

Pleasure Head

NO MEMO

HAPPYTHANKYOUMOREPLEASE

by

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In the darkness, a ringing phone...

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

The camera slowly pans around a one-bedroom apartment. By the size of it, we can only assume we're in New York. We see bowls of half-eaten cereal, empty beer bottles, clothes on the floor, finished-in-pen crossword puzzles, a laptop, a typed manuscript on a table, etc.

The camera then lands on two shirts lying on the sofa, one striped, the other solid. A hand reaches in and picks up the solid shirt.

The phone finally stops ringing as the answering machine picks up and we hear:

ANNIE (V.O.)

Sammy boy, big day. It's gonna be great.

A full-length mirror is propped against a wall. In it, we see SAM WEXLER, 29, stuffing his arms into the shirt.

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

Will you call me after your meeting? I need you to talk me down. Hey, you're gonna wear the striped shirt, right?

Sam quickly rips off the solid shirt and grabs the striped one, begins putting it on.

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

Uch, this happens every time I host a party. There's always this moment beforehand when I prepare myself to learn I'm not nearly as well-liked as I thought I was.

Sam has finished buttoning his shirt and leaves frame. We stay on the mirror.

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

And you've gotta admit this is weird, Sam. I'm having a weird party. Tuck, tuck. Don't forget to tuck.

Sam pops back into frame and tucks in his shirt.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

These people can't know you normally dress like a fourteen year-old. Okay, you're probably gone by now.

Sam looks down at his watch. He's late. We see him dash into the bathroom, hear him gargling some mouthwash.

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

Speaking of fourteen year-olds, Spencer Gibson's gonna be there - Mr. Hot Floppy-Hair East Coast Boarding School Man - and he makes me go weak in the knees. Who's never left Junior High? Show of hands...

Sam races out of the bathroom, dialing his cell phone. He grabs his keys and throws his bag over his shoulder.

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

Wow, huge day for you, making it all about me. I'm so good at that-- Ooh, look, you're calling me.

She hangs up. We can faintly hear Annie on the other line as Sam walks out the door.

SAM

Hey.

ANNIE (V.O.)

How do you look?

SAM

National Book Award-Winning.

Door slams.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Sam tears down the stairs, fast.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Good boy. Will you come early tonight? I'm convinced no one's gonna show.

SAM

You're wrong, but I'll be there early.

ANNIE (V.O.)

When?

SAM

First thing.

ANNIE (V.O.)

God, I fucking love you. Now go get your bad self published.

SAM

Done.

ANNIE (V.O.)

And remember: You're the voice of our generation.

Sam stops cold right at the front door. Silence.

SAM

That's a lot of pressure.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Sorry.

SAM

Okay. See you tonight.

He hangs up and bursts out the front door. The sunlight is blinding and beautiful. Sam Wexler's day has begun.

MAIN TITLES.

GREAT SONG.

Throughout, we see various images of our characters:

--Sam winding his way through the city streets, a spring in his step. He's feeling good.

--MARY CATHERINE stacking brushes in an art store, lost in a pleasant memory: She and CHARLIE making love in the morning light.

--A young, beautiful, hairless woman, ANNIE, putting a turban/wrap on her head in the mirror. It's clear from her proficiency she's done this hundreds of times.

EXT. STREET - DAY - LATER

Sam has picked up the pace a bit. Suddenly, he notices a STRIKING GIRL emerge from the subway carrying a ton of bags. She walks towards him. Time stops a bit, in the way it does when beautiful women are drawing near. She smiles at Sam as she approaches.

When they are face to face, they play a tiny game of "Who's-Gonna-Go-Which-Way?" Finally, they navigate things and Sam turns to watch her go. She takes a left into a bar. Sam jogs a few steps back to catch the name of the bar. He then heads down into the subway.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Sam looks down at his watch, taps his foot. He glances around and notices an OVERWEIGHT BLACK WOMAN. She is surrounded by a gaggle of children, to whom she pays little attention. One of the boys is trying to take a piece of candy from one of the girls.

GIRL
(pushing him off)
Stop!!

He doesn't. He grabs for the candy and she yanks it away. Little pieces spill out all over the train and she knocks into her mother's leg.

MOTHER
Sitcho ass down.

She grabs the girl hard by the arm and pulls her down to a seat. The girl rubs her arm. The boy collects random pieces of the candy and stealthily tosses them at the girl. The mother does nothing.

Sam notices another SMALL BLACK CHILD (6) with them. He has thousand year-old eyes and is calmly staring out the window. He and Sam notice each other. The boy subtly tips his chin up at him ("What's up?") Sam tips his chin back. The boy then resumes staring out the window.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY - LATER

A voice announces the next stop. The mother gathers her things, separates the still warring boy and girl, and waits for the train to pull into the station.

Sam notices the other boy still seated and staring out the window. The train stops and the mother gets off. The kids file out behind her. The boy does not. Sam starts to grow a little concerned.

We hear the voice announce the next stop. People file into the train. Still the boy does not move. We see the mother and the kids get swallowed by the sea of commuters on the train platform.

Suddenly, the boy races toward the exit. A crush of people entering the train block his way. He can't get through, but it doesn't look like he's trying that hard. The doors close. Sam pops out of his seat and runs toward the boy as the train begins to move.

SAM

Hey. What are you doing? They'll help you in there.

The boy shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

What, are you wanted for something?

Nothing. Sam has no idea what to do.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, someone has to... I can't-- I gotta leave you here, dude. I don't know what else to do with you.

The boy looks devastated. Sam gets nearer to him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you know your address?

The boy shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

What neighborhood do you live in?

(the boy shrugs)

You don't know? Is it in Manhattan?

(beat)

Brooklyn, Queens...? You really don't know where you live?

(no answer)

What's your name?

The boy stares at Sam but says nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)

My name's Sam.

(beat, impatient)

It's not good to talk to strangers, I know, but I'm clearly a good... citizen or something. I'm trying to help you.

(beat)

You not gonna tell me your name?

Nope. Sam looks at his watch.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fuck.

(to the kid)

Don't swear.

He sees some people getting out of a taxi. Decision time. What does he do? He looks down at the boy.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Sam hops in the taxi.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy is walking away from the station. The cab pulls up next to him. The door opens. Beat. The boy gets in.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY

Sam and the boy get off the elevator at a fairly swank publishing house and approach the receptionist.

SAM

Hi, I have a meeting with Paul Gertmanian.

RECEPTIONIST

Your name?

SAM

Sam Wexler.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY - LATER

They sit, waiting. Sam is clearly nervous. Suddenly, he furiously untucks his shirt. He then pops up and goes to the receptionist.

SAM

Hey. When I go in there would you mind keeping an eye on him?

The receptionist looks at the boy on the couch.

RECEPTIONIST

What's his name?

Sam is at a loss.

SAM

Ask him. He likes to chat.

Her phone rings.

INT. PAUL GERTMANIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam sits across from PAUL GERTMANIAN. Two other EDITORS sit in the room staring at Sam. A manuscript rests on Paul's desk. The door is open.

PAUL

Susan speaks very highly of you.

SAM

I speak very highly of Susan.

PAUL

Mmm. So... We like this. We do. A fantastic start. We think you're good. But first. Answer me this: How good do you think you are?

(Sam is tongue-tied)

Let me put it this way: You're sitting where I'm sitting.

(holds up the manuscript)

Do you buy this?

(then)

Come on, we don't know much about you, beyond these fifty pages. What kind of writer are you going to be?

(beat)

Seriously. Help me out. You have my job, do you write the kid a fat check and tell him to finish?

SAM

I... really couldn't say. I write books, I don't publish them. It's like asking an architect to speculate on real estate.

PAUL

Cute. The correct answer was 'yes.'
Come on, Sam, get a little cocky.

Suddenly, Sam sees the boy, unaccompanied, walk past the open office door. Paul and the other editors do not see him. Sam doesn't know what to do.

PAUL (CONT'D)

We want to get this book out of you.

(leaning in)

Do you have this book in you?

(Sam is frozen)

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Sam, I'm going to get a bit crude about this: Do you have any idea how much it takes to publish and market a first novel?

Sam leaps up out of his chair.

SAM

Excuse me for one second.

He rushes out of the office.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam calls after the boy.

SAM

Hey.

The boy turns around.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

The boy points down the hallway. Sam goes to him.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam and the boy find the men's bathroom. The boy looks up at Sam.

SAM

Go ahead. I'll wait for you here.

The boy goes in.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

We see Sam tearing around the corner and racing towards Paul's office. He pops his head in.

SAM

Sorry about this. Be back in one sec.

He goes. Paul is confused.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is impatiently waiting. Finally, he opens the door just as the boy is coming out.

SAM

You good?

The boy nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's go.

They head back towards the lobby, passing Paul's office. Paul notices Sam is with a small black child. How odd.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They reach the lobby. The receptionist is gone. A creepy-looking OLDER MAN sits holding a manuscript. He smiles at the boy. Sam doesn't like this one bit.

INT. PAUL GERTMANIAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul and the editors are waiting, impatiently. Finally, Sam appears at the door, with the boy. He places the boy in a chair by the door and retakes his seat. Beat.

SAM

Yes.

PAUL

Hmm?

SAM

I'd write the kid a fat check.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

Sam and the boy are waiting for the elevator. Sam looks disappointed. The elevator arrives and they step in. Just as the doors are closing, we hear the receptionist:

RECEPTIONIST

Bye, Rasheen.

RASHEEN

Bye.

Sam turns to him as the doors close.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - ELEVATOR - DAY

Sam's looking up at the floor numbers as they descend.

SAM

What kind of a name is Rasheen?

No answer.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna call you Mean Green Rasheen.
Would you like that?

RASHEEN

No.

Ding. Elevator doors open. They leave.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam walks fast. Rasheen struggles to keep up.

RASHEEN

Where are we going?

SAM

Toy store.

RASHEEN

(thrilled)

Really?

SAM

No. We're going back to my place where
there's a phone book so I can call
whoever the hell it is I call and we can
get you back home.

Rasheen stops walking. Sam turns back to him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dude, come on.

(beat)

Come on.

Suddenly, Rasheen turns and runs, fast, in the opposite
direction. Great. Sam chases after him. It's not easy.
The kid has some speed. Finally he catches up to him.
Rasheen has slowed to a jog, and Sam jogs alongside him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Not cool, dude. Not cool.

They jog. Sam is breathing pretty hard.

SAM (CONT'D)

Could we stop running? I'm almost thirty.

They stop running.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look, you're obviously having some family issues. But whatever, it's childhood, it ends.

Rasheen looks at him like he's insane.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. That piss you took might have seriously damaged my writing career.

(deep breath)

Now, come on, it's time to get you home. Your mom's probably worried sick about you.

RASHEEN

(quietly)

She's not my mom.

SAM

What?

Rasheen says nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)

That woman on the train, that wasn't your mom?

Rasheen shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

Were those your brothers and sisters?

Again, he shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's your mom?

(he shrugs)

So you were just staying with that woman?

(beat)

Were you living with that woman?

(he nods his head)

Like in foster care?

Rasheen says nothing. Beat. Sam realizes something.

SAM (CONT'D)

Did you mean to stay on that train?

He gets no answer. Rasheen is just staring up at him, something both helpless and imploring in his eyes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam and Rasheen walk by the bar where Sam saw the girl earlier. They pass the large front window. Sam looks in but doesn't break his stride.

INT. BAR - DAY

We see the girl seated at the bar, wearing headphones and studying some sheet music. From inside, we see the large front window that Sam and Rasheen just passed. Suddenly, we see Sam lightly jog back a few steps. He grabs another short look at the girl, then jogs off. The girl looks up at the window. He's gone.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam stands by the door of the bar and looks down at Rasheen.

SAM

Don't move.

INT. BAR - DAY

Sam walks in. The girl looks up at him.

SAM

Hey... You guys open?

STRIKING GIRL

Not yet.

SAM

Cool.

Sam has no idea what to say.

SAM (CONT'D)

You work here?

STRIKING GIRL

Yep.

SAM

Uh-huh.

(beat)

Hi.

STRIKING GIRL

Hi.

Sam doesn't move. Suddenly, the door opens and in walks Rasheen. The girl smiles at him. Sam shoots him a look: "This was not our plan."

STRIKING GIRL (CONT'D)

Who's this?

SAM

Oh, this is... my little brother. Not my actual brother, but I'm his Big Brother, like Big Brother/Big Sister... type-of-thing.

STRIKING GIRL

That's great. Good for you.

SAM

Yeah. Good deeds.

Sam rubs the top of Rasheen's head.

SAM (CONT'D)

So, great... I'm going to come back here... and drink... soon.

STRIKING GIRL

(you're cute but weird)

Okay.

He smiles and they go.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam and Rasheen emerge from the bar and walk. After a few moments, Sam holds out his hand.

SAM

Good save.

Rasheen gives him five.

EXT. STREET - PIZZA SHOP - DAY

Sam and Rasheen are standing at an outdoor table at a pizza shop. They each toss down a slice.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DUSK

The sun is setting. Sam sits on a chair across from Rasheen who is on the couch. They stare each other down.

SAM

You can't stay here.

RASHEEN

Why not?

SAM

Cause.

RASHEEN

Cause why?

SAM

Cause you can't.

RASHEEN

Why can't I?

SAM

Cause.

Long beat.

RASHEEN

Why not?

SAM

Cause.

RASHEEN

Cause why?

Sam says nothing.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rasheen is on the couch, drawing something on a take-out menu. Sam sits on the other end of the couch, asleep. Suddenly, Sam pops up and looks at his watch.

SAM

Fuck.

(getting up)

Don't swear. We have to go.

They leave.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

We hear music and other party sounds from inside. Sam's hand comes into frame and knocks on the door. After a few moments, the door opens and we see:

ANNIE (28) She has soulful eyes framed by a fair amount of eye make-up. She also wears large earrings and a fantastic, colorful, and tall wrap/turban thing around her head.

[Note: Annie has Alopecia Universalis, which means she has no hair anywhere on her body - head, eyebrows, etc.]

ANNIE

Early meaning... late?

SAM

I'm so sorry.

ANNIE

Thank God my friend Grey Goose was here early to comfort me.

(huge smile)

I'm wrecked.

They hug, then she notices Rasheen standing next to Sam.

SAM

This is Rasheen.

ANNIE

(shaking hands)

Hi, Rasheen. I'm Annie. Hey, good handshake.

They enter and Annie leans over to Sam, sotto voce.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

You'll explain later?

SAM

Yeah, things got a little... complicated.

ANNIE

I can see that.

(kissing his cheek)

Go get drunk. None for the kid.

She shoves him and goes off to hostess. They head towards the bar. Despite Annie's prediction, the party is well-attended. As they walk, a guy recognizes Sam.

GUY

Sam, what's up, man?

SAM

(not stopping to talk)

Hey, how's it goin'?

Sam and Rasheen reach the makeshift do-it-yourself bar. Some cookies, chips, and vegetables are also laid out. Sam pours Rasheen a ginger ale and hands him the cup.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here.

RASHEEN

Can I have a cookie?

SAM

Dude, it's a party, you can have like ten cookies.

Rasheen grabs a handful of cookies and takes his ginger ale. Sam pours himself a stiff drink, turns from the bar and scans the crowd. He sees a familiar face, a very cute girl, KAITLIN, who blows him a kiss. He catches it and pastes it on his cheek. He's about to go to her but he's cut off by MARY CATHERINE, cute, tough. She's wearing a T-shirt that says "I've Got Potential."

MARY CATHERINE

Hey.

Mary Catherine notices Rasheen, then looks up at Sam.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

SAM

(admonishing)

Come on. Child.

(then)

Rasheen, this is my cousin Mary Catherine.

SAM (CONT'D)
 We're not really cousins.
 Parents, best friends...

MARY CATHERINE
 Thanksgivings, the whole
 bit.

They look down at Rasheen, whose mouth is stuffed full of
 cookie.

MARY CATHERINE
 Look. He's riveted.
 (to Sam)
 What's going on?

SAM
 I'm just... looking after him for awhile.

MARY CATHERINE
 And you thought, "I know what kids love:
 Alopecia Awareness Parties!"

SAM
 Kind of. How are you?

MARY CATHERINE
 Nauseous.

SAM
 Nice. Where's Charlie?

MARY CATHERINE
 In L.A. He's back tomorrow.

SAM
 I like that Charlie.

MARY CATHERINE
 So do I. I'm a mess without him.

Mary Catherine looks back down at Rasheen, then up at
 Sam. She points back and forth at both of them.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 This is fishy.

SAM
 It's fine.

MARY CATHERINE
 Why do you have a small child with you,
 Sam?

SAM
 We're gonna mingle.

He and Rasheen start to walk away.

MARY CATHERINE
 (calling after him)
 I'm calling you tomorrow.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Sam winds his way with Rasheen through the now-larger crowd. He leaves frame and we linger for a bit to pick up the following party conversation.

GIRL
 I think there might be bigger problems.

GUY
 Well, it's the root of all our problems.
 For sure.

GIRL
 People not *breathing* properly?

GUY
 Yeah. Oxygen deprivation. Leads to all
 sorts of bad decision-making.

We hear Annie's voice.

ANNIE (O.S.)
 It's showtime everybody. Gather 'round.

They start to go.

GUY
 Be a whole different world if people were
 breathing right.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

People file into the living room as Annie says:

ANNIE
 In here. Follow... my... voice...

The crowd settles in.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Thank you all for coming. I'm Annie,
 your hostess-- oh my God, Tommy, you're
 here.

TOMMY waves.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

So happy about that. Where was I? Oh, yes--

(pointing to self)

Annie, hostess, welcome. Thank you all for humoring me.

(tension-releasing scream)

Ahhhhh. I'm nervous. Okay, I promise this won't take long and if anyone wants an extra dash of fun, whenever anyone says, oh, I don't know... 'follicle' or 'white blood cells,' we could all drink.

Someone whoops.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(trying it out)

'Follicle.'

Some people drink. Annie is pleased.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Very good. Now. The first thing most people notice about me is that I am...

Annie looks for some audience participation.

FEMALE PARTY GUEST

Hot.

ANNIE

Yes, that's correct. I am super hot. I am also, in addition to being super drunk--
(indicating her body with a flourish)

Hairless. Now unlike some of the hot gay men here, I do not wax. I have a very awesome auto-immune disorder that we're going to learn about right... now.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Some people are standing up in front of the room reading from note cards. Annie sits off to the side.

MELISSA

"...that approximately two percent of the population will be affected at some point in their lives. Onset most often occurs in childhood."

(MORE)

MELISSA (CONT'D)
 (looking up)
 That's all I have.

ANNIE
 Friends, amazing. You may be seated.
 Now Alopecia, as we heard, is an auto-
 immune disorder. Here's a fun fact. Get
 this: Both, yes, *both* of my parents
 are... immunologists.

The crowd "oohs" ironically.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Right? Is that not some trippy Twilight
 Zone shit?

(crowd laughs)
 Who has the next card? No, one more fun
 fact. Wait, is everyone having fun?

CROWD
 Yes!

ANNIE
 We should drink. 'White Blood Cells.'

Everyone drinks. We find Sam in the back of the crowd
 with Rasheen who's standing on a chair so he can see.

SAM
 You okay?

Rasheen nods.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Learning something?

He nods again.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Cool.

We find Annie again.

ANNIE
 Imagine if you will - Long Island circa
 1988 - and you're noticing at shower-time
 after gym class that you're not
 developing like all the other girls. Who
 knows what I'm talking about?

Some giggles, Annie looks around.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Yes, Peter, exactly. But one of the lovely treats of adulthood has been the current trend towards--

(elegantly gestures south)

The Smooth. It's the silver lining. I'm a total trendsetter.

We hear a cell phone ring.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(mock-pissed)

Oh, yeah, could everyone please turn off their cell phones?

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)

Sorry, sorry.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine steps away from the crowd and into the kitchen to answer her phone.

MARY CATHERINE

(slight whisper)

Hey.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Oh, my God, baby, I wish you were here with me right now!

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DUSK

Mary Catherine's boyfriend, CHARLIE (funny, great spirit,) is speeding alongside the Pacific Ocean.

CHARLIE

I'm driving on the PCH in a goddamn convertible and the sun is setting, it's UNBELIEVABLE. This is not an east coast sun, it's like some sort of... magic ball that's splattering this *amazing* color, I just want you here so I can park you on the beach with your paints and watch you capture this.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine has thawed and is now smiling warmly.

MARY CATHERINE

How's Dave doing?

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Amazing. Do you know I haven't encountered a single mosquito out here?

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DUSK

Back with Charlie on the phone.

CHARLIE

It's like a no-mosquito zone. They're outlawed or something. And I never really appreciated the palm tree. Palm trees are the fucking best.

MARY CATHERINE (V.O.)

They're not indigenous. They shipped them in and planted them for effect. Kind of like everything in Los Angeles.

CHARLIE

I know, I know.

(sing-song mantra)

"L.A. sucks, the people suck..." But I wish you could see this sunset.

He's stopped at a light and is hypnotized by the view.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary Catherine waits to hear if Charlie's going to go on.

MARY CATHERINE

Charlie. Come home right now. I miss you. And New York misses you, too.

(beat)

Charlie.

Silence. Mary Catherine looks down at her phone. "SIGNAL FADED." She hangs up. She has a pensive moment as we hear from the other room:

TYLER (O.S.)

It's from the Greek 'alopekia,' which means "fox."

Someone whoops. Mary Catherine returns to the party.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

We pan around the party, now slightly less crowded, and pick up snippets of conversation like this:

GIRL (O.S.)

That's when I realized: Self-aggrandizement is the new self-deprecation.

We find Rasheen asleep on the couch. Sam talks to Kaitlin, the cute girl from earlier. He's pretty wasted.

SAM

I think I saw you in a commercial.

KAITLIN

Probably. I have a few running right now.

SAM

Do you ever feel weird about hawking product for corporate Goliaths?

KAITLIN

Sometimes. But then I look around my new loft on Perry Street, and I feel totally great about it.

SAM

Ooh, show me your loft. I want to see your loft.

KAITLIN

(laughing)
I'll bet you do. Not tonight.

SAM

Yes, tonight. Tonight's perfect.

KAITLIN

Don't you have other responsibilities?

Kaitlin gestures to the couch. Sam looks down at the sleeping Rasheen, sighs.

SAM

Fucking kid continues to ruin my day.

KAITLIN

You're gonna be a great dad.

SAM

Kiss me.
 (puckering his lips)
 Come on. No one's looking.

KAITLIN

(not uncharmed)
 Why should I?

SAM

The real question is: Why *shouldn't* you?

KAITLIN

Cause I'm about to turn 30. You have to at least buy me dinner.

SAM

Isn't that prostitution?

KAITLIN

Possibly.

Sam puckers up again. Kaitlin smiles, gives him a sweet kiss on his cheek, then walks away. Sam watches her go.

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Annie talks to SPENCER, her floppy-haired crush.

ANNIE

I think it went well. Parties should be more educational, don't you think?

SPENCER

Why not?

Sam comes over to Annie, with the sleeping Rasheen slung over his shoulder.

SAM

Great party.
 (kissing her cheek)
 I never noticed you didn't have hair.

Annie pushes him towards the door. Sam then turns around, suddenly ruminative.

SAM (CONT'D)

I feel like my life is totally different all of a sudden... And I don't know if I like it.

He turns and passes the 'breathing guy' from earlier.

GUY

Just remember to breathe, my friend.

As Sam and Rasheen leave, the guy turns to his friend.

GUY (CONT'D)

He'll be fine.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sam and Rasheen, zombie-like, stumble down the street. They pass the bar. Sam looks in the window. No sign of the girl. They continue to stumble home.

EXT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie gets out of a cab with his bags and heads to his front door. He has trouble with the key. The door opens and the super walks out.

SUPER

Mr. Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey. Still having trouble with the lock.

SUPER

Right. The lock.

He leaves. Charlie enters.

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie is inside the building. The light flickers annoyingly. He stares up at it. He then turns to the stairwell. Four flights await him. He sighs, then hoists his bag up onto his shoulder. Home sweet home.

INT. ANNIE'S WORKPLACE - MORNING

Annie is at her desk. She's slightly hung over, trying to get the top off a bottle of aspirin. It's not going well. She sticks the bottle in her mouth and tries prying the top off with her teeth.

Suddenly: A flash. She looks up. A man stands by her desk holding a camera. This is SAM #2 - pleasant enough but no one's idea of Mr. Right - Think a younger, jollier Paul Giamatti. He wears a suit and is all smiles.

SAM #2

Don't worry. I'll destroy that. Here.

He grabs the bottle from her and easily pops the top off.

ANNIE

Thanks.

SAM #2

Rough night?

Annie doesn't answer. She pops two pills in her mouth.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

I have a question. Why aren't we better friends?

ANNIE

(not totally mean)

Um... I wasn't aware we were friends.

SAM #2

(not offended)

I think we'd get along very well.

ANNIE

Well. My best friend's name is Sam...
Sam. I mean, seriously, how many Sam's
can a girl have in her life?

SAM #2

You could call me Sam 2. Hey, I sound
like a sequel.

Sam #2 chuckles at this. Annie does not. He gestures to a chair by her desk.

SAM #2 (CONT'D)

(sitting)

May I?

He keeps smiling, but says nothing. Not knowing what to do, she turns to her desk. Beat. She turns back to him.

ANNIE

Help me out with something here, Sam
Number 2. You work in legal, right?

SAM #2

Yeah.

ANNIE

Seventh floor. Why are you always lurking around down here?

SAM #2

Come on. Everyone knows the party's on five.

(then, mock frat-boy)

Philanthropic giving! Woo-hoo!

Sam #2 is loving this, grinning wide. Annie turns back to her desk. Beat. She can feel that he hasn't moved. OK, she's just going to politely ask him to leave. She turns to him and - FLASH! - he snaps another picture.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Rasheen is at the kitchen table drawing on a newspaper. Sam, still half-asleep, comes out of his bedroom.

SAM

You sleep okay?

He nods.

SAM (CONT'D)

That's a quality couch.

Sam heads towards the refrigerator.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hungry?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam sits across from Rasheen. They are each eating an ice cream sandwich. Sam leafs through the Yellow Pages.

SAM

Who to call who to call...? Child... services something or other...

Sam looks up at Rasheen.

SAM (CONT'D)

Is this your first experience with foster care?

Rasheen shakes his head "no."

SAM (CONT'D)
How many other places you been?

Rasheen thinks and starts counting on his hands. He holds up seven fingers. Whoa.

SAM (CONT'D)
And how old are you?

Rasheen puts down one of his fingers. Sam takes this in. He turns back to the phone book, but then abruptly shuts it and tosses it aside.

SAM (CONT'D)
We can deal with this later.

Sam finishes his ice cream sandwich.

SAM (CONT'D)
You want another?

Rasheen nods. Sam takes out two more, tosses one to Rasheen, keeps one for himself. They eat.

SAM (CONT'D)
So whatcha reading lately?

INT. CHARLIE AND MARY CATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie and Mary Catherine are in bed.

MARY CATHERINE
Welcome home.

She kisses him and goes off to the bathroom. We hear the water running. Charlie stares up at the ceiling.

CHARLIE
Dave thinks he's really gonna get this thing off the ground.

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)
That's great.

CHARLIE
Yeah. He was the happiest I've seen him in a long time.

Beat. Charlie looks tormented.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

L.A. seems to agree with him.

MARY CATHERINE (O.S.)

Yeah?

CHARLIE

Yeah. He says he doesn't miss New York at all.

SFX: Toilet flushes. Mary Catherine reenters.

MARY CATHERINE

I knew he'd bail. Dave was always too much of a wimp to stay here forever.

(hopping on him)

You know what I want?

(seductive)

An omelette.

She kisses him.

CHARLIE

You think it's wimpy to want to leave New York?

MARY CATHERINE

Yes. *Huuuuungry...*

CHARLIE

Wait, no, just... curious. Why do you hate Los Angeles so much?

MARY CATHERINE

Because it's the epicenter of all that is awful.

CHARLIE

You know, the coolest person on the planet lives in Los Angeles.

MARY CATHERINE

Who's that?

CHARLIE

Bob Dylan.

MARY CATHERINE

(unimpressed)

Dylan lives in Los Angeles?

CHARLIE

Well, Malibu, but yeah.

MARY CATHERINE

(beat)

Never been hungrier.

CHARLIE

Wait. Dave told me this great thing about L.A.

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping, quietly)

Feeeed me.

CHARLIE

Listen: He said he figured it out. He said the whole town is a blank canvas and whatever you bring to it, that's what it is. It's just this random collection of neighborhoods where it's always sunny, and it basically reflects wherever you are back at you. You're happy, L.A.'s great. You're not, L.A. sucks. But it has nothing to do with Los Angeles cause get this:

(greatest thing ever)

There's no such thing.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

And?

CHARLIE

And... that's it.

MARY CATHERINE

That's like marrying someone who has no personality and holding that up as their chief virtue.

(then)

"Look, this person has nothing going on and nothing to offer but they really let me be me."

CHARLIE

Not... really.

MARY CATHERINE

If you don't feed me soon, I'm going to eat your face. Let's go.

Mary Catherine climbs off him and starts to get ready. Charlie doesn't move. Mary Catherine stares at him.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Okay, what's going on? Dave said what?

Moment of truth.

CHARLIE

He wants to partner with me. 50-50. But we'd need... to be out there.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

When?

CHARLIE

The end of the month.

Beat.

MARY CATHERINE

And you want to do it?

Charlie sheepishly shrugs.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well, if you think it's best. I mean, I can paint anywhere, right?

CHARLIE

(cautiously thrilled)

Totally.

MARY CATHERINE

And we could have a much bigger apartment and take walks on the beach and it would force me to get my driver's license *finally* and I could get some fake boobs and, ooh, we could both stop reading books and start writing *screenplays*. How soon can we book our flight?

Charlie deflates. Mary Catherine grabs his face and squeezes it tightly, making him look ridiculous.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

If you think I'm moving to Los Angeles, Charlie, you're fucking insane.

(then)

Breakfast?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rasheen sits on the sofa. Sam bursts into the living room from his bedroom.

SAM

Dude, this is not right. I'm not-- You, you, you shouldn't be here. I have to...

(definitive)

It's time for you to go.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam and Rasheen sit on the sofa calmly watching TV, splitting some microwave egg rolls.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY - LATER

Sam sits at the table, writing. Rasheen sits across from him, drawing. Curious, Sam gets up and wanders over to him. He stares down at the drawing. It's stunning.

SAM

Dude.

Rasheen looks up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good work.

Sam sits back down, but then pops up out of his seat. He grabs a cupful of pencils and highlighters and a stack of blank paper from his printer and places them by Rasheen.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Later. Sun is setting. Sam is writing. Rasheen is drawing. It seems to be going well for both of them.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam and Annie hover over a sleeping Rasheen. Annie sifts through Rasheen's drawings.

ANNIE

Whoa.

SAM

I know. I don't know what to do.

ANNIE

Sell them. Kidding.

(then)

What do you think was going on?

SAM

Something bad. He says he won't go back.

Annie takes another look at him.

ANNIE

He's super cute.

(re: the drawings)

Possibly a genius.

(beat)

I say we keep him.

She looks at Sam.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. We can't keep him.

They start to head out.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Sam. Seriously. Don't keep him.

INT. SAM'S ROOF - NIGHT - LATER

Annie and Sam sit in lawn chairs on the roof of Sam's apartment building. A beautiful night. They're taking hits off a one-hitter that looks like a cigarette.

ANNIE

Did I ever tell you what he said about having kids with me?

SAM

Huh-uh.

ANNIE

Fucking Ira. This is like when we were totally in love. It was just so awful. He said if we had kids and they turned out to have Alopecia, he would want them in wigs cause quote: "Kids can be cruel."

SAM

Whoa.

ANNIE

I know. And I just burst into tears. I was like, "No, you can't say that, don't say that. You have to love your bald wife and your little bald kids." But it made me think about something my mom said when I was little. She literally sat me down, I was like ten or eleven, and she said-- to her *daughter*: "It's going to take a very special man to love you."

SAM

Oh, my God.

ANNIE

Yeah. Thanks, mom. Helpful.

(then)

Like the manner in which I am damaged vis a vis men is so not veiled in any way. It's like *there it is*.

Beat. Annie takes a hit, exhales.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Did you know that was a wig freshman year?

(then)

Why am I talking about all this stuff so much?

(then)

Wait, did you?

SAM

Yeah. I mean I think so. I don't really remember.

ANNIE

Well, I was fat, too, so the whole period's a bit of a blur.

Sam smiles. She hands the one-hitter back to Sam.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Did you end up meeting that guy Spencer at my party?

SAM

No.

ANNIE

My little *crushy-crush*. We talked pretty much all night.

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Get this: I ask Peter Mehlman about him the next day and fuckhead somehow felt free to tell me: "He only dates hot girls."

Sam groans.

SAM

Annie, you have to stop talking to people.

ANNIE

Right? I know...

(beat)

Some shit's really coming up for me, Sam, I don't know. Like I'm playing at the whole *I-am-what-I-am-and-I-love-it* thing, but more often than not I just feel like an unlovable bald freak.

SAM

That's crazy. You're the greatest girl pretty much ever, and you're totally hot. You just have uniquely terrible taste in men.

Annie stares at Sam as he takes a hit.

ANNIE

If I'm so great, how come you never wanted to be with me?

Sam is smoking and this doesn't really land on him.

SAM

(out the side of his mouth)

What?

ANNIE

Any word on the book?

SAM

Nope.

ANNIE

Nervous?

SAM

I don't know. I don't even know if it's what I want anymore, you know?

(pretty high now)

Like *goals*, I have them, cause I guess I'm supposed to, but what... what's a goal... even?

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
 (long beat)
 Whatever.

ANNIE
 Life is hard.

SAM
 Yeah. It is.

ANNIE
 And I somehow want it not to be, which I
 think maybe misses the point.

They both stare up at the sky, taking it all in.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Lunch. Charlie is looking down at the table sullenly. The tension is thick. Mary Catherine playfully attempts eye-contact. Charlie doesn't respond. Mary Catherine can't take it anymore. She shuts the menu dramatically.

MARY CATHERINE
 Fine, just, you know what? Just give it
 to me.

CHARLIE
 What?

MARY CATHERINE
 Let's hash it out. Give me the whole
 anti-New York case you've been building
 up in your head ever since you fell in
 love with the palm tree.

Charlie rolls his eyes.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Seriously. Lemme have it.

CHARLIE
 Fine.

MARY CATHERINE
 Fine.

CHARLIE
 Fine. You wanna know what I think?

MARY CATHERINE
 You know I do.

CHARLIE

I think. New York... is done.

MARY CATHERINE

New York City is 'done?'

CHARLIE

Totally.

MARY CATHERINE

Uh-huh. And you're declaring this right now? Officially?

CHARLIE

I'm just saying...

MARY CATHERINE

What kind of bullshit is that? New York is the greatest city on earth.

CHARLIE

Right, I forgot about that time you went to every city on earth and then decided--

MARY CATHERINE

(overlapping)

Oh, fuck you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Just, okay, let's-- Calm down.

(then)

Tell me what you're so afraid of?

Mary Catherine really gives it some thought.

MARY CATHERINE

I'm afraid of my brain melting. I'm afraid we'll turn into people who watch and care about reality television. I'm afraid we won't care about things anymore except opening weekend grosses and... Pilates classes.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but you know they'd be, like, the best Pilates classes.

(beat)

Kidding.

MARY CATHERINE

Scary Jacob and Hallie Sorenson and remember Valerie What's-Her-Face who was trying to start her own religion?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

MARY CATHERINE

All born and raised in Los Angeles.

Charlie rolls his eyes.

MARY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Kids who grow up in Southern California are weirdos.

CHARLIE

And New York City kids are so well-adjusted?

MARY CATHERINE

There's no art there--

CHARLIE

That's ridiculous.

MARY CATHERINE

There's no culture--

CHARLIE

What, you don't think people paint in Los Angeles?

MARY CATHERINE

Yes, toenails.

(then)

New York has everything. The best restaurants, the best theater, museums--

CHARLIE

And how many museums do you hit in an average week? Just curious.

MARY CATHERINE

That's not the point. The point is that I *can*.

CHARLIE

No, that *is* the point. What good is paying out the nose to live here if we never take advantage of it. We should just visit every once in awhile and actually *do* things. Hit the Met, take in a Broadway show, Carnegie Deli...

(mock-tourist)

"Whoa, that's one big sandwich. I don't know if I can eat all--"

