

STEINBECK'S POINT OF VIEW

by

Brandon Camp

&

Mike Thompson

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOMEWHERE - DAWN

Ancient claws scratch at the auburn sky. A massive old oak stands alone in an arid field. Dangling from its limbs, gently CREAKING in the wind, a tire swing. On the blue canvas beyond, a billowing jet stream inches across the horizon. Serene. Quiet.

In stark contrast to --

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAWN

Downtown. Steel and concrete stretch into the sky.

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - LATER

Afternoon. An Audi at the curb of a dilapidated warehouse.

Four stories up, atop his world, we find a man. TOM BAILEY. Pressed suit, deliberate eyes, rugged. Thirty-five years rugged. Gazing upon the city, he's just found what he's looking for. HIS VOICE, from a different time and place, STIRS --

TOM (V.O.)

*I know an old lady who
swallowed a fly. I don't know
why she swallowed the fly...*

EXT. ROOFTOP - A DAY OR SO LATER

Tom with a pair of seasoned CORPORATE TYPES. Giving the location a once over.

TOM

...there isn't an appraiser in town that would recommend this investment. Dead neighborhood. No retail for blocks. Inaccessible.

CORPORATE

(keen)

Alright. Then why are we here?

TOM

Because you've got vision.

He produces a pair of binoculars. Offers them up and nods to the east. A freeway under construction a few miles down.

TOM

What do you think two hundred
(more)

TOM (cont'd)
thousand buys at the planning
commission?

They eye the hook, piqued.

TOM
An off-ramp.

The men glance at each other. We leave them to the details.

TOM (V.O.)
*I know an old lady who
swallowed a spider. That
wiggled and jiggled and tickled
inside her. She swallowed the
spider to catch the fly...*

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - ANOTHER DAY

Across the street, Tom stands in front of a run-down store-
front with a prospective BUYER --

TOM
...groundbreaking's under way.
Twelve hundred units in four
buildings. Young, mobile
professionals. And they're all
going to need one thing in the
morning. Coffee. Your coffee.

Dollar signs in the prey's eyes. As --

TOM (V.O.)
*I know an old lady who
swallowed a bird. How absurd,
to swallow a bird...*

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - ANOTHER DAY

Down the block, Tom with a team of CORPORATE REPS before
another facade:

TOM
...three restaurants on that
side there, grocery store down
on the end, condo units there,
there, and there. And right
here? Of course. What better
place for the nation's number
one department store?

Of course. They're hooked, too.

TOM (V.O.)
I know an old lady who
swallowed a cat. Can you
believe that? She swallowed a
cat...

INT. BANQUET HALL - EVENING

Black tie, lavish spread. Ice sculptures, goose pâté, and
silicone. Tom stands at the podium, confidently addressing
a couple hundred ATTENDEES --

TOM
(continuing)
She swallowed the cat to catch
the bird, she swallowed the
bird to catch the spider. She
swallowed the spider to catch
the fly. I don't know why she
swallowed the fly.

Takes a breath. Phew.

TOM
But I do know that Mother Goose
could've made a fortune in
commercial real estate.

People laugh. But they're not sure why.

TOM
The single fly theory, might
say? If ya can just get that
one buyer to swallow, with a
little luck you'll have spiders
and birds knocking down your
door. Or something like that.
Fortunately, it seems to have
been my door this year.

Gestures with the small plaque in his hands -- Agency of
the Year.

TOM
Anyway, I'll let you get back
to your Chicken Kiev. On
behalf of my staff, I'd like to
thank the Association for this
award. Means a lot to us.
Thanks. Thanks again.

APPLAUSE as he steps down from the podium.

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Post-ceremony chatter. Tom works the room. Or rather, the room works him -- "Congratulations"; "Well done." And --

BLUE EYES (O.S.)
Nice speech, Father Goose.

A long-legged executive with BLUE EYES. Soft, inviting smile. He flinches, a history.

TOM
Katie. Long time.

BLUE EYES
See you've kept yourself busy.
Cheers.

She raises her glass. He fumbles for his. Tense.

BLUE EYES
I called awhile back...

TOM
Yeah...I'm...

BLUE EYES
Seeing that waitress that
spilled coffee on the suede
shoes I bought you?

He smiles. She steps closer, straightens his tie. He lets her, tempted. But then forces himself to surface--

TOM
Actually. Someone else.

Oh. Stops her cold.

BLUE EYES
Yeah? Who's that?

TOM
(discomfort)
...Lucy.

BLUE EYES
Lucy. Well.
(then)
Congratulations.

A regretful smile and she moves on. He lets her go. Regretful smile himself.

RICHARD
Now the way I remember the end
(more)

RICHARD (cont'd)
of it, that old lady swallowed
a horse and died. What then,
Mr. Bailey?

Tom turns to discover a familiar face. Smiles.

TOM
Pray the check's cleared?

The two shake. Good friends. DR. RICHARD FORRESTER.
Fifties, stands tall, wealthy enough to wear a Timex and
loafers.

TOM
The good doctor. Who let you
in here?

RICHARD
Same boobs that gave you that
plaque.

TOM
Been meaning to call you.
Spotted some prime space on the
east side if you're looking to--

RICHARD
(a grin)
Nancy's well, thank you for
asking.

Tom sighs easy, caught.

RICHARD
And Josh? Oh he's getting
ready for camp again. Keeps
wondering where his absentee
tennis coach is however.

TOM
Guilty as charged.

RICHARD
I've been wondering as well.
(gentle)
How are you, Tom?

TOM
(quick)
Million bucks.

Not good enough. Richard moves in close. A look of
concern. Just the two of them. More at play here than we
understand --

RICHARD

Tom. How are you?

Catches the Broker of the Year off-guard. But he covers.

TOM

Doin' great. Really.

Their eyes hold. Richard knows better. But eventually lets him off the hook.

RICHARD

Go, your minglers await.

Tom nods. And escapes.

INT ATHLETIC CLUB - NIGHT

Upscale gym. Tom arrives, still in his tux. Tie undone, bag over his shoulder. Routine. Nods to the ATTENDANT, kneels to an eager BLACK LAB at the desk.

TOM

Heya, Lucy. How's my best girl?

Dog laps at him lovingly.

ATTENDANT

Let's see, eleven o'clock, all dolled up...and at the gym?
She musta had a tail?

TOM

Slapped me at the door, more likely.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

Half-a-dozen late night weight-lifters and stair-climbers. In the back, Tom pounds the rubber treadmill at a good clip. Step after step. Great shape.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

The inhabitants have dwindled to a rope jumper in the corner and a muscle poser in front of the mirror. And Tom. Still at it. Sweat. Resolve. Legs burn, lungs heave. But he refuses to submit.

Instead, jacks up the speed and angle.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

The place is empty. Not a sound but the incessant hum of the treadmill. Past his threshold, a manic force propels him. He cranks the elevation higher, his knees crunching with each stride.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Perched atop a rolling hill. Its glassy austerity blends into the still night sky.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The PATTERN of slippers echo in the house. The spartan house. Obvious he lives alone. He appears, showered, in his robe, and kneels to collect letters from the mail slot. Shuffles through them, slides up to the answering machine. Hits play --

MAN (ON MACHINE)

Tommy boy, how's it hangin'?
Rich Karner here. Look, know
ya said you're busy as hell
this year -- but Jackson busted
his ankle last game and we sure
could use your arm out there.
Not to mention your stick.
Have I kissed your ass enough?

(then)

Anyway, we're Tuesday nights
this season. Gimme a call.

BEEP. Tom doesn't hesitate, punches a button and the machine announces: *Message erased.* He moves on --

THE KITCHEN

Opens the fridge, pours a glass of wheatgrass juice. Meanders to the cupboard, pulls down...a bottle of pills. Then another bottle. Then another. Another. Long, ugly pharmaceutical names side by side. He uncaps each one and pours out a dosage of a dozen capsules.

Finishes the letter he's reading and pounds the pile of pills like aspirin for a headache. Utter nonchalance. Downs the juice and exits, on to the next piece of junk mail.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The bedroom light goes dark. A day in the life.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - DAY

Contemporary glass and steel. A half-dozen STAFFERS in an open-air space. Tom strides off the elevator, meets and greets. Ends up at MRS. BROOKS, his key assistant. Older, proper, dresses in pastels.

MRS. BROOKS

Morning, Mr. Bailey. How did it go last night?

TOM

I was marvelous, Mrs. Brooks. You're a born speechwriter.

MRS. BROOKS

No, just a grandmother.

TOM

How is that Katie? Still sugar and spice?

MRS. BROOKS

Pierced ears and Green Day I'm afraid.

(then)

Doctor Forrester is waiting in your office. Said he was in the area.

TOM

(discomfort)

Oh.

They round the corner, enter the office. The good doctor.

RICHARD

Now who says we don't make house calls?

TOM

(to Mrs. Brooks)

Please excuse us.

Abrupt. She didn't expect it.

RICHARD

(saving)

Actually, what say we run by that East Side space? S'why I stopped by.

TOM

Sure, no problem. Perfect.

Lie.

INT. EAST SIDE SPACE - DAY

Tom and Richard on the second floor of a vacant office building. Tom gives the guided tour, on edge.

TOM

...take out those walls and
there's your reception area.
Patient rooms here, your office
there. Lab on the second
floor, rent out the third and
fourth and cover the bank.

Richard wanders the floor. Arrives at a doorway. The
bathroom. Cramped, mildewed, a mess. And yet --

RICHARD

(fond)

This stays.

(off Tom's look)

Our last building. Had to
renovate. Knock down walls,
new floorplan, the whole thing.
Got half-way through
construction before we
realized. So wrapped up in
"would my office be better over
here or over there" that we
forgot the goddamn bathroom.
Believe that? The bathroom.
Looked at those plans a hundred
times. Just had my head in the
clouds.

(pointed)

Then it was too late.

TOM

I'd say you need a new
architect.

RICHARD

Tom. What are we doing here?

TOM

How's that?

RICHARD

Where's your head these days?

No answer. Saw it coming.

RICHARD

Why are you still runnin'
around wheeling and dealing?
Pawning off all these
properties...

(more)

RICHARD (cont'd)
 (careful)
 ...like it matters?

TOM
 Richard, let it go.

RICHARD
 Nobody knows, do they?

TOM
 (averting)
 The building was bolted last year. There's galvanized plumbing, copper wiring...

RICHARD
 It'll sneak up on you. And then you're going to wish you'd spent this time differently --

Enough, Tom erupts -- a hidden fury surfaces --

TOM
 I'm spending my time exactly right! Last year I closed on about 100 properties; this year I've already doubled that. Last year I couldn't walk a mile; now I run ten a day. Ten a day. I'm better. Okay?

Richard acknowledges. But doesn't waver --

RICHARD
 Okay. But what about next year?

A sucker punch. Tom stares at the floor. Walks out.

RICHARD
 You're sick, Tom. You need to talk about it.
 (then)
 What are you going to have to show for yourself?

CUT TO:

TOM - TIGHT

Pale. Sweat on his forehead. Dazed.

DEALER (O.S.)
 Interested in a purchase or leasing?

THE LOCAL DEALERSHIP. Tom sits behind the wheel of a shiny

new Porsche. Smarting. Doesn't answer.

DEALER
Purchase or a lease?

TOM
(sotto)
'Like it matters.'

DEALER
Huh?

TOM
(to self)
I wake up every morning. And I
go out. And accomplish
something.

DEALER
Sure, okay. In this car,
everybody'll know that.

TOM
Yeah.
(breath)
A lease.

DEALER
They run from one to four
years. Usually folks go with
one or two. Don't want to be
locked in past that.

A wince on Tom's face.

TOM
Four. I'll take four years.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - LATER

Tom, driving. Traffic. Eyes vacant, utterly indifferent
to the new purchase. No tinkering with knobs, no stroking
the leather. Nothing. Suddenly --

A FLASH. Blinds him. He squints to make out the source --
sees it -- the sky -- off the horizon -- washing over him.
Beautiful. He loses himself in it.

CYCLIST (O.S.)
Eyes on the road, dipshit!

A BIKE MESSENGER pounds on his hood. Tom comes to --
realizes he's in the middle of an intersection --

TOM
-- I -- did you see that?

The kid flips him the bird and pedals on. Tom cranes his neck -- just blue sky now.

Bizarre.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Tom enters the office, oblivious to his staff around the T.V. He strides toward a bay window, opens the blinds and peers out at the horizon: ink black smoke, rising a mile in the sky. An ugly dark poison.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey?

TOM

There was this light -- in the sky -- did you see it?

MRS. BROOKS

Terrible.

TOM

Wha?

MRS. BROOKS

Well the -- you didn't hear?
Oh. 727 went down over Sonoma.
They're saying a hundred people
were...

TOM

Jesus. Taking off from SFO?

MRS. BROOKS

No, coming in. Wind shear
something or another they think.

(then)

I must say, Greyhound is
looking more and more
attractive.

Tom just stares out at the looming darkness. Can't take his eyes off.

MRS. BROOKS

Are you alright?

TOM

...Yeah. Sure.

He sighs. Long day. Heads into his office.

MRS. BROOKS

How'd it go with Dr. Forrester?

TOM

He wasn't interested in the property.

Closes the door behind him. Mrs. Brooks piqued.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - NIGHT

Late. Empty gym. Tom, running. Even more intense. An overhead monitor blares details of the crash. Footage of firefighters, wreckage, burning hillside, A REPORTER broadcasting live: *...As the resulting fires rage on, NTSB agents begin the arduous task of extracting bodies. Again, no survivors. All 123 passengers and crew dead...*

The whir of the treadmill slows. Stops... The Gym Attendant looks up -- Tom Bailey never stops.

Tom dismounts the belt. Suddenly magnetized to the image on the monitor. Stares into the pixels. Drawn in. Not by the twisted, smoking metal. Not by the blackened field of scattered luggage. Not by the anxious Reporter.

But, oddly, by the lone SPARED TREE behind her. It can't be...

CUT TO:

A LITTLE BOY

Tom. A PHOTOGRAPH of old. Nestled in a long-dusty album.

Tom's in a closet full of boxes. Momentarily paused, caught off guard by the memories. Shuffles through the photos, searching. Purposed.

And there it is. Exactly as we saw it on the T.V. Exactly as he remembered. Behind the youngster, a MASSIVE OAK TREE complete with tire swing. Its hundred year old limbs clawing every which way.

Now a burial ground. A voicemail BEEPS and:

TOM (V.O.)

I'm going to get out of town for the day...

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - DAWN

Tom, driving, the Golden Gate in the b.g. On the phone:

TOM

...There's a property in Napa I want to see. When you get
(more)

TOM (cont'd)

this, check the status of the title clearance on the Rochester property. Also call First Federal and tell 'em they'll have the McCormick down payment by Tuesday. And one other thing -- need to switch my insurance over to the new car.

(realizes)

Right. I got a new car. Porsche. I know, I know, my old one worked perfectly fine, but I...

Grits his teeth. Thinking.

TOM

There's something I've been meaning to tell you, Mrs. Brooks. See. I...

Pauses. Can't do it. Hangs up. Accelerates.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - LATER

Winding through the countryside. Acres upon acres of flourishing grapevines. Wine country.

Tom's eyes flicker. Nostalgia.

EXT. PENNGROVE - DAY

Little town. A quaint main street. Bed and breakfast, feed store, wine and cheese shop. And satellite trucks parked on every street. The vultures have arrived.

Driving through, Tom takes it all in.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A valley outside of town. Rows of cars and news vans stretch a mile long. Tom parks it on the grassy shoulder and gets out. Walks.

Crosses the property line. And there she is. Reaching for the sun. His great oak. Tire swing still intact.

He places his hand upon her bark. Breathes her in. Remembers.

Across the way, a farmhouse. A victim of years of neglect. Grown over, dilapidated, boarded windows.

This place died a long time ago.

Finally moves up the hill into the throng of ONLOOKERS. Hundreds of people standing in absolute quiet. Terrifying silence.

He crests the peak, his eyes ingesting the horror. Black earth carved deep. Pieces of fuselage strewn about like a child's broken toy. Uniformed OFFICIALS wading through the graveyard, bagging what's left of lives snatched away.

An empty dog kennel; giftwrapped birthday presents; a set of stray dentures...

A sickness wells.

His eyes dart to the countless people gathered here. He wades amongst them: A REPORTER; A FAMILY of locals gawking with a video camera; A MOTHER clutching a doll, her dry eyes searching the wreckage --

MOTHER

(to self)

Have to find her. The recital's in two days. She has to practice...

She'll repeat this a hundred times today. She turns to Tom, her eyes pleading for help. But he's rendered cold. Useless.

It's more than he can take. He descends the hill, walks away from it all, nauseous. Has to stop, hunch over. Gags.

KANSAS CITY (O.S.)

Rite of passage.

Tom looks up -- huh?

KANSAS CITY

Marked my territory over there.

Sitting in the dirt, a YOUNG MAN in a Kansas City Royals cap. Gangly, midwestern. Tired, bloodshot eyes. Been through the wringer. Tom nods an acknowledgement, uneasy.

KANSAS CITY

Lookey-loo, huh?

TOM

What?

KANSAS CITY

Figure if ya lost somebody, ya'da been here earlier.

(more)

KANSAS CITY (cont'd)

(then)

Sorry. None a my business.
Tired.

Exhausted more like it. Shit beat out of him. Anxious moment.

TOM

Forget it.

In his hands, the kid fingers a cluster of grapes. Tears off a vine and offers it to Tom --

KANSAS CITY

Want some?

Not really interested, Tom takes them anyway. Sympathy.

KANSAS CITY

They grow everywhere 'round here.

He gazes upon the opposite horizon -- lush, thriving fruit. Then back at the crash site -- dry, gnarled vines. Dead.

KANSAS CITY

'Cept here. Looks like the land's been dead for years.

(sotto)

Ironical, huh?

Tom shifts his weight, a self-conscious chill. The kid plucks a grape. Stares into it.

KANSAS CITY

Battle between a man and the elements. For one a these guys to turn out just right, I mean. Break your back turnin' the soil so's it can take the rain. Rain that may or may not fall when ya need it.

Poor kid's just rambling. In shock. Tom lets him.

KANSAS CITY

Prune just enough for a small, superior yield. But not so much that ya come up dry. Timing of your harvest, weather cycles, insects, vine rot. S'a real art.

(pointed)

Least that was Steinbeck's point of view.

Tom begins to edge away --

TOM
Yeah, Steinbeck...

KANSAS CITY
'Course you probably know all
about grapes.

TOM
How's that?

KANSAS CITY
Aren't ya from around here?

TOM
No. Over from the city.

KANSAS CITY
Oh. Near the water?

TOM
Not really.

KANSAS CITY
She has a place on the wharf.
S'where we were gonna live.
Together.

Suddenly, the man's veneer cracks. His eyes go moist.

KANSAS CITY
If she. Said yes..
(difficult)
Had the ring and everything.

Oh god. This whole thing. Horror. What the hell do you
say?

TOM
I'm -- I'm -- so --

KANSAS CITY
(forcing a smile)
No no. Didn't mean to drag you
in. Just...haven't really had
a chance to talk to anybody
about it. Ya know?

Yes. Tom knows. More than he cares to admit.

KANSAS CITY
Can I ask ya somethin'?

TOM
Sure, yeah.

KANSAS CITY

Why'd you come here?

He doesn't know. Wrestles with it.

TOM

...Used to own this property.

Spent summers on it as a kid.

KANSAS CITY

Huh. Nice memories?

Tom nods. Wishing he wasn't here.

KANSAS CITY

Why'd ya sell?

Good question. Obvious discomfort in the answer. So --

TOM

Just did. Business.

KANSAS CITY

Oh.

The conversation comes to an end. Neither exactly sure of what to say. Inadequate, Tom makes a move for his car --

TOM

Take care, now.

KANSAS CITY

Uh-huh.

The kid lets him pass. Then --

KANSAS CITY

Passion.

His eyes peer into Tom. And hold.

KANSAS CITY

Forgot that part. Takes
passion, too.

He indicates the grapes. Then ambles back up the hill. Tom's gaze falls to the grapes in his hands. Rolls one around in his palm. Squeezes it between his fingers.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - LATER

Tom, headed back. A trance. Troubling.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tom and his staff at the conference table. An ASSOCIATE drones on about the business of the day. But Tom hears none of it, staring out the window. Bags under his eyes.

He's elsewhere:

TOM (V.O.)
Like I told ya, I'm feeling better than ever. I am. But how can I screw ya on a real estate deal if you're always coddling me?

CUT TO:

A SWIRLING COLLAGE

Colors. Orange, yellow, red, black. Light seeping from behind as WE WIDEN...

TOM (V.O.)
Just wanted to come in, prove ya wrong, get ya off my back.

MRI film on a light screen. A sea of yellow tissue stained with intrusions of black. Small, but ominous. FURTHER WIDEN -- a second film. Identical. Except the black has swallowed up the yellow. Devouring the tissue whole.

Forrester stands before Tom. Wraps an arm around him. Tight hold. Words are useless. Grave, solemn lines carve both faces.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ER - LATER

A chaos of lights and sirens -- ER CREWS and PARAMEDICS race a CRITICAL inside --

Exiting, Tom doesn't even glance up. Catatonic.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

On the treadmill. His intensity waning with each stride. Until finally he just quits. Steps off the belt and exits.

Mentally submitting.

INT. NATURAL FOODS MARKET - NIGHT

Tom at the check-out counter. The CASHIER runs his items across --

CASHIER

...wheatgrass, tofu, soy
powder, ginseng extract...

Tom gazes down at the pseudo-food.

And without a word, walks off, right out of the store. The cashier stares dumbfounded.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Empty hole in the wall. Tom, at the counter, hunched over a burger and fries dripping with grease. Looks up to the Hispanic FRYCOOK --

TOM

Got any Worsteshire?

COOK

Qué?

TOM

Worsteshire sauce?

COOK

No sé. Ketchup?

No habla Ingles. Forget it. Tom reaches into his pocket, retrieves a bag of his pills. Swigs them down one after another after another with his milkshake.

To the curiosity of the cook.

Tom's knee-jerk is to hide them. But he refrains. Starts to speak. Stops. Then, finally does it --

TOM

I have...

(tedious)

I have a tumor. In my liver.
They say it's gonna kill me.
Not too long. But...I've been
holdin' up. Me and my bag of
pills.

The cook just blinks at him. A beat of silence in the empty restaurant. Until a CUSTOMER enters. The cook moves on.

Left alone, Tom reins it in.

TOM

There. I talked about it.

INT. STAN'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Five and dime. Tom enters. Unshaven, flannel shirt, flip flops. STAN, the old gent at the pharmacy counter sees him, grabs his order.

STAN

How do, Tom.

Tom musters a nod, hands over his cash. Stan gives him a once-over, notes the disheveled ensemble. Concern.

STAN

Playin' hooky today?

Doesn't answer. Eyes focused on the magazine rack. *Newsweek, Time, People: Terror in the Sky, Freefall of Flight 300...*

STAN

Mm. All those folks. Just like that.

Tom blinks. Drawn to one cover in particular. A collage of photographs. Dozens of faces. Victims. Young, old, men, women, children...

And...

Kansas City. The young man from the vineyard. Big smile, same cap?!

What the hell? Can't be. He rips open the magazine, scours the pages, photos -- shredded fuselage, mourners, charred suitcases. And the K.C. Royals cap. Singed, astray in the dirt.

TOM

(speechless)

...how...

The bag of pills fall from his grip.

STAN

Tom?

SMASH TO:

AN ANSWERING MACHINE

Phone RINGS, it picks up --

MRS. BROOKS (ON MACHINE)

Mr. Bailey? Um. Starting to become slightly worried. Where are you? I took care of your
(more)

MRS. BROOKS (cont'd; ON MACHINE)
 schedule, canceled the
 McCormick closing. But --
 well, just wondering if you're
 okay?

The living room floor. Blanketed with magazines,
 newspapers by the dozens. Coverage of the crash. Victims.
 More shots of Kansas City: Kevin Miller, 28, from Topeka.

But no Tom.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Tom speeds up the familiar path. Yellow tape, bulldozers,
 cranes. He parks, gets out --

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Striding up the hill, he peers down. The site virtually
 cleared. Lingered MOURNERS. He weaves amongst them,
 studying every face --

Yonder, a MAN with his back turned -- baseball cap -- Tom
 edges up to him... Oh, too old. Moves on --

He searches. Waiting. Hoping to validate his sanity.

BLUE (O.S.)
 You're wastin' your time.

Tom turns, off-guard. Stocky BLUE COLLAR GUY with a
 moustache. Wild eyes drill a hole in him.

TOM
 Excuse me?

BLUE
 You're lookin' aren't ya?

TOM
 Uh...

BLUE
 Don't bother. You'll never see
 'em again.

TOM
 You -- saw...?

BLUE
 Watermelon off a rooftop.

TOM
 ...What?

BLUE

(bitter)

Tha's how they explained it.
How my wife's remains are
'unaccounted for.' How ya like
that?

Bodies. The man's talking about bodies. Not ghosts.

BLUE

Ya don't got your ziplock bag
yet, ya shit outta luck.

TOM

...Okay.

Jesus. Tom struggles for words. But the man doesn't wait,
heads on.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

The numbers dwindle with the sun's resignation. Night
crews toil under floodlights.

Tom's left standing there. Self-conscious. Doubting his
own recollection.

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Pacing in the darkness. Where Kansas City stood.
Replaying. Waiting.

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Beneath the great oak, eyes scanning the land. Checking
the Newsweek in his pocket. Again. And again.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK

A low RUMBLING builds, LOUD, overtakes us -- we are the
earth, soil ripping apart. A bulldozer greeting the day.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAWN

Tom wakes with the noise. Slumped against the tree, must
have fallen asleep. Stands up, caked in dirt. Gathers
himself.

Enough of this. He starts out, heads for the car. But is
blinded suddenly -- A SPARKLE --

From the vineyard. Hypnotizing.

He curiously heads down the hill -- across the yellow tape -- but sees nothing, lost it. Eyes playing tricks?

He turns -- the farmhouse. So familiar, yet so foreign. His CHILDHOOD LAUGHS but whispers in the wind. He steps onto the porch -- to the door -- but can't do it. Quickly heads back up the hill when, again --

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT reflected from the sun. He edges closer, closer...and...

There...in the lifeless soil...a struggling seedling pushing forth? In all this death?

He kneels to it. Unmistakable. The desperate beginnings of a grapevine. An array of colors in its leaves. Burgeoning with strength. Astounding. Tom's awe surpassed only by the SHIMMERING object tangled in its tiny limbs...

AN ENGAGEMENT RING. Gold. Single diamond.

His face goes white. Mouth agape. Heart pounding.

NTSB (O.S.)

Excuse me --

NTSB AGENT approaching --

NTSB

Restricted area sir, if I could ask ya to step behind the yellow tape. Safety and all.

Tom can barely speak. Can barely move. Pries the ring free, pockets it, walks.

INT. PORSCHE - MOMENTS LATER

Hands trembling. Inspecting the ring. An engraving in its spine -- Dearest Amy, Love Kevin 6/12.

Impossible.

EXT. PENNGROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Town Square brick building.

INT. PENNGROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Tom, at a computer. Been at it a while, search engines smoking. Newspapers...magazines...phone books...

INT. PENNGROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY - LATER

He's got it -- *Topeka Sentinel*. 1988. Sports page photo of Topeka High Trojans. A handful of basketball players, cheerleaders ecstatic over a victory. Among them, Kevin Miller and a fresh-faced brunette, Amy Calhoun.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Back in the city. Driving along the water, searching. A page torn from the phone book in his hands.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Pots and planters. Tom speaks with an elderly MAN on the stoop...

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - DAY

Governmental nightmare. Endless lines of irate would-be DRIVERS, handful of underpaid EMPLOYEES to serve them. Tom enters the double doors, plunges into the throng. Scans the workers -- fat, bald, black, Chinese -- there, behind a camera -- the fresh-faced brunette: AMY CALHOUN. Despite the pulled-back hair, grey shirt and tie, she wears her best smile for the next in line --

AMY

Step on up. Face forward, big grin.

A pudgy CONSTRUCTION WORKER steps up. Grumbles.

AMY

Come on now, lemme see those chompers.

No dice. Another grumble.

AMY

Okay. So this chicken goes to bed with an egg. They have sex. After, the chicken lights a cigarette and says to the egg, 'well, I guess that settles that.'

Guy thinks. Can't help it, has to smile -- FLASH, mission accomplished. She winks, he moves on.

TOM (O.S.)

Excuse me.

She turns -- a nervous Tom fidgeting before her. Awkward.

Can't put the words together.

MOTORCYCLE
Yo -- line starts back there.

MOTORCYCLE GUY throws him an elbow, trudges past.

AMY
So. This skeleton walks into a
bar...

Shit. Tom sighs, takes his place in line.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - LATER

FLASH, the camera shutter flares. FLASH, the line decreases. Tom finally makes it to the head, pulling his hair out.

AMY
Next, please.
(sees him)
Ya made it.

He just stands there. Where to start?

AMY
Don't be shy, step right up.

TOM
Amy...Calhoun?

AMY
(re: name tag)
Hey, got it right. Have your
paperwork?

He shakes, no. Struggling. Swallowing.

AMY
Uh-oh. Then you're not gonna
like me much -- 'fraid you
gotta get your paperwork done
first. That neverending line
over there --

TOM
No... I'm here to see...you.
Amy. Calhoun. From...Kansas.

Catches her off guard.

AMY
Yes...? Do I know you?

He paces. Stops. Paces. Stops --

TOM

Okay -- here's the deal -- no,
 you don't know me --obviously--
 but -- he mentioned a woman
 living on the wharf. And -- I
 checked -- I went to the
 library and -- you live on the
 wharf -- and you're a woman.
 See?

Not at all. An impatient NOSE-RINGED gal next in line --

NOSE-RING

What the hell?

Amy catches a glance from her SUPERVISOR. Shrinks, motions
 to Nose-ring. But Tom steps in front, toes on the photo
 line.

TOM

-- your landlord said you
 worked at the DMV -- and this
 is the DMV and -- here you are.
 Just like he said.

Another look from the Supervisor. Aware, Tom smiles. She
 takes the damn picture.

AMY

(lost)
 My landlord?

TOM

No. No no.
 (then)
Kevin.

Shock. Film drops from her hand. Face goes white.

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - LATER

Sixteen-year-olds and foreigners driving off with
 instructors. Tom paces out back, waiting, waiting. Door
 finally opens -- a hesitant Amy squints into the daylight --

AMY

(on edge)
 I've only got a minute.

TOM

Right, thanks. Okay. See --

AMY

You knew Kevin?

The look on her face. No more chicken and egg jokes.

TOM

Sort of. I...just met him.

AMY

When?

Yeah. Go ahead and tell her, pal.

AMY

Who -- just who are you exactly?

TOM

I'm sorry -- I'm Tom. Bailey.
Look -- I don't call Dionne
Warwick, don't even read my
horoscope. But I saw what I
saw. I mean. At least I think
I did... See...

(finally)

I met him. After.

AMY

After what??

He resists. How to do this? Just goes for it --

TOM

After... The crash.

That word. The crash. Slaps her.

AMY

Wait, wha? But -- they said
everybody was...

TOM

They were.

AMY

(impatient)

I'm not following and I --

TOM

I thought he was there to
grieve. That he'd lost
somebody. He was so upset,
what else would I think, would
anyone think. But then, couple
days later, I see his face,
Newsweek, sittin' right in
front of me. 'Bout had a heart
attack.

AMY

Wait -- just -- you're tellin'
me you met him...after? As in
after?

A sheepish nod. She straightens up, does the math.
Backsteps -- fear -- fury --

AMY
I don't know who the hell you
think you are -- what kind of
crap you're tryin' to pull --
but -- this is insane -- you're
insane --

She spins for the door. An icy glare before she vanishes
inside. Leaving him there.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - LATER

Amy back behind the camera. Rattled. No jokes. No smiles.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - LATER

Fingers impatiently tap on the steering wheel. Tom, parked
outside the DMV. Waiting. Then spots her -- exiting the
front, bag over her shoulder, headed home. She strides for
an intersection. Waits on the light. And --

TOM (O.S.)
He knew about wine?

She spins, face drops -- Tom standing at the curb.

TOM
He was like an expert. About
growing grapes, the whole thing.

She skirts past -- fear --

TOM
(desperate)
My grandfather made wine there.

She's almost running.

TOM
Maybe...there's some kind of
connection --

AMY
Get away from me -- I can't
help you --

TOM
I think you can.

She stops, turns. Face of tears.

AMY

What do you want from me??

TOM

He was on the plane. To see you. And I just thought --

AMY

No he wasn't.

Stops him short. She hardens. A fierce step toward him --

AMY

He wasn't. I didn't even know
he was on that damned plane!

She's screaming. People take notice. Sobers him.

TOM

I've intruded. I'm sorry. I...

Ill-equipped. Ashamed. Last ditch, he fumbles in his pocket. The ring. Gently extends his hand, offers it.

TOM

I...think he wanted you to have this.

Her lips part. This can't be happening.

TOM

(reads inscription)

Dearest Amy. Love, Kevin.

AMY

I -- I'm supposed to...
Believe he gave you that?

TOM

I found it. On the land.
Hanging from a vine. He did
mention it.

Enough -- seething, she turns, runs -- trips into a passerby -- falls -- purse dumps from her shoulder -- compact SPLINTERS in two, coffee mug SHATTERS. He kneels to help -- she rears up, scrambles into a crowd.

TOM

Wait -- please --

But she's gone. He stands there. Regret. Overload.

Then he sees them. On the ground. ST over here. NB over

there. Broken shards of coffee mug. He kneels, puts them together like a jigsaw puzzle. An insignia. STEINBECK'S. Coffee shop. He blinks. A chill. He searches -- spots her -- boarding a trolley --

TOM

Steinbeck. He said that!

She stares. Confusion. But the trolley vanishes around a corner.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Tom at the yellow pages -- frantically flipping pages -- searching -- finger comes to rest, he's got it -- Steinbeck's Coffee Shop. Rips the page free, races out.

INT. BROWNSTONE - LATER

Trembling hand fumbles with a key. Jarred, Amy enters her apartment. Modest two-bedroom accented by an older woman's touch. Needlepoint, ceramic swans. She hangs up her coat, passes through the living room, kitchen. A daze: keys on the counter, bag on the table, purse in the fridge.

The fridge. Oblivious, she shuffles out.

INT. AMY'S ROOM - LATER

Framed black-and-white photographs line the walls: bay bridge, water, landscapes. Dresser overflows with old Nikons, lenses. Amy sits on the floor Indian-style with the blood and guts of a camera before her. Polishing every centimeter with a vengeance. A knock at the door reveals an older gal -- nurse outfit, dyed hair, bags under bright eyes. IRENE.

IRENE

You really want to keep this fresh, I recommend the freezer.

Amy looks up, askance. Irene with her purse.

IRENE

Found it in the fridge.

AMY

Oh. Guess I spaced out.

IRENE

Tough day?

AMY
(forced)
Nothing out of the ordinary.

Irene certainly knows better, but lets it alone. Heads out. Amy gets back to polishing. Polishing. Polishing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A FEW LATER

Irene, settled into the couch with a cup of tea. Glances up from dipping her bag -- Amy. Eyes red. Shoulders tight.

AMY
Yeah. Tough day.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Amy, pacing. Irene, listening.

IRENE
And what'd he say his name was?

AMY
Tom something. I don't know.

IRENE
And you're sure he's not from back home. School or --

AMY
I'm sure. Never seen him before in my life --

IRENE
Okay okay, slow down, sweetheart. Just trying to make sense of this.
(then)
He said he knew Kevin?

AMY
Yeah -- he said he met him --
after he was dead!

She's cracking. Wearing a hole in the carpet.

IRENE
And you're positive you didn't misunderstand him? You've been under an awful lot of --

AMY
Stop. Stop talking like my mother.

IRENE

Sweetie, my sister wouldn't be saying a word. She'd just sit ya down in front of the preacher for answers.

AMY

I know what I heard.

IRENE

Well maybe he was some kind of...conman? Trying to get you to buy the ring? I mean, did you look at it?

Amy stops. Exhausted. On the verge.

AMY

He read me. An inscription.
(finally)
Dearest Amy. Love, Kevin.

To say them. Out loud. Devastates her. Her knees buckle and she collapses into her aunt's lap. Sobbing.

AMY

I couldn't do it...buy a black dress...go sit in a pew. I...
(then)
If he really was on that plane to... My god. I... I killed him.

IRENE

Hey.

Amy clutches her tight. Fetal, child-like.

IRENE

No. You stop that. Shh...
Shh...

Irene sits up straight. Turns Amy toward her. And --

IRENE

Hey. Why'd the rabbit cross the road?

A moment. Amy holds out. Irene pokes her. Finally --

AMY

'Cause... He was stapled to a chicken.

It's a start. A little smile. WE WITHDRAW as --

IRENE
Knock, knock...

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Tom searches the storefronts. Arrives at his destination.
Steinbeck's Coffee Shop.

INT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

Greasy spoon. Booths and a counter. Regulars. He
searches their faces. To the annoyance of some. To his
own embarrassment.

Pulls out the Newsweek -- points out Kevin's mug to the
CASHIER --

TOM
Excuse me -- have you -- seen
this person?

She notes the context of the photo. Gives him the lunatic
once over, shakes her head. He can't blame her.

He wanders the rear dining room. Pokes his head into the
bathroom -- empty.

A final befuddled look and heads out.

EXT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

Out on the walk, staring at the restaurant. Utter
bewilderment. Wild goose chase. Sheer folly. Stomps out
of FRAME.

Just as a flickering light reflects in the coffee shop
window. Tom promptly steps back into FRAME, bowled over --

Across the street, A BLUE NEON sign coming to life. It's
letters clearly forming to read:

T O M , T H E W I N E C U R E S

He stands there, mouth agape, barely able to compute the
words. He blinks, he can't possibly be seeing this?! And
then their brothers and sisters alight:

STROMBERG, THOREAU & WINTERS SECURITIES

An I'll-be-damned gawk consumes his face --

TOM
Steinbeck's point of view...

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - FILE ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Brooks stands idle in the doorway. Concern carved in her face. Beyond her, Tom rifles through the file cabinets -- manic -- wild -- a foot of paper on the floor.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey?

But he doesn't hear her. Obsessed.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey, you vanish for two days? Now you do finally show up and... I've been concerned.

He finds it. A document. Reads it --

TOM

October 12, 1989...

MRS. BROOKS

The year you started the agency?

TOM

...family trust deed...Thomas Bailey grants ownership...Lot 1, Tract 5906...

His mind goes into overdrive.

TOM

Standing there eatin' those grapes. He asked me why. Why I sold.

MRS. BROOKS

Sold what? Who?

TOM

Kevin Miller.

MRS. BROOKS

Kevin Miller...?

TOM

He was on Flight 300.

She's lost. Fearful.

MRS. BROOKS

I don't understand.

TOM

I wouldn't expect you to.

He darts out the door. Then darts back in.

TOM
Mrs. Brooks. Judith. I'm
sorry.

MRS. BROOKS
For what?

TOM
For not telling you.

MRS. BROOKS
Telling me what?

TOM
Get everybody together tomorrow
morning, 9AM.

Takes ahold of her hand, gently --

TOM
I am sorry.
He leaves her. Anxiety ridden.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAWN

Sun peaks over the horizon. A new day.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAWN

In front of the mirror, straightening his tie. Clean
shaven, sharp suit.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Suitcases on the bed. Latches them shut.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Stands before the cupboard, trash can in hand. Takes a
breath and dumps each pill bottle, one by one.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

With the blunt end of a shovel, he pounds a Bailey Company
sign into the earth. For Sale.

Look of resolve.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

His staff assembled before him. Spectrum of emotion. Shock. Sympathy. Discomfort. But Tom's all anxious juice --

TOM

...I realize that this is a lot to take in all at once. And I apologize for that. I should've told you sooner. But this is the first time I've had a terminal illness. Not real practiced at it.

He smiles. They don't.

TOM

I hope you can all understand why I have to do this.

Nobody knows what to say. Or how. Finally --

NANCY

Of course we do.

BILL

Just tell us what you want us to do.

End of the table, Mrs. Brooks remains silent. Bloodshot eyes. Hard time with this.

TOM

You should be proud of yourselves. You've all helped build something great here. And my leaving shouldn't interrupt that. So. I've put together a proposal for you guys to buy me out, run with it, make it your own...

He breathes. Looks at each face. Each set of memories. Each reminder of what will soon be gone.

TOM

Now I know what you're all wondering...

(wry sigh)

Who's gonna get my office.

Strained chuckles. Lightens it. He swallows the emotion.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Tom and Mrs. Brooks riding down in silence.

MRS. BROOKS

There has to be a way, Mr. Bailey. All the new treatments --

TOM

Not new enough, I'm afraid.

MRS. BROOKS

Surely you can beat this. Keep the company. Your life.

TOM

Trust me, I am going to beat this.

And by god he seems to mean it.

MRS. BROOKS

But why -- like this?

TOM

Because. That's what he wants me to do.

MRS. BROOKS

This...Kevin person?

TOM

Yes.

MRS. BROOKS

But doesn't this grape growing business take a long time?

TOM

You and Forrester. He doesn't give me 'till New Years.

She can stand it no longer, boils --

MRS. BROOKS

Well -- fuck. Your favorite lunch is a chinese chicken salad but without the chicken -- even though that just makes it a chinese salad.

Shocks him. And her.

MRS. BROOKS

-- and you wear size thirty-
(more)

MRS. BROOKS (cont'd)
four briefs. Fruit of the
Loom. That I know. But
this...?

TOM
I'm sorry...

MRS. BROOKS
Stop it. Just stop it. How
can you be so -- you're willing
to place your illness in the
hands of some -- some dead
hallucination??

Paints it like it is. But there's instant regret. She
didn't mean it to come out that way.

MRS. BROOKS
I...apologize.

Elevator opens. They spill into the garage, arrive at his
car.

TOM
1989? Eleven years you put up
with me.

MRS. BROOKS
Guess so.

TOM
Ya know. I should've fired you
a long time ago.
(off her look)
You should be runnin' your own
place. God knows you ran mine.

He retrieves an envelope from his jacket. Hands it over.

TOM
Consider it start-up capital.
She's speechless. Salty eyes. They embrace. A long time.

MRS. BROOKS
Damn it. You better get
yourself well. Because I'll
never forgive myself for
letting you walk out of here
without a straightjacket.

His eyes smile. A last look, no words. He gets in the
car, starts it.

TOM
Goodbye, Mrs. Brooks.

MRS. BROOKS
Goodbye, Mr. Bailey.

And off he drives.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Pots and planters. Amy's place. Parked at the curb, the Porsche. Tom sets a package in the mailbox, heads back down the steps...

EXT. BERKELEY - AERIAL - AFTERNOON

Tom speeds through the perimeter of town. Car packed full of boxes, nervous grin stapled on his face. Excited anticipation.

EXT. BERKELEY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A row of quaint Colonials. Tom's car in front of one.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

MRS. WHITTAKER in the garage with a table saw. Tough old dame. Comfortable with a man's tools.

MRS. WHITTAKER
...Most old folks cash out,
they take up golf, buy an R.V.,
tinker in the garage. But not
him. Sonofabitch was convinced
we were gonna be Ernest and
Julio Gallo.

She chuckles. Misses the sonofabitch. Opposite her, Tom's hunched on a saw horse. Suit and tie, briefcase.

MRS. WHITTAKER
My Henry was out there every
day breakin' his back. But two
years, couldn't turn up a
sprout. Time he was done
carvin' up that dirt, wan't
worth half what ya sold it to
us for.

She cuts a slab of cherry wood across the saw. Breathes in the timber smell, familiar smile --

MRS. WHITTAKER
Rain in the forest, Sunday
morning walk.

He fidgets, impatient. She notes it, keeps on --

MRS. WHITTAKER

Three years on the market, not a bite. Cursed, I figured, that land. Then... When I lost him... Dunno, decided to hang on to it. Guess it went up in value for me.

A moment. She shakes it off, self-conscious.

MRS. WHITTAKER

What's your angle, Mr. Bailey?

TOM

How do you mean?

MRS. WHITTAKER

Come now. You didn't want it a dozen years ago. Now, after that god awful nightmare happens up there, you want it back?! Might odd.

He considers the truth. Refrains.

TOM

I have my reasons.

MRS. WHITTAKER

Well like I said, me too..
Sorry.

He stands, turns it on, Broker of the Year --

TOM

I'll meet list plus twenty percent.

MRS. WHITTAKER

Don't think you heard me.

TOM

Plus fifty percent. That's a half-a-million dollars.

Takes her aback.

MRS. WHITTAKER

A hundred people died on that land. My husband died on that land. What you want, this is a very eccentric thing, sir.

TOM

I realize that. I sold my
business. My house.

His eyes. The desperation.

MRS. WHITTAKER

What is it with you men? Some
calling from the dirt?

TOM

Somethin' like that.

Piqued, she sets up another slab of wood. Steps out of the way, nods for him to give it a go. Crazy old bird, he obliges, runs the board through. Splits like butter. She breathes in the scent, indicates for him to do the same. He does.

TOM

...Sawdust?

MRS. WHITTAKER

Aren't you the romantic.

TOM

...Pine?

MRS. WHITTAKER

Pathetic.

She shakes her head, walks out. Leaving him. Alone with the wood. And not much else.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Typetrays and floral wallpaper. Whittaker relishing an afternoon beer, cigarette. Couple sips, couple drags, and he enters.

TOM

Sunburn. Smells like sunburn.
And Old Spice. My
grandfather's aftershave.
Built trellises together on
that land. Sawing and
hammering the middle of August.
Hot as hell.

How could saying something so simple be so difficult? She studies him. The seven-hundred dollar shoes. The Porsche out front.

MRS. WHITTAKER

I remember now. The young man
(more)

MRS. WHITTAKER (cont'd)
 that sold us that vineyard.
 Grandfather just died, body
 barely cold. Wearin' his T-
 shirt and sandals, full a piss
 'n vinegar. Drivin' off with
 our check fast as he could.

TOM
 My grandfather had a faith in
 that land. Those grapes. I
 didn't share it.
 (then)
 That place. Saved my parents a
 few dollars on summer camp.
 That's all it was to me.

MRS. WHITTAKER
 Sunburn and Old Spice? Hm.
 Suddenly you want to get back
 to that?

TOM
 Don't want to.
 (then)
Have to.

She considers. His stern look. The nervous, clenched hands.

Another sip, another drag.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - DAY

Driving. Grin on his face. Piece of cherry wood on the passenger seat...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

The barren aftermath. Government pulled out, mourners replaced by crosses and flowers.

Tom's car, affront the farmhouse.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

He stands in the middle of the field. The ring-producing vine. Wilting. Only sign of life.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

He sets down his suitcases amidst the clouds of dust.
 Home, sweet home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Wandering. Broken windows and cobwebs. Random pieces of abandoned furniture. The banister he slid down. Third slat in the kitchen floor that creaks on cue. He's transported.

Arrives at the staircase. Pauses, a recollection. Runs his fingers along the grooved wood panels. Finds the sweet spot, pushes -- a crawl space revealed. A smile too. Can't help himself, kneels down, crouches inside -- barely fits. Closes the door behind him. Perfect hideout. Every thunderstorm, every mischievous misdeed.

Feels silly. Pushes on the door...jammed. Can see it now: *Man Found Dead in Crawl Space*. Rears up, rams against it -- topples out.

Laughs at himself.

INT. VINEYARD - WINERY - DAY

Doors slide open, light greets the long sleeping interior. He steps in, overcome. A series of rooms stepping down the hillside. Dormant vats and barrels, fermentation tanks, chutes, presses... And oddly, an upright Steinway piano in the corner...

Old friends.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DUSK

Door opens. Amy enters with bag in one arm, mail in the other. Sorts through the phone bills...coupon books... wrapped little package? Brown paper, no postal mark. Upturned brow as she goes to work on it. Inside, a small box. A folded note. She pulls it free: *Ms. Calhoun. My sincerest apologies for upsetting you. This belongs to you. Tom Bailey.*

She swallows. Stares at the box. Anything to avoid opening it. But the stall runs dry and she forces herself. Gingerly pulls it out. The ring. Real. Touches it. Yet keeps her distance.

Until she sees it. The inscription -- the part Tom failed to read -- *Dearest Amy, Love Kevin 6/12*. Knocks the shit out of her. 6/12. Impossible. How?

AMY

June...twelve...

INT. AMY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The glimmering diamond alone in a sea of formica. The kitchen table. Two pair of awestruck eyes gaze upon it. Like the holy grail. Amy and Irene.

IRENE

What's six-twelve?

AMY

(concealing)

I don't know.

IRENE

So. What are ya gonna do?

Forever before --

AMY

I don't know.

INT. AMY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Moonlight. A thin streak across the untouched ring. WE TRACK through the sleeping house...the bedroom...Amy in bed. Wide awake. Eyes on the ceiling.

Until she can take it no more -- stumbles out of bed -- through the hall -- into the kitchen -- sweeps the friggin' ring off the table, stuffs it back in its box -- tosses the box on the counter. Exits.

Only to march right back in -- throws the box in a cookie jar -- clamps it tight. Exits.

Only to march right back in -- climbs up onto the counter -- sticks the cookie jar in the highest cabinet she can reach. There. Exits once and for all.

CUT TO:

SERIES --

...Jeans and boots, hands and knees in the soil. Tom trowels the unyielding earth. Dry, malnourished...

...Digging, digging. An impenetrable floor...

...Deeper, deeper. Fingers in the black earth...

...He finds something. Gently tugs it free. A root. Alive. Anchored.

...Night. In the house. Lightbulbs, groceries, ice cooler. Setting up shop...

...On the floor with a pile of books. *Soil Fundamentals, The Grapevine, Irrigation Strategies...*

...Next day, in the dirt again. A dozen roots in his wake, isolated and drawn forth...

...A stake trellis pounds into the ground. He ties off a fledgling vine to its new support...

...A troop of stakes standing at attention. Row after row...

...The dirt road. A PAIR of local oglers in a Ford pick-up watch this strange man. Furrowed brows, dismissive smirks...

...Moonlight. Surgical mask and goggles. Tank in one hand, spray gun in the other. He douses the vines with pesticide...

...Bathroom. Brown water whirlpooling down the drain. And streaks of red. Tom, hunched in the shower, violently coughing. Blood...

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A calendar pinned to the wall. August. He's marked the passing days not with X's but with !'s. He enters, scratches another box. Another precious day.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

PVC pipes networking the rows. Irrigation. Wrench in hand, Tom battles the main water valve at the property line.

SUNDAY BEST (O.S.)

Whatchou doin'?

Startles him. AN OLDER WOMAN in her Sunday best. Frail but spirited. Clutching a giftwrapped present. Something about her. The way the wind seems to encircle her.

TOM

I'm... Tryin' to turn on my water.

SUNDAY BEST

You lives here?

TOM

Do now.

Her face crumples up. Hard time understanding that.

SUNDAY BEST

Uh-huh. Well.

He searches the road -- no car in sight.

TOM

How'd...you get here?

SUNDAY BEST

My own two feet.

He gives her the once-over. Wants to touch her, see if she's real.

TOM

Kind of a long walk from anywhere.

SUNDAY BEST

When I get tired, they carrys me.

TOM

Who?

SUNDAY BEST

The angels.

Enough for him -- he leaps up, frenetic --

TOM

--Why are you here -- whaddyou want with me??

SUNDAY BEST

I wants to leave this birthday gift for my daughter.

TOM

Then why me -- why not just talk to her??

SUNDAY BEST

'Cause she's dead, fool.
Didn't you see that big plane crash outside your porch??
What the matter with you?

Oh. Ahem.

TOM

I --... Nevermind.

SUNDAY BEST

So you mind I leave this or not?

TOM

No. Of course not.

She sighs, looks around. Searches. Finds the perfect spot, sets the gift down. Backs away, assesses its placement. Frets. Paces. Something's not right.

SUNDAY BEST

Will you open it?

TOM

Sorry?

SUNDAY BEST

Birthday presents gotta be opened.

TOM

You want me to open it?

SUNDAY BEST

Well I can't open it, I bought it.

Awkward, he takes it from her. Peels away the wrapping. Opens the box. Sheet music. Chopin's *Lady of the Camellias*.

SUNDAY BEST

So?

He plays the part as best he can.

TOM

Oh. I. Love it. Thanks.

SUNDAY BEST

She was a musician. Goin' to school for it and everythin'.

She shakes her head. Then, to the sky --

SUNDAY BEST

Well. Happy birthday, Celia.

She starts off. But stops. Just now realizing. The vineyard.

SUNDAY BEST

You replantin'? Here?

TOM

Yes ma'am. That okay?

She's not sure. Not really sure.

Tom's grip slips -- the wrench cranks, the valve opens --

water races through the PVC pipes, spraying over the land in a cascading shower -- the sun slices through the mist -- heavenly -- and a brilliant rainbow is born.

The sheer beauty of it. Reaches inside her.

SUNDAY BEST

Yes. It just fine.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, on the porch. Staring out at his labor. A few days' stubble. Literally twiddling his thumbs. Waiting.

EXT. VINEYARD - TIME LAPSE

Day turns to night. Turns to day. To night...

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Tom and the roots. And the vines. Or lack thereof. Barren, unforgiving soil. Dead soil.

He flops down amongst the posts. Pale. Frustration. Blank stare into the indifferent YELLOW MOON.

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dark but for that YELLOW GLOW out the window. Amy, wide awake. Tossing, turning. Wrestling with it. Endless. Throws back the blanket as if it were the culprit.

INT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

A corner booth. Amy. Staring at a cup of coffee. Heavy heart, muddled mind.

Fluorescent sign BUZZING across the street -- Stromberg, Thoreau & Winters Securities...

INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Front door creaks open. Amy tiptoes inside, traipses for her room -- an eruption of light -- kitchen fluorescents flash on: Aunt Irene in a robe. Amy exhales, heart attack.

IRENE

I've been craving a Nutter Butter for days now. But I just couldn't seem to place the cookie jar...

Caught, Amy reddens. Irene pushes forward the ring box.

IRENE

I talked to your mother, dear.
She's worried about you.

AMY

What's new. Single mother
syndrome.

IRENE

You haven't slept. You haven't
eaten.

AMY

Irene --

IRENE

I also talked to your mother
about...June twelfth.

Amy looks away. Irene moves to her, holds out the ring.

IRENE

You need to talk to that man.
Whoever he is.

A stern motherly gaze. Amy finally takes the ring.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - PRE-DAWN

Amy prowls the dark corridors of the pre-dawn offices. All nerves, she creeps her way into an office -- rounds the desk, gently CREAKS open a drawer as emerging sun reflects through a window -- she hurries -- not good at this -- finds a key -- races down a hall -- fumbles to unlock a door -- slips inside...

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - A FEW LATER

Amy, seated behind the all-powerful DMV computers. Nervous anticipation as she enters letters: B A I L E Y. The hardware WHIRS. Loud. Surely someone will hear? Finally, screen after screen spits forth records, addresses, driver history...

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Tom, in his sleeping bag. A pair of feet arrive at his side. He cracks his eyes open:

RICHARD

Love what you've done with the
place.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Tom emerges with pudding cups. Offers one up --

TOM

Breakfast?

RICHARD

I see you're eating well.

TOM

Subtle segue.

RICHARD

Segue?

TOM

To the friendly doctor-knows-best lecture that you surely came here to deliver.

Forrester bristles, but gets to it --

RICHARD

Still on your meds?

TOM

You bet.

Okay. Forrester sighs, produces a ziplock bag. The discarded pill bottles.

RICHARD

Then I guess these just accidentally ended up in your garbage?

TOM

Oops.

RICHARD

Needless to say, Mrs. Brooks was concerned.

TOM

It's not about pills anymore.

RICHARD

Tom, I'm glad you made a change, I really am. But this? My. Doesn't look so good.

TOM

What? Is it the beard ya don't like?

RICHARD

It looks like you came up here
to die. All alone. Is this
how you want to do it?

TOM

Just how exactly am I supposed
to do it?? Richard. You don't
know a thing about what I'm
doing. Go home.

RICHARD

Tom --

TOM

You my friend or my keeper?
Because this damned-if-I-do,
damned-if-I-don't is getting a
little old.

He descends the steps, traipses into the field. Richard
gives a moment, then follows. Redirects --

RICHARD

So. When do you plant the
vines?

Gee, that helped.

TOM

These are the vines.

RICHARD

Oh.

Tom erupts, it getting to him --

TOM

What the hell's the matter with
your eyes? Can't you see?!
They're blossoming with life?
This is a spectacular harvest --
it's a fucking surplus --

Cracking, he seizes a root, yanks it outta the ground --

TOM

-- the fruit of my labors --
the--

He instantly goes quiet. For there, tumbled from the
root's bosom...

A 35mm camera. A Minolta, scuffed and scarred.

RICHARD

My. What kind of fertilizer
you usin'?

Tom kneels gingerly, pries it free of the root's tentacles.

TOM

It's one of theirs...

RICHARD

Theirs?

The hatch springs open. Inside, a capsule of film.
Rewound, undamaged. He catches his breath --

Stands. Alive again. Marches toward the house --

TOM

Thanks for stopping by, Richard.

Richard blinks -- what the...?

EXT. PENNGROVE - ONE-HOUR PHOTO - DAY

Tom anxiously counting the minutes.

INT. PORSCHE - LATER

He rifles through the photographs: mountains. Nomadic
peoples. An exotic plant, shot after shot -- two dozen.
And...

The last photograph. On board the plane. Blurred, but
distinguishable. A man in his seat, photographing himself.
Behind him, chaos. Yet he is calm. Eyes staring into the
camera. Almost summoning. Fear, yet warmth. Fingers held
to his chest in a V -- peace sign.

A man's last moment. A silent voice from the dead.

EXT. HEAVENS - DAY

A 747 screams through the clouds --

INT. 747 - TRAVELING - DAY

Tom white-knuckling his seat. On edge, given the mode of
travel. In his hands, the Newsweek collage: a photo of the
man, the Minolta's owner. Less the beard, year or two
younger, but unmistakably the same.

Tom flips through the developed photos, the bizarre, leafy

plant. Brown and yellow, odd configuration of spores.
Picture after picture -- close, wide, far.

Unusual.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

He drives. Palm trees and wetlands. Florida. Sunshine
suburbia.

EXT. JACOBS' ESTATE - DAY

Parks it at the curb and strolls up the expansive estate.
Statues and waterfalls. Goes for the door knocker -- only
to be stopped by an arrow in the heart -- of the rubber toy
variety. A seven-year-old tyke (RUSTY) emerges from behind
a fountain donning a headdress and facepaint, cupping his
hand to his mouth --

RUSTY

You're dead. Now I get to
scalp ya.

TOM

Yikes.

The kid stands there, scrunched up face.

RUSTY

You're supposed to fall down
and bleed your guts out.

Ill-equipped, Tom rings the bell.

TOM

Is your mom home?

RUSTY

I don't have a mom. I was
raised by wolves.

Mama wolf, MRS. JACOBS, appears at the door. Housewife of
the Prada and Gucci variety.

TOM

Mrs. Jacobs? Tom Bailey.. We
spoke yesterday.

MRS. JACOBS

(off-guard)

Oh. Yes? But -- I thought you
lived...

TOM

I do. I caught the red eye.

Wary, she reaches out to her son --

MRS. JACOBS
Rusty, come inside.

But the boy defiantly stands where he is.

MRS. JACOBS
Whatever you claim you found, I
told you to speak to the
airline --

TOM
Yes, ma'am, but I--

MRS. JACOBS
How exactly did you get my
address?

TOM
You're listed.

MRS. JACOBS
I'm not giving you any money.

TOM
I'm sorry?

MRS. JACOBS
They told us about the likes of
you. Whatever belonged to my
husband, I've already collected
from the airline.

She pushes the door shut. He pulls out the Minolta. She
freezes. Mouth agape.

EXT. PATIO - LATER

Manicured lawn, marble pond. On the patio, Tom and Mrs.
Jacobs. Minolta and photographs on the table. But she's
entirely too preoccupied -- polishing a silver box. Odd
casualness.

MRS. JACOBS
He takes that camera everywhere
with him. Yes indeed.

TOM
I had them developed because I
didn't know who--

MRS. JACOBS
It's fine.

A man's cigarette case. She's polishing a man's cigarette

case.

MRS. JACOBS

Ridiculous. For all the claims of this polish, it simply won't bring back the luster.

He shifts, uneasy. Eyes escape to the yard -- exploding with fruit trees, exotic flowers, a giant green house. Practically a Seventh Wonder of the World.

TOM

Your husband worked with plants?

MRS. JACOBS

He does, he does. Brian's a botanical chemist. Partners with Hutt and Meyers, pharmaceuticals.

Jesus -- of course -- a ray of light pierces the haze -- he fumbles for the photos --

TOM

These plants --

MRS. JACOBS

Mm? Oh, Afghanistan. He'd only just returned. Hardly popped in for hello's before he was off again to the bay area. Busy, busy. Missed Rusty's T-ball game. He got two singles and a double.

TOM

So they're medicinal?

MRS. JACOBS

Would you like to know something shocking?

TOM

Please.

MRS. JACOBS

His funeral cost twelve thousand dollars. You believe that?

TOM

Uh. Sorry.

MRS. JACOBS

Brian and I have money, that's not the issue. I was merely surprised, that's all. How do some people afford that?

TOM
 (pushing)
 Mrs. Jacobs, do you know if
 there was a particular area of
 medicine he was--

MRS. JACOBS
 Rusty! Get down from there!

She leaps up -- the little Indian's scaling a tree.

RUSTY
 Shut up, I can climb it if I
 want!

MRS. JACOBS
 No. You cannot just climb
 trees all day.

RUSTY
 Why not?

She doesn't have an answer. He sticks out his tongue and
 runs off. Sigh, she returns to her seat. Smiles,
 attempting to hide it. But obviously rattled. Our first
 glimpse. Then, almost as an afterthought --

MRS. JACOBS
 Cancer.

He nearly falls out of his chair.

TOM
 Your -- husband was looking
 for -- a cure?

MRS. JACOBS
 Oh no, he wasn't looking. No,
 no.

(casual)
 He found it.

He does fall out of his chair. She pays no mind --

MRS. JACOBS
 Damn this tarnish.

Holds up the cigarette case, shakes her head --

MRS. JACOBS
 Married, Mr. Bailey?

TOM
 I -- no -- but you were saying--

MRS. JACOBS

The things that come up. He said he quit smoking. Our housekeeper found the Marlboro butts in his desk drawer. Well. I got upset. So then he got upset. All of a sudden we're fighting. And out he storms...

(winces)

Takes an earlier flight.

Air leaves his lungs. Bowled over. This whole thing.

MRS. JACOBS

I'm sorry, you were asking?

TOM

You...said he found...

MRS. JACOBS

Oh yes. At least that's what he thinks. But Brian has his detractors. Always has.

TOM

San Francisco. That's where Hutt and Meyers is based? He was taking them these pictures?

She finally flips through them. As if perusing snapshots from a family vacation. Until the last one, the self-portrait on the plane. Jarring. Cold water in the face.

MRS. JACOBS

Why? ... Why are you here, Mr. Bailey?

TOM

I -- just thought it was important...-- Did he bring plants back with him from his trip?

MRS. JACOBS

You could have mailed these. I really don't understand what you're doing.

He's backed into a corner. Looks her squarely --

TOM

I know this might sound odd. But what your husband found. I think -- I think it's meant to help me. Save me.

She stares at him. Her eyes at last focused, quivering, as if waking from a slumber --

MRS. JACOBS

You must understand something.

My husband is--

(breath)

was obsessed. He came back like he always came back, saying he'd finally found it. This was hardly the first time. That he thought he'd discovered...

She trails off. The photograph. Tormenting her.

TOM

But Mrs. Jacobs, maybe this time--

MRS. JACOBS

I tell you, you're really just wasting your time here. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an appointment.

She up and walks inside. Leaving him sitting there.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Tom starts the car, empty-handed.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Eyeballing the rearview mirror as he leaves the house behind. Brick wall. Exasperation building. Makes a decision --

Cranks the wheel.

EXT. SIDE STREET - LATER

The afternoon sun hangs lower. Parked around a corner, Tom spies the Jacobs Estate. Car backs out of the driveway, zooms past.

He starts the engine.

EXT. JACOBS BACK YARD - DAY

He scales the brick wall, creeps into the yard. Swallows hard, scoops up the photos still on the patio table, goes for the greenhouse --

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

A state of the art botanical biosphere. African violet, Ginkgo biloba, Asian hemlock... He searches the endless indoor landscape, comparing plants and herbs with the photos.

Arrives at the man's work station. Hundreds of microscopes, test tubes, terrariums, freezers. Grateful Dead CD's on the stereo, incense, books by Leary and Ginsburg. He moves on -- shit, a NOISE -- he's caught --

An arrow in the back of the head. Little Geronimo, in the doorway --

TOM

I -- where's your mom?

RUSTY

Gone.

TOM

You're by yourself?

RUSTY

I'm supposed to be taking a nap at the Abernathy's next door. Shhhh.

TOM

Make ya a deal, I won't tell if you won't.

Kid nods.

RUSTY

How come you're in here?

On edge, Tom continues his search, doesn't answer.

RUSTY

Know what? I'm Dalzar, mutant human hybrid from the twenty-eighth century.

He pulls out a flashy action figure. Plops him into a terrarium.

RUSTY

Have to save the planet from the Falconian wasp monsters. But first I gotta escape from their torture cave.

TOM

Uh-huh...

RUSTY
(hopeful)
You can be my partner. If ya
want.

He offers up another action figure. But Tom's a little
preoccupied --

TOM
Is this the only place your
daddy kept his plants?

The kid's playtime exuberance stops cold. Eyes to the
floor.

RUSTY
I dunno. He's. Out of town...

Tom glances up from his self-absorption. Sees what he did.
Feels like shit.

TOM
Hey, I didn't mean to...

RUSTY
Dalzar can't escape.
(quiet)
Without his partner.

TOM
Well. We can't have that.

Tom sticks out his hand. Brightening, Rusty hands over the
second action figure: a Flash Gordon.

TOM
Huh... I used to...

RUSTY
Flash has to fly his ship over
and lower a rescue line.

Tom inadequately holds Flash over the torture cave.

TOM
Okay then -- uh, crawl on up.

RUSTY
On what?

TOM
Well -- pretend there's a rope?

RUSTY
Nuh-uh -- you're doing it
wrong. First, there has to be
(more)

RUSTY (cont'd)
cool sound effects for the
spaceship -- CH-CH-CH-CH!

Bolts to his feet, escalating -- bounds across the room --

RUSTY
--And then if he was here, what
he'd do is -- he'd fly Flash
Gordon over to the Dark
Mountains -- CH-CH-CH-CH --
battle the giant beetle bugs --
POW BLAMMO BANG! -- to get the
magic stretchy branches!!

TOM
Hey shhh, remember?

RUSTY
--Then he'd tie 'em to Flash's
leg and fly him -- CH-CH-CH-
CH -- zooming down to the
rescue --

Racing back, he brushes into Tom -- tumbling the photos to
the floor --

RUSTY
Do it like that. Do it like he
did it.

Like my dad did it. Tom, the substitute. Doesn't even
know where to begin. So he doesn't -- scrambles to pick up
the photos -- the noise, the mess, running out of time --

But then stops. Realizing. Staring back at him all this
time. The photograph of Jacobs on the plane -- his fingers
on his chest, the V -- the peace sign.

RUSTY
C'mon, the wasp monsters are
attacking!

Tom spins to the man's work station -- there it is -- next
to the incense tray, a tattered sticker -- a peace sign, on
a lock box. He snatches it -- frantic -- searches for its
corresponding key -- desk, cabinet, no dice -- screw it, he
throws it to the ground -- it catapults open -- eureka! A
bounty of hermetically sealed plants -- the plant -- yellow
and brown, the spores. A journal and video tape as well.

Nervous, uncontrolled smile on his face. Everything
leading to this. His panacea? Frenzied, he gathers the
plants, the accompanying journal and video tape, replaces
the lock box, and walks right past the kid out the door.

Rusty trails as Tom sets the photos back on the table.

RUSTY
What are you taking?

TOM
Borrowing.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Tom hops in the car under the boy's confused eye.

TOM
You take care, okay?

RUSTY
How?

TOM
Well. Just hang in there.

RUSTY
You didn't save him. Dalzar's
dead.

Tom blanches. This heartbreaking kid.

RUSTY
All ya had to do was fly to the
Dark Mountains and get the
stretchy branches. That's all
you had to do.

His little eyes grow heavy, watery. His brow scrunches up,
flustered.

RUSTY
How come? How come you
couldn't do that?

Tom struggles for an answer. But the kid's not waiting
around, hurls his Flash Gordon at him, into the car.
Trudges off, disappears around the house.

Tom's eyes fall to the floor. Where Flash stares back at
him. Even he seems disappointed in him.

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - DUSK

Establishing. Frequent FLIERS grabbing tea, checking in.

ANGLE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Skeptical awe on Tom's face. Staring at a monitor, Jacobs'
video tape playing: *Nomadic mountain people. Furs and
kelts. Makeshift drums and horns before a raging fire. A*

ritual dance encircling a sickly young woman. She lay on a grass platform, drawing smoke from a long, ceremonial pipe.

FAST FORWARD -- the ceremony continues, building with intensity, rhythm. Tom focuses on the pipe. Its spiraling smoke. The woman. Trembling, ill. Eager eyes.

Not unlike his own.

INT. 747 - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Headed home, Tom pours through the man's journal. Page after page of cryptic notes and figures. Scientific chicken scratch.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Where'd you come up with this?

TOM (V.O.)

Just tell me what it means.

INT. PENNGROVE - DRUG STORE - DAY

Tom at the local copy machine. The journal. Blood counts, stats...

RICHARD (V.O.)

Patient chronologies. At least from what I can tell. T-cell counts before and after. Some kind of treatment.

TOM (V.O.)

For cancer?

INT. FORRESTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Journal pages spit forth from a fax machine. Forrester curiously ingests them as they come.

RICHARD (V.O.)

So it would seem. Look Tom, I don't know what quack you got these from -- but -- it's fiction --

TOM (V.O.)

Richard. Please.

RICHARD (V.O.)

(sigh)

They start through the roof, then stabilize.

TOM (V.O.)
Over how long?

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, in the kitchen. Eyes locked dead ahead. The pack of herbs before him.

RICHARD (V.O.)
It's ludicrous. Days.

TOM (V.O.)
Remission, isn't it?

RICHARD (V.O.)
I don't know what kind of so-called -- treatment -- this is. But you can't just be experimenting with your body--

TOM (V.O.)
It's remission, isn't it?

A sigh of resignation --

RICHARD (V.O.)
Sure, Tom. Sure.

Tom's gaze doesn't budge. A long moment.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Decided, he rips open the pack -- immediately met with a ghastly aroma. Tears free a bud, grinds it in his fingers. Lays the herb inside a rolling paper.

CUT TO:

A JOINT

The joint of all joints. Tom lights her up. Self-conscious, acutely aware of the absurdity. But what the hell, takes a deep drag.

Hacks like a kid's first Marlboro.

SERIES --

...Tom's boom box. CD spins, speakers fill with Bob Marley's *Jamming*...

...His eyes but red slits, his head a ten thousand pound bowling ball on his shoulders...

...Rolls another doobie, air drumming to the steel drum

beat...

...On the roof with Flash Gordon, token' to the moonlight,
ear to ear grin...

...Loads another, an old pro...

...Munchies -- bags of Doritos and Hostess treats ravaged
before him...

...Onward and upward to a water bong...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Arms over his head, standing before the mirror. Examines
his armpits -- lymph nodes swollen, discolored.

Some cure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Transfixed on his newly purchased TV. Replaying Jacobs' tape. Searching for subtleties missed. The woman in the circle. The ceremonial pipe. What's he doing wrong?

INT. PENNGROVE - SMOKE SHOP - DAY

The VENDOR pulls from beneath the glass case an ornate wooden pipe. Long and narrow. Close enough, Tom pulls out his wallet.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Before the video again. Pipe in his hands, he's flat on the floor, emulating the woman's exact posture, technique. Looks ridiculous, has to laugh. But does it anyway.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hunched over the toilet, he nearly throws a kidney. Violent retching.

More blood.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - DAY

Elevators open. Amy. Steps into the busy workplace. Despite Tom's absence, the Bailey Company has moved along fine. She navigates the maze of cubicles, arrives at Tom's office -- sees a woman through the door. Mrs. Brooks. Tenderly packing away the Broker of the Year plaque.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - DAY

Amy nervously stands before her government Supervisor who takes his government job very government seriously.

SUPERVISOR

...so what you're really asking for is a personal day.

AMY

I haven't used a single sick day in the last two years. I'm just asking for this one... favor.

SUPERVISOR

Mmn. This an emergency?

AMY

Technically, no.

SUPERVISOR

Ms. Calhoun, you know the policy for personal days. Fill out a form, week in advance.

AMY

Yes, I know. But if you can make an exception just this once...?

He scrunches up his face. Irked.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The pack. Depleted, down to the last bud. Tom stares at it. Do or die. Literally.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Again, in front of the TV, studying the wild, nomadic ritual. Has been for hours.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

He hauls firewood, kindling, old boards into a pile...

Runs cable from the house...

Carries the TV, VCR into the field...

Douses the wood with lighter fluid...

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

A MATCH SPARKS in the dark breeze...tossed into the pyre...flames rage --

Tom hits the remote and the outdoor video feed comes to life. Dueling ceremonies. The direst of circumstances, he lights the pipe, hands quaking, then gives it his best shot. Stilted, awkward, he kicks up his heels, does like the natives do. Attempting to match each beat, each step as he circles the wild flames.

A madman?

Yes. He stops cold. Feels like an ass. A goddamned ass. Senses he's being watched.

Because he is. A DEER across the way eyes this lunatic.

TOM

What? You lookin' at me?
Huh?! Do I entertain you?

The deer snorts, indulges him.

TOM

Standin' here in the middle of
a goddamn airline crash!
Smoking god knows what! What's
left of my skin stinkin' of
imminent death?!

The deer cocks her head.

TOM

Well step right up, enjoy the
show!

He jumps up and down on one foot, flails back and forth, lets out a WAIL --

TOM

How ya like that? Yessir, put
your right foot in, take your
right foot out, s'what the
cancer dance is all about!
Whew, feel better already --
I'm cured -- I'm cured!

He HOWLS, spinning like a top, arms this way and that. The fire rages. The AFGHANI BEAT surges, creeping up on him. Spinning, spinning. Losing himself. Releasing. His own ceremony in full bloom...

ANGLE - DIRT ROAD

A pair of headlights approach...

VINEYARD

Tom WAILS. Faster, faster. Laughing, laughing. Wild, furious, passionate.

DIRT ROAD

The car parks. Lights extinguish. The driver peers at the bizarre ongoing.

Amy. Struggling to comprehend the oddity her eyes take in. Steps out of the car, edges closer.

Below, Tom rages on. Arms stretched to the sky. A million miles from here.

She beholds the spectacle. Captivated. This display of lunacy. And yet that smile on his face, it's magnetic. Makes her smile. But then she's embarrassed that she's smiling. She reels it in -- this isn't funny -- this is pitiful. She turns away. Only to turn back. Can't take her eyes off.

Exhausted, he finally falls to the earth. Elation. A child on summer grass. Contented smile.

The curtain closing, the deer nods a farewell and heads on her way.

Amy tiptoes out of the asylum, shaking her head. Bolts to her car, kicking herself. Key in the ignition, halfway home. But no. She's not going anywhere. Can't.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Late. A dim light.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A huddled mass in the corner. Blankets, trembling. Within, a shivering Tom. Soaked in sweat. Wheezing.

Paying the price.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAWN

The sun awakens. Though Amy's been up all night. Back seat of her car, clutching the object of her insomnia. The ring. Turning it round and round... Dearest Amy, Love Kevin 6/12.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Amy stepping onto the porch. A reassuring breath and knocks on the door. Waits. No answer. Tries again. Peers through the boarded bay window -- the dark living room.

And Tom. Still enveloped in the blankets, crouched on the floor. Lifeless. Eyes wide open.

AMY

Mr...Bailey?

He slowly turns his head. His eyes come to focus. Sees her. Might be more surprised if he gave a damn anymore.

TOM

Ms. Calhoun. Please come in.

She tentatively steps inside. Nose met with the scent of sickness.

TOM

Pull up a chair.

There are no chairs. He attempts a chuckle. Comes out a cough.

AMY

You look... Not so good.

TOM

Allergies.

Right. No welcome mat, she gets to it. Pulls out the ring --

AMY

What is this? Seriously. What exactly is this?

TOM

Trick question?

AMY

'Cause I can't figure it out -- haven't slept in-- the Amy and Kevin part, whatever, but there's no way in hell you could've known that date.

TOM

Date?

AMY

Come on, the inscription --
(more)

AMY (cont'd)

June 12?! Our prom, only it
wasn't the real prom because--
and just -- how?

He doesn't respond. Watches her. The tide of emotion.
These two people. Life's valleys.

TOM

I'm going to have some pudding.
You?

AMY

What??

TOM

Chocolate. It's good.

Strange. Throws her off track. He climbs to his feet, a
little trouble with that balance thing. Traipses into the
kitchen. She surveys the ramshackle lodging. The
agriculture books. The unusual pipe. The unopened bag of
pills.

TOM

Pardon the plastic, the maids
are polishing the silver.

He enters, hands her a plastic spoon, pudding cup. An
awkward silence. The onus on her. The ring.

AMY

Hello? Don't you have anything
to say?

TOM

Not particularly.

AMY

Great.

He just eats his pudding, not giving her an inch. Tables
turned. She turns snide --

AMY

Well have you... 'seen him'
again?

TOM

'Fraid not.

AMY

Uh-huh. What about Steinbeck's?

He shrugs. And there they are. The well run dry, she
slams down her pudding, moves for the door --

AMY

Thanks a lot for the pudding.

He nods a farewell. But she can't walk out. Cracking, eyes welling --

AMY

I don't get it -- I don't get you.

TOM

Don't beat yourself up about it.

AMY

I'm sorry for your --
'allergies' -- but you're the
one who came to me. And you
know what? To hell with you
for that. For -- for...

She trails off, what's the point? But it hits home. And he feels like an asshole.

TOM

For raising your hopes.

(then)

I'm sorry. I know what that
is. Probably shouldn't have
gone to you in the first place.

AMY

So...what? Now you think you
imagined seeing him?

TOM

Maybe. I don't know.

AMY

(the ring)

Then what about this?

TOM

Souvenir. Doesn't mean
anything.

That's not good enough -- erupts --

AMY

I saw you last night. What the
hell did that mean? I -- you --
you've lost your shit ya know
that? Completely.
Certifiable. Rubber room.

TOM

Thanks for the newsflash. I
(more)

TOM (cont'd)
was so completely unaware of
that fact.

He's now licking the pudding cup clean. Christ, she can't
take it anymore. Just wants some order, truth...

AMY
If. If you know something,
then I deserve to know. 'Cause
if this is just some twisted
con...
(vulnerable)
Then...please...just tell me.

TOM
Con... Yeah, that's it. I've
sold my business, my house,
bought the place I grew up in
all just to con you. Makes a
lotta sense. Ya know --
just...go.

He moves for the door, finishes her off --

TOM
This isn't about anybody else
but me. My little made-up
fantasy world. There are no
ghosts, no Kevin Miller, no
magical connection, no cure.
There's nothing in that field
but dirt. Dead dirt.

He throws open the door --

TOM
And...vines...?!
Utter, heart-stopping bafflement. For the barren, dry
field is no more -- in its place, a maze of foot-tall
adolescent vines. Healthy, burgeoning leaves reaching for
the sun. Dozens.

TOM
W-What's...going...on...?

She arrives at his side, unimpressed. He bolts outside --

TOM
Those -- are new. Really new.
Like from yesterday new.

AMY
Excuse me?

TOM

That was the Sahara yesterday.

AMY

Okay...?

He bounds into the dirt to be amongst his children.
Touches them, inhales them. Life. Rebirth. Strong and
vibrant. She follows, ever mystified by this man.

AMY

Sure you're not imagining this,
too?

TOM

You said you were here last
night, did you see 'em then?

AMY

It was dark. Didn't see
anything.

TOM

Trust me.

He's running now -- bursting -- greeting each impossible
vine like a long lost friend.

AMY

Lemme guess, you traded a cow
in for some little beans or--

TOM

I'm tellin' you -- I've been
here for two weeks and there
hasn't been one weed -- I know
how this--

AMY

Shut up.

TOM

Look, I--

But her eyes are frozen --

AMY

Shut up.

He stops. Follows the path of her stare -- nestled in a
limb's leafy paw...gift-wrapped in stems...delicately
presented for the world to see, sparkling like a
prospector's treasure...

A set of keys on a ring. Car keys. They share a look.
His sanity validated. Her hope quenched.

AMY
I believe you.

INT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tom pacing, effervescent --

TOM
I'd like to know what the
hell's goin' on here?

AMY
You and me both.

Bouncing off the walls, he walks, pounds his head, breaks
the strewn pipe in half --

TOM
Runnin' around like an idiot.
Stoned outta my mind for what?
Can probably add lung cancer to
the list. For what? For what?
A set of spare keys?! Am I
supposed to be growing grapes
or running a lost and found?

AMY
I don't know. Maybe... You
just gotta see where it takes
you.

He stares out the window. A hard nervous laugh.

TOM
Where it takes me? Uh-huh.
And that'll take how long?
Just -- nevermind -- there are
things -- things you don't know.

But she does know.

AMY
Well. What's the alternative?

He sits down. No alternatives.

AMY
Besides. I hear Cloverdale's
nice this time of year.

She tosses him the keys. Stamped on the back of the key
chain: DONNY SHOEMAKER'S AUTOWORLD -- CLOVERDALE,
CALIFORNIA.

AMY
Maybe we should take a drive?

TOM

We?

AMY

This whole thing. Started with
Kevin.

He considers.

INT./EXT. PORSCHE - TRAVELING - DAY

The lonely highway. The pair ride in awkward silence.
Strangers thrust together. She attempts to take the edge
off --

AMY

Still has new car smell.

He nods, adjusting to a stowaway on his journey.

AMY

Somebody should bottle that and
sell it.

TOM

They do.

AMY

No kidding?

TOM

No kidding.

She fidgets. Camera in her lap. Her goto inanimate object.

TOM

Photographer, huh?

AMY

Yeah. No. Maybe.

More silence. He cuts to it --

TOM

She told you, didn't she?

AMY

What?

TOM

Mrs. Brooks.

AMY

(lie)
Told me what?

TOM

Come on. You haven't asked me one question. Gee Tom, why'd ya quit your job?; how come you're so obsessed?; and oh yeah, Tom, why do those 'allergies' make ya look like a Feed-the-Children ad?

No use. She comes clean.

AMY

Sorry. Figured it was yours to talk about.

TOM

Just as well. Somebody's gonna have to explain it to the coroner.

She stares at him, aghast. He smiles.

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Tom emerges with a tray, climbs back into the car --

TOM

Your bran muffin, my chili dog;
your orange juice, my Slurpee;
and two hot gourmet coffees.
Cream, sugar?

AMY

Black's fine.

He takes a heaping bite out of the sloppy dog --

TOM

(mouth full)
Wanna bite?

She doesn't answer. He starts it up, drives. And more silence.

AMY

So what. Was he translucent or something?

Takes him a second. Slurping his Slurpee.

TOM

No. Wasn't rattling any chains either.

AMY

He wasn't injured or bleeding...?

TOM
Nothing like that.

AMY
What'd he have on? I mean --
clothes?

TOM
Looked like a regular guy.
Jeans, shirt, cowboy boots, I
think. Baseball cap.

AMY
Royals.

TOM
That's the one.

AMY
(awe)
Always wore that ratty thing...
What else? Did he seem. Okay?
Happy?

TOM
(careful)
He knew. He wasn't going to
see you again. Wasn't gonna
get to...ask you.

Stings. Bad.

AMY
Yeah, well then that's
bullshit. I thought it was
supposed to be so great,
peaceful.

TOM
I...

Don't know. And that ticks her off.--

AMY
He was right there? Right in
front of you? Why?! Why
weren't you paying attention? --
you must've missed something--

TOM
(yields)
Maybe.

AMY
Why you? Why the hell did you
get to see him?

TOM

I don't know.

(then)

After the crash, did you go...?

She dodges. No. Guilt. Fingers crush into the bran muffin. Doesn't even realize.

AMY

Goddamn turkey legs.

She looks at him as if that should explain everything.

AMY

College. He came up with this bright idea to sell turkey legs on the street. Like hot dogs or pretzels. Took out a loan, bought the carts, all that.

TOM

Turkey legs? Kinda good idea.

AMY

It's a stupid idea. Out of business in a week, defaulted on the loan, bankruptcy, total mess. He... He should've known better. Mr. Spontaneity.

Her voice cracks, she stops. More at work here than turkey. He eyes her. Drives.

EXT. CLOVERDALE - DAY

Driving down the off-ramp. Small town-turned-mini-mall haven.

EXT. DONNY SHOEMAKER'S AUTOWORLD - DAY

Giant neon sign, used cars by the hundreds. Through the showroom window, Tom and Amy at the desk of a SALES MANAGER. A few words and the man turns to his computer, clicks away...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A cloud of dust as the Porsche pulls up to a gated ranch. Parked out front in the grass, a beat-up Chevy. Sky blue, '68 convertible. "For Sale" sign on the dash.

Eerie. Keys in Amy's hands. Lonely kinship. Tom drives through the gates.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Log cabin-style home, acres of grassy plains, barn. Tom and Amy park it, climb out. A stillness in the air as they ascend the porch steps. About to knock when --

A SHRIEK. They turn -- a tall, gawky CREATURE vanishes around the house.

AMY

What...was...that?

It appears again with another CRY -- this time in full glory -- AN OSTRICH?! Ruffled and posturing. Gives a warning SQUAWK -- they backstep around the corner --

Oh shit -- right into a pack of THIRTY MORE on the other side of a corral fence --

BIRDY (O.S.)

G'dangit, Harriet -- get away from those folks!

The bird bobs her neck in protest and scampers off. The chubby little man ambles up. BIRDY BANKS. Fifty-somethin', looks older. Big, bright eyes, a broad, embarrassed grin --

BIRDY

My apologies. Old bird's a bit of a quack.

(sticks out his hand)

Birdy Banks.

TOM

Tom Bailey, Amy Calhoun. Hell of a watchdog you got there.

BIRDY

Aw, she's harmless. Just a little outta sorts lately.

(then)

What can I do fer ya?

TOM

Jerry Banks. Your son?

A flinch. Then a fond smile.

BIRDY

The one and only. What's your intrest?

TOM

(breath)

Flight 300. I live on the land where it went down.

BIRDY

Aw hell. Sorry ta hear that.

TOM

No, I'm sorry for you, sir.

BIRDY

'Ppreciate that. He was one a the good ones.

The pleasantries stall. Amy hands over the keys.

TOM

Found them on my property.
Tracked 'em through the dealership.

BIRDY

Well I'll be godd--

He pauses, in the company of a lady. Gently takes the keyring. Precious. Feels the singularity of every groove. Spins them once on his finger. Beams. Spins them again, and again --

BIRDY

S'what he always did. If'n he was nervous. I'd guessed...he probably had 'em goin' like a pinwheel. Figured tha's why they weren't on him, in his pocket.

He sighs, but doin' just fine. Amy, however, can't stomach the details. Excuses herself, slinks off to the car.

BIRDY

Did I -- she alright?

TOM

She'll be fine.

BIRDY

Din't mean ta upset her. Guess I jus've spent my time with it. And know in my heart, he's doin' okay, in a good spot. Ya know?

TOM

Sure.

BIRDY

Figure there's a bigger and better bowl game up there. I know him, he's already throwin'
(more)

BIRDY (cont'd)

touchdowns.

(shakes it off)

Awful kind to bring 'em all
this way. Anything I can do in
return?

TOM

I see you've got the car up for
sale. Wonder if I could take a
look?

The man blanches. Immediate resistance. But, courteous --

BIRDY

Sure. Least I can do.

They head up the drive, come to Amy at Tom's bumper.

BIRDY

You okay, miss?

AMY

Yeah, just my -- allergies --
acting up.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

The key slides into the rusted Chevy lock. Perfect fit.
Tom pulls the door open, eager. Hell if he knows for what.

BIRDY

(dissuading)

Can't make any promises. Kid
was under that hood every
weekend, poundin' her out.

Amy hovers in anticipation as Tom sinks into the driver's
seat. Instantly transported to another time. The vinyl,
the gear shift, the radio...

TOM

Anything special about this
car, anything he ever talked
about?

BIRDY

How ya mean?

TOM

I don't know, anything odd or
bizarre or -- I don't know --
anything?

BIRDY

Uh. I don't quite foller.

Tom searches -- for something, anything -- under the floor mats -- beneath the seats -- kicks open the glove box -- rifles through the stack of papers. Birdy raises a brow.

BIRDY
Lookin' for somethin'
particular?

TOM
(sotto)
The point...

Amy diverts --

AMY
So... Ostriches?

No response, Birdy eyeing Tom's meticulous examination.

AMY
What do you raise them for?

BIRDY
(cold)
Burgers.

Tom moves onto to the backseat. Combs the ash trays, floor, windows... Nothing. Exasperation. Suddenly --

A SCREECH -- Harriet pops her head through the window -- goes for his nose --

BIRDY
Harriet -- get yer gizzard
outta there!

He leaps after the bird -- she dodges clear, scampering wild, SQUAWKING in contempt --

BIRDY
Godblessed bird. Been tryin'
to wrangle her for weeks.

AMY
Maybe she's not too keen on
accompanying fries and a shake.

BIRDY
Naw, she's a breeder. All bent
outta shape since... She was
Jerry's. Ate right outta his
hand, slept in the house
sometimes... Reglar house pet.

AMY
(amazed)
She...misses him?

Oblivious, Tom climbs out, heads on to the trunk.

BIRDY

Gonna be missin' her 'fore too
long -- gettin' scrawny, won't
eat.

Standing alone in the field, Harriet plunges her head in
the dirt. Amy gazes out at her. Knows the feeling.

Tom closes the trunk. Sighs.

TOM

The hell if I know.

BIRDY

(relief)

Yeah, don't blame ya. Tall
order goin' from your German
machinery to this bucket a
bolts.

TOM

Oh don't get me wrong, I gotta
have it.

Catches Birdy by surprise. Not what he expected. Or wants.

TOM

Somethin' wrong?

BIRDY

Mr. Bailey, I'll be honest with
ya. I thought about holdin' on
to her myself. But then I got
ta thinkin'. It ain't much,
but it's a young man's car.
Burnin' down the highway;
smoochin' with your gal in the
backseat? Figure he'd want
somebody doin' her justice.
Not this old fart behind the
wheel, toolin' around ta the
post office.

TOM

Can't guarantee I'll do much
smoochin' in the back seat, but
I'll definitely work that
engine.

BIRDY

I'm sorry, I jus' like to see
her go ta... Well, a kid.

TOM
(desperate)
I'm younger than I look?

BIRDY
You can understand.

TOM
Mr. Banks, there's something
you don't understand. Ya see--

BIRDY
(open wound)
Please now.

Dead end. Tom pushes it no further, given the circumstances.

They head for the house. But -- Amy's wandered off, headed for the feeding trough. Something in her eyes. Birdy scratches his head, watches her scoop up a handful of grain, head for the despondent fowl yonder.

ANGLE - HARRIET

Head pops up. Eyeing this trespasser. Backsteps warily.

AMY
It's okay, girl. Shhh. Ya
hungry, want some food?

Harriet hisses, sticks out her black tongue.

AMY
Yeah, know exactly how ya feel.

Another hiss. Amy hisses back, sticks out her tongue. Takes the bird aback, bobs her slinky neck in suspicion. So Amy retorts, bobs right back. The bird cocks her head, stands on one leg. Amy does likewise.

ANGLE - TOM AND BIRDY

Engrossed. Fascinated.

ANGLE - AMY AND HARRIET

Amy slowly offers up her hand of grain. Harriet shuffles, refuses. So Amy takes a bite herself --

AMY
Mmmm, you're missin' out.

But nothin' doin'. Harriet heads on.

AMY

Okay. Well, guess that just means more for me.

She turns to leave, reverse psychology -- hooked, Harriet curiously strides after -- Amy holds out her hand again and the ostrich edges closer -- slowly, slowly -- plunges her beak into the feed.

AMY

That's a girl. Good stuff, huh?

Harriet downs every last seed. CHIRPS a thank you and nuzzles Amy's cheek. Seemingly sighs, in need of a friend.

AMY

I know, I know... You can tell me all about it...

Commiseration. WE PULL AWAY, leaving them to their girl talk...

ANGLE - TOM

A smile. Taken by this woman.

ANGLE - BIRDY

Flabbergasted. Touched.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - LATER

Birdy and Harriet come waddling out of the house --

BIRDY

Can't let ya get away empty-handed.

He hands over a package to the pair. Whispers, out of Harriet's earshot --

BIRDY

Ground patties.

AMY

Oh. You don't have to--

BIRDY

Hush now, least I can do.

Tom fidgets, last ditch --

TOM

Birdy. That car. Me finding those keys... There's
(more)

TOM (cont'd)
 somethin' to that, don't you
 think?

Birdy averts his eyes. His boy heavy in his heart.

BIRDY
 I'm...sorry.

Not as sorry as Tom. He nods, heads into the Porsche. Amy
 climbs in. Stops. Finds herself giving the man a hug, a
 kiss. The first smile we've seen on her face.

AMY
 Thank you, Mr. Banks.

BIRDY
 For what?

AMY
 For being here. We've got a
 lot in common.

Touches him. Knows not why. Harriet squawks, me too. Amy
 hugs her neck, then gets in the car.

Tom starts the engine. Slowly pulls away. Birdy watches,
 chewing his lip. Harriet looks at him coldly.

BIRDY
 Wha?

She squawks. He sighs. Regret welling. Decides -- trots
 after the car, waving. Tom stops as the old timer saddles
 up to Amy's window.

BIRDY
 (to Amy)
 Ya know. Those allergies a
 yours...

He stares out at the Chevy. Lets go.

BIRDY
 Well. Jerr used ta say a
 stretch a interstate in that
 baby'd cure ya a just about
 anythin'.

Off their looks --

EXT. RANCH - LATER

Harriet pumping her wiry legs at full speed, a sweetheart

on the train platform. Chasing the Cal Bears bumper sticker on Jerr's pride and joy. Amy waves as Tom cruises it down the highway.

Harriet slows to a trot. Stops. Whimpers.

A WAILING captures her attention. The house. The Porsche alarm blowing.

ANGLE - PORSCHE

Birdy in the driver's seat, scrambling to disengage it. Eventually does. Content with the trade, he goes to town on the amenities. Sunroof, car phone, CD player. Has a good disbelieving chuckle.

That unexpectedly turns on him. The old man starts to cry...

INT./EXT. CHEVY - TRAVELING

Tom and Amy. Windblown hair. Sun in their faces. He watches her. Charmed.

TOM

You got a real way with poultry.

AMY

I won't lie. It's a gift.

TOM

Old guy was pretty impressed with you.

(then; open)

I was too.

She looks at him. Lips upturn. Embarrassed.

AMY

Why thank you.

TOM

Why you're welcome.

Feels like a schoolboy. Can't contain a smirk.

AMY

What?

TOM

Nothin'.

AMY

What?

TOM
Well, here we are.

AMY
Here we are.

TOM
Be nice to know where.

AMY
Maybe -- we're supposed to
drive it somewhere?

TOM
Maybe.

AMY
The interstate?

TOM
Happen to know which one?

AMY
No idea.

And there it is. He shrugs. She shrugs.

TOM
(amused)
Just like that. I'm drivin' a
convertible hot rod. It's...
ridiculous...but cool?

AMY
Just remember, after the malt
shop, my dad wants me home by
ten.

TOM
I thought he said eleven.

AMY
Ten-thirty.

They both smile, enjoying, relaxing. He slides his seat
back, rides low. Turns to her with a smile -- low ridin'
fool. She slides down, too. Eyes engaged. A spell.
Oblivious as as they fast approach a truck chugging along
in their lane --

AMY
Tom...?

He focuses. Lets up on the gas. But... The Chevy refuses
to slow -- in fact, speeds up --

AMY

Tom, slow down --

He goes for the brake -- no response -- the ignition frozen --

TOM

It's stuck -- the pedal --

AMY

Whaddya mean stuck?!

He kicks at it with his feet --

TOM

Grab the wheel --

Amy clamps on -- he reaches down -- attempts to wrench it free -- useless --

He yanks on the emergency brake -- no dice -- rear of the truck just feet away -- opposite lane traffic whizzing by -- no choice -- he veers onto the shoulder -- speedometer climbing, screams past the truck --

A road sign dead ahead -- shit -- he screeches it off the highway, sliding down the grassy incline -- spins -- into a dried riverbed -- struggles to keep control, wrestles the wheel -- faster, faster --

AMY

Tom!

Plows through a pool of water -- mud sprays, blankets them -- blinded -- he punches the wipers --

A fallen tree ahead -- he scales the banks -- rips through a barbed-wire fence -- a field -- charging into a herd of grazing cattle -- dodges as Amy slams on the horn -- the bovines scatter and MOO --

Rumbles past -- into a clearing -- phew, clear -- cranks the wheel all the way to the left -- a wide perpetual circle, taming the 40mph beast for the time being. Relief.

AMY

Uh...

TOM

Tell me about it!

AMY

So how much was that Porsche worth?!

TOM
 (just realizes)
 I was leasing it!

He laughs. She laughs. Caked in mud, loop-d-loops in cow pies.

AMY
 What now?

TOM
 Beats me. Gotta run outta gas
 sooner or later.

The fuel gauge -- full. Great.

AMY
 Lemme know when we get there.

She settles in, turns on the radio. Flips the stations, finds the perfect COUNTRY DITTY.

TOM
 You're killin' me.

AMY
 Kansas girl, remember?

TOM
 Well yeehaw.

He spins the wheel to the TWANG -- a fishtail here, a figure eight there. A regular Dukes of Hazzard, giddy from the absurdity. She cranks the tunes, he gets daring -- weaving through trees, hay bails...

Letting go. Both of them.

But he runs out of room -- cows and an irrigation ditch --

AMY
 Don't think this is what Birdy
 had in mind --

He veers, hops the property line, speeds onto a fire road, just trying to hang on, wild fans of dust behind. Until...

They run out of road -- a rickety, old fence dead ahead -- ditch on one side, elm trees on the other --

TOM
 Uh. Got your seatbelt on?

Faster, faster the wheels spin -- smiles vanish, this isn't gonna be pretty -- their hands find each other, clench tight -- deep breaths -- they duck down, cover their eyes -- and they explode through the barrier --.

Wood splinters, dirt flies --

And the wild ride comes to an end. Dust clears. And wouldn't ya know it, the gas pedal innocently pops free. Like magic. Heads cautiously poke up...

TOM

You okay?

AMY

All things considered. You?

TOM

Oh, never better.

Breaths of relief. Eyes fall to their trembling hands. Still clutched. Shared moment of silence. Which eventually gives way to belly laughs.

AMY

For a minute there...

But he doesn't answer. Realizing. Eyes turned serious. He climbs out. Ogles the blown-out front tire.

AMY

Well. How does a psychologist change a tire?

TOM

I dunno, how?

AMY

Same as everybody else. But the tire has to want to change.

A groan and he pops the trunk for the spare.

AMY

Give ya a hand?

TOM

Me man, you woman.

AMY

Ah, I see. Well then this woman's gonna go find the little girl's room.

She heads off. Tom gets to it.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Amy meanders the underbrush. Takes in the sights, smells, sounds. Comes upon an emerald pond nestled in a pocket of vegetation. Pink sun on its surface. She reaches into her

bag, pulls out her trusty 35mm. Snaps off a few landscapes. Inspired.

A deep breath. First in awhile.

EXT. CLEARING - A FEW LATER

Red glow melts over the auburn landscape. Tom tosses the jack, tire iron back in the trunk. Amy emerges --

AMY

Hey -- you by the car.

He turns, grease on his face -- FLASH, she CLICKS off one. He grimaces.

AMY

Paperwork goes in the red box,
should receive your license in
four-to-six weeks.

(then)

Withdrawal.

He smiles, they step into the car. He adjusts the mirror, flips down the sun visor -- stops suddenly. Cut into the vinyl, a heart: JB + BW. She notices him noticing. Steals the moment.

TOM

That poor kid. No more
smoochin' in the backseat...

(fading to memory)

Roadtrips to Tahoe... Skinny
dipping with the local girls...
No more of any of that.

(undone)

Time's up. Watch your step and
exit to the right.

Poor kid. Poor Tom. He sits with it, eyes glaze over. Finally puts the key in the ignition -- but she pulls his hand away. Won't let that sit. Steps out of the car.

AMY

C'mon. I wanna show you
something.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

She guides him through the trees. He lets himself be guided.

TOM

Where are we going?

AMY

Oh, somewhere I found...

And just like that, she drops his hand and runs ahead.
Suspect, he traipses after. Around a bend...to...the pond.
Twilight glistening. But she's nowhere to be found.

TOM

Hello...?

AMY

Here's your local girl. Now's
your chance.

She's in the water. Buck as a jaybird.

TOM

Uh. What are you doing?

AMY

I don't know. I really don't.
But why don't you do it with me?

TOM

I --... Just drop 'em? All my
clothes?

AMY

You're the expert.

TOM

I don't know, Amy... This is --
strange.

AMY

No doubt about it.

TOM

I mean. You and me strange.

AMY

Hey, I'm not trying to...

The moment festers. Spoiling.

AMY

I'm sorry. Just thought it'd
be fun. For you. I'm sorry.

She swims for the bank. But before it sours completely,
what the hell, he peels off his clothes, dives in --

TOM

Jesus -- it's freezing. I
could catch cold and die.

AMY
Oh god, I didn't even think of--

TOM
It was a joke.

AMY
Oh. Not funny.

She splashes him. He splashes back. Turns silly. Which makes it turn awkward. As if the forbidden apple only just now swallowed down...

AMY
So...?

TOM
So...?

They're just dog-paddling there.

TOM
(then)
Can I confess something?

AMY
Uh oh.

TOM
I've never been skinny dipping.
I was the scrawny kid who
wouldn't take off his shorts.

She chuckles. Eases it up.

AMY
Well I was the gawky, freckly
girl who wouldn't even get
invited to the swimming hole.

TOM
Come on, you were a cheerleader.

AMY
I was also in the chess club.

TOM
Big deal. I was in band.

AMY
Lots of people were in band.

TOM
I played the triangle.

AMY
 Ouch. You win.
 (a chill)
 Childhood.

Tom stops. Thinking. Realizing.

TOM
 I miss it.

She stops too. But refuses to let the moment drown.
 Closes her eyes and --

AMY
 Marco...?

Swims toward him -- he doesn't get it --

AMY
Marco...?

He makes senses of it -- dives, escaping --

TOM
 Polo...

She rears back, calls out Marco. He eludes, Polo. Back and forth, splashing, even giggling. Until she vanishes under water -- ten seconds, fifteen, twenty...

TOM
 ... Amy?!

She pops up behind him -- slaps him on the back --

AMY
 You're it.

He turns. Face to face. Skin to skin. She swallows down a breath. Eyes suddenly nervous.

AMY
 I... Wouldn't've said yes.

TOM
 About what?

She refrains. But then has to get it out --

AMY
 If he'd gotten off that plane,
 I wouldn't've said yes... And I
 hate that.
 (difficult)
 We'd had our time. A long time
 ago, we were kids. Football
 games, homecoming...

TOM

Prom?

AMY

Yeah... He was sick. Week later, I picked him up, had the dress, tux; we danced to Culture Club in my backyard. June 12.

(then)

Guess it stuck with him.

Would've stuck with Tom too. A moment.

AMY

But then? I got on with my life, I didn't want to be a country mouse.

(regret)

Couldn't wait to join the big city rat race. Be a photographer maybe. Didn't matter.

Staring at every decision she's ever made.

AMY

Good friends, great friends, that's what we'd grown into. Phone calls, letters. Flowers here and again. He visited a year ago, we sat and drank coffee in this booth all day. Steinbeck's... We'd joked about always being there for each other, worst case, if we got old and nobody else wanted us. But they were... jokes. ... I did still love him. Dammit. But. I wasn't in love with him.

(cracking)

He should've known. He should've known.

(then)

People didn't want turkey legs.

Then the tears come. Streaming down. Sadness. Guilt.

TOM

Amy. You didn't make him get on that plane.

AMY

I know. But. I never told him stop with the flowers either.

He lets her wear that. But then, close, soft, a whisper --

TOM

A plane crashed. He happened
to be on it.

She stares into the water. Eyes twitching. Pain.

AMY

Because of me.

TOM

But you didn't make it crash.

She doesn't budge.

TOM

You didn't make it crash.

Finally, she relents. Holds him. And he holds her back.
Quiet, tranquil, intimate. Her tears on his skin. he
closes his eyes. A long beat. Too long.

TOM

Marco...?

No answer. He nudges her, milks it...

TOM

Marco?

She fights it. But loses.

AMY

(soft)

Polo.

INT./EXT. CHEVY - TRAVELING - NIGHT

The nightswimmers headed home. She, curled up, head on his
lap, asleep. Peace. At last. He, cruisin' the open road.
Eyes wide open. Literally. Figuratively.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

He tucks her into his Four-Star lodging. Pulls the
sleeping bag warm around her as she drifts away.

He can't help but watch for a spell.

Turns to leave -- but a hand reaches out. He takes it.
Nestles in beside her. Their lips ever so close, eyes
searching for permission. They melt into another. Flesh
on flesh. No pain here.

Warm union. All night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Amy stirs awake with the early light. Orients herself, curious as to his whereabouts.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

She steps out onto the porch. Shudders at the sight. Thick, mature stalks, at least six feet tall. Blossoming white flowers. And grapes. Far and wide, high and low.

Tom's head pops out of the greenery.

AMY
(speechless)
Good -- good -- good --

TOM
Morning?

AMY
Yeah -- that.

TOM
(overflowing)
As tall as I am! -- they're almost ready! -- you know how long this is supposed to take?? A year!

AMY
It's un...believa...ble!

TOM
Look how sticky -- the Brix, sugar -- they're Cabernets.

AMY
My favorite. As of right now.

She notices the mountainous pile of pruned sprigs and limbs. A full night's work. Amazement suddenly battles concern.

AMY
You sleep at all?

TOM
Sure.

AMY

Liar.

The look on her face. He hears what she's not saying.

TOM

Look around, how can I deny
this?

She says no more, watching as he moves on down the line,
trimming at the wrapping like a kid on Christmas morning.
Kick in his step, whistling as he works.

TOM

It's all comin' back to me --
pruning at angles, curling the
tendrils to support the
grapes -- all of it.

How deny this indeed. Her turn. To be taken with him.

AMY

Then can I help?

He offers his hand, clippers. Together they prune. Hand
over hand.

Until the SHRIEK of tires skidding on the dirt road. The
Ford pick-up with the pair of local ogles. And this time
they've really got something to ogle at. Jaw dropped
astonishment. Tom acknowledges with a tentative wave.
Continues pruning.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - DAY

The no-nonsense government Supervisor cradling the phone,
incredulous --

SUPERVISOR

...you want me to give you an
indefinite leave of absence,
starting today, with full
salary, and you can come back
whenever you see fit??

INTERCUT - FARMHOUSE

Amy, on the phone, wry grin --

AMY

Yup. That just about sums it
up.

SUPERVISOR

Well let me sum up somethin'
(more)

SUPERVISOR (cont'd)
for you. If you think for one
minute, I'm gonna --

AMY
Hey, Charles. You hear the one
about the girl that worked at
the DMV?

SUPERVISOR
Huh?

AMY
She told her boss to go fuck
himself.

She gently hangs up the phone, exits to --

THE PORCH

Right into Tom. Heard the whole thing. Face wears the
touched shock of it.

TOM
You...shouldn'tve...

AMY
Long overdue.

TOM
Why? Would you want to stay?

AMY
In a word? Pudding.

TOM
But --

She kisses him silent. Silence is good.

INT. WINERY - DAY

Tom flings open the sweeping bay door. Lets the skeletons
out and leads Amy to the towering fermentation tank.

TOM
This is where it starts. First
stage of fermentation.

AMY
This where we run around
barefoot and stomp 'em?

TOM
You've been watching too much *I
Love Lucy*.

She moves to the Steinway in the corner. Regards it oddly.

TOM

For the harvest. My grandma
used to saddle up to it, fire
up the troops.

AMY

I know how to whistle?

He hands his student a scrub brush and bucket.

INT. WINERY - LATER

Tom and Amy hands and knees in the base of the tank. Eight feet across, ten feet deep. Giving its rusted walls a spic-and-span treatment.

He has to stop, winded.

AMY

You alright?

TOM

(a smile)

Quit doting.

AMY

Okay, okay...

(then)

So when do we get to the
drinking part?

SERIES --

...They climb down the winery ladder into the cellar, a dark, cobwebbed abyss. Wall-to-wall aging barrels. A secret treasure room...

...Patching, hammering, showering with cleanser -- the barrels undergo a restoration...

...Tom fixes the archaic corking machine -- inserts a bottle beneath -- the glass shatters on contact...

...The dirt road. The locals are back. This time with an entourage. FARMERS and TOWNSPEOPLE stare down at the miracle. Awe...

...Amy removes plastic hoses from the holding tank -- a rat scurries out, disregards her screams and carries on about its business...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Dust from a VW Bug chugging up the drive. Parks in front of the house. Irene steps out of the car with a suitcase, sees Amy descending the porch. They hug.

IRENE
(re: suitcase)
Everything you wanted. Now
mind clueing me in?

Amy exhales. Where to begin?

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Dinner. Tom and Amy on one end of the table, Irene on the other. The aunt stares at her plate. Dumbfounded shock.

IRENE
So this sign? Down at
Steinbeck's --

AMY
Across the street.

IRENE
Across the street. Said...Tom?

Tom's lips awkwardly crinkle into a smile. Amy nods emphatically on his behalf.

IRENE
And then those grapevines out
there -- started growing?

Amy gets an idea, bounds out of the room. Leaving Tom and Irene. Staring at each other. Forever. Amy steps back in -- plops a magazine down. The Newsweek. Flips to a picture of the vineyard --

AMY
Look, no vines.
(throws open the
window)
Vines.

Irene just stares into her plate.

EXT. VINEYARD - A FEW LATER

Irene, crossed arms, traipses out of the house. Amy, on her tail --

IRENE

Sweetheart, I know you don't want me actin' like your mother... But I gotta tell ya, you got me worried.

AMY

I know how this all sounds --

IRENE

No, clearly you don't.

(backs off)

He seems like a perfectly nice man, and I'm sorry for him, but --

AMY

I love him.

Shocks Irene. Shocks Amy.

AMY

Look. There are a lot of things. I should've done when they needed doing. But I didn't.

(then)

No more.

Touches the aunt. A proud tear wells. But Amy will have none of that --

AMY

Hey. Why'd the rabbit cross the road?

No dice. Amy pokes her. Eventually, a submitting smile. Role reversal.

IRENE

Because... He was stapled to a chicken.

She wraps her arms around her niece, holds tight. Long.

EXT. VINEYARD - LATER

The VROOM of the VW Bug as it rumbles to a start. Tom bounds out of the house with a familiar box --

TOM

Almost forgot. A little parting gift.

IRENE

You shouldn'tve -- what is it?

AMY
(wink to Tom)
Burgers.

Confused, she takes them. Amy kisses her on the cheek and away she goes.

CONTINUE SERIES --

...Round two with the corking machine. After a tinker here, a tap there, he edges another bottle close -- THWOCK -- perfect fit. ... Until it cracks into a million pieces...

...A determined Tom, ready for war with the corker. Readies the bottle -- THWOCK -- success! ... Except that the machine cracks into a million pieces...

...The local vintager shop where Tom and Amy avoid LOCALS' stares as they load up on vineyard 101 supplies -- bottles, hoses, presses... And a new corking machine...

LOCALS (AD LIB)
(hushed)
...Word is he's doin' voodoo dances... ...It ain't right, growin' up there... ...I say we call Hard Copy...

That's it, Tom turns, addresses his detractors --

TOM
Actually, if you want to know the truth, I'm with the government. We're testing a new agent in the soil. It's only slightly radioactive.

He smiles and walks out.

...The dirt road. Completely empty of spectators...

AMY
What now?

TOM
We wait.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Tom, on the porch beneath a mound of blankets. Staring out at the grapes. Freezing. Knows he should be indoors. But can't leave their side. Restless. The wind calls out with her EERIE HOWL. Amy steps out with a pillow.

AMY

Any point in me tryin' to
convince you to come inside?

He smiles, no. So she sits down next to him.

AMY

Got any room in there?

He smiles, yes. She climbs in. Smiles. Tom looks out at
the land, their work.

TOM

I watched my grandfather work
that land, bleeding himself dry
fourteen hours a day. Squeezed
out a couple good vintages, but
died same way he started. My
folks had already died, so he
put all his eggs in my basket.
Always had. I got out of
college, and there I was. With
a vineyard. But I just...
wanted more.

His eyes flicker. Regret.

TOM

I couldn't understand. The
audacity he had to be so...
Happy? Happy as hell.

But then...a smile. As if now he does. She rests her head
on his shoulder.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The vines drip with dawn's dew. Wrapped up in each other's
arms on the porch, they come awake together. A moment's
awkwardness. She rises, helps him to his feet.
Trepidation as they descend into the field and he gently
tears free a bunch. Afraid to pierce its flesh.

TOM

Color looks okay...

AMY

That's good...

TOM

Skin looks okay...

AMY

That's good too...

He hands them over --

TOM

You do it.

AMY

Oh no -- this is your vineyard,
mister.

He gazes at the fruit, the answer hidden inside. Finally,
grits his teeth and crushes them in his hands -- juice.
Sticky. Pure.

TOM

(whisper)

They're ready.

CUT TO:

SERIES --

...Tom goes vine to vine slicing bunches free, filling
baskets with the purple bounty...

...Taking the heavier labor, Amy loads the baskets into a
wheelbarrow, carts 'em off...

...She wheels the barrow around the back of the winery, up
to the chutes...

...Dumps the load down the gaping funnel, into the
fermentation tank -- thousands of plump marbles raining
down...

...As Tom fills the last of the baskets, his ears perk up
to a familiar jingle -- CHOPSTICKS. Spots Amy in the
winery at the Steinway, plunking away.

AMY

It's all I know...

...Long day's night. Atop a ladder, he guides her hands
over a giant oar, stirring the mixture...

...Inside the vat, powder sprinkles down, an enchanting
weightless dance...

...Bags of yeast serve as pillows as Tom and Amy sleep in
the corner. The tank, however, wide awake, bubbling with
vitality..

...Tom in rubber leggings standing inside the tank,
punching down the thick, foamy swill of skins and stems...

AMY

And that's what we're drinking?

...Tom jerks open the valve and the juice ROARS through
filters and drainage tubes to the holding tank below...

...Siphoning the nectar into the individual barrels. One after another, tedious and exhausting. Tom weathering through it...

...Rolling the barrels down the incline, lining them along the cellar walls. Every single one. Job well done...

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Strain taking its toll, Tom sleeps. Amy studies him. Brings her camera to her eye. Focuses. CLICK.

INT. WINERY - DAY

They stand before a makeshift chem lab. Funnels, beakers, siphons. He extracts a sample from a barrel's bung hole. Dips a freshly plucked dandelion inside, watches it turn blue.

TOM
How my grandfather read the
acid levels. When it's orange,
we go to bottles. Pray for
orange.

She picks up a bottle. Regards its naked surface.

AMY
Have to come up with a name,
label.

But he doesn't answer. Eyes suddenly vacant.

AMY
What was your grandfather's
called?

Still nothing. He wavers, unsteady.

AMY
Tom...?

He plummets to the floor -- the bottle shatters -- his eyes flutter, face twitches.

AMY
-- Tom!

TOM
...I'm...okay.

She helps him up, cradles his head. His voice a whisper.

TOM
It's starting.
(wry)
All downhill from here...

AMY
No -- no -- you just overdid
it -- gotta take it easy --

TOM
Shhh.

The room gets small. Quiet.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Tom pushes his body toward the winery. Snatches
a stray dandelion from the soil as he goes...

TOM (V.O.)
Weakness, dizziness come
first...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. He struggles with each step. Another flower...

TOM (V.O.)
As it takes over my lungs, just
breathing'll become a battle...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Desperation...

TOM (V.O.)
It'll be all my heart can do to
keep up. Couple weeks, it just
won't...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Hope faltering...

TOM (V.O.)
And then...

INT. WINERY - DUSK

A dandelion. Blue. Still blue. He just stares at it,
bowing to its inevitability.

TOM

...That's it.

AMY

No. It'll happen.

TOM

I just thought. The vines were so fast....

(lost)

You don't have to stay for this.

AMY

'Quit doting.'

TOM

You're not hearing me -- I'm not going to make it. This takes months, years...

But she's not going anywhere. Holds him. He looks away, something in his eyes. A narrowing. Raw. Angry.

TOM

Your aunt was right. They were all right.

He steps past her to the barrels. Stares at them. Collects a fire axe from its hook. And in a single thrust of rage, pain, frustration, he swirls the jagged edge into the wood -- a barrel crumbles with the blow -- blood red wine FLOODS the air, CRASHES to the floor --

AMY

Tom! No!

But he's deaf -- moves to the next barrel -- swings -- an EXPLOSION of oak and wine. He lines up for the third --

But she stands in his path, guarding the cure. As fierce in resolve as he. Eyes locked on each other. Finally, he gives in. Drops the axe to the red floor. Sinks into the wet. Long moment. Searching to include her.

TOM

You're driving, not paying attention. You look up, you're headed for a cliff. You slam on the brakes. Split second of terror. That feeling.

(then)

For me, it's not a split second. It's all there is.

AMY

No. No, I refuse to believe
(more)

AMY (cont'd)
that I was brought to you just
to lose you.

(then)
Tom, the wine cures.

TOM
How do you know?

AMY
I just do. I have faith in
what's in those barrels. Those
vines. All of it.

Her words stir in him.

TOM
What if...it's not in time?

AMY
It will be. It will be.

She takes his hand. Strength in her eyes. He seems to
absorb it, finally surfaces.

TOM
Bet you were some cheerleader.

She smiles. Runs his hand through the wine. Its color
bleeding into their skin. Soaking into their clothes.
Awash in red...

INT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Amy wakes, wipes away the cobwebs. No Tom. Glances out
the window. Sees him trudging up the hill. Slow, tired
legs. She can't take her eyes off of him.

EXT. GREAT OAK - LATER

Its protective limbs enveloping Tom. Seated on one above
the ground. Legs dangling.

INT./EXT. CHEVY - TRAVELING - DAY

Sunday drive. Amy at the wheel, more of those country
DITTIES. A feeble Tom clutches the windshield, head high
in the wind. She fumbles for her camera -- fumbles with
the steering wheel -- CLICKS one off. Another. Another.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Amy, making dinner. Feast for a king. Crumpled in a

chair, Tom looks on, licks his lips.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Candles and paper plates. After dinner puddings. Drained, he's fallen asleep halfway through his. She just sits. Watching him...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

A rich, blue sky hangs above the vast field of vines. Below, a lone figure. Dwarfed by the vines like a child. WE DESCEND toward the soil below. Tom in the dirt with Rusty's Flash Gordon. Gaunt and jaundiced. Weak voice. Wielding Flash through the terrain.

TOM

...Dalzar, mutant human hybrid
from the twenty-eighth
century...

And this time, he does add the cool sound effects --

TOM

...CH-CH-CH-CH-CH...

But he runs out of breath. Tired. Tosses Flash down.

TOM

I blew it, huh, Flash?

He would seem to agree. Were it not for his arm, accusingly pointed yonder. Tom curiously follows its path up a stalk...to the top of a vine...blooming in the flowers...a child's barrette. He moves to it, reaches for it -- only to be struck by another vine -- a pair of sunglasses. Another -- woman's lipstick. Another -- a pocket knife. A bracelet, an address book, a belt buckle...

Every single vine, there's something. Newly hatched, like ornaments on a Christmas tree. Each item, a life... A life missed. But there is no surprise on Tom's face. Only widening eyes. And understanding.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A purpose carries him into the kitchen -- Amy, at the table with her cameras --

AMY

I was thinking we could go up
the ridge, take some pictures --

He unfolds his shirt -- his harvest dumps free to the table.

AMY
(speechless)
-- out -- there??

TOM
All I had to do...was fly to
the Dark Mountains...get the
stretchy branches. How come I
couldn't do that?

AMY
I don't follow.

TOM
This kid. He needed something
from me. But I was so
concerned with me. Only, I
don't think it's about me.
It's bigger than that.
(then)
It's for Birdy Banks. Barbara,
Rusty Jacobs. The woman with
the music. You.
(solace)
The wine. The cure. I think
it's for all of you. To take
something away from all of
this. Something positive. I
didn't see it then. But. I do
now.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Card stock and envelopes. Tom and Amy addressing
invitations with care. She whizzes through as he...sleeps,
pen still in his hand. She can't help but stare. Worry.
She stops. Looks away. Then back. Weak, a whisper --

AMY
Tom. What if it's not ready in
time?

He merely sleeps. Peace.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Amy at the mailbox, cramming in every last invitation. At
least a hundred.

INT. WINERY - DAY

A mason jar filled with the immature wine. Feeble, Tom
sits propped in a chair, his voice barely audible.

TOM

Stand back and behold...

Amy watches as his trembling hands crack an egg over a spoon, allowing the whites to drop into the jar. Dirt and sediment attract to the sinking goo like a magnet, cascading to the base.

TOM

Positive charge of the egg
takes out all the sediment.
Four whites per barrel.

He points to a syphon and hose.

TOM

Stir it quick and hard, then
you're ready to fill the
bottles. One at a time -- cork
as ya go and don't let it
breathe too long--

AMY

I'm never gonna remember all
this.

He stops. Looks her in the eye. Grave.

TOM

You have to.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tom. Eyes closed, head heavy. She puts a spoon of soup to his mouth, feeding him.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Tom at the base of the steps. Beside a patch of wildflowers. Breathing them in. Gazes up at the blue sky. Breathes it in.

But he's shivering. Middle of the day and freezing. Amy arrives, attempts to shepherd him inside. He won't leave. She thinks...

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Next day. She guides him to the bedroom. Throws open the door to reveal...

His wildflowers and sky. She's painted the wall and ceiling blue, puffy clouds and all; potted the flowers, his own indoor garden.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, on his back. She contracts and extends his legs.
Exercising the dormant muscles.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Wet washcloth, fingers running along his naked back.
Bathing him.

FADE TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

In the distance, a caravan. Approaching cars, taxis,
buses. On the porch, Amy, in a dress. Nervously waiting.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Dark. Flowers dead. Tom on his last legs. On the
mattress, struggling to breathe. She enters with warmth
and smiles, making it look easy. It's not.

AMY

Tom, honey. They've come.
They're here.

He fights to open his eyes, focus on her.

TOM

The wine...?

She hides the truth.

AMY

Don't you worry. No worries
for you.

She runs a hand through his hair. He motions with his
eyes -- the dresser. On it, an envelope marked with her
name. Confused, she picks it up, opens it. Pulls forth a
document --

AMY

What is this...the vineyard? A
deed?

As she reads further, her heart melts. His final gift.

AMY

Tom -- I...

Their eyes hold. Before he drifts off again.

INT. WINERY - DAY

She fumbles with a dandelion -- a last test -- still blue. Damn blue.

Disheartened, she throws it to the floor amidst a dozen others. Walks outside -- the vehicles arriving.

ANGLE - ROAD

Airport charter bus parks. A hundred people. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters disembark... Mrs. Jacobs and Rusty. The boy tossing a football in his hands to avoid the reality... A number of familiar faces -- Sunday Best who brought the birthday music, various others...

SUNDAY BEST

Well I'll be...

Her gaze on the shining vineyard, the farmhouse -- fresh coat of paint, curtains in the windows. Tables with white linen, buffet of food, flowers... Complete transformation. No sign of what once was.

But the focus is diverted by a SCREECH. Porsche skidding to a stop on the shoulder. Birdy (and Harriet) Banks.

ANGLE - AMY

Watching as these welcome strangers descend upon the land that's caused so much pain. Some wearing the ache like shackles. Some, beyond that, relishing the catharsis. Others, confused and unsure. She belonging to the latter.

EXT. VINEYARD - A FEW LATER

The group has gathered. Come together, commiserated, shared tears. Amy weaves through with hellos, stands to address them.

AMY

Hello. Hi. My name is Amy Calhoun. Welcome.

She's nervous. Wondering what in the hell she's gotten herself into.

AMY

I want to thank you all for coming. I know this is odd, difficult, I know. I also lost somebody, a dear friend on that flight. On this land. This land where...well, just look at it now. At this amazing life.

(more)

AMY (cont'd)

... It was Tom Bailey's idea
to bring you here.

She swallows, not accustomed to saying the words. A face
in the crowd encourages her. Aunt Irene.

AMY

He's...sick -- maybe later
he'll... Well. He wanted to
give you all a piece of this
land, this life. He worked the
soil, he nurtured these vines,
he protected them, he harvested
their grapes. And he made wine.

(awkward)

Enough for each of you. His
first vintage. He'd hoped it'd
be ready for today. But I'm --
so sorry. ... It's not.

And it's tearing her apart. Doesn't know what else to say.
Looking into each pair of expectant eyes. The Mother whose
little girl missed the recital. Blue Collar who couldn't
find his wife.

AMY

I'm...sorry -- but at least
we're here and --

BIRDY (O.S.)

What the heck you talkin'
'bout, 'lil lady?

Heads turn to the old eccentric -- emerging from the
winery, bottle in hand --

BIRDY

Darn near the best vino I ever
did taste!

AMY

...Excuse me?

BIRDY

I'm a snoop, cain't help it.

AMY

It's...wine?!

BIRDY

I ain't no connoisseur --

He hands the bottle to a YOUNG WOMAN in a suit. She takes
a hesitant sip. Face lights up.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's...good. Really good.

A buzz befalls the crowd.

CUT TO:

THE WINERY DOORS

burst open -- Amy races to the tapped barrel -- fills up a beaker -- tastes it --

She's never tasted anything like it. Immediately grabs a dandelion, tests it -- orange. Bright, beautiful orange. A miracle.

BIRDY (O.S.)

Red thirty-nine! Red thirty-nine! Set -- hut -- hut!

All eyes whip curiously to the crazy fool -- now clutching Rusty's football, dropping back from an imaginary line of scrimmage -- searches downfield, scrambles -- finds his man, fires the pigskin -- right over Rusty's head --

...twenty...thirty...forty...fifty yards!

Uh... The crowd utterly dumbstruck by this feat of athletic prowess. Hell, Birdy utterly dumbstruck. Shaking with disbelief, he sprints after the ball, lookin' like a thoroughbred. Picks it up, reloads -- searches for another receiver -- spots the tire swing hanging from the great oak -- thirty yards down -- he fires --

Right through.

He giggles to himself. Can't believe it.

AMY

Birdy...?!

BIRDY

I...feel...him? I swear I feel him. Like he's in me.

(calling out)

Jerr?? Jerry, are ya with me??

Quiet enchantment. The man's face beaming with emotion --

BIRDY

My son...my son...

A tear streaks down his face. So unexpected. So marvelous. Starts laughing through the tears.

BIRDY

Amy... Ya know what I need?

AMY

No, Birdy?

He rushes past --

BIRDY

More a that wine!

He dashes for the winery. The crowd follows, lines up for a taste. MURMURS, WHISPERS, CHUCKLES --

And MUSIC. Sweet strains from the old Steinway. Amy follows the enchanting melody -- at its tired keys, Sunday Best with the birthday sheet music, halfway into a glass, tears streaming down her face. Expertly fingering the piece with beauty and grace.

SUNDAY BEST

It's Chopin.

Amy nods, askance.

SUNDAY BEST

I don't plays the piano. Never have. It's her.

And no music can be complete without dance -- pirouettes and pliés. The proud Mother, bottle in hand. Eyes closed, dancing as only a little girl can. Up on her toes, spinning, leaping. Won't miss her child's recital after all...

MOTHER

My baby, my baby...

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Tom's eyes crack open. The MUSIC filling him.

INT. WINERY - SAME

Amy stares as a button-down BUSINESSMAN juggles bottles like an old carny pro... A WOMAN works out an elaborate scientific formula near the winery lab...

FARMHOUSE - PORCH

Tom edges outside, inhaling these lulling notes, these people. And... To his sheer wonder, something else:

TOM'S POV - WINERY

Sunday Best has an admiring observer seated beside her on the piano bench. HER DAUGHTER. Shrouded by a glowing aura. Heart brimming over. And she's not the only one...

Giggling with delight, another light. The little BALLERINA. A peaceful gaze, watching her mother...

Beyond... JERRY BANKS. The glimmering quarterback has a good laugh as pops lets loose another Hail Mary...

And all the rest. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters...

PORCH - TOM

His eyes dance. As only those witnessing heaven and earth can. For it is only he who sees this. Tom, the wine cures. Indeed.

NEW ANGLE - WINERY

Back to the folks, unaware of their visitors. A CONSERVATIVE WOMAN kicks off her heels to build castles in the dirt, singing a sandbox rhyme... A TEENAGE GIRL approaches Amy with nails in her mouth, hammer in one hand, wine in the other --

TEENAGE

(gruff)

Your foundation's a little warped, mind if I reinforce your support beams?

AMY

Uh...no.

The girl hands her the wine and moves on. Amy stares into the bottle. Bites her lip, dare she? Not another thought -- she swigs it down -- and --

SMASH TO:

COWBOY BOOTS

stepping up the porch. Heels clicking. Arrive behind Tom. A bunch of grapes slide forth --

KANSAS CITY (O.S.)

Want some?

Tom turns, beholds the K.C. Royals cap. After everything, hardly surprised. Just glad to see him.

TOM

Kevin...

KANSAS CITY

Tom... How ya feelin'?

TOM

Minute by minute.

KANSAS CITY

The best way...

TOM

How are you?

KANSAS CITY

Worked out some of the kinks.
You should see me. I'm a big
hit..

TOM

Yeah?

KANSAS CITY

Oh yeah. Got turkey leg stands
on every corner.

A still moment as the wind carries echoes of winery
laughter through the land.

TOM

Ya know... You coulda just
told me.

KANSAS CITY

Mysterious ways. All that.

TOM

Guess I'll find out soon enough.

KANSAS CITY

Minute by minute, Tom.

Kevin offers his hand. Tom takes it, suddenly light on his
feet, almost weightless, as he's escorted down the steps,
into the vines.

KANSAS CITY

I wanna thank you for what
you've done.

TOM

Nearly lost 'em to the crows.

KANSAS CITY

Not what I mean.

Tom follows his gaze...Amy -- emerging from the winery,
bottle in hand. She looks up to the porch. And sees.
Goes white. Can't move. Cold shock. Forces her limbs
into action -- running -- straight for them -- everything
in her --

Tom looks at her, then Kevin --

TOM

She's been hoping for this.

KANSAS CITY

Don't think so...

Tom cocks his head -- just as she rushes for them -- and right past, not even seeing them -- to the porch --

To the body collapsed against the rail. Tom's body. Dead?

In the vines, the Tom with Kevin -- thunderstruck --

AMY

Tom! -- Tom?!

But there's no answer from the lifeless man. Frantic, she sits him up --

AMY

No -- it's ready, sweetheart --
no --

She takes his head, brings the bottle to his lips --
desperate tears --

AMY

It's just like you said -- the
people came -- the wine's
ready -- drink, drink --
please -- it's your cure too --

Tom reels. His death. Her pain.

TOM

Oh god -- it's not fair --

Kevin watches. Feeling for these mortals.

TOM

She doesn't deserve this. She
can't go through this again.

KANSAS CITY

She won't have to...

Kevin glances at him. Knowing smile.

KANSAS CITY

S'good wine. You should try
some.

He winks and...

ANGLE - PORCH

The body jerks conscious -- cough of wine --

AMY

Tom??

He shakes out the stars. Swallows the wine.

TOM

Strong character. Deep
texture. Rich aroma. Not bad.

His eyes sparkle and she clutches him tight, teeming. He
clutches her back, everything in him. Beyond, Kevin.
Looking on, teeming himself:

KANSAS CITY

Well. I got a flight to catch.

But no one hears him. So without another word, he heads
down the steps. WE FOLLOW his path through the
crowd...past the vines...and up the hill...where he joins
them. Brian Jacobs. Jerry Banks. Blue Collar's wife.
The little ballerina. The pianist. All of them...

And Kansas City. A last look. Shining eyes. Joyous
smile. Takes off that ratty old Royals hat, bids an
unwitting Amy an eternal adieu.

He pops a grape into his mouth, vanishes into the crowd.
Only the SWEET MELODY from the winery in his place. And --
Blue Collar emerging from the kitchen in an apron, stirring
a bowl of cookie dough --

BLUE

Answer me this. How am I
supposed to make snickerdoodles
without cinnamon?

Tom and Amy chuckle. She helps him up.

AMY

Are you...?

TOM

God, I think so.

They step into the vineyard, hand in hand. Aunt Irene,
mouth agape, gazes on. She looks skyward.

Tom waves -- but he's nearly knocked flat over -- a pair of
Indian braves racing by -- Rusty and Barbara Jacobs
spilling over with bliss, cupping mouths, dancing about.
Best of friends, mother and son again.

TOM

Round up the wagons, Agnes --
Apaches.

Tom pulls out his imaginary six shooter but the Indians

overwhelm this cowboy -- he takes an arrow to the chest. And this time, he does it right -- clutches his chest and falls to a knee, bleedin' his guts out.

RUSTY

Now I get to scalp ya!

ANGLE - DIRT ROAD

Car pulls up. Two doors open. Mrs. Brooks and Richard. Awestruck eyes ingest the vines. The people. The celebration. And Tom. On the ground --

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey --

RICHARD

Oh lord --

They race across the field -- clear past the crowd -- get to him -- and he's dying. Well, of laughter. Sidesplitting pain from the boy's attack of tickles. He notices the latecomers.

TOM

Oh, ya made it.

Rises to his feet, a great big hug to Mrs. Brooks, a firm handshake to Richard. Both speechless.

TOM

What's the matter? You two look like you've seen a ghost.

He winks to Amy. But they just stare. Doesn't make an ounce of sense.

Tom and Amy lead them into the throng of revelers. Brimming with spirit. In more ways than one...

FADE TO:

Riding carefree in the convertible. The swimming hole. The tire swing dangling from the massive old oak. Photographs. Dancing in a sea of black. One after another with END CREDITS...

Tom, fixing the tire. Amy, a self-timed pudding kiss on his cheek. Harriet, pecking Birdy's butt...

FADE OUT.

THE END.