

Popular: Senior Year
"Breaking Up Is Not All That Hard
to Do"
by
The Wild Pikachu

POPULAR: SENIOR YEAR

BREAKING UP IS NOT ALL THAT HARD TO DO

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. MCQUEEN UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A frozen tableau: Sam, staring in stricken shock at Harrison and Brooke, who have obviously just been in the shower together.

For a long moment, no one moves.

HARRISON

Sam—

His voice breaks the spell; Sam focuses on him, eyes wide, shaking her head in mute disbelief. Then she turns and flees back down the stairs.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

SAM!

He rushes down the stairs after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The front door flies open, and Sam runs full-tilt out and down the walk. A moment later, Harrison appears in the open doorway.

HARRISON

SAM!!!

He starts to step outside before remembering that he is only wearing a towel. He turns back, slamming the door shut.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Harrison bounds back up the stairs and runs for Brooke's room. Brooke, who hasn't moved from the bathroom doorway, reaches for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE

Harrison—

He brushes past her and disappears into her room. Starting to cry, she slides down to the floor, burying her face in her hands.

WHITE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S APARTMENT

Josh is treading down the hallway, peeking around corners and doorways.

JOSH
Lily? Lil? Come on, where are
you? Look, I'm sorry I blew up.

He stops for a moment and listens. Silence. He continues down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Josh pokes his head around the corner of the doorway, then steps inside cautiously.

JOSH
Lily?

He looks around the empty room; then, the barest of sounds comes the closet. Carefully, he pads across to the closet door—which is slightly ajar—and opens it.

Lily is huddled in the corner of the closet, quivering, arms wrapped protectively over her head.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Hey...

He reaches down—but the moment he touches her shoulder she recoils violently, and he jerks his hand back.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Whoa! Lily, it's me. It's Josh.
(gently cajoling)
Come on...I'm not going to hurt
you...

He tries to touch her again, but again she flinches away, rocking herself in the corner of the closet. Josh leans in closer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
 (mumbling)
 ...please don't hit me anymore,
 I'll be good...I promise...just
 don't hit me...

Once more Josh reaches out, and this time when she shies away he keeps hold of her. Scooping her up in his arms, he pulls her out of the closet, carries her over to the bed and gently lays her down. She curls up there, eyes open but unfocused.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S BEDROOM

Harrison is just putting on his shoes when Brooke appears in the doorway.

BROOKE
 Harrison—

HARRISON
 I have to go. I have to find Sam.
 I have to find her, and...

Brooke's voice rises to the edge of ragged hysteria.

BROOKE
 And what?! Explain? It wasn't
 what it looked like? It didn't
 mean anything to you?

HARRISON
 Not now, Brooke, please. I have
 to—

BROOKE
 —go, right, you have to run and
 make things up with Sam.

HARRISON
 I-I can't handle this right now—

BROOKE
 God, Harrison, you never could
 handle us!

HARRISON
 Brooke—

BROOKE
 Fine! Go, then! See if I care!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

For a moment it looks as if Harrison might not go; but then he gets up and rushes out of the room. Brooke walks shakily to her bed and collapses on it.

The phone rings.

For three, four, five rings she ignores it. Then, finally—perhaps remembering that she wrecked her answering machine—she reaches out, zombie-like, and picks it up.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

JOSH - CLOSEUP

JOSH
 Brooke! Is Sam there? I need to talk to her.

Brooke's reaction is to laugh mirthlessly, and hold the receiver away for a moment, shaking her head and looking to the heavens fatalistically. Finally she brings the phone back to her ear.

BROOKE
 No...Josh...Sam's...not here.

JOSH
 Well, do you know where she went, then?

BROOKE
 (snorts softly)
 Not a chance in hell.

JOSH
 C'mon, Brooke, I'm not playing around! Lily's in trouble, and I need Sam!

That brings Brooke at least partly out of her funk.

BROOKE
 What...? Lily...what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH

Something...I don't know what happened...we were...and now she's...I don't know the word, it's one of those "E.R." words, like, she's all frozen...cat something. Like she's in shock.

BROOKE

(whispering)
Catatonic.

JOSH

Yeah, I guess.

Brooke sits up and pulls herself together.

BROOKE

I'm sorry, Josh...I really don't know where Sam is.

JOSH

(shaking his head)
Brooke—I'm scared. I've never seen her like this before. I've never seen anyone like this before.

BROOKE

Okay...Josh, just...don't panic. I'll... Hey, what about Carmen?

JOSH

Naw, she went with Shug to some concert today.

BROOKE

Try her anyway.

CUT TO:

INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM

where Sugar Daddy has confronted Carmen with the computer printouts he's discovered.

CARMEN

(defensively)
It's not what it looks like, Sugar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUGAR

It's not what it looks like? How can it not be what it looks like? It looks like you're doin' the nasty with some guy online.

CARMEN

Come on, we've never even met!

SUGAR

Oh, no?!

He flips through a few of the papers.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

(reading)

"I thrill to the touch of your strong hands, as you brush your lips across my—" Man, I can't even read this stuff!

CARMEN

It's just—chat.

SUGAR

This is not just chat. This is... it's like, internet porn.

CARMEN

It is not! It's...romantic.

SUGAR

(shakes his head)

I don't know a lot about romance, but I know this isn't it.

CARMEN

It's just make-believe, Sugar. It's just pretend.

SUGAR

Man, what happened? When we were chatting online, I didn't know it was you—but it was the real you.

CARMEN

Yeah, well, that was a long time ago.

(indignantly)

And what gives you the right to judge me, anyway?! What, you think we go on a couple of dates, and you can march in here and dictate my personal life?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUGAR
I'm not judging you.

CARMEN
You sure as hell sound like it.
Look, why don't you just go to
your concert? I'm not in the mood
for ska anymore.

SUGAR
(throwing up his hands)
Fine by me.

He tosses the papers aside and stalks out of the room. Carmen flops down on the bed, then shakes herself and reaches for the phone.

SPLIT SCREEN WITH:

JOSH. - CLOSEUP

also dialing the phone. It takes a moment for them to get identical busy signals. They both hang up.

CUT TO:

INT. AUSTIN LIVING ROOM - LATER

The doorbell rings.

GEORGE (O.S.)
I'll get it!

MRS. AUSTIN (O.S.)
Are you sure?

George, on crutches, walks into the picture.

GEORGE
I can still walk, Mom!
(to himself)
Sort of.

He steps to the front door and opens it to find Sam standing there, eyes red-rimmed, shaken.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Sam? What—?

Still on the edge of tears, she opens her mouth to say something—but then turns and walks away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Sam!

He hobbles out after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUSTIN DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

With his mobility impaired, it takes George a few seconds to get around and in front of Sam, blocking her path.

GEORGE

Sam, what is it? What's wrong?

Again she starts to try to say something, but then just shakes her head and buries her face into his shoulder, sobbing, while he wraps his arms around her as best he can.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S LIVING ROOM

Josh opens the front door, and Brooke steps inside.

BROOKE

How is she?

JOSH

I think she's sleeping. Her eyes are closed, anyway. I-I...I just don't know what's wrong?

BROOKE

Did you find Sam?

He shakes his head.

JOSH

I tried everywhere. Carmen's line was busy...George wasn't there, but I talked to his mom, and she hadn't seen her... I've got to go find her. She knows Lily better than anyone. She'll know what to do. Look, Brooke—

BROOKE

I'll stay here. You go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH
(hugging her)
Thanks.

As Josh gathers his things and leaves...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AUSTIN DRIVEWAY - LATER

George and Sam are sitting side-by-side on a low stone wall.

SAM
...I just...I couldn't...I can't
believe he...they...

GEORGE
I'm sorry, Sam.

SAM
I didn't know where else to go...
I didn't...know if I should come
here... I thought...maybe you'd
think...

GEORGE
What?

SAM
(looking over)
...I got what I deserved? I mean,
now I know how you felt, after
spring break.

GEORGE
Is that what you think of me, Sam?

SAM
(hanging her head)
No. I'm sorry.

GEORGE
I'm sorry this happened. Okay,
maybe I'm supposed to think,
turnabout is fair play...but I
don't. I never wanted to see you
hurt, Sam.

He puts his arm around her, and she snuggles next to him. For a couple of moments they stay like that; then she leans in closer, to kiss him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(stiffening)
Sam...don't.

SAM
(hurt and confused)
But—

GEORGE
I don't know what you expect from
me, but...

SAM
But...Brooke said...

GEORGE
Look...I do care about you, but...
not that way. I can't go there—
especially not now.

SAM
(pleading)
George—

GEORGE
I want to be there for you, Sam.
But not like this.

He hops up and gets his crutches under him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

She hugs herself tightly and watches despairingly as he
hobbles away.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

DREAM SEQUENCE - B&W

INT. A BEDROOM

A large man with a belt and a clenched fist is advancing menacingly on a battered little girl (about 8) huddled in the corner of the room.

MAN

I'll teach you not to run around
this house, you little snot!

GIRL

(cowering)
I won't, I promise, Daddy...
Please don't hit me again...I
swear I'll be good...

The man reaches down and swings his fist, and—

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S BEDROOM

Lily bolts upright in bed, screaming. In an instant Brooke is there, arm around her protectively.

BROOKE

(soothingly)
It's all right. You're all right.

LILY

(blinking)
Brooke?

She looks around uncertainly.

LILY (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

BROOKE

Josh called. Well, he called
looking for Sam, but...I came.

LILY

Josh...

Her eyes widen slightly, and she pulls back to look at Brooke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY (CONT'D)

Did I...say anything?

Brooke purses her lips sympathetically and nods.

LILY (CONT'D)

Please, don't tell Josh.

BROOKE

I won't, I promise. But, Lily...

LILY

I know.

BROOKE

Do you...want to talk about it?

Lily shrugs morosely, settling into a sitting position against the headboard. Brooke pulls her legs up, sitting cross-legged across from her.

LILY

My father...he wasn't a very nice man. And he was an alcoholic.

BROOKE

He hit you.

LILY

And my mom. Domestic violence—
America's dirty little secret. We
were a statistic.

BROOKE

God, I'm sorry.
(delicately)
Did he...?

LILY

No. He just couldn't control his
temper.

BROOKE

Why haven't you told Josh?

LILY

I don't...I don't want him to feel
sorry for me. Plus I don't want
him to think he has to walk on
eggshells around me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE

Lily, you can't keep something like this from him. You guys are married. For better or worse.

LILY

I think this is a little worse than "worse".

BROOKE

I know he loves you. He'd do anything for you. You just have to trust him.

The conversation hangs there for several long moments, each of them wrapped up in her own thoughts. Then Lily looks up.

LILY

Did you say Josh called you?

BROOKE

No, I said he was looking for Sam.

Something in Brooke's face betrays her; Lily peers at her more closely.

LILY

What?

Brooke just looks away, shaking her head.

LILY (CONT'D)

Something happened? Between you and Sam?

Brooke lets out a rueful little laugh.

BROOKE

I've... Any chance Sam and I ever had for any kind of relationship...it's ruined. Forever.

LILY

It can't be that bad.

Brooke looks up at her.

BROOKE

Yes, it can.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

EXT. CITY STREET

In the heart of the city, Sam aimlessly wanders the streets, holding herself, alone amongst the crowds. The sequence ends as her eye catches the sign on a building across the street: "L.A. National Trust Bank". Taken by a thought, she cuts across the flow of traffic.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BANK

Sam steps up to one of the teller windows.

SAM
McPherson, Samantha? Five-three-
nine-one-eight-six-six-three.

The teller taps some keys.

TELLER
What can I do for you today, Ms.
McPherson?

SAM
I want to take money out of my
savings account.

TELLER
And how much?

SAM
All of it.

The teller looks up sharply.

TELLER
Are you certain?

SAM
Yes.

TELLER
I see... And would you like—?

SAM
Cash.

TELLER
Please, wait just a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The teller scoots back in her chair.

CUT TO:

INT. CARMEN'S BEDROOM

Carmen has been pacing the room despondently. Finally she plops down in front of her computer and begins to work on it. A moment later the room fills with the sound of the modem.

INSERT: THE COMPUTER SCREEN

as she enters a romance chat room.

She relaxes and a grin spreads across her face as she begins to type in earnest.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BANK

The teller is counting out a spread of bills in front of Sam.

TELLER

...six hundred, seven hundred,
eight hundred, twenty, forty,
fifty, fifty-two, and thirty-seven
cents.

Sam sweeps up the bills and the change and tucks it all away.

SAM

Thanks.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - LATER

Harrison approaches the front door and rings the bell. He waits, shifting impatiently, for a few moments, then knocks on the door.

HARRISON

(calling)
Sam?! Sam!!

No response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Sam, are you in there?!

(beat)

Brooke?! Anyone home?!

He tries to peer in the front window, but then gives up and walks away. A few seconds after he disappears, Sam comes out from behind a bush and quickly goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Sam looks all around, almost a bit lost, or as if she's seeing the room for the first time. After a bit of this, she shakes herself out of her reverie and heads up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S BEDROOM

Lily and Brooke are sitting on the bed in the midst of a sober silence.

LILY

Wow.

BROOKE

You hate me now, too, right?

LILY

Brooke...

BROOKE

I mean, of course you hate me.
How else could you feel? How else
could anyone feel? I don't blame
you for hating me.

LILY

Brooke—

Brooke swings her legs out, stands up, and steps towards the door.

BROOKE

I'm just gonna go now, 'cause I'm
sure you don't want to be anywhere
near me...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
BROOKE!

Brooke finally stops and turns her head to look back at Lily. Lily smiles encouragingly and pats the bed next to her—something she has to do twice before Brooke returns and perches on the edge of the bed. Lily reaches for and takes her hand.

LILY (CONT'D)
Of course I don't hate you.

Brooke shakes her head, utterly confused.

BROOKE
Why?

LILY
Well, first of all, hatred is an extremely negative emotion, which ultimately poisons the hater as well as the hated.

Brooke gives her a very strange look. Lily chuckles, and starts over.

LILY (CONT'D)
Brooke, I'm not going to judge you. Look at me—I am the last person to tell anyone what to do when it comes to love.

BROOKE
But—you and Sam are, like, best friends, and I've...
(covering her eyes)
Oh, God, what have I done?

LILY
You didn't just go after Harrison to hurt Sam, did you?

BROOKE
(shocked)
What?! No!!

LILY
Then you followed your heart, and it took you somewhere completely unexpected.
(shrugs)
I do know a little something about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKE

Will you stop being so understanding? How can you be so understanding?

That gets a laugh out of Lily, before she turns serious again.

LILY

All right... Yes, Sam is my friend, but...I'd like to think that you're my friend, too. And I've learned that when your friends are fighting, the best thing to do is to not get involved. So I promise, right now, that I won't choose sides between the two of you. No matter what.

Brooke leans over and hugs Lily.

BROOKE

I don't you suppose you have any idea how I can fix things with Sam?

LILY

Sorry—you're on your own there.

BROOKE

(ruefully)

She's going to kill me. How am I supposed to live with her after this?

Lily shrugs helplessly. Brooke refocuses.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

So, what about you?

LILY

I think I oughta call Josh and get him back here.

Lily reaches for the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE

Josh walks up to the front door, rings the bell and then pounds on the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sam comes down the kitchen stairs, duffel bag slung over her shoulder. At the bottom of the stairs, she hears the banging at the front door.

JOSH (O.S.)
 (from outside)
 Sam?!! Are you in there?!!

After a moment, she turns and quietly slips out the patio door.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Josh is still standing on the stoop when his cell phone rings. He pulls it out.

JOSH
 (into the phone)
 Hello?

LILY (V.O.)
 (over the phone)
 Josh?

JOSH
 Lily! Are you all right??

LILY (V.O.)
 I'm fine, Josh. Can you come home?

JOSH
 (relieved)
 Sure thing, baby, I'm leaving right now.

Josh puts the phone away and rushes off.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lily hangs up the phone.

LILY
You don't have to stick around.

BROOKE
Uh-uh. I promised Josh I'd stay
with you till he got back. As
long as you're sure you can stand
to be in the same room with me...

LILY
(laughing)
Stop it.

BROOKE
(sighs)
Besides, I'm not exactly looking
forward to going home.

Lily makes a sympathetic sound and pats Brooke's hand.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

At a table of computers under a hanging sign that reads "Internet", Sam is sitting at one of the terminals, typing away. After a few mouse clicks, she stands, picks up her duffel bag and walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S BEDROOM

The two girls are still sitting on the bed.

LILY
You know—I wonder why Josh didn't
call Carmen.

BROOKE
Oh—he did. He said the line was
busy.

LILY
Hmm...

Lily reaches for the phone and dials; a moment later she hangs it up again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY (CONT'D)

Still busy.

(beat)

That's funny—I thought she and
Sugar Daddy were going out today.

BROOKE

(shrugs)

I don't know.

From outside the room there is the sound of the front door opening and closing. Brooke stands up, and a moment later Josh appears in the doorway.

JOSH

Lily?

LILY

(waves)

I'm sorry I scared everyone.

He rushes to the bed and hugs her tightly.

JOSH

Baby, I couldn't stand it if
anything happened to you.

LILY

I'm going to be fine. Really.

Brooke steps away.

BROOKE

I'm going now.

Lily holds out her hands, draws Brooke to her and hugs her.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Good luck.

LILY

You too.

BROOKE

(rolls her eyes)

Yeah.

She brushes Josh's shoulder.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(to Josh)

You—take good care of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

With that, Brooke walks out. Josh throws Lily a questioning look.

LILY

Later. Right now, what's important is us.

JOSH

Lily, I'm sorry, I didn't mean—

LILY

I know, you didn't mean anything. But there's some things, things about me, that I haven't told you. Things I've kept from you. I thought that was for the best, but it's not, and now we have to talk.

JOSH

I love you, Lily. You can tell me anything.

LILY

(smiling)

I know.

As Josh settles on the bed—

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ART FLEISCHER'S OFFICE

Art is reading notes, typing on his computer, and generally doing several things at once.

Vicki pops her head through the open doorway.

VICKI

You've got a meeting with Tolliver in Metro in ten minutes. The housing project thing?

FLEISCHER

(without looking up)

Right.

(beat)

Where's the Planning Commission file?

Vicki, who had left, swivels back.

VICKI

Roger took it.

FLEISCHER

I'm not done with it.

VICKI

He had a deadline.

FLEISCHER

Get it back.

VICKI

Don't you have a meeting?

FLEISCHER

I want it on my desk when I get back.

VICKI

Okay, okay...

Fleischer is half out of his chair when he notices a blinking box in the corner of his computer screen. He sits back down and uses his mouse to open a set of windows; and his eyes narrow as he reads the screen. He reaches for his phone and speed-dials a number.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER

Come on, come on...

He hangs up the phone and clicks his mouse once more. Then he jumps up, snatches a sheet of paper as it emerges from the printer, and rushes out, brushing by Vicki.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

(calling over his shoulder)

Cancel my meeting!

VICKI

Wha—? Where are you going?!

But he is already halfway to the elevator.

VICKI (CONT'D)

(mimicking)

"I'm sorry, my boss has temporarily lost his mind. I'll be sure to have him call you as soon as he regains his sanity."

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

The front door opens and Brooke walks in. She opens her mouth to call out, but then thinks better of it. She is eyeing the stairs when the door opens behind her, making her yelp and spin around. Jane and Mike come in, pushing Mackenzie in a stroller.

BROOKE

Dad! Jane!

MIKE

Oh, good, you're here.

BROOKE

(cautiously)

Yeah?

MIKE

Go tell Sam we're all going out for Saturday supper.

BROOKE

(shaking her head slowly)

Oh...no, that's a really bad idea.
A really, really bad idea.
Really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE
(frowning)
It's a good idea.

BROOKE
Noo, trust me, it really isn't.

JANE
(folds her arms)
Don't tell me you and Sam are
fighting again.

Brooke looks away guiltily.

JANE (CONT'D)
Well, this'll be a good
opportunity for you to work things
out.
(sighs)
Fine, I'll get Sam.

As Jane heads up the stairs, Brooke turns to her father.

BROOKE
Dad, is there any way at all I can
get out of this?

MIKE
Sorry, honey. You know, Jane just
wants things to work out between
the two of you.

He puts his arm around her shoulder.

MIKE (CONT'D)
And so do I.

BROOKE
Dad, really, I don't think—

But suddenly from upstairs comes:

JANE
MIKE!!!

Mike and Brooke trade a glance, and go running for the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke and Mike crowd into the doorway together, to find Jane standing in the middle of the room—which is a mess, with opened dresser drawers and clothes strewn on the bed and on the closet floor, which is otherwise empty.

BROOKE
Oh, my God, Sam...

JANE
(hysterical)
Why??! Why would she do this??!

Mike turns to Brooke.

MIKE
Do you know what this is about?

Brooke closes her eyes and hangs her head before finally nodding reluctantly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brooke is sitting across from Mike and Jane.

BROOKE
...and then Harrison took off after her. I haven't heard from either one of them since.

For a few moments Mike and Jane just sit there, looking at her. Then Jane shakes her head angrily.

JANE
I can't believe you did this. What were you thinking?!

BROOKE
But, I—I didn't know...Sam wasn't supposed to come home—

JANE
It shouldn't have happened at all! Not at all!

She jumps up and begins to pace; and then turns to Mike.

JANE (CONT'D)
We have to find her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

All right, we'll split up, cover her friends, where she might have gone...

BROOKE

I can—

Mike cuts her off sharply.

MIKE

(severely)

You won't do anything. You are going to stay right here, and hope we can find Sam before anything happens to her. You've already caused enough damage.

Brooke's face crumples.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm very disappointed in you, Brooke.

She breaks out in sobs, leaps to her feet and runs upstairs. Mike looks as if he might be regretting his outburst—but then the doorbell rings. He gets up and opens the door, and Fleischer brushes past him.

FLEISCHER

Is Sam here?

He pulls up short at the sight of Jane's anguished expression. Mike closes the door behind him.

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

What's going on?

MIKE

We think...Sam's run away.

JANE

Do you know something about this?

FLEISCHER

(sighs)

I just got a very disturbing e-mail from her.

He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Mike, who unfolds it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIKE

(reading)

"Dear Art: I'm sorry, but something has come up, and I have to go away. I really appreciate the opportunity you gave me, and I hope you can forgive me someday. Sam."

JANE

Oh, Sam... What do we do? We can't call the police until midnight.

FLEISCHER

It doesn't matter—they won't take it seriously anyway.

JANE

(astounded)

Why not?!

FLEISCHER

First, she'll be classified a runaway, not a kidnap victim. Second, she's almost eighteen. The older the person is, the lower priority it gets. In a few months it won't be called running away, it'll be called "moving out".

MIKE

We just have to find her ourselves, then.

FLEISCHER

Right. Our best hope is that she's gone to one of her friends. If not...we'll have to check the bus station, the train station—even the airport, if she's got enough money; and knowing how resourceful Sam is, she's probably got all the money she can get her hands on.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mike appears in the open doorway. Brooke is sitting on the bed, her back to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE
 (brusquely)
 Brooke, we're going. You stay
 here and look after Mac.

No response.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 All right?

She turns her head just slightly and nods, once.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 After we've found Sam, we'll talk
 more.

She doesn't acknowledge that, either, and after a moment Mike
 turns away and heads back down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane is putting Mackenzie in her crib when Mike runs back down
 the stairs.

MIKE
 All right, we'll split up. We can
 cover three times the ground that
 way.

JANE
 Wait—should we call her friends
 first, before we go out looking?

Fleischer holds up his cell phone.

FLEISCHER
 The miracle of modern technology:
 we do both at the same time.

Jane picks up her back and hurries out; Fleischer is at the
 door when Mike catches him by the elbow, holding him back.

MIKE
 (quietly)
 What's the worst-case scenario?

FLEISCHER
 (grimacing)
 Worst-case?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)

If she decides to skip town, and we don't find her before she does...we probably never will.

CUT TO:

EST. THE BUS STATION

An exterior shot from the rear, with buses pulling in and out.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUS STATION

Sam steps up to one of the windows at the ticket counter.

SAM

I'd like a one-way ticket to New York City, please.

CLERK

That'll be one-seventy-two forty.

Sam counts off a bunch of twenties and pushes them across the counter, and a few moments later picks up her ticket and change.

SAM

Thanks.

She walks through the waiting area to an empty seat, unslings her duffel bag and sits down. She looks up at the huge departure board on the wall...

INSERT: THE DEPARTURE BOARD

A line reading across: "LAS VEGAS - ST LOUIS - CHICAGO - NEW YORK", "BAY 6", and "245PM".

...and then checks her watch.

INSERT: SAM'S WATCH

which shows 2:07.

With a little sigh, she settles back in her seat.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S APARTMENT

The couple are sitting on the sofa. Lily is studying Josh intently.

JOSH
I...I don't know what to say.

LILY
You're mad.

JOSH
I'm not— Lily, you didn't trust me enough to tell me this!

LILY
I know, I'm sorry. I just thought...it would be easier if you didn't know.

JOSH
Well, it's not. Lying, and, and, keeping secrets—it's not easier.

LILY
I know. Can you forgive me?

JOSH
Don't be silly. Of course I can forgive you. I love you.

LILY
Aw, baby, I love you, too. I promise, no more secrets.

As she snuggles up next to him, the phone rings. She groans, and leans across the sofa to get to it.

LILY (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Hello?... What?... Wait, hang on, slow down, Ms. McPherson... Sam did WHAT???

She stares wide-eyed at Josh, who gives her a quizzical look.

CUT TO:

INT. AUSTIN LIVING ROOM

George opens the front door, and sees Harrison standing there.

GEORGE
Okay, see, this takes nerve, you
showing up here like this.

Harrison reaches the obvious conclusion.

HARRISON
Sam's been here.

GEORGE
Yeah, Sam's been here.

HARRISON
(annoyed)
Well, I'm sure you enjoyed the
opportunity to let her cry on your
shoulder.

GEORGE
(pointing to his cast)
See this? This is the only thing
that's saving your ass right now.

MRS. AUSTIN (O.S.)
(calling)
George!

George looks over his shoulder.

GEORGE
Just a minute, Mom!

MRS. AUSTIN (O.S.)
It's Sam's mom on the phone! She
says Sam's run away!

GEORGE
What??

He turns back—but Harrison is already running down the drive.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKE'S BEDROOM

Brooke hasn't moved; she is still sitting on the edge of the bed, sobbing. Finally, she reaches up and wipes her tears away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE
(whispering)
She's right...

She stands up abruptly, and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Brooke comes down the back stairs, turns into the kitchen and opens one of the drawers. After rummaging through the contents, she pulls out a long, thin key. Then she walks out through the patio door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Brooke makes a sharp turn from the patio door, and walks along a narrow brick path to a shed which sits in the corner of the yard.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHED - CONTINUOUS

The shed is fairly small—eight by twelve feet—extremely cluttered, and dark except for the light from a couple of tiny windows—and that which pours in through the door when Brooke opens it. She goes straight to the far corner and tosses aside a few boxes to uncover a steamer trunk. She opens the trunk, reaches in, and from underneath a pile of odds and ends pulls out a small metal lockbox. She lets the lid of the trunk slam shut, and walks out of the shed without replacing any of the boxes, or closing the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. FERERRA HOUSE

Harrison is walking up to the front door when his cell phone rings. Stopping, he yanks the phone out and pulls it open.

HARRISON
(into the phone)
Sam???

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM

Brooke is standing in the middle of the room, phone in hand.

BROOKE
(into the phone)
Sorry, wrong sister.

HARRISON
Brooke... Sam, she—

BROOKE
(wiping her eyes)
I know. Look, can you come over here? Right away?

HARRISON
I have to find Sam—

BROOKE
(raggedly)
Everyone's out looking for her. Harrison, please...

HARRISON
Okay, all right... I'll be there in a few minutes.

BROOKE
Please hurry.

Brooke hangs up the phone, sniffing, and walks slowly over to Mackenzie's crib. Leaning over, she manages a bit of a smile at the sight of the baby. She reaches down and tickles her, tearing up again.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
(sobbing)
I'm sorry... I know...you won't understand... I...I...

Mackenzie gurgles up at Brooke innocently. Brooke picks her up and cradles her tightly, rocking her back and forth.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Your mom was right... It shouldn't have happened. None of it should have happened.

Tearfully, she kisses Mackenzie's forehead, and sets her back down in the crib.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I'll always love you, Mac... I hope you believe that.

She turns away.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUS STATION - LATER

The clock on the wall reads 2:28.

Sam is fidgeting impatiently. Suddenly she gets up, and picks up her duffel bag. Walking over to the women's restroom, she disappears through the door—and a moment later Jane comes rushing into the waiting area, looking around frantically. Her cell phone rings, and she digs it out of her bag.

JANE

(into the phone)

Hello?

MIKE (O.S.)

Jane?

JANE

I'm at the bus station. She's not here.

MIKE (O.S.)

Art called—he struck out at the train station. I'm almost to the airport now.

Jane turns around and heads for the doors.

JANE

I just don't know what to do. I—where do we even start looking, if she's just...out there somewhere?

MIKE (O.S.)

Honey, we will find her. I promise. No matter what it takes.

She steps out onto the sidewalk.

JANE

Maybe I should talk to George again. She might have said...I don't know, something...to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE (O.S.)

Oh, hey, while you're there, you should see if they some kind of schedule.

JANE

(bleakly)

You think she's already gone?

MIKE (O.S.)

I don't know... We have to be prepared, though.

JANE

(sighs)

All right.

She puts the phone away, turns on her heel and walks back into the station—and practically runs into Sam, coming out of the restroom.

SAM

(eyes widening)

Mom?

JANE

Sam!

Jane hugs her tightly for a moment, then holds her at arms-length.

JANE (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

You didn't even leave a note this time.

Something approaching panic appears in Sam's eyes, and she takes a step backward, looking like she might actually turn and run. Jane quickly abandons her irritation, and puts out a placating hand.

JANE (CONT'D)

Sam—please... I just want us to talk.

Carefully, she slides her arm around Sam's shoulder and guides her in the direction of the seats.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE

Harrison walks up to the front door, intending to ring the bell, but there is a note taped to the door, so he pulls it off and unfolds it.

HARRISON
 (reading)
 Harrison, please look after Mac
 until Dad or Jane come home.
 Brooke.
 (beat)
 P.S.: I'm sorry for everything.
 Please forgive me.

Taped to the bottom of the note is a house key; shaking his head in confusion, he pulls it off and uses it to open the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The first thing Harrison does is go over to the crib and check on Mackenzie. After making sure that she's all right, he stands in the middle of the room, hands on hips, at a loss as to what to do next.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUS STATION

Sam and Jane are sitting together. Sam is hunched over, and as she speaks, she never looks up from the floor.

SAM
 ...I felt so...empty...like they'd
 just...reached in, and torn out my
 heart...

JANE
 (holding her)
 Oh, baby, I'm so sorry.

SAM
 And then...I ran to George.
 (laughs bitterly)
 Another disaster. After that...I
 couldn't face anyone...I just...I
 had to get away...from...from
 everything...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gently, Jane lifts Sam's head up.

JANE

I can't imagine how awful this must be for you, but...I want you to come home with me now.

SAM

You're not just ordering me?

JANE

(chuckles ruefully)
Believe me, if I thought that locking you in your room until you were eighteen would do any good...

The moment of relative levity passes.

JANE (CONT'D)

Sam...I can't stop you from running away. I know that. But it's not the answer. It really isn't. Now, I don't know how we're going to be able to work this out. But I really hope you'll try, because...if you left, a lot of people would miss you. Your mother included.

SAM

(wavering)
I don't want to go away...but...

JANE

Just...come home with me. All right? Just for today. We'll just make it through today. That's all I'm asking. And we won't worry about tomorrow until tomorrow.

For a long time Sam makes no response at all. Then, finally, she shrugs, ever so slightly. Jane decides to take that as a yes, and hugs her tightly.

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh! I have to call Mike and tell him that I found you. And Art.

SAM

(groans)
Oh, no. He didn't...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JANE

He came over as soon as he got your e-mail. He was very concerned.

Sam covers her eyes.

SAM

Oh, God...

JANE

I'm sure he'll be understanding.

SAM

I'm sure he'll fire me.

JANE

I'm sure he won't. And if he tries, I'll just have to talk to him.

SAM

(mortified)
God, please don't.

Jane stands up and pulls Sam to her feet.

JANE

Let's go home.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND LILY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Josh is sitting on the sofa, watching Lily pace back and forth in front of him.

JOSH

Lily, just face it—if you had any idea where to start looking, you'd be out there looking.

LILY

(frustrated)
I know, I know. I just can't stand feeling helpless like this...

Josh reaches out and pulls her down onto the sofa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH

She'll be all right. I mean,
she's Sam. She's always all
right.

Lily curls up next to him.

JOSH (CONT'D)

About the football thing...

LILY

Oh, I was just being completely
paranoid. If it's what you want—
I don't want you to start giving
things up for me.

JOSH

Naw, I don't really want to. I
mean, I'll help get Stankowski
ready to play, but I'm not suiting
up myself.

LILY

You sure?

JOSH

Yeah... It felt good being part
of the team again and all, but...
it's just not me anymore.

A moment of silence passes between them.

LILY

Josh?

JOSH

Yeah?

LILY

Did you ever call Coach Krupps and
tell him you couldn't make it to
practice today?

Josh's mouth drops open and he leaps up, leaving Lily to fall,
flailing, into the empty space she is now leaning on.

JOSH

I totally forgot! Man, Coach is
gonna kill me!

He rushes to the phone and picks it up.

LILY

Sorry...I guess it's my fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSH
 (dialing)
 No, Lil, it's not— Dammit! It's
 busy!

He slams the phone down, making Lily jump; immediately he
 throws his hands up, contrite.

JOSH (CONT'D)
 Whoa, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

LILY
 (annoyed)
 See, this is why I didn't want to
 tell you. I don't want you to be
 afraid to get mad around me!

JOSH
 Well, what am I supposed to do,
 Lily? I don't what happened
 before to happen again.

She gazes at him soberly.

LILY
 Josh...we need help. I need help.

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM

The front door opens; Jane and Sam walk in—and pull up short
 upon seeing Harrison there. Sam's expression turns bitter and
 she looks away.

JANE
 Harrison, what are you doing here?

He puts up his hands defensively.

HARRISON
 Hey, this wasn't my idea, okay?
 Brooke called, she asked me to
 come over; when I got here, she
 was gone, there was just a note
 asking me to take care of Mac
 until you got home.

JANE
 What??

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harrison hands over Brooke's note, which Jane reads, puzzled.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCQUEEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mike pulls his car into the drive; and a moment later, Fleischer parks on the street behind him. Mike gets out and walks down to the sidewalk, as Fleischer also climbs out of his car.

MIKE

Art, I really want to thank you for helping out today. I know you must be a very busy man.

FLEISCHER

(waving a hand modestly)
I'm a columnist; I set my own hours. Besides, I think that Sam is an extraordinary young woman, with a great deal of talent.

MIKE

Look, if you wouldn't mind—do you think you could stay and talk to her? I know she really looks up to you—and I'm not sure if she's listening to any of the rest of us.

FLEISCHER

(nods)
Of course. I don't mind at all.

Mike leads Fleischer around the side of the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PATIO - CONTINUOUS

The two men are continuing the conversation.

MIKE

...she actually ran away once before. Well, for a day, anyway. But it still doesn't seem like her.

FLEISCHER

I know—it's because she's normally so self-possessed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLEISCHER (CONT'D)
Then something like this happens,
and we have to remind ourselves
that she's only seventeen.

They are about to go inside when Mike spots something odd:
the door of the shed hanging open.

MIKE
(putting up a hand)
Hang on a minute...

Leaving Fleischer at the patio door, Mike walks over to the
shed and peers inside.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Brooke?

It's obvious at a glance that the shed is empty; but Mike
spots the misplaced and overturned boxes. Rushing to the far
side of the shed, he throws open the lid of the steamer trunk
and frantically goes through the junk inside.

MIKE (CONT'D)
(ashen)
Oh, my— Brooke?! BROOKE!!

CUT TO:

INT. MCQUEEN LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The silent tension between Harrison and Sam and Jane is
shattered by Mike running into the room from behind them, with
Fleischer on his heels.

MIKE
Where's Brooke?!

JANE
(irritated)
She's not here.
(holding up the note)
She took off. And she left Mac
alone, even if it was for only a
few—

MIKE
(cutting her off)
We have to find her. We have to
find her now!

Harrison, Sam and Jane all look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE

Why?

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNEDY HIGH ATHLETIC FIELD

On a grassy knoll overlooking the deserted track and football field, Brooke is sitting cross-legged, with the lockbox on the ground in front of her. Slowly, methodically, she digs the key out of her pocket, unlocks the latch, opens the lid of the box.

And lifts out the revolver lying inside.

SUPER: TO BE CONTINUED

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END