

Ceremony
by
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OVER TITLE CARD.

SAM (V.O.)
He would not take no for an answer.

INT. BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

CLOSE ON an illustrated manuscript of a children's book.

A rudimentary colored pencil drawing shows a young man in an old-fashioned deep-sea diving suit grappling with an older, blonder, more handsome merman holding a trident.

SAM (O.S.)
Our young hero was unfazed, as the evil king raised his trident to strike. But the diver unsheathed his spear gun and fired, like a madman, driven by love and revenge. His harpoon struck the merman's heart...or what was left of it, anyway...and blood shot out like a miniature geyser.

A hand turns the page. The next page shows the dead king lying on the ocean floor, a harpoon in his chest and blood spraying the seaweed red. A beautiful mermaid, trapped inside of a bubble, looks on. The diver reaches for her hand.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
With one last act of bravery, the diver had slain him. The evil sea king was no more. The bubble surrounding the princess burst, as our hero bent down on one knee. "We have to move fast," the young diver said. "His men are on their way! But first, I've been meaning to ask you something," and his hand held out a small pearl.

The page turns once again. The drawing shows the diver on one knee, holding open a clam to reveal a shiny white pearl. The princess stares down at it, flattered.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The princess smiled. "Don't bother," she said. "My bags are already packed."

The hand turns to the last page, which is a picture of the diver and the princess riding away on a humpback whale. A cluster of pink coral spells out "THE END."

Pull back to reveal SAM DAVIS, 23, sitting on a small stool at the front of the room, closing the book. He has longish hair parted to one side and the beginnings of a moustache. He wears a faded cardigan sweater and cheap corduroy trousers.

Sam removes his tortoise shell glasses and tucks them in his shirt pocket. He looks up.

SAM (CONT'D)
Any questions?

REVERSE SHOT of a handful of young children sitting with their respective parents on small rocking chairs and floor mats, a look of confusion or indifference on most of their faces.

Some faint applause drifts from the back of the reading area where MARSHALL SCHMIDT, 24, stands alone leaning on a bookshelf, wearing an expensive red striped sweater and slacks. He has an innocent face and a bit too much pomade in his hair.

SAM (CONT'D)
Thank you very much.
(beat)
So...how did everyone feel about the ending? Would you say you found the whole thing believable for the most part?

Silence. A few of the parents lead their children away. A YOUNG BOY in overalls raises his hand.

SAM (CONT'D)
Yes, you in the overalls.

YOUNG BOY
I liked the sea horses.

Sam nods, not really taking this into consideration.

SAM
That's nice. Anyone else?

YOUNG GIRL
I'd like to be the mermaid!

Sam raises an eyebrow.

SAM
Right...but what about the relationships? Who did everyone gravitate to emotionally?
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
 Did you feel that the diver ending
 up with the mermaid was too easy?

Just then an older LIBRARY ATTENDANT in a ruffled tweed suit leans INTO FRAME and taps Sam on the shoulder. Sam looks up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Yes?

The elderly man talks quietly in Sam's ear.

LIBRARY ATTENDANT
 I'm sorry but...who are you? What
 are you doing here?

SAM
 I'm workshopping my story. This is
 a public library, isn't it?

LIBRARY ATTENDANT
 (hesitates)
 I...you can't do that.

CUT TO:

We TRACK BACKWARDS with Sam as he walks briskly towards the exit. He holds a white canvas suitcase with brown leather piping. Marshall follows, holding some books under his arm.

SAM
 I thought they responded well back
 there, don't you?

Marshall looks around. A couple security guards are huddled around the Library Attendant in the background, who is now pointing in Sam's direction.

MARSHALL
 Yeah, I thought it went great. Are
 we in a hurry or something?

SAM
 Not at all. I'm just eager to get
 this show on the road.

We follow them OUTSIDE onto the front steps. Sam notices the books under Marshall's arm.

SAM (CONT'D)
 What's that you got there?

MARSHALL

Just some things I've been meaning to read but I never got around to. I remember you recommended this one to me a long time ago.

Sam looks at the book. It's an old hardcover copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

You always said it was your favorite.

Sam looks at Marshall and squints, frowning his brow.

SAM

Yeah...well. Then I grew up.

Sam continues to walk. Marshall looks confused.

I/E. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Marshall drives. Sam sits in the passenger seat. He glances back at Marshall's three large suitcases nestled in the backseat.

SAM

That's a lot of luggage for three days, Marshall.

MARSHALL

Well, I wasn't exactly sure what to be prepared for. You weren't very specific over the phone.

Sam sifts through Marshall's luggage pulling out a pair of flower-print swim trunks, snorkel gear, a crushed velvet blazer, some pomade. Sam holds up a terrible-looking leather jacket, and give Marshall a look.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I was thinking if there were girls at our hotel, I'd want to look nice.

(beat)

You think there'll be girls there?

SAM

Of course, but that's not what this trip is about. This is about you and me getting some sun and relaxing. Catching up.

(nudges Marshall)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

And if there happen to be some girls staying at our hotel, then we'll just deal with that when it comes up.

Marshall taps the steering wheel, smiling.

MARSHALL

Great. That's really great. It's been such a long time, you know.

SAM

Since you've been with a woman?

MARSHALL

No, no. Since you and I have done something like this. Together.

(pause)

But yes to the first part, as well.

SAM

Are you kidding? We had lunch not that long ago.

MARSHALL

To be honest, Sam, I don't think I've seen you for at least a year.

SAM

A year!? Are you out of your head? I took you to lunch right after you had your whole..."accident". You told me you were seeing that girl. Mary.

MARSHALL

Who's "Mary?"

INT. DINER - DAY

Sam and Marshall sit on opposite sides of a booth.

MARSHALL

Anyway, I think your moustache looks great. Very mature.

Sam insecurely rubs his hands over his pathetic moustache.

SAM

You really think so?

A beat. Sam sighs, looking down at his untouched peanut butter and jelly sandwich. There is some awkward silence.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've just been working so much, that's why I've been so terrible at calling you back. It's the new book. It has nothing to do with you personally. But you know that.

MARSHALL

Well, it was great seeing you in action back there. The characters in this one were much more developed than that other one you sent me. The one about the two caterpillars--

SAM

That's actually one of my worst ones.

MARSHALL

It's great you're able to write all these stories and still have a real job during the day.

Sam smiles.

SAM

That is my real job, actually.
(beat)
Let's get the check.

A WAITRESS walks past the table. Sam waves his hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

Marshall, I need you to get this one. I left my wallet in the car.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Marshall pumps gas into the beat up station wagon. Sam leans against the car, tapping his foot incessantly, wearing sun glasses.

MARSHALL

You know, honestly, I was ready to dive into the job market myself. I sent a bunch of resumes, took a meeting, and then...well, that whole disaster happened and I moved back in with my parents. You know the whole story.

(MORE)

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I guess it was just the universe's way of telling me to slow down and take my time, you know? It's been pretty impossible leaving the house lately. Until now, at least.

Sam looks at Marshall.

SAM

Yeah, God, I can imagine that whole thing being pretty...traumatic.

(beat)

But that's why I organized this trip. We've got to get you out of your apartment and back to your old self.

Sam pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

MARSHALL

When did you start smoking?

SAM

I don't inhale.

EXT. NEW YORK COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The beat up Mercedes makes its way around the winding country roads. The crashing grey sea on one side, green fields on the other.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATER

The car drives past a faded wooden gate, down an unassuming pebbled driveway. It bumps up and down mercilessly on the unpaved road until we get our first glimpse of...

...an OVERSIZED WHITE HOUSE with pale blue shutters. It's surrounded by trees on both sides with a large beach and a stunning view of the sea behind it. The white paint is starting to peel, but large tangles of ivy do a fair job of concealing it.

As Marshall's car pulls around the bend, we see a slew of parked cars resting on an unruly lawn of grass and reeds.

Several GUESTS in tasteful attire remove luggage from their respective trunks. A handful of BUTLERS and MAIDS in uniform aid them, carrying luggage through the front door. It all has an air of European elegance about it.

Marshall's car pulls around the circular driveway and stops the car in front of two enormous double doors.

I/E. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Marshall are sitting quietly looking around at all the activity outside the car. Marshall looks confused. Sam is wearing sunglasses.

MARSHALL

Is this our place?

SAM

No. Our place is just down the road. We must've taken a wrong turn.

Marshall watches the older guests walk past his window. Sam looks anxious, peering through windows, clearly searching for someone.

MARSHALL

Do you know these people or something?

Sam ignores him. Marshall catches the eye of a BLONDE MAID, carrying the bags of an elderly couple. She's delicate-looking with fragile blue eyes. Her gaze locks with Marshall's. They share a brief moment, just before she enters the house.

Out of nowhere, a BUTLER taps on the windshield. He motions for Sam to roll down his window.

BUTLER

Can I help you, gentleman? Are you guests of ours for the weekend?

SAM

You know what? I think we're alright, thanks so much.

Marshall innocently calls out from the drivers side.

MARSHALL

We're staying just down the road!

Sam whips his head around at Marshall. The Butler seems impatient. A moment. Sam slowly rolls the window back up.

I/E. STATION WAGON (MOVING) - LATER

The boys are back on the road. Sam looks enraged.

SAM

Unbelievable! Who the fuck did that guy think he was!? Looking down at us, like we were middle class or something.

MARSHALL

I'm pretty sure he was just doing his job. And we are middle class. Sort of--

SAM

Are you kidding me? He assumed we didn't belong there just by looking at us. This piece of shit car didn't help us much either.

MARSHALL

It's the only car my dad would let me have for the weekend.

Sam squints as he looks out the window towards a small parking lot on the side of the road in the distance.

SAM'S POV

A MAN stumbles out of a beat up blue Fiat, and hastily crosses the highway, entering a local country market.

BACK TO SCENE

Sam snaps his fingers.

SAM

Pull over. Let's get some snacks.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Sam and Marshall stand in front the general store. The place is wooden and pale green and resembles a barn.

SAM

You go get some supplies and alcohol for the room. I need to make a quick phone call.

MARSHALL

Who do you need to call?

Sam removes a crisp \$10 bill from his wallet and hands it to Marshall.

SAM

Here, get anything you'd like.

MARSHALL

I don't think this is enough.

Sam is already gone.

MINUTES LATER

Sam stands inside a phone booth staring down at a small POSTCARD, the front of which is a movie still from *The Wizard of Oz*.

He picks up the phone and begins to dial, then hangs it up.

All of a sudden, Sam starts to hyperventilate. His eyes are glassy and red. He puts his hand on his chest.

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, pulling himself together.

CUT TO:

INT. GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks down the aisle, suspiciously, having regained his composure. Marshall fills a wicker basket with provisions. Sam looks through Marshall's basket, holding up some malt liquor and salmon jerky questioningly.

Sam swaps the bottles for some club soda and a handle of Irish whiskey.

SAM

If we're going to act like men this weekend, we need to drink like men.

Suddenly, a LOUD CRASH from one aisle over. Several bottles of beer roll along the ground. Sam turns to see the Man from outside, standing over the broken glass. He's in his late twenties, gangly, with a lit cigarette in his mouth. He wears a blazer and suit pants, rolled up to the knee. His bare feet leave a trail of sand everywhere he goes. This is TEDDY.

Sam's eyes widen. He springs into action and grabs the top few cases from Teddy's hands.

SAM (CONT'D)
Let me help you with that.

TEDDY
(English accent)
Oh, cheers, mate. You're a real
prince.

SAM
It's my pleasure. I'm Sam.

TEDDY
I'm called Teddy. This is Ian.

Teddy looks around for his friend to no avail.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
I guess he's still in the car.

A look of recognition darts across Sam's face.

SAM
That's an interesting accent,
Teddy. Whereabouts are you from?

Teddy looks at him oddly for a moment.

TEDDY
England. The Northern part
originally. Just in for the
weekend. So appreciate you all
having us.

CUT TO:

Marshall attempts to catch the eye of an attractive Red Head at the cash register, but she ignores him, coldly pointing to the cash register, which shows a total of \$45.48. Marshall looks down at Sam's \$10 bill.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Marshall has both his hands filled with the boys' supplies as Sam trails behind him, helping Teddy carry the cases of beer.

TEDDY
There's a whole group of us over here for the weekend. We all sort of commandeer this darling little inn up the road that belongs to my future brother-in-law. It's a bit of a tradition. Been doing it for years now.

SAM

You know, I think your inn shares a beach with ours. We stay just up the road at this charming boutique motel. Very quiet. Different sort of scene, I guess.

Marshall looks over eagerly, unloading their groceries into the station wagon.

MARSHALL

We haven't been together in a while.

Sam gives Marshall a strange look then turns back to Teddy.

SAM

He means together as friends. We're both very interested in women, though. I mean, obviously.

Teddy opens the back door of his Fiat and hops in.

TEDDY

Well...appreciate the hand, Samuel. Our camp just sort of runs wild, so feel free to skip over to our side of the beach if you're so inclined. It's all very casual.

Teddy takes a sip from a beer bottle.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

We'll have one or two of these.

Sam laughs, clearly trying too hard.

SAM

Or seven or eight of them. You never know with us, right?

The Fiat peels out, narrowly missing a passing car.

INT. LITTLE MOHICAN INN (RECEPTION AREA) - AFTERNOON

It's a quaint little bed and breakfast, filled with odd Northeastern Indian-type art and bright green carpeting.

Marshall waits patiently by the luggage, petting a tabby cat as Sam argues with a very OLD APACHE wearing a fake head dress at reception.

SAM

I need you to just run the card
again, please.

OLD APACHE

But sir--

SAM

Run the goddamn card, chief!

INT. LITTLE MOHICAN INN (ROOM 7) - LATER

Much like the lobby, the room is dressed in Native American overtones but it's quite livable and spacious. Sam lies on the bed, anxious, staring at the decorated walls, admiring a small medicine shield with a wolf in the middle of it. Marshall is unpacking toiletries in the bathroom.

MARSHALL

The shower is broken. I couldn't
get all the cream rinse out of my
hair.

SAM

I just can't get over that Indian.
I swear I put money on that card
yesterday. I'll pay you back for
both our shares as soon we get back
to the city.

Marshall enters the bedroom and starts unpacking all of his belongings neatly into wooden cabinets. He hangs up his coats and rolls a lint remover over all of them.

MARSHALL

I'm just glad that's over and I can
lay down for a minute. I'm
exhausted.

Sam hops to his feet quickly.

SAM

Let's go for a swim.

EXT. LITTLE MOHICAN INN (POOL AREA) - LATER

The pool area is completely empty save for Sam and Marshall. There are no women in sight. The patio is on top of a small rocky ledge that overlooks the white sand beaches below.

Marshall sits in a rickety wooden pool chair, reading his library book, his hair wet from the leaf-filled pool. He's shirtless, in flowered swim trunks.

Sam is still fully dressed looking down at the beach through a pair of old binoculars.

MARSHALL

You know it's funny. I'm only on page thirty-seven, but so far it's really beautiful. I read this book and I feel like it's about my life or something. Is that weird?

SAM'S POV - THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Wooden tables and chairs are set up along the far end of the beach. A cocktail party is underway. The well-dressed guests from earlier, now in pearls and jackets, are all barefoot drinking martinis in the sand. Some wear fancy bathing suits and stand by the shore. There must be about seventy guests in total, not counting the large fleet of traditionally-dressed staff members.

Sam scans the crowd in search of something, or somebody. He stops on a large cluster of people in a circle.

BACK TO SCENE

HOLD ON Sam's face.

SAM

You want to know what I think? I think we need to get out of here and have ourselves a drink.

MARSHALL

Should I get the whiskey from the room and make us some highballs?

SAM

We'll save that for later. You wanted to meet women on this trip, right?

MARSHALL

Well, there might still be girls here, they're probably just in their rooms, napping or something.

Sam puts the binoculars up to Marshall's face.

SAM

No one else is here, Marshall.
There's a great thing going on down
on the beach. And we were
personally invited.

MARSHALL

By who?

SAM

By our new friend Teddy, that's
who. Come on, it'd be a little
adventure.

Marshall puts the binoculars down.

MARSHALL

You think I could just walk over
there in my swim trunks?

SAM

Of course not. You brought a real
suit though, didn't you?

MARSHALL

Yeah. You told me to bring one but
I still have to sticky roll it--

SAM

Well, let's get some use out of it.

Sam snaps Marshall's book shut and walks towards the room.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Dusk is approaching and the sun is setting over the water.
They are both wearing suits. Sam's is brown corduroy, with
canvas patches over the elbows. Marshall's is navy with gold
buttons.

MARSHALL

How do I know what to say to these
people?

SAM

All you have to do is be yourself.
You're rich, so you'll have plenty
to talk to them about. Don't you
remember that time we snuck into
your Dad's country club?

Marshall nods.

MARSHALL

I know, it's just...I haven't left the apartment in a while. And I feel like I've gained weight.

SAM

Let's stay focused, Marshall. Our goal right now is to find Teddy and stick with him until we get acclimated to our surroundings, just sort of peacock around a bit, show ourselves off. Then when the time is right, we'll unleash ourselves on some of these older women.

MARSHALL

Sounds good.

Suddenly Sam stops.

SAM

One last thing. Feel free to make shit up about yourself, like a job or something like that.

Sam continues on. Marshall looks confused.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Sam and Marshall jump out from behind some shrubs lining the beach. Sam dusts himself off. Marshall looks at him oddly.

MARSHALL

Why are we sneaking around like this if we were invited?

SAM

We're not sneaking around. We're being mysterious.

Just then, a waiter carrying a tray of tropical cocktails with the little umbrellas sticking out, walks by. Sam grabs the last two remaining glasses, handing one to Marshall.

The majority of the guests are far older than the boys, in their thirties and forties. Behind them, the large white house from earlier looms in the last remnants of sunlight.

In the distance we see Teddy, a bit drunker than earlier, wearing a snorkel mask and flippers. Other guests look at him oddly.

Sam and Marshall approach him hesitantly.

SAM (CONT'D)
Hello, Teddy!

Teddy turns around. He looks completely confused.

SAM (CONT'D)
Sam and Marshall.

A moment of silence. Teddy finally gives a smile of recognition.

TEDDY
Shall I show you boys around?

MOMENTS LATER

Teddy leads the boys through the party towards the bar. Teddy's sense of ownership over the place, is clearly an annoyance to most of the guests.

TEDDY
I'm so pleased you boys made it over to our side of the beach. It's a bit stuffy over here as it is.

SAM
We're thrilled to be here.

Sam's eyes are wandering all over the party. He appears to be hiding behind Marshall.

TEDDY
Well, first thing, let's get you some cocktails that don't flag the both of you as couple of homosexuals.

Teddy snaps his fingers. Ian, stands by the bar drinking from a bottle.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Ian. Prepare something a bit more masculine for our young friends here!

Ian starts pouring drinks. Teddy sticks a cigarette in his mouth, extending the pack towards Sam and Marshall. Marshall is about to decline, when:

SAM

We'll just share one of these,
thanks.

Sam pops one in his mouth as Teddy lights it with some matches. Sam puffs then passes it to Marshall. Marshall takes a puff, clearly not inhaling, but trying to fit in.

Teddy squints, eyeing someone in a crowd.

TEDDY

You see that girl over there in the purple scarf? She fucked my friend in the ass with a strap on, once when we were all on ketamine.

(beat)

I'll be right back.

And he's gone, leaving the boys alone. Sam notices Marshall watching the Blonde Maid from earlier, clear a table.

MARSHALL

She's so beautiful. In a sad kind of way.

SAM

Well, everyone here is sad, Marshall. That's why we could really clean up in a place like this.

(beat)

But personally, I think you shouldn't be focused on the maid at a party like this.

Marshall turns and sees a WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES in a sundress.

MARSHALL

Okay, what about that dark haired one?

SAM

She's perfect! She'd be lucky to have sex with you.

She starts to stare at Marshall, laughing amongst her small circle of friends.

MARSHALL

I think she's laughing at us.

SAM

That's what these people do. It's a mating call. We're the young guys here. Don't you understand what kind of power that gives us?

The boys stand silent for a moment, absorbing the concentration of wealth and decadence that surrounds them. All of a sudden a wave of discomfort and insecurity washes over both of their faces.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

No, no I think it was a Noel Coward play that they turned into a film.

OTHER OLD PERSON (O.S.)

I'm afraid I don't know that one.

ANOTHER OLD PERSON (O.S.)

David Lean was the director. I believe it was called Brief...something or other.

A proud but desperate look of recognition washes over Sam's face as he turns to find a well dressed OLD MAN engaging in conversation with other rich people.

SAM

(interjecting)
Brief Encounter.

In one motion, the small cluster of tweed and pearls turn to face Sam and Marshall, not expecting such a diatribe.

OLD MAN

Excuse me?

SAM

That's the movie you were trying to think of. It was based on Coward's play 'Still Life' from 1936, but they didn't make the movie til 45'.

Again, Sam is trying too hard and no one seems impressed.

OLD WOMAN

Who are you?

SAM

Oh, I'm Sam. Davis. A published author of children's stories and Marshall over here is an...

Sam winks playfully at Marshall.

MARSHALL

I don't have a job actually.

Sam looks at Marshall, dumbfounded.

SAM

(laughs)

He's joking--

MARSHALL

I've been going through a rough patch lately, so I haven't been putting myself out there really. But when I do...I think I'd like to be an actor.

But Sam's not paying attention anymore. Something in the distance has caught his eye.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE PARTY

We see a tall woman, beautiful and befreckled. ZOE, mid thirties, sips a martini, laughing with a group of friends. She's beautiful, with a liveliness that defies her age. As she turns towards Sam, her smile shifts suddenly into one of surprise and confusion. She drops her martini glass in the white sand.

BACK TO SCENE

Marshall is still droning on. Sam excuses himself, totally distracted.

SAM

Excuse me, for a moment.

CUT TO:

Sam and Zoe walk towards each other from opposite ends of the beach. Sam saunters with a false sense of confidence and ease as opposed to Zoe, who seems like she is speeding to intercept him.

ZOE

(whispering)

What the fuck are you doing here?

Sam smiles.

SAM

I can't believe how beautiful you look.

ZOE
Answer the question, Sam.

SAM
What question?
(off Zoe's look)
Your brother invited me.

ZOE
I told you not to come.

Sam looks her up and down, in awe. She is slightly taller than him.

SAM
Wow. Have you grown since last spring? You seem a bit taller.

ZOE
(defiantly)
You don't know my brother.

SAM
Not true, actually. We met at the market just up the road. He told us to come and have a drink, so I thought--

ZOE
I told you not to come here.

SAM
Excuse me? You keep saying that, but when did this happen? And where was I?

ZOE
I sent you a postcard.

Sam takes a moment. Zoe seems deflated.

SAM
Is this seriously my "hello" here? Come on. I've traveled six hours to see you.

Zoe's face softens. She looks at Sam sweetly.

ZOE
Your moustache looks ridiculous.

Sam touches his face insecurely.

SAM

Oh, I forgot I even had it.

Just then, Teddy walks up, handing Sam a large tropical drink. Zoe looks surprised.

SAM (CONT'D)

Thanks for the drink, Teddy.

Sam takes a sip, winking at Zoe. Teddy looks at Zoe curiously, then rubs her head, messing up her hair.

TEDDY

Sam, this is my over-grown sister, Zoe. Massive head, she's got, hmm?

SAM

Yeah, you know, oddly enough, we happen to know each other. But never until this moment have I ever noticed just how massive this head of hers really is.

Zoe glares at Sam, then Teddy.

ZOE

(to Teddy)

Oh you've met Sam then, have you Teddy? Sam Davis?

As Zoe utters Sam's name, Teddy realizes something. His face changes.

TEDDY

Mr. Sam Davis...

(beat)

Yes! Right, Sam and I've become good friends now, haven't we?

(awkward beat)

Well, I'll go find your friend, Marlon or whatever.

Teddy stumbles away awkwardly. Zoe looks to Sam.

ZOE

You brought a friend?

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PARTY

Marshall continues to converse with the older guests, gesticulating wildly. They look more than bored.

BACK TO SCENE

SAM

I didn't have much of a choice.
Marshall drives. And I had to see
you.

Zoe can't help but smile. Sam puts his hand on Zoe's face,
but she swats it away quickly.

ZOE

Are you insane? You have to leave
immediately. I sent that postcard
to warn you.

SAM

Warn me? About what?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

There she is!

Suddenly, a hand grabs Zoe's shoulder. The hand belongs to
WHIT COUTELL, a tall, lanky, gentlemen in a tan suit and
tortoise shell glasses. He has a clean-shaven face with a
close-cropped haircut atop his head. He holds two champagne
glasses.

WHIT

Hey sweetheart, we're just going to
have to snap a few pictures for the
photographer, it should only take a
minute...

Whit kisses Zoe on the cheek, snapping her out of her
reverie. Whit looks down at Sam, confused.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Who's this?

Zoe struggles to answer. Sam quickly reacts.

SAM

(smiles)

Sam. Sam Davis. Pleased to finally
meet you, Whit. I've heard so much
about you.

Zoe looks to Sam, a bit surprised. Whit doesn't say anything
for a moment. His face shifts to a warm smile of recognition.

WHIT

Sam! Yes, of course!

He extends his arms and hugs Sam tightly, placing Sam's head snugly in his armpit. Whit lets out a sound as they embrace.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Finally, a chance to meet the famous Sam Davis! What a surprise! I was wondering when I was going to finally be able to put a face to go with the stories.

Whit looks to Zoe.

WHIT (CONT'D)

I didn't know you invited Sam.

ZOE

Actually, Sam isn't staying long--

SAM

(interjecting)

Oh, she didn't invite me, actually. It was just a...fluke. You see, my best friend and I are staying down the road. We wanted to get away for the weekend and our hotel happens to share a beach with yours so...after we ran into Teddy at the market, we thought we'd stroll over say and hello.

ZOE

It's all just a lovely coincidence.

WHIT

Well, it certainly is, isn't it?

Whit takes everything in for a moment, sizing up Sam up.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Jesus. You have to forgive me, Sam but by the way Zoe speaks about you, I always sort of imagined this, strapping, tall...man, You know with all the "Sam sent me this..." and "Sam wrote me that"

(beat)

Anyway, if you don't mind me saying, you're a lot shorter than I imagined. It's funny, isn't it?

Sam deflects the comment effortlessly. He gives Zoe a look.

SAM

Well, Zoe's been telling you tall tales, hasn't she.

Beat. The joke doesn't receive the reaction he intended.

SAM (CONT'D)

Anyway, I tend to grow on people.

Whit laughs. Sam joins in.

WHIT

He is funny!
(to Zoe)
You were right!

Zoe looks sick, she nods. Just then a TAN COUPLE approaches Whit and takes his attention.

WHIT (CONT'D)

(ecstatic)
There he is! Get over here.
Welcome! Welcome!

Whit kisses both of them, warmly.

TAN MAN

Congratulations, Whit. Thanks for having us. You know, I forgot to mention earlier, somebody slipped me that piece about you in The New Yorker--

While Whit and the Tan Couple engage, Sam and Zoe lock glances. He smiles confidently.

ZOE

(hushed)
You need to leave.

SAM

(hushed)
Why are you whispering?

In the background Whit continues:

WHIT

Oh, come on! Hey, do me a favor and go grab a drink but stay close by I want to talk to you about an idea I just had. Stay close.

Whit signals the couple away and gives his attention back to Sam. He puts his arm around Zoe.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Sorry, for that. Bruce is the head of the "Little Foot" foundation, one of my favorite charities... anyway what was I saying? Right, who are you here with? Where are you staying?

SAM

My friend, Marshall and I are staying at the Little Mohican Inn, this neat little Native American motel. Great place to go and just get away from it all.

Sam points to far end of the beach where Marshall is still struggling to entertain the older couple.

SAM (CONT'D)

That's him over there. Talking to the oldest people I've ever seen.

WHIT

Oh, he's gotten in good with my parents, has he?

Whit waves his hands towards his parents and Marshall.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Over here, gang!

Marshall waves back, confused. A photographer in glasses taps Whit on the shoulder.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Well, listen, Sam. We've got to take some pictures but to be honest it seems like a waste for you and Marvin to stay in that Indian rat trap all the way across the beach, when we've got this house to ourselves.

ZOE

Oh, Whit, I'm not sure we have the space with everyone in from out of--

WHIT

No, no. I'm sure we can find an extra room somewhere. It's rare that we get the whole gang in the countryside to celebrate such a...

(looks fondly at Zoe)

Special occasion.

Zoe opens her mouth to contest, but Sam cuts her off.

SAM

What exactly are we celebrating?

Whit looks to Zoe, confused.

WHIT

Have you not told him the good news?

Sam appears totally oblivious. He stares at Zoe, confused. Zoe avoids Sam's look, unable to answer.

SAM

No. She hasn't. Zoe, please. Tell me the good news.

WHIT

Zoe and I are getting married on Sunday.

Several guests standing around, clap politely and fawn over the lovely couple. Sam appears totally oblivious, an odd expression on his face. He shifts his attention to Zoe.

SAM

Really?! This Sunday!?

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Sam storms towards Marshall, a determined look on his face.

Marshall is flirting with the attractive Lady in Dark Glasses. She's very drunk. Marshall lifts his hair, pointing to something on the top of his forehead. As Sam nears Marshall, we can hear their the tail end of their conversation:

MARSHALL

...that's where they got me...
 (points to other side)
 And the rest...well, it's all a blur, really.

Before he can go further, Sam pulls Marshall aside, taking him towards the sea.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

How was I doing back there?

SAM

I thought we made an agreement to lie about ourselves.

MARSHALL

Who were those people you were talking to? I thought I recognized that man from a magazine--

SAM

Oddly enough, those were some friends of mine that happen to be staying here for the weekend.

(beat)

I've told you about my friend Zoe, haven't I?

Marshall shakes his head.

SAM (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter. Anyway, I think we should check out of the Mohican and check in here.

He points to the large white house bearing down on them.

MARSHALL

Honestly?

SAM

Yeah. Honestly. We were extended the invitation and I think we ought to take it.

MARSHALL

But I sort of like the Mohican. It's got a lot of character.

SAM

Okay, first of all, people only say that about things that are terrible when they're trying to be nice.

(beat)

Second, our room's a shoebox, Marshall and it smells like gunpowder. Our accommodations here would be twice as spacious and we'd at least have a working shower and some closet space.

(pause)

Take a look around.

Marshall does so. The guests all talk amongst themselves blatantly ignoring Sam and Marshall.

SAM (CONT'D)
Everyone wants to know who we are.
Especially that one.

Sam points to the Lady in Dark Glasses.

MARSHALL
Her name is Esme.

SAM
Of course it is. And I'm sure that
sad maid is around here somewhere.
Those are two real possibilities,
We're not going to get a deal like
that at the Mohican.

Marshall still looks unsure.

MARSHALL
I just feel like you and I wouldn't
get to spend as much time together
if we stayed here. This weekend is
supposed to be about you and me.

SAM
And it still is. We're just going
to improvise a little, okay?

Sam eyes Zoe in the distance, Whit's arm tightly around her
whilst simultaneously shaking hands. Zoe notices Sam's gaze
turning for a moment, a sad expression in her eyes. Sam turns
back to Marshall.

SAM (CONT'D)
Are you with me or what?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Sam and Marshall drag their luggage up to the front of the
massive white house. Marshall's old Mercedes sticks out badly
amidst the nicer cars in the background.

SAM
...and remember, don't feel like
you have to explain everything to
everyone all the time. It makes you
seem a little pathetic. And you're
not pathetic, are you?

MARSHALL
I'm not pathetic.

SAM

No, of course you're not. I'm just saying, let's not be afraid to use a little subtlety here and there.

The boys now stand at the massive double doors, looking exhausted and a bit confused. Sam knocks dramatically. No answer.

Sam begins pulling on the door's handles with a bizarre sense of urgency.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why is this door locked!?

Just then the doors open, revealing Teddy, his arms crossed, a cigarette dangling from his lips. Behind him we see the FOYER of the house. The decor is much like an old seaboard hotel from the seventies with sanded wooden floors. Lived in but not worse for wear. A large staircase in the middle of the house goes up three floors.

TEDDY

Hello friends.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Teddy leads the boys down a narrow hallway lined with framed pictures and movie posters.

TEDDY

This whole weekend was as much of a surprise to me as anyone.

SAM

I can imagine. The whole thing feels pretty thrown together.

TEDDY

You're telling me. I had to hop on a plane directly from my work.

SAM

What is it that you do, Teddy?

TEDDY

I like to build things.

Teddy begins walking again. Sam follows. Marshall lags behind. He stops to examine some of the pictures on the wall.

The photographs are stills from various documentary film shoots.

The focus of each is Whit, performing various directing duties. On stage with Cuban musicians in a rundown Havana music hall. A picture of him laughing hysterically with Werner Herzog in a rain forest clearing. Lunching with a collection of Kentucky coal miners. Playing chess with the Dalai Lama in Tibet.

TEDDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well here we are.

Teddy stops at the last door on the right and opens it.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens revealing a tiny, cramped bedroom. It looks like it's currently being used as some sort of storage room. The wallpaper is old and flowery and the tiny wrought iron bed could barely fit one person. A small gift basket rests atop it.

Sam walks in first with optimistic enthusiasm. Marshall seems a bit unsure. Teddy follows, holding some of Marshall's luggage. There is barely enough room to set everything down.

SAM

Ha! This is perfect!

TEDDY

I suppose, it's a bit cozy, isn't it?

SAM

That's no problem for us.

Sam wipes the sweat off his brow. Just then, an overweight tabby cat scampers out from the bathroom and into the hallway.

MARSHALL

Who's cat is that?

TEDDY

Olivia belongs to my sister.

(ignores)

More importantly, it's imperative I take your shoes with me.

MARSHALL

Pardon?

TEDDY

No shoes this weekend. Per my sister's request.

(MORE)

TEDDY (CONT'D)
They'll stay in the laundry room
until after wedding.

Sam takes off his shoes and hands them to Teddy. Marshall is a bit more reluctant.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
Don't fret, Marshall. I haven't
worn shoes since we landed.

Marshall looks down. Teddy's feet are filthy and bloody. Marshall gathers several pairs of leather shoes from his suitcase and hands them, hesitantly, to Teddy.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
You'll have to excuse my sister's
romantic view of reality. But when
she makes a request, we all have to
listen, don't we? It's her weekend,
isn't it?

And Teddy is gone, closing the door behind him. Marshall looks around uneasy. Sam unbuttons his collar.

 MARSHALL
It's so hot in here.

Marshall tugs the cord of the ceiling fan, but the string just breaks off.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - LATER

Sam looks out the bay windows. The sun has nearly set and many of the barefoot weekenders are heading towards a large dinner table being set nearby.

Marshall enters from the bathroom, a towel around his waist and one around his head, like a turban.

 MARSHALL
The cat shit in our bathtub. And
there's no hot water, either.

Marshall lays down on the tiny bed, looking uncomfortable.

 SAM
Isn't this bed great? We can sleep
head to toe.

 MARSHALL
Did you know that I'm in therapy?

Sam is caught off-guard.

SAM
What? Really?

MARSHALL
Yeah. I just thought you should know that.

A moment.

SAM
Jesus Christ, Marshall. Next time you tell someone something like that you should wait for a more opportune time or something. You know, rather than just...blurting it out like that.
(beat)
Is it working?

MARSHALL
Yes and no.

Sam looks at Marshall with genuine concern.

SAM
Well, I'm sorry to hear that.

Marshall inspects the gift basket on the bed. He sifts through a few records, a book of short stories and poems, some bubble bath, marmalade, and a Marx Brothers DVD. A little note attached plainly reads: *Thank you for being a part of this. Love, Z.*

MARSHALL
You think everyone got one of these gift baskets or just us?

Sam stares at the note. His face grows emotional.

SAM
Well, I should have my shower now.

Sam picks up his toiletry bag and walks into the bathroom closing the door. The shower turns on shortly after.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Ha! This water's exhilarating!

Marshall begins digging through a leather handbag, removing the small manuscript from which Sam was reading earlier. On the cover page: *"The Affair of the Pearl Hunter."* Underneath this it says: "words and pictures by Sam Davis."

Marshall notices Sam's glasses sitting on the night stand. He tries them on. At first he squints, then opens his eyes wide appearing to see completely clearly.

MARSHALL
(calling out)
Hey Sam, we have the same
prescription!

No response. Marshall flips through manuscript, looking at some of the pictures.

He looks over to a shelf where there are two framed pictures. One of Whit, standing on a cliff, his scarf blowing in the wind and one of Zoe, holding her knees on a picnic blanket.

Back to the book. The mermaid and merman look eerily similar to Zoe and Whit.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
How did you meet Zoe, again?!

SAM (O.S.)
What?! Can't hear you, Marshall!

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Through the steam, Sam stares in the mirror with shaving cream all over his face.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Whit lies napping, spread out over white sheets in his king-sized bed with an eye mask covering his face.

In the background we hear another shower running.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zoe has her head under the water, her wet blonde hair forming a curtain around her face. Her eyes are open, deep in thought.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Marshall and Sam hurry down the grand staircase barefoot. They are dressed in suits, looking sharp. The house is empty.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

An extremely long banquet table set up on the veranda, filled with the weekends guests, illuminated by hundreds of Chinese lanterns that hang from the trees.

Sam and Marshall sit alongside Teddy at the foot of the table, the section clearly reserved for outsiders and third uncles. Marshall seems somewhat entertained. Sam takes large sips of his whiskey, visibly anxious, attempting to listen in on various conversations around him.

PARTY GUEST 4

The whole house looks absolutely gorgeous. You know he paid for all this himself.

PARTY GUEST 5

My impression was that the bride's family was supposed to take care of all that.

PARTY GUEST 6

Well, we all know, Whit. I don't know much about her family. To tell you the truth, I think it's just her and that brother...

Sam looks away, annoyed He stares at Zoe and Whit, who sit at the opposite end. Zoe is in a green-flowered dress. Whit has her in a tight embrace. They are chatting it up with another well dressed couple.

WHIT

You know when I first asked Zoe out she laughed in my face.

Zoe nudges him, smiling.

ZOE

I wouldn't quite use the term *laughed*. But--

WHIT

My hand to God, I hounded her. For at least a month! Following her everywhere, dropping roses off at her door step, literally begging her day and night to come to dinner with me. Keep in mind she had pink hair during this period.

Just then we hear the CLINKING of a glass, signifying a toast. Everyone turns to find Teddy struggling to stand up, holding his glass in the air.

TEDDY

Can everyone shut up, please?

Teddy continues to tap his glass with a butter knife, eventually shattering it all over himself.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Ah, I can see Whit, brought out the good crystal.

(awkward pause)

Alright I'd just like to say congratulations. Congratulations to my trouble making cunt of a sister, Zoe...whom I love deeply...so...cheers to her. It's truly an oddity to see her finally settling down. Especially for, you know...Whit.

Zoe laughs at Teddy affectionately from across the table. Marshall laughs too, catching glimpses of Esme from across the table, who is sitting next to a HEAVY MAN with salt and pepper hair in a tweed coat. She steals glances at Marshall. He turns to Sam, noticing his moustache is gone.

MARSHALL

(whisper)

Did you shave off your moustache?

Sam looks straight ahead.

SAM

I look better without it.

MARSHALL

You were so proud of it, though.

SAM

I'm listening to Teddy's speech, Marshall.

Sam downs another glass of whiskey.

TEDDY

I'd like to pay my respects to, uh, Whit as well. First because he never fails to pick up the bill or my airplane tickets, And, second, for taking care of Zoe.

(MORE)

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I know she's not the easiest and certainly is...mercurial by nature.

Whit smiles and laughs.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

It's a lovely thing, you two tying the knot after all these years of speculation. We were all starting to fear Whit might be a bit...hmm hmm...and my sis was some elaborate beard or something. I'm kidding. I'm sure he's got a strong healthy cock, if Zoe's stayed with him this long.

(long beat)

Right, well, anyway, cheers everyone.

Some uncomfortable laughter from the table. Whit looks less than flattered, but smiles nonetheless. Zoe finds the whole thing hysterical.

Whit stands up quickly, a glass of champagne in his hand.

WHIT

Well, thank you, Teddy. Your candor is always very much appreciated. I love you, too.

Some laughter. Teddy sits down, muttering something under his breath. All eyes are on Whit, but Sam hasn't turned away from Zoe. She notices Sam staring and motions for him to look at Whit.

WHIT (CONT'D)

I'm going to make this quick if it's alright with you. I'm not one for speeches but...

Some polite chuckles from the crowd. Marshall notices a small film crew setting up in the corner. Just then a LIGHT flips on and shines on Whit.

WHIT (CONT'D)

(confused)

Oh. Should I start over?

(beat)

I'm going to make this quick if it's alright with you. I'm not one for speeches but...

MARSHALL

Are they filming this?

SAM

Probably.

WHIT

I'd just like to thank all of you for being here with us in one of my favorite places in the world on a very special weekend.

(beat)

You know when you've spent your last few months sleeping in a thatched hut in the Congo you really learn to appreciate things like a decent shower and a good cheeseburger.

(pause for laughter)

You learn to appreciate being home. Around your family. Around your friends. Around the people that are the most dear to you.

He looks down at Zoe. A dramatic beat.

WHIT (CONT'D)

I'd be a lying if I didn't say that, loving you has been the one of greatest adventures of my life, which is saying quite a lot.

(beat)

And believe me when I say that forcing you to finally marry me has been the greatest accomplishment. Besides the Oscar. Just kidding. I love you, Zoe.

He bends down and kisses Zoe deeply, then raises his glass.

WHIT (CONT'D)

A toast to you all. To my family, to my old friends...

Everyone at the table raises a glass, visibly moved.

WHIT (CONT'D)

...and to new ones.

Whit smiles and directs his glass to Sam and Marshall at the end of table. Guests turn to face them. Suddenly Sam stands, glass in hand, interrupting Whit's speech. Whit seems caught off guard. Some murmurs from the crowd.

SAM

Cheers, Whit. Cheers, Zoe. Uh, it's quite a strange coincidence sharing the beach with you this weekend. And I know I speak for Marshall and myself when I say, coincidence or not, it's truly a pleasure to be here for this...beautiful pairing of two souls about to embark on a...long journey together. Really, you're just a perfectly attractive couple...so tan...

Sam trails off. Zoe looks concerned.

SAM (CONT'D)

Thanks so much for having us. And yes, to new friends, and old ones.

Sam winks at Zoe. Marshall and Zoe are looking at Sam like he's crazy. Zoe mouths "What the fuck are you doing?"

SAM (CONT'D)

Whit, you're a lucky man. And Zoe...

Sam turns and stares at Zoe straight in the eye. He holds her gaze for a long moment.

SAM (CONT'D)

Whit's a lucky man.

The crowd gives him a surprisingly generous laugh. Whit smiles just a bit, eyeing Sam and Zoe curiously.

SAM (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll just excuse me for a moment.

Sam backs away from the table and heads towards the woods. Marshall and Zoe look concerned. People clap, looking pleased but a bit confused.

RANDOM GUEST (O.S.)

Who the fuck was that?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Sam is leaning against a tree, throwing up violently. Finally, he stops and just stands there, panting.

Marshall walks up behind him.

MARSHALL

Are you feeling alright?

Sam turns around, surprised. He wipes his mouth, trying to seem upbeat.

SAM

Oh, hi Marshall. That's sweet of you to come and check up on me. Don't worry, I'm fine. Just a bad case of food poisoning, I think.
(laughs awkwardly)
You'd think with all the money this guy's worth they could serve some decent food.

Beat.

MARSHALL

You didn't touch any of your dinner.

SAM

What are you a detective?

MARSHALL

Are you drunk? You smell like whiskey...

An odd moment of silence.

SAM

Actually, that's probably it. I drank on an empty stomach. You have any of that salmon jerky left in your bag? I'll just go up and refuel and then I'll be good as new.

Marshall takes the small package out of his breast pocket and hands it to Sam. He eats some.

SAM (CONT'D)

There. That's better.
(claps his hands)
Alright, see you out there.

Marshall doesn't move.

MARSHALL

Did you and Zoe ever...have a thing together?

SAM

What does that mean? What's a "thing," Marshall?

MARSHALL

She just looks at you strangely all the time. And you start breathing differently whenever she's around--

SAM

No, it's not like that.

Marshall gives Sam a look.

SAM (CONT'D)

Listen to me. We made a deal to enjoy ourselves and get you acclimated to the real world.

Sam puts his arm around Marshall. Marshall seems skeptical.

MARSHALL

No, of course. I agree. I totally agree, but I was just...flipping through your story again and...it's just...there's a lot of similarities--

SAM

Have you ever written anything before, Marshall?

MARSHALL

Well, once--

SAM

Right, well let me tell you about what writers do, okay? We like to make up things...amalgams, okay? And what is an amalgam? They're characters that are based on several people and places and things, just sort of mixed together into one thing. Now Zoe up there, I find extremely interesting and beautiful, but she's just part of a bigger whole, okay? Part of that mermaid you met. So the female character in that particular story isn't necessarily her. It's a mixture of a lot of different girls. Sort of like scrambled eggs in a way. Are you still with me?

MARSHALL
So Chloe the mermaid isn't--

SAM
Chloe the mermaid is not Zoe the
person, no. Not even close. She's
just eggs. Okay?

A beat. Marshall seems a bit skeptical.

MARSHALL
Just eggs
(beat)
With an English accent.

SAM
Exactly.

Sam claps his hands. They start walking back up the trail
towards the house.

MARSHALL
(concerned)
I'm having a difficult time
articulating exactly what my fear
is but it's really present right
now. I mean, I trust you--

SAM
Then loosen up, alright?
(beat)
How's my breath?

Sam breathes into Marshall's face. A beat.

MARSHALL
You should brush your teeth.

Longer beat.

SAM
Thank you for always being so
honest.

INT. BOY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sam brushes his teeth staring at himself in the mirror. He
spits out the remainder of toothpaste and continues to stare
for a long moment. He looks like he could cry. But he
doesn't.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Faint music drifts through the house, bouncing off of the cracked walls. The antique grand chandelier rattles softly with the bass. There is no one in sight. Sam creeps down the large staircase.

SAM

Hello?

No one responds. VOICES coming from the LIVING ROOM.

Sam pokes his head through the large double doors.

SAM'S POV: INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM

Whit is standing in the center of a large oak room, an old pull-down movie screen behind him. There is a captive audience in front of him, sitting on antique sofas, in fold-up chairs and on the floor. Bottles of wine, blankets, cigarettes and food trays are strewn about.

WHIT

Now, I don't normally do this, but I thought that while I had you all together I could give you a sneak peek at what I've been up to. I figured rather than returning all those calls and emails, explaining my adventures, I could just show you. And raise some awareness.

(beat)

I've also left you some questionnaires for you to fill out afterwards. Totally optional.

Sam scans the crowd through the haze of cigarette smoke and finds Zoe, bundled up in a cashmere afghan on the floor, surrounded by friends. Whit whirls his hand in the air.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Let's roll the film!

Whit sits in his leather armchair. He whispers something into Zoe's ear.

The lights go black, and the projector begins running scenes from his newest documentary about the Congo. We see various shots of Whit interviewing African guerillas. Participating in ceremonies. Shots of Whit rushing women and children to safety, as a small village burns down.

Whit watches, satisfied and moved. Zoe tries to seem entertained, like she hasn't seen all this before. She stands and sneaks towards an exit at the opposite end of the room.

Sam follows her with his eyes and disappears from the doorway, rushing to intercept her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Zoe exits the living room when Sam appears from out of nowhere, grabbing her suddenly. She jumps.

ZOE
What the--?

Before she can finish, Sam pulls her into a nearby closet.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Zoe's faces are within inches of each other. The cramped coat closet is filled with sailing equipment and other nautical contraptions.

ZOE
(whispering)
--fuck is the matter with you!?

Sam kisses her, pulling the chain for the light bulb, turning it OFF. We hear sounds of scuffling and resistance.

Immediately the lights turn back ON, Zoe's hand is on the chain. She looks flustered.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Have you completely lost your mind?

Some orange life jackets tumble down from the top shelf. Sam throws them off him in a fit.

SAM
Maybe.

Sam kisses her again. She is less resistant this time. Sam pulls the chain. The room goes dark.

Zoe turns it on again. She keeps one hand on the chain and slaps Sam in the face with the other. He's shocked.

ZOE
This stays on!

Sam calms down a bit, holding his face.

SAM

Okay...okay.

(beat)

I've never actually been slapped before. It kind of hurts.

ZOE

I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it so hard.

(pause)

Why did you shave off your pathetic little moustache?

SAM

(sadly)

Because you told me to.

Zoe softens for a moment

ZOE

What are you still doing here, Sam? I sent you that postcard to avoid these types of dramatics.

SAM

Well, maybe sending postcards isn't the best way to alert people of heart-shattering information in the modern world.

ZOE

I left you a message too.

A moment. Sam thinks.

SAM

My phone was shut off.

Zoe huffs. Calming down.

ZOE

What exactly is your objective here?

SAM

It would seem like I'm in the process of winning you back.

ZOE

May I reiterate that I'm getting married in two days? I'm engaged, Sam. I've always been engaged!

SAM

Yeah, but I never thought you'd actually go through with it! When did this all happen anyway?

ZOE

I was just as shocked about it as you were. Whit thought it would be a nice surprise to move the wedding to this weekend, while we had everyone in one place. Without asking me.

SAM

That's some goddamn surprise, isn't it?

(beat)

Jesus, I had this whole weekend planned out. All our time budgeted so we could meet in the woods and--

ZOE

It's not like it would've been so easy for me to just sneak away even if it was a holiday, Sam. His whole family is here. Surprise wedding or not. It was a stupid plan to begin with.

SAM

You can't possibly think this guy's a real option for you. He screens his movie at his own rehearsal dinner. You're going to be giving birth to a child and he'll be showing the doctor footage of him giving those Africans piggy back rides.

ZOE

For your information, he was saving those Africans from a burning village.

SAM

Yeah, well only because they were his film crew.

(pause)

The man doesn't have a single hair on his chest.

ZOE

You're behaving like a child.

SAM

So are you.

Zoe sighs, frustrated.

ZOE

Look, Sam. Be reasonable, here. Why not go home and save yourself the torture. Or if you do intend to stay and make my life more difficult, at least introduce yourself to one of the lovely young girls here. I'm sure they're all just as desperate as you to get their rocks off.

SAM

(wounded)

How could you say something like that?

ZOE

I meant it in the least offensive way possible.

Zoe looks down then walks out. She is halfway out the door when she turns.

ZOE (CONT'D)

And stop standing on your fucking toes, Sam. I like you how you are.

Sam lowers himself to his proper height. Zoe turns off the light and closes the door behind her. Sam stands in the darkness for a moment gathering his thoughts.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam walks into the kitchen. The room is huge, covered in exposed brick and several wood-burning ovens. Some of the younger people at the party are wearing costumes and drinking. Teddy, Ian and Marshall are sitting at the breakfast table with bowls of cereal and funny hats on.

TEDDY

Look who it is! Welcome back, Sam.

(beat)

You feeling alright?

Sam suddenly infuses himself with energy.

SAM

Yeah. I feel great.

IAN

How about a funny hat for our
friend, Sam!

Teddy places a chicken hat on Sam's head.

TEDDY

And how about a pill to go with
your chicken hat?

Teddy extends a little plastic baggie filled with colored
pills.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

We convinced sweet Marshall to
indulge. Thought it would quiet the
voices in his head for a bit.

Marshall looks up at Sam, eyes glazed.

MARSHALL

My heart feels like it's metal.

SAM

Nice to see you loosening up a bit.
(to Teddy)
What are these, like muscle
relaxants or something?

TEDDY

I'm not a fucking doctor, mate.

Sam looks out the kitchen windows.

SAM'S POV: ON THE VERANDA

Whit and Zoe entertain a several guests, drinking martinis.

BACK TO SCENE

SAM

How many does it usually take?

TEDDY

Maybe four or...six, depending on
the night...and my agility.

Marshall and Ian are engaged in a heated conversation nearby.
A Monopoly board is set up in front of them.

MARSHALL

No! I'd be the thimble!

IAN

You look more like a boot, quite honestly.

Marshall laughs a little too loudly.

SAM

(re: Marshall)

I'll take one less than he had.

Teddy hands Sam a single pill from the bag. Sam swallows it.

SAM (CONT'D)

And how long till I feel the effects?

INT. BALLROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sam and Marshall are dancing uninhibited in the middle of the party. Marshall wears oversized sunglasses and Sam is still wearing his chicken hat. Both have lit cigarettes in their mouths.

MARSHALL

(yelling)

I feel like I can't stop moving!

Sam nods, caught in the music, but still swiveling his head around the party, which is a bit rowdier now.

SAM

What's the quickest possible way we could get another cigarette into my mouth?

Marshall checks his pockets, but they seem to be empty. Sam throws his cigarette down on the black and white tiled floor and takes the lit cigarette out of Marshall's mouth.

People dance around Sam and Marshall, drinking from champagne bottles, smoking and laughing. A few of the bridesmaids don cheap plastic tiaras. The men wear sunglasses and hats. A couple drunkenly makes-out on top of the piano, surrounded by balloons. Teddy is wrapped in Christmas lights, setting off firecrackers with Ian.

Marshall notices Esme dancing with a group of friends, stealing glances in his direction.

MARSHALL

I think she's staring at me. What do I do?

Sam's eyes have drifted over to the...

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Where Zoe and Whit are gathered, surrounded by friends. Whit is dancing unabashedly, wearing Groucho Marx glasses and holding light sticks. It provokes uncomfortable laughter from Zoe.

Zoe turns towards the ballroom, noticing Sam.

BACK TO SCENE

Just then Esme dances up to Sam and Marshall.

ESME

Ahoy, Marshmallow. Do you know how
to cha-cha?

Esme wraps a scarf around Marshall's neck and leads him away. They begin dancing closely.

Sam can't stop staring at Zoe and Whit. Whit kisses her on the nose lovingly, while talking to some other people.

Sam looks to his left, noticing a mildly-attractive Irish girl, MARGARET sitting alone on a stool next to the bathroom. She wears a tiger-print leotard under her pea coat, looking around awkwardly, clearly wanting someone to talk to her.

CUT TO:

Sam saunters up to Margaret, playing it casual. Margaret looks up and smiles politely.

SAM

Hi.

MARGARET

Hello.

A beat. Sam takes out a bottle of whiskey from his coat.

SAM

You want some?

MARGARET

No thanks, I'm alright.

SAM

Maybe you misunderstood me. I was
talking about the whiskey.

Margaret smiles. Sam pours a bit of whiskey in her glass.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't you worry. The farther down
this goes, the more sexually
attractive I get.

Margaret takes his drink.

MARGARET

You sure about that?

SAM

(smiling)

No. Not really. Cheers.

They clink glasses.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Sam shows Margaret how to play quarters at the table, both of them far drunker than before. She laughs at everything he says. We can barely hear anything being said over the music.

Margaret concentrates bouncing the quarter and missing the glass entirely. She laughs hysterically.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM

Zoe watches Sam and Margaret interact, clearly bothered. She turns back to Whit and her friends, forcing a smile.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

A disco ball hangs duct-taped to the ceiling. A few people are passed out in chairs while some are slow dancing in the middle of the room. The couple is still making-out on top of the piano.

Marshall and Esme are leaning against the wall, in mid-conversation. Esme looks bored out of her mind.

MARSHALL

Honestly, it's crazy out there, you know? One day you're walking down the street and some guy in a jump suit asks you for the time. Then the next thing you know, I'm laying on a hospital bed in Lenox Hill with blood all over my sport coat.

(beat)

Have you never been pistol whipped before?

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM

Sam sits on a couch with Margaret, talking quietly. He whispers something in her ear and she smiles, looking around. She stands up, grabbing his hand, leading him towards the French doors that open up to the backyard.

Sam turns back towards the kitchen as we ramp into SLOW-MO.

Zoe is watching them go. She locks eyes with Sam for what feels like a long moment...

...and then he disappears outside. Zoe looks down, then away.

Marshall is still rambling to Esme.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Let's just kiss. Right now.

Marshall moves in, but Esme turns her head.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
I was just kidding.

The Heavy Man from earlier walks up and puts his hand on Esme's shoulder. He pushes Marshall aside.

Esme walks away. Marshall just stands there, uncomfortably.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The boys are lying head-to-toe in the tiny bed. Both are sweating profusely, their eyes tired and bloodshot. They stare up at the ceiling fan, which is still motionless.

Sam suddenly stands up on the bed, spinning the fan aggressively. He lies back down, watching as the fan spins a few times then slows to a stop.

MARSHALL
I just feel so sad.
(beat)
How'd things go with your girl?

SAM
With Margaret? Not bad, actually.
We had sex. Twice. Back to back.

MARSHALL
Twice...? Wow. How was it? You know...on pills?

SAM

Frankly, I think we should just forget about the pills from now on.

(beat)

How'd things go with yours?

A long moment of silence.

MARSHALL

She has a husband.

(sighs)

I think she used me.

SAM

Well, it's her loss. She'd be lucky to have you.

MARSHALL

Yeah. I guess it could be worse.

Sam stares up at the ceiling.

SAM

Why do you think she's with him anyway?

MARSHALL

I don't know that much about her--

SAM

No, I was talking about Zoe. How could she be with Whit?

Marshall turns over on his side.

MARSHALL

Oh, I don't know. I'm sure it has something to do with her father. My therapist says lots of things can be explained that way.

SAM

Well, her parents died when she was young. She's practically an orphan. I'm sure that's damaged her judgement in some way.

MARSHALL

She seems like the type of woman that needs to feel taken care of. And Whit clearly does that. I mean, look around.

(beat)

(MORE)

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

He's handsome too. In a classical sort of way.

Sam reaches for a stack of magazines on the night stand. He grabs a copy of American Documentarian and holds it up.

The cover shows Whit wearing a red turtle neck pulled up to his nose, with his eyes opened wide. An outline of the continent of Africa is behind him. The headline reads: "WHIT COUTELL: HEART OF DARKNESS?" Sam points at the picture.

SAM

You honestly find this man...this man, right here, with the red turtle neck up to his eyes, attractive?

Marshall examines the picture seriously.

MARSHALL

I do. Yeah. He seems really concerned with topical issues as well--

SAM

Well maybe you should just marry him.

MARSHALL

Now you just seem jealous.

SAM

I had sex tonight. Why should I be jealous?

A light KNOCK on the door.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello...?

The door creaks open. Sam looks down to see Zoe crawling on the floor in a sleeping bag. Olivia, the cat, by her side. She peeks her head over the side of the bed. A beat.

ZOE

Hi...

Sam turns to Marshall.

SAM

Do you still consider me, your best friend?

MARSHALL

What?

SAM

I need you to take a bath.

MARSHALL

But there's no hot water--

SAM

It's the middle of summer.

Sam half-pushes Marshall out of the bed. He grabs the bubble bath formula and shuffles into the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. The water starts running.

Zoe stands, still in the sleeping bag. She and Sam stare at each other for a moment. She hops over to a nearby record player and puts on the 45' that was in the boys' gift basket. Sam notices her clutching some sheets of yellow lined notebook paper and a pencil in one hand.

ZOE

(re: Marshall)

Is he going to be alright in there?

SAM

Of course, Marshall loves baths.

(beat)

He's my sidekick.

ZOE

I heard he had a rough time with Esme. Apparently, he told her some dreadful story about being robbed or something.

SAM

Yeah, sometimes Marshall doesn't know when to shut the fuck up.

Zoe climbs into the bed.

ZOE

I'm staying in my sleeping bag, so don't try anything.

SAM

You smell like whiskey. Are you drunk?

ZOE (CONT'D)

Is that your newest one? Why haven't I read this?

SAM

I'm still workshopping it. I can give you a synopsis though.

ZOE

(smile)

Please do.

Sam thinks a moment.

SAM

It's about a deep sea diver who's searching for pearls on the ocean floor where he meets and falls in love with this mermaid who is previously engaged.

ZOE

Is she an *older* mermaid?

SAM

Significantly, but anyway, our diver falls in love with this mermaid, who's involved in a fraudulent, vapid relationship with a megalomaniacal, arguably gay merman. You know...complete sociopath. Anyway our hero has to battle this merman for the mermaid's hand. There's a big fight scene at the end. Sea horses, octopi...

(beat)

I'm not sure how it all ends yet.

ZOE

You really think children will like this story, Sam?

SAM

Probably not.

ZOE

It sounds quite original, though. Certainly a big step up from the one about the two caterpillars.

SAM

Thanks.

Sam looks down, noticing that Zoe is still clutching the notebook paper.

SAM (CONT'D)

What are you working on?

ZOE

They're supposed to be my vows, but they're all blank. Thought you could help me with them.

Zoe smiles up at him coyly. Sam stares at her for a long moment, then sits up.

SAM

Alright. Where should we start?

ZOE

That's what I asked you.

SAM

Well, what exactly do you like about him?

Zoe thinks.

ZOE

Let's see...

(beat)

He's not afraid to be himself.

SAM

I can see that. What else?

ZOE

Um...he makes me feel safe. He's extremely successful and handsome.

SAM

Okay...yeah. Keep going.

ZOE

He's very...strong-willed.

SAM

Right. Okay, this is good...so let's write this down. He's not afraid to be himself, clearly. I mean, nobody who dances like that could possibly be self-conscious. Just completely uninhibited...

ZOE

I can tell you're not going to be much help with this.

SAM

No, no, no! Let's keep going.

Sam holds up a copy of Cineast Monthly magazine. What is on the cover posing as Jesus on the cross. The headline reads: SAVIOR OF AMERICAN FILM?

SAM (CONT'D)

I mean, how could you not feel safe and secure with a guy like this?

Zoe sighs.

SAM (CONT'D)

And as far as being strong-willed goes...it's great for you because you'll never have to make another decision for yourself ever again. So you can sort of switch off for the next fifty years or so.

ZOE

Now you're just being an asshole.

Silence. They lay there silently and still. Sam looks down.

SAM

Your hands are getting old.

ZOE

Oh, shut up.

Sam leans in and kisses Zoe. This time, she doesn't resist.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marshall sits in the bathtub, covered in bubbles, leaning his ear to the door, listening. He leans back into the tub and dips his head under the water, slowly.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - MORNING

The sun shines through the closed green shutters. Sam lies asleep in the sleeping bag, but he's alone. Sam's eyes open.

INT. BOY'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Marshall is asleep in the bathtub. Most of the bubbles have evaporated.

Sam sits fully dressed, on the toilet, pouring two shots of Irish whiskey into paper cups.

Marshall stirs and jolts forward, realizing where he slept, then quickly inspects his hands, which are pruned and indented.

MARSHALL

Have you been watching me sleep?

Sam extends one of the cups to Marshall.

SAM

We had a rough night, didn't we?
How's your head?

Marshall sips from the cup.

MARSHALL

Well, I think the water absorbed most of the toxins that were running through my body, so that's good.

(beat)

What happened last night? With Zoe?

SAM

What about her?

MARSHALL

I was listening through the door.

Marshall stares at him.

SAM

How much did you hear?

MARSHALL

Almost everything.

Sam, sighs, leaning back against the wall with guilty eyes.

SAM

I'm not sure I've been completely honest with you regarding the whole...you know, Zoe of it all.

(beat)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

She and I...we did have a thing together, but it wasn't an emotional thing. It was just the sort of thing that happened once, randomly, and then kept happening.

MARSHALL

That's what I figured.

SAM

I know you did. I just want to make it extremely clear to you that although I did have previous knowledge that Zoe would be here this weekend, I only found out after I had made it my mission to get you feeling good again. And that's still what this is about. I just figured I could kill two birds with one stone. Reconnect with you during the day, then once you went to bed, I could come and meet Zoe and mess around with her in the woods or something. But let me perfectly clear. I have no feelings for her whatsoever.

Marshall continues to stare at Sam skeptically.

SAM (CONT'D)

And I swear to you, we never would've come over to this goddamn beach in the first place, if I had known there was going to be a wedding.

MARSHALL

So what are we still doing here?

Sam takes a breath.

SAM

I just need a few hours to officially break things off with Zoe and give her my blessing on all this, and by nightfall you and I will be in our room together at the Mohican, playing cards.

Marshall still seems a bit hesitant. Sam stands up abruptly, snapping his fingers together.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why don't you grab yourself a quick power nap. I'll have them whip you up some eggs downstairs.

Sam turns to leave.

MARSHALL

Can't we just get out of here now?

He stops and turns around.

SAM

(beat)

You still like the yolks cut out?

Marshall nods sadly. Sam walks out of the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Sam hurries through the kitchen. A feast is being prepared. The room is overrun with caterers and cooks. Stews are stirred, vegetables are cleaned, fowl is plucked. A Chef cuts the head off of a small quail.

Sam, negotiates his way through the bustle, and taps a cook on the shoulder

SAM

Excuse, me. Which one of you is the chef--

But something stops Sam. He looks directly past the chef towards the:

THE BACKYARD

Workers are everywhere. A massive tent is being erected. Tables and chairs are being set up. Gardeners are working in the rose garden. An altar stands in the distance, covered in vines and flowers.

The reality of the wedding hits Sam for the first time. We see a renewed sense of purpose in his face.

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

A cluster of weekenders sit amongst a string of picnic tables, drinking tea and eating waffles.

Sam comes around the side of the house and sees Zoe, surrounded by women at the far table, laughing about something.

He heads to another table nearby, where Teddy and Ian are seated. There are jars filled with markers, paints, and construction paper set on the tables for arts and crafts. Teddy and Ian both seem quite involved in their projects.

SAM
Morning, boys.

IAN
(squinting)
Is it morning already? Christ...it sneaks up on you, doesn't it?

TEDDY
Greetings, Samuel. You get enough sleep?

SAM
Perfect amount. You?

Teddy doesn't bother to look up.

TEDDY
Not sure we ever went to bed, really.
(re: art project)
I've been working on this for some time now.

CLOSE ON

Teddy's piece of construction paper, where a detailed representation of a penis has been created from dried pasta and Elmer's glue.

TEDDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's a cock.

AT THE OTHER TABLE

Zoe is having her hair braided by Esme and one of the other girls at the party.

ESME
How exactly did you meet this Sam?

ZOE
Just casually. I was in New York for some reason.

(MORE)

ZOE (CONT'D)

We sort of...bumped into each other randomly. We became fast friends. Pen pals, really.

ESME

Have you shagged this one yet?

Zoe puts down her tea cup, about to spit.

ZOE

Of course not! Jesus...

Margaret sits at the table with some corn flakes. She wears thick sun glasses, looking hungover and miserable.

ZOE (CONT'D)

What about you, Margaret? You seem to know him best of all, hmm?

There's a childish glare of jealousy in Zoe's eyes.

MARGARET

Nothing happened. Personally, I think he might be a bit of a poof, really.

Esme rolls her eyes.

ESME

Come on, out with it! You two shagged last night, didn't you?

MARGARET

Unless you call a "shag" me patting his back while the poor boy weeps about some other slag who broke his heart then yes, we shagged all night long!

The girls all laugh. A realization across Zoe's face.

ZOE

He's a complicated boy. Emotional. Very intense.

ESME

You certainly stare at him enough.

Zoe snaps out of it and looks to the girls.

ZOE

What! I do not...

SAM (O.S.)
I made you something.

The girls turn to find Sam, standing and smiling a few feet away. He's holding a hand-made macaroni and sea shell necklace, with little tiles that spell out "Zoe."

SAM (CONT'D)
It's a wedding present. I thought the sand dollars matched your eyes pretty well.

ESME
Look, Zo, it's got your name on it.

Some more laughter from the girls. Sam drapes the necklace around Zoe's neck. He looks into Zoe's eyes, holding her stare for a long beat.

WHIT (O.S.)
Hello everyone!

Whit pulls up to the picnic tables in a yellow dune buggy. He's wearing a nautical striped shirt, pale blue swim trunks and a yellow rain slicker over it all. A couple of ASSISTANTS are scribbling notes on a yellow pad. Whit signs a couple of things, says a few final words, the sends them off.

WHIT (CONT'D)
Family. Friends. Sam.
(looks to Zoe)
Wife-to-be.

Teddy stumbles up holding a Bloody Mary and waving his drawing of the cock for all to see.

TEDDY
Ahoy, Whit...I made you a wedding present.

WHIT
That's sweet of you, Teddy.

TEDDY
It's your portrait! See?

Laughter from the crowd. Whit joins in. Teddy walks off.

WHIT
Well, thank you, Teddy. Glad to see your putting those art lessons I've paid for to good use.

Whit receives the necessary laughter, taking a seat next to Zoe.

WHIT (CONT'D)

(to Zoe)

Where were you last night. The King's chamber was cold.

ZOE

Oh. Couldn't sleep. Still needed to do some work on my vows.

WHIT

(smiles)

Well that shouldn't be too hard.

Whit kisses Zoe passionately. It lasts for a long moment. He runs his hand through her hair, noticing her new necklace.

WHIT (CONT'D)

What's this hideous thing doing around your neck?

ZOE

Sam made it for me. It's a wedding present.

Whit turns to Sam.

WHIT

A jeweler and a writer? My God you're certainly a jack of all trades, aren't you?

SAM

(smiles)

Yours is in the mail. I just ran out of sea weed.

Some more chuckles, but Zoe laughs the hardest. Whit looks at her, then Sam. A beat.

WHIT

You know, Sam, why don't you take a ride with me down the beach? Looks like Teddy used up all our fireworks last night and we need some more for the reception. What do you say?

Whit gives Sam an odd smile. Zoe looks at Sam, worried.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marshall stumbles around the room, packing things up. He picks up Sam's crumpled blazer off the floor, giving it a good dusting. *The Wizard of Oz* postcard falls out and floats to the ground.

Marshall stares at it for a long beat.

CLOSE ON: THE POSTCARD

In neat cursive, it says: "*Dear Sam, Please don't come. I'm getting married. Love, Z*"

Marshall looks down at it, confused.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Marshall is rifling through Sam's suitcase, searching around for something. He tosses Sam's clothes and crumpled pieces of notebook paper all around the room. He finds something.

Marshall takes out a small matchbox. He opens it, revealing a modest quartz ring. Marshall's eyes go wide.

EXT. BEACH (MOVING) - DAY

Sam and Whit are side-by-side in the buggy. Whit wears goggles, staring straight ahead with a serious look on his face. The wind is blowing hard and loud. Sam looks terrified.

The buggy drives further and further down the beach, away from the guests and sun bathers.

WHIT

(shouting over the wind)
You boy's having an alright time, I hope?!

SAM

(shouting back)
Great time, Whit! I can't thank you enough for all your hospitality!

WHIT

You know, Zoe left one of your stories lying around the house and I finally had a chance to read it! It was the one about the two caterpillars who share an umbrella!

Sam has a troubled look on his face.

SAM

Really?! Why would you do that?!

WHIT

Well, you've seen what I do! I thought I should know a little something about what you do!

(beat)

You're not half-bad! I thought it had a lot of character!

SAM

You're not exactly my target audience, and to be honest, that's one of my worst ones!

Whit slows the buggy just a bit, so the wind is not as loud.

WHIT

Are you as much of a romantic in your real life as you are in your work?

SAM

I can only try to be.

WHIT

I've always been...more concerned with the human condition, you know? I've always considered myself a realist. But you can tell that from my body of work.

(beat)

But I admire that quality in your writing, Sam. Despite the fact I'm not much of a reader.

Sam stares at Whit confused. He then looks behind them where all signs of civilization are receding in the distance.

WHIT (CONT'D)

All Zoe does is read. All day and all night. She'll read anything you put in front of her. She loves it. That's why she likes you.

(beat)

I'm working so much of the time, it's difficult for me to cater to all of Zoe's...interests.

Whit smiles at Sam. He casually presses harder on the pedal.

WHIT (CONT'D)

But that's Zoe, isn't it? She decides she wants to learn tennis. She starts going to matches, takes lessons every day, develops a backhand, literally sleeps with her racket. And then, just like that...it's over. Decides tennis is a dull sport. Not for her. Last summer it was dragonflies. She was obsessed with the things. Took classes, studied them, painted them, couldn't learn enough about them. Then, one day...poof. No more dragonflies.

A moment of silence. Sam seems oddly moved.

SAM

I never knew she liked dragonflies.

Whit looks over at Sam.

WHIT

She doesn't, Sam. Not anymore.

Suddenly, Whit skids the buggy to a stop on a secluded beach with jagged rocks all around them. The only sounds are that of seagulls, circling them above.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Zoe left me once.

(beat)

Did you know that?

An awkward silence. This is clearly the first Sam has heard of this.

SAM

(hesitates)

No...I didn't.

WHIT

Of course you didn't. Nobody does. She's very good at keeping secrets.

Sam is genuinely confused.

SAM

Who was the guy?

WHIT

Some songwriter. Played tambourine or something.

(MORE)

WHIT (CONT'D)

(beat)

She left some note on the kitchen table. Told me she was in love. That she was running away with him to Egypt. And that there she had left a ham waiting for me in the oven.

SAM

Wow. What did you do?

WHIT

I let her leave. What would you have done? If you were me?

SAM

I'd probably go after her, I guess.

Whit stares out to sea.

WHIT

I guess I just don't feel the need to chase girls around the schoolyard anymore.

A long moment of silence. Sam raises an eyebrow.

SAM

Well, she came back, didn't she?

WHIT

Of course she did. She always does.

Whit smiles, leans back. Sam's eyes look a bit sad as Whit's statement sinks in..

SAM

Should we go get those fireworks?

WHIT

Oh, don't worry about it. I'll send someone else.

(beat)

Tell me, Sam. Do you like sailing?

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Marshall, showered and fully dressed, puts the last of their luggage in the trunk of the station wagon. He slams the hatch shut.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marshall approaches one of the COOKS, a small graying man, slaving over a hot stove.

MARSHALL

Excuse me, have you seen the other guy I came here with? He was supposed to leave some eggs for me.

COOK

Sorry. Breakfast is over.

The Cook walks away. Marshall looks around for Sam.

MARSHALL'S POV: THE WINDOW

Weekend guests lay around on blankets playing acoustic guitars, drinking on the beach.

BACK TO SCENE

As Marshall turns to head outside, he bumps directly into the Blonde Maid, who drops a large bowl of fruit onto the floor.

MARSHALL

Oh my God. I'm so sorry...

She immediately gets down on her knees and begins picking everything up. Marshall gets down on his knees to join her.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

It's my fault. Please. Let me help.

They pick up the fruit together without saying a word.

Marshall glances in her direction. Her eyes are red, like she's been crying. She looks up at him, noticing him staring. He wants to say something, but all that comes out is:

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

The Blonde Maid looks at him oddly, then stands with the fruit.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Marshall walks down the beach, looking very much alone. People talk in individual little groups scattered amongst the shore. Nobody notices Marshall as he scans the crowd, searching for Sam.

In the distance, Marshall sees Zoe, flanked by wedding planners, pointing at flower arrangements set up in front of her. Zoe notices Marshall out of the corner of her eye. She smiles and waves. Marshall waves back, slightly annoyed.

All of the sudden, Marshall screams loudly, collapsing onto the sand amidst the tall beach grass.

Zoe turns hearing Marshall's scream. She excuses herself from the wedding planner and rushes over towards Marshall. No one else seems to notice.

EXT. BEACH - MINUTES LATER

Marshall sits on a beach chair, his leg extended as Zoe kneels in front of him, using a flowered handkerchief to halt the bleeding from Marshall's foot.

ZOE

Are you feeling light-headed? You passed out for a few moments.

MARSHALL

No, I think I'm okay. Just seeing my own blood brought back some bad memories.

(beat)

How does it look?

ZOE

Not terrible. I'm just embarrassed. What kind of a responsible person leaves a martini glass in the sand?

(beat)

I guess we've never officially met by the way. I'm Zoe...officially.

She extends her hand, noticing that it's covered in blood.

ZOE (CONT'D)

This is all a bit morbid, isn't it?

MARSHALL

It's okay. It's all mine anyway.

Zoe wipes her bloody hand off on her expensive dress, then extends her hand again. They shake.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Has Sam told you a lot about me?

Zoe pauses for a moment.

ZOE

He certainly has. It's nice to finally put a face to the name.

MARSHALL

(genuinely surprised)
Honestly?

Zoe nods enthusiastically, clearly lying.

ZOE

Yes, of course.

(beat)

You probably think we're all a bit whacked, hmm? Drunks and adulterers, the whole lot of us.

MARSHALL

It's okay. I don't really think I had much of a chance with your friend anyway.

Zoe's head is somewhere else.

ZOE

You're very brave for accompanying Sam this weekend. I shudder to think what he's told you about me.

MARSHALL

We're basically brothers, so...Sam tells me everything.

ZOE

Fuck, man. I hope not.

Marshall thinks for a moment, connecting the dots.

MARSHALL

You know, come to think of it, he never told me how you two met, actually.

Zoe seems taken aback.

ZOE

So he hasn't told you *everything*.

MARSHALL

Mostly everything. I'm just a little hazy on that first part.

Zoe sighs and begins to wrap the handkerchief around Marshall's foot.

ZOE

Well...I was with Whit in New York while he was doing some press for one of his films...or maybe we were visiting his family. Anyway we'd just had some massive fight, and I left the hotel, completely hysterical and it was pouring rain. Are you sure you've never heard this before? Knowing Sam, he's probably recounted it a million times over.

Marshall nods his head. Zoe looks down for a moment.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'd left in such a state that I had forgotten my umbrella, and I was waiting to cross the street, looking miserable, like a massive wet dog, and a few feet away from me was Sam. He was trying to use a copy of the Times as an umbrella. It wasn't working though, obviously.

Zoe smiles.

ZOE (CONT'D)

We must've been the only two people in the whole city who didn't have umbrellas that day. I could feel him staring at me, you know, and we held stares for a moment.

Zoe trails off. Marshall tries his best to conceal his confusion.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I'm sure you can fill in the rest. We ended up spending the whole day together, feeling bad for ourselves. His book had just been rejected by some publisher. Sort of a mutual acceptance of pity, I suppose. We saw an old film at some shit cinema and laughed. We spent the night at some ghastly hotel by his place because he wouldn't let me see his apartment. I went back to England the next day.

MARSHALL

And then what?

ZOE

He started sending me letters and his stories and I made the mistake of writing him back. And here we are.

(smiles)

Jesus, I'm sorry I can't shut up. There's no way you want to hear about this...

Marshall looks stunned. Marshall opens his mouth to speak but barely anything comes out.

MARSHALL

Oh, no...I do.

ZOE

It feels good to talk about this with someone that's not my therapist. These are all Whit's friends, mostly.

(beat)

I suppose if I wasn't constantly surrounded by these people there'd be nothing to stop me from hopping on a boat and sailing away with your little friend.

Zoe's eyes turn red. People around them, have begun to gather their belongings, and head over towards a dock in the distance.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I adore him...I really...I do.

(beat)

But I'm not a fucking mermaid, you know? I'm too selfish.

Marshall awkwardly puts his hand on Zoe's, attempting to comfort her. He sees how deeply affected she is.

MARSHALL

You mean shellfish.

Zoe looks at Marshall. A beat. She bursts out laughing. Marshall smiles sadly.

ZOE

I'm sorry you were dragged into this. I sent Sam a postcard begging him not to come. He claims to not have received it, but I think we both know him a little better than that.

MARSHALL
Yeah...we sure do.

ZOE
He certainly has a flair for the dramatic. I can't wait to see what the ring looks like.

Zoe laughs to herself. Marshall looks confused.

MARSHALL
Oh...you knew about that?

Zoe stares at Marshall oddly.

ZOE
Knew about what?

MARSHALL
The ring...

Zoe's smile fades.

ZOE
What ring?

Marshall realizes he's said too much.

MARSHALL
Nothing. Nevermind--

ZOE
What ring, Marshall?

MARSHALL
(fumbling)
Nothing. A friendship ring. Sam got it for me. I thought you knew--

Marshall is bright red. He's a terrible liar.

ZOE
Oh God, Sam...
(covers her face)
So stupid.

MARSHALL
Please don't tell him I told you.

ZOE
What?

Just then, they both see Whit's buggy speeding towards them. Zoe wipes her eyes quickly, as the buggy screeches to a halt in front of Zoe and Marshall. Whit climbs out, oblivious.

WHIT

Why is everyone so down over here?
We've got a race to win, don't we?

Whit puts his arm around Zoe. Zoe looks at Sam.

WHIT (CONT'D)

Are we ready to go?

ZOE

All ready over here...

WHIT

Well, that's good! Just want to
make sure you're still on my team,
that's all.

Sam walks over to Marshall, a bit dazed.

MARSHALL

We all set to leave?

SAM

Actually, hold that thought. We've
got one more thing to do and then
we're getting the fuck out of here.

MARSHALL

What are you talking about? I
already packed up the car.

WHIT (O.S.)

Is Marshall ready?

Marshall looks genuinely confused.

MARSHALL

Head over where? Where are we
heading? What is he talking about?
We had a deal.

Whit puts his hands on Marshall's shoulder.

WHIT

Our annual boat race! We take it
very seriously. Sam told me he
thought you two could put up a good
fight. I didn't know you sailed in
college, Marshall.

Whit saunters off. Marshall turns to Sam.

SAM

Look, I bet Whit \$700 we would beat him in this race. If we walk we lose the money.

(off Marshall's reaction)

They're tiny sail boats! How hard could it be?

Marshall stares at Sam in disbelief. Sam hops onto the back of the buggy, offering Marshall a hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that.

WHIT (O.S.)

Come on! We're going to be late!

Marshall ignores Sam's hand, slowly mounting the buggy himself. It speeds off towards the other end of the shore, Sam looks over at Marshall, noticing the bandages.

SAM

What happened to your foot?

MARSHALL

I stepped on a martini glass.

SAM

(beat)

Why would you do that?

Marshall's eyes are angry.

EXT. BAY - DAY

A group of petite sailboats, each with different colored sails, make their way at a brisk pace around some orange buoys. The water is calm and clouds are beginning to settle along the horizon.

A gathering of people camped along the shore, casually cheering and clapping. A boat with a YELLOW SAIL has taken a lead.

ON THE BOAT WITH THE YELLOW SAIL

Whit spins the wheel like a true sea captain. Whit's brother works the sails. Whit's father sits on a chair in nautical stripes. They all wear orange life jackets.

Whit has a huge smile on his face.

WHIT
Tag the line!

Whit's brother runs to the sail and carries out his task.

Behind them, a small fleet of sail boats clip along, except for the boat with the PINK SAIL, which is emerging out of the group.

ON THE BOAT WITH THE PINK SAIL

Sam spins the wheel feverishly, clearly out of his element. His eyes are locked on Whit's boat ahead.

SAM
Tag the line, Marshall! Did you
hear what he just said up there?

Marshall is tangled in a complex system of ropes with no idea what to do. He looks at Sam with spiteful eyes.

Sam runs over to Marshall and grabs the ropes off him, offering some help.

SAM (CONT'D)
If you want to win your money back
I'm going to need your help out
here, so let's work together.

Sam runs back over to the wheel. They are gaining a little ground.

SAM (CONT'D)
Push forward!

The wheel suddenly spins out of control. Sam grabs hold of it, steering with all his might.

Marshall pushes the sails forward but it's clear his heart is just not in it.

SAM (CONT'D)
Marshall! Where's your head at
right now!?

Marshall stares at Sam. He lets go. A beat.

MARSHALL
You're a liar.

SAM

Let's try to stay focused here...

MARSHALL

You're in love with her. You're obsessed with her and that's why we're here. You lied about the postcard and you lied about wanting to be a good friend.

(beat)

And that hurts me.

SAM

Things have changed since this morning. Whit just told me Zoe left him, okay? She left him once, and she's going to do it again. He's practically running scared! All we have to do is win this race and prove to him that we're men and then we can all go home together. All three of us.

MARSHALL

This isn't real for her. You're just a vacation.

(beat)

You came here to break up some sad lady's marriage and you took advantage of me because no one else would ever be a part of this. And because I have a car.

Marshall folds his arms. Sam's eyes are wild and desperate.
UP AHEAD, Whit's boat is nearing the finish line.

SAM

Now is not the time for therapy, Marshall! You're the one that went through my bag!

MARSHALL

Just admit it that you used me!
That you're currently using me!

SAM

If you're not going to help me win, then you're dead weight!

ON THE SHORE

Zoe is watching the race through binoculars.

ZOE'S POV: THE BOAT WITH THE PINK SAIL

Sam and Marshall are now physically fighting. Sam has Marshall in a headlock.

BACK TO SCENE

SAM

You're making us lose!

MARSHALL

I have glass in my foot because of you!

The weight of the boat shifts drastically to one side. As the mast swings, Sam ducks to avoid a collision, but Marshall doesn't see it in time. The mast knocks him off the boat and into the water.

Marshall surfaces, floundering about and spitting water out of his mouth. He waves to Sam.

Sam throws Marshall an orange life preserver.

SAM

I'll send someone back for you! We can beat this rich faggot!

MARSHALL

(screaming)

Turn the boat around, Sam! I have a fear of deep water!

But Sam's boat keeps going, leaving Marshall floating there, alone. Marshall takes off his red tie, waving it in the air.

EXT. SHORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Several fire pits have been dug out of the cold sand. The weekend guests are keeping warm around them.

Whit is surrounded by friends, celebrating his victory. He wears a first place sash with a paper crown on his head and holds a large succulent roast on a silver platter, offering slices of meat to his guests. In his other arm, Zoe rests snug in his grip.

Sam sits on a log by a fire on the outskirts of the crowd. Marshall sits, back turned, on the farthest end of the log, attempting to get warm by the fire, yet still shaking uncontrollably. Sam can't stop staring at Whit and Zoe.

SAM

Look at him parading his meat
around like a...I don't even know.
I mean, isn't he embarrassed? To be
that oblivious?

Marshall glares at Sam. He lifts the bandage off his foot
revealing his open bloody cut. Sam doesn't seem to notice.

SAM (CONT'D)

By the way, I'm a little short on
the money I bet Whit. If you could
front it to me, I'll pay you back
as soon as we get to the city.

Whit works his way closer to the boys, doling out slices of
glistening ham as if it were gold. People help themselves,
bestowing their congratulations upon the victor. Marshall
eyes the meat.

MARSHALL

I want some of that meat.

Whit nears them. Sam finally notices Marshall's demeanor.

SAM

What? Whose meat? His meat?
(beat)
You're not touching that meat.

MARSHALL

I need that meat. I haven't eaten
anything since we've been here.

SAM

What about your eggs this morning?

MARSHALL

You forgot to fucking order them.

Sam's eyes grow panicked.

SAM

Look, if you touch that man's meat,
you might as well be waving a white
flag in the air. Do you understand
that?

WHIT (O.S.)

Care for some cured victory ham,
boys?

They look up to find Whit standing before them, his meat extended. Zoe stands by his side, with cold eyes, refusing to look at Sam.

SAM

None for me, Whit. Thanks. You know, factory farming.

Sam stares at Marshall, awaiting his response. A long beat.

MARSHALL

No, I'm alright. Still pretty full from breakfast.

Marshall looks at Sam, but Sam is focused on making eye contact with Zoe, to no avail.

WHIT

(chewing)

I salute your courage out there, boys. You gave it your best shot.

(beat)

There's no shame in losing.

Sam is about to speak when another guest, intercepts Whit and begins a conversation. Soon, enough he and Zoe are surrounded by another gathering. Sam turns to Marshall.

SAM

You're a good friend.

Marshall looks at Sam for a moment, then gets up and walks away.

Sam gets up and rushes over to Zoe who stays behind while Whit enjoys some conversation. Sam takes her arm. Zoe turns to him annoyed and cold.

SAM (CONT'D)

Are you mad at me or something?

ZOE

(hushed)

You lied to me.

SAM

What is this? Now you're turning on me?

ZOE

You lied to me. You got the postcard and you came anyway. And you dragged poor Marshall along with you.

Zoe clearly wants to say more but stops herself.

SAM

Of course, I got the postcard. You knew that. And I came anyway. Which makes me romantic.

ZOE

Which makes you a selfish, delusional little boy. You'd go to all this trouble just to ruin my life?

SAM

Ruin your life? I came here to save you.

Zoe looks at Sam for a long moment, then walks away.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The sun is beginning set as Marshall walks towards the house, past the rickety wooden dock at the far end of the beach.

Ian and a couple girls are splashing around in the water, completely naked except for snorkeling gear, laughing and acting fucked up. Ian sees Marshall.

IAN

Hey, it's the boot! Hello, boot!
Join us! We're all swimming naked!

Laughter from the girls.

MARSHALL

Actually, I was just looking for Teddy because I need my shoes back. Have you seen him anywhere?

Ian looks confused.

IAN

Yeah...he was just here a second ago. Right over there.

Ian points out towards deeper waters. Marshall squints, searching for Teddy, but there is no sign of him.

MARSHALL

I don't see him.

Ian swims out a bit, blowing water from his snorkel into the girls' faces.

Marshall stands alone, surveying the water. Still no one. He walks up the dock.

Then he sees something. Out in the bay, a flailing hand briefly emerges, then disappears back under the water.

Marshall remains still for a moment. His face turns pale. He looks around. There is no one else in sight, save for Ian and the girls.

He opens his mouth to yell something, but nothing comes out. Then, suddenly, Marshall starts sprinting at full speed down the long dock and dives into the water.

He begins paddling his arms and legs furiously, breathing intensely and spitting salt water. He's swimming as fast as he can, but Teddy is nowhere to be found. Marshall slows his swim down, listening intently.

Then he sees him. Teddy's hair, bobbing up and down like blonde seaweed a few feet away.

CUT TO:

Marshall lifts Teddy's unconscious head out of the water and tries to put him on his back, but he's too heavy. He manages to elevate Teddy's head just enough for him to breathe.

He begins swimming with all his might, dragging Teddy along with him. The shore seems miles away. Marshall screams.

ON THE SHORE

A group of weekend guests turn, hearing Marshall's cries. They begin talking amongst themselves, worried. Zoe emerges from the house, looking concerned.

Suddenly, she realizes what is happening. She begins running towards the water as fast as she can.

ZOE

Call a medic!!

IN THE WATER

Marshall is nearing the sand, practically hyperventilating. He reaches the shallow water but he can barely stand. Zoe rushes into the water to help carry Teddy. They drag him onto the sand and lay him down.

MARSHALL

(shaking)

He's not breathing...so much...

Marshall collapses. Zoe kneels above her brother frantically.

ZOE
Oh god, don't do this...come on,
Teddy...please...

There is no response. Someone starts giving him mouth-to-mouth.

Sam runs over from the other end of the beach, confused. He sees Zoe and Marshall and rushes over to help.

Zoe is pressing on Teddy's chest. People are starting to gather around them.

ZOE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
...come on, Teddy...come on...

Marshall is watching from the outside, looking delirious...

...then with a final push on Teddy's chest, he COUGHS.

The entire crowd breathes a huge sigh of relief. Zoe squeezes Teddy in her arms, kissing his forehead.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Fucking hell, you scared the shit
out of me...

Teddy sputters and coughs, regaining consciousness. He looks around for a moment, trying to process everything.

TEDDY
Did I go under...?

PARTY GUEST 7 (O.S.)
He's alright! He gave us a scare,
but he's fine!

PARTY GUEST 8 (O.S.)
Somebody get this man a drink!

Zoe and a couple others help Teddy to his feet and lead him back towards the house, leaving Marshall by himself.

Sam runs over to Marshall, out of breath.

SAM
What happened?

Sam extends his hand to Marshall. Marshall stands up by himself and swats it away, storming off towards the house.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MINUTES LATER

Sam and Marshall are in the middle of a heated argument. Some local paramedics pack up their things into an ambulance nearby.

SAM

No! No! You do not do this right now! This is my last chance with this woman!

MARSHALL

I'm going home.

SAM

But we still have some time left!

MARSHALL

These people...these are not good people, Sam! They're irresponsible! They're like...babies with money!

SAM

Look, I should have never left you out there but I really thought we had a shot at winning. You would have done the same if it were me.

MARSHALL

You never had a shot, Sam! I can't stay and watch you do this to yourself anymore. You can come with me or not. But I'm not going to be a supporting character in your story anymore.

SAM

Don't try and use metaphors with me, okay? I'm the writer here and I'm willing to forgive you for telling Zoe about the postcard if you could just support me.

Marshall seems completely stunned by Sam's demeanor.

MARSHALL

You want to know what the sickest part of all this is? You preyed upon a broken man.

SAM

What? Who?

MARSHALL

You forced me out of the house with your fucked up plan, which shows a complete lack of consideration for all the shit I've been through lately.

SAM

Please, Marshall, give it a rest. I think everyone is a little tired of hearing about your perceived misfortune. I mean, the way you decide to divulge this information to anyone who is willing to listen is disgusting.

MARSHALL

What's that supposed to mean?

SAM

It means someone pistol-whipped you in the head, Marshall. I'm sorry that it happened, and it's a shame, but it happens to someone new every day. We move on with our lives. Do you know how many people are starving in Africa.

MARSHALL

I was assaulted, Sam! A man came at me from behind and took my money!

SAM

Come on, if it wasn't the pistol whipping it would be something else. Who does that money belong to anyway? This is just like the time you checked into the hospital when you thought you had avian flu and it turned out to be a sinus thing.

MARSHALL

I was under a lot of stress.

SAM

From what?! Talking too much?!

A moment of silence. Marshall has nothing to say.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's always something. Always coming up with new reasons not to get a job or move out. Honestly, it's pathetic.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I did you a favor, Marshall. Your parents will thank me I got you on an adventure. And now we're this close to getting what we wanted and you're willing to give it all away.

Marshall stares at Sam, almost in tears.

MARSHALL

Do you really think these people care about guys like us? You're not a real possibility. You have nothing to offer her. You're just a mistress. You're a little vacation for her. And this? What the fuck is this?

Marshall reaches into his pocket and takes the matchbox he found in Sam's bag out and holds it in the air. Sam's eyes look wild.

SAM

Give that back, Marshall.

Marshall throws the matchbox at Sam.

MARSHALL

You're young and you're poor. And honestly? You're a shitty a writer.

Sam charges Marshall in a fit of rage. He tries to tackle Marshall. They grapple for a moment but Marshall easily breaks free and accidentally elbows Sam in the face. Sam falls to ground, blood coming from his left nostril. Marshall looks down at Sam, disappointed.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I used to look up to you.

Marshall turns and walks off towards his car.

Before he gets in, he takes one last look at the house. The Blonde Maid is standing by the side entrance, holding some dirty laundry. They hold eachother's gazes for a moment, then Marshall gets in the car.

Sam lies still, watching the Mercedes drive away. He stares over at matchbox laying in the tall grass.

LATER

Sam is still lying on the ground, holding his nose. Whit leans over him, staring down INTO FRAME.

WHIT
(concerned)
What happened to your face, Sam?

SAM
I fell down the stairs.

WHIT
You should have the paramedics take
a look at it if they're still here.
Your nose is crooked.

SAM
I know. It was like that before.

WHIT
Hmm. Okay. Well, anyway the men are
off to the woods. It's a family
tradition before a wedding. We're
all going to sleep under the stars
tonight.

Sam looks to the side and sees several men in camping attire,
along with the camera crew from earlier. They all carry
overnight packs

SAM
What's the camera crew doing there?

WHIT
Oh. They're cutting together a
little something for the guests as
a party favor. Make sure to leave
your address with someone.
(beat)
See you at the wedding, Sam.

Sam smiles softly.

SAM
Yeah, you bet.

Sam watches Whit and his group of men march into the woods.

WHIT
Keep an eye on the women while
we're away!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teddy lies on the green sofa recovering, sipping hot tea,
surrounded by Ian and other familiar faces.

The movie screen is pulled down and an old black and white movie plays in the background.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Zoe and some girls wear their nightgowns, playing a game of charades by the fireplace.

Esme acts out a part for the girls, getting some laughs. Zoe watches with a cigarette dangling out of her mouth. Her head is someplace else.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The wedding preparations are finally complete. Everything is perfectly in place.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - LATER

Sam lies in bed on his back, examining the *Wizard of Oz* postcard, for a long moment. Finally, he rolls out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Sam is outside Zoe's closed bedroom door, in mid-speech

SAM

I'm pretty sure he doesn't even think you're that funny, which to be honest is one of your best qualities. He admitted to me, out loud that he hates reading. I know you think I'm young and irrational and I am but at least I appreciate you for all your best qualities. I know I've made a lot of terrible mistakes and probably alienated a majority of the people that are close to me, but I did that because of you and that's love isn't it?

(beat)

If you could just give me a chance. At least where we could live together in the same place for a month, and I could make some money and buy you things and we could develop hobbies together. I could see myself spending the rest of my life with you. I could be the father of your children.

Sam takes out the matchbox from earlier and opens it revealing the ring.

SAM (CONT'D)

I bought this for you because I had this whole plan, and I thought things would were going to be a certain way and now they're not--

ZOE (O.S.)

Sam, who are you talking to?

Sam turns and sees Zoe standing at the far end of the hall, holding a glass of water.

ZOE (CONT'D)

You look like shit.

SAM

Well, I got punched in the face.
(beat)
How much of that did you hear?

ZOE

Not enough.
(beat)
Want to give me the abridged version?

Sam looks at Zoe, sitting up on one knee and extending the open matchbox towards her. Zoe stares at the pathetic ring.

ZOE (CONT'D)

(sighs)
Let's go for a walk.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

The sun is just beginning to peek out from behind the clouds. The sky is pale orange. Zoe leads Sam along a dirt path into the forest.

ZOE

You think Marshall will be back for the wedding? I never had a chance to thank him properly for saving Teddy.

SAM

I don't think we'll be seeing each other for a while. I don't even know how I'm supposed to get home.

Zoe picks up a pink and yellow wild flower and begins picking off petals, one by one.

ZOE

What did you and Whit talk about earlier?

SAM

He told me you used to like dragonflies. I never knew that.

ZOE

You get anything else out of him?

Sam hesitates. He wants to say something but he doesn't.

SAM

Nope. That's about all we covered.

They keep walking, quietly taking in the scenery. Zoe gets to the last petal on the flower and rips it off. Sam notices.

SAM (CONT'D)

How'd we do?

ZOE

Not well.

(beat)

I never saw myself as a woman in this position, Sam. Really.

(beat)

Oh, Sam. You'll love other women. Shorter women--

SAM

I like your height. It's my only chance of being a father to an athlete.

Zoe laughs sadly. Sam stops walking.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't marry him, Zoe.

(pause)

I mean it.

ZOE

Oh, Sam. I do have a certain amount of awe for your persistence.

Sam walks up to her and stops. He grabs her arms.

SAM

Look at me. You don't want to marry him, okay? You can't. We used to laugh at this guy.

ZOE

Sam. I have to. You don't understand.

(beat)

I want to...

SAM

You don't want to, Zoe. Otherwise you would've done it already.

Zoe's face is pained with emotion. Sam remains very matter-of-fact. Their faces are close together.

ZOE

I told you from the beginning I was trouble, Sam. Just go home.

SAM

I love you.

ZOE

No, you don't.

Sam kisses her, hard. A long passionate, life-affirming kiss. Zoe pulls away, looking at him for a moment

ZOE (CONT'D)

Is this how your little story ends?

Sam kisses her again, pushing her up against a tree. She grabs his hair, pulling it, as they stumble to the ground.

They hang on to each other, rolling around in the leaves. They move quickly. Sam puts his hands up Zoe's dress.

She unbuttons his corduroys. He kisses Zoe's neck. Her ears. His eyes are closed. Zoe's are open. He climbs on top of Zoe, her dress hiked up. She digs her hand into the soil.

CUT TO:

A FEW MINUTES LATER

They lie together, quiet and still. Zoe puts Sam's arm around her waist, then turns the other way. She seems oddly disconnected. Sam lays his head on her shoulder, very at ease.

SAM
It's times like these I wish I
smoked cigarettes more
consistently.

Zoe sits up. She begins to button her dress. Sam notices.

SAM (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

ZOE
I'm late.

SAM
Late for what?

ZOE
(matter-of-fact)
My wedding, Sam.

Zoe gets up and heads, barefoot, through the woods. Sam gets up and follows after her. Her face is more hardened than we've ever seen it.

SAM
What do you mean? You're not
actually going back there, are you?

ZOE
Sam. Please. Let it be.

SAM
You're still getting married? After
what just happened?

ZOE
Nothing happened, Sam. You got what
you came for. A clumsy, passionate
fuck in the woods.
(beat)
I haven't even written my vows yet.

Zoe begins walking faster. Sam catches up quickly.

SAM
There's a reason for that, Zoe.

ZOE
I'm begging you. Don't make this
harder than it already is.

SAM

Why are you marrying him? Give me one good reason and I swear I'll leave right now.

ZOE

It's not that easy.

SAM

Well, it should be!

Zoe starts walking towards the house. Sam stands there for a moment, then chases after her.

SAM (CONT'D)

You're settling, Zoe! You're settling for a life of wealth and mediocrity!

Zoe ignores him.

ZOE

Go home, Sam.

SAM

I'm going to ruin your wedding in front of everyone.

ZOE

Oh? And how do you plan on doing that?

SAM

I'll tell Whit about us. I'll tell him everything.

ZOE

(exasperated)
Whit knows, Sam.

Silence. Sam looks confused.

SAM

What?

Zoe softens her voice. She looks sad.

ZOE

He knows. He's always known.

SAM

I don't understand. How would he know?

ZOE

Because he's not an idiot. He's
always known.

A moment of silence. Sam's face turns angry. A sad realization coming to the surface.

SAM

So is that all I am to you?
Just...dragonflies?

ZOE

What is that supposed to mean?

SAM

I know all about your tambourine
player. Whit told me.

ZOE

You have no idea what you're
talking about, Sam. I loved him at
the time.

They're entering into the BACKYARD of the house. Several banquet tables have already been set. The staff bustles back and forth, carrying trays, drinks, tablecloths.

SAM

You love everyone, Zoe! That's the
problem here! You love everyone
without consequence! And Whit let's
you get away with it! You really
want to be with someone who's just
going to let you walk away?

ZOE

How did you see this ending, Sam?
What are you proposing? Did you
think I'd just waltz up to the
altar and announce that the
wedding's been canceled because I'm
in love with a twenty-three year
old?

Sam doesn't have an answer.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Quick, Sam. Tell me about this
amazing plan, hmm? What's our move?
Do I go pack up my suitcase, jump
in your friend's station wagon and
run away with you to your one-
bedroom apartment?

(MORE)

ZOE (CONT'D)

I'm sure you'll be able to provide for me and the little ones with all the money you've made from your wildly successful children's stories.

(beat)

Or better yet, why don't we hop on a whale together and live under the sea?

Sam is at a loss for words.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I can see you've really thought this through.

Silence for a long moment. Sam runs his hand through his hair, looking down. He looks like he's about to cry.

SAM

I think we could maybe make the "whale plan" work.

He smiles sadly.

ZOE

Darling, you're a child.

Zoe walks up and kisses Sam on the forehead, brushing leaves out of his hair.

ZOE (CONT'D)

We were fucked the moment we forgot our umbrellas.

Zoe turns and walks towards the house. For the first time, Sam doesn't follow.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

It's pouring rain. A group of people are standing under umbrellas at a busy street corner, waiting for the light to change.

Sam, a year or so younger, standing there without an umbrella. He tries his best to protect himself with a severely damaged news paper.

He turns and notices a woman in an olive green raincoat, standing a few feet away at the front of the curb. It's Zoe.

She looks like she could be crying, but her face is so wet it's hard to tell. She doesn't have an umbrella either.

She turns around, feeling Sam's eyes on her. He smiles at her. She looks down. After a beat, he walks over to Zoe and holds the news paper over her head, shielding her from the rain.

INT. BOY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam sits at the windowsill, looking down at the staff preparing for the party. Several older guests sip cocktails, wearing formal attire, still barefoot.

Whit, his band of brothers, and the film crew parade in from the woods. They look dirty but refreshed. Whit notices Sam watching from above points and smiles. A camera man angles up and shoots him.

EXT. CAFE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sam and Zoe sit at a corner table in a quaint-but-crowded New York cafe. They are both still sopping wet, talking over tea. Zoe pours some brandy from a flask into her porcelain cup.

She slips off her engagement ring, putting it in her pocket.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zoe is in her wedding dress, surrounded by a large group of over-excited women. They mess with her hair, adjust her dress, touch up her make-up. Zoe seems distant. She looks beautiful and Esme sprinkles flower petals in her hair.

The folded up pieces of blank notebook paper intended for Zoe's vows rest on a wicker chair in the foreground.

EXT. PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rain has drenched the meadows of Central Park, turning the place into a swamp. Sam and Zoe walk alongside a fence. She's self-consciously pouring her heart out to him.

Sam puts his arm around her. She looks at it questioningly, but leaves it where it is.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ladies rush Zoe out of the master bedroom, making their way down the hall, heading for the stairs at a brisk pace. A look of realization across Zoe's face.

ZOE

Shit, I forgot my--

Esme pops out from the line of frantic women, stuffing the folded up pieces of paper into an envelope. She hands it to Zoe.

ESME

Right here, love.

ZOE

No, You don't understand. I never finished them...

ESME

You'll think of something. Come on.

Esme ushers Zoe down the stairs.

INT. OLD MOVIE THEATRE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

We are behind Sam and Zoe as they sit and watch a 35mm print of *The Wizard of Oz*, in a near empty movie theatre.

Sam scribbles a note on a ticket stub and passes it to Zoe. It takes her a moment to read. Zoe rests her head on Sam's shoulder.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

The wedding ceremony is underway.

An elderly Minister with salt-and-pepper hair walks down the aisle, holding a bible and wearing a flower on his lapel.

Whit walks down the aisle with his mother at his arm. He's in a custom tuxedo, looking handsome.

The bridesmaids follow in their beautiful lavender dresses, accompanied by Whit's groomsmen. Everyone looks happy...

...and as they reach the podium, every head turns towards the back of the aisle in anticipation.

Zoe stands there, holding Whit's father's arm, in a spring dress cut just above the knee. Her feet still bare and dirty.

She walks slowly, taking her place beside Whit at the altar. Teddy is in the front row, wearing dark glasses and smoking.

MINISTER

We are gathered here today...

Zoe stands, facing the minister. She can feel Sam's eyes on her. She turns her head slightly, looking in Sam's direction.

But he's not there.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

Sam walks down the endless winding road, lugging his suitcase behind him with some difficulty. He's sweating profusely and it seems like miles to the nearest highway.

Suddenly, Sam stops, noticing a car in the distance, heading right towards him. As it nears, we see it's Marshall in his beat up Mercedes.

Sam watches as the car drives right past him.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marshall pulls up onto the front lawn and hops out of the car, rushing into the house, looking around frantically.

THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW

We see the Blonde Maid, standing alone. Suddenly, Marshall rushes INTO FRAME, grabbing her attention. He talks animatedly for a few moments.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Sam is still standing on the side of the road. Marshall's car is heading towards him from the other direction. He drives past Sam again.

Then, after a few moments, the car screeches to a halt. It slowly reverses, pulling up right beside Sam.

Marshall stares straight ahead for a long beat, saying nothing. Then the trunk pops open. Sam puts his things in the back and hops in the front seat.

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks at Marshall curiously. Marshall avoids his gaze.

SAM
What just happened back there?

MARSHALL
I asked that sad maid for her phone number.

Sam stares at Marshall in disbelief, impressed.

SAM
Wow. Did she give it to you?

Marshall exhales.

MARSHALL
No.

A quiet pause.

SAM
I'm sorry for not calling you back for a year. I don't think I've been completely honest with myself lately.

An even longer moment of painful silence. Finally:

MARSHALL
You've been a really bad friend to me, Sam.

Sam nods, thoughtfully.

SAM
I deserve that.

MARSHALL
You've said some nasty things these past few days. Things that I'm not even sure you can take back.

Sam shakes his head.

SAM
I know. You're right.

Marshall finally looks at Sam.

MARSHALL
You've taken a lot of my money too.

SAM
Marshall. I know. I know that.
(genuinely)
And I'm sorry.
(beat)
I think I'd like to start seeing
your therapist, maybe.

Marshall nods.

MARSHALL
How'd things end with your girl?

Sam stares out the window. He half-smiles to himself.

SAM
I ruined her wedding.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Zoe and Whit remain facing each other at the altar.

MINISTER (O.S.)
Have you prepared your own vows,
Zoe?

Zoe looks back up at the Minister, looking unsure.

ZOE
(nervously)
Uh, I have...yes...

Whit looks at Zoe lovingly, touching her face.

Zoe looks down for a long moment fumbling with the folded up pieces of blank notebook paper, then opens them up slowly.

Inside is the Wizard of Oz postcard. She turns it over.

INSERT - POSTCARD

Her original note has been scribbled out and there are fresh words all around it in Sam's sloppy handwriting:

"He's everything I'm not. Start from there."

BACK TO SCENE

Zoe looks up.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The pale blue Mercedes speeds along down the empty highway.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Zoe and Sam ride in silence on opposite sides of the lift.
Some other hotel guests stand between them.

One by one, they each file out, leaving Sam and Zoe alone.
Sam moves in towards Zoe and they kiss sweetly. Sam is on his
toes. The door closes.

CUT TO BLACK.