

PATHWAYS

"The Eternal Flame"

by

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TEASER

INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on a painted sign which reads "TONIGHT ONLY - KARAOKE NIGHT!".

PAN OUT and we're getting a full view of the Blaze in all its glory, as waiters and waitresses bustle about, people get their groove on on the dance floor, and multiple groups and couples chat away at various tables around the club.

A song is just ending, and SILENCE takes over for a beat. Then, familiar country twang MUSIC fills the air in the club, and people begin to slow dance.

ON STAGE, we slowly pull in on GABE JONES, who nervously stands in a spotlight, a microphone in front of him.

GABE

(singing)

*I fall to pieces...
Each time I see you again...
I fall to pieces...
How can I be just your friend...*

He's surprisingly good, and people are really getting into it. Across the club, SAM, MARK, JULIE and DOMINIC are sitting at a table, watching Gabe continue to sing (which we can almost make out in the background).

SAM

He's good.

DOMINIC

Really good.

SAM

Did you know he could do that?

DOMINIC

No idea.

JULIE

What, no late-night shower singing sessions?

Everyone turns and looks at her with an odd look.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What? I'm not allowed to occasionally be crude and obnoxious? Geez.

MARK

I think it's really nice. I wish I could sing like that.

SAM

Honey, the point of karaoke isn't to sound good.

MARK

Yeah, but Gabe does. Doesn't he Dominic? Doesn't he sound good?

DOMINIC

Yeah. He does.

ON GABE as he looks out into the crowd, and he catches Dominic's eye, and he breaks out into a grin as he continues to sing.

GABE

(singing still)

You tell me to find someone else to love...

Someone who'll love me too, the way you used to do...

But each time I go out with someone new...

You walk by and I fall to pieces...

ON DOMINIC as he begins to clap and whistle as the music comes to a close. Everyone around him begins to join in, and soon, everyone in the club is giving Gabe a standing ovation.

ON GABE as he looks out on the audience, basking in the glory of the adoration.

ANNA (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

Hey! Hey, sleepy-head! Hey!

CUT TO:

INT. GABE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gabe is being shaken by ANNA as she sits on the bed next to him, trying to wake him up. Slowly, Gabe's eyes open and he groans in his mother's general direction.

GABE

Waaah!

ANNA

Wake up! Wake up, wake up!

GABE

Why?

ANNA

It's morning. The sun is up. The roosters have crowed.

GABE

We don't have roosters.

ANNA

That could change.

GABE

It's early.

ANNA

It's the middle of the night on the other side of the world. Australians are getting ready to go to bed. Or maybe they're eating lunch. Not the point! The point is, it's time to get up.

GABE

Why? Why must you torture me??

ANNA

This is officially your first weekend of freedom. No more school! You're free! It's time to celebrate, and the only way to do it properly is if you get out of bed and join the living!

GABE

Okay, okay, just give me a minute to catch up with reality.

ANNA

Yeah, mister, you looked like you were having a really good dream. Anything you can remember?

Gabe just shakes his head.

GABE

No. Can't remember it.

ANNA

Huh. Weird. Sounded like you were humming.

GABE
Humming?

ANNA
Yeah. Sounded kinda like...country
music.

GABE
Weird.

ANNA
Really weird.
(beat)
Anyway, breakfast's ready
downstairs. I already poured the
cereal, the milk's waiting.

GABE
Okay, I'll be right down.

Anna gets up and leaves the room, and Gabe sits up in bed, a
grin forming across his face.

GABE (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Good dream.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. CRESTVIEW STREET - DAY

Gabe and Sam are walking past storefronts on a busy city street as cars and other pedestrians pass them by. The sun is shining, and it's a beautiful day in a beautiful small town.

SAM

I love summer. Don't you love summer? Summer is just...the best. Everything great happens in summer. Summer vacations, summer flings, summer showers, summer sports.

GABE

You hate sports.

SAM

Ah, but in summer, I love sports. Everything about summer is great.

GABE

Gotcha. Big check in the "I love summer" box.

SAM

Just take a breath.

GABE

What?

SAM

Take a breath. Breathe in the clean, fresh summer air.

Sam does just that, he inhales dramatically, waving his arms in the air as he does so, and he exhales loudly, waving his arms out as if he is pushing the air out.

SAM (CONT'D)

So refreshing.

GABE

Yes. I feel the zest. I'm zestfully fresh.

SAM

I'm sensing some summer hate coming my way.

GABE

I don't hate summer. It's just...with the heat, and the humidity, and the sun never relenting in its beating, ever-increasing in heat rays...Summer fever, heat strokes, dehydration. All very, very bad things.

SAM

You miss school.

GABE

Is that bad?

SAM

Understandable from a newbie. Brighton is a great place. It's like a t-shirt you can't help but wear even though t-shirts are unbelievably common and made out of itchy cotton that makes your skin break out.

GABE

Well, I mostly miss the people IN Brighton, more than the actual building itself.

SAM

Ah-hah!

GABE

What?

SAM

I knew it.

GABE

Knew what?

SAM

You miss Dominic.

Gabe looks hard at his feet, playing with the hem of his shirt.

GABE

No I don't.

SAM

And the award for least convincing "No I don't" goes to...

GABE

All right. I miss him. A little.
But we're taking things slow.
Incredibly slow. Mind-numbingly,
painstakingly, throw me in a coffin
now slow.

SAM

This too shall pass.

GABE

Since when did you become all
higher-being-know-it-all-y?

SAM

Hello, I'm me. I know things. And
I can tell from a mile away that
you are a love-sick puppy in need
of its mother's milk. Or should I
say daddy's milk...

GABE

Sam!

Sam shrugs playfully and quirks an eyebrow.

SAM

I'm just saying...you love him, he
obviously loves you...or at least
he may love you, what with the
whole he's-probably-straight thing,
but you two have a good thing
going.

GABE

You mean we would have a good thing
going if there was a thing to be
going. Right now
we're...thingless. Nothing going
on right now.

(beat)

A whole lotta nothing.

SAM

It'll change. Just you wait and
see.

GABE

Wait and see, huh? You really
think that will work?

SAM

It has to.

As this sinks in with Gabe, they continue walking forward until they begin to fill the screen, and we:

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGHTON - HALLWAY - DAY

Julie is walking alone down the center of the main hallway we are so used to seeing, only now it is completely empty and desolate - not a soul to be seen. Her heels click on the tile and echo around the corridor.

She nears a classroom door, and she's about to walk past it when it FLIES OPEN, revealing CHARLIE, who is carrying a stack of boxes in front of her, concealing her face.

JULIE

Woah!

CHARLIE

Huh? Who? Who is that?

She turns around and looks over her shoulder to see Julie, watching her with a confused look on her face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, it's you.

JULIE

Yeah. Me. What are you doing here?

CHARLIE

I could ask you the same thing. School let out a couple days ago. Shouldn't you be off lounging in Capri or something by now?

JULIE

You know I'm not like that, Charlie. That's more Sam's forte. Running off to exotic places at the drop of a hat.

CHARLIE

Well that's Sam for you.

JULIE

What do you mean, "that's Sam for you"? You don't even know him.

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)
You've been in the picture for
about two seconds, and you're
talking about him like you know
him?

Charlie sits the boxes down and looks Julie right in the face
now.

CHARLIE
Hey, woah woah woah! Slow down a
second here.

JULIE
What?

CHARLIE
You can't do that.

JULIE
Do what?

CHARLIE
Just walk in here and start yelling
and making threats and acting like
you have some sort of exclusive
privilege of being Sam's friend.
He's a big boy, you know, he can
make his own decisions.

JULIE
You obviously know nothing about
boys. They can't make any
decisions for themselves.

Charlie picks up one of her boxes.

CHARLIE
Look, I don't know what you two
have going on between you, but far
be it from me to get in between
whatever sick love triangle you've
pulled me into.

JULIE
Love triangle!?! What are we, in
some teen soap opera?

Charlie shrugs her shoulders.

CHARLIE
That's something you should be
asking yourself, Julie. You're
just creating drama out of nothing.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You and I...we could be...well, not
friends...

She pauses.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But, acquaintances maybe? I mean,
let's face it. Sam is in both of
our lives.

JULIE
He's more in my life than your's.

CHARLIE
Oh my God, are you eight?

JULIE
No, I'm just able to tell when
someone is weaseling in where they
don't belong. Sam is never going
to be interested in you like you're
interested in him. I mean, could
the boy be anymore gay? He's
practically got it stamped on his
forehead. I mean, SAM, liking a
GIRL? Get real!

Charlie looks doubtful.

CHARLIE
It sounds like you're trying to
convince the wrong girl.

Julie glares at the other girl angrily, before turning and
marching away, leaving Charlie to look after her, a concerned
look on her face.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE - DAY

Mark is walking through the Blaze, carrying a rag, and wiping
down tables, an apron wrapped around his waist. He begins to
clean a particularly dirty table, when someone appears behind
him. He turns around, notices KATHLEEN, and accidentally
swipes several of the things on the table to the floor,
causing a large clatter.

MARK
Er...I can pay for that.

KATHLEEN
Kids your age shouldn't drink
coffee. You're jumpy enough.

MARK

Right. Good advice. Except I...

KATHLEEN

I've been watching you, Mark.

Mark gulps visibly.

MARK

You...you have?

KATHLEEN

Not in a creepy "I've been watching you" way. Just...you've caught my eye.

MARK

(still nervous)

Uh-huh.

KATHLEEN

Okay, I didn't realize this was going to be so hard to explain.

MARK

Oh, no, I totally follow you!

Kathleen quirks an eyebrow, not buying it.

MARK (CONT'D)

I just need a hint, maybe a sign, something...and I will totally be following.

Kathleen smiles and shakes her head.

KATHLEEN

You're an odd duck, Mark. Anyone ever told you that?

MARK

(smirking)

I can do a mean quack when I want to.

Kathleen looks Mark up and down, evaluating him.

KATHLEEN

The Eternal Flame is set for next Friday. I've been looking for my best waiter to take control of the event.

MARK

Yeah, I...know. Everyone's sort of been on their toes for weeks.

KATHLEEN

I thought I noticed that.

MARK

It's a huge job. And...really coveted by the entire staff. I mean, anyone who gets chosen will be the envy of everyone else. It's sort of the only thing we can all talk about.

KATHLEEN

It's true, it's a prestigious position. The Eternal Flame is the biggest event of the year. This place is packed to maximum capacity. Last year we had to turn people away.

(beat)

I think you'll be perfect for it.

Mark takes a moment as this sinks in.

MARK

Really?

KATHLEEN

You're responsible, you're hard-working. I've seen you do a lot of good for this place. Not to mention, you're more obsessed with the place than me. And that says a lot.

MARK

(grinning stupidly)

I just like my job.

KATHLEEN

It's going to be a lot of work. You'll have to make sure and keep up on it. Next Friday will creep up on us faster than you think.

Mark gives Kathleen an awkward hug, and she makes a face, not sure what to think. Mark pulls away, still grinning.

MARK

You have no idea how happy I am,
Kathleen!

(beat)

Well, you might have a small idea.

KATHLEEN

I think the hug solidified it.

MARK

Sorry.

KATHLEEN

It's okay. So...I take it you want
the job?

MARK

Are you kidding!?

Kathleen gives him a look.

MARK (CONT'D)

Of course you aren't kidding! I
would love the job!

(beat)

Oh my God...I can't believe this.

KATHLEEN

Try to contain your excitement,
okay?

(beat)

And avoid caffeine for the next
week.

They both look down at the smashed glass/garbage that spilled
onto the floor.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

And...

MARK

And I'm going to clean this up!

Kathleen nods and walks away, leaving Mark to bask in the
fact that he couldn't be happier than he is in this moment.
Still grinning, he begins cleaning up the mess, not even
caring that he has to do it.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE - DAY

Close up on the phone and all is quiet, until the phone suddenly RINGS. In the BG, we hear keys JANGLING and the door OPENS. Anna comes into frame, rushing towards the phone as it rings again.

ANNA
Coming, coming!

She quickly picks up the phone.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(breathless)
Hello?

A beat.

VOICE (OC)
(filtered)
Anna?

Anna narrows her eyes.

ANNA
This is Anna. Can I...help you?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A MAN is seated at a desk in a richly designed office, full of fine furniture and a spectacular cityscape view behind him in a picture-window. The man sitting in the office looks just as refined, with smoldering eyes, short dark hair, and a sharp suit. He is holding his phone to his ear. This is MICHAEL JONES.

MICHAEL
Anna, it's me.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE

Anna's eyes widen as she realizes who she is talking to, and the voice becomes familiar.

ANNA
Michael?

MICHAEL (OC)
(filtered)
Yeah, it's me. How are you?

Anna walks further into the house, slumping down on the couch.

ANNA
How AM I?
(beat)
How AM I? Michael, it's been six years; no phone calls, no letters, no visits. And after all this time, you call me to ask me "how AM I"?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE

Michael sits silently for a moment, obviously unsure what to say.

ANNA (OC)
(filtered)
Are you there?

MICHAEL
I'm here. Anna, I don't know what to say. I can't explain. There are no excuses. I just wanted to call. I wanted to tell Gabe happy birthday.

ANNA (OC)
(filtered)
You're a week late.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE

Anna stares angrily into space.

ANNA
I can't believe you, Michael. I can't believe you'd even have the nerve. Oh wait, I can believe it! You've been a spineless creep since day one, I was just too stupid to notice.

MICHAEL (OC)
(filtered)
That's not fair. You know -

ANNA
(interrupting)
No! You know what's unfair!?
Putting me in this position! Gabe
waited for you for so long. Waited
for you to come back, to call...to do
something! And after all these
years, nothing. And now this?
This sorry excuse at making up for
lost time? What, you thought you'd
say "happy birthday" and six years
of anger and resentment would just
disappear?
(beat)
You know as well as I do that it
doesn't work like that.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE

Michael sits stone-silent, caught up with emotion.

MICHAEL
I can't apologize enough. What I
did was wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE

ANNA
Gee, you think?
(beat)
How did you get this number?

MICHAEL (OC)
(filtered)
I called in a favor. Found you by
luck.

ANNA
Do you still feel lucky?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE

MICHAEL
I just want to talk to my son.

ANNA (OC)
(filtered)
I'm sorry, but it's too late for
that.

MICHAEL
(disbelieving)
What?

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE

Anna stands up and moves over to the cradle for the phone.

ANNA
You gave up those rights a long
time ago.
(beat)
I've gotta go, now.

Before Michael can say another word, she hangs up. She turns away from the phone, covering her mouth, tears welling up in her eyes.

In the B.G., the door OPENS and Anna quickly wipes away her tears and sniffs heavily, trying to hide her emotions. Gabe enters the living room and notices Anna standing there and she forces a large smile onto her face.

GABE
Mom? What's going on?

ANNA
(fake happy)
Nothing! How was school?

Gabe looks at her oddly.

GABE
School let out last week.
Remember? I hibernated in my room
for three whole days studying for
finals, and then we had the
celebratory "I'm free!" dinner?

Anna quickly nods.

ANNA

Right, right! Force of habit. So what's going on?

GABE

I was going to ask you the same question.

ANNA

Oh, nothing. Just...doing some...stuff. Here in the middle of the living room.

GABE

Uh-huh. Well, I'm gonna go to my room. Think you can handle things down here without me?

ANNA

Yup. I'll hold the fort. You go do your thing. I'll be here.

Gabe gives her a weird look and heads up the stairs. Anna watches him go, and when he disappears, she sinks back down on the couch, burying her face in her hands.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. TECHNOID ROOM - DAY

Gabe, Sam, Mark and Julie are all sitting together at a booth in the arcade, sharing some fries and sipping on drinks. Wild MUSIC plays in the B.G.

MARK

Well...I have an announcement.

SAM

You're pregnant.

MARK

That would explain the swollen ankles.

JULIE

You do look like you're glowing.

GABE

I noticed a tiny glint in your eye earlier.

MARK

Okay, you're freaking me out now!

GABE

Sorry.

JULIE

Won't happen again.

They continue munching on fries, silent.

MARK

So...

SAM

What's the big announcement?

Mark sits up straight, wiping his hands clean, as if preparing himself to give the message.

MARK

Yours truly has been given the honor of being given the reins to the biggest party of the year.

SAM

You get to host the Tony's!?

Mark throws him a look.

MARK

Not that.

GABE

What is it? It sounds fun!

Mark looks at them all, shocked.

MARK

You really don't know?

More shocked silence.

MARK (CONT'D)

It's all I've been able to talk
about for weeks.

Julie, Sam and Gabe exchange awkward glances.

GABE

It's been really busy the last
couple of weeks.

SAM

Yeah, you know, with the hair, and
the...the brushing of
teeth...and...

MARK

(disappointed)

You guys really don't know?

JULIE

Might help if you told us.

MARK

My boss put me in charge of the
Eternal Flame.

Silence as everyone takes this in. Suddenly, Sam LAUGHS,
nearly snorting out his soda.

SAM

I'm sorry.

MARK

Wow.

GABE

Mark...he didn't mean it like that.

Mark leans back in his seat, eyes narrowed.

MARK

Really? It sure sounded like he meant something.

SAM

Mark, it's just...come on!

Sam smiles and tries to get a reaction out of Mark, but Mark is stone-silent.

JULIE

(awkward)

Congratulations?

Mark suddenly sits back up.

MARK

You know what I think? I think you're just jealous, Sam. I got this job, and I worked my butt off and proved myself, and you've never done anything like that. I earned my way in. Can you say you've ever done that?

Sam is shocked into silence. His smile is gone.

GABE

Um...

JULIE

I concur.

Mark looks at Sam, waiting for a response.

MARK

I can't do this now.

He quickly stands up, leaving the three of them alone. Julie slides the basket of fries in front of Sam, and he gloomily picks one up, snapping it in half.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S OFFICES - DAY

Anna walks out of the back with a WOMAN and a GIRL standing at her side as they make their way into the waiting area.

ANNA

So just be sure and keep an eye on her temperature.

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)
Keep her drinking plenty of
liquids, and give her the medicine
twice a day.

Anna leans down close to the Girl.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Feel better soon, okay?

The Girl nods, mustering a small smile.

WOMAN
Thank you, Dr. Jones.

They leave, and Anna watches after them. SARAH appears at
the reception desk, holding a file folder.

SARAH
All set?

ANNA
Yeah, one down, one to go. When's
my next appointment?

SARAH
(consulting file)
Uh...about thirty minutes from now.

ANNA
Thank God. Coffee. Now.

SARAH
I've got some fresh in the back.

ANNA
You're a life-saver.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM

Anna is stirring some creamer into her coffee as Sarah preps
her own cup.

SARAH
Something on your mind?

ANNA
That's a loaded question right now.

SARAH
I'm sorry...

ANNA
Not your fault. I...got a call from
"the father" yesterday.

Sarah sits down, raising an eyebrow.

SARAH
Gabe's dad?

ANNA
One in the same.

SARAH
Oh my God, what happened? Does
Gabe know?

Anna bites her lip. Sarah grimaces.

ANNA
Seeing my problem yet?

SARAH
Definitely a predicament, there.

ANNA
I was just so surprised. I haven't
talked to Michael in years. And
all of the sudden, there he is. On
my phone. Talking to me.

SARAH
Wow.

ANNA
I know. And...he wanted to talk to
Gabe, but I freaked.

SARAH
Any idea why?

ANNA
I don't know! It just came out.

SARAH
Eek.

ANNA
Double eek.

Sarah sighs. Anna nervously plays with her coffee cup.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I should have told him, shouldn't
I?

SARAH
He's his dad.

ANNA
Father. He's not a Dad. Dad's
don't bail out on their kid.

SARAH
True. Sorry. I'm no good with
this stuff.

ANNA
It's fine. I'm unloading on you.

SARAH
(smiling)
I can handle it.

Anna is silent for a moment or two.

ANNA
I did what I had to do.
(beat)
Right?

SARAH
You did what you had to do.

Anna nods, looking ahead, seeming very unsure about herself.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mark is pacing back and forth in his bedroom, holding a phone
up to his ear as we hear RINGING.

VOICE (O.C.)
(filtered)
Hello?

MARK
Uh, hi! Um, Maddox? I mean, is
Maddox there?

A beat.

MADDOX (O.C.)
(filtered)
This is Maddox. Who is this?

MARK
It's Mark. Mark Roberts? From
school?

CUT TO:

INT. KING RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

MADDOX KING is sitting on his couch in the living room, and he grins a little.

MADDOX
I know who you are, Mark. You
don't have to remind me.

MARK (O.C.)
(filtered)
Sorry. Phones make me nervous.

MADDOX
Just phones, huh?

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Mark sits down at his desk, a playful smile on his face.

MARK
Well, I can't reveal all my secret
weaknesses.

MADDOX (O.C.)
(filtered)
Darn.

MARK
So good news! I'm in charge of the
Eternal Flame party this year! My
boss apparently loves me, and now
all the other staff members hate
me, but it's so worth it! People
don't get this chance everyday, you
know!

CUT TO:

INT. KING RESIDENCE

Maddox looks very happy for Mark.

MADDOX

Mark, that's great! I think you'll be perfect for that. I heard you had a big success with Gabe's birthday party last week.

A beat.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Mark worriedly bites his lip.

MARK

Um...yeah. Sorry you didn't get an invite to that. I...guess I didn't think you'd want to come.

MADDOX (O.C.)

(filtered)

It's cool. We would have had fun though. But hey, there's always next time.

MARK

I'm actually really glad you said that! 'Cause I was thinking, you know, we could maybe hang out at the Eternal Flame party.

Silence on the other end.

MARK (CONT'D)

Are you there?

More silence.

MADDOX (O.C.)

(filtered)

I'm here.

MARK

Is everything okay? You just got extremely quiet.

MADDOX (O.C.)
 (filtered)
 I'm not gonna be able to make it to
 the Eternal Flame. I'm really
 sorry Mark.

Mark's face falls. He is obviously extremely disappointed,
 but doesn't want to let Maddox know.

MADDOX (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 (filtered)
 I wish I could see it. I know
 you're gonna do great. I can't
 really explain. I wish I could,
 but I just can't. I'm really
 sorry, Mark.

MARK
 Um...that's okay. I'll just let
 you go then.

Mark hangs up, slowly sits the phone down, and stares forward
 with a blank expression.

CUT TO:

INT. MCMANN RESIDENCE - EVENING

Anna is sitting on the couch in James's living room, looking
 about ready to watch TV, two empty wine glasses on the table
 in front of her. JAMES enters the room, a giant bowl of
 popcorn and a bottle of wine in his hands.

JAMES
 I come bearing gifts.

ANNA
 Oh, alcohol or popcorn, which would
 I rather choose?

JAMES
 Go for the popcorn. It was
 probably more expensive.

ANNA
 (grinning)
 A man after my own heart.

They lean in and share a kiss.

JAMES
 So what have we got for our viewing
 pleasure tonight?

ANNA

I picked up a couple of bad comedies that we purposely skipped in the theatres because we'd mock them too loudly.

JAMES

Can't wait.

James digs into the popcorn, and shoves a gigantic handful into his mouth.

ANNA

You better save some for me, mister!

JAMES

Is that a threat?

ANNA

Boy howdy it is! Never come between a woman and her freshly popped corn!

James picks up a handful of popcorn and raises an eyebrow at Anna, and she narrows her eyes playfully.

JAMES

Oh, you want the popcorn?

Anna reaches for the popcorn in his hand. James yanks the bowl away with his free hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You better come and get it!

Anna leans forward quickly, and James shoves the popcorn in her face, and they collapse on each other, laughing hysterically.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BLAZE - EVENING

Sam is standing outside the Blaze, looking a bit bored. DYLAN walks up to him, looking very smug. Sam looks at him, already annoyed.

SAM

You have five minutes.

DYLAN

I'm glad you came, Sam. I wasn't sure if you would respond to my messages. Looks like you're smarter than I thought, after all.

SAM

This whole super-villain thing you're trying to pull? So not cool, man.

DYLAN

I told you that you were done ruining people's lives, Sam, and I meant it. So I am going to ruin yours.

SAM

Is this what you practically beat my door down to tell me? That you're going to ruin my life?

(beat)

As if you're the first person to threaten that.

DYLAN

This time it's true.

SAM

What do you mean?

DYLAN

Kiss me and find out.

Sam's eyes widen and he raises his eyebrows.

SAM

Say what?

Without another word, Dylan leans in and plants a big smooch on Sam, and Sam is unable to do anything but go along with it, Dylan is being so forceful.

REVERSE ANGLE:

To reveal SHAWN, holding a note in his hands, and he looks back up to see Sam and Dylan kissing from across the street. Upset, he quickly turns and hurries away.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. GABE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gabe is lying on his bed with a phone, and he's listening to the other line as it RINGS.

DOMINIC (O.C.)

This is Dominic, leave a message at the beep.

Gabe hesitates, having not expecting voicemail. He sits up as the BEEP sounds.

GABE

Uh, hi. It's me. Gabe. But you probably knew that. Not that you know exactly what my voice sounds like. I mean I figure you must by now. Anyway, not the point. I have a question for you, and if you can call me back, I'd...appreciate it. So...yeah. Call me back.

Gabe hangs up the phone, looking down at it. A beat passes. Suddenly the phone RINGS. Gabe jumps in surprise, but quickly answers it, fumbling with the phone.

GABE (CONT'D)

Hello!?

SAM (O.C.)

(filtered)

Gabe, it's me.

GABE

Sam? What's wrong?

SAM (O.C.)

(filtered)

Just come to my house. Now.

GABE

I'm coming.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gabe and Sam are sitting in Sam's luxuriously decorated bedroom. Sam on his bed, and Gabe in a comfortable looking recliner facing the bed.

SAM

He won't answer my calls anymore.
I tried calling like a thousand
times. He told me he doesn't want
to see my face, hear my voice, or
speak to anyone with a name
beginning in "s".

GABE

My name doesn't begin with "s".
Maybe he'll talk to me.
(beat)
Plus, he did kiss me that one time.
Maybe I've got sway with him.

Sam throws him a look.

SAM

So not helping.

GABE

This doesn't have anything to do
with that Dylan guy, does it?

Sam gets nervous.

SAM

What do you mean?

GABE

The guy who asked you out on a
date? Did Shawn find out about
that? Maybe if you just explained
that there's nothing going on
between you two...

SAM

He saw Dylan kissing me.

Gabe's jaw drops.

GABE

Okay, what?! I thought you were a
one-man guy! No more fooling
around. Semi-monogomous, and all
that.

SAM

Dylan trapped me! He lured me out
and snared me with his lips. He's
a rat bastard! And I'm pretty sure
I glimpsed Shawn hot-footing it
away. Dylan must have set it up.

Gabe leans back, shocked.

GABE

Wow. Somebody call Kaia, 'cause she's just been dethroned as Queen Bitch.

SAM

So what do I do? Oh my God, he's probably going to break up with me. I swear I didn't mean to do anything wrong...

Sam puts his head in his hands. Gabe gets up off the recliner and comes to sit next to Sam, putting a hand on his shoulder comfortingly.

GABE

Hey. It's okay. Shawn's a smart guy. Maybe he'll come around. The Eternal Flame's in a couple of days, and he knows how excited you guys were about going together.

SAM

I know...but what if that's all ruined now?

GABE

If it makes you feel any better, Dominic's totally been blowing me off since school let out.

Sam looks up, gloomy.

SAM

Not really.

GABE

So we can both be pathetic together, then.

Sam changes positions, and Gabe positions himself on the bed next to him so they are both leaning against the headboard.

SAM

Yeah.

GABE

Yeah.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKER'S CAR - NIGHT

Julie is seated next to PARKER in his car, and they seem to be in cuddle-mode, as he is parked somewhere fairly private.

JULIE

So he just left after that.

PARKER

Who left?

JULIE

Mark did! Haven't you been listening? I've been talking about this for at least twenty minutes.

PARKER

Sorry.

Julie sits up and looks at him.

JULIE

I ran into Charlie today.

PARKER

Charlie Davenport?

Julie nods.

JULIE

I hate that girl. She's such a know-it-all. I mean, she had the nerve to tell me she thinks I have this weird crush on Sam.

Parker raises an eyebrow, and Julie chokes out a laugh.

PARKER

And how did she draw that conclusion?

JULIE

You got me! The girl's certifiable, if you ask me. She's got all kinds of wild theories pouring out of her ears.

(beat)

I mean, Sam is so selfish lately. It's like you said. If you don't have a penis, why should he care? It's getting to the point where that doesn't even matter anymore.

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)
The way he's been treating Shawn,
Mark...

They sit in silence.

PARKER
So. Blow him off.

Julie looks at him, confused.

JULIE
What?

PARKER
If he's bugging you that bad, tell
him.

JULIE
I could never...I mean...it'd be
really hard.

PARKER
He's never gonna know unless
someone tells him.

Julie thinks this over for a moment, and we:

CUT TO:

INT. MCMANN RESIDENCE

James is cleaning up the living room. Anna seems to be gone.
The front door opens and Parker comes in. James looks up.

JAMES
Hey there. Just the man I wanted
to see.

Parker walks further into the living room.

PARKER
Oh really?

JAMES
As a matter of fact, yes. Wanna
take a seat?

Parker rolls his eyes.

PARKER
(sarcastic)
Oh, this is a sitting thing.
That's always a good sign.

JAMES
Come on, humor me.

Parker sits on the couch, and James half-sits on the coffee table nearby.

PARKER
So what's this all about?

JAMES
I wanna talk to you about something really important, Parker.

PARKER
If it has anything to do with birds or bees, feel free to skip it, or at the very least, give me the Reader's Digest version. I've heard it all already.

A beat as James takes that in.

JAMES
No, it's nothing like that, but now that you mention it, we're gonna need to have a talk about that soon now.

Parker rolls his eyes again, sighing.

PARKER
I walked right into that one.

JAMES
What happened to you being in such a good mood lately? Are things going okay with Julie?

Parker bristles at the mention of Julie.

PARKER
Things are fine with Julie.

JAMES
Good! She's a good girl. I liked her.

PARKER
That's...good. Look, Dad, are we nearing a point anytime soon, 'cause I have things...

JAMES

You're seventeen years old, what kinds of things could you have?

PARKER

You know. Things.

James shrugs his shoulder.

JAMES

All right, fine. I'll get to the point.

He pulls a small black box out of his pocket and holds it in front of Parker, a small grin on his face.

PARKER

Are you serious?

James opens it, revealing a stunningly beautiful diamond ring.

JAMES

You know how important Anna has become in my life. And we've only gotten closer the last couple of months. Things are really progressing, Parker. Faster than I ever thought they could. But...I am so in love. And I haven't felt this way in such a long time. Every time I see her, I get excited. Like it's my first time taking a step, or I'm jumping off a cliff, just waiting to pull the parachute cord. It's the most exhilarating feeling in my life.

(beat)

I want to marry her.

Parker is speechless. Without saying a word, he gets up off the couch, and leaves the house, the door slamming behind him. James looks after him, silent, still holding the ring-box.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

Mark is busily scribbling notes down on a pad while he rushes around the Blaze, checking on workers as they put decorations up and get things ready.

A huge torch-like fountain is being constructed in the middle of the club, and Mark walks over to the head worker, TIM.

MARK

Hey, Tim. Tell me we're almost done.

TIM

Well that might mean I'd have to lie to you, Mark.

MARK

How much more time till this baby's up and running?

TIM

Got a week to spare?

MARK

More like six hours. Think you can swing it?

TIM

It'll be tough.

MARK

We need a miracle, Tim.

Tim goes back to work, and Mark heads over to a different section of the club, and meets up with Kathleen, who is looking around the club with a small smile.

KATHLEEN

You're really pulling it all together, aren't you, kid?

MARK

Just doing my job.

KATHLEEN

It looks marvelous, Mark. I'm really impressed.

MARK

We're running a tight schedule, but I think we'll make it. Everything seems to be running like a well-oiled machine.

Kathleen turns to Mark.

KATHLEEN

All thanks to you.

Mark smiles sheepishly.

MARK

I have a lot of people helping me,
too.

KATHLEEN

It takes a hard worker to run an
event like this. I'm gonna
remember this, Mark.

She smiles gratefully, and walks away, leaving Mark to turn
and survey the club, a victorious smile on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Gabe is in the kitchen watching something cook in the
microwave, and we hear the door OPEN and CLOSE and Anna
appears in the kitchen a moment later.

ANNA

Busy?

GABE

Yup.

ANNA

I can tell.

GABE

What's up?

Anna comes closer to Gabe.

ANNA

Gonna pull your nose away from the
microwave, or are your psychic
powers providing the heat?

Gabe turns away from the microwave and faces his mother, a
curious look on his face.

GABE

Turning. Eyes focusing. And I'm
here.

ANNA

Glad to have you back.

GABE
Anything particular you wanted to
discuss?

Anna hesitates for a moment.

ANNA
Well you see...the thing is...I'm
not quite sure how to tell you
this. But...you know how serious
things have been getting with
James.

GABE
Uh-huh.

ANNA
Aaand...we've been spending a lot
of time together, talking. Talking
about all kinds of important, grown-
up things.

GABE
Right.

ANNA
And I think we've come to a mutual
understanding that it's time to
take things to the next level.

GABE
The next level?

ANNA
You know...?

Gabe raises an eyebrow.

GABE
You're gonna need to throw me a
bone here.

ANNA
What would you say to all of us
moving in together?

A beat. Gabe is speechless.

GABE
Um...by "all of us", you do mean us
and the cast of The OC, right?
'Cause they have great houses
there.

ANNA
No, us. Me, you. James, Parker.
All under one roof.

GABE
I think it sounds like a recipe for
disaster.

ANNA
You said you were going to be
supportive about this.

GABE
I know. I am supportive. Of
everything but this.

Anna looks disappointed.

ANNA
I was hoping you'd be more open-
minded about this. Don't you want
me to be happy?

Gabe lowers his head.

GABE
Of course I do.

ANNA
Okay...then...

GABE
All right. So, Parker and James
moving in with us. I...guess I
could handle that.
(beat)
Do I still get to keep my own room?

Anna smiles.

ANNA
That's my boy.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

The Flame Fountain is now in working order, and there are giant FLAMES in the uppermost part of it, as fountains of water trickle down beneath it. The place has a wide array of different colored lights everywhere, and it looks completely different than usual.

Tons of people are already there, and we pull in to see Gabe and Sam entering, dressed very nicely, but still casual.

GABE
So this is it.

SAM
This is it.

GABE
Pretty fountain.

SAM
Yeah.

GABE
So, wanna go home now?

Sam nods, and they are about to turn around, when suddenly Julie appears, holding a drink in her hand. She looks to be extremely drunk.

JULIE
There you are! I've been looking all over for you. Boy have I got a bone to pick with you, Sam Davidson. For you to have the nerve to think that you can just lord yourself all over town like some sort...lord. Thinking you can have anyone you damn well please!

Sam and Gabe are both shocked, and Sam is about to say something, but Julie interrupts.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Oh, you didn't think I knew? Shawn told me all about it. You just think you're so hot, don't you Sam? Well I have news for you! You're just a pathetic, poor little rich boy who is used to getting what he wants all the time, and when things don't go your way, you just get mad! You were lucky to get a nice guy like Shawn and you treated him like dirt. Parker was right! You are just a selfish little gay boy.

Sam's eyes well up with tears. Julie leers at them, waiting for a response.

GABE

Julie...you're...obviously drunk.
I don't know how you got ahold of
alcohol, but...we need to go get
you cleaned up. Right now.

Gabe hurriedly takes Julie away, leaving Sam to stare into
space, hurt and confused.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Close up on a list of flights, heading in all different
directions at different times.

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

Thank you for choosing Crestview
International, we appreciate you
flying with us.

Pan down to find Parker looking up at the departing flights,
a blank look on his face.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

Gabe and Sam are seated at a table as everyone else jostles around them, having a grand time. They both look to be having an extremely poor time.

Up on stage, they notice Mark approach a microphone.

MARK

Hello everyone! Thank you so much for coming!

(clears throat, reads from a card)

Uh, the Eternal Flame is a symbol of love. It can live forever if untouched. That's why we're all gathered here. To find our true love. And we can only hope that it will last as long as the flickering flames that warm our hearts every time we see that special someone. So turn to the person you're with, and if they're your true love, then congratulations!

Gabe and Sam exchange a sour look.

MARK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I hope you all have as much fun tonight as I did putting all of this together. It's been a labor of love for me, and...

Mark's voice fades out as Gabe and Sam begin to get restless at their table.

GABE

I can't believe this.

SAM

Me neither.

GABE

This really sucks.

SAM

Really, really sucks.

GABE

I don't think I've ever experienced something that sucked this bad.

(beat)

(MORE)

GABE (CONT'D)
 Well, maybe a couple of things, but
 this ranks right up there in the
 Top 10.

SAM
 Amen, sister.

The two stare gloomily into the distance as we:

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM STALL

Julie is sitting in a bathroom stall, on top of a closed toilet, looking extremely worse for the wear. She tugs a cell phone out of her purse and dials a number. It RINGS and we:

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT

Parker's phone begins RINGING, and he distractedly answers it as he sits in a chair in the terminal, people bustling all around him.

PARKER
 Hello?

JULIE (O.C.)
 (filtered)
 Parker? Where are you?

PARKER
 Uh...

JULIE (O.C.)
 (filtered)
 Parker...I did something terrible.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM STALL

Julie is now sobbing.

JULIE
 Everything I never wanted to say
 out loud...just...came out.
 I...didn't mean to do it. I was
 offered a drink, and then one drink
 turned into two, and now...Sam
 hates me.

PARKER (O.C.)
(filtered)
What!?

JULIE
I can't talk in order right now. I
need you! I need you to come here
right now. Please...?

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT

Parker hesitates. He looks down, and we see now that he's holding a ticket. He was ready to bail on everything. He stands up and begins walking.

PARKER
I'm on my way. Where are you?

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE - NIGHT

The song "You and Me" by LIFEHOUSE begins playing in the B.G. And Gabe notices Dominic in the crowd of people dancing and having fun. He immediately perks up, and smiles. Dominic waves him over.

Gabe walks over, leaving Sam, who appears to have fallen into a vegetative state, and approaches Dominic.

GABE
Hey.

DOMINIC
Hey.

GABE
I was starting to think you never
wanted to talk to me again.

DOMINIC
What gave you that impression?

GABE
Not talking to me for a week might
have had something to do with it.

DOMINIC
I'm sorry...I needed time. To
think. About a lot of things.

GABE
Did you get my message?

DOMINIC
I did.

GABE
Why didn't you answer?

DOMINIC
Trust me, I wanted to. But...I
wanted to surprise you. I knew you
would be here, so...

Gabe chuckles.

GABE
Well consider me surprised.

DOMINIC
I'm glad you're here.

GABE
Feeling's mutual about now.

Dominic smiles.

DOMINIC
I have something really important
that I need to talk to you about.

GABE
This sounds serious.

DOMINIC
It is. It's really serious.

GABE
Okay...

DOMINIC
Remember how I told you that I just
wanted to be friends?

Gabe takes a deep breath, his eyes clouding over.

GABE
Yeah, I remember that.

DOMINIC
Forget I ever said it.

A beat.

GABE

What?

DOMINIC

Gabe, I don't know what it is about you. Something about you just...shines. I can't stop thinking about it. I...never knew I could feel this way, especially...about a guy...I mean...you have to understand how hard this is for me.

Gabe approaches him, getting closer, putting a hand on his arm.

GABE

I do.

DOMINIC

You're always on my mind. You're like this thing I just can't quit. And trust me, I've tried. But I just can't. So I can't deny it anymore. I...I have to jump in. Head-first, if you'll let me.

GABE

Dominic...I...

DOMINIC

You don't have to say anything yet. You don't have to make a decision. Just know this is how I feel. I wanted to tell you, once and for all.

Gabe looks at him with wide eyes, unbelieving, and we:

CUT TO:

INT. MCMANN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The song continues playing in the B.G., as we see James and Anna sitting on the couch in the living room, cuddled up with one another, Anna's head leaning against his chest, his arms wrapped around her.

JAMES

Thanks for coming over. I think Parker just needed some time to cool off.

ANNA
 It's fine.
 (beat)
 What did you guys have a fight
 about, anyway?

James hesitates.

JAMES
 Oh, you know. This and that.

ANNA
 Ah, I see. That explains it.

JAMES
 Father/son stuff. That's all.

Anna turns and looks up at him.

ANNA
 Father/son stuff, huh? Sounds
 interesting.

JAMES
 Not too terribly.
 (beat)
 Although something did come up...

Anna sits up.

ANNA
 What?

JAMES
 I've been meaning to do this for
 awhile now...I just wasn't sure
 how.

Anna looks at him expectantly. James pulls out the same ring-
 box as before, and holds it out to Anna.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Anna Jones...will you marry me?

ANNA
 Oh my God.

James suddenly gets worried.

JAMES
 Too soon?

ANNA
No! It's just...I wasn't
expecting...I mean...

James looks at her with wide eyes.

JAMES
You don't have to answer.

Anna calms down enough to put a hand on James's cheek, and she smiles warmly.

ANNA
It's not that I...don't want to
marry you. I would love for that
to happen. But...I was thinking
maybe we might be a little, I
dunno, unconventional this time
around. Obviously jumping right
into marriage didn't do us any good
in the past, so why not give it a
trial run first?

James looks at her expectantly.

JAMES
A trial run?

ANNA
Move in with me. With me and Gabe.

James is stunned.

JAMES
You mean you'd want that?

ANNA
Of course! It'd be great. Don't
you think?

James blinks.

JAMES
Um...yeah. I think it would be!

ANNA
Excellent! Wow, that was a lot
easier than I thought it would be.

Anna grins happily, and leans back into his chest, and James doesn't look too entirely sure.

JAMES
Yeah...excellent.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE

Gabe and Dominic are still standing together talking, and Sam suddenly busts in between them.

SAM
Guys!

GABE
Um...Sam? Kind of in the middle of something.

DOMINIC
It's okay.

GABE
I'll handle this.
(to Sam)
What are you doing!?

Sam jerks his head to the side, towards the other end of the club. Gabe looks over, and we follow his line of vision to see: Julie and Parker walking through the throngs of people, holding hands.

SAM
Incoming. We gotta go. Now!

Gabe looks at Dominic, desperate.

GABE
But I...

SAM
Gabe, I need you!

Dominic nods.

DOMINIC
It's okay. Go with Sam. He needs you right now.

Gabe looks torn. Sam is waiting impatiently, biting his lip. Gabe finally nods, and follows after Sam, throwing one last glance back at Dominic, who watches as they walk away.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BLAZE

Over by the Flame Fountain, Kathleen approaches Mark with a big grin on her face.

KATHLEEN

You did it, kid! Everything is running smooth as a whistle.

MARK

Thank you. It was a lot of hard work, but...

Mark keeps looking around, trying to spot his friends, but he can't seem to find them.

KATHLEEN

Everything okay?

MARK

What?

(beat)

Oh, yeah. Everything's fine. I was just...

KATHLEEN

I wanted to tell you how impressed I was with the way you handled everything. Not just tonight, but in general. You're a great employee here, Mark. And I wanna show you I appreciate it.

(beat)

So I'm promoting you.

A beat.

MARK

You're what?

KATHLEEN

Promoting you. It's what you do when someone does an exceptional job, and so you move them up a notch to see if they can still handle it.

(beat)

What do you say, are you up to the challenge?

MARK

I don't know what to say.

KATHLEEN

Yes might be a good start.

Mark laughs.

MARK

Yes! Yes, of course! I'd love to take the challenge.

KATHLEEN

Great! Now go celebrate. You deserve it.

Kathleen walks away, and Mark looks around, trying to spot Sam, or Gabe, or even Julie, but no one seems to be in sight. Then he seems to be struck with an idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Mark is excitedly making his way down the street, a big grin on his face. He rounds a corner, and begins heading up the block, and towards a large, nice house, only to see a large moving van in the driveway.

Confused, he walks closer, and then he sees Maddox come out of the house with a large box in his arms.

MADDOX

(surprised)

Mark.

He sits the box down carefully.

MARK

Um...am I interrupting something?

MADDOX

I...

Mark back-pedals.

MARK

What am I saying? Of course I'm interrupting. You're obviously in the middle of moving out of town, and here I am, standing in your front yard, just...in the way, and...I can't believe you weren't gonna tell me.

Maddox is silent.

MADDOX

I'm sorry, Mark. I would have told you. But everything is happening so fast. I haven't even had time to...

He stops talking, choked up with emotion. Mark narrows his eyes, concerned. He moves closer to Maddox, who obviously looks to be on the verge of a breakdown.

MARK

Maddox...

MADDOX

They said she had more time.
(beat, the tears come)
They said it wouldn't happen so fast. They said we had time...

Maddox tumbles down, sitting on the box, full-on crying. Mark kneels down beside him, his own worries forgotten.

MARK

Your mom...?

Maddox nods slowly, looking up at Mark with tear-stained cheeks.

MADDOX

(tiny voice)
She...she's gone.

Mark takes in a deep breath, trying to maintain his composure.

MARK

I don't know what to say.

MADDOX

They...they already...
(beat)
She's back home now. In L.A.
That's where I'm heading. My...my
older brother has a place out
there.

MARK

You're moving to L.A.?

MADDOX

I don't know for how long. Maybe permanently.

A beat as this sinks in.

MARK
So...this is goodbye?

Maddox looks at him, his eyes wide and deep as ever.

MADDOX
Looks like it.

MARK
I don't know how this gonna sound,
especially right now, but...I'm gonna
miss you. More than I probably
realize right now. I'm sure it
will hit me eventually, but...

Maddox suddenly leans in and KISSES Mark. Mark falls
completely silent.

MADDOX
Um...

MARK
That's what I was gonna say.

MADDOX
I'm sorry.

Mark looks confused.

MARK
Sorry?

MADDOX
I shouldn't have done that. I'm
just...really messed up right now.
Lot of things going through my
head. I...I don't know what I'm
doing. Just...do me a favor?

MARK
Anything.

MADDOX
Forget the past five minutes.

Mark struggles to hold back tears.

MARK
Right. Of course...

MADDOX
I...I'll keep in touch, okay?

Maddox stands up, and Mark follows suit.

MARK
Okay.

MADDOX
I've got a lot to do...so...

Mark nods, getting the picture.

MARK
I understand.

Mark starts to walk away.

MADDOX
Mark?

Mark turns around, a hopeful look on his face.

MARK
Yeah?

A beat. The tension is palpable.

MADDOX
Thank you.

Mark nods, and turns to walk away, as Maddox watches on from behind.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE

Sam and Gabe rush into the foyer of the house, and Gabe shuts the door behind him.

SAM
Okay, we need a plan.

GABE
A plan?

SAM
We can't stay here!

Gabe looks at him like he's crazy.

GABE

What?

SAM

Run with me here. We skip out of town for a couple of weeks, lay low, have a fabulous time, and then when we come back, everything will have blown over.

Gabe's eyes widen.

GABE

This isn't gonna involve driving over a cliff while holding hands, is it?

SAM

Come on, Thelma, let's go pack your bags! We're hitting the road, and we're hitting it hard.

(beat)

What have you got to lose? Things have been sucking here really bad, right?

GABE

Well...kind of...

SAM

So it's time to go out there, see the world, have some fun! Don't we deserve a vacation after all of this?

Gabe takes this in.

GABE

But...what about...

SAM

Don't worry about it! I'll take care of everything, I promise.

Sam runs down the hall and towards the stairs.

GABE

Where are you going!?

SAM (O.C.)

You're gonna need swimming trunks!!

Completely bewildered, Gabe slowly walks into the living room, and notices that the answering machine is blinking. Curious, he hits "play" and we hear the message:

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hey Anna, it's Michael. I...I'm really sorry about just appearing out of nowhere like I did. I shouldn't have done that to you. But you can't keep Gabe away from me. He's my only son. I miss him. Please call me back, okay? We have a lot to talk about. I know you're mad, but...just give me a chance, okay?

(beat)

All right, bye.

CLICK. Everything becomes silent. We see that Gabe has tears welling up in his eyes. Sam appears behind him, a duffel bag in his hands.

SAM

Are you ready or not?

A beat passes.

GABE

Let's go.

As the two of them begin to walk out of the house, we:

CUT TO:

INT. JONES RESIDENCE - LATER

Anna opens the front door and rushes inside, a huge smile on her face.

ANNA

Gabe?! Gabe, are you home!? I've got big news! BIG NEWS!

She runs into the living room, and reaches the bottom of the stairs.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Are you up there?! I wanna tell you something!

Anna begins to rush through the living room, but she notices a piece of paper taped to the answering machine. It reads "LISTEN". She pushes the play button, and we hear again:

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hey Anna, it's Michael. I...I'm really sorry about just appearing out of nowhere like I did. I shouldn't have done that to you. But you can't keep Gabe away from me. He's my only son. I miss him. Please call me back, okay? We have a lot to talk about. I know you're mad, but...just give me a chance, okay?

(beat)

All right, bye.

Anna has an extremely worried look on her face. She turns the note over, and it has more words scribbled on the back, but we can't see what they are.

Anna moves into the middle of the living room, a hopeless, worried look on her face. Her arm drops to her side, and she stands motionless, helpless, and on this moment, we:

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE