

MIXTAPE

Track I:
Sam & Nellie

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NETWORK DRAFT FOUR
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20th Century Fox TV
Annapurna Television

Nellie

Side A

CLOSE ON: The open, bright-eyed, hope-filled face of African American SAMSON HUGHES, 32, looking directly at us somewhere in Los Angeles. We have never met this man, but we feel safe with him. Maybe it's his eyes, or his smile, or the fact that he's just so fucking excited right now to explain that:

SAM

Every song is a love song.

He waits for our reaction. Continues.

SAM

Okay, start with songs about desire, or longing - those are obvious, right? But then you have songs about the struggle to find love. Or falling in it, being tested by it, jealous of it. Songs about being dumped, left, brokenhearted, even hopeful again. But then there's the metaphors and analogues. Songs about God are about the love for him or her or it. Political songs are love for your country, your fellow woman or man. And if you're disillusioned with them? Disillusionment is just another form of heartbreak, right? Songs about family, your squad, your self, your regrets, hell, even a diss track -- hate is passion. Biggie loves to hate Tupac, Fleetwood loves hating Mac, Taylor hates, and loves, well, everyone. No one picks up a guitar or a cello or their drumsticks or sits at a piano with apathy. Only emotion. One emotion. Which is why every song we hear, from the day we're born til the day we die, from that first lullaby your mom sang to you to the hymn you won't hear at your funeral, it tells us: love. Whoever, whatever, whenever. It's what we're here for. Everything else is just wasting time.

As he waits for whoever's opposite him to agree or disagree, we CUT TO:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - BEDROOM - MORNING

Where NELLIE O'BRIEN, 26, wakes with a smile. She's that dreaded anomaly: a morning person.

She carefully rolls out of bed so as to not wake her sleeping boyfriend, the unfairly hot LEVI GORDON, 28, who has robbed most of the duvet from her just to sleep on top of it. Nellie exits out and into:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - KITCHEN - MORNING

Where she opens her tiny balcony doors to a standard east side foggy morning. She hits a favorite on her phone and as it rings, turns to measure out and weighs her coffee (we are in Los Feliz, after all) and we INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PARK LABREA APARTMENT - MORNING

Where the sixtysomething hand of the still rakishly handsome HUGH O'BRIEN reaches for his phone on the nightstand, its factory-set ring not stopping. He groggily answers but has to clear his voice before his:

HUGH
...hello.

NELLIE
You're not up.

HUGH
Of course I am. I'm talking to you.

But that's when his alarm clock goes off. She smiles:

NELLIE
You're not up.

He smiles back, this is their routine.

HUGH
I am now.

NELLIE
Love you, Dad.

HUGH
Love you too, honey.

She hangs up. We stay with Hugh for a moment as he sits up in his sparsely decorated 700 square foot low-ceilinged, parquet-floored prewar prison cell of an apartment. Hugh rubs his face and stands, older bones cracking, putting on his best smile for the day and we CUT TO:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - BATHROOM - MORNING

Nellie, still smiling, brushes her teeth in front of the steamed-up mirror. A thought overtakes her.

Using her finger, she draws a doodle in the steam. Even this rudimentarily, we see she's talented. She hesitates, then wipes it off. CUT TO:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - HALLWAY - MORNING

Nellie is getting dressed in the cramped hallway so as to not wake up Levi. As she does, something strikes her. She takes a pencil from wherever and draws the doodle from the mirror on the back of a receipt pulled from her pants pocket. Then the pencil goes in her hair, the receipt in her pocket. She pours another mug of coffee. Leaves it on the nightstand next to the still-sleeping Levi, grabs her backpack, and heads out.

EXT. LOS FELIZ DUPLEX - MORNING

As Nellie walks down the Spanish steps to the courtyard, she passes the neighborhood feral cat. She stops, tries to get close. The cat runs away. Nellie looks after her.

NELLIE

Some day you'll be mine.

EXT. LOS FELIZ STREET - MORNING

Nellie gets into her car, turns on the radio, which is suddenly way too loud so she JUMPS and turns it down. And then: turns it the fuck back up again. SHE KNOWS THIS SONG!

Without turning it off, she jumps out of the car and runs back through the courtyard and up the steps and back into:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - BEDROOM - MORNING

Where she jumps on the bed waking up Levi yelling:

NELLIE

You're on the radio! You're on the radio!

LEVI

What the hell are you--

As she fumbles for her NPR app on her phone and plays it, Levi has no time to be pissed, because he can hear it, too. He's up and jumping with her, kissing her. Then he breaks. This is a major moment for him, for them. For him.

LEVI

Oh my god, babe.

NELLIE

I know. *I know.*

This private moment could turn into something more private, but then... Levi immediately jumps off the bed grabbing his phone to roll calls to his fellow bandmates.

LEVI

Benj, it's me. Turn on NPR right-
yeah, can you friggin' believe it?

Nellie looks after him, proud. She loves him.

EXT. LOS FELIZ STREET - MORNING

As Nellie re-approaches her car, the stray cat is sitting on the hood. Nellie smiles: *is today that someday?* But the cat dashes off again, revealing it was planted on a parking ticket she just got. As she takes it off the windshield, she doesn't lose her smile. Nothing can get her down today.

INT. OTIS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN - OFFICE - DAY

Nellie's in her janitor's-closet-of-an-office, drawing the doodle from the mirror/receipt on a real piece of paper now. It's grown into something beautiful; she's not just talented, she's exceptional. There's a knock at the door.

CO-WORKER

Time for the next tour.

As Nellie puts her pencils down, we CUT TO:

INT. OTIS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN - OFFICE - DAY

Nellie leads a prospective student and her parents on a school tour. Nellie is kind, effervescent, knowledgeable.

NELLIE

I believe in this school. I believe
a good foundation for a career in
art starts here. You can learn all
the basics and hone your skills
while having your dreams nurtured
and protected at the same time.

But the teenager is surly. Turns to her parents.

SURLY TEEN

Why should I even go to school?
Every cool artist working today
didn't.
(to Nellie)
Did you?

NELLIE

Of course. I went *here*.

SURLY TEEN
(to her parents:)
See?

But even that can't get Nellie down. Not today. She smiles.

INT. OTIS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Nellie sits in traffic on the 405, two bags from TJ's in the backseat. She continues to work on the drawing in the car.

INT. PARK LABREA APARTMENT - DAY

Nellie unpacks boxed dinners from Trader Joe's into Hugh's freezer, dumping half-eaten ice cream cartons and takeout containers. Hugh, in his well-worn ill-fitting suit, sits at the counter opposite her taking cartons out of the trash that she's put in, smelling them and then dropping them back.

HUGH
You don't have to take such good
care of me.

NELLIE
Just repaying the favor.

HUGH
Speaking of favors... It was my
night to buy the rounds at Hanks.
More people showed than I thought.

Nellie knows this routine by heart. From out of her bag, she fishes her last 40 bucks. Gives it to him. He sees the drawing poking out of the bag. He lifts it, she protests--

NELLIE
Don't, it's nothing--

HUGH
It's never nothing.

He unfurls it. It takes his breath away. Her work often does.

HUGH
How did someone like me have
someone so talented like you?

NELLIE
You have to say that.

HUGH
Yeah, I do.
(she nudges him, playfully)
And also, you are.

Done packing, she gives him a look.

NELLIE
You gonna be okay?

HUGH
I'm gonna be okay.

She kisses him goodbye and runs out the door, we CUT TO:

EXT. MOHAWK GENERAL STORE - DUSK

A clothing store in Sunset Junction. An ornately gel-manicured hand turns the sign from OPEN to CLOSED.

INT. MOHAWK GENERAL STORE - DUSK

That hand belongs to GIGI DUMONT, a 25 year old CVS-brand box blonde Greta Gerwig-type -- the full ashtray of a character she'd play, not the together person she is. The constantly chipper and externally chic Gigi returns to where co-worker TROY PELTIER, an All-American jock who is the best salesman in a woman's clothing store, stands with Nellie.

TROY
We told our boss Pandora was down
so we could turn KCRW on. They've
played Levi's song at least twice.

GIGI
What's it like to date someone
actually talented in LA?

NELLIE
I can't believe this is happening.
The band's been on the verge so
long it's like all they had was
verge. No matter how much touring
or how many EPs, nothing mattered.

GIGI
What do you mean, nothing mattered?
Atlantic signed them. They're
blowing up. I'm just excited we
won't have the man the merch table
anymore. VIP section, here we come!

NELLIE
What if I'm wrong about tonight?

GIGI
It's your third anniversary and he
made the dinner res. Levi's never
made a reservation in his life.

(MORE)

GIGI (CONT'D)

If it didn't come from a stand, a box, a bag, or a truck, he wouldn't know what to do. A res is a bold move. A res only means one thing.

TROY

And if you're gonna get a ring on that finger tonight, you're sure as shit gonna have the dress to go with it.

Troy pulls a Dries Van Noten stunner from a rack for Gigi to hold out for the skeptical Nellie.

NELLIE

No way.

TROY

ONLY way. If you get it back to me before I open, no one will know.

NELLIE

It's too beautiful. I couldn't.

GIGI

Neither could Jean Dubrowski from Dearborn. But Gigi Dumont of Silverlake can. And so can you.

NELLIE

You changed your name to wear dresses?

GIGI

I didn't change. I just stopped holding on to the girl I grew up as and allowed myself to be the woman I should be. The clothes you're wearing right now, they say "date me, I'm fun and practical." But this dress? It says "*marry me.*" It says "*I will never stop surprising you.*" It says "*I'm the woman you're going to share your life with.*"

TROY

So do these earrings, these shoes and this bag--

He tosses them to Nellie faster than Cinderella's mice, as Gigi guides Nellie to the changing room. Nellie stops at the door. Asks the question that's been plaguing her all day.

NELLIE

Am I allowed to feel this good?

GIGI
Not out loud. But inside? Hell
yeah.

As Gigi closes the curtain on us, we CUT TO:

INT. CAFE STELLA - NIGHT

Nellie walks into the restaurant, on cloud nine. Gigi was spot-on; the right dress (and best friend) can do wonders for your confidence. Nellie looks like a star. Not the celebrity kind, the ones you look up at and marvel how bright they shine. She's holding the drawing she made, rolled and wrapped with a ribbon. Levi, in his de rigueur Canadian tux (denim on denim) - looking just as good in his clothes as out of them - stands and greets her nervously.

LEVI
Hey babe. You look amazing.

He kisses her on the cheek, awkwardly, and then pulls out her chair for her to sit. The full court press - it's *totally* happening tonight. The WAITER brings over a cocktail:

LEVI
I ordered your favorite.

WAITER
Is it a special occasion?

NELLIE
Our anniversary.

As she holds up the cocktail to cheers with Levi's Stella, she beams, on the biggest high of her life. And WE CUT TO:

-Appetizers are now on the table. No proposal yet. And not much conversation either.

LEVI
How is it?

NELLIE
Good. Great. It's great. And yours?

LEVI
Same. Great. Yeah.

This small talk, akin to a first date, is raising Nellie's hopes; Levi's awkwardness a sign of good to come. CUT TO:

-Entrée time. No ring yet. Nellie's now nervous, her leg shaking under the table, tapping the terracotta below.

LEVI
What's that sound?

NELLIE
(stops her leg)
I don't hear anything.

She looks at her phone hidden in her lap. It lights up with a returned text from Gigi, that follows Nellie's "**still no**":
Cut it out. Who proposes pre-dessert? It's coming. CUT TO:

The Waiter takes the entrees off the table. No one is talking. Nellie can't handle the tension, so she thrusts her drawing across the table with:

NELLIE
I got you this.

Levi takes it, hesitates, then unfurls it. We see for the first time what it is: upon first glance it looks like a landscape, but on closer inspection, it's two faceless bodies entwined. It's simple and intricate at the same time, and wholly beautiful. He regards it. Then can't wait any longer.

LEVI
I need to talk to you about something.

She sits up too fast, wine glass wobbling. She stops it. Relaxes. This dress, this moment, will *not* be ruined.

LEVI
I talked to the band, my manager, my mom and my therapist about this.

NELLIE
(that's odd, but:)
Okay...

LEVI
And I think our relationship has been holding me back from success.
(Nellie doesn't react)
We've been together three years, and they've been nice and all, but only in the last few months has anything actually *happened* for me, and I think it's cause I'd been thinking about us breaking up. Like, it psychologically freed me, you know? So, we should do that.

NELLIE
Should what?

LEVI

Break up.

Nellie's still not getting it. She's still smiling, because too let go of that smile would mean she's processed it. And she hasn't. She's too blindsided.

LEVI

I'll keep the duplex, cause, you know, it was mine first. You can take the car, cause that was yours--

Just as Nellie's face starts to fall, the Waiter lands with a dessert and a lit candle, totally mistaking the moment:

WAITER #1

Happy anniversary to-

That's when the sound drops, along with the proverbial ground beneath Nellie's feet. The lights shift as Nellie stands and takes off running in slow-motion, knocking into tables and people on the way out of the restaurant, lip-synching our first HUGE PRODUCTION NUMBER.

SONG: LOVER TO LOVER (Florence & The Machine)

NELLIE

I'VE BEEN LOSING SLEEP
I'VE BEEN KEEPING MYSELF AWAKE
I'VE BEEN WANDERING THE STREETS
FOR DAYS AND DAYS AND DAYS
GOING FROM ROAD TO ROAD, BED TO BED
LOVER TO LOVER AND BLACK TO RED
BUT I BELIEVE, I BELIEVE

She makes it to the door and pushes it. It opens & we CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY (**SONG**)

CLOSE ON: A group of 8 year old girls in uniforms jump rope. A group of 8 year old boys whisper to each other and point. Our Nellie appears on the blacktop, looking for something.

NELLIE

THERE'S NO SALVATION FOR ME NOW
NO SPACE AMONG THE CLOUDS
AND I FEEL I'M HEADING DOWN
BUT THAT'S ALRIGHT

Which is when she sees the boys and girls are egging on her 8 YEAR OLD SELF, about to have her first kiss with a classmate. As Our Nellie watches helplessly as young Nellie kisses the boy, who pushes her away, disgusted, landing her hard on the blacktop. Our Nellie crosses over and helps young Nellie up.

NELLIE

THAT'S ALRIGHT

The boys and girls laugh at her. Our Nellie turns and is in:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY (**SONG**)

Where she moves through a swarm of high schoolers like a ghost. She makes it to a classroom door, looks inside to see:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - EMPTY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS (**SONG**)

Where 15 y.o. Nellie kisses a 15 y.o. JOCK, hidden from view.

NELLIE

I'VE BEEN TAKING CHANCES
I'VE BEEN SETTING MYSELF UP FOR THE FALL
AND I'VE BEEN KEEPING SECRETS
FROM MY HEART AND FROM MY SOUL

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT (**SONG**)

Nellie and the Jock make love in his car in an empty lot. Our Nellie watches from a distance. She knows what's coming:

NELLIE

GOING FROM ROAD TO ROAD, BED TO BED
LOVER TO LOVER AND BLACK TO RED
BUT I BELIEVE, I BELIEVE

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY (**SONG**)

15 year old Nellie approaches the Jock the next morning, elated, until she sees: he's holding the hand of a different girl. Our Nellie is also there, watching.

NELLIE

THERE'S NO SALVATION FOR ME NOW
NO SPACE AMONG THE CLOUDS
AND I FEEL I'M HEADING DOWN
BUT THAT'S ALRIGHT, THAT'S ALRIGHT

15 year old Nellie turns and cries on Our Nellie's shoulder.

NELLIE

THAT'S ALRIGHT, THAT'S ALRIGHT

WE CUT TO: A succession of Nellie's bad relationships, all under the watchful eye of Our Nellie on the sidelines:
-18 year old Nellie walks in on her boyfriend with her college roommate.
-Nellie leaves a hook-up's building with his number on her hand. As she calls, she gets "this number is not in service."

NELLIE

ROAD TO ROAD, BED TO BED
LOVER TO LOVER AND BLACK TO RED

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (**SONG**)

23 year old Nellie sits at a dive bar table with some friends (including Gigi), smiling up at 26 year old Levi on stage, playing a song just to her. Our Nellie sings her warning:

NELLIE

ROAD TO ROAD, BED TO BED
LOVER TO LOVER AND BLACK TO RED

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE DIVE BAR - NIGHT (**SONG**)

23 year old Nellie kisses Levi out back as the band loads up the van. He takes her hand and she gets in the van with him. As it drives off, Our Nellie is left alone this alleyway.

NELLIE

BUT THAT'S ALRIGHT
THAT'S ALRIGHT

She turns and sees she's not alone after all; she's surrounded by all the men in her life that disappointed her somehow. She tries to push through them, but every time she touches one, they turn their back on her. Over and over, until she's encircled by the backs of countless men. She has no choice but to start climbing them.

NELLIE

ROAD TO ROAD
BED TO BED
LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER
TO LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER
TO LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER TO LOVER

She's finally reached the top; all her bad relationships beneath her. Just as she gets a foothold, all the men collapse under her and she falls, the song coming to its close as she lands:

INT. CAFE STELLA - NIGHT

Right back in her seat at the restaurant just as the Waiter, turning away from the table with the dessert and candle, knocks her glass of wine all over her borrowed dress. As Nellie lets out frustrated:

NELLIE

FUUUU-

But since we listen to the FCC, we cut to the titlecard:

MIXTAPE

AND WE'RE OUT.

SAM

Side A

ACT TWO

INT. ECHO PARK HOUSE - DAY

A light-filled house high on the hill, but with all the rooms empty. Sam, our bright-eyed monologist from the opening, leans against a wall, alone, regarding one particular empty room. We can tell from the sunbleached outlines of bedposts against a wall that this was a bedroom.

Sam checks the emptied closet one last time and finds inside, tucked in a corner: a guitar case. He hesitates reaching for it, which is when the cutest six year old ever captured on digital, BARRY HUGHES, passes the door with a box way too big from him. Sam races to grab it before Barry drops it, but:

BARRY

No. I wanna see how far I can get
without putting it down.

Barry passes out of view. Sam calls after him:

SAM

Think you can make it to the car?

The sound of a CRASH tells us the answer is no.

BARRY

It wasn't me, it was the wall!

Sam smiles, shakes his head. Takes the guitar after all, and heads out after Barry until he's stopped by something. Sticking out from under a baseboard is a small scrap of paper. Sam fishes it out. From his face we know it means something to him. Barry comes back into view with the box:

BARRY

The wall didn't break anything!

SAM

Success!

BARRY

Whatever that is!

Sam pockets the paper, takes the box, and walks out with him.

INT. CAR - DAY

The fruit trees and juice joints of former hipster climes have turned to the shitty roads and fast food blocs in lower LA as Sam and Barry drive south. In the backseat, Barry fills out a Lyft Driver Application on Sam's phone.

BARRY
How old are you?

SAM
32.

BARRY
That's a number?

SAM
Ok, wise guy, what's next?

BARRY
What's your address?

SAM
Remember the song you memorized?

BARRY
"9319 Compton Avenue. Watts Calif--"

SAM
Watts isn't a city. It's still LA.

BARRY
(looking out the window)
Are you sure?

SAM
Next question?

BARRY
How many hours do you want to work?

SAM
With my job, I've only got nights
and weekends, so, let's see...
(cringes)
36?

BARRY
Married, single, or divorced?

Sam didn't see that coming. He takes the phone from Barry.

SAM
I'll do the rest later.

BARRY
Which one?

SAM
It's called widowed.

BARRY
That wasn't there.

SAM
Because not many people are.

Sam does the parent trick of turning on the radio to end the conversation. It works. As the MUSIC COMES UP it takes us to:

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - DAY

Sam's U-Haul is next to a low-income housing block in South Central. Sam hands his aunt, ANNETTE SANDS (50s, African American, warm, pragmatic) one of the last boxes out of the back. She crosses off as he pulls the gate closed, and turns to walk with the last box, almost bumping into a passing woman (let's call her JOANNA, 32, beautiful and guarded) as she moves to her parked car.

JOANNA
Sorry.

SAM
Totally my fault.

Joanna pauses in that way you do when you want to start a conversation but don't know how. But Sam's missed it, cause:

BARRY (O.S.)
Dad! It's apartment 12! You didn't
put that in the song!

Sam moves up a flight of stairs to the balcony outside an apartment where Barry is. Joanna moves off to her car, the moment passed. Annette crosses to Barry, standing with her precocious daughter LEAH (15), hands him a dollar.

ANNETTE
Ice cream truck comes soon.

SAM
What do we say?

BARRY
Thanks, Aunt Annette.

SAM
(heartfelt)
Thanks, Aunt Annette.

ANNETTE
I'm so glad this place came up. You
can thank Dante for that. Don't
know how he knew, but he did.

LEAH

We share a wall, B-man. We can make
a code and knock it at each other.

An LAPD helicopter flies way too low above their heads.

BARRY

Hey dad, look! A helicopter! Wow!

LEAH

You'll be seeing a lot of those.

Barry chases after it along the balcony. Sam and Annette
share a look. Leah heads after Barry.

ANNETTE

You held onto that house as long as
you could. With the rent where it is
here, you can start to save again.

SAM

Being around you guys will be good.

ANNETTE

And your job, how's it been? Any
opportunities for your songs?

SAM

I'm a support tech. They don't even
know us by name. Which is good,
because the way the music industry
is, they keep getting laid off, but
my job is safe. Client Services is
always the last to--

Before Sam can answer, he's tackled and grabbed into a bear
hug. Well, a koala bear hug, as the benefactor of said hug is
Sam's diminutive cousin, the 5'6" Afro-Latino DANTE MENDOZA,
28, a jittery livewire (and Annette's first born).

DANTE

Sam-SON! You look so *old*. Your eyes
are like six inches in, like a sad
skull! You need some rest, cuz!

SAM

(smiling)

You don't look nearly as busted as
I thought you would.

DANTE

What else you gotta do in the joint
but pump all day, you know? You
should try it, *gordo*.

He lifts his shirt to show his abs. As well as his chestful of tats. Dante's a tough guy. Sam pulls Dante's shirt down:

SAM

Bear, come meet your cousin. Dante,
this is my son, Barry.

Dante bends down to the skeptical Barry, though he doesn't have to.

DANTE

Sorry to hear about your mom, kid.

BARRY

Why don't I know you?

LEAH

He's been out of town...?

SAM

It's ok, Leah. I'm honest with him.
Dante just got out of prison. He
was in for four years.

DANTE

(proudly)

Shoulda been five, but the warden
had a thing for me. Having you and
your pops as my neighbors is the best
release present ever.

ANNETTE

Dante's always looked up to you.
You can be the good influence you
were when you were kids, help him
stay on the straight and narrow.

DANTE

I don't need no influence, *vieja*.
Joint's influence enough.

(to Barry)

Your dad and me, we used to get up
to it, know what I'm saying?

SAM

More like whatever he got up to, I
had to clean up.

BARRY

I thought you grew up in Oakland?

SAM

We moved when I was 12.

DANTE

If you come to my party, maybe we
can loosen him up again, chulo?

LEAH

It's not his party, it's a block
party. It just happens to be the
same week he got out.

DANTE

Why you gotta bust me, sis!

SAM

Whatever it is, we'll be ther--

DANTE

(sees something)
Oh damn, crazy legs still lives
here? *Piernas Alocadas en la sala!*
Ejercita esas piernas locas!

And with that, Dante is gone as fast as he arrived. Like most
(former?) addicts, you don't have his attention for long.
Annette can see Sam's overwhelmed. She motions for Leah.

ANNETTE

Why don't you boys settle in. We'll
be next door if you need anything.

Leah knocks twice, then once more. He does the same thing
back. She gives him a thumbs-up - they have their code.

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Small and hasn't been updated since its inception, but
there's a certain homey feel to it. We find Sam in the
bedroom, putting together Barry's bed.

BARRY

Where you gonna sleep?

SAM

The sofa.

BARRY

I can trade with you sometimes?

Sam looks at his son; proud to have raised such a good human.
Barry takes something out of a box, look at it intently.

SAM

Since this is going to be your
room, how bout you put that up?
Right above the bed, maybe?

Barry drops it back into the box. Shakes his head: uh uh.

SAM

Why not?

Barry shrugs; he doesn't want to talk about it.

SAM

It's been over a year, bear. Maybe
it's time to talk about it?

Barry shakes his head, takes the drawing from the box, and puts it in the trash, then exits. Sam watches him, concerned. Looks to the drawing in the trash. Should he leave it?

EXT. COMPTON AVE BLOCK PARTY - DUSK

A full-on block party is in effect. Grills are fired up, coolers are out and open, rap music blasts from a speaker, this extended-family-of-a-community in full force. Sam watches Barry, already the star of the under-8 set, showing his dance moves to a group of kids.

VOICE

You *can* let him out of your sight,
you know.

A hand reaches into Sam's eyeline with a beer, which he gladly takes from DE'ANDRA GREEN, 30, a fast and feisty spitfire. Though her clothes may leave little to the imagination, you're not getting anywhere without her respect.

DE'ANDRA

You settling in?

SAM

Oh no, I am definitely *unsettled*.
Summers were one thing, but back
living under the LAPD helicopter
path? That is another.

DE'ANDRA

You *do* know Central isn't the
Central of nineties movies and your
youth anymore, right? Roy Choi
opened his last restaurant here.
Jordan Downs is an "urban village."
We've got charter schools, public
transportation, one of the best
hospitals in the county.

SAM

If you believe all that, D, how
come you moved to Highland Park?

DE'ANDRA
It's closer to my hospice?

SAM
Closer to other things, too.

She smacks him, playfully. A moment. Then:

SAM
You gonna tell him?

DE'ANDRA
Not yet.

Sam nods; it's her choice. Dante rushes over, fakes holding his chest as if he's been wounded.

DANTE
De'Andra Green, you know how to
stop a brutha's heart from beatin!
(they kiss, clearly together)
For real tho, I thought you had
night school tonight?

DE'ANDRA
It's Friday. And it's not "night
school," it's med school, dumb-ass.

DANTE
How could I forget my girl's gonna
be a fancy doc, set me up for life.

He kisses her again. Her knees go weak a little. She loves him, in spite of better judgment. To wit, when they break:

DANTE
Yo, doc, you got any funds? Elena's
Tamales pulled up and I'm tapped.

DE'ANDRA
(holds out a bill)
You can have this, but only if you
bring me a tamale back.

DANTE
(takes it from her)
Un puerco en hoja de platano comin'
right up.

As soon as he's gone, Sam snarks, with smile:

SAM
You know there's no tamale truck,
right?

DE'ANDRA

Do you think it's wrong of me to hope he won't fall back into old habits? That four years for possession and assault should've scared him straight? That's why I waited for him. He promised it had.

SAM

It *looks* like it has...

Their eyes fall on Barry, having the time of his life.

SAM

He still won't talk about her.

DE'ANDRA

He'll talk when he's ready.

Annette butts in, buzzed from her many Solo cups of beer. She puts her arms around Sam and De'Andra and hangs there.

ANNETTE

Ready for what? Dating? Now I *know* you're not talkin' bout that, cause this man has joined the priesthood. Sammy, Saint of celibacy.

Sam and De'Andra laugh at Annette's happy drunkenness.

SAM

Okay, Annette, okay, I get it.

ANNETTE

You're thirty years old. You have so much life left. Have you even *been* on a date since the accident?

SAM

You only get one great love in your life, and that's if you're *lucky*. I had mine.

ANNETTE

Oh please. That was the line they used so people stayed in bad marriages like their parents had. Now we know better. There are *many* "ones" out there. How many times have I been married?

DE'ANDRA

Three?

Sam mouths "four."

ANNETTE

And those are just the ones I told you about.

SAM

You've also been widowed or divorced four times.

ANNETTE

I was in love four times. *That's* what counts. Not how it ends, but how it is while it's happening.

SAM

It's too soon, k? For Barry's sake.

ANNETTE

Barry wants what every child wants - their parent to be happy. And he can sense on some level you aren't. Have you thought maybe he isn't talking about Eleanor not cause he can't face it, but because he's trying to help you move on from it?

That hasn't occurred to Sam. It resonates.

ANNETTE

It wasn't just her life that stopped when she died. You have a gift, had it from birth. When's the last time you picked up that guitar?

SAM

I haven't felt like playing.

Annette and De'Andra know what he means; since Eleanor died.

ANNETTE

You two made a deal...

SAM

Not this again--

DE'ANDRA

Eleanor got to go after her dreams, and then it'd be *your* turn.

ANNETTE

But now she's gone, and all that's left is your dream. If you don't pursue it now, will you ever?

SAM
I need to provide for my son.

ANNETTE
(points to his heart)
You need to provide for you too.

Sam's phone dings. He looks at it, no sure if it's good news:

SAM
Lyft just came through.

DE'ANDRA
There go your nights and weekends.

ANNETTE
Don't worry, Leah and I will take
good care of Barry.

Annette squeezes Sam's hand; she knows how hard this all is.
As she moves off, De'Andra pats Sam on the shoulder:

DE'ANDRA
I'm gonna go find *myself* a tamale.

She exits. Sam, alone, sees Dante break off from a few
members of his former gang with hand signals. As Dante passes
Sam, he smiles. Sam looks at him, wary. Dante reads it, and:

DANTE
All good, bruh. They tryin' to reel
me back but I ain't biting. Just
gotta look like I am, y'know?

Sam looks Dante in the eye, hard. Is he telling the truth?

DANTE
Trust, son. Where'd D go?

He holds up a tamale. Sam looks at it, feels instantly bad
for judging Dante. As he points in the direction De'Andra
went, Dante heads off. Sam looks down at his phone, where the
Lyft App is waiting for him to hit "**Accept**." As he does, his
PERSONAL SONG begins. He sings as he watches Barry play.

SONG: BETWEEN ME AND YOU (Brandon Flowers/The Killers)

SAM
BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE AND
BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I THINK I'M LOSING IT NOW

Barry runs by with the other kids, smiling.

KIDS

HEY!

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (**SONG**)

Sam has put Barry to bed. He watches his tucked-in son sleep.

SAM

BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE AND
BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I THINK I'M LOSING IT NOW

He turns the light out and we CUT TO:

INT./EXT. MONTAGE - (**SONG**)

-Sam in his cubicle at a company like Universal Music Group
or Warner, in a uniform like the other techs around him.
-Sam driving his car with Lyft passengers in the backseat.
-Sam the valet getting tossed a car's keys by a patron and
hopping in to park it.

SAM

ALL MY LIFE
I'VE BEEN TOLD
FOLLOW YOUR DREAM
BUT THE TRAIL WENT COLD
AND THE HEART DON'T LIE
AND THAT'S A GOOD LUCK CHARM
BUT I'M WATCHING IT TEAR OUT OF MY ARMS

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - MORNING (**SONG**)

Sam parks his car after a whole night of working, walks up the stairs to the house.

SAM

AND THERE'S A POWER IN LETTING GO
I GUESS I DIDN'T WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY (**SONG**)

Sam enters, dead on his feet, to see: Barry's already gone to school. Sam starts to change into his suit for work.

SAM

THESE HOURS I'M WORKING AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
SOMETIMES ITS LIKE A BULLET CAME
AND BLASTED ME RIGHT OF OUT OF THE BLUE
BUT I'M DOING MY BEST
NOT TO LET IT GET
BETWEEN ME AND YOU

And we're right back into:

INT./EXT. MONTAGE - (**SONG**)

-A drained Sam fixes an EXEC'S computer. The Exec talks on the phone as if Sam's not even there.

-A depleted Sam drives his car with passengers in the back.

-An bushed Sam getting out of someone's car and giving them their keys at the restaurant.

SAM

BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I'VE BEEN STRUGGLING JUST
TO CARRY THE WEIGHT
BETWEEN ME AND YOU
I THINK I'M LOSING IT NOW

-At his office, Sam looks at Barry's picture on his desk.

SAM

THE FIRST TIME THAT
I SAW YOUR FACE
TIME STOOD STILL
I FOUND MY PLACE
NOW I'M WATCHING IT TEAR OUT UP MY ARM

EXT. OFFICE PARKING LOT - DUSK (**SONG**)

Getting into his car from his office, Sam takes off his tie, opens the Lyft app to begin his night.

SAM

THESE HOURS I'M WORKING AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
AND CHASING EVERY DOLLAR, BOY, IS THIS WHAT I WAS BORN TO DO?
BUT I'M DOING MY BEST
NOT TO LET IT GET

EXT. DAL RAE RESTAURANT - NIGHT (**SONG**)

Sam sits at the valet stand, dead on his feet. He tries to fight sleep but his eyelids are closing, no one's around...

SAM

BETWEEN ME AND YOU

His head drops and we are instantly in:

EXT. GARDEN BEHIND HOUSE - DAY (**SONG**)

Sam's memory of his wedding day in a spectacular English country garden somewhere. He stands, beaming, under an arbor watching a beautiful woman walk towards him down the aisle.

SAM

I REMEMBER YOU IN WHITE IN THE GARDEN
ITS BEEN TRIAL AFTER TRIAL
THROUGH THE RINGER IN THE BACK
OUT THE WINDOW, OFF THIS TRACK
I WAS JUST TOO PROUD TO KNOW

VOICE (O.S.)

GET UP, CHILD!

Sam wakes up with a start at the VALET STAND where a MAN is waiting with his ticket, pissed. Sam hops to it.

SAM

THERE'S A POWER IN LETTING GO

INT. SAM'S CAR - NIGHT/DAY/NIGHT AGAIN (**SONG**)

And now we're back with him, as he drives with a succession of people in the backseat. The passengers look at their phones, make calls, eat, fight, vape, make out, puke, sing to the radio, sleep, dance. Sam never looks back, just gets more and more tired, the days and nights taking their toll:

SAM

THESE HOURS I'M WORKING AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
SOMETIMES ITS LIKE A BULLET CAME
AND BLASTED ME RIGHT OF OUT OF THE BLUE
AND I FEEL LIKE I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SHOW
FOR THIS LIFE AND I'VE BEEN WONDERING
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO

But what Sam *doesn't* notice is that his last passenger is none other than Joanna, the woman he almost bumped into outside of his apartment. She, however, recognizes *him*. As he doesn't notice her trying to work up the courage to say something:

SAM

BUT I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET
AND I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET
YES I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES STREET - MORNING

As he pulls to the side of the curb, Joanna's ride concluded, she doesn't move.

SAM

BETWEEN ME AND YOU.

The song ends, but Joanna's still sitting there. Sam, exhausted beyond belief and just wanting to get home to his son, doesn't even turn around:

SAM
This is it, right?

JOANNA
It is. Yeah. Th-- thanks.

And again, unable to summon the courage to talk to Sam, she gets out. In the car, Sam takes one moment to himself to breathe. He texts Annette: **coming home now**. Annette texts back: **Barry just left**. Sam shakes his head and drives off.

ANGLE ON: Joanna, still on the curb. She sees Sam drive off. As she opens the Lyft app to look at his profile, she sees his name: **Sam**, and his photo. As she moves her fingers across the screen to see if the photo opens wider, she touches the star ratings by mistake, giving Sam one star.

JOANNA
Oh no!

She tries to go back but it's not possible. (Truly: it's not possible. Someone should fix that).

IN THE CAR

As Sam's app registers the low rating, he lurches a little on the brake. Shakes his head. Another fucking ding on his shit life. He looks around at where he is; some random street somewhere, nowhere he'd like to be. That's when his phone rings. He answers. What he hears is abject panic:

BOSS
Hughes! Thank god you're there.

SAM
What's going on?

BOSS
I was right; we are launching our own streaming service. The COO wants to run a test Thursday to see if the servers can hack it. I asked everyone but no one can get here before ten. If you do, I'll put you up for Analyst when it launches?

Even though it's clear Sam's boss doesn't want him, Sam straightens up at this potential way to get back to his and Barry's home. He smiles for the first time in days. Fuck yes:

SAM
I'll be right there.

END OF ACT TWO

Nellie

Side B

ACT THREE

CLOSE UP ON: A WHOLE NEW NELLIE

As she sings to us her PERSONAL SONG showing all that has changed in the months since we've seen her. Her hair's messier, last night's eyeliner darker, her mood IDGAF as she wakes up in her new bedroom in Gigi's apartment.

SONG: LOVE IS A LOSING GAME (Amy Winehouse)

NELLIE

FOR YOU I WAS A FLAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME
FIVE STORY FIRE AS YOU CAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

As Nellie begins her day, we see the apartment: a wall-to-wall-carpeted vertical-blinded 70s Studio City monstrosity.

EXT. STUDIO CITY STREET - MORNING

Nellie comes out to her car. A different stray cat on the hood. This one wants a pet. But she passes it and gets into her car, a small honk to get it to run off.

NELLIE

ONE I WISH I NEVER PLAYED
OH WHAT A MESS WE MADE

INT. OTIS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN - DAY (**SONG**)

Nellie gives another tour, but her heart is not in it, as she doesn't even interact with the student behind her.

NELLIE

AND NOW THE FINAL FRAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

INT. GIGI AND NELLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (**SONG**)

Nellie enters the apartment, tired, resigned. She closes Gigi's bedroom door (where Gigi and Troy are on Gigi's bed with facemasks on) to have space to herself. She unloads a Trader Joe's boxed dinner for herself.

NELLIE

PLAYED OUT BY THE BAND
LOVE IS A LOSING HAND
MORE THAN I COULD STAND
LOVE IS A LOSING HAND

INT. GIGI AND NELLIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (SONG)

Nellie, only one forkful of her boxed dinner eaten, sits in front of her sketchbook.

NELLIE
 SELF PROFESSED, PROFOUND
 'TIL THE CHIPS WERE DOWN
 KNOW YOU'RE A GAMBLING MAN
 LOVE IS A LOSING HAND

A page back, she sees a sketch of what she made for Levi; it breaks her heart. She throws the book into her closet.

INT./EXT. MONTAGE - DAY (SONG)

Nellie scrolls through a dating app while in traffic, at the office, at the gym.

NELLIE
 THOUGH I BATTLED BLIND
 LOVE IS A FATE RESIGNED
 MEMORIES MAR MY MIND
 LOVE, IT IS A FATE RESIGNED

Nellie on a succession of bad first dates. Personal Trainer at *Sugarfish*; Entertainment Lawyer at *Craft*; CW Actor at *Pink's*. Nellie walks away from them all, none of them right.

NELLIE
 OVER FUTILE ODDS
 AND LAUGHED AT BY THE GODS
 AND NOW THE FINAL FRAME
 LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

As Nellie walks away, the song ends at:

INT. HOP LOUIE CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Where Nellie sits at a table, waiting for her next (last?) date. Every time the door opens, she checks her phone to cross-reference a photo of a cute-looking 20something. An 18 year old FRESHMAN in a Supreme hoodie enters and walks towards Nellie with confidence, even as his Nikes squeak.

FRESHMAN
 Nellie?

She looks up at him, confused.

NELLIE
 ...maybe?

He nods - *alright!* - and sits opposite her. She looks around.

NELLIE

Is this some sort of joke?

FRESHMAN

It's Cam. You probably don't recognize me; I shaved.

NELLIE

Ten years off the age from your profile? Are you in *high school*?

FRESHMAN

Nah, man, I'm a frosh at SC.

NELLIE

(laughs)

Oh my god. This is so not happening.

She stands, fast. Of course, in moving, she knocks over her water glass and it spills directly into her open purse still on her chair. Shaking her head at this ridiculousness, she heads to the bathroom as Freshman shrugs and downs her wine.

INT. HOP LOUIE CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nellie enters the ladies room, dumps the water from her purse, drip-drains her cell.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Rice.

She looks down the mirror to where the beautifully sad JOANNA KARAM, 26, is staring at herself in the mirror.

JOANNA

If you put your phone in rice, it should be okay.

NELLIE

(smiles)

Good tip, thank you.

There's a pause. Nellie sees how closely Joanna is examining herself. It's not the good kind of examining. It's the kind you do when you're trying to see the thing someone else said.

NELLIE

This is none of my business, but...
you look totally awesome.

Joanna looks at Nellie; her kindness reaching through her sadness.

JOANNA

Why is it I can love who I am all day; I can wake up and not need coffee, get to work in a real twenty not an LA one, have emptied my inbox by lunch -- but the wrong look from some rando guy, and it's back at one. A total do-over.

NELLIE

That bad, huh?

JOANNA

Stood up bad. And not by some blind date, if those even exist anymore. By someone I've been chatting with for weeks. Clearly he came, he saw me, he cut and run. Better than most of my dates, which usually feel like a Groundlings showcase, two people yelling potential topics across a table at each other hoping to find something that works before they're dropped from the program.

A beat. Nellie holds up her pot of lip gloss to Joanna. Joanna takes some, tries it on her lips. It looks good.

JOANNA

Whatever happened to passing someone on a street, or catching their eye across the club, or even from the back of a car and feeling that thing? The hairs-on-the-back-of-the-neck adrenaline-rush, that light-headed thing when you feel a connection? Like if you just *talked* to that person, they'd be the one? We know so much about each other now before we show up there's no *chance* for that headrush, and even if there was-

(holds her phone in front of her)
-our arms are always in front of our faces we can't even see who's passing by. Does anyone ever meet anyone anymore? Or do we all just kinda know each other so why bother?

NELLIE

No one really knows anyone. I was with someone for years, and on Monday it was great, and on Tuesday it was over.

(MORE)

NELLIE (CONT'D)

Nobody could have seen it coming.
Now I just want an answer. Six
months later, the suddenness of it
still doesn't feel right. If I'm
being honest, the relationship
never really did, either. I did the
worst thing you can do with one;
let it define me. And now that it's
over, all I'm left with is the
knowledge that I don't know who I
am at all.

JOANNA

What do you do?

NELLIE

I'm an artist. I work at-

JOANNA

Uh uh. You said what you are.
Whatever else you're about to say
is just how you pass your time.

Someone else walks into the bathroom, shattering the moment
between these two kindred strangers.

NELLIE

I should grab that rice.

JOANNA

Yeah.

(a beat)

Wait. I got something I think you
might need more than me.

She hands Nellie the fortune from her fortune cookie.
Suddenly nervous, she adds:

JOANNA

Old family tradition. Pass to the
left...

Nellie looks at it. It reads: *Your luck is about to change.*

NELLIE

God, I hope so.

As the two women smile, and walk out together, then move off
separately, we CUT TO:

INT. NELLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Nellie is driving her dented car home from her "date" when
she turns on the radio. And wouldn't you know it:

TERRY GROSS

Up next on Fresh Air, Grammy
nominee Levi Gordon of the band
Phillips 66.

NELLIE

Is nowhere safe??

Nellie tries desperately to turn off the radio, but her fingers don't find the knob. Looking down for a *millisecond*, the car jumps the curb, the tire pops, and the radio goes full blast. Guess her luck hasn't changed at all. She exhales. Takes out her cell, and dials:

INT. AAA AUTO CLUB CALL CENTER - NIGHT

The Triple-A call center in Downtown LA. Rows of identical cubicles cut in half so no one has any privacy. At one of these sad compartments sits Nellie's dad, Hugh, Men's Wearhouse tie flipped over his shoulder as he drinks his second cup of corporate coffee on the night shift answering phones. His cell rings, and he answers.

HUGH

Hey hon, I'm at work, everything
ok?

NELLIE

I have a flat and no spare.

HUGH

Want me to send someone out?

CUT TO:

EXT. CAESAR CHAVEZ AVENUE - NIGHT

Nellie is sitting on the curb next to her car when a car pulls to a stop behind her. She rolls her eyes.

NELLIE

Of course you didn't send someone.

Getting out of the car is Hugh himself.

HUGH

This is the only way I get to see
you! You have't called or come by
in weeks, you just text. I don't
have a daughter anymore, I have an
emoji.

As he unloads his spare, he looks at her.

HUGH
You don't look so hot, kiddo.

NELLIE
Cause I'm not so hot, dad.

Nellie helps her Dad roll the spare to her car.

NELLIE
No matter where I go, Levi seems to follow me.

HUGH
That's a bit of an exaggeration, don't you think?

She points to a billboard of Levi and his band over their heads. Hugh shrugs; okay, maybe not. As they change the tire:

NELLIE
I don't know what to do. I don't seem to be able to connect to anyone or anything. I've stopped drawing.

HUGH
You haven't showered...

NELLIE
I haven't showered. I've given up at work. Hard to tell kids their dreams can come true when mine clearly haven't. Worst thing of all? What if Levi was right? What if I was holding him back?

HUGH
You weren't holding anyone back with him but yourself. You were halfway through your book when you met and then... what happened!

NELLIE
They're not called books, they're graphic novels. And it was a graphic *memoir*, actually--

HUGH
Whatever it was, you gave it up for *him*, when you should've been a team. He dreams a little, you wait. You dream a little, he waits. That was the problem with me and your mom.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

There was never any room for my dreams. We had to get divorced for me to become who I was meant to be.

NELLIE

(scrunches up her face)
Minus the fraud and embezzlement?

HUGH

Sure. But who knows? Maybe time will show even *that* was worth it for some reason.

NELLIE

I just want to know why. I just want the answer.

HUGH

You'll get it. Be patient. You earn clarity with time. It doesn't come when you need it.

But Nellie has stopped listening. Because she's received a **Google Alert** on her phone: *Grammy Nominee Levi Gordon announces engagement to supermodel Lina Carr on Fresh Air...* Nellie shakes her head, incredulous. She's fired up, in that way when you feel like you could rob a bank and get away with it. She has no more fucks left to give, and it is glorious.

NELLIE

I was holding him back -- from the other woman he was clearly dating while he was with me!

She holds the phone out to her father. He nods.

HUGH

Great! You got your answer. Now you can move on.

But Nellie's already back on her phone, calling Troy, a devilish glint in her eye.

NELLIE

Troy. Does that guy you used to sleep with still work at Atlantic? There's a show we need to get into tomorrow night...

She's moving on, alright. Moving on to the fight of her life!

END OF ACT THREE

SAM

Side B

ACT FOUR

A PAIR OF SPOTLESS DIOR HEELS

Walk across broken pavement & up a flight of stairs.

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - MORNING

Sam, parking his car after his long night of driving, sees the woman with the shoes enter his apartment, and exhales. Shit.

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sam's elegant and beautiful 50something mother-in-law, MARGOT WESTON, is helping Barry tie his shoes.

MARGOT

Nice to see you, Annette. And this guy, of course.

She hugs Barry. He hugs her back. They are very close. Margot looks at the place, tries to hide her distaste.

SAM (O.S.)

What do you think, Margot?

BARRY

Dad!

Barry releases his hold on Margot to run to Sam, having entered behind her. Despite her abundant warmth and regal calm, Margot and Sam have a complicated relationship.

MARGOT

It's... smaller than I expected.

SAM

We prefer "homey."

(to Barry)

Hey, bud, why don't you grab a sweater? It's chilly today.

Annette takes Barry into the bedroom; she knows what's going on. Sam sees Margot's eyes land on his guitar in the closet. He steps in front of her so she has to change her focus.

MARGOT

There's a great house for rent a block from where you used to live. You could work on your music there, rent-free. Guilt free.

SAM

And my son?

MARGOT

You and I have our differences, but I know how much you love Barry. I know you want what's best for him.

SAM

He has that here, living with his *father*. We've been over this...

And just like that, they're back in the same argument they've clearly been having since Eleanor died.

MARGOT

Do you know the crime statistics for this neighborhood? The education attainment level? I looked it up. Six percent of kids go to college. You'd see him all the time if he lived with me in Brentwood. He'd just have the right school, better housing, a yard, full-time care.

SAM

By a revolving door of strangers while you're off doing your next Hallmark movie in Alberta?

MARGOT

I'm just trying to help. You lost your wife, you don't have to lose your dreams, too.

SAM

Well I don't want to lose my son, either. I appreciate the offer, Margot. I know it comes from your heart. But I'm on track for a promotion at work that'll give me more time here, and--

MARGOT

More time?

Up til that moment, Sam forgot Margot doesn't know how hard he's working. How he's never home. It adds instant fuel to the fire that is Margot's uneducated-but-semi-valid fears for Barry in South Central. Annette comes out of the bedroom.

ANNETTE

You're going to be late.

MARGOT
 Didn't you just get home?

BARRY
 Dad's a superhero. He has three
 jobs.

MARGOT
 Who picks up Barry from school?

ANNETTE
 (nods to Leah in the doorway)
 Me and my daughter live next door.

LEAH
 Just a reminder, I have SAT prep
 today.

Sam and Annette clearly forgot. Annette to Sam:

ANNETTE
 The hostess is on maternity leave.

Sam doesn't want to look like he doesn't have this handled in
 front of Margot.

ANNETTE
 That's why we asked Dante.
 (to Margot)
 My first born. Just moved back in.

Dante, having his morning smoke al fresco, hears his name.
 Sam looks to Annette; this a good idea? Annette nods, small.

ANNETTE
 You're picking up Barry from school
 today, remember?

Dante understands what's going on fast, no fool he. He also
 is buoyed by this; means a lot to be considered trustworthy.

DANTE
 See you at two, B-man?

SAM/LEAH/ANNETTE
 Three.

They look at each other - oops. Margot takes Barry's hand.

MARGOT
 Want to put the address in my GPS?

BARRY
 I know how to go.

A wary Margot leaves with Barry. Sam turns to Dante. Clearly worried he may be making a mistake. But Dante isn't worried.

DANTE

I'll do you proud, cuz. I got you.

As Sam's phone dings with a text from his boss: **on your way?**
Grabbing his uniform from the closet, we CUT TO:

INT. THE MUSIC GROUP - SERVER ROOM - DAY

It's vast, hot, and full of machines making machine noises, as an exhausted but hopeful Sam checks the stability of one server after another. His co-worker/friends PATTY (45) and AJAY (25) take a coffee (Ajay) and vape break (Patty).

AJAY

Awful lot of work for one human. Is he testing the servers, or you?

PATTY

You've always said he's had it out for you.

SAM

Yes, and while he may be a racist dickhead, I'm going to get this promotion and get far away from him.

PATTY

You're lucky you're in here, anyway. The interns are listening to unsolicited demos in CR3.

AJAY

I overheard Shelley in A&R say they're looking for new voices for a writing camp. They must have had to widen their nets.

PATTY

What's a writing camp?

AJAY

It's when a bunch of songwriters get put up in a hotel for a weekend so an artist like Drake or Rihanna can go room to room looking for hooks, lyrics, new collaborators. It's how Madjid Jordan, Ingrid, even Charlie XCX got started.

SAM

The writers who get to go to camps
are famous. I have no chance.

PATTY

I've literally never heard of
anyone he just said.

SAM

The point is you don't get to
audition without being someone.
What do you want me to do, break
into Shelley's email, find out
where the camp is and crash it? I'd
get fired.

That's when JAKE, their boss, lands. An unctuous man just a
few years older than Sam, he has a habit of not making eye
contact - but only with Sam.

BOSS

What's going on in here?

SAM

I'm about halfway.

BOSS

You'll be all the way by five?

SAM

Five... Thursday?

BOSS

Don't screw with me, Sam. Get it
done. I'm counting on you.

As he exits, shoulders still hunched, Sam shakes his head.
Ajay covers his mouth:

AJAY

OH MY GOD he *set you up!* He told
you Thursday when he meant today!

Sam's cell rings. As he reaches for it:

SAM

I'm sure I just misheard him this
morning, I was barely awake. I'll
get it done. It's only thre--

VOICE OVER PHONE (O.S.)

Mr. Hughes? This is Joy from Ritter
Elementary. It's fifteen minutes
past pick-up and your son's still-

SAM

I'll get *right* back to you.

He hangs up, pissed, pulls up Dante's contact, dials.
Straight to vm. Tries again, same thing. Worried, he calls:

SAM

D, it's me. Dante hasn't picked up
Barry like he was supposed to-

DE'ANDRA (O.S.)

I spoke to him an hour ago, he was
getting ready to leave.

SAM

Damn. Damn damn damn.

He hangs up and stands. Looks to Ajay and Patty.

PATTY

(already moving to help)
I'll forward the help desk tickets
to my phone.

AJAY

I'll take a *really* long bathroom
break. We got you covered.

SAM

I'll be back within an hour.

INT. RITTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Sam races into the school looking for Barry. But he's not in
the classroom. He's not on the playground. He's not in the
Principal's office. He sees the Security Guard -

SAM

Have you seen Barry Hughes, he's
new, he's-- this is him:

He holds up Barry's photo on his phone to the Guard.

SECURITY GUARD

Yes, he was here a little while
ago. You sure he wasn't picked up?

SAM

I don't know. Maybe he was by now--

That's when a TEACHER rounds the corner, with none other than
Joanna, looking professional in a smart suit. She stops when
she sees Sam. He's too busy panicking to notice.

TEACHER

Mr. Hughes? This is Jo-

SAM

I don't care. I have to find my son, I can't talk right now--

TEACHER

I'm sorry, but that's not-

Joanna is the epitome of calm.

JOANNA

It's okay. Let's find his son...

SAM

Barry.

JOANNA

Barry, and then we can all talk. Is that alright, Mr. Hughes?

Sam nods, feeling calmed by Joanna. They start walking together. It's an odd moment for Joanna, having seen this man so many times before, and now being dropped into his life in a way he has yet to understand. Sam doesn't notice, but feels relieved having Joanna by his side. Until he sees Dante, however, also looking for Barry. He sees Sam, explains, fast:

DANTE

Did they call you? Do you have him?

SAM

What the hell, Dante?

DANTE

It's not my fault, man. You know how busted my car is, it didn't start. I called and told them I was late cause I had to walk--

SAM

They didn't tell me you'd called when they called.

(he looks in Dante's eyes)

Are you *high* right now?

Joanna hears that, wishes she hadn't. The Guard circles back:

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Hughes, an Aide said she saw Barry on the playground five min--

Sam starts to run, Dante does too, but Sam stops him.

SAM
No. Go home.

And he runs. Joanna is left behind. She looks to Dante, and then takes out a pad, and writes a note she wishes she didn't have to write.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam drives down alleyways, main avenues, side streets, looking for Barry. And then he screeches to a stop, because in an alley he sees Barry walking, like nothing in the world is wrong. He reverses the car fast, yells out the window:

SAM
BARRY!

Barry jumps as Seam leaps out of the car.

SAM
What the HELL are you doing?

BARRY
Wa -- walking home.

Sam grabs Barry, tight. Sam's fear immediately scares Barry.

SAM
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID THAT!

BARRY
Dad - daddy, you're scaring me!

SAM
I'm sorry. I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at myself. This never would've happened if your mom was here.

Barry pushes away from Sam.

BARRY
Why do you keep talking about her?
Stop talking about her!

Sam looks at Barry; still with this? He climbs into the car, pissed, and tries to strap himself into the booster again. But he can't clip the clip. Of course. Sam's phone dings with a texts from Patty: **He's looking for you. Trying to stall.**

INT. DAL RAE RESTAURANT - DAY

Sam deposits Barry with Annette in her cramped General Manager's office at the restaurant.

ANNETTE

Hey baby, wanna help me put the
specials in the menu for tonight?

BARRY

I'm not a baby.
(but he starts anyway)
Flounder? Like in the *movie*?

ANNETTE

I'll bring him home when I get off.
Get that promotion!

EXT. OFFICE PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Sam pulls his car into his spot and runs. Trips a little, but catches himself. Slows down. He's running on the fumes of fumes, but he can do this.

INT. THE MUSIC GROUP - OFFICE/SERVER ROOM - DAY

Sam walks towards his cubicle, but as he gets close, he sees Ajay afraid to look at him. As Sam opens the door to the server room, he sees there are TWO NEW TECHS working inside. Sam tries to grab his computer from one of them, with:

SAM

That's my laptop-

VOICE (BEHIND SAM)

Hughes. My office. Now.

INT. THE MUSIC GROUP - BOSS' OFFICE - A MINUTE LATER

Jake the Boss sits across from Sam. As predicted, there's a gross smug smile on his face.

BOSS

It's too late, Sam. I already told
the COO you couldn't get it done.
That I had to finish it myself.

SAM

What?

BOSS

What was I supposed to do, *lie*?

SAM

My son was missing.

BOSS

I assume you found him. So was he
really missing?

Sam starts to answer, but the boss wasn't really asking.

BOSS

I know things have been hard for you since... But I've given you time, and your work has not improved. You come in looking like a zombie, leave looking worse. This job is too stressful for you.

SAM

That's not true. I just need to sleep more. I can find more focus. I need this. Anything you want me to do, I'll do it. Please. I can't lose my benefits. My kid-

BOSS

Sam, Sam, stop. There's nothing you can do. I'm sorry, but you're--

But before he can say the word "fired," Sam stands, walking out of the office, singing:

SONG: SMILE (Mikky Ekko)

SAM

SMILE, THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN
GOT NOWHERE TO GO
WE COULD BE HERE FOR A WHILE
BUT THE FUTURE IS FORGIVEN SO SMILE

Patty and Ajay and other co-workers are waiting to see Sam's fate. Once they see his face, they react with sadness.

SAM

WE'RE TRYING SO HARD
TO GET IT ALL RIGHT
BUT ONLY FEEL LONELY AT THE END OF THE NIGHT
WELL I WANNA BE SOMEWHERE
AWAY FROM THIS PLACE
SOMEWHERE JUST A LITTLE CLOSER TO GRACE

Sam pushes a chair angrily out of his way. It slides far and knocks into a wall. Something about that feels good. So Sam turns to a cubicle near him. Pushes a pile of papers off. Then everything else from the tabletop.

SAM

I'LL SMILE, THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN
GOT NOWHERE TO GO, WE COULD BE HERE FOR A WHILE
BUT THE FUTURE IS FORGIVEN SO SMILE

Sam pushes the cubicle wall. It falls. Like dominoes, all the cubicles fall behind him. He grabs a paperweight, throws it at a wall of servers. As they spark and explode in slow motion:

SAM (CONT'D)

CALL ME A LOSER, CALL ME A THIEF
TELL ME I'M SPECIAL WHEN YOU SPIT AT ME
'CAUSE I DON'T WANNA BE LONELY
I WANNA BE LOVED
AND I WANT YOU TO HOLD ME LIKE I'M THE ONLY ONE

Patty, Ajay, support staff and assistants join in with Sam, gleefully and choreographically destroying and dismantling the office as they let loose their pent-up frustration over this shit job. It's office drone wish fulfillment of the highest order as Patty takes a baseball bat to the Polycom, Ajay takes a fire axe to his computer, and other workers jump on the conference room table to break it:

SAM

AH SMILE
THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN
GOT NOWHERE TO GO
WE COULD BE HERE FOR A WHILE
BUT THE FUTURE IS FORGIVEN SO SMILE

As workers push the copy machine out the window, Sam hits the elevator button, down, and we CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE PARK - DAY (**SONG**)

Sam walks outside of the building with other support staff, calmly, as executives run out around them. Sam is handed a grenade launcher by another co-worker.

SAM

SMILE, THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN

As he points the launcher towards the building, and pushes the trigger, we CUT BACK TO:

INT. THE MUSIC GROUP - BOSS' OFFICE - DAY

Where Sam is back where he was in front of his (former) boss.

SAM

Thank you. Thank you for your time.

And he gets up, and walks out.

END OF ACT FOUR

MASHUP

ACT FIVE

EXT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

A live music venue off Sunset Blvd in Echo Park. A line leans down the block for cancellation tix to what the marquee calls "Phillips 66 Grammy Nom Party." Nellie and Gigi, looking hotter than hell and primed for a fight, walk to the front where Troy is waiting for them.

TROY

Here they are. Peltier, plus two.

The A&R Asst at the door nods and lets them, and us, into:

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

Dark, crowded, loud. The opener is already on. N, G & T walk past the merch table with tons of Phillips 66 shit laid out.

GIGI

Ghost of literal Christmases past,
nine o'clock.

Nellie picks up a T-shirt, incredulous:

NELLIE

He's still using my art?

Troy takes it out of her hands. Gigi steers them away.

TROY

What's the plan here, babe? Mezcal
to the face before he goes on?
Death glare from the floor so he
screws up his solo? Or full on-
stage knock-down-drag-out til
you're pulled off?

NELLIE

I just need to see his face.
That'll tell me what happens next.

GIGI

Whatever it is, you can't be sober
for it. Come on.

As they walk towards the bar, we CUT TO:

EXT. THE ECHOPLEX - NIGHT

Around the corner is The Echo's sister club, more nightclub
dive bar than a venue. Sam walks up to find De'Andra waiting.

SAM

Dante's inside, isn't he.

De'Andra smiles a guilty smile:

DE'ANDRA

Don't be mad. He wanted to apologize in person. I thought someplace neutral was best. Why don't we have some beers, make fun of a couple bands like we used to, put yesterday behind us?

(off Sam's face)

He got to school late. That's all. You saw him there yourself. He *has* changed. But if the people he cares about most don't believe that, why should he stay that way?

Her plea has worked. Sam relents.

SAM

On one condition: if you believe he's changed, you have a decision to make, too. Tell him. Or break it off before he finds out.

Which is when Sam's tackled in another shock hug from Dante.

DANTE

Thank you thank you thank you for showin'. *Ahora la fiesta ya puede empezar!*

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

Troy, Gigi and Nellie look for Levi, drinks in hand. Nellie grows a little pale before our eyes.

NELLIE

Okay, I'm having second thoughts.

Troy and Gigi hand Nellie their drinks. She downs them.

NELLIE

Do I do this, or do we leave? I can't tell if I need a pep talk or our parking validated.

GIGI

It's now or never, whatever it is. You gotta burn it down before you can rise from it, right? So do it.

Nellie looks at Gigi; she's right. As they move to find Levi:

TROY

Gotta thank my friend. I'll find you.

INT. THE ECHOPLEX - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Dante, with Sam, has found a quiet(er) area by the bar.
Behind them, an Alternative R&B band plays, blandly.

DATE

It never shoulda happened. I'm
spending all my gate money to get
the car fixed so it never happens
again. I get you probs won't ever
ask me again, but just in case--

SAM

I appreciate that.

DANTE

I appreciate you, man. You getting
out, you don't know what that did
for me. Watching you get the house,
the family, reach for your dreams.
You inspired me, man. That's why I
got released sooner. Then when I
heard Eleanor died--

SAM

If it inspired you, why've you been
hanging with your old crew?

DANTE

I dabbled with them a little, but
they offered. I can't say no right
away. You got out so you don't know
what it's like here. They stood by
me. Looked out for my moms and sis
while I was in. For you, too. Who
do you think got rid 'a those
people so you could move in?

SAM

What? Got rid of who?

DANTE

I'm on the hook, bro, but it'll be
okay. I just gotta pretend I'm
still with 'em before I pull away.
I don't want anything to happen to
you. 'Specially Barry.

Sam grabs Dante, a bit too hard.

SAM

What are you talking about? Did you put me and my son in danger?

DANTE

Of course not, cuz. I'm out in front of it. It's all good.

Before Sam can ask more, his cell rings: **Annette**. Sam answers and moves towards the door where he can hear:

ANNETTE (O.S.)

Leah just got home. Told me someone from Child Protective Services was at school today to see Barry.

SAM

What? Why? I don't under--

ANNETTE (O.S.)

Someone must've called when he wasn't picked up. Apparently they were there yesterday when you were, and you didn't come back to talk to them? They can take Barry away from you, do you understand? They can put him in foster care...

Sam's world spins. Dante smiles at him from the bar. A smile that cuts Sam to the core. Does Dante know what he's wrought?

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT/INT. ECHOPLEX - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Gigi and Nellie have made it close to the stage, pushing through a crowd of bodies swaying to the opening act. And then she sees him. Levi, talking to his A&R rep by the stairs to the stage, his truly beautiful fiancée standing with him.

Nellie's face falls. This is the truth, right in front of her. And it hurts. Before she knows what she's doing, she moves straight for Levi. He sees Nellie crossing through the crowded dance floor to him, and gets his hackles up. Suddenly all the dancing around Nellie goes into slow motion as the last song begins, our MASHUP, with Nellie and Sam, each in their private moments. Nellie sings to Levi, starting our MASHUP: **SUPERCUT (Lorde)/FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE (Stevie Wonder)**

NELLIE

IN MY HEAD I PLAY A SUPERCUT OF US
ALL THE MAGIC WE GAVE OFF
ALL THE LOVE WE HAD AND LOST
IN MY HEAD THE VISIONS NEVER STOP
THESE RIBBONS WRAP ME UP
BUT WHEN I REACH FOR YOU THERE'S JUST A SUPERCUT

Levi looks at her; what is she saying to him?

AT THE ECHOPLEX, Sam approaches Dante, trying to keep his rage in check:

SAM

FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE I HAVE SOMEONE WHO NEEDS ME
SOMEONE I'VE NEEDED SO LONG
FOR ONCE, UNAFRAID, I CAN GO WHERE LIFE LEADS ME
AND SOMEHOW I KNOW I'LL BE STRONG

NELLIE

I PLAY A SUPERCUT OF US.

SAM

FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE I WON'T LET SORROW HURT ME
NOT LIKE IT'S HURT ME BEFORE
FOR ONCE, I HAVE SOMETHING I KNOW WON'T DESERT ME
I'M NOT ALONE ANYMORE

NELLIE

THE VISIONS NEVER STOP.

SAM

FOR ONCE, I CAN SAY, THIS IS MINE, YOU CAN'T TAKE IT
AS LONG AS I KNOW I HAVE LOVE, I CAN MAKE IT
FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE--

NELLIE

IN MY HEAD, IN MY HEAD I DO EVERYTHING RIGHT
WHEN YOU CALL I'LL FORGIVE AND NOT FIGHT
BECAUSE OURS ARE THE MOMENTS I PLAY IN THE DARK
WE WERE WILD AND FLUORESCENT
COME HOME TO MY HEART

We CROSS-CUT between our two locations, as Nellie tells Levi exactly what she feels, and Sam tells Dante the same. They are exorcising their demons. The more Nellie sings at Levi, the less angry she is. She feels better, stronger. More alive. It's cathartic for Sam, too, expressing his anger and disappointment over his life right now.

NELLIE

'CAUSE IN MY HEAD
IN MY HEAD
I DO EVERYTHING RIGHT
WHEN YOU CALL
WHEN YOU CALL
I'LL FORGIVE AND NOT FIGHT
BECAUSE OURS ARE THE MOMENTS
I PLAY IN THE DARK
WE WERE WILD AND FLUORESCENT
COME HOME TO MY HEART

SAM

FOR ONCE, I CAN SAY, THIS IS
MINE, YOU CAN'T TAKE IT
AS LONG AS I KNOW I HAVE
LOVE, I CAN MAKE IT
FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE, I HAVE
SOMEONE WHO NEEDS ME
SOMEONE WHO NEEDS ME
FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE
SOMEBODY THAT NEEDS ME
FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE

SAM

I'M NOT ALONE ANYMORE.

As the song ends, Sam, six inches from Dante, looks down at him. Has he gotten his message through? He pushes his finger into Dante's chest.

SAM

Get your house in order. Cause it's my goddamn house now, too.

AT THE ECHO: Gigi sees Echo Security coming and dives in to grab Nellie, pulling her away from the stunned Levi. As they pass us - and a stunned Troy - we see the huge grin on Nellie's face.

IN THE ECHOPLEX: A bouncer appears and pulls Sam away from Dante, even as De'Andra tries to intervene. But it's no use. Sam's thrown out into:

EXT./INT. ECHO/ECHOPLEX - NIGHT

Out on Sunset, Troy rushes out after Nellie and Gigi.

TROY

Guess I'm never sleeping with that guy again! But who cares: you okay?

NELLIE

Okay? I'm AMAZING! Guys... that life is done. I'm ready for what's next.

As they run off, laughing, we PAN DOWN to find, under the overpass, a pissed and despondent Sam walking away from where Nellie just was, his world crumbling around him...

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAWN

A fired-up sam sits on the sofa. Sees his guitar in the corner. An emblem of brighter, more hopeful days. Of dreams that never quite died but have to now in order for him to live. All he knows is, he has to destroy it right away. He grabs it, opens the door, gets ready to hurl it, but:

BARRY (O.S.)

Dad? What're you doing?

Sam turns. Barry is standing in the bedroom doorway. Sam catches his breath, trying not to show Barry his anger.

SAM

I- I didn't mean to wake you.

BARRY

I want to show you something.

He takes Sam's hand, and leads him into:

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As soon as they enter, Sam immediately sees: Barry has put up the drawing of him, Sam, and Eleanor. Sam can't hold back. His eyes fill with tears. He tries to be strong, but it's not possible. He breaks down. Through his tears to Barry:

SAM

Sorry. I'm sorry.

BARRY

It's okay to cry. That's what you say, right? It's okay. Are you crying for mommy?

(Sam nods)

Cause she's not here anymore?

(Sam nods again)

I do that sometimes too.

Sam is overwhelmed at his son finally talking. He holds him tight. They both cry.

BARRY

Tell me a story.

SAM

What do you want to hear?

BARRY

Tell me how you and mommy met?

Sam collects himself. Has an idea.

SAM

How 'bout I show you instead?

INT. THE GROVE - FARMER'S MARKET - MORNING

Nellie and Hugh are having breakfast as the rest of the market opens around them. They eat in silence for bit, until Hugh puts his fork down, fixes her with his dad look. Nellie doesn't even look up to see it. She knows what's coming.

NELLIE

Forks down? I know what that means.

HUGH

I think it's time you got your life in order.

NELLIE

Funny coming from you. I pay your rent.

HUGH

Hey. I'm parenting you right now.

NELLIE

What makes you think my life isn't in order?

He takes out his phone and holds it up so she can see herself. She sees her now-streaky smokey eyes, unkempt hair. She grabs the phone from his hands.

NELLIE

Ok. Point taken.

She wipes her eyes with her napkin, smoothes her hair down.

HUGH

When's the last time you spoke to your mom?

NELLIE

Around the last time you did?

HUGH

You've rejected everything that ever came from her, even the name she gave you. If she weren't here, that'd be one thing. But she's three miles away...

NELLIE

I don't want to think about mom right now. Which works for her too, cause she doesn't *think* of herself as a mom. What I need is a fresh start. Something's coming. I've cleared the way. Once I know what it is, *then* maybe I'll call. Maybe.

HUGH

Finish your book at least, can you promise me that?

The Waitress drops the check. As Nellie takes out her wallet:

NELLIE

I can't promise anyth-- Oh no. My credit card. I left it at the club last night. I kept my tab open but was thrown out before I paid.

HUGH

This is really good for my thesis
about your life.

NELLIE

I have to get it. Call you later?

As she drops cash and rushes out, Hugh yells after her:

HUGH

Don't call me, draw me!

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - MORNING

Sam and Barry walk down Sunset Boulevard. They stop in front
of The Echo. Barry looks up at it, confused.

SAM

See this club? Eight years ago, I'd
been out with friends - including
your Uncle Dante - all night. He'd
gotten us into a party we weren't
invited to, some after-hours thing.
We were leaving here at eight in
the morning when I bumped into your
mother. Literally. The door opened,
and wham! Right into her. Like
something out of a dumb movie. And
the second I reached to help her,
the second we touched, we both felt
it. Like we were supposed to be
there at that moment, even if it
made no sense. Like when you hear a
song for the first time and without
even knowing the words, something
about it hits you *right here*.

(touches Barry's chest)

BARRY

(giggles)

I don't know what you're saying.

SAM

You will. And when you do, it'll be
the best feeling you've ever had.

BARRY

Okay, but dad? I have to pee.

SAM

There's a bathroom inside.

BARRY

I want to do it myself.

As he opens the door for Barry to head in, the door hits Nellie! Standing right behind it, having been putting her credit card back in her wallet. As the contents of her wallet fly to the ground, she and Sam both bend down to pick them up. Their hands meet over her driver's license – and it's like a shock goes through both of them. The good kind.

SAM

My god, I'm so sorry. That was so stupid of me.

But Nellie doesn't hear it. She's too busy feeling that feeling Joanna talked about. *We* feel it too. But we also notice: Barry is gone. Not only that, but Sam looks different; different haircut, different clothes, younger. And there's Dante, coming out of the club, also younger, cleaner.

DANTE

Yo Sam, man, I'm thinking pancak-

He's about to pull Sam away when he sees Nellie. He knows enough to stand out of the way. As Sam picks up Nellie's driver's license from the ground, he reads it.

SAM

That's not a name you hear anymore.

NELLIE

I don't use it. Haven't since I was a kid. Most people call me Nellie. But... I've been thinking about going back to it. Maybe.

SAM

I like it. Eleanor.

If we didn't know by now, it's just clicked for us. Nellie is Sam's future late wife, Eleanor. Her story has been in 2010. And Sam and Barry's is in 2018. We haven't just been looking at a love that's about to start, we've also been looking at it after it's over. You can't have a Side A without a Side B. Sam and Nellie/Eleanor feel a pull towards each other.

DANTE

Get her number man, call her later. I really need some food.

SAM

I'm going to do something I promise I've never done: ask a complete stranger for their number.

NELLIE

I'll put it in your phone?

SAM

I don't have a smartphone...

NELLIE

Now I *know* I like you.

She fishes in her bag for paper, finds a scrap, and takes out one of her pencils. Draws a cartoon of her number on the back of the scrap. As she hands it to Sam:

NELLIE

That piece of paper's done well for me. Think it might for you too.

As he looks at it, we see it's the scrap he picked up in the house. And as he turns it over, it's also the fortune Joanna gave Nellie at the restaurant. *Your luck is about to change.*

Sam watches Nellie go, but we see it's 2018 Sam, and Nellie is gone. Barry comes out of the club.

BARRY

I did it myself!

SAM

I'm so proud of you! Let's go home?

OVER WITH NELLIE, the smile on her face as she walks away from 2010 Sam is real. It's huge. And it's not going away.

CLOSE ON: A guitar case unzipping. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY (2018)

Sam enthusiastically holds his guitar, laptop open in front of him. Barry lies on the floor nearby, drawing.

BARRY

What are you going to play?

SAM

I'm not going to play, I'm going to write. Something new. Something great. And get it heard.

And now we see: he's hacked into Shelley from A&R's inbox and found the email about the Music Camp. He's going to crash it!

EXT. MOWHAWK GENERAL STORE - DAY (2010)

Gigi is opening up as Nellie runs up, grabs her, spins her.

GIGI

What the-- are you on something?

NELLIE

No. Yes. I dunno, the future, maybe?
Gige: I think I just met *my guy*.

As Gigi opens the door, the store radio is playing Levi.

GIGI

Wait here, I'll turn it off.

NELLIE

Don't! Turn it up! I want to dance!

As she starts to dance through the store:

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY (2018)

As Sam noodles on his guitar, Annette gently knocks.

ANNETTE

Sam? The caseworker's here for a
random check. She wants to observe.

SAM

No problem.

ANNETTE

You're so calm. Is everything ok?

SAM

No one is taking my son away. Not
my mother-in-law, not your son's
"friends," and not the city. My
luck is about to change. Again.
Even if I have to change it myself.

EXT. MOWHAWK GENERAL STORE - DAY (2010)

Gigi and Nellie dance through the store, totally free. Nellie
sits to catch her breath. Looks in her bag. Pulls out a
moleskin book. It's her graphic novel, and it's beautiful.
She turns to the last page, and starts to sketch: Sam.

INT. HIGHLAND PARK BEDROOM - MORNING (2018)

De'Andra lays awake in bed, her boyfriend asleep next to her.
Her cell rings - Dante calling. We realize that's not who's
next to her. This is what Sam was referencing; she didn't
wait for Dante, but he doesn't know that. She doesn't answer.

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - MORNING (2018)

Dante sits on the balcony, on his cell. De'Andra's not
answering. He hangs up. Sees one of his gang cronies motion
him to come down. Dante goes with him. This is not good.

INT. PARK LABREA APARTMENT - DAY (2010)

Hugh gets dressed for work. Sees a framed picture of himself and Margot (with Nellie) in happier times on his dresser. Looks at it. It's clear there are still feelings there.

INT. BEL-AIR MANSION - BEDROOM - DAY (2018)

Margot is brushing her hair, and catches a glimpse of the same photo on her nightstand. Does she still feel the same?

INT. SAM AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY (2018)

Annette opens the door to let Joanna in.

BARRY

What are you gonna write?

SAM

I don't know. But I'm pretty sure it'll be a love song.

BARRY

A love song? Why?

As Joanna enters to quietly observe, she suddenly stops. Something happens that she didn't expect: Sam actually looking at her, and only that, but seeing her, for the first time. Unlike all the other times. We PULL AROUND SAM to see: the hairs on the back of his neck standing up. That thing he's felt only once before. The thing we don't have to feel only once, if we're lucky.

Worlds colliding again, this next mixtape begins. Joanna sits next to Barry, open, kind - doing her job.

JOANNA

I don't mean to interrupt. What were you talking about, Mr. Hughes?

SAM

Sam. And I was just telling my son something important.

JOANNA

Oh yeah? And what's that?

He smiles at his son. Smiles at this stranger. And he begins.

SAM

Every song is a love song.

WE CUT TO BLACK.