A TEEN GIRL drinking coffee).

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET

We see the truck crash into the cafe and plow down tables. The back of the truck jack-knives across the street. A cab flies into the shot.

EXT. INSIDE TAXI CAB

The CAB DRIVER rolls his eyes in his rearview mirror listening to the WOMAN and her CHILD in the back seat.

WOMAN  
 I don't care how much you like it,  
 you don't stick it up your nose.

CAB DRIVER looks forward and his expression changes to fear. He slams on the breaks, but the cab slides into the belly of the jack-knifed truck. It explodes into a fireball.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

The explosion repeats from further away. The camera shakes with its intensity as the fireball goes up into the air and a thick plume of smoke rises up.

FADE TO BLACK.

CREDITS

The CAMERA starts high in the air and slowly descends on the city.

Montage of city scenes as people go about their daily business as V.O. is heard.

Traffic on bridges.

Classrooms of elementary school students.

People sipping coffee at a cafe.

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)

People underestimate guilt. It's a disease, really. It consumes them and alters their reality. It can make them physically ill and affect every waking second of their life...Why couldn't it be fatal? Guilt can kill a man. The only cure is to atone for your sins. And very rarely do people get that chance.

YOUNGER WOMAN (V.O.)

Chance?

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)

*To make things right.* To cure themselves from the disease.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SAM wakes up, startled. He's asleep under the window, a tourniquet around his arm. He jerks his feet in and looks around the room. LEO is sleeping in the corner. He pulls the tourniquet off his arm quickly and stands up, lost. Slowly he walks over to the sleeping boy and touches his cheek. LEO stirs a little, but continues to sleep. He squeezes LEO's shoulder and LEO wakes up groggy.

LEO

Sam...

LEO scoots up against the wall and rubs his eyes. He wheezes a little and SAM hands him his inhaler, which is on the corner of the mattress. LEO uses it and sets it down.

SAM

You okay, buddy?

LEO nods and then crawls back into a ball on the mattress going back to sleep.

SAM

I'm going out for a bit, buddy.  
I'll be back in an hour or two.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - NIGHT

SAM walks under the streetlights rubbing his arm. He's trying to figure out the dream he had, which seemed too intense.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

SAM continues to walk through the city streets until coming to the end, along the bank of a small river.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The sounds of traffic fade as he continues his walk to a bridge. There is a silhouette of a TEEN GIRL on it, but SAM doesn't notice until he's almost upon her, halfway across the bridge. There are no cars on the street behind them.

SAM notices the TEEN GIRL as she steps over the barbed handrail of the bridge, to a ledge.

SAM

(to TEEN GIRL)

Hey! HEY!!!

The TEEN GIRL looks back and smiles through tearful eyes. She faints and starts to fall.

SAM rushes over to save her and grabs her by the nape of her shirt as his arm gets skewered from her weight on one of the barbed poles of the handrail.

He screams awkwardly but doesn't let go.

EXT. WIDESHOT OF BRIDGE

CAMERA can see the TEEN GIRL, unconscious, hanging by her shirt as SAM moans in pain. He starts to swing her slowly. After the third or fourth swing she has enough momentum and he lets go.

EXT. BRIDGE FROM BELOW.

TEEN GIRL tumbles unconscious to the embankment along side the bridge and safely rolls to a stop. A necklace falls into the street and lands by the CAMERA.

EXT. BRIDGE - SAM'S POINT OF VIEW.

SAM slowly lifts his arm off the barbed pole. We see its end disappear into his flesh as he continues to pull it off, wincing. He finally gets it off and pulls back to the street, cradling his arm. He teeters down the street.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY/WAITING ROOM

SAM walks in to the hospital with his shirt soaked with blood. He's light-headed from the pain and loss of blood. He approaches BECKY, a nurse at the front desk, and she looks up, startled. She begins to say something and notices his arm.

BECKY  
(to SAM)  
Oh My God...

SAM collapses on the floor of the hospital lobby.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL - BED

BECKY attends to an unconscious TEEN GIRL in the bed next to SAM. Her leg is in a cast and her neck is swollen. Her eyes are puffy.

SAM comes to. He is shirtless and we can see his upper arm is bandaged to the elbow.

BECKY  
(to SAM)  
Well, look who's finally awake.

SAM looks up at her, then at his arm.  
Do you know where you are?

SAM stares.  
You're at St. Agnes's. You stumbled  
in last night with a hole in your  
arm.

SAM continues to stare.  
You're lucky you didn't die. You  
lost a lot of blood. The doctor  
bandaged you up and gave you a  
tetanus shot. How did that happen?

SAM  
Who are you?

BECKY  
I'm the night attending nurse.  
(she pauses)  
Becky.  
(she pauses)  
Do you know how you hurt your arm?

SAM  
No.

SAM slinks back in the bed and turns his head to the window.  
In his line of site is the TEEN GIRL he saved last night,  
asleep.

BECKY  
Do you know this girl?

SAM  
Is she okay?

BECKY  
She's sleeping now. A woman brought  
her in last night, unconscious,  
with a broken leg. Do you know her?

SAM  
No.

BECKY  
She didn't have any identification  
on her. We just figured her a  
runaway.  
(she pauses)  
Like you.  
(she pauses)  
Do you have a home?  
(MORE)

BECKY (cont'd)  
(she pauses)  
What's your name?

SAM  
(reluctantly)  
Sam.

BECKY  
Sam. Well, I'll be back to check up  
on you, SAM. If you need anything,  
press the little white button  
there.

SAM  
What's the red one?

BECKY  
That's for emergencies.

SAM  
And the blue?

BECKY  
You don't need the blue one. That's  
for people who try to leave without  
paying their bill.  
(she pauses)  
Relax, for runaways, the state  
picks up the tab.

SAM  
I'm not a--  
(he understands)  
Thanks, Becky.

BECKY  
It was nice to meet you, Sam. If  
you need anything...

SAM  
White button. Gotcha.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION - HOURS LATER

SAM gets up from the hospital bed and slips his arm into one  
sleeve of his jacket. He wraps the other over his shoulder  
and picks up his bloody shirt.

He walks over to the bed of the unconscious TEEN GIRL and  
looks at her.

He turns and walks out of the room.

As he approaches the nurses' station, we see BECKY signing a clipboard. Her hair is back and she has glasses on.

BECKY

You shouldn't be walking around,  
Sam. Your body needs time to heal.

SAM

I'm okay. I gotta go check on my  
brother.

BECKY

It's seven in the morning.

SAM

Thanks for...  
(he motions to his arm)

BECKY removes her glasses and leans in to SAM. Her expression changes from professional to slightly flirtacious.

BECKY

So, I know runaways don't have  
phones, but I want you to call me  
if you need to talk.

(she hands him a slip of  
paper. It has her phone  
number and address on it)

About anything. Okay?

SAM

(pocketing the paper)  
Sure.

BECKY

You know how to reach me?

SAM

(smiling, and turning to  
leave)  
White button.

FADE OUT.

SAM wanders from the hospital back to the bridge in a short montage of the city. It's a hot Summer day and teens are out on sidewalks playing hopscotch, freestyle rapping, and listening to music.

EXT. BRIDGE

SAM has taken off his jacket and is walking along the side of the bridge in the sun. He starts sweating and shaking from withdrawal and is rubbing his head from a throbbing headache. He stops at the center of the bridge where the barbed pole is coated with dry blood. He lean over the edge and rubs his temples. Traffic goes by behind and below him.

SAM spots the locket in the center of the road and crosses down to get it. He manages to find his way down the embankment to the edge of the street. Looking for traffic, he finds his opportunity and runs to the road. He picks it up and stares at it.

A car blazes passed with the driver laying on the horn. SAM gets to the side of the embankment and hollers at the car. He looks at the locket again, turning it over in his hand. He pockets it. He turns and walks off.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

SAM enters the apartment and touches the door to the bedroom. In a flash, he recalls the dream.

A SERIES OF SHOTS - FLASHBACK

LEO screams. The bullet rips into his chest.

He collapses back as the thugs laugh.

NICKY  
(Echoing)  
You'll care, all right.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

SAM pushes open the bedroom door and LEO sleeps in the corner.

He puts his coat down and tosses his shirt into the trash.

SAM rummages in a hamper for a cleaner shirt and wrestles to put it on. He's still shaking and sweating.

He runs his fingers through his hair and crouches down next to LEO.

SAM  
(shaking LEO gently. His  
voice wavers with  
withdrawal)  
Lee-Lee. You awake, buddy? Leo?

LEO  
(waking)  
Sam...

LEO yawns and rubs his eyes.

SAM  
There you are. Look, buddy. I'm  
going to need to go away for a few  
days.

(LEO notices his arm)  
Look, it's okay. It's just a  
scratch. But I really need to take  
care of things. You gonna be okay?

LEO  
How long you gonna be gone?

SAM  
Just a couple days. A week at the  
most.

LEO  
Did you break your arm, Sammy?

SAM  
I told you, it's okay. There's  
money in the coffee jar in the  
kitchen. You can buy groceries and  
things while I'm gone. Don't spend  
it too quickly, okay?

LEO  
You promise only a few days?

SAM  
Yeah, buddy. Only a few days.  
(he shakes a little more)  
But I have to leave now and you  
have to promise me something.

LEO  
(yawning)  
What?

SAM

Don't open the door to anyone. And if you see weird people hanging around in the building, I want you to go to Mrs. Walters' across the hall, okay?

LEO

(he uses his inhaler)  
Her apartment smells like cat litter.

SAM

(laughing)  
I don't care, buddy. You have to promise me this, okay?

LEO

(reluctantly)  
Okay.

SAM

Okay, buddy. I gotta run.

LEO

Only a few days, right?

SAM

Right.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SAM'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

SAM pushes open the door to the street and steps down to the curb. His shirt is sweat-stained. He turns to look up at the apartment, and then starts down the street in the opposite direction of the bridge.

Cars pass as he walks and he senses a car pulling up behind him.

He looks into a rear windshield and notices it's NICK and his THUGS.

SAM breaks into a run and the car SQUEALS into motion.

SAM looks over his shoulder to see the car gaining on him.

EXT. SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SAM ducks into a side street and the car stops at the entrance behind him.

One of the THUGS gets out and starts chasing after him, gun in hand. The car peels out again, presumably to head them off on the other side.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SAM cuts out of the alley and runs into the street. It's grid-locked traffic and he zigs between the cars.

The THUG is hot on his trail as he pushes over a trash can on the other side. He slinks through a group of CHURCHGOERS as air conditioning and gospel blows past him.

The THUG jumps over the trash can and crashes into the CHURCHGOERS, knocking people over.

CHURCHGOER 1  
Watch yourself, son.

CHURCHGOER 2  
Sister, sister, you okay?

The THUG raises his gun. CHURCHGOERS scatter quickly as he continues running. He limps a little and has lost ground on SAM.

EXT. INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

NICKY pulls into the intersection ahead of SAM and SAM, looking back, runs into the hood of NICKY's car.

NICKY raises his gun as SAM jumps on the hood, then the roof, and launches off the back end.

The car SQUEALS into a 180 as it tries to turn into the direction of SAM.

SAM falls facedown in the middle of the road and looks in time to see a car approaching quickly.

He rolls out of the way, just in time, but the car smashes into NICKY's driver side door, stopping both vehicles instantly.

NICKY tries to get out, but is pinned. He slams the steering wheel with his hands, swearing.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

SAM staggers into a counselling center cradling himself. He's shaking badly and his headache is piercing. He walks to the front desk where the REHAB NURSE in a blue uniform helps him to one of the rooms. The REHAB NURSE is middle-aged, black, and has a shaved head.

REHAB NURSE

I didn't think we'd see you back,  
Sam.

SAM

I-I..

REHAB NURSE

S'okay, man. We all slip into a  
crack sometimes. The trick is to  
remember where it is, next time.

SAM

Y-Yea...

REHAB NURSE

Lay down on the bed.

SAM

Crack...

REHAB NURSE

That's right, Sammy.  
(pulling the curtains  
closed)  
Stay away from the crack.

SAM

Water.

REHAB NURSE

Right there on the table. Lay down.  
The drugs are gonna kill you, boy.

The nurse pours SAM a glass of water and hands it to him.

SAM drinks the whole thing and hands it back. As the REHAB NURSE is refilling it, SAM awkwardly pulls himself under the covers and hugs them close. He's shivering.

The REHAB NURSE starts to hand the water to him and decides to leave it on the table.

REHAB NURSE  
I'll be outside if you need me,  
Sam. You're gonna make it this  
time, I can tell.

He turns and walks to the door.

REHAB NURSE  
(opening the door)  
And if you even consider another  
fix, you just let me know. And I'll  
kill you myself. A lot cheaper that  
way.

The REHAB NURSE closes the door and we hear the sound of  
bolts being thrown.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION - NIGHT

BECKY is rubbing her temples at the nurses' station. She has  
her glasses on again, but her hair is slightly disheveled.  
She's drinking a cup of coffee.

HEAD NURSE  
You look like you've had a long  
day. You work a double shift again?

BECKY  
Yea.

HEAD NURSE  
I don't now why you do it, Becky.

BECKY  
I need the cash right now.

HEAD NURSE  
Why don't you go home?

BECKY  
I can't.

HEAD NURSE  
You're no good to us, right now.

She takes the coffee from BECKY.  
You're shaking from lack of sleep.  
You're gonna get yourself sick.  
Come back when you're more rested.

BECKY

I need--

HEAD NURSE

The cash, I know. But you act like there's something else...

She pauses.

I was like you before. Trying to pay my way through Med school, thinking I was out to save lives and get my degree at the same time. But I figured out real quick that I was just burning myself out. My grades were slipping, I started forgetting to give out Meds or gave the wrong doses. You're not helping yourself, Becky. And you're putting our patients in jeopardy.

BECKY

You're right.

HEAD NURSE

I know I'm right. I didn't have a perfect protege to tell me that, either.

They laugh.

BECKY

There is something else...

HEAD NURSE

What, Becky?

BECKY

(she thinks)

This must've been about a decade ago. I was working a double-shift. I think it was my third in as many days. And this woman comes in. She's on God knows how much heroin. And she's pregnant. She's freaked out because she can't feel her baby moving and she's too wasted to know what's going on. It was lucky she made it to the hospital.

HEAD NURSE

She's on drugs and pregnant?

BECKY

Yeah.

(she pauses)

So anyway, the mom is dirty and scraped up and vomiting and we get her into a bed to calm her down. I give her a shot of penicillin but tell her we can't give her a pain killer because of the baby. We can't get a heartbeat for the baby so call for an emergency C-section. The doctors give her an epidural and she's finally calm.

HEAD NURSE

What happened?

FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - A DECADE AGO

A younger BECKY backs out of a room and leans against the wall. She puts her hand on her face as tears well up in her eyes.

BECKY (V.O.)

She didn't make it. We couldn't tell if she OD'd or what, but she was gone before they cut the baby out. I'm guessing she was allergic to the penicillin, but because of the epidural, we couldn't tell she went into shock.

HEAD NURSE (V.O.)

The baby lived?

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - MOMENTS LATER

BECKY

It was a month-and-a-half premature. Smaller than my hand, here.

HEAD NURSE

My God...

FLASHBACK

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - A DECADE AGO

The younger BECKY sits on her window sill by her air conditioner and hugs herself. She rocks back and forth and shakes as she cries.

BECKY (V.O.)

Yeah, I left that night. Took a month off, concentrated on school and got my life back together.

HEAD NURSE (V.O.)

I can imagine.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - MOMENTS LATER

BECKY

I came back to work when I had my shit together.

(she pauses)

I know I hit my limit. You don't make rational decisions when you're stressed. I should've held off on the penicillin. I should've called the doctors immediately. I should've done a lot of things.

HEAD NURSE

Did you find out about the baby?

BECKY

Dead, I'm sure. I'd rather not know, though. Rather leave it alone.

(to HEAD NURSE)

Ever since then, I've always felt a sorta guilt. I feel like I owe it to that girl...and her baby...Like something I did in the past is preying on me until I atone for it.

HEAD NURSE

It's not your fault. We all make mistakes.

Go home, Becky. Get some sleep. It's not worth the money. And if you really want to help these patients, you need to do it when you're clear-minded and well-rested.

(she pauses)

(MORE)

HEAD NURSE (cont'd)  
You're not responsible for that  
woman or her baby dying. You need  
to know that.

BECKY  
Thank you.  
(she grabs her coat and  
stretches her neck)  
Thank you.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

An older man's voice can be heard yelling from outside.  
Passers-by are in their morning rush. Many have coffee.

A woman and her 5-year-old DAUGHTER stand on the street  
corner as the woman talks on her cell phone and hails a cab.  
The daughter is playing with her umbrella.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

CAMERA shows a woman's room. It is sparsely dressed with  
pictures on the walls and a nurse's uniform hung over a  
chair. BECKY sits on her bed buttoning her shirt. A MAN  
continues to holler from the hallway.

MAN  
(off-camera)  
I come home to find you sleeping,  
you can imagine what I was  
thinking.  
(BECKY shakes her head and  
continues to get ready)  
I was thinking that my no-good  
bitch of a daughter decides to take  
the night off. She thinks Daddy can  
just pick up my portion of the  
rent.  
(he walks into the room)  
I'm on the goddamn road all fuckin'  
day so I can keep this roof over  
your head. I get back and I expect  
to have a moment's quiet and I see  
you sleeping here.

BECKY  
Dad, they told me to go home.

MAN

(yelling)

I don't give a shit. You tell them you're working anyway. You tell them that your father isn't going to keep busting his hump all night every night because his daughter is too lazy to do her share.

BECKY

Dad...

MAN

You think I like driving a rig over sitting in some comfy office with a nice suit?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM enters his apartment to get clothes for rehab and check on LEO.

He sees that the place is trashed. NICKY and his crew came and smashed everything. He pulls a few scraps of clothing and stuffs them into his backpack.

He crosses the hall and bangs on MRS. WALTERS' door. We hear her open the peephole and then unlock the door, but leave the chain in. She cracks it open.

MRS. WALTERS

Where've you been?

SAM

Is Leo with you? Is he okay?

MRS. WALTERS

You must've had some party last night. Of course, you know you're not allowed to have--

SAM

Mrs. Walters, is he okay?

MRS. WALTERS

Sure, Sammy. He's at school. He came over last night at around eight saying he was hungry.

SAM

He's at school right now?

MRS. WALTERS

Yeah. You really should take better care of him. You are his guardian, Sammy.

(she notices his arm)

Jesus, Sammy, what happened to you.

SAM

Can you watch him for the next few days? I've gotta get back to--

(he pauses)

I have to go out of town.

MRS. WALTERS

You mean that wasn't you over there last night? It got pretty loud.

SAM

We were robbed.

MRS. WALTERS

Robbed? In this building? My goodness...

SAM

I really have to get going. Please say that you'll watch him.

MRS. WALTERS

I can't, dear. I'm sorry. No. Robbed? Oh My.

SAM

Please, Mrs. Walters? Just for tonight and I'll take him to a friend's tomorrow, I promise.

MRS. WALTERS

Ok. Just for tonight.

SAM

Thank you.

(he turns to leave)

MRS. WALTERS

You sure you're okay? Do you need some money?

SAM

I don't...I mean...

MRS. WALTERS

Your mother was such a sweet girl.

She reaches back around the door and hands him \$50 through the crack.

SAM  
You don't have to...

MRS. WALTERS  
Take it. I know how expensive the city can be. Just don't tell Mr. Walters. Okay?  
(she pauses)  
Is there anything...else I can do?

SAM  
(following her gaze to his arm)  
I'm fine. Just take care of Leo until I get back. Thank you.

MRS. WALTERS  
Anytime, dear.

SAM turns down the hall. Mrs. Walters closes her door and we hear her mutter.

Robbed...Oh My.

She bolts the lock.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

The MAN is still yelling to BECKY as he puts on his coat and grabs his keys.

MAN  
You better have your half of the rent in my hands by the time I come home tomorrow morning or you're gonna find yourself in the hospital, yourself.

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

The WOMAN and her child are still waiting for the cab. The LITTLE GIRL is twirling around on the street with her umbrella open.

BECKY  
(off camera)  
They won't let me do three doubles in a row anymore.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

MAN  
(grabbing her by the arms)  
Well you tell them you're doing it  
anyway.

The MAN pushes BECKY across the room. She SLAMS into the window and air conditioner. It slips back in its frame and tilts backward.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - CLOSE-UP OF AIR CONDITIONER

We see a close-up of water pool on the edge of the air conditioner where it drips, in slow motion, down to the street.

The DAUGHTER smiles and tilts her head back. The water splashes on her forehead and she giggles.

She opens up her umbrella again and holds it up over her head.

She reaches out from under it with her palm up to feel for more rain.

MAN  
You tell those bitches I'll come in  
there and teach them to make you  
disobey me.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - CLOSE-UP OF AIR CONDITIONER

The air conditioner slips some more. It makes a wrenching sound as BECKY stands up and removes herself from pressing on it, oblivious to its precariousness.

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

SAM rounds the corner looking at the slip of paper. He looks up at BECKY's apartment and puts the paper in his pocket. He begins to cross the street and notices the DAUGHTER and her MOTHER.

SAM's mind flashes as he recognizes the DAUGHTER.

## MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

A flashback shows a montage of them in the back seat of the cab.

MOTHER

I don't care how much you like  
it...

## EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

SAM is confused but feels a sudden rush of danger. He sees the air conditioner slipping three flights up.

CUT TO:

## INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - CLOSE-UP OF AIR CONDITIONER

It falls back and the cord pull taut as it slips slowly out the socket. We hear a wrenching sound as it slips further.

## EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

SAM runs across the street yelling. A cab flies into view and stops just short of hitting him. He places his hands on the hood as he tries not to fall back.

The CAB DRIVER SWEARS as the MOTHER and DAUGHTER open the door.

## INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - CLOSE-UP OF AIR CONDITIONER

The cord rips from the socket and we see it fly up and out the window as the air conditioner falls.

## EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

The woman gets into the cab and sits beside her daughter. SAM is on the side of the street as the driver peels away flipping him off and hollering, only half-noticing he has a fare.

The air conditioner crashes to the ground next to him and explodes into pieces.

INT. TAXI CAB

The WOMAN and DAUGHTER brace for the abrupt driving. Her phone slips out of her hand and onto the floor of the cab. She hollers at the driver.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

SAM climbs the steps as the DAD rushes past.

DAD  
(to self)  
Swear to God I'm gonna pull the  
fuckin' trigger someday...

The DAD pushes out the door as SAM climbs to the landing of the third floor. He sees the door open and knocks. With no answer, he steps in.

SAM  
Hullo?

SAM wanders to the bedroom and sees BECKY on the bed crying. She's rubbing her arm where her father grabbed her.  
You okay?

BECKY  
I think so.  
(relieved to see him)  
What are you doing here?

SAM  
White button.  
(they laugh.)  
Was that your dad?  
(BECKY nods)  
You want to talk about it?

BECKY shakes her head. SAM sits next to her on the bed and looks at her arm. She notices.

BECKY  
I'll live. What are you doing here?

SAM  
I..have a favor to ask.

BECKY  
Look, if it's drugs, the answer is  
no.

SAM

No, no. I need a place to crash.  
For me and my brother.

BECKY

You...want to stay here?

SAM

I'd like to stay with you.

BECKY

(blushing)

I don't know, Sam. My father is--

SAM

Just for a couple of days.

SAM pauses, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out the money Mrs. Walters gave him.

I can pay in advance. Just a couple  
of days, please?

BECKY

Sam, If you stay here, you've gotta  
be clean. And my father can't know.

SAM

(leaning into her)

I'm getting there. I spent the  
night in rehab. I'm going back  
tonight. I just need a place for  
Leo right now.

BECKY

I don't...

SAM

You're the only person I have,  
right now.

BECKY

What about your parents?

SAM

I never knew my father. My mom died  
when I was little.

BECKY

Oh my God, I'm sorry.

SAM

Yeah. Leo never met her. Our  
neighbor, Mrs. Walters, took us in.

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)  
Other than that, it's just us.  
(leaning closer)  
You're the only person who cares  
for me. Please?

BECKY  
Just for a couple of days?

SAM  
(he kisses her)  
Unless...you reconsider...

BECKY  
I don't even know your name.

SAM  
It's Sam.  
(he pauses)  
Just Sam.  
(they kiss again)

BECKY  
Okay, Just Sam. A couple of  
days...and I'll let you know if I  
do.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREET BY A BAR - AFTERNOON

SAM walks down the street shaking. He stops to take some deep breaths and is overcome by memories.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACKS

The truck tires SQUEAL.

The cafe tables are crushed.

People scream.

EXT. STREET BY A BAR - AFTERNOON

The emotion is so strong, SAM finds himself bent over in an alley, throwing up. He dry heaves and wipes his mouth. It's dizzyingly hot out and his face is dappled with sweat. He runs his fingers through his hair and heads across the street to a bar.

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON

SAM walks into a smoky, dimly lit bar. It is filled with miscreants and regulars. A loud group is arguing in the corner.

He finds an empty bar stool and makes his way over.

Sitting down at the bar, he grabs a few napkins and wipes his mouth.

He asks a woman behind the bar for a beer. She hands it to him and he drinks half of it in one gulp.

He sets it down and rubs his face, still shaking.

A MAN is belligerent on the other side of the bar.

BARTENDER

(to MAN)

All right, all right. Keep it down, please.

MAN IN BAR

(to BARTENDER)

You too? All I need is another woman telling me what to do. Just git me another fuckin' JD.

She retreats and pours a shot of Jack Daniels.  
 Mother who didn't do shit. Wife who probably fucked half the guys in here before leaving town. Bitch of a boss who doesn't know her ear from her asshole. Lazy fuckin' daughter who can't even keep a job. Now you?

The BARTENDER puts the shot in front of him.  
 I swear to God, bitches run this world. That's why's I gotta drive all fuckin' night just to make ends meet.

BARTENDER

Easy...

MAN IN BAR

Back and forth and back again every goddamn night.

BARTENDER

Everyone's got their problems, man.

MAN IN BAR

Don't you patronize me. Don't you fuckin' patronize me! I swear to God I'm gonna kill the next bitch that does it.

BARTENDER

(to LOUIE, the bouncer)

Louie?

LOUIE comes over and asks if there's a problem. SAM gets up to use the bathroom. As the CAMERA follows him to the bathroom, we hear their conversation.

MAN IN BAR

(to LOUIE)

Don't you get sick of taking orders from them? Come on, man. Wake up.

INT. BAR BATHROOM

SAM enters the bathroom and walks over to the sink. He grips the edges to calm his shaking and stares into the mirror. His eyes are bloodshot and his face twitches.

He turns on the faucet and splashes water on his face.

Behind him the bathroom door is kicked open. We see his reflection as he walks over to a urinal.

MAN IN BAR

(to self)

It'd be all too easy to. Just fuckin' walk up to that bitch on Monday morning and wait. Wait for her to say something. Wait til the bitch tries to tell me what to do, then, BAM!

(laughing)

Right through her fuckin' head. That's how I want to go. One for her and one for me. Fuckin' end this shit.

(laughing harder)

That's a way to go. A bullet through the brain. That's what she needs. One for her and one for me...Get these bitches...

(through the laughter)

(MORE)

MAN IN BAR (cont'd)  
...these bitches off my ass  
forever.

SAM steals a glance to see who it is, but just sees the back of his head.

He grabs some paper towels and dries his face. Pausing to look in the mirror one last time, he turns to exit the bathroom. We hear a flush and SAM looks quickly at the man while he's walking out.

CAMERA sees his face and instantly SAM is hit with an onslaught of the memory.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM's body falls in the MAN's sunglasses.

The MAN spins the steering wheel rapidly.

The cafe tables fly over the hood and crack the windshield.

INT. BAR BATHROOM

SAM, frightened, backs up to the door and stumbles through.

INT. BAR

As SAM is walking out the door, NICKY and his THUGS walk in.

SAM runs out the back of the bar as the BARTENDER hollers after him for money. NICKY doesn't see him.

INT. REHAB CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

SAM walks in to the rehab center out of breath. He stumbles up to the desk where the same REHAB NURSE is standing.

REHAB NURSE  
(to SAM)  
You miss the crack, boy?

SAM nods.

Look at me.

The REHAB NURSE stares into his eyes for a moment and then ushers him past. SAM walks to his room and closes the door.

FADE OUT.

INT. REHAB CENTER - CAFETERIA - MORNING

SAM walks into the cafeteria looking worlds better. He is clean-shaven and his eyes are clear. He doesn't appear to be shaking as much and looks like he's gotten control of the withdrawal.

He grabs a tray and walks toward a table. He sees a quiet TEEN GIRL sitting in the corner staring out the window. CAMERA follows his gaze downward and sees shes wearing a cast. SAM recognizes her as the TEEN GIRL on the bridge.

He walks up and sits across from her. After a few beats, she stops looking out the window and turns to SAM.

GLORIE

(to SAM)

I know you. Somehow.

SAM continues eating, but smiles at her.

Like, from a dream. You're a boy in my dreams. An angel.

SAM

You got me confused. I'm no angel.

GLORIE

Sure you are. You come to me at night. I know your face. You lift me up when I'm about to fall. You carry me to safety.

(SAM doesn't respond)

I've seen you night after night in my dreams.

SAM

It's not me.

GLORIE

I'm Glorie.

SAM

Sam.

GLORIE

Sam, you're my angel. My guardian angel.

SAM finishes his half-sandwich and pockets an apple. He gets up and looks at GLORIE.

SAM

I'm sorry, its not me.

GLORIE

You convinced me to come here. You made me believe that if you cared enough to save my life, night after night, then I might be worth saving. I've been clean for two days.

SAM

You're gonna make it.

GLORIE

Because of you.

SAM shakes his head and walks out of the cafeteria. We hear her off CAMERA.

My guardian angel.

INT. HOSPITAL - EARLY AFTERNOON

SAM is filling out forms at the hospital with the OLDER NURSE looking on. She has her glasses on the brim of her nose and has a distasteful look on her face.

OLDER NURSE

You realize that joining the team here at St. Mary's requires commitment. You can't just come in whenever you like.

SAM

Yes, ma'am.

OLDER NURSE

The janitorial staff opening has evening shifts from 6pm until 2am. Is that going to be a problem?

SAM

No, ma'am.

She studies SAM for a while and then her expression changes to a more motherly, concerned one.

OLDER NURSE

May I ask why you want to work here?

SAM  
I'm trying to *make things right*.

The phrase strikes a chord with the OLDER NURSE and she begins to changer her mind about SAM.

OLDER NURSE  
*Make things right?*

SAM  
My life.

SAM signs his name to the forms and slides them over the desk to the OLDER NURSE.

She examines them and replies to SAM without looking up.

OLDER NURSE  
You have no prior job experience?

SAM  
Nothing that I can put on that form.

OLDER NURSE  
I see. Well, we have a zero tolerance policy here at St. Mary's. No drugs. No alcohol.

SAM  
I understand.

OLDER NURSE  
(Forcing a smile.)  
Well, I'm going to take a chance on you, Sam. You only get one strike. Please don't make me regret this.

SAM  
No, ma'am.

EXT. PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

School bell rings and children bound down the front steps of a public school. SAM stands on the sidewalk as the kids wind past him. He's flipping the locket over in his hands, looking at it. Eventually, LEO comes out, looking disheveled.

LEO  
SAM!

SAM  
(hugging LEO)  
Hey buddy. How was school?

LEO  
You're back! You're back!

SAM  
Not really, Lee. I'm going to take you to a friends' house to stay. I gotta leave again tonight, but tomorrow, I should be back for good.

LEO  
You promise?

SAM  
(walking with LEO to BECKY's apartment)  
Yea.

LEO  
Where do you have to go, tonight?

SAM  
I got a job, buddy.

LEO  
Job?

SAM  
Yeah. I'm working at the hospital.

LEO  
You're a doctor?

SAM  
(laughing)  
No, buddy. I'm a janitor. I get to clean up after the doctors.

LEO  
Well, that doesn't sound like too much fun.

SAM  
Jobs aren't supposed to be fun, Leo. They're supposed to give us enough money so we can eat, and buy things, and pay for our mistakes. My mistakes.

LEO  
Oh, you mean the bad guys.

SAM stops and turns to LEO.

He gets down on his knee in front of his brother.

SAM  
I'm going to try to make things  
better for us, buddy. Like when Mom  
was alive. So we don't have to  
worry about the bad guys anymore. I  
promise. Okay?

LEO nods emphatically and SAM gets up and holds his hand.

They continue walking to BECKY's apartment.

LEO  
Who's your friend?

SAM  
Her name is Becky.

LEO  
Is she your girlfriend?

SAM  
She's just a friend, Leo.

LEO  
(taking out his inhaler)  
Is she pretty?

SAM  
What if she is?

LEO  
(using the inhaler)  
You like her?

SAM  
I don't know, buddy.

LEO  
Does she like you?

SAM  
Tell you what, you find out for me  
tonight, okay?

LEO  
Okay. Should we tell Mrs. Walters?

SAM  
I already spoke with her.

LEO  
(turning to SAM)  
You seem better.  
(he pauses)  
You look happy, Sam. I'm proud of  
you.

SAM  
You're proud of me? You're nine-  
years-old, how can you be proud of  
me?

LEO  
(shrugging)  
Just am.  
(They start walking  
again.)  
Does she got big boobs?

SAM  
(laughing)  
Come on, buddy.

FADE OUT.

INT. REHAB CENTER - DUSK

SAM walks into the rehab center, starting to shake. His shaking is less, but he still feels it important that he's there.

A car pulls up in the street behind him and slows. The window opens but CAMERA cannot see inside. Viewer senses that it is NICKY and his THUGS. As SAM enters the rehab center, a hand flicks a cigarette out the window. It closes as the car slowly pulls away.

The REHAB NURSE is waiting for SAM and waves him past.

SAM wanders through the halls before going to his room. He hears a CRASH and peeks into the small glass window on the door. CAMERA sees GLORIE convulsing on the bed.

SAM unlocks the two locks and runs in. GLORIE's mouth is foaming as SAM tries to hold her down. He looks in her hand and she's clasping a pill bottle. They spray all over when he gets her hand open.

SAM runs out into the halls.

SAM  
(yelling)  
Somebody? Somebody help!  
(sound of people  
approaching)  
Somebody!

REHAB NURSE runs up along with a security guard.  
She's O.D.ing on something.

REHAB NURSE  
Where'd she get those?

SAM  
Don't look at me. I didn't bring  
them.

REHAB NURSE  
She was clean when she got in here.

SAM  
It wasn't me, I promise.

Doctors rush in shouting about a stomach pump. SAM is  
squeezed out of the room.

He walks slowly back to his own room, cradling himself.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. REHAB CENTER - SAM'S ROOM - HOURS LATER

SAM wakes up in a cold sweat. He downs a glass of water and  
swings his feet over the bed. He's wearing a sweat-stained T-  
shirt and boxers. He rocks back and forth for a bit and  
decides to get up.

INT. REHAB CENTER - SAM'S ROOM DOOR

SAM walks over to the door and peers out the window. He tries  
the knob and notices, during the commotion, the REHAB NURSE  
forgot to lock the door. He walks back and throws his clothes  
on and ties his shoes.

INT. REHAB CENTER HALLWAY

He walks through the moonlit hallway and enters GLORIE's  
room.

INT. REHAB CENTER - GLORIE'S ROOM

She's laying there asleep. She appears to have stabilized and is unconscious (again). He crouches by her and pushes her hair back from her face. A beam of moonlight rests on her hands which are crossed on her chest.

He sees the GLORIE's cell phone on the night table and picks it up. Walking over to the window, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out BECKY's number. He dials it and puts the phone up to his ear.

SAM

(on phone to BECKY)

Hi.

(pause)

Everything okay?

(pause)

Don't let him eat everything, he will, you know.

(pause)

He has his inhaler?

(pause)

Yes, asthma.

(pause)

Maybe in the morning.

(pause)

I know, I'm sorry.

(pause)

I was thinking about you too.

(pause)

Becky? Thank you.

(pause)

Okay, I'll see you soon.

He hangs up and looks out the window. After a moment, he looks back at the phone and scrolls through the numbers. He sees the most recent outgoing call is to someone named SHARON. He looks at the sleeping GLORIE, then back at the phone. He presses "Send."

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE TAXI CAB - NIGHT

PATRICK is in the back seat of a cab staring out the window. His eyes are glossed over and his face stoic.

PATRICK  
 (whispering, to CAB  
 DRIVER)  
 Pull over.

The CAB DRIVER doesn't hear.  
 Pull over here.

CAB DRIVER  
 (looking in rearview,  
 talking to boy)  
 I can't let you out here, it's the  
 middle of a goddamn intersection.

PATRICK opens the door and steps out.

INT. OUTSIDE TAXI CAB - MOMENTS LATER

PATRICK hands the driver a five and starts to close the door. Suddenly a phone begins to ring. The boy looks at the floor of the cab and sees the cell phone. He gets in the cab to grab it, closing the door, just as a truck careens past. It would've hit him for sure.

PATRICK  
 Jesus!

CAB DRIVER  
 That's what I'm saying.

PATRICK  
 (picking up the phone)  
 I could've been hit!

CAB DRIVER  
 No shit. How about waiting until we  
 pullover.

The boy picks up the phone.

PATRICK  
 (to caller)  
 Hullo?

SAM  
 (Voice on phone)  
 Is Sharon there?

PATRICK  
 Who?

CUT TO:

INT. REHAB CENTER - GLORIE'S ROOM - SECONDS LATER

SAM

Sharon. Is she there?

(pause)

Look, I just wanted her to know that her friend Glorie is okay. She's at the clinic on Water Street. She could really use a friend right now.

(pause)

I don't know, but she needs someone. Will you tell Sharon?

(pause)

Right. On Water Street.

SAM hangs up and walks back to GLORIE's side. He reaches into his pocket and produces the locket. He looks at it again and then puts it in her hands, clasping them.

He hears a noise from down the hall.

REHAB NURSE

(off-camera)

We don't have anyone here that fits that description, sir. And if we did, you'd need to be family to visit him.

SAM peers into the hall and sees Nicky and his guys threatening the REHAB NURSE.

INT. REHAB CENTER - FRONT DESK

NICKY

Aw...but I am family.

(he holds up his gun)

And I really need to have a talk with him.

INT. REHAB CENTER - GLORIE'S ROOM

SAM slips back into GLORIE's room and pulls the door closed. He crouches below the door as the figures approach. One of the THUGS peers in the window. SAM looks up and holds his breath. The THUG passes.

INT. REHAB CENTER - GLORIE'S ROOM - WINDOWS

SAM runs to the windows and tries to open them. They're locked shut. He runs back to the door and catches his breath. He starts to shake and cradles himself, taking control of the withdrawal. Then, slipping his head out, he sees NICKY and the THUGS enter his room.

INT. REHAB CENTER - HALLWAY

He seizes the chance and runs down the hall out the front door. He bounds down the steps and turns and runs down the street.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY/WAITING ROOM

SAM enters the hospital out of breath and stops at the doorway. He turns to look outside to make sure NICKY hasn't followed him. He looks up to find the RESIDENT, who is working the desk, is staring at him quizzically. SAM controls his breathing and walks down the hall past the RESIDENT.

RESIDENT  
(muttering to self)  
Crackhead.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD

SAM pushes a broom through the hospital children's ward watching the children sleeping in their beds. One child whimpers. His face is black and blue and his arm is in a sling. SAM stops in front of the child's bed and looks into the boy's eyes. The boy is calling for his mother in his sleep.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - CHILD'S BED

SAM takes a stuffed bear from the child's night table and places it in the crook of the boy's arm. The boy turns over, hugging the bear and slowly ceases whimpering.

OLDER NURSE  
(from hallway, to SAM)  
We get about a dozen kids in here  
each month just like him.

SAM whirs around to face the OLDER NURSE, startled by her voice.

SAM

What's wrong with him?

OLDER NURSE

He watched his mother die of a drug overdose.

SAM

Sounds familiar.

OLDER NURSE

Unfortunately, it's a common sight around here. I'm sorry.

SAM

It was a long time ago.

OLDER NURSE

May I ask how?

SAM

Search me. The cops found her and brought her here. In the same night, I became a brother and an orphan.

OLDER NURSE

How old were you?

SAM notions to the sleeping boy.

SAM

About the same as this little guy.

The two of them watch the sleeping boy.

OLDER NURSE

The neighbors found him crying by her side and brought him in here. They said she used to beat him.

SAM

His mom?

OLDER NURSE

And the boy loved her anyway. I see it all the time. The child thinks they're responsible for being abused. They don't understand why. They just endure it. If they can.

SAM

Poor little guy. Why would he feel responsible for his mom beating him?

OLDER NURSE

Who knows why guilt works the way it does. I'd say he got off lucky.

SAM

Lucky? His mother is dead.

OLDER NURSE

There's a lot of responsibility to being a guardian. To a child, the guardian is a god. All-caring. All-knowing. All-loving. If they fail, it's the child who fails.

SAM takes a moment to let understanding sink in. He looks at the sleeping boy and then back at the OLDER NURSE.

SAM

He's better off being on his own?

OLDER NURSE

We can only hold onto him for one more day. After that, he becomes a ward of the state.

SAM

He doesn't have any family?

The OLDER NURSE just stares at the boy and SAM looks as though he wants to say something, but doesn't.

OLDER NURSE

A child doesn't choose his guardian. Sometimes, the best decision a guardian can make is to pass the responsibility to someone else.

The OLDER NURSE walks away, leaving SAM to stare at the boy.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GAS STATION - HOURS LATER

SAM walks down the street checking behind him occasionally to ensure NICKY and the THUGS aren't around. He stops, slicks back his hair, and looks at his hands, which are shaking.

He crosses his arms to stop them and starts walking toward a gas station where he sees a vending machine for bottled water.

A cab comes puttering up and stops outside the station. Its hood is steaming and the car is knocking.

The CAB DRIVER gets out and starts swearing.

EXT. GAS STATION - IN FRONT OF CAB

The CAB DRIVER has a cigar corked in his mouth as he touches the hood, burning his hands. He SWEARS again and grabs a rag from the driver's side door pocket. CAMERA racks focus to the truck parked up the hill from the gas station. CAMERA sees SAM approaching from the edge.

EXT. GAS STATION - SIDE OF TRUCK

TRUCK DRIVER finishes filling truck and tries to screw on the gas cap. It gets stuck and he kicks the metal gas canister a few times.

CLOSE-UP OF GAS CANISTER.

Metal bends and cracks. Gas starts trickling out slowly. CAMERA zooms in as we hear the TRUCK DRIVER, oblivious, MUTTERING about women and storming off.

WIDESHOT OF GAS STATION

TRUCK DRIVER walks to door, enters and approaches counter. SAM comes into view, cradling himself, breathing heavily. CAB DRIVER, in distance, is leaning into engine of car, holding hood over him.

CLOSE-UP OF STREET

Trickle is wending its way down the hill toward the cab driver.

CLOSE-UP OF GAS STATION

TRUCK DRIVER is purchasing a six-pack of beer.

CLOSE-UP OF CAB

CAB DRIVER takes a deep toke on his cigar and tosses it behind him.

CLOSE-UP OF STREET

Cigar lands in front of CAMERA in a shower of sparks, but continues to burn. CAMERA racks focus to gas as it creeps faster toward the cigar and cab.

CLOSE-UP OF SAM'S FACE

SAM's eyes are rolling as he continues to breathe heavily.

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

SAM is staggering as he cradles himself and advances toward the vending machine in the gas station, close to the CAB DRIVER. He looks to the TRUCK DRIVER and a flash of memory hits him.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

The TRUCK DRIVER, en route, takes a swig of something in a brown paper bag.

A body plummets in the man's sunglasses.

The trucker reacts.

EXT. GAS STATION

SAM is thrown into reality, spinning. He sees the CAB DRIVER and another flash of memory hits him.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

The CAB DRIVER's eyes in the rear view mirror and the voice of the MOTHER in the back seat.

The view of the jack-knifed truck from the driver's POV.

The CAB DRIVER slamming on the breaks.

CLOSE-UP OF STREET

SAM falls to his knees and holds his head as the trickling gas is inches from the cigar. It soaks into his jeans and wells around him as he writhes in pain.

The CAB DRIVER hears him fall and spins around. He lowers the hood and calls out to SAM. SAM doesn't react. Running over, he steps on the cigar, tamping it out. He crouches by SAM and tries to pick him up.

CAB DRIVER  
(to SAM)  
You okay, man. You just collapsed.  
I thought you were having a fit or  
something.

SAM continues to moan.

CAB DRIVER  
Look, lemmie take you to the  
hospital or something. Okay?

INT. TAXI CAB - MOMENTS LATER

The CAB DRIVER lifts SAM and drags him to the cab. He closes the door and gets behind the wheel.

SAM  
You were there. I saw you...

The CAB DRIVER pulls up and turns on his signal to merge in with traffic.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM is holding his head as flashes of the CAB DRIVER occur again.

EXT. GAS STATION

The TRUCK DRIVER, who has left the gas station and started walking to his truck, is approaching the cab.

INT. TAXI CAB

SAM

...die.

(SAM sees TRUCK DRIVER)

And him...he swerved...

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

Flashes of the TRUCK DRIVER before the accident.

INT. TAXI CAB

SAM

Exploded...the truck...the woman...

CAB DRIVER

(to SAM, worried)

Who died? What woman?

SAM

Your fare...and her  
daughter...umbrella...

The cab pulls out and speeds to the hospital.

CAB DRIVER

Look, man. You need help. Nobody's  
dead, okay?

SAM

She won't...she won't be there. I  
have to go to her house. Check on  
Leo...

CAB DRIVER

I don't think that's a good idea,  
pal. We should get you to the  
hospital.

SAM

I gotta see Becky. Becky. Make a  
right.

The CAB DRIVER pauses, looks in the rear view mirror,  
considers.

CAB DRIVER  
Your call, buddy. You gotta pay,  
though. Only free trips to the  
hospital.

Again, the CAB DRIVER pauses and looks in mirror.  
...or the nuthouse.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. REHAB CENTER - FRONT DESK

PATRICK walks in the front door of the Rehab Center looking lost. He approaches the front desk where a few COPS are speaking to the REHAB NURSE.

COP 1  
(to Rehab Nurse)  
I think we have all we need. If  
they come by again, you give us a  
call right away.

REHAB NURSE  
Thank you officer.

COP turns and leaves, side-steps PATRICK as he leans over the front counter.

PATRICK  
(to Rehab Nurse)  
Hi, I'm here to see Glorie Pearson.

REHAB NURSE  
If I ask if you're family, you  
gonna stick a gun in my face?

PATRICK  
What?

REHAB NURSE  
Only family can visit outside of  
visiting hours.

GLORIE comes around the corner and sees PATRICK.

GLORIE  
You came!

REHAB NURSE

Glorie, doors need to be locked now that the police are gone. I'm afraid you'll need to wait until visiting hours to see your guest.

PATRICK

This will only take a second. Please?

REHAB NURSE

(considering)

One second. And if you're slipping her something, I'm gonna let her OD this time.

The REHAB NURSE turns to file papers and refill his coffee.

INT. REHAB CENTER - CLOSE-UP OF GLORIE AND PATRICK

PATRICK holds up his cell phone and hands it to GLORIE.

GLORIE

You keep it. Your calls are the only thing that's getting me through this.

PATRICK

Are you sure? Won't your friend be mad?

GLORIE

She doesn't even know it's gone. Just for a few more days until I'm out of here, okay?

PATRICK

I've...liked talking to you too.

GLORIE

Yeah?

PATRICK

(whispering to GLORIE)

You've helped me in more ways than you know, Glorie. I...I can't thank you enough.

GLORIE

Me?

PATRICK  
That night. The night that your  
friend called--

GLORIE  
--my guardian angel.

PATRICK  
When Sam called to tell me you were  
here, I was...I mean, it helped me  
know that what I was feeling...

GLORIE  
(blushing)  
Sam just randomly dialed your  
number. It wasn't even your number,  
but you answered, and I found you.

PATRICK  
You called back.

GLORIE  
I had to. I needed to know I wasn't  
alone.

PATRICK  
Me too.

GLORIE  
(leaning closer)  
You're not alone.

REHAB NURSE  
Okay. Enough of the Rehab Dating  
Game for the night. Time to go,  
lover-boy.

PATRICK  
When are you out of here.

GLORIE  
A few days. You'll call?

PATRICK  
As soon as I get home.

GLORIE  
(smiling)  
Hurry.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - LOBBY

PATRICK turns to walk out and GLORIE stops him by the shoulder. He turns and finds himself kissing her.

GLORIE

Take this.

She hands him her locket.

A miracle brought it back to me.  
Another brought you into my life.  
If there's any power left, I hope  
it keeps you there.

PATRICK

You sure?

She nods.

You saved my life, that night.

GLORIE

Good. We're even.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM is laying on the bed and BECKY is wiping his forehead. His shaking has subsided and he's breathing calmly.

BECKY

How long is it going to be like  
this?

SAM

I should've k-kicked it by now.

BECKY

You've been in rehab before.

SAM

Yeah.

BECKY

How long this time?

SAM

Th-three days.

BECKY

It should only take 48 hours for  
the drugs to leave your system.  
Detox can last up to two weeks.

SAM

It never takes this long.

BECKY

Do you feel better?

SAM

Yeah.

BECKY

Can I do anything?

SAM

(closing his eyes)  
Where's Leo?

BECKY

Asleep in my dad's bed. He's  
working through the night, so  
Leo'll be okay.

She looks at his face.

I feel like I know you. Like I've  
seen you before somewhere.

SAM doesn't respond.

I mean, I know I've seen you at the  
hospital. And you showed up the  
other day...but I feel like I know  
you.

SAM opens his eyes and looks into hers. He studies them,  
trying to figure out if she's from his nightmare of the  
crash. He searches her face and comes up empty. This comforts  
him and he "sees" her for the first time and realizes she's  
beautiful.

Do you know what I mean?

SAM

(pausing)  
No. But I want to.

They kiss. The kissing escalates as he pulls her down to the  
bed beside him. CAMERA focuses in on tight angles as the  
couple has intercourse.

FADE OUT.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - FATHER'S ROOM - MORNING

LEO climbs out of bed and stretches. He's wearing an oversized T-shirt and looks sleepy. The sun is coming in from the window and the room has a huge shadow of a fire escape across the furniture. There are sounds of SAM and BECKY off-camera as they prepare breakfast happily. Their voices sound calm and content.

LEO pulls his pants on, removes the oversized shirt and puts his own shirt on.

He sits down on the floor by the bed and starts slipping his shoes on. He catches sight of a long shadow under the bed and peers under it. He pulls out a gun.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SAM and BECKY are in the kitchen making breakfast. BECKY is wearing pajamas and SAM is wearing his T-shirt and boxer shorts.

SAM places a cup upside down on the center of a slice of bread. He twists the cup a little and then removes it, pulling a circular section out of the center of the bread.

BECKY

You're so weird.

SAM

It's not weird, my mom used to do this.

BECKY

For you and Leo?

SAM

For me. She died when Leo was born.

BECKY

I'm sorry.

SAM

Don't be. It was a long time ago. Now pay attention because this is important. You have to butter BOTH sides of the bread, okay?

BECKY

Weird.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - FATHER'S ROOM

CAMERA is at a low angle as we see five bullets lined up on the hardwood floor. Their long shadows stretch in the sunlight. LEO peers up close to the cylinder and closely clicks it around.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

CU. of the pan with two pieces of bread frying in it, their centers removed. SAM cracks an egg and empties it into the center of one of the pieces of bread.

BECKY

What's this little circle for?

SAM

Almost forgot.

He takes the circles and places them in the pan beside the bread with the eggs in them.

They're great with jelly.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - FATHER'S ROOM

LEO clicks the cylinder closed and tumbles the gun in his hand. He's now holding it with the barrel facing him and is fingering the trigger, playfully.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

BECKY is putting jelly on a toasted circle. It's hard to hold and it slips out of her hand and onto the floor. She bends down to retrieve it. When she comes back up, she has jelly over the pocket of her pajamas.

SAM turns to look at it and a flash of memory hits him. He sees his brother with blood soaking through a hole in the pocket of his pajamas. He drops the spatula.

BECKY  
(looking up from wiping  
the jam off her pajamas)  
You okay?

SAM  
Yea, I better check on Leo. C-can  
you watch these?

SAM exits quickly.

BECKY  
When do I flip them?  
(she listens)  
Sam?

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - FATHER'S ROOM

LEO is holding the gun at eye level with the trigger halfway clicked. He smiles as the camera racks focus on the trigger as it slides forward.

As SAM bursts through the door, it makes a loud noise. LEO jumps and looks up. He hasn't pulled the trigger.

SAM  
(to LEO)  
What the fuck? LEO! Put that down!

LEO  
(frightened)  
I was just playing.

SAM  
Don't you ever play with guns! Are  
you fuckin' crazy!

LEO starts crying and SAM looks at him. He realizes everything is okay and hugs LEO.

Off-camera sounds of the front door opening and the father bitching about work.

SAM  
(whispering)  
Where'd you find this?

LEO points under the bed. SAM quickly pushes it under the bed along with the bullets.

They scatter and roll to the other side of the bed.

They both get up quickly and scramble out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION

HEAD NURSE goes about her rounds, checking patients and reading charts. She gets into a conversation with an OLDER NURSE and brings up the story of the pregnant woman who died giving birth.

HEAD NURSE  
(checking an IV)  
How do we know that the disease that affects our patients is something that medicine can cure?

OLDER NURSE  
We don't, dear. We do our best to help and hope for the best.

HEAD NURSE  
I suppose you're right. It just seems fruitless at times. We prescribe drugs and monitor vitals, but ultimately just ensure that they're comfortable as their body and mind work out what is affecting them.

OLDER NURSE  
Don't let the doctors hear you say that.  
(she pauses)  
But you're right, dear. The mind is a powerful drug. Conscience can save someone just as easily as it can destroy them.

HEAD NURSE  
How?

OLDER NURSE  
I've seen perfectly healthy people die in their sleep. I've seen terminally ill patients get up and walk out of here cured.  
(MORE)

OLDER NURSE (cont'd)  
(she pauses)  
Where is all this coming from,  
dear?

HEAD NURSE  
I guess I was thinking about this  
story that Becky told me. There was  
a woman that came in pregnant when  
she was on her residency. To hear  
her tell it, it was like this woman  
died to give life to a child that  
deserved it more. She said the  
woman was doped up and had a bad  
reaction to Penicillin, but it  
doesn't sound like that would've  
taken her. Poor Becky, she blames  
herself for this.

OLDER NURSE  
That's why she pushes herself so  
hard?

HEAD NURSE  
That's what she says.

OLDER NURSE  
Poor girl. When was this?

HEAD NURSE  
Oh, a decade ago...

OLDER NURSE  
The baby?

The HEAD NURSE shrugs.

I see.

(she pauses)  
Maybe it was her time, dear. Becky  
should understand that.

HEAD NURSE  
It doesn't seem right.

OLDER NURSE  
It doesn't have to. A crisis of  
conscience is psychosomatic.  
Stress, tension...they're killers.

HEAD NURSE  
Guilt.

OLDER NURSE  
Certainly.  
(she pauses)  
(MORE)

OLDER NURSE (cont'd)  
 When people suffer from guilt, they  
 tear themselves apart. It affects  
 diet, sleep, emotion. They  
 physically deteriorate.

HEAD NURSE  
 Maybe that's what happened to her.

OLDER NURSE  
 Remember, dear. A child doesn't  
 choose his guardian. Sometimes, the  
 best decision a guardian can make  
 is to pass the responsibility to  
 someone else.

HEAD NURSE  
 She couldn't bear the thought that  
 her child was destined for a  
 terrible life. Between the drugs it  
 ingested in her womb and the parent  
 it was fated to have...  
 (she pauses)  
 Guilt.

OLDER NURSE  
 It can produce pangs in a person as  
 bad as those that come from  
 withdrawal.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

SAM walks LEO down the stairs toward the kitchen where we  
 overhear arguing.

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
 Their body is overcome by it. Their  
 mind, consumed. Guilt can cause  
 physical pain, tremors, vertigo...

SAM and LEO peer around the corner to the kitchen. SAM leans  
 against the wall as he's shaking. He looks at his hands and  
 then at LEO who returns the glance, worried.

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
 Why couldn't it be fatal?

TRUCKER  
 Day in, day out, the same fucking  
 thing.

SAM recognizes the MAN IN BAR as the TRUCKER and realizes its BECKY's father. He sees flashes of the body falling in the trucker's glasses.

TRUCKER (V.O.)

A bullet through the brain...that's what she needs. One for her, and one for me...

BECKY

Daddy, please don't talk like that.

TRUCKER

You're gonna tell me what to do?

BECKY

No I just...

TRUCKER

You're damn right you're not.  
Fuckin' bitch.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM sees the TRUCKER walking out of the gas station drinking a beer in a paper bag.

He sees the TRUCKER taking a swig of beer in the truck as he drives down the street.

He sees the TRUCKER exiting BECKY's place the first time he went to her apartment. Each time, the TRUCKER seems to be more and more enraged.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

The TRUCKER storms out of the kitchen and walks by SAM and LEO, not noticing them.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

The TRUCKER leaves the apartment, slamming the door. SAM slides down the wall with his hand on LEO's shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION

Scene picks up where it left off with the OLDER NURSE and HEAD NURSE talking.

OLDER NURSE

People underestimate guilt. It's a disease, really. It's your body's way of telling you that something is wrong. It's not good to ignore it. It consumes them and alters their reality. It can make them physically ill and affect every waking second of their life...The only cure is to atone for their sins. And very rarely do people get that chance.

HEAD NURSE

Chance?

OLDER NURSE

*To make things right.* To cure themselves from the disease.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

SAM is holding his head as BECKY rounds the corner looking for them. She sees SAM collapsed against the wall and rushes to help.

BECKY

(to LEO)

Leo, go get a glass of water, quickly.

LEO

Sammy?

BECKY

Please, Leo, go.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM sees GLORIE at the bridge, looking back at him before she faints.

Then, GLORIE laying in the hospital bed, unconscious.

Then, her sleeping in rehab as he puts the locket into her hands.

Then, her sitting at the cafe that the TRUCKER slammed into. She's smiling as she sips her coffee.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

SAM  
(stammering)  
Th-they're all...

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM sees the LITTLE GIRL dancing in the street with her umbrella and her mom hailing a cab.

Then their faces in the rear-view mirror.

MOTHER  
I'd don't care how much you like  
it...you don't put it up your  
nose...

Then the two of them shielding their eyes as the cab skids into a crash with the jack-knifed truck.

Then the LITTLE GIRL's face in the window as the cab pulls away from the sidewalk and the air conditioner smashes to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY

SAM  
I-I see them all. They all died.

BECKY  
Who is, Sam? Who died?

SAM  
Your father was in the truck.

BECKY  
My father?

SAM  
Glorie was at the cafe.

BECKY  
Who?

SAM  
The cab driver...

BECKY  
Sam, you're scaring me...

SAM  
And Leo was shot.

SAM starts crying, holding his head.

BECKY  
Leo's fine, Sam. We're all fine.

SAM  
I need to save them all, somehow. I  
need to make up for what I did.

BECKY  
What, Sam? What did you do?

SAM  
It's all coming together. Everyone  
is connected. But you. I don't know  
how you fit in to it. You're not  
there.

BECKY  
I'm right here, Sam. I'm right  
here.

SAM looks up and sees BECKY's face.

She's concerned and her lips are trembling.

He leans in and hugs her, crying against her shoulder.

Then, he looks into her eyes and kisses her passionately on  
the lips.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Scene fades into a montage of all the characters in their  
current settings.

MONTAGE

Montage is intermittently injected with B-Roll of goings-on in the city.

Traffic on the bridge.

People in the hospital.

Diners in the cafe.

Classrooms of kids

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM lays BECKY down in her bed and kisses her neck while she unbuckles his belt. A shaft of sunlight highlights their bodies as they wrap in an embrace.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. REHAB CENTER - FRONT DESK

Across town, GLORIE and PATRICK carry GLORIE's suitcase past the REHAB NURSE. He smiles.

REHAB NURSE  
Watch out for the cracks.

INT. HOSPITAL - ARCHIVES ROOM

OLDER NURSE is flipping through files researching cases that happened a decade ago.

EXT. TRUCKING COMPANY - TRUCK LOT

TRUCKER lowers the back gate of his truck and walks to the cab. He opens the glove compartment revealing a gun and a flask.

The TRUCKER reaches for the flask and takes a quick pull as the sun blazes down.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

The LITTLE GIRL waves at her mom from the top of the slide before pushing off with her arms up giggling.

The MOM, who stands at a pay phone, waves back and continues an angry conversation. She's staring at a document of employees with charts of labor and hours.

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

LEO looks both ways as he crosses the street toward his school. He carries his backpack and lunch box as NICKY and his crew drive up to stop at the traffic light. NICKY notices LEO and stares at him as the boy crosses the street.

EXT. STREET BY A BAR

The CABDRIVER stands by an open door as an older woman gets into the back seat.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

BECKY arches her back and tilts her head back as SAM looks down at her, smiling.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - FRONT DRIVEWAY

PATRICK closes the trunk of his car and turns around to GLORIE who envelopes him in a hug, planting a kiss on his lips.

EXT. TRUCKING COMPANY - TRUCK LOT

TRUCKER wipes sweat from his forehead with a sinister smile on his face. He slams the door to his cab and starts walking toward the manager's office door.

INT. HOSPITAL - ARCHIVES ROOM

OLDER NURSE, reading a file intently, absentmindedly closes the filing cabinet drawer and lowers to a seat. She pushes her glasses up the bridge of her nose and thumbs to the next page.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

The MOM hangs up the receiver to the pay phone bitterly, pauses, then slams it on the hook over and over again. She braces herself against the phone booth and wipes a tear from her eyes.

LITTLE GIRL comes running up to her mom and pulls on her shirt tail.

The MOM looks down, kneels to her daughter and hugs her.

The LITTLE GIRL still looks concerned and we see the MOM's face change from worried, to relieved. She smiles, turning to the document in her hand and casually tosses it to the trash can by the pay phone.

She kisses her daughter on the forehead, gets up and they walk hand-in-hand to the slide.

EXT. GAS STATION

CABDRIVER squeeges the windshield of his cab as the gas pump meter runs.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM rhythmically moves on top of BECKY and presses his forehead against hers. They're sweating and both their eyes are closed.

BECKY caresses SAM's back as they rock together.

EXT. REHAB CENTER - FRONT DRIVEWAY

GLORIE and PATRICK sit down in the car and exchange a glance as PATRICK shifts gears and pulls out into the street.

The REHAB NURSE behind them turns and walks back into the building.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Montage music crescendos as BECKY throws her head back in ecstasy and SAM collapses on her with a kiss.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. TRUCKING COMPANY - FRONT DOOR

TRUCKER stumbles to office door with a sinister grin on his face. We see him take the gun from his belt line and put it into his hand as he opens the door.

INT. TRUCKING COMPANY - MANAGER'S OFFICE

CAMERA is unsteady, as though from the hungover TRUCKER's point of view. It enters the office and focuses on the woman behind the desk. It is the MOTHER of the LITTLE GIRL and she's smiling. There are pictures on her desk of the LITTLE GIRL and her husband.

TRUCKER

Gate on the truck won't latch again  
and my delivery hasn't come yet.  
Every goddamn day I deal with this  
shit. I work all night at this shit-  
ass company and never spend time  
with my friends or daughter...

The MANAGER/MOTHER swivels in her chair as she holds a picture of her daughter and husband. Her back is to the TRUCKER.

CAMERA racks focus to the TRUCKER who takes out his gun and raises it to the back of her head. The TRUCKER's face shows resolve as the CAMERA racks focus again to the gun.

He pulls the trigger.

It clicks. The bullets were removed by LEO.

MANAGER/MOTHER doesn't notice the sound.

TRUCKER

(caught off-guard)

I...

MANAGER/MOTHER

I know what that's like.

MANAGER/MOTHER presses her finger against her daughter's face in the picture.

I know how it can consume us.

She pauses, then swivels the chair back as the TRUCKER hides the gun, quickly.

We don't make time for things that  
are important to us.

She looks at the TRUCKER's face then starts writing something down.

That's why I want you to take a few weeks off. Paid vacation. You take time to be with your daughter.

TRUCKER  
(incredulous)  
What?

MANAGER/MOTHER  
You've been under a lot of stress and putting in some hard hours. It's obvious that you dislike your route.

She tears the sheet of paper from the pad and handing it out to him.

TRUCKER  
Well, I...

MANAGER/MOTHER  
While you're off, I want you to consider a promotion.

TRUCKER  
Promotion?

MANAGER/MOTHER  
I've worked this desk for twelve years. How long have you been behind the wheel?

TRUCKER  
Twenty.

MANAGER/MOTHER  
I don't want to tell you how to live your life, but my position will be open when you get back, and I'm happy to put in a good recommendation for you.

TRUCKER  
Wh-what?  
Nine-to-five and no weekends. Plus, a guaranteed bonus and you'll have more time for family.

TRUCKER  
Why?

She looks at the picture again and whispers to herself.

MANAGER/MOTHER  
I...I lost my phone.

She pauses, then looks at the TRUCKER.  
You don't have to make a decision  
until you get--

TRUCKER  
I'll take it, boss.

MANAGER/MOTHER  
(smiling)  
Please, call me, Sharon.

TRUCKER turns to leave and then stops at the door.

TRUCKER  
Thank you.

MANAGER/MOTHER  
(looking at the picture)  
You're welcome.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' STATION

NICKY comes into the door and approaches the Nurses' station.  
A RESIDENT is leaning over the desk trying to catch the score  
on a basketball game that is playing on a little TV. NICKY  
walks up and engages the RESIDENT.

RESIDENT  
Ah Christ. C'mon, Ref. Foul!

NICKY  
With the amount of traveling he  
does it's amazing he don't get  
frequent flyer miles.

RESIDENT  
(startled)  
Ain't that the truth, man. I got  
money on this game too.

NICKY  
I'm wondering if you can tell me  
about my kid brother. He came in  
last week.

The RESIDENT picks up a clipboard.

RESIDENT  
Name?

NICKY  
Sam.

RESIDENT  
Last name?

NICKY  
(scanning clipboard)  
Him. That's my brother.

RESIDENT  
Yeah, I remember him. Kid skewered  
his arm. Came in with this druggy  
girl...

NICKY  
Where's my brother now?

RESIDENT  
He was discharged the next day.  
Your *brother* came back and got a  
job as the new night janitor.

NICKY  
He..er...hasn't come home yet...do  
you know where he might be?

The RESIDENT looks hesitant.  
C'mon, man. Mom's worried sick.

RESIDENT  
Look, buddy. I know you're not his  
brother. For all I know, you and  
him are stealing pills from the  
pharmacy at night. WHICH, I might  
add, won't happen, because it's  
locked up tight and only I have the  
key.

NICKY  
(muttering to self)  
Good to know.

RESIDENT  
What?

NICKY

Ok, you got me. He's not my  
brother.

NICKY changes his tone and starts getting forceful with the  
RESIDENT.

But I'd still appreciate it if you  
could let me know where he is.

The RESIDENT is now clearly angry.

RESIDENT

We're not supposed to give out that  
information.

NICKY looks toward the TV where the crowd is cheering.

He reaches behind him toward the gun in his pants and then  
decides to pull out his wallet.

He hands the RESIDENT a fifty.

NICKY

How much you got riding on the  
game?

RESIDENT

(surprised)  
That about covers it.  
(taking the money)  
He's been shacking up with one of  
our nurses. Becky.

NICKY

You got an address?

The RESIDENT thumbs through a Rolodex, eyeing NICKY and finds  
BECKY's address card.

He hands the card to NICKY, who smiles and walks out.

RESIDENT

(muttering to self)  
Crackhead.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD

BECKY is talking to the HEAD NURSE while they monitor some  
incubators and check the charts hanging by them.

OLDER NURSE enters and rushes over to them.

OLDER NURSE  
The baby didn't die.

Both BECKY and the HEAD NURSE look perplexed.

OLDER NURSE  
(to BECKY)  
Ten years ago a woman came in her  
on drugs. She was in labor and you  
gave her Penicillin. The doctors  
gave her an Epidural.

FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - A DECADE AGO

A younger BECKY backs out of a room and leans against the wall. She puts her hand on her face as tears well up in her eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD

BECKY  
Yes, but how did you--

FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL - NEO-NATAL CARE WARD - A DECADE AGO

We see a flashback of the scene of the OLDER NURSE's V.O.

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
The baby didn't die. The doctors  
were able to get a faint heartbeat  
and brought it here to be treated  
by a Pediologist specializing in  
narcotic-specific neo-natal  
treatment. The baby was in  
intensive care for almost a month  
before its vitals came back.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - MOMENTS LATER

The OLDER NURSE hands BECKY the chart.

OLDER NURSE  
The baby lived.

FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - A DECADE AGO

We see a flashback of the scene of the OLDER NURSE's V.O.

                          OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
A neighbor of the late mother came  
to claim the child and brought it  
to social services for an adoption.  
The only resulting affect from the  
trauma was...

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - MOMENTS LATER

The OLDER NURSE flips through the chart.

                          OLDER NURSE  
A respiratory problem.

                          HEAD NURSE  
                          (to BECKY)  
It lived.

                          OLDER NURSE  
Yes.

                          SAM (V.O.)  
I have to save them all. To make  
things right.  
                          (V.O. pauses)  
We're all connected. But you. I  
don't know how you fit in.

FLASHBACK

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - A DECADE AGO

The younger BECKY sits on her window sill by her air  
conditioner and hugs herself. She rocks back and forth and  
shakes as she cries.

                          SAM (V.O.)  
My mom died when I was little. Leo  
never met her.  
                          (MORE)

SAM (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 We were raised by a neighbor, Mrs. Walters.  
 (V.O. pauses)  
 We lived with my neighbor, Mrs. Walters.  
 (V.O. pauses)  
 Your father. Glorie. Leo. They're all connected. But you. I don't know how you fit in.  
 (V.O. pauses)  
 I have to save them all...

INT. HOSPITAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - MOMENTS LATER

BECKY realizes something is going on, though she doesn't quite understand it yet.

BECKY  
 (to OLDER NURSE)  
 Was it a boy?

OLDER NURSE  
 What?

BECKY  
 The baby. Was it a boy?

OLDER NURSE  
 Y-yes.

BECKY  
 And the respiratory problem?

OLDER NURSE  
 (reading chart)  
 Asthma.

BECKY  
 I-I'm sorry. I have to go.

BECKY turns and walks briskly out of the hospital.

The OLDER NURSE and HEAD NURSE both turn and look at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

SAM is sitting on the bed staring out the window while LEO plays in the corner. He's rubbing his arm and we wonder if he's injected himself again.

SAM  
(to self)  
Glorie was in the café.

## FLASHBACK

SAM sees her eyes slow-motion as the truck's shadow comes over her at the café.

Then he sees her jumping off the bridge as he reaches out to save her.

## INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

LEO looks up and realizes that SAM is talking to himself.

CAMERA pans out and shows that SAM hasn't injected himself. He's clean and for the first time, doesn't appear to be shaking.

SAM  
The woman and her daughter were in  
the cab.

## MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

SAM sees them hugging and holding in the cab in slow-motion as it slams into the jack-knifed truck.

The vision switches to the LITTLE GIRL's face, smiling, as the cab peels away and the air conditioner slams to the ground.

SAM sees the TRUCKER aiming and firing the gun at the MANAGER/MOTHER as the bullet buries itself in her head. The chair slides back and the wall is splattered with blood.

The vision switches again to LEO removing the bullets from the gun.

Then SHARON hugging her daughter at the phone booth.

Then SHARON smiling at the photo as the TRUCKER's gun goes CLICK.

SAM (V.O.)  
And the cab driver...

SAM sees the gasoline trickling toward the cigar at the gas station.

The gas is ignited and a river of fire races toward the cab. Instantly it explodes and the CAB DRIVER is engulfed in flames.

The vision switches to SAM as he plummets to his knees. The gasoline soaks into his jeans and the CAB DRIVER runs over to tamp out the cigar.

CAB DRIVER  
You okay?

SAM (V.O.)  
And the trucker...

SAM sees the truck erupt in a fireball.

Then SHARON writing the TRUCKER's paid vacation slip.

TRUCKER  
Thank you.

SAM (V.O.)  
And...

Flashes become quicker and quicker.

SAM sees himself dialing SHARON's phone and PATRICK answering.

PATRICK narrowly escapes getting hit by the passing car outside the cab.

He sees PATRICK sitting across from GLORIE at the cafe, drinking coffee.

He sees the MANAGER/MOTHER (SHARON) fingering the picture of her daughter.

He sees himself pulling the gun away from LEO.

He sees the TRUCKER collapse on his bed in BECKY's apartment  
He sets the gun down on the end table by the bullets and smiles.

He sees GLORIE handing PATRICK the locket.

He sees LEO shot dead in the corner.

He sees BECKY's face.

He sees himself on the window ledge.

He sees BECKY's face.

He sees himself push off.

He sees BECKY's face.

He sees himself falling.

He sees BECKY's face.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Suddenly the door bursts open and NICKY and his THUGS walk in.

NICKY

Sammy, boy. We been looking for  
you.

SAM takes a second to realize that this is actually  
happening.

NICKY pulls out the gun and spins the cylinder.

It's not nice of you to hide from  
us when you know we have some  
business to take care of.

NICKY raises the gun.

LEO whimpers and NICKY turns to face him.

SAM sees what's happening and lunges at NICKY.

SAM

NO!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

A truck horn BLARES. BECKY is running down the street darting  
cabs and trucks. She nearly gets hit a couple of times as  
she's running to her apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM and NICKY are wrestling on the ground. The THUGS stare,  
not knowing what to do.

NICKY GRUNTS as he tries to reach for the gun that was dropped in the commotion.

LEO SCREAMS from the corner, crying.

SAM reaches for the gun, but NICKY grabs it first.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET ACROSS FROM BECKY'S APARTMENT

BECKY makes it to the sidewalk alive but there's a massive pile up of people HONKING and YELLING.

She races to the door which is split open and runs up the stairs.

She runs past her father's room and catches sight of the gun on the end table.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

SAM and NICKY are still scrambling for the gun. They throw punches and the gun gets buried between them. Both are bloodied and grunting. LEO screams in the corner.

Suddenly a GUNSHOT rings out. SAM and NICKY stop struggling and look at each other.

It's dead-quiet as SAM's eyes roll back and he slumps down.

LEO screams loudly while he's crying. The other two guys in NICKY's crew see what has happened and scramble out the door, running away.

NICKY rises to his feet and looks at SAM, who is clutching his chest. Blood has spread around his hand on his shirt. NICKY wipes some blood off his lip and nose with the hand that's holding the gun.

LEO  
(pleading, crying)  
SAMMY! No, Sammy. Sammy.

NICKY turns the gun on him.

LEO cringes in the corner as NICKY smiles.

A GUNSHOT rings out again.

NICKY's expression changes as he turns to look at the doorway.

BECKY is standing there with her father's gun aimed at him. The barrel is smoking.

BECKY  
(to self)  
...I have to save him...

NICKY looks down and sees a bullet hole dead center of his chest. He turns toward BECKY, who fires two more times.

NICKY stumbles backward and drops the gun. He hits the wall and falls over into a heap on the ground, dead.

BECKY  
...to *make things right*.

BECKY, recovering herself, drops the gun and runs over to SAM.

She kneels down next to him and cradles his head.

SAM  
(coughing)  
That's why you're here....  
(his voice is frail)  
For Leo. That's how you're  
connected.

BECKY  
Shhh. Sam, don't talk. You're gonna  
be okay...

SAM  
It wasn't for me to do. It was  
always you.

BECKY  
(crying)  
Sammy, please.

SAM  
(weak)  
It...was...you...

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
People underestimate guilt. It's a  
disease, really. It consumes people  
and alters their reality.  
(MORE)

OLDER NURSE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 It can make them physically ill and  
 affect every waking second of their  
 life...The only cure is to atone  
 for your sins. And very rarely do  
 people get that chance.

HEAD NURSE (V.O.)  
 Chance?

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
*To make things right.* To cure  
 themselves from the disease.

SAM dies in BECKY's arms.

LEO comes over and she hugs him as SAM lays on her lap.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

CU. of BECKY as she talks on the phone to her dad, the  
 TRUCKER, who succeeded in getting SHARON's job as manager of  
 the trucking company.

BECKY  
 (to dad on phone)  
 I know, Dad. I love you too.  
 (pause)  
 I was thinking about getting a  
 pizza.  
 (pause)  
 Right, six o'clock.  
 (pause)  
 OK, see you soon.  
 (pause)  
 Bye.

BECKY hangs up.

School bells RING and LEO comes out, looking a little older.  
 They hug as the CAMERA pulls out a little and we notice that  
 BECKY is pregnant.

BECKY  
 How was school?

LEO  
 Okay.

BECKY  
We're getting a pizza, tonight. You  
hungry?

LEO  
Yeah.

They walk to the street as the music turns eerie and fills with suspense. LEO is in the street looking for friends. BECKY cries out in pain and holds her pregnant stomach. LEO turns back and runs to the sidewalk to where she is. A truck BLARES past right where LEO was standing. BECKY looks up at the truck, then at LEO, then at her stomach.

LEO  
(notioning her stomach)  
Y'okay?

BECKY  
(notioning the truck)  
Yeah, are you?

LEO  
Yeah.

She rubs her stomach and smiles. The viewer is certain now that the baby is SAM's and it just saved their lives. The CAMERA pulls out from the two on the sidewalk until they've all but disappeared.

OLDER NURSE (V.O.)  
Remember, dear. A child doesn't  
choose his guardian. Sometimes, the  
best decision a guardian can make  
is to pass the responsibility to  
someone else.

FADE OUT.

END.