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Other notes: This is not a complete story, exactly. It is a collection of scenes representing one story arc (the Sam/Harrison/Brooke triangle), spread over several episodes. In real "Popular" scripts, they would be spliced together with other scenes from concurrent plotlines (each episode of "Popular" has three or four plotlines). There are notes scattered throughout pertaining to placement.

The title: For a long time this work had no title, because (as I said) it isn't meant as a free-standing story, but part of a larger context. Since it had to have a title here, I decided to call it "I Can't Help Myself", after the song by Nobody's Angel. Though I often use music during the creative process to set the mood for various scenes, this is definitely *not* "songfic" in that sense (until very recently, I wasn't aware that there *was* such a thing). "I Can't Help Myself", however, would be the background music for Brooke's little road trip.

Parting words: Although it begins a few days before the junior prom, this was written after "Coup", and is an alternative to the entire Sam/Harrison/Brooke story arc starting with "I Know What You Did Last Spring Break!" Oh, and there is one reasonably large plot hole that I'm aware of, which you're welcome to look for. It could easily be patched shut with a short Sam/Lily scene, but I decided not to bother.

"I Can't Help Myself"

[NOTE: This storyline should start about three days before the Junior Prom.]

[NOTE: Ideally this scene would be the teaser of an episode, followed by the title sequence and one 2-3 minute scene from a concurrent storyline displaying the opening credits.]

FADE IN:

INT. JAMIE'S APARTMENT

There is a knock at the front door. JAMIE approaches, opens the door, and sees BROOKE standing in the hallway.

JAMIE
(surprised)
Brooke...what are you doing here?

Brooke breezes past him and into the apartment.

BROOKE
I know, I should've called, but I was thinking, you know, about where we should go, after the prom. And I looked up, and it turns out I was only a few blocks away, so I thought, why bother calling when I could talk to you and see you in person--

Her stream of thought is interrupted by something unexpected.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)
(from an adjoining room)
Jamie, is that pizza? You know how starved I get after--

ALEXANDRA walks out in a robe and towel, obviously having just emerged from the shower. She pulls up short at seeing Brooke. Brooke does a double-take and then looks disbelievingly at Jamie.

JAMIE
Uh, um, Brooke...this is--

Brooke puts her hands up defensively and begins backing towards the door.

BROOKE
Ah, no...you don't have to introduce us...

JAMIE
Brooke, wait--

BROOKE
I guess I should've called after all, huh?

JAMIE
Brooke, I know what you're thinking, but--

BROOKE
(raggedly)
Why don't you two just go back to whatever--

Jamie reaches out towards Brooke as she slides by him.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
(shrieking)
--DON'T TOUCH ME!!!

Reaching the door, she turns and runs.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

Brooke runs wildly by. Jamie hangs halfway out of the doorway a moment later.

JAMIE
Brooke! Wait!

After a moment, Jamie hangs his head in defeat, and turns back.

CUT TO:

INT. JAMIE'S APARTMENT

ALEXANDRA

That was Brooke?

JAMIE

That was Brooke.

Alexandra looks down at herself.

ALEXANDRA

This looks bad, doesn't it?

JAMIE

We'll go over there, and explain everything. It'll be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. A DINER

A garden-variety "Denny's"-type coffee shop. Brooke rushes in, red-eyed, disoriented. A WAITRESS approaches her.

WAITRESS

(concerned)

Excuse me, Miss? Can I help you?

Brooke looks at the waitress blankly. After a moment she manages to collect herself enough to speak.

BROOKE

Phone?

The waitress points to a nook in the back. Brooke makes her way in that direction, with the waitress looking after her.

ANGLE: THE PHONE NOOK

Brooke picks up the phone, digs through her bag, and drops some coins in the slot. She hesitates for a long moment before punching in a number. It is clear that she is barely hanging on to her composure:

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(rambling into the phone)

H-hello? It's--it's me...Brooke.

I--I--something...happened. I--I

don't know... I--I--can you--

come? I can't...

(listens)

Where...?

She looks around, unsure even of where she is.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I'm--I'm at the Pancake Barn...
Yeah, that one... Just--please
come...

She hangs up the phone and slumps against the wall, shaking.

BLACK OUT.

{other scenes here}

INT. THE DINER - LATER

The glass doors bang open and HARRISON rushes in.

HARRISON
Brooke?

Spotting Harrison, Brooke runs full tilt into him, sobbing uncontrollably. Somewhat unnerved, Harrison does his best to console her, wrapping his arms around her and stroking her hair.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
(soothingly)
Shhh...it's OK. Everything's
going to be OK...

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

EXT. A PARK - AFTERNOON

Harrison is sitting on a concrete bench, watching Brooke as she paces back and forth along a piece of the path in front of him. Brooke is a bundle of nerves; she fidgets even when she isn't pacing.

BROOKE
(raging)
OH! I can't believe how stupid I
was! I can just picture him
laughing with his girlfriend
about the high school kid he was
stringing along!

Harrison confines himself to making sympathetic gestures and noises.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I just--oooh! I fell for that
whole smooth college-guy act! I
thought, he was sophisticated, he
was mature--he said all the right
things...and he turns out to be
(CONT.)

BROOKE (CONT'D)
just another sleeze! God! Love
sucks!!

HARRISON
(reproachfully)
Brooke--

Brooke turns on him.

BROOKE
What?! You're going to tell me
love doesn't suck? Go on--tell
me!

The challenge sends Harrison into some hemming and hawing.

HARRISON
Well...uh...
(throws up his hands)
OK, you're right. I admit it.
Love does suck.

Brooke buries her face in her hands.

BROOKE
(miserably)
Oh, Harrison, I am--so--sorry.

Harrison shakes his head in incomprehension.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I'm not satisfied with ruining my
own life--I've got to go screwing
with yours, too.

HARRISON
I'm still not following.

BROOKE
Sam! Who was the one who
confronted you about being in
love with Sam? Me! I was all
for you telling Sam how you
felt--I thought you two would get
together and live happily ever
after.
(buries her face again)
Oooh!! What an idiot I am!

Harrison stands up and gestures emphatically to correct her.

HARRISON
Brooke, no. I was in a very
unhealthy place for a long time
with Sam. Half the time I was in
(CONT.)

HARRISON (CONT'D)

denial, and the other half I was so scared I wasn't even really living. But thanks to you...and, you know, surviving leukemia and all...I was able to come out and be honest about my feelings, and that was the right thing for me.

He sits back down.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

The fact that the result was a complete disaster doesn't change that.

Brooke glumly sits down next to him.

BROOKE

It doesn't help, either.

Harrison silently concedes that point. They sit there silently for a few moments.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(ruefully)

Boy, we are a pair, aren't we?

HARRISON

Oh, we really are.

Further down the path, Harrison spots a vendor's cart.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Hey--you know what we need?

Brooke shakes her head.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Chocolate-dipped, double-scoop, ice cream cones.

She raises her eyebrows at him.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Come on--what better way to wallow in misery than with a load of meaningless calories?

BROOKE

Well...when you put it that way, I see your point.

Harrison stands up.

HARRISON
(grinning)
You stay here--my treat.

He takes a couple of steps, then turns back.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
Hey, Brooke--you gotta look at
the bright side. After all, it
could be worse.

Brooke shrugs her shoulders helplessly.

BROOKE
How?

HARRISON
Well, look at me. At least you
didn't fall in love with someone,
who's in love with someone else.

Brooke watches Harrison as he takes off down the path.

BROOKE
(wistfully)
Yeah. I did.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brooke walks in the front door, and is startled to see MIKE sitting comfortably with Jamie and Alexandra. They all get up.

BROOKE
Dad, what are they doing here?

MIKE
Brooke, I think you should
listen.

BROOKE
(goggling)
WHAT?

JAMIE
Brooke--this is Alexandra
Michaels. My cousin.

BROOKE
That's Alex??

Jamie nods, and Alexandra holds up her hand in greeting/acknowledgement.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Oh.

(winces as realization sets
in)

Ohhh... Dad, could Jamie and I
have a minute to talk?

MIKE

Of course.

(to Alexandra)

Would you care to join me for
some coffee?

ALEXANDRA

I'd love to.

As Mike and Alexandra head for the kitchen, Jamie steps up
to Brooke.

BROOKE

Jamie--

JAMIE

Brooke, I completely understand
why you freaked. I mean, the way
it looked...

BROOKE

Jamie, I have to tell you
something.

(swallows hard)

I can't see you anymore?

JAMIE

Huh? But--

BROOKE

No, it's not that. I totally
understand.

JAMIE

(confused)

You totally understand, but
you're dumping me anyway?

BROOKE

It's not you, it's me.

(overriding him)

I know, but this time it's true.
I think I've been using you.

JAMIE

Using me how?

BROOKE

To forget about...feelings...I
have for someone else.

JAMIE
(nonplussed)
Oh.

BROOKE
Look, it's not fair to you, and
it's not fair to me, and I have
to figure out what's going on
inside me. Or else in the end
it's just all a lie.

JAMIE
I'm not gonna be able to talk you
out of this, am I?

BROOKE
(shaking her head sadly)
Nope.

JAMIE
I hope...you figure out what's
best for you. That's all I've
ever wanted.

Brooke wipes away a tear, and gives Jamie a peck on the
cheek. He turns and walks away forlornly. A few moments
later, Mike comes back in.

MIKE
Honey?

BROOKE
Dad--I may have just done the
dumbest thing in my entire life.

Mike walks over and holds her.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brooke is sitting at her computer in the dark, illuminated
only by a small lamp and the light of the screen as she
types.

BROOKE (V.O.)
...I get the feeling that this
thing with Jamie happened for a
reason. Because I know now that
he was never the right one for
me. I'm sure of that... I
don't think I told you just how
great Harrison has been. He knew
exactly the right thing to do,
just like he always does.

She stops typing for a few moments, then resumes.

BROOKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You know, it's ironic. Now that I think I'm sure of how I feel, I'm in exactly the same place with Harrison as he was with Sam. I can't tell you how proud I am of him. Even though he got shot down, he had the guts to follow his heart.

(beat)

I wish I could do that.

(beat)

Dad said it would be OK if I just blew off the prom and went up there for the weekend. I'd love to see San Francisco with you. We could do all the museums and galleries and eat lunch at an outdoor cafe... Besides, I miss you, Mom. So let me know. Love, Brooke.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

As Brooke clicks "Send."

Brooke snaps off the lamp and screen, plunging the room into darkness.

BLACK OUT:

{other scenes here}

[NOTE: The storyline should move forward one episode here.]

INT. THE JOHN KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

OFF-SCREEN, the sound of THE FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING. Harrison walks in, wearing a backpack and carrying a handful of mail. He unslings the backpack and lets it drop on a chair, then looks through the mail, dropping the envelopes on the kitchen table one by one.

HARRISON

(muttering)

No, I don't want cheap auto insurance... No, I don't want a platinum card...

One large white envelope catches his attention. He sets down the rest of the mail and opens it.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Well, let's see what they have to say this week.

He takes out a packet of stapled papers and unfolds them.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
(reading)
Harrison John, blah blah blah,
full series, blood chemistry,
blah blah blah...

He turns the page.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
Hemoglobin... White cell
count...

His voice trails off and he grimaces as he reads the rest of the test results.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
(disgusted)
Well, that's great. That's just
perfect.

He throws the papers down angrily.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
A perfect end, to a perfect year.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE JOHN LIVING ROOM - LATER

ANGLE: A PHOTO ALBUM ON THE COFFEE TABLE

Harrison is deliberately turning the leaf of an album filled with photos. Visible are a half dozen snapshots crowded together. He peels back the plastic cover and lifts off two of them, both shots of he and Sam together. Smoothing the plastic back into place, he turns the leaf to reveal the end of the album, then turns over the back cover of the album itself.

ANGLE: HARRISON

Harrison looks at the photos in his hand for a long moment. Then he brings up a lighter, flicks it, and holds the flame to them, setting them alight. When the photos are burning steadily, he drops them into a bowl where a bunch of other photos--all of Sam--lay. Harrison sits, chin resting on steepled fingers, eyes hooded, watching the whole pile burn.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE MCQUEEN DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mike, JANE, Brooke and SAM are eating dinner.

BROOKE

Jane, are you going to be able to take me to the airport after school?

JANE

Of course, Brooke. I'll be ready as soon as you get home.

BROOKE

Great. I'll pack tonight, and bring my suitcase down in the morning.

SAM

So, you're really skipping the prom, huh?

BROOKE

Well, I don't have a date now, so...

SAM

What happened with you and Jamie, anyway?

BROOKE

It's...complicated. Oh, and don't tell anyone I'm not going, OK? I don't want everyone making a big deal about it.

SAM

Sure. No problem.

MIKE

Honey, whatever's going on, I hope you're not cutting yourself off from your friends.

BROOKE

(shrugging)

I just don't want to have to answer a bunch of questions. You know, sometimes Nic isn't very understanding about this kind of thing.

From her side of the table, Sam snorts in agreement. Brooke wrinkles her nose in that direction.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Anyway, the only other person who even knows is Harrison.

JANE

Harrison?

BROOKE
He's been terrific.

Brooks leans back in her chair.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
It's been a strange week. I'm
really glad to have Harrison
there. I really...don't know
what I would've done without him.

Sam grimaces at the talk of Harrison, and studiously
continues eating.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

[NOTE: The intervening scenes include a transition to THE
NEXT DAY.]

EXT. THE ESPOSITO HOUSE - AFTERNOON

[NOTE: This scene has Harrison dropping off Harry, a pet
iguana (part of a parallel storyline). This scene can be
reworked as needed to accommodate the other storylines; the
important thing is that Harrison have some reason to visit
Lily.]

ANGLE: THE FRONT DOOR

Harrison approaches, carrying Harry's cage, and knocks on
the door. After a moment, LILY opens the door from the
other side.

LILY
Hey, Harrison? What's going on?

Harrison holds out the cage.

HARRISON
I was wondering if you could take
care of Harry for a while.

Lily takes the cage.

LILY
I guess so... Was there a
problem?

HARRISON
No, I just-- No. I just wasn't
going to be able to take care of
him for a while.

LILY

(concerned)

What's wrong? This isn't-- This doesn't have anything to do with-- Harrison, you don't have to go back into the hospital, do you?

Harrison shakes his head and laughs off the notion.

HARRISON

No... I'm just going to be doing some stuff, and I know you could take better care of him, that's all.

(beat)

Look, I gotta go do some stuff, so-- Thanks.

LILY

Are you sure you won't change your mind about tonight? You could still come with me and Josh.

HARRISON

Yeah. I'm just going to hang with Brooke. You have a good time, and don't worry about me.

LILY

OK... Harrison? You're sure? I mean, about--

HARRISON

Trust me, Lily. I am not going back to the hospital.

There is a long pause to absorb the real meaning of Harrison's statement. Then:

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The doorbell rings. Mike walks to the front door and opens it. ROBIN is standing there.

ROBIN

Oh--I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mr. McQueen.

MIKE

It's Mike. Of course not.
(gestures her in)
Please.

Robin steps inside. Jane emerges from the kitchen and breaks into a smile.

JANE
Robin, how are you?

ROBIN
Actually, I need to speak to Harrison.

MIKE
(confused)
Harrison's not here.

ROBIN
Do you know where he might be?
He left a note saying he was going to spend some time with Brooke tonight.

MIKE
Brooke's in San Francisco with her mother.

JANE
And Brooke said she told Harrison that yesterday.

ROBIN
I don't understand, then. I have to find him.

JANE
Robin? What's wrong?

ROBIN
Harrison's doctor called me this afternoon.

JANE
Oh, no...

ROBIN
He has to be checked back into the hospital tomorrow.

MIKE
I'll call Brooke. Maybe he told her something.

JANE
I'll call Sam. Everyone's at the prom--maybe one of them knows something.

CUT TO:

[NOTE: This scene should be the last of the episode.]

INT. DANCE HALL

Sam and George are standing by one of the tables, watching everyone dance.

SAM

Are you sure you don't wanna...?

George eyes the crowd warily.

GEORGE

This is a little too fast for me.
Tell you what--next slow dance,
I'm all yours. Hey--how about
some punch?

SAM

Sure.

She shakes her head after George as he heads towards the refreshments. Moments later, Josh and Lily come twirling out of the crowd, slightly out of breath.

LILY

Hey, why aren't you out there
doin' the groove thing?

SAM

George is a little...

LILY

Shy?

SAM

More like--intimidated.

JOSH

Ah, he's not into the groove
thing.

SAM

Well...not in front of 200
people.

Sam spots Carmen and waves.

SAM (CONT'D)

Carm!

Carmen traipses over to them.

CARMEN

Sam, I cannot tell you how happy
I am that you talked me into
this! I have dance with like a
(CONT'D)

CARMEN (CONT'D)
dozen guys so far. And there's
more waiting!

SAM
Well, I'm happy for you. It's
definitely better than sitting at
home.

There is the faint sound of a CELL PHONE RINGING. Everyone
checks around to see where it is coming from. Sam holds her
bag up to her ear, then fishes her phone out and answers it.

SAM (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Hello?
(listens)
No, I don't. Hang on.
(to the group)
Has anyone seen Harrison?

LILY
He told me he was going to hang
out with Brooke.

SAM
That can't be right. Brooke's in
San Francisco. Are you sure?

LILY
I'm sure. He dropped Harry off
after school.

SAM
But Brooke said she told Harrison
yesterday that she wasn't going
to be here.

LILY
Well, he told me this afternoon
that he was going to be with
Broke.

SAM
That's weird.
(into the phone)
He's not here, but he told Lily
he was going to see Brooke, which
we can't figure out. Why?
What's going on?
(listens)
Oh, my God.

LILY
What?

SAM
(to Lily)
His last tests came back today.
He's out of remission.

LILY
WHAT!?

JOSH
The leukemia's back? Man, that's
whacked.

LILY
Does he know?

SAM
I don't know. Hang on.
(into the phone)
Mom? Does Harrison know about
this?

She tries to listen, with the phone clamped to one ear and her hand over the other, but the music begins to blare louder than before.

SAM (CONT'D)
What!? Hang on, I can't hear
you. I'm going outside.

Sam heads for the nearest exit, with the gang trailing close behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTICO

Standing in a corner of the garden, with everyone huddled around her, Sam lifts the phone to her ear again.

SAM
(into the phone)
OK, now, what about Harrison?
(listens, then sighs)
OK. If he shows up here, or I
hear anything, I'll call.

Sam hangs up.

SAM (CONT'D)
The results should've been in the
mail today. Harrison brought in
the mail and they weren't there
when his mom came home.

LILY
So he does know.

George appears behind Lily.

GEORGE

Who knows what?

LILY

Harrison is out of remission, and no one knows where he is.

GEORGE

Well...maybe he just needed some time alone to deal. Hell, I don't know how he did it the first time.

He steps over to Sam and hands her a cup.

SAM

Maybe George is right.

LILY

No... It's not like Harrison to just lie. I've got a really bad feeling about this.

JOSH

(snaps his fingers)
Hey! Did anyone try calling him?

SAM

Huh?

LILY

Yeah, what about his cell?

SAM

Harrison has a cell?

JOSH

Yeah, he got it a few days ago. Something about some market survey or something.

LILY

I know it works, 'cause he gave me the number.

Sam still has a miffed expression from being left in the dark, but she hands her phone over to Lily. Lily digs a slip of paper out of her purse and dials from it.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. SOMEWHERE

At this point, just Harrison, standing against a blank wall. He starts when he hears a ring coming from inside his jacket. He reaches in, pulls out a cell phone, and hesitantly puts it to his ear.

HARRISON

H-hello?

LILY

Harrison?

HARRISON

Lily? What--why are you calling me here?

LILY

Harrison, where are you?

HARRISON

I, uh, just like I said, you know, Brooke and I...

LILY

Cut the crap, Harrison. I know Brooke is in San Francisco, and I know about the tests. So where are you? And why didn't you tell me?

HARRISON

Lily...

LILY

You lied to me!

HARRISON

OK, yes, but I just didn't want you to worry, and I thought if you thought I was with Brooke, then you wouldn't--

LILY

Not that! I asked you straight out, and you promised me you weren't going back to the hospital!

HARRISON

Lily, I didn't lie to you about that. I said I wasn't going back, and I'm not.

LILY

WHAT??? Now you're just talking crazy!

HARRISON

Doesn't seem crazy to me.

LILY

Harrison! Did you see the test results? If you don't go back to the hospital, you'll die!

HARRISON

(matter-of-factly)

Yeah.

LILY

That is not even funny! How can you joke about something like that?!

HARRISON

Lily--I'm not joking, OK? I'm just going to--to go away. Look, don't worry about me. It's not like I'm going to suffer. I've got enough pills to last me as long as it takes--besides, if it gets too bad, I can always chug them and put a quick end to it.

LILY

(on the verge of tears)

Harrison, stop it! You're really scaring me now! You have to come back--you have to... Listen, I know this must be really scary, but you beat this disease before! I know you can beat it again!

HARRISON

(suddenly angry)

Yeah, Lily. I did. I laid in a hospital bed for weeks with tubes sticking in me, getting radiation shot through me and puking my guts out every day, and I beat leukemia. And what did it get me? I think I'm just gonna concede the rematch, OK?

LILY

(panicking)

NO! It's not OK!! Please--you can't just--just--give up--

Sam snatches the phone away from her.

SAM

Harrison?

Harrison freezes in stricken silence.

SAM (CONT'D)
Harrison, I know you're still
there. I know you can hear me.

She turns away from the others while trying--not very
successfully--to stay calm.

SAM (CONT'D)
Just listen to me, OK? I know
the last few weeks have been
heinous, and horrible, but--this?
This is not the answer. This is
your life! Harrison--please--
listen to me. You have to come
home. There are so many people
here who--who care about you--
Harrison--please...

Slowly, painfully, Harrison clicks the phone off.

SAM (CONT'D)
Harrison? HARRISON??!

She turns back to the others helplessly.

CUT TO:

EXT. A BUS STATION

Harrison pitches the cell phone neatly into a garbage can,
then turns and heads for the open door of a waiting
intercity bus.

FADE TO BLACK.

[NOTE: The story should move forward one episode here.]

FADE IN:

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - MORNING

Mike is sitting at the breakfast bar drinking coffee when
the patio doors open and Brooke rushes through, suitcase in
hand. She sets the suitcase down and looks at him
expectantly.

BROOKE
Dad?

MIKE
(shakes his head)
I'm sorry, honey. We haven't
heard anything.

Sam comes down the stairs, and Brooke turns on her.

BROOKE

Why didn't you stop him?!

SAM

Brooke, it's not like I could just reach through the phone and grab him.

BROOKE

You could have tried harder!

SAM

You think I didn't try?!

MIKE

Girls--

BROOKE

I think Harrison wouldn't be in this position if you weren't so wrapped up in your own personal romance novel!

SAM

You think I'm self-absorbed?

Jane comes in through the patio doors.

BROOKE

I think you're so self-absorbed, you don't even know you're self absorbed! You might try caring about someone besides yourself once in a while!

JANE

Brooke--

SAM

That is so unfair--!

BROOKE

UNFAIR?!! Harrison is out there somewhere! Some best friend you are--he'd rather die than talk to you!!

Mike steps between Brooke and Sam.

MIKE

Okay, this isn't going to solve anything. I think everyone's upset about Harrison, but we need to just stay cool, all right?

Sullenly, Brooke turns away and retrieves her suitcase.

BROOKE

I'm going to unpack.

She tromps up the stairs. Sam gets a bottle of water from the refrigerator and sits dejectedly. Jane comes up behind her and strokes her hair.

JANE

Mike's right. She's just upset.

SAM

What if she's right?

JANE

Sam...

SAM

I could've tried harder to get through to Harrison.

JANE

Honey, you did your best.

SAM

Not just last night. Any time. I could've tried to make him listen to me... I could've tried to break down the wall he put up--but it was easier, to just--

JANE

(hugging Sam)

We'll find him.

Teary-eyed, Sam nods, but it doesn't look like she believes that.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

[NOTE: The storyline moves ahead two days here.]

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - SUNRISE

Mike is getting coffee out of the coffee maker. Jane comes padding down the stairs.

JANE

You're up early.

MIKE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.

JANE
(shakes her head)
I wasn't really asleep.

Jane gets her own cup of coffee, and they sit side by side in silence for a moment.

MIKE
I'm worried about Brooke. I don't think she's eaten anything in the past two days.

JANE
I'm worried about Sam. I don't think she's slept in the past two days.

She turns to him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Mike--what if this is one of those things that doesn't turn out?

MIKE
We can't give up hope.

JANE
If Harrison-- God, it'll devastate both of them.

Mike reaches across and holds her.

MIKE
I know.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S ROOM

[NOTE: In this scene Brooke is VERY quiet and still, almost emotionless, in contrast to Sam, who is very nervous. Also, every response by Brooke is preceded by a long pause, as if she's considering how to answer, or whether to answer at all.]

Morning sunlight is beginning to stream through the window. Brooke is lying on top of the covers of her bed, on her back, eyes closed and hands clasped over her chest--almost as if she were dead herself. Sam pokes her head in the door.

SAM
Brooke? Are you awake?

BROOKE
(without opening her eyes)
Yes.

Sam wanders in, meandering to the window and fiddling with the knickknacks on the sill.

SAM
Brooke--do you think this is my fault?

BROOKE
No.

SAM
I mean... I keep thinking about what I could have done different, but-- I love George, and--and--

BROOKE
You can't help the way you feel.

SAM
He made me choose. He said, me or George... I tried-- I-- don't know--why--

Brooke opens her eyes and peers at Sam's back.

BROOKE
He can't help the way he feels, either.

SAM
I--I just... I never wanted to hurt Harrison... God, I could never--and I have, and I don't--I can't understand--how--or what to do--

(turns to face Brooke)
How can you just lie there?

BROOKE
(closes her eyes again)
I don't have the energy to run around. When I know what to do, I'll do it.

Sam shakes her head in bewilderment and ambles back towards the doorway, stopping just short of it.

SAM
Brooke?

Brooke opens her eyes and turns her head to look at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

You do think this is my fault,
don't you?

Brooke just gazes at her for a long moment, then turns her head back and closes her eyes again. Sam bites her lip, and walks away.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. NICOLE'S CAR - MORNING

MOVING

Nicole is giving Brooke a ride to school, and chatting it up in her usual way:

NICOLE

Man, I cannot believe Harrison would just bail. I mean, life-threatening illness and all, but still... Anyway, he'd better not come back and be expecting any more donations from yours truly. No, sir, the Julian marrow bank is closed--

A choking noise cuts across her monologue, and she turns her head to find Brooke curled up in her seat, crying her eyes out.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

(suddenly contrite)

Oh, Brookie-- You know I was totally kidding, about the marrow bank thing.

BROOKE

(sniffling)

I know. It's just--if he dies, I don't know what I'll do.

NICOLE

Oh...

(realization dawns)

OH-- I didn't realize--I mean, I didn't think you two--

BROOKE

We aren't. But we could've been. Should've been...

NICOLE
Well, don't worry. When he comes
back, you two can--you know, be
all you can be. Just like the
National Guard.

Nicole drives on in uncomfortable silence after that.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. KENNEDY HIGH GIRLS' RESTROOM - LATER

Brooke and Nicole are sitting on one of the sofas. Nicole is listening over Brooke's shoulder as she talks on her cell phone.

BROOKE
(into the phone)
...no? All right...thanks?

Brooke drops the phone into her bag.

NICOLE
Still no word?

Brooke shakes her head, squeezing her eyes shut against forming tears. Nicole reaches up and hugs her shoulders.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
This is all Spam's fault. She
just trampled all over his
feelings, instead of doing what
she should've done, which was
give him a chance--

Brooke shakes her head slightly.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
--no?

Brooke opens her eyes and stares coldly off into the distance.

BROOKE
She doesn't deserve him.

NICOLE
(softly)
Damn straight she doesn't.

They both turn as the door bangs open and Mary Cherry comes in. Upon seeing them, she lights up and steps across the room.

MARY CHERRY

There you are! I have the most--
glorious--news! Brooke McQueen,
you just perk up that pretty
little blonde face of yours,
because Mary Cherry is here to
put the sunshine back in your
day!

BROOKE

Is this about Harrison???

MARY CHERRY

Yes, indeed, Mama's detectives
were able to track Joe down like
bloodhounds going after an
escaped serial killer!

Brooke shakes her head to get that image out.

BROOKE

How?

MARY CHERRY

(sitting down)

Well, it seems that Joe has been
visiting a leukemia survivors
chat room on the internet. He's
made friends with other leukemia
survivors all around the country.
So all Mama's detectives had to
do was wait for Joe to show up in
the chat room again. Which he
did, this very morning, and then--

BROOKE

(excited)

--they traced where he was logged
in from!

MARY CHERRY

And it just happened to be the
exact account of one of his
survivor friends.

NICOLE

So Harrison's staying with this
friend.

Mary Cherry produces a piece of paper.

MARY CHERRY

A friend whose address is right
here!

At that moment, the restroom door opens, and Sam and Carmen walk in. Brooke snatches the paper from Mary Cherry, stuffs it in her bag and shakes her head urgently. Nicole nods.

SAM
(spotting Brooke)
Brooke-- I just talked to Mom.
They haven't heard anything.

BROOKE
(neutrally)
I know. I just talked to Dad.

She gets up, and turns to Nicole.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Nic, can I borrow your car? I--
want to get some lunch. I don't
feel like cafeteria food today.

NICOLE
(knowingly)
Sure.

Nicole hands her car keys to Brooke.

BROOKE
Thanks.

Brooke gathers up her bag and breezes out of the restroom.
A moment later Nicole gets up and runs after her.

NICOLE
Hey, Brooke? Wait up!

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nicole pops out of the restroom.

NICOLE
Brooke!

Brooke, who is halfway down the hall, stops and jogs back.
Nicole takes a wad of bills and presses it into Brooke's
hand.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Here. I'm buying lunch.
(beat)
Good luck.

BROOKE
Thanks, Nic.

Brooke takes off back down the hallway, breaking into a sprint before she hits the doors.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Sam is setting the table when Mike comes in.

MIKE

Sam, have you seen Brooke this afternoon?

SAM

(considers)

I haven't seen Brooke since before lunch. Which isn't surprising--we're not exactly connecting these days.

MIKE

Huh. She was calling every hour this morning, and then around noon she just stopped.

SAM

Maybe she got tired of hearing the same thing all the time.

MIKE

Did that stop you from calling?

SAM

(grimacing)

No. Did you try calling her?

MIKE

Her phone's off.

SAM

OK, that's just weird.

MIKE

I don't want to panic just yet--I know she probably just wanted to be by herself... You're sure you didn't notice anything--unusual--when you saw her?

SAM

The last time I saw her, she was headed off-campus for lunch in Nicole's car.

MIKE

I thought juniors weren't allowed
to do that.

SAM

(shrugs)
It's not like they guard the
gates.

MIKE

(decides not to make an
issue of it)
OK.

SAM

Did you try seeing if she's with
Nicole?

MIKE

I'm just getting to the "calling
her friends" stage now.

SAM

With Nicole--better you than me.

MIKE

OK.

He starts to turn away, then:

MIKE (CONT'D)

You're sure?

SAM

Sorry.

Mike nods and walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCQUEEN DINING ROOM - LATER

Mike, Jane and Sam are eating in tense silence. Suddenly
Mike BANGS his glass down, making Jane and Sam jump.

MIKE

I can't take this.

JANE

Mike--

MIKE

I'm not upset, I'm worried.
Something might have happened to
her. I think we should check the
hospitals, and call the police.

JANE
(glancing at Sam)
You can't call the police until
midnight.

SAM
(rolls her eyes)
I'm never gonna be able to live
that down, am I?

JANE
Uh, no.

Sam sighs theatrically. Mike gets up.

MIKE
Well, I may not be able to call
the police, but I sure can start
calling hospitals.

As Mike walks away, Jane and Sam look at each other helplessly.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - MIDNIGHT

Mike is standing by the phone, with Jane nearby. As the hands of the clock show midnight, he picks up the phone and dials.

MIKE
(into the phone)
Hello?... I'd like to report a
missing person...it's my
daughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. A RURAL HIGHWAY

A broad, curving, nearly deserted highway, somewhere in the mountains. In the darkness Nicole's car goes racing by, with Brooke driving. As it speeds past it passes a sign which reads: "OREGON STATE LINE".

BLACK OUT.

[NOTE: The story moves forward one episode here.]

FADE IN:

INT. THE MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Mike is toppled over asleep on the sofa, cordless phone still in his hand. Jane sits gingerly next to him and nudges him awake.

MIKE
(rubbing his eyes)
Oh...
(suddenly awake)
Did Brooke--?

JANE
No. And the police haven't called back.

MIKE
(bleakly)
My little girl's out there somewhere...and I can't do anything for her...

Jane scoots over and wraps her arms around him.

JANE
I know...I know.

CUT TO:

EST. AN URBAN HIGHWAY

Nicole's car is packed in with hundreds of others, making good time.

CUT TO:

INT. NICOLE'S CAR

MOVING

Brooke is casually munching on a breakfast bar.

RADIO D.J. (V.O.)
...We're expecting sunny skies and 75 degrees today! All you folks coming in from Gresham, remember work is being done on the southbound 205 all day today- so be careful out there! Now it's time for another mega-music marathon on mega-hit KPRT, 94.4 FM! Good morning, Portland!

BLACK OUT.

{other scenes here}

EST. THE SEATTLE SKYLINE - MID-MORNING

A generic iconic shot, including the Space Needle (so everyone knows where we are).

CUT TO:

EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET

At an intersection at the bottom of a steep hill, Nicole's car turns onto the street and comes up a bit before pulling over to the curb.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICOLE'S CAR

Brooke parks, turns the engine off, and gets out. She stretches once, then steps up onto the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

INT. AN APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

There is a KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR. A few moments later, a disheveled Harrison approaches, as THE KNOCK REPEATS.

HARRISON
(scratching his head)
Okay, okay. Give a dying guy a
break, wouldja?

Harrison opens the door and gapes. Brooke stands there, bouncing on her toes nervously for a moment.

BROOKE
(gamely)
Surprise?

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. HARRISON'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HARRISON
Brooke, what are you doing here?

Brooke walks past Harrison into the living room.

BROOKE
You know you didn't even say good-
bye? That was very
inconsiderate.

HARRISON

Brooke--

BROOKE

Harrison, what are you doing here??

Harrison closes the front door.

HARRISON

I was trying to stop being a pain in everyone's ass.

Brooke sits down heavily on the sofa.

BROOKE

(yawns)

Well, it didn't work.

Harrison shakes his head, still trying to organize his thoughts.

HARRISON

I don't understand--how did you get here?

BROOKE

Oh--I borrowed Nic's car. She was really sweet about it, too.

HARRISON

You drove? But that's like, over a thousand miles!

Brooke continues to yawn as the long hours catch up to her.

BROOKE

Yeah, it's a ways.

HARRISON

Brooke--you drove all night?

BROOKE

(thinks)

Yeah, I started--what day is this?

HARRISON

Tuesday.

BROOKE

Yeah, I started yesterday, and I'm here today.

From the next room comes AN INSISTENT BEEPING.

HARRISON

Okay, that's my breakfast. You hang on--I'm going to get you some coffee.

BROOKE

(sleepily)

I'm not going anywhere...

Harrison leaves the room. After some KITCHEN NOISES, he appears with a cup of coffee, only to find Brooke stretched out on the sofa, sound asleep. Sighing, he sets the cup down on an end table and gazes at her.

HARRISON

It's a good thing I'm dying anyway, 'cause your dad's gonna kill me.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - LATER

The PHONE RINGS, and Jane, being closest to it, snatches it up, with Mike a step behind.

JANE

Hello??

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HARRISON'S LIVING ROOM

HARRISON

H-hello? Mrs. McPherson?

JANE

HARRISON??!

HARRISON

Uh, yeah.

JANE

Oh, my God--where are you??

HARRISON

I'm, uh, in...Seattle--

JANE

You're where??!

HARRISON

I'm staying at a friend's place. Listen--

JANE

Do you realize how reckless
running away was?! You have no
idea how worried everyone's been!

HARRISON

(breaking in)

Please, Mrs. McPherson, I have to
tell you something.

JANE

(forced calm)

Okay. Go ahead.

HARRISON

(deep breath)

About ten minutes ago, there was
a knock at the door...and it was
Brooke.

JANE

WHAT!!!

MIKE

What?!

JANE

(to Mike)

Harrison's in Seattle, and Brooke
just showed up there!

MIKE

WHAT?!

Mike tries to grab the phone, but Jane puts up a hand to
ward him off.

JANE

Is she all right?!

Harrison looks over at Brooke's sleeping form.

HARRISON

Right now she's out cold on the
couch, but other than that, she
seems fine.

JANE

Okay...do you know...how--?

HARRISON

Nicole's car's outside. From
what I could get out of her
before she fell asleep, she must
have driven for almost twenty
four hours straight to get here.

(CONT.)

HARRISON (CONT'D)

(defensively)

I swear, I don't even know how she found me.

JANE

Okay--you have her call the minute she wakes up, understand? In fact, give me your number there.

HARRISON

(hurriedly)

Uh, you know what, I'll just have her call. I promise.

Harrison hangs up before Jane can protest.

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN

Jane stares at the dead phone, then hangs it up.

MIKE

(testily)

Okay, do you mind telling me what's going on now?

JANE

Harrison said it looked like Brooke drove all night to get there.

(reasonably)

If she was up all night, she wasn't going to be in any shape to listen to you yell at her anyway. She's safe, that's the important thing. Harrison'll take care of her, you know that. And maybe she'll be able to convince him to come home.

Mike concedes Jane's points with a nod as she snuggles up to him.

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh! I'd better call Sam, and tell her we've found Harrison.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Sam is standing by her locker, on the phone.

SAM
(into the phone)
What?... No, say that again?
(listens)
Are you sure? OK--thanks for
calling.

Sam puts the phone away. She spots Nicole down the hallway,
and her eyes narrow as she puts two and two together.
Furious, she stalks over to Nicole.

SAM (CONT'D)
Nicole!

NICOLE
(turning)
What do you want, Spam?

SAM
I want to know right you think
you have to play around with
people's lives!

NICOLE
As usual, I have no idea what
you're blabbering about. Now, if
you'll excuse me--

SAM
I'm talking about Brooke taking
your car to go to Seattle to find
Harrison!

NICOLE
(honestly surprised)
Seattle?

SAM
Oh, like you didn't know.

NICOLE
Hey, I never saw where Harrison
was. You barged in before Brooke
could tell me.

SAM
And you couldn't tell me Harrison
had been found?!

NICOLE
Brooke could have told you. She
didn't want you to know.

Sam shrugs helplessly.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Maybe she figured that if you
talked to him again, he'd run all
the way to China next time.

Nicole sweeps off, leaving Sam fuming.

CUT TO:

{other scenes here}

INT. HARRISON'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Brooke is still asleep on the sofa, covered with a blanket. She starts awake and looks around blankly, then sits up. For a moment she seems a bit dazed. Then her eyes widen as she remembers where she is.

BROOKE
Harrison...
(calling)
Harrison?

She looks around the empty living room.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Harrison!

She disappears for a few moments through one doorway leading from the living room, then reappears, frowning. She turns through the doorway leading to the kitchen.

BROOKE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Harr-i-son!!

By the time she appears again, she has a panicky look on her face. At that moment, the front door opens and Harrison enters, carrying a grocery bag.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Harrison!

HARRISON
(starts)
Brooke--you're awake.

BROOKE
God, you scared me!

HARRISON
I--didn't mean to.

BROOKE
I thought maybe you'd run off
again.

HARRISON

Only to the store. Dying man's gotta eat, you know.

BROOKE

Don't. Don't joke like that.

HARRISON

Sorry...it's a reflex. Death is actually easier to deal with if it's funny.

BROOKE

Harrison, you're not dealing with this at all.

Harrison heads for the kitchen.

HARRISON

OK, Brooke, I've already heard all this, and you're not going to change my mind.

Brooke throws up her hands and follows him.

CUT TO:

INT. HARRISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Harrison sets the bag on the counter and starts to unload it.

BROOKE

I don't get it. You're seventeen years old--how can you want this to be...the end?

HARRISON

It's not all that hard to figure. I mean, really, what do I have to look forward to?

BROOKE

(unbelieving)
What???

HARRISON

If I go back, there'll just be another go-round with the chemo and the bad hospital food--and then what?

Brooke makes an uncomprehending gesture.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
Seriously, Brooke. Say I go, and
by some chance they manage to
beat the leukemia back into
remission--until it decides to
come back--

Brooke throws him an exasperated look.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
--and even if it doesn't--what is
there for me? I go back to high
school? And then what?

BROOKE
I don't know--college? life?

HARRISON
Yeah well, if this so far is
setting the stage for what my
life is going to be like--I gotta
tell you, I'd just rather not.

Finished with the groceries, Harrison heads back into the
living room, with Brooke at his heels.

CUT TO:

INT. HARRISON'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BROOKE
But--

HARRISON
Oh, by the way--you'd better call
home.

Brooke gasps at the thought.

BROOKE
Oh, my God... I'm dead. I
don't even know how to tell Dad
where I am.

HARRISON
You don't have to worry about
that part, 'cause I already did.

BROOKE
WHAT??!

HARRISON
Well, what was I supposed to do,
Brooke? You show up, out of the
blue, fall asleep on my couch--I
kind of figured you didn't tell
(CONT.)

HARRISON (CONT'D)
anyone what you were doing. So I
called your place.

BROOKE
Oh, God, what did my dad say?

HARRISON
Actually I talked to Sam's mom.
But I think your dad was there,
and I didn't hear any explosions
in the background. I did promise
that you'd call as soon as you
woke up, though, so...

Brooke folds her arms defiantly.

BROOKE
Nope.

HARRISON
What do you mean, nope?

BROOKE
The only way I'm calling is to
tell them that we're both coming
home.

HARRISON
That's not gonna happen.

BROOKE
Harrison--!

Harrison sits on the sofa, a little defiant himself.

HARRISON
No. I told you, you're not
changing my mind.

BROOKE
What about your mom? Imagine
what this is doing to her.

HARRISON
(shifts uncomfortably)
This is better. You don't know
how hard the first time was on
her--running back and forth
between home and the hospital,
trying to pay the bills...

BROOKE
Harrison! It wasn't the bills
that made it hard, or the travel!
It was you almost dying! What
happens when you really do die?!

Harrison looks away.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

And what about all your friends?
How do you think Lily is going to
feel? And Carmen? And Sam??

HARRISON

Let's not even go there, OK?

BROOKE

OK, you know what, all that
doesn't even make any difference.

HARRISON

(scornfully)

Oh, wait, I remember this part
from my counseling sessions.
You're going to tell me that if I
really want to get better, I have
to do it for myself.

BROOKE

All right. Forget about doing it
for yourself.

She gets down on one knee in front of him.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Do it for me.

HARRISON

(nonplussed)

You?

Brooke takes a moment to gather herself.

BROOKE

Do you want to know how awful I
am? When Mary Cherry told me she
knew where you were--

HARRISON

Mary Cherry?

BROOKE

Her mother's detectives found
you.

HARRISON

Oh. Right. Of course.

BROOKE

Mary Cherry gave me this address.
And Sam was right there. I
could've told her. But I didn't--

(CONT.)

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I just got in Nic's car and took off. You know why?

Harrison shrugs, clueless.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Because I wanted to be the one to bring you home. Not her. I wanted you to come back for me. Because...because I can't imagine my life without you in it.

HARRISON

But...what about...?

BROOKE

I broke up with Jamie.

HARRISON

(still confused)

I thought you said the girl in his apartment was his cousin.

BROOKE

Oh, it was. That's not why I broke up with him.

HARRISON

So--?

BROOKE

I realized I was using him...to forget about you. And it was working, it really was. But then...I found out that forgetting about you wasn't what I wanted.

HARRISON

Brooke...

BROOKE

I--I know... I'm not asking you to forget about Sam. All I'm asking... Come home. Put up the kind of fight I know you're capable of. And then...and then, maybe...you could give us a chance. That's all I want.

Harrison shakes his head (not negatively, just indecisively). Brooke takes both his hands in hers.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Harrison...I love you. I
know...that you might never be
able to feel the same way about
me. All I'm asking for is a
chance. Please.

HARRISON
Are...you sure about this?

BROOKE
I just drove across three states.

HARRISON
Well, yeah, there is that...

BROOKE
(hopefully)
So--is that a--yes?

Harrison swallows hard, and manages a nod. Brooke shrieks,
wraps her arms around him and drives him back into the
cushions. As she hugs him, he winces.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Oh! What?

HARRISON
Nothing. Little headache.

BROOKE
Oh, God, all right, um...

She climbs off of him and reaches for the phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN

The PHONE RINGS. Mike scrambles into view and snatches it
up.

MIKE
Hello?

BROOKE
Dad?

MIKE
Brooke!

BROOKE
OK, Dad, I know that you're
probably madder at me right now
than you ever have been, but I
(CONT.)

BROOKE (CONT'D)
really need to get Harrison to
the hospital, right now.

MIKE
You got Harrison to agree to come
back with you.

Standing nearby, Jane and Sam trade relieved looks.

MIKE (CONT'D)
All right, Brooke, listen
carefully. Cherry Cherry's
private jet is waiting at the
airport there to bring you home.
Take the car to--

He reaches for a piece of paper and reads off of it.

MIKE (CONT'D)
--Hangar Six. Leave it there--
Mrs. Cherry has already arranged
to have it driven back. We'll
meet you when you land--

BROOKE
(breaking in)
Wait--"we"? Can...just you and
Harrison's mom meet us?

MIKE
But--

BROOKE
(emphatically)
Dad, no. Definitely--not--Sam.

MIKE
All right. Robin and I will meet
you--and then you and I can have
a little talk.

BROOKE
(gulps)
I understand. We're leaving,
right now.

MIKE
We'll see you soon, honey.

INT. HARRISON'S LIVING ROOM

Brooke hangs up the phone and looks at Harrison.

BROOKE

We don't have to drive back.
Mary Cherry's mom, Cherry Cherry,
sent her jet up here for us.

HARRISON

Wow. I didn't know I was that
big a deal.

Brooke gets up in Harrison's face.

BROOKE

You are a very big deal.

After an uncomfortable moment, Harrison slaps his knees and
gets up.

HARRISON

OK. Just let me throw my stuff
together, and we'll get going.

BROOKE

Doesn't this place belong to
someone?

HARRISON

Oh, he's on a retreat in Nova
Scotia. I just have to lock up
and drop the key with the
neighbors.

(laughs)

I had to promise him I wouldn't
actually die here, so I guess
that's gonna work out.

Brooke just shakes her head resignedly.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCQUEEN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mike hangs up the phone.

MIKE

Well, they should be home soon.
I'd better call Robin.

SAM

Great--I wanna change first--

MIKE

Sam--Mrs. John and I are going to
go meet the plane.

SAM

But--no, I want to--

Mike just looks at her, and she gapes as the truth dawns on her.

SAM (CONT'D)
(bleakly)
He still doesn't want to see me?

JANE
(reaching for Sam)
Sam...

Sam shrugs Jane off and runs up the stairs.

JANE (CONT'D)
(to Mike)
I'll take care of her. You go
get Brooke.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN AIRPORT TARMAC - NIGHT

Mike and Robin are waiting by their cars while Cherry
Cherry's jet rolls up. As they approach the jet, its door
opens, and Harrison and Brooke come down the steps. Robin
holds out her arms, and Harrison runs the last few steps to
her, breaking down as she hugs him.

HARRISON
(sobbing)
I'm sorry...

ROBIN
Shh... You're going to be all
right. Come on...

Robin guides Harrison towards her car.

Mike grabs Brooke by the shoulders and holds her at arms
length for a moment, then clutches her tightly.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER

Mike is driving silently, which Brooke is curled up in the
passenger seat.

BROOKE
So, are you going to yell at me
now, or do I get the silent
treatment til we get home?

MIKE
Brooke--I don't even know what to
say. What you did--it was rash,
and irresponsible--

BROOKE

I know.

MIKE

--and dangerous! What were you thinking?! What if you'd had an accident out there somewhere?!

BROOKE

I know, I wasn't thinking. All I could think of was getting to Harrison. I don't even remember most of it. It was like I was in a daze the whole time.

MIKE

You should have told someone. Me, or Harrison's mom.

BROOKE

I know. I should have. I--it's just that...I--I kept seeing Harrison...lying somewhere...and I--I--

She starts to cry. Mike looks over, worried.

MIKE

Brooke?

Brooke snifles.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Are you...? I thought you and Harrison, it didn't work out...?

Brooke wipes her eyes, but doesn't answer.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Is this why you broke up with Jamie?

Brooke nods.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And...what about Harrison?

BROOKE

He said...he'd give us a chance. That's all I need, is a chance.

There is a few moments silence as Mike absorbs that information. Then:

MIKE

You're grounded. For a month.

(slightly defensive)

You took a car and drove halfway across the country without telling anybody. I can't let you get off scot-free--even if you did to it for someone you...

BROOKE

Love.

MIKE

...someone you love, and probably saved his life.

BROOKE

I understand.

After a few more moments:

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Dad?

MIKE

Hmm?

BROOKE

I know I'm not exactly in a position to ask, but--

MIKE

What?

BROOKE

Can I serve my sentence after Harrison gets better?

MIKE

No.

(holds up a finger)

But, I will exempt visits to the hospital from your grounding.

Brooke manages a small smile.

BROOKE

Okay.

(looks around outside)

Dad? This isn't the way home.

MIKE

I know. I figured you might want to make sure Harrison got checked in all right.

Brooke snuggles up next to him, and he puts his arm around her as they head for the hospital.

FADE TO BLACK.

[NOTE: This last scene isn't contiguous with the others; it happens at least several days and one episode later.]

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Sam approaches Harrison's room, but before she gets there, Nicole steps out, frowning, arms folded, and blocks her path.

NICOLE

Where do you think you're going?

SAM

I want to see Harrison.

NICOLE

Well, Spam, I want you to disappear from my life, but we don't all get what we want.

SAM

Get out of my way.

NICOLE

He doesn't want to see you. What part of "he doesn't want to see you" are you having trouble with?

SAM

The part where you're the one saying it. Now I'm going to see Harrison.

Sam starts to move around Nicole, but Brooke comes out, strikes the same pose as Nicole, and blocks her again.

BROOKE

You're not welcome here.

SAM

You know, I've heard that from everyone but Harrison.

BROOKE

That's because Harrison doesn't want to see you.

NICOLE

(sotto voce)

I tried that. She's a little dense.

Sam makes an exasperated noise and pushes her way past Brooke and Nicole.

INT. HARRISON'S ROOM

Harrison is sitting up in bed. He looks up, and his expression sours when he sees Sam. Brooke and Nicole are on her heels.

BROOKE
I'm sorry, Harrison--

HARRISON
No, it's okay. Give us a sec.

Brooke and Nicole both give Sam dubious looks, but finally turn and step outside.

SAM
I knew it, I knew those two--

HARRISON
(cutting her off coldly)
Sam, what are you doing here?

SAM
(shaken)
H-how could I not be here??

HARRISON
The same way you could not be in my life, period.

SAM
That wasn't my choice.

HARRISON
No, it was my choice. And it still is my choice, so maybe you should just go now.

SAM
Harrison--please, don't do this--

HARRISON
I really don't think there's anything left to say.

SAM
Please, don't shut me out--I don't--I want you in my life...

HARRISON
Well, we don't all get what we want. Surprise.

SAM

I can't believe--don't look at me
like that...

HARRISON

Like what? Like someone you
thought you knew better than
anyone, but it turns out you
didn't know at all?

SAM

(miserably)
That's not true...

HARRISON

This isn't doing either one of us
any good. So why don't we just
say good-bye, and leave it at
that.

SAM

Harrison--

HARRISON

GET OUT!!!

Sam recoils visibly, then turns and runs from the room.
Brooke and Nicole come back in a moment later.

BROOKE

I'm sorry about that.

HARRISON

No, it's okay. It's a good day
for exorcising old demons, I
guess.

NICOLE

(checking her watch)
Well, I'd better bounce. Schemes
to scheme, people to trash, you
know.

(to Harrison)

What's tomorrow look like?

HARRISON

Chemo. You might want to think
about skipping--I'm gonna be
lousy company.

NICOLE

Okay.
(tsks)
See ya--wouldn't wanna be ya.
Really. I mean it.

HARRISON

Thanks.

Nicole turns to go.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Hey, Nicole.

She turns back.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Kick ass out there.

Nicole smiles and sketches a finger-salute.

NICOLE

You know it.

(to Brooke)

See you tomorrow?

Brooke nods, and Nicole brushes past her and out the door.

Harrison looks up at the clock.

HARRISON

Isn't it kinda late?

BROOKE

Dad's picking me up. I don't think I'm going to be allowed near a car again until I'm twenty-five.

A NURSE comes in carrying a tray, which she sits down on Harrison's table.

NURSE

Dinner time, Mr. John.

HARRISON

And with so few things to look forward to in here, you'd think this could be one of them.

NURSE

(playing along)

Come on, Mr. John. People almost never die from eating our food.

HARRISON

I'm so relieved.

The nurse leaves, and while Harrison pries the plastic cover off his dinner tray and picks gingerly at the food underneath, Brooke heads for the door.

BROOKE

I'm going to get a bottle of
water from the cafeteria.

HARRISON

(calling after her)
Oh, hey, Brooke!

She pops her head back around the edge of the door frame.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

While you're down there, get me a
cheeseburger, fries, and a
chocolate shake.

BROOKE

(grinning)
Nice try, buster.
(points)
Eat!

HARRISON

I'll pay you! Really!

BROOKE

(giggles)
EAT!

After Brooke disappears, Harrison takes his fork and lifts a
stringy piece of green something-or-other, examining it
distastefully.

HARRISON

Yecch.

BLACK OUT.