

Payback Incorporated

FADE IN:

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Male fingers nervously fiddle with an engagement ring.

The fingers belong to CLIENT, who sits across from SAM (late 30's) in a therapist-style setting. We see the only the back of Sam's chair, but hear his voice.

CLIENT

I woke up this morning and I didn't know what to do. I, I...

SAM

If that were true, you wouldn't be here. You are a man who knows what to do.

CLIENT

To walk in on them like that. It was horrible.

SAM

What did you expect?

The Client indicates the ring.

SAM

Are you kidding?

CLIENT

(distraught)

I met her parents. She met mine. We were talking about floral arrangements, guest lists, private schools for kids. All that shit.

SAM

What's next?

CLIENT

If there was some way I could forgive her. I've read that forgiveness can be the most powerful force in the universe. That the ultimate goal of any lasting relationship is trust and forgiveness.

SAM

I'm sure that's what... what was her name?

CLIENT

Cassie.

SAM

I'm sure that's what Cassie was thinking while she was banging your friend in the crotch-less panties you bought her for Valentine's Day.

The Client puts his face in his hands.

SAM

Look, you've been lied to. You've been lied to by old girlfriends. You've been lied to by self-help books and Dr. Phil. You've been lied to by romantic comedies and fairy tales. These women don't need forgiveness. What they need is to be taught a lesson.

CLIENT

Okay. How?

The chair finally spins around to reveal Sam. He is gorgeous, with a sly smile on his face.

SAM

Well, I just might have a few ideas.(beat) So, cash is cool with you?

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY- DAY

Sam briskly walks down the hall to an elevator with JEN (late 20s, bookish, glasses), who takes notes and tries to keep up.

SAM

(rapid fire)

Cassandra Alexander. Lower East Side, of course. Prom queen. Wants kids but needs to prove herself first. Best friend, Kathy Dunhill, is a pediatrician at St... Whatever. Find out where they have their Sex And The City bitch-fests and do the table-close-by thing. Here's the social security number. Get a credit score and find out if Daddy is paying the bills or if she actually has a mind of her own.

The elevator door opens, and he gets in.

SAM
Think you can have an outline by
tomorrow?

JEN
Jesus, Sam, it's Friday night.

SAM
That's why I hired the best.

She hops on the elevator before it closes.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

JEN
What's the timeline?

SAM
Month-and-a-half max. Dork-boy
upstairs was her last chance to get
hitched before the big three-o.
I'm sure she's already picked out
her Baby Einstein collection.

JEN
This will be one of your shortest
windows yet. You sure?

Sam shoots a "give me a break" look.

JEN
You're the boss.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Exiting the elevator...

SAM
As you know, I've got four drops
this week, so needless to say, you
are on call for the next seven
days. Got the Nextel?

She holds up a two-way walkie talkie.

SAM
Spare?

She holds up another. Sam smiles. Jen signals the valet as
they exit the building.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

JEN

By the way, your accountant called. Something about a storefront for lease.

SAM

Well, I'm on my way to the bank right now. I'll deal with him later. Then it's the first in this week's series.

JEN

(skeptical)

Okay. Let's hear it.

SAM

(relishing the challenge)

Tonight, dinner with Nancy at La Jonquille, where I reveal that I'm not really Jewish. Sunday, Barbara at Coney Island, when I finally admit that I'm sterile. Tuesday night, Sandy at the apartment, where she finds the thong in the bed. And Thursday is Anne the gold digger at the theater, when the credit card gets declined and she learns of my bankruptcy.

Jen is impressed as Sam's car pulls up behind him. He tips the valet and starts to get in.

JEN

(smiling)

You are one sick son-of-a-bitch.

SAM

I've told you a million times, sweetheart; I don't think up these nightmares... they do. We get paid for making them come true.

He gets in the car and speeds off.

MONTAGE - SAM AT WORK

EXT. APARTMENT STOOP - NIGHT

Sam waits, and NANCY comes out of the door and embraces him. They kiss and head down the steps.

EXT. TREE-LINED NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Sam pulls up to the curb as a sweet BARBARA watches the neighborhood kids play hopscotch. She is joyous when Sam's car arrives and jumps in.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

Sam and SANDY kiss as they wait for the elevator. The doors open and she gets in first. He hesitates, and she pulls out a pair of handcuffs from her purse with a wicked grin. He gets in.

EXT. THEATER VALET PARKING - DAY

Sam gets out of the car and comes around to open the door for ANNE. She gets out, fixes her skirt and marches ahead of Sam. She is a woman in charge. Sam grins and follows behind.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sam and Nancy are seated by the maître d'. Nancy looks nervous and giddy.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - DAY

Sam and Barbara play various carnival games and win stuffed animals. Sam gives all the animals to a stranger's child. Barbara swoons.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam sits handcuffed to the bed as Sandy does a cheesy striptease.

EXT. THEATER BOX OFFICE - DAY

Sam and Anne wait in line for tickets. She is impatient. They finally make it to the window and Sam pulls out his wallet.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sam and Nancy talk. Nancy's face goes from happiness to horror.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - DAY

Sam and Barbara sit on a bench talking as Barbara starts to look more and more confused.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam and Sandy revel in the moment after. He gets out of bed. Sandy starts to feel something at her feet and pulls out another woman's thong.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Sam holds his credit card, trying to explain something to a rather perturbed Anne.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nancy cries and yells as she escapes the table. Sam hurriedly follows.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - DAY

Barbara sobs in Sam's arms as loads of children walk by.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sandy shrieks at Sam while waving the other woman's thong.

EXT. THEATER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Anne waits expressionless for a taxi as Sam tries to explain.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Nancy slaps Sam.

Barbara slaps Sam.

Sandy slaps Sam.

Sam winces, awaiting a slap as Anne gets into a taxi without expression. Sam exhales.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Jen comes in with a manila folder.

SAM
How did we do?

Jen hands him the folder.

JEN
Nice to see you too.

SAM
Come back in a couple of hours.

JEN
Can I get you something to eat?

He becomes engrossed in the dossier of Cassie Alexander. Jen starts to leave.

SAM
Jen. Nice to see you. Thanks for everything.

Jen smiles and exits. Sam studies the dossier which is filled with photos, college transcripts, love letters to the client and so on. There is a picture of the client and Cassie at dance lessons.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam has crumpled papers on his desk and his tie loose.

Jen comes into the office. Sam puts on his jacket getting ready to leave.

JEN
All set?

SAM
Come here a sec. Take your shoes off.

Sam goes over to a stereo and puts on a Glenn Miller song. He takes Jen's hand.

SAM
Remember how to do this?

JEN
I think so.

They start to swing dance, and it is clear he is an expert. After a few choice moves, they stop.

JEN
So, the Royal Ballroom?

SAM
Yep.

He kisses her on the forehead and leaves.

JEN
(chuckling)
Amazing.

INT. ROYAL BALLROOM - NIGHT

Sam watches a crowd of swing dancers. He spots CASSIE and then goes over. He sits down next to her in feigned exasperation.

CASSIE
You okay?

SAM
Yeah. Just a little intimidated.

CASSIE
Well, that's why we're here, right?

Sam shrugs. Cassie stands.

CASSIE
Come on. There's no point in coming if you don't try.

SAM
I'm not sure.

CASSIE
Don't worry. I won't bite.

Sam nervously gets up and they go to the dance floor. They start to dance and Sam is very clumsy. He gets progressively better and Cassie encourages him the whole way. In no time, they are laughing and having fun.

INT. BALLROOM LOBBY - LATER

Sam and Cassie put on their coats.

SAM
Thanks for being so patient. I
hope you weren't too bored.

CASSIE
You were great.

SAM
You're being generous.

CASSIE
Really. I think a few more times,
and you'll be an expert.

SAM
It's just the crowd. When there's
too many people, I get flustered.

Cassie considers for a moment and pulls out a pen and paper.

CASSIE
Tell you what; here's my number.
We could practice together and then
come next week and wow everyone.

SAM
You really don't have to do that.

CASSIE
I don't mind. I've got a big
living room. I won't let you break
anything.

Sam takes the number.

SAM
Wow. That's very kind. Are you
sure?

CASSIE
Positive. How's Tuesday night?

SAM
Thanks. I really appreciate it.

CASSIE
Okay. See you then. It was nice
to meet you, Thomas.

SAM
(beat)
Call me Tommy.

CASSIE
Ciao, Tommy.

SAM
Ciao.

Cassie leaves. Sam smirks.

SAM
Ciao indeed.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Sam and Cassie dance at the ballroom.

Sam and Cassie stroll in the park.

Sam and Cassie buy groceries.

Sam and Cassie make dinner.

Cassie receives flowers at work.

Sam buys an engagement ring.

Sam brings Cassie breakfast in bed. Cassie finds the ring on the tray and cries.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Sam and Jen sit at a table.

JEN
We've been here an hour.

SAM
I know. We'll give it another
thirty minutes.

JEN
Why didn't you do the thong in the
bed?

SAM
I just wanted to give this a try
and then we can be done today.

JEN
You are always thinking, and I'm
always up for new things. We make
a great team.

SAM
(distracted)
Well, if more women were like you,
I probably wouldn't be in this
business in the first place.

They smile at each other affectionately.

JEN
(summoning courage)
Sam, can I tell you something?

SAM
Hold up. It's showtime.

Sam spots Cassie in a mirror coming into the cafe. He waits
for her to see them. He takes Jen's hand.

SAM
Three...two...one... blast off.

Sam leans over, and the two of them kiss passionately. He
keeps his eyes on the mirror to make sure Cassie sees the
whole thing.

Cassie's face goes from confusion to a quivering chin, and
she rushes out of the cafe.

Sam and Jen stop the act. Jen bats her eyes and is a bit
surprised how much she enjoyed it.

SAM
(back to business)
Perfect. Schedule an appointment
with the client for the debrief and
send him some champagne.

JEN
(suddenly back to reality)
No problem.

Sam stands up, leans over and kisses Jen on the forehead. He
pulls out an envelope and puts it on the table.

SAM
Here's a little bonus for this
thing. You were great.

JEN
Just... just doing my job.

SAM
See you at the office.

Sam leaves. Jen sits somewhat bewildered.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam walks to the elevator with the Cassie-client. The client has a rather distant look on his face.

SAM
It was easier than I thought and we finished early.

CLIENT
Well, thanks. I, um, well. Thanks.

SAM
Look. You hired me to do a job and I did it. Christ, you're a lawyer. You know what you have to do to win.

CLIENT
Yeah. It's like, when I get in the Zone, the other side doesn't know what hits them.

SAM
Then you know what I'm talking about. Okay, Jen will be in touch to wrap things up for you. Take care.

They shake hands and the bewildered Client gets on the elevator.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Sam sits at the bar, drinking champagne.

SAM
Bobby, can I get another?

BARTENDER
I'll just bring the bottle. I'm sure you are aware of the price.

SAM
Trust me, I earned it this week.
In fact, give the house a round.

BARTENDER
You did have a good week.

A waitress takes the drinks to the few customers in the bar. Various people raise their glasses in thanks. Two MEN eyeball Sam suspiciously as the drinks arrive. One of them comes over to Sam at the bar.

MAN
Thanks for the drinks. Win the lottery?

SAM
No problem. No. Just finished some business.

MAN
What business you in?

SAM
I'm a consultant.

MAN
Yeah, what's your area?

SAM
(feeling tipsy)
Women.

MAN
That something you get paid for?

SAM
You have no idea.

MAN
Well, thanks for the drink.

SAM
Don't mention it.

The man goes back to his table. He and his friend talk briefly and then leave.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAR - NIGHT

Sam comes out of the bar trying to find his car. He beeps his clicker, locates his car and then heads across the parking lot.

As he reaches his car, he is struck from behind. The two men from the bar kick and punch him. As Sam takes the final blow, the man who spoke to him in the bar leans over.

MAN
How does that feel, hotshot? By
the way, Stacey says "hello."

The two men leave. Sam cannot get up.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Jen stands by Sam's bed. He is bruised and bandaged.

JEN
How you feeling?

SAM
Like two creepy guys beat the shit
out of me. Who the Hell is Stacey?

JEN
Stacey Filander?

SAM
I guess.

JEN
Blonde. Stacked. Worked as a dog-
walker.

Sam doesn't recall.

JEN
You stood her up for a Jimmy Buffet
concert and then acted drunk in
front of her brothers.

SAM
Oh, right.

JEN
Apparently, the brothers didn't
forget.

SAM
Isn't that a bit extreme? I mean
shit, so I dumped their sister.

JEN
I figure it is the cost of doing
business.

SAM
Well, the cost is too high.

JEN
What are you talking about?

SAM
I'm retiring.

JEN
(a little too emphatic)
You can't do that! I mean, we are
such a good team. There's too much
money to make. Sam, I...

SAM
It's been a good stretch, Jen-Jen.
You knew this day would come. This
beat-down just sealed it a bit
earlier than we planned.

JEN
Are you sure?

SAM
Very.

JEN
(resigned)
Well, I took the liberty of packing
your bags and filled the gas tank.

SAM
Thank God. Get me out of here.

JEN
I'll get your prescription and the
car.

SAM
Thanks.

Jen leaves. Sam struggles to get up.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

As he starts to walk out of his room, he spots an OLD MAN dozing off in a chair in a nearby room. He holds chocolates, flowers and a stuffed tiger. The flowers drop to the floor and Sam looks around to see if someone is going to pick them up. No one does, so he limps over and picks them up. As he does, the old man wakes up.

OLD MAN
Oh, did I drop those? Thanks.

SAM
No trouble.

OLD MAN
You look like you've seen the wrong
end of a hockey match.

SAM
Long story. You?

The Old Man indicates the room.

OLD MAN
My wife. Stroke. This might be the
finish line.

SAM
I'm sorry to hear that.

OLD MAN
Well, if it is, I may as well throw
in the towel too.

SAM
Bit over the top, don't you think?

The old man considers Sam for a second.

OLD MAN
I'm just talking. But one look at
you and I can tell you wouldn't
understand.

SAM
That right?

OLD MAN
But I hope someday you will.

SAM
Well, see you around. Take it easy.

Sam leaves and looks back before he heads out the door. He
sees a nurse bring the old man a vase for the flowers.

EXT. HOLY GRAIL COMIC BOOK SHOP - DAY

Sam enters the shop where his friend, DEXTER (30's, fat,
scruffy looking), who eats a pizza and reads a comic from
behind the counter.

DEXTER

Well, I've seen you look like crap before, but this is some kind of record.

SAM

Long story. Look, I've got news.

DEXTER

Let me guess, you seduced a woman and then dumped her and made a bunch of money by doing it.

SAM

Um, well, yeah. But that's not the news. I want to open the shop ahead of schedule.

DEXTER

Really? You mean it? How are we going to do? We don't have enough money yet. We don't have number fifteen yet.

SAM

We got enough to open. And those guys will be moving out of the used record store in a month. That's the place we wanted anyway.

DEXTER

Number fifteen? That was the whole idea; open with the complete Amazing Fantasy collection intact.

SAM

Well, you've got a month to find it.

DEXTER

How am I gonna pay for it?

SAM

Look, we'll open whether or not we have it. For obvious reasons, I've got to get out of my current line of work.

DEXTER

You look like something in Tales From the Crypt.

SAM
Yeah, but in two weeks, I'll look
great again. You are hopeless.
See ya.

INT. SAM'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Sam enters the house with some groceries. It is a modest house, but right on the beach. Sam goes about opening up the house. Later, he collapses on the couch and falls asleep.

INT. SAM'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Sam wakes, cooks a healthy breakfast and works-out on the beach.

INT. SAM'S BEACH HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Sam contemplates his bruised face in the mirror.

SAM
At least they didn't ruin the hair.

Eventually he goes into the living room and retrieves the key on the table. He goes to a locked door and opens it.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Sam enters a room that has meticulous shelves filled with comic books in order by series and date. He takes out a few choices and sits in a large recliner. He carefully takes a comic book out of its plastic wrapper and reads.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Sam finishes reading with a couple of empty Diet Coke cans on the table. He puts the last comic back in its wrapping and re-shelves them. He then walks over to a collection labeled "Amazing Fantasy." They are all in order. Only #15 is missing.

SAM
(longingly)
Where are you? Where ARE you?

He pulls out his cell phone and dials "DEXTER."

DEXTER (V.O.)
Holy Grail. This is Dexter.

SAM
We got what we need.

DEXTER (V.O.)
We need number fifteen.

SAM
We've been working on this collection for three years. My money and your connections have done it. No fluff. Just classics. We are the best at this.

DEXTER (V.O.)
We need number fifteen.

SAM
We don't have that kind of money. You need to find it for half the going rate.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Sam, I've got feelers out to everyone I know.

SAM
Well, start feeling up some new people. I'll be back soon.

DEXTER (V.O.)
How's your face?

SAM
Better than yours.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Geek.

SAM
Dork.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Nerd.

SAM
Dweeb.

Sam hangs up.

SAM
(to self)
Am I actually friends with that
guy?

INT. CASTAWAYS BAR - NIGHT

Sam sits in an island-themed bar surveying the women. He has pretty much recovered from his injuries.

He spots two women at a table and then gets the bartender's attention. He points out the women. The bartender nods.

A minute later, the bartender brings two drinks to the women and then points to Sam. The women giggle and then wave him over.

He goes to the table. With a perfect smile and very confident...

SAM
Hi. I'm Sam.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam's eyes open and he rubs his face. He looks to his right to see one of the sleeping girls. He smiles. He looks to the left and there is the other girl.

He gets out of bed without waking either of them, gets dressed quietly and leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sam takes out his keys and nonchalantly walks to his car and gets in.

INT. SAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam takes out his phone and dials Dexter.

DEXTER (V.O.)
(sleepy)
Huh?

SAM
Coming back tomorrow.

DEXTER (V.O.)
That's super Sam. Did you have to call me at eight in the morning to tell me?

SAM
I've got kind of a retirement party thing, and then we'll get started on the shop.

Pause.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Once again, that's super. Did you have to call me at eight in the morning to tell me?

SAM
You know, you haven't been out to the island for a long time. You should come and check out the local scenery, if you know what I mean.

Long pause.

DEXTER (V.O.)
That's super, Sam. Did you have to call me at eight in the morning to tell me?

SAM
Will you stop saying that? I'm in a good mood, okay?

DEXTER (V.O.)
Let me guess; have a good time last night?

SAM
You have no idea.

Sam hangs up and starts the car. He looks at himself in the mirror and gives himself a wink.

INT. RESTAURANT, PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Sam and about some old clients, ROGER, BILL, RICHARD are laughing it up over bottles of wine and a finished dinner. All of the men are rather well-heeled.

ROGER

And she's crying to ME about this asshole she met who dumped her by text message. It was brilliant. Sam, that was awesome.

SAM

Roger has such good taste in women that I've done three jobs for him. He paid for most of my retirement.

Everyone laughs and clinks Roger's glass.

BILL

How do you know the best way to do it?

SAM

It's a measured response. Richard, yours thought she was your mother, so I became her father. Steve, you had that girlfriend who wanted to tie you up and get kinky so I beat her at her own game. My assistant actually saw her take all her leather and stuff to the Goodwill after I was done with her.

More laughter.

SAM

But the ones that aren't so obvious are better when they are done right.

RICHARD

What do you mean?

SAM

Most of my clients just want me to hop in the sack with them and then dump 'em. But if you really want to get it done right, you have to find the emotional underbelly.

The guys are rapt and it is clear that Sam is a bit tipsy.

SAM

What are we really talking about here? It's a game. All that phony concern that gets heaped on us is reconnaissance for when they need it.

And we're suckers for letting them in 'cause we're all going to get psychoanalyzed when they are feeling insecure.

A few guys nod in agreement. They hate that one.

SAM

So, you invent a fake past that will make them feel sorry for you. In turn, she will tell you some deep, dark secrets. This is, of course, after the perfunctory mixed CD of music showing her you how to cook. Women are stunned when you know how to cook.

(beat)

Just act like that gay friend they all seem to have.

All the guys laugh and cheer.

SAM

But that stuff is easy. It's when you pull out the dark secrets and lay that on them. That's what you guys really pay me for.

A WAITRESS enters.

WAITRESS

Can I get you guys anything else?

STEVE

How about a piece of ass?

Drunken laughter.

WAITRESS

How about the check instead. Who's paying tonight fellas?

Each of the men hand her a credit card.

WAITRESS

Uh, so I guess I'll be splitting this six ways? Be right back.

The waitress leaves, rolling her eyes.

ROGER

(raising a glass)

Here's to Sam, the King of Payback. What will we do without him?

STEVE
Come on, Sam, don't retire. We
need you.

SAM
You guys are on your own. I'm out.

RICHARD
To the king!

Everyone toasts.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

As Sam enters his office lobby, Jen stops him.

SAM
'Morning. What's up with the
movers?

JEN
Sam, there is someone already in
your office. This is the pushiest
asshole I've ever seen. I mean,
he's worse than you.

SAM
Did you call security?

JEN
No. He wants to hire you.

SAM
Jen it's sunset time. We're outta
here.

JEN
Like I said, he's worse than you.

SAM
I'll get rid him. When are the
movers coming?

JEN
Tomorrow at three. But this guy...

Sam puts up his hand and walks into his office.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

JACK STODDARD (50's, burly) sits at Sam's desk.

SAM
 (indicating his desk)
 As if you didn't make a bad enough
 impression already.

JACK
 Is that anyway to talk to your best
 client?

SAM
 I don't have clients anymore.

JACK
 I've got something you want.

Jack holds up two fingers.

SAM
 What, is that a peace sign? The
 sixties were a long time ago, dude.

Jack doesn't move.

SAM
 What? Two? Two what?

JACK
 Million.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Sam's head pops out of his office, into the reception area,
 where Jen is packing boxes.

SAM
 Psst. Cancel the movers.

Sam's head disappears.

JEN
 (to self)
 Yes!

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Back in his office, Sam pours a cup of coffee and tries to
 act nonchalant.

SAM
 Coffee?

Jack shakes his head.

SAM

Why?

JACK

I don't drink it.

SAM

No. Why so much money?

JACK

Because I don't think you can do it, but I want to see you try.

SAM

So, this is more about a challenge to me, not about her.

JACK

A little of both. Trust me, I can afford it.

SAM

What business you in?

JACK

Not that it is any of your business, I do a little bit of, uh, creative shipping.

SAM

Of what?

Jack raises an eyebrow.

SAM

Fine. Tell me about her. What kind of offense is worth two million dollars?

JACK

She's the Wicked Witch. She's a dragon. You'll fall for her in no time, and in no time, she'll rip your heart out.

SAM

My job is to be immune to all that. What did she do to you?

JACK

Do you really need to know?

SAM
No, but I'd feel bad hurting
someone who didn't deserve it.

JACK
Don't you think my paycheck will
help you over that little hump?

SAM
Good point. (beat) Okay, what's her
favorite movie?

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Sam sits in a chair, talking to a male STYLIST.

SAM
I need to think about highlights.
I need a little something, but
without looking too gay.

STYLIST
(slightly offended)
Excuse me?

SAM
Knock it off. You know what I
mean?

STYLIST
The funny thing is that I always
do.

INT. GYM - DAY

Sam, with his personal TRAINER, does crunches.

TRAINER
Good. Very good. Damn, Sam,
what's gotten into you?

SAM
You said I needed sculpting. So,
let's sculpt.

TRAINER
Cool. Great. How many of those are
you going to do?

SAM
(considers)
Two million.

INT. EYE GLASS STORE - DAY

Sam talks to a SALESPERSON who is clearly annoyed. A dozen frames are on the counter.

SAM

No, I need something that an architect might wear, but without being too professorial. So there is an angular look, but without pretense. You know what I mean.

SALESPERSON

(sarcastically)

Oh, I think I have exactly what you are looking for.

The salesperson exits.

Sam's cell rings and Sam answers.

SAM

Dex.

DEXTER (V.O.)

(ecstatic)

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

SAM

I take it you got my message.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

SAM

Yes. That's right, two million dollars.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

SAM

Call that guy about leasing the shop.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

SAM

I love you too.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

Sam hangs up.

SAM
What a freak.

He picks up some frames.

SAM
These might work.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam sits at his desk with an open file labeled CLAIRE DUPREE. There are photos, financial reports and a timeline of her life. Jen enters with some Chinese food.

SAM
Don't be ridiculous.

JEN
Sam, she's not going to fall for you if you look like you've just been liberated from Auschwitz.

SAM
I know what I'm doing, Jen. Is this all you have? I mean, you've had a week-and-a-half.

JEN
There's good stuff there. I'll get more soon. What's the angle going to be?

SAM
I'm not sure. All that stuff Jack told me doesn't square with what I've found.

JEN
How can I help?

SAM
(reaching for papers)
This conversation you over-heard where she talks about the boyfriend prior to Jack.

JEN
Yeah, she threw a tantrum in a burger joint?

SAM
That's not what he said.

JEN
Who? Jack?

SAM
No, the old boyfriend.

JEN
You talked to the old boyfriend?

Sam gives Jen a curious look.

SAM
I don't mean to alarm you, but I do
this for a living.

JEN
Like I said, what's the angle?

SAM
She seems like a tough cookie, so
charming her won't be the way to
go. She also sounds competitive,
so I'll just have to figure out how
to beat her at something.

JEN
Like what?

SAM
Whatever she's good at.
(beat)
Go home. You work too hard.

JEN
Look who's talking.

He waves without looking and then sits and stares at a photo
of Claire.

INT. SAM'S CAR - NIGHT

Sam sits parked across the street from a pool hall.

A group of guys stand in awe of the woman running the table.
This is CLAIRE (30's, sexy, in a leather-jacket-and-jeans
kind of way). When she wins the game, the loser puts money
down and there are high fives all around.

Sam watches for a while longer, he gets out of the car and
goes into the bar.

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Sam plays pool by himself. He is awful. This is perhaps the one skill he doesn't have. Claire watches from the bar.

He finally gives up and then heads to the bar the bar.

SAM

Hi. Have you been watching long?

CLAIRE

Long enough. You have other talents, I presume?

SAM

God, I hope so.

CLAIRE

What are you drinking?

SAM

What kind of martinis do they have?

CLAIRE

(smirking)

Um, they don't. Hey, Jimmy!

Claire holds up two fingers to the bartender. He comes over and puts two pints of beer down.

SAM

I can deal with this.

The bartender then drops a shot glass of whiskey in each, creating boilermakers.

SAM

(nervous)

I can deal with this.

CLAIRE

Cheers.

They clink glasses. She drains half of hers. He coughs.

SAM

So, where are you from?

CLAIRE

Wow, just like a first date in the movies. I'm from Manhattan. Ever heard of it? What about you?

SAM
Um, Toledo originally.

CLAIRE
That explains leaving. Let's see, what comes next? Oh, what do you do for a living?

SAM
Consultant.

CLAIRE
You're unemployed.

SAM
No, really. Marketing mostly. You?

CLAIRE
Portfolio manager. Nothing big time. I'm just getting started.

SAM
Really? You don't look... I mean.

CLAIRE
Ah ah, books and covers. Didn't your mom ever teach you that?

A group of POOL GUYS put quarters into the pool table.

POOL GUY
Claire! You in or what?

CLAIRE
Be there in a sec! (to Sam) I got to do this. Sticking around?

SAM
Sure.

CLAIRE
Good.

Claire wins another game. After, she waives Sam over.

CLAIRE
Want to learn?

SAM
Sure. This won't be pretty.

Sam gets ready to break.

CLAIRE

Hold on.

She comes up behind and puts her arms around him to show how to use the cue.

CLAIRE

Bend your knees. Good. Loosen your grip, like you're holding someone's hand. Now keep it smooth, but you've got to strike it hard.

Claire steps back to watch. Sam summons all of his concentration. He strikes as hard as he can and the cue ball sails off the table and smashes the pitcher of beer of the defeated players.

POOL GUY

Jesus Christ! Damn, Claire. Where did you find this guy?!

SAM

Shit. I'm sorry. Let me buy you guys another round. Hey, Jimmy!

POOL GUY

Damn skippy! What a moron!

CLAIRE

Take it easy, Max.

SAM

Look it was a mistake. I'm sorry. Relax.

POOL GUY

Did you just tell me to relax?

SAM

(to Claire)

Um, would this be a bad time to ask you for a date?

CLAIRE

(to Sam)

Yes. But, yeah, sure. I'll write my number in the blood you are about to lose.

SAM

Don't worry about it. (to Max)
Listen, my low-foreheaded friend, I fucked-up and apologized.

I'll buy you and your Cro-Magnon buddies drinks all night if you just leave us alone. Is that too complicated for you or do you need me to write it in crayon?

All the pool guys stand up. Claire shakes her head and walks away.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam sits at his desk with an oversized bandage on his nose. Jen stands in front of him, trying not to laugh.

SAM
Will you please wipe that look off your face?

JEN
Have you seen yours? Did you really say Cro-Magnon?

SAM
Just send him in.

Jen leaves smirking. Jack comes in and sits down.

SAM
Jack. Thanks for coming.

JACK
Whoa. So now you know what I've been telling you.

SAM
This? She didn't do it.

JACK
Trust me. Hang around with her and bad stuff will happen.

SAM
Perhaps. But what did she do to you? So she dumped you. But from what I have seen, it's not that you want to get back at her, but that you just hate women.

Uncomfortable pause.

JACK
Do you think I intend on paying you
two million dollars to
psychoanalyze me?

SAM
No! It's just that I need to know
the best way...

JACK
I want her destroyed. They said
you were the guy to come to. If
you're in over your head then,
let's forget the whole thing.

SAM
No. I'm your man.

JACK
(calming down)
She broke my heart okay? Is that
what you need to hear? First, I
was impressed at how cool she is,
but then she made me believe I
could be myself around her. She's
gonna rip your heart if you are not
careful.

Jack composes himself and goes back to being a tough guy.

JACK
Anyway, it will take a while for
her to trust you, so you better do
something impressive. Trying to be
macho doesn't seem to be your
strength. Now, tell me why I'm
doing what I hired you to do?

SAM
I've been doing this a long time.
I just need a couple more dates.
I'm seeing her in a week and it's
going to be on my turf.

JACK
Then I expect to see some results.

SAM
You will.

Jack leaves. Sam sits, exasperated. Jen comes in.

JEN
What's next, Slugger?

Pause.

SAM

Jam session at Tommy's Tavern.
They know me there and will let me
play anything I want.

JEN

Been a while, hasn't it? How are
your chops?

SAM

My chops are just fine, thank you.
I've been playing for fifteen
years.

JEN

What song will you play?

SAM

I don't know. Something not too
cheesy.

JEN

Like what?

SAM

I don't know. I'll figure it out
when I get there.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Sam and Claire walk. Sam wears a slightly smaller bandage on
his nose.

CLAIRE

I've been asked out before, but
never quite like that.

SAM

Getting beat-up seems to be my
specialty lately. It impresses all
the girls.

CLAIRE

How do I know it's not going to
happen in this place you are taking
me to?

SAM

We're safe tonight.

CLAIRE
I don't know. You seem like the dangerous type to me. I'm gonna need some reassurance.

SAM
Okay.

They stop walking and Sam takes out his cell and dials.

CLAIRE
What are you doing?

SAM
You wanted reassurance. Hello?
Hi, it's Sam.

VOICE (V.O.)
Samuel Patterson, what in the world are you doing calling me in the middle of the night?

SAM
Mom, it's only ten o'clock. Here, I want you to talk to someone.

Sam hands the phone to Claire.

CLAIRE
Hello?

VOICE (V.O.)
Who is this?

CLAIRE
Um, this is Claire. I'm on a date with your son.

VOICE (V.O.)
Well you tell him that he is in big trouble for calling me at this hour. Now what do you want?

CLAIRE
I guess I need to know if he's a good guy. He seems okay to me.

VOICE (V.O.)
He is a very nice young man. You are perfectly safe, but he should know better than to call his mother in the middle of the night.

CLAIRE
I couldn't agree more, Mrs.
Patterson.

VOICE (V.O.)
You sound like a very nice young
girl, so have a good time and tell
Sam he is in big trouble.

CLAIRE
I will. Sorry to wake you.

VOICE (V.O.)
Now good night!

Claire cuts off the phone and hands it back to Sam.

CLAIRE
Just when I thought I'd seen it
all. By the way, I think you're
grounded.

Claire puts her arm in Sam's and they walk again.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Claire and Sam walk in and make their way to a table. Various
people greet Sam and point to his bandaged nose.

The band swings as different people come on and off the
stage. The sax player comes to the microphone.

SAX
Alright. Everybody sounding real
good tonight.
(seeing Sam)
Hey. Long time man. You in or
what?

SAM
(to Claire)
Be back in a minute.

Sam leans over and pecks Claire on the cheek. Sam gets on to
stage and shakes hands with the band and sits at the piano.
Sam leans into the microphone.

SAM
I'm going to send this one out this
lady right over here. One, two,
one, two, three, four.

The band breaks into Witchcraft ala Frank Sinatra. Sam croons into the mic and smiles at Claire. She sits impressed.

After a minute, the BAR WAITRESS comes to the table.

BAR WAITRESS
Can I get you something Honey?

CLAIRE
Okay for now. Maybe when Sam gets back.

BAR WAITRESS
Sam?

CLAIRE
The guy on the piano. His name is Sam, isn't it?

BAR WAITRESS
(impressed)
Actually, it is. Well, well. You must be something special.

The waitress leaves. Claire, confused for a moment, goes back to enjoying the show.

The band soon finishes to polite applause and Sam returns to the table. As he is about to sit down, Claire gets up.

CLAIRE
Not bad. Want to see how it's done?

Claire steps onto the stage and has a quick chat with the band. She borrows a guitar, and in no time the band bursts into Johnny B. Goode with Claire belting out the vocal. After a minute, she plays a blistering guitar solo.

Sam sits with his mouth agape.

SAM
(to self)
This is getting ridiculous.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam rushes around collecting documents. Jen lies on a couch, snickering.

SAM
(annoyed)
It's not that funny.

More laughter.

SAM
Will you shut up already?

Sam stuffs papers into a briefcase and starts to leave.

CLAIRE
Witchcraft? Oh that's not cheesy at all, Sam. Why not Feelings or (singing) "I just called, to say, I loooooooooooooove yooooooooooooou."

Sam leaves in a huff.

Jen calms down and then realizes the time.

JEN
Shit.

She rushes out.

INT. UPTOWN CAFE - DAY

A smartly dressed woman, ANNE, sits at a table. Claire comes in wearing business attire. She can seemingly pull off any look.

ANNE
Here she is. Start talking.

CLAIRE
Can I at least order lunch?

ANNE
Relax. Get a glass of wine.

Claire sits.

CLAIRE
He's very good-looking. Actually, he's gorgeous. Quick-witted. Classy, but not in a cheesy Rolex/Armani way. I think I could be into him. I am into him. But it's only been two dates.

ANNE
You usually bail out after the first date. That is, if you make it through a first date. You trust this guy?

CLAIRE
Yes. I might even take him home.

ANNE
Don't you think that's a bit sudden?

CLAIRE
I'm just talking.

ANNE
Who's the last guy that met your family?

CLAIRE
Some dick-head.

ANNE
Wow. This is serious.

CLAIRE
Like I said, it's only been two dates.

Anne looks at Claire suspiciously.

CLAIRE
What? I told you. It's only been two dates. Okay, maybe the family can wait.

The waiter comes to take their order. At the table next to theirs sits Jen with her back to the girls. She takes notes on a note pad.

INT. JEN'S CAR - DAY

Sam watches Claire in a restaurant. There is a sudden, loud knock on the passenger window. Jen's face appears.

SAM
Jesus! You scared the crap out of me.

Jen gets in.

JEN
Hey, it's my car, dude.

SAM
What did you find out?

JEN
Well, she's definitely into you.

SAM
Really? How could you tell?

JEN
(impatient)
She used the phrase "I'm really into this guy." And utilizing my extraordinary deductive reasoning I concluded...

SAM
Okay, okay. What else?

JEN
There's already talk of you meeting the family.

SAM
Already?

JEN
Beats me. You haven't even tapped it yet.

SAM
I can meet her parents before that. What's the rush?

Jen sits stunned.

SAM
What?

JEN
I've been working for you for four years, and I've never once seen you go soft.

Jen starts to get out of the car.

SAM
I'm not going soft. I'm just being cautious. This one is different.

JEN
Two million dollars and you are going to screw it up. Unbelievable.

Jen leaves. Sam broods and then continues watching Claire.

INT. FAMILY ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sam and Claire sit over a finished, unpretentious meal. Sam's nose is all better.

CLAIRE

So yeah, Mom's kind of a mess. Dad's ornery and my brother is challenged. But we're good to each other. No more problems than any other family, I suppose.

SAM

Sounds better than mine.

CLAIRE

Yeah? What's up?

SAM

Hell, we'd be two more bottles in by the time I finished.

CLAIRE

It's cool. Some other time.

SAM

It's okay. Dad died when I was young. It was just me and Mom for many years. No siblings. We bounced around a lot.

CLAIRE

You seem a lot more relaxed.

SAM

I wasn't before?

Claire raises an eyebrow.

SAM

Okay, It's just that I've never met anyone like you.

CLAIRE

That good or bad?

SAM

Refreshing.

The check comes.

SAM

Are you seeing anyone?

CLAIRE
Actually I am... You.

Sam smiles.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

SAM
My mom is in a retirement home in Long Island, but we still have the house on the beach. After Ohio, that's pretty much where I grew up.

CLAIRE
On the beach, nice.

SAM
Yeah, I go by every once in a while after I've finished a big job.

They walk by the Holy Grail Comic Shop.

SAM
(suddenly distracted)
...it's a great place to relax and...

CLAIRE
(seeing the preoccupation)
Oooh. I've heard about this place. Let's go in. I need to look for something.

SAM
You like comics?

Claire walks in without him.

SAM
(to self)
Wow, she's cool and a nerd. Jackpot.

INT. COMIC SHOP - CONTINUOUS

DEXTER
Well helloooo.

CLAIRE
Don't blow your load, geek, I'm with my boyfriend.

Sam comes in.

DEXTER
Sam-Bam! I was just hitting on
your girlfriend.

SAM
She's not my... I mean. Do you
have that thing?

CLAIRE
You guys know each other?

DEXTER
I need a little more time. I'll
find it.

CLAIRE
Find what? Fantastic Four #4?

DEXTER
No.

CLAIRE
Detective Comics #38? Batman
introduces Robin?

SAM
No.

DEXTER
Oh my God, Sam actually finds a
cool girl. Stop the presses.

SAM
Shut up, Dex.

CLAIRE
Which one are you guys looking for?

Sam and Dexter look at each other.

SAM
Amazing Fantasy #15.

CLAIRE
Right. Good luck. I hope you're
millionaires.

DEXTER
Until then, check out the Warren
Publishing section.

SAM
(suddenly intrigued)
Really? Which one?

DEXTER
See for yourself.

Sam and Claire go to the section. Sam finds the rare copy of the Creepy comic.

SAM
Wow. I can't believe he doesn't have this behind the counter. I have to have this. I HAVE to have this. You have no idea how cool this is.

CLAIRE
Cooler than Vampirella?

SAM
(still shocked)
Wow, you do know comics.

CLAIRE
I know lots of things, Sam. What? Girls can't be into comics?

Sam excitedly turns the pages with a childlike intensity. Claire watches with an affectionate smile.

CLAIRE
Hey, boy-wonder. Will you come somewhere with me?

SAM
(distracted)
Where? Your apartment?

CLAIRE
(a little taken aback)
Um, noooo. I got a place you'll like even better.

SAM
(still engrossed)
Okay.

She takes him by the arm and he continues reading.

INT. DARK OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam's face is stoic. He plays poker with an unseen PLAYER. Sam wins the hand and slowly picks up three dollars from the table.

PLAYER (O.C.)
Looks like you cleaned me out. You haven't lost a hand since you got the deal. What's the secret of your success?

Long pause.

SAM
(calmly)
Prayer.

PLAYER (O.C.)
You're a hellava card player. I should know cause I'm a hellava card player, and I can't even spot how you're cheating.

The chair scrapes on the floor as the man gets up. Sam doesn't flinch but watches coolly.

PLAYER
The money stays. You go.

Claire's face appears next to Sam's.

SAM
I wasn't cheating.

CLAIRE
We should go.

SAM
He's got to ask us to stick around.

CLAIRE
(to the player)
Look. Could you ask us to stick around awhile? You don't even have to mean it.

Silence.

CLAIRE
I can't help you, Sundance.

Claire looks up to the unseen player and makes a face that says, "Now stupid. It's your line."

The player's face is seen. He is a geeky-looking kid with goggles on his forehead. He is not at all happy about being talked into this reenactment of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. He holds up an index card and reads with exacerbated boredom.

PLAYER

When I said you were cheating, I didn't know you were the Sundance Kid. If I draw on you, you'll kill me.

SAM

(deadpan)

That is a possibility.

PLAYER

Why don't you stick around for awhile?

CLAIRE

(pleased)

No thanks. We gotta go.

Sam gets up and walks past the player. Both men wear ridiculously large paintball guns in holsters.

PLAYER

Hey, kid, how fast are you?

Sam spins around and draws his paintball gun, which promptly slips out of his hand and smashes into a coffee maker on the desk.

CLAIRE

Holy shit!

The player, clearly an employee of the paintball store, draws his gun and starts firing in his own office. Claire runs over to get the gun while Sam dodges paint bullets.

CLAIRE

What are you doing?!

SAM

It slipped!

CLAIRE

Nice job Sundance! Here!

Claire gets the gun and tosses it to Sam. He catches it and they both burst out of the door into a huge paint gun facility.

There are ramps, barrels, climbing towers, tunnels etc. Sam and Claire gleefully join the fray with a multitude of other paint-ballers.

MONTAGE:

Over the next half an hour they jump, slide, climb and shoot. They are a perfect team, working with an unspoken synergy. Whenever Sam is in a jam, Claire comes to the rescue and vice versa.

At one point, Claire becomes trapped behind a set of barrels. Sam comes crashing over the top and sits next to her.

SAM
How you doing?

CLAIRE
I'm out of ammo.

SAM
Shit. Me too.

CLAIRE
Having fun?

SAM
Yes. I love this place.

BLUE SPLAT, GREEN SPLAT above their heads. Sam and Claire get closer as they are unable to return fire.

CLAIRE
So, am I your girlfriend yet?

Sam gives an embarrassed smile. Claire grabs him by the neck and they kiss passionately. They don't bother to take off their dorky goggles as they kiss under the SPLAT, SPLAT, SPLAT all around them.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sam's face has multi-colored smudges all over as he watches Claire sleep. Claire's face is equally smudged. She stirs.

CLAIRE
Howdy, Sundance.

SAM
(smitten)
Mmmm. Good morning.

CLAIRE
Have fun last night?

SAM
Yes. You?

CLAIRE
Yep, once we got started.

SAM
Oh, sorry about that. It doesn't
usually happen to me. I, well,
okay, I was a bit nervous.

CLAIRE
Trust me, you more than made up for
it.

She pecks him on the cheek.

CLAIRE
I suppose we should clean this
stuff off our faces. You want
coffee?

SAM
Wait. I, want to tell you
something.

Pause. He can't say it.

CLAIRE
It's okay. You can drop the L-
bomb. I won't kick you out.

Interminable pause.

CLAIRE
(deep voice)
Luke, use the Force.

Pause.

CLAIRE
Dude! It's not the Matrix okay?
It's real!

SAM
Fine. I think I'm in love with you
okay?

CLAIRE
(mocking)
Oh my gosh!

I'm not ready for this! I'm a really complicated person! Please leave! NO! DON'T LEAVE ME! We can still be friends though! But I have baggage! IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S ME! OOOOOOOOH!

SAM
Thanks for making it so easy, smart-ass.

CLAIRE
(getting up)
Cream and sugar?

SAM
Cream, no sugar.

CLAIRE
Sam, seriously. You want to make this a thing? Sam and Claire?

SAM
I think I do.

CLAIRE
I do too.
(beat)
Okay. Shower's over there. Get that shit off your face. You look like a clown who got mugged.

SAM
Have you looked in the mirror?

CLAIRE
This is how I always wear my make-up.

INT. JEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam comes into Jen's reception area energetically, with his earbuds blasting. Jen tries desperately to get his attention. Sam dances furiously and breaks into a series of cheesy moves (pop-lock, moonwalk, cabbage patch). Jen waves and points at Sam's office door. Sam finally takes out the earbuds.

SAM
What?

JEN
(whispering)
He's here.

SAM
Shit.

Sam puts away his iPod and straightens his tie. He goes into his office.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE

Jack, again, sits at Sam's desk.

SAM
You know Jack, the whole "you sitting at my desk" thing is getting a bit tired.

JACK
You'll get used to it. What do you have for me?
(pause)
Well?

SAM
Good news. The eagle has landed.

JACK
You banged her?

SAM
Um, well. I meant that I think she has fallen for me. I don't need to go into details.

JACK
I thought you were good at this?

SAM
I am.

JACK
You should have bagged her by now at least. I'm getting tired of you wasting my time.

SAM
Whoa. Who is the one who does this professionally?

JACK
Have you met the parents yet?

SAM

No.

JACK

You need to do that, Goddamit.
(beat) But I want to talk to you
about something else.

SAM

What?

JACK

I was wondering how bad they fall
when you're done.

SAM

They are pretty devastated, if it's
done right.

JACK

Have you ever had one try to kill
themselves?

SAM

Excuse me?

JACK

After you dump them.

SAM

No. Of course not.

JACK

Are you sure? I mean it's
possible. Not actually go through
with it, but try.

After a moment, Sam calmly goes for the door and opens it.

SAM

Get out.

JACK

I can double your fee.

SAM

Get out, you sick bastard.

Jack gets up and moves toward the door.

JACK

Okay, Slugger. We'll keep to the
original plan.

SAM
Deal's off. Don't ever come back here.

JACK
You're making a mistake.

SAM
I don't make mistakes.

JACK
Sam, be reasonable. This is what you do for a living, and I'm offering a pretty big payday.

SAM
I just retired. Get the hell out of here.

JACK
You are going to regret this.

Jack walks out of the door.

INT. HOLY GRAIL COMICS - DAY

Dexter's horrified face. Sam stands with his arms folded.

DEXTER
Quit?! What do you mean you quit? Sam, we were ready to rock this thing. I leased the shop.

SAM
So we're back to the original plan, that's all.

DEXTER
Two million dollars? What's the story? Just cause she likes comics. Hell, Sam, I can introduce you to a ton of girls who like comics.

SAM
Yes, I've always been impressed at what a ladies' man you are.

DEXTER
This is serious, dude.

SAM
Dex, if I'm bankrolling this thing,
I'll do it my way.

DEXTER
Whoa! We've been friends since we
were ten and you're going to play
the bank account card on me? Well
excuse me if I don't seduce women
for a living. At least I don't
have to move my apartment every
other month.

Uncomfortable pause.

SAM
I'm sorry. Look, we'll be fine.
We've talked about this for twenty
years and nothing is going to get
in the way. It's just that this
girl...

DEXTER
The one you brought in the other
night? I thought that was like, an
actual girl, not, you know.

Sam looks off in the distance.

DEXTER
You're kind of freaking me out.
You okay?

SAM
I am freaked out. Officially
freaked out.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sam comes out of the elevator with flowers, chocolate,
wine... the whole nine. He knocks on the door. Claire
answers.

CLAIRE
Good God, Sam. You look like a
Hallmark commercial.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam comes in. The apartment is set for dinner. Sam puts his
groceries down and grabs Claire for a kiss.

SAM
I love you.

CLAIRE
(wary)
You mentioned that.

SAM
What's for dinner?

CLAIRE
Lasagna.

SAM
Bueno.

CLAIRE
That's Spanish, dumb-ass.

Sam is a bit too eager and happy. Claire looks at him suspiciously.

SAM
You know, you mentioned your family. Do you think I could meet them? Especially your brother. He's younger than you, right?

CLAIRE
How about we get through dinner?

SAM
That's cool. I mean sometime. If it's okay with you.

CLAIRE
Of course it is. Now sit down.

He does and Claire serves salad. There is a quiet moment as they eat. Sam gives a pathetic smile.

CLAIRE
Okay, what's up with you?

SAM
Nothing. I'm just in a good mood.

CLAIRE
Well does it have to make you look like Doogie Howser?

Claire sips the wine and is impressed.

CLAIRE

Tell you what; how about I give you a key? We'll meet the parents soon enough.

SAM

Some would say the key is a bigger step than the parents.

CLAIRE

Listen, if this whole thing goes South, can I count on you being cool about it. I don't really do drama.

SAM

Me neither. Deal.

Claire gets up and puts the lasagna on plates and brings them to the table. She takes a key out of her pocket and puts it next to Sam's wine glass.

CLAIRE

Cool?

SAM

Tres Bien.

CLAIRE

That's French, dumb-ass.

They eat.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Sam comes out of Claire's apartment building. As he steps off the stoop...

JACK (O.C.)

This is all very romantic.

Sam stops but doesn't look back.

SAM

I told you. I'm retired. Now piss off.

Jack steps in front of him.

JACK

How about I just tell your little girlfriend what you do for a living instead?

SAM
How about I kick the shit out of
you instead?

JACK
You can try.

SAM
How about I do what I do best and
ruin your life?

JACK
You're a smart kid. I figured you
would know when you're beat.

Sam grabs Jack by the shirt.

SAM
I guess I didn't mention this to
you when we met; I don't lose.

Jack puts a grin on his face.

JACK
Let's see? Barbara, Anne, Sandy
and, of course, sweet little
Cassandra. I could arrange for
Claire to meet all of them.

SAM
What the...?

JACK
I've got people too, Sam.

He pulls himself loose.

JACK
Now. You finish this and I'll be
out of your perfect, highlighted
hair and you will be a rich man.

SAM
You're sick. You need help.

JACK
Bit like looking in the mirror,
isn't it?

Jack walks away.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam talks with Jen.

SAM
Well, how did you find him?

JEN
He found us!

SAM
Well, I need to know everything
about him. Work it up as if he was
the mark.

JEN
Sam, I don't see the point.

SAM
The point, Jen, is that this guy is
going to blow our cover and Claire
is going to find out everything.

JEN
Oh, and then her little ole
feelings will be hurt. That's
really sad, Sam. It just happens
to be what you get paid for.

Sam is now focused and gets eyeball-to-eyeball with Jen.

SAM
What you get paid for is working
for me. He is now the mark, not
her. Anything about this you don't
understand?

JEN
Okay, take it easy.

Sam walks toward the door.

SAM
I want a report on this guy in two
days or you and I are finished.

Sam walks out.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - NIGHT

Jen pretends to read a magazine as she watches a strip club
across the street named the Grind Palace.

After a while, Jack walks up to the club, shakes hands with the doorman and enters. Jen waits a moment and then crosses the street.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Jen hands her coat to a COAT CHECK girl.

COATCHECK
Nice suit.

JEN
Thanks.

COATCHECK
You a working girl?

JEN
You could say that.

COATCHECK
You want some advice?

JEN
Sure.

COATCHECK
Don't do it in this club.

JEN
What do you mean?

COATCHECK
Brenda won't even let you get close.

JEN
Who's Brenda?

COATCHECK
You'll find out. Go on Sweetie. Some girls need to learn the hard way.

JEN
Whatever.

Jen enters the main room. There is a typical, center stage with pole dancers and booths along the walls. Jen spots Jack at the other side of the club.

As she makes her way past what seems to be an unending row of lap dances and such, the strippers give her dirty looks and shake their heads. Jen makes it to Jack's table. A LAP DANCER is on his lap.

JEN
Hey, we need to talk.

LAP DANCER
What the hell is this?

JACK
Forget it. Come back later.

The stripper storms off.

JACK
Well, well. You must be either really brave or really stupid.

JEN
My boss is melting down and I need your help.

JACK
Really?

JEN
I've been working for him for a long time and I know what makes him tick.

JACK
I don't know what to tell you.

JEN
Please, come back to the office next week.

JACK
What's the plan? I can't talk him into something he doesn't want to do.

JEN
I just want you to say...

A stern-looking older woman approaches. It is BRENDA, the house manager.

BRENDA
Bitch, I don't know if you are really brave or really stupid.

JEN
What? Did you two rehearse?

Brenda clicks-out a switchblade under Jen's throat.

JEN
(stunned)
Can I just talk to him outside?

BRENDA
Only the girls who work for me talk
to him.

JEN
Wait. You think I'm a prostitute?

BRENDA
Out.

JEN
Okay. Okay.

Jen backs away and starts to leave amongst the sneers and snickers of the other girls.

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Jen comes out of the club and takes a deep breath. The doorman just smiles.

JEN
(to self)
I do not get paid enough for this.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam sits at the computer with a furrowed brow. He shakes his head and dials the speaker phone. Jen answers.

INTERCUT: SAM'S APARTMENT/JEN'S APARTMENT

SAM
Jen, pick up.

JEN
Sam. We need to talk.

SAM
You're damn right. What is this
crap?

I've got nothing on this guy. I could have done better research in my sleep.

JEN

No, I mean I think we need a better angle on this guy.

SAM

Jen, I'm warning you.

JEN

Sam, if you really want to hit this guy then you need to do what you do best; seduce him.

SAM

Excuse me?

JEN

You need to make him think you are back on the case. That's what will buy us time.

SAM

Go on.

JEN

If he thinks you've come to your senses and are ready to play ball, I can get more information from him. You need to pour it on thick. You need to charm this guy back in order to clip him.

SAM

Maybe you're right. Okay. But when he's back in the fold, you need to make it look like you talked me into it.

JEN

I did.

SAM

And you need to get some money from him.

JEN

How much?

SAM

Half.

JEN
Seriously?

SAM
Are we playing him or not?

JEN
(hesitantly)
Okay. I'll get him back for a
meeting in two days.

SAM
Fine.

They both hang up.

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - NIGHT

Claire and Anne stroll through various abstract paintings.

CLAIRE
He wants to meet my family.

ANNE
So? I thought that was your idea.
In fact, most of the guys I've seen
you get rid of, most of us would
kill for.

CLAIRE
He wants...

ANNE
Spit it out, Claire.

CLAIRE
(suddenly defensive)
Come on, Anne, you know men. All
they talk about is having their
space and then they get all needy.
I'm just being myself.

ANNE
No you're not. Other guys have met
your family. What's the big deal?

CLAIRE
I haven't been completely honest
with him.

ANNE
About what?

CLAIRE

It's just that I got into this thing for different reasons.

ANNE

Look, even Claire Dupree is allowed to fall for someone. God forbid you are the one who gets wrapped up.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Museum of Modern Art will be closing in ten minutes.

They stop in front of a Jackson Pollack painting.

CLAIRE

Are you kidding me? I could do that. People pay millions of dollars for this stuff?

ANNE

We aren't done talking about this.

CLAIRE

I know. Let's get a drink.

They leave.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam walks out of his office with Jack.

SAM

So, you can see how the whole thing got off track. But we're on the way to finishing this up.

JACK

Don't worry about it. Just as long as we understand that I need you to be the Sam I've heard about.

SAM

You don't have to worry about that.

JACK

Good.

SAM

Did Jen talk to you about a payment.

Pause.

JACK
I gave you a twenty thousand dollar
retainer, Sam.

SAM
She didn't talk to you?

JACK
Sam, this is bad form, don't you
think? I mean, I just hired you
back after you fired me.

SAM
No problem. I'm back on the case.
In fact, I'm making plans to go to
her parent's for dinner.

JACK
Good. There's a lot to work with
there.

SAM
I'll be in touch.

They shake hands. Jack leaves.

SAM
(to himself)
Asshole.

INT. CLAIRE'S CAR - DAY

Claire drives distractedly while on the phone.

CLAIRE
I'm not angry. Well, he doesn't
need to meet my family. What do you
mean, "do what I have to do?"
Don't you think I've done enough?

Claire runs a red light and is smashed by an oncoming truck.
She is bloodied and unconscious.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sam sits by Claire's bed holding her hand while she lies
unconscious. Like the old man from the earlier hospital
scene, Sam has with him flowers, chocolates and a stuffed
tiger. He leans close to her ear.

SAM
 (whispering)
 Don't leave. Please don't leave.

Claire squeezes Sam's hand.

CLAIRE
 (waking)
 I'm not going anywhere. We're
 having dinner with my family next
 week.

SAM
 We are?

CLAIRE
 Yeah. (beat) A tiger?

SAM
 Seemed like a good idea at the
 time.

CLAIRE
 I know the feeling.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Sam, on his cell, waits across the street from the Grind
 Palace. He talks to his private detective (JERRY).

SAM
 I don't understand, Jerry.

JERRY (V.O.)
 I'm telling you, the only Jack
 Stoddard I got lives in Florida and
 he's a plumber.

SAM
 When did Jen call you on this? How
 much time do you need?

JERRY (V.O.)
 I only got the call from you.

SAM
 Damn it. She was supposed to call
 you a week ago.

JERRY (V.O.)
 Well, Sam, I got your call last
 night and this is what I found.

Jack Stoddard, plumber, sixty-three grand a year.

SAM
This gets better every turn.

JERRY (V.O.)
What do you want me to do?

Sam sees Jack walk up to the club and shake hands with the bouncer.

SAM
I'll call you back.

Sam hangs up, waits until Jack gets into the club and then crosses the street and approaches the BOUNCER.

SAM
How's it going?

BOUNCER
It's going. It's a twenty-dollar cover.

SAM
That's funny. I saw a guy go in a minute ago. He didn't pull out his wallet.

BOUNCER
One, you pay inside. Two, he's a preferred customer. Three, he's none of your business.

SAM
Business? Oh, I like doing business.

Sam scratches his forehead, exposing a hundred dollar bill.

BOUNCER
Well, that just bought you a name.

Sam gives him the bill.

BOUNCER
Danny.

SAM
Danny have a last name?

BOUNCER

Yep. But you only paid for a first name.

Sam smiles and reaches for his wallet.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Sam talks on the phone, walking a safe distance behind Jack.

SAM

Jerry? The name is Daniel Richter. I'll call you with an address a little later.

Sam hangs up as Jack goes down subway stairs.

SAM

(to self)

Since when do billionaires take the subway?

Sam follows Jack into the subway.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Jack walks down the street in a middle-class neighborhood in Queens. He stops at a modest house, picks up a neglected trike on the lawn and goes in the front door. Sam follows a distance back and hears, "I'm home!" And, "Daddy! Daddy!"

SAM

Now you get the Sam you heard about.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam wears a dorky apron and works furiously to prepare dinner. He puts the meal on a tray and brings it into the bedroom, where a bandaged Claire is waiting with a guilty smile.

CLAIRE

Sam, this is three nights in a row. You don't have to do this.

SAM

I want to.

CLAIRE

What is it tonight?

SAM
Thai.

CLAIRE
Yummy.

Claire tastes the food and is impressed. Sam is pleased.

CLAIRE
How is next week?

SAM
For what?

CLAIRE
Dinner with my folks.

SAM
I'd like that.

CLAIRE
They want to meet you.

SAM
You told them about me?

CLAIRE
Here's the deal: I'm kind of protective. My mom is a big churchgoer, can't even stand profanity. Dad is an alcoholic, but he's been off the sauce for about a year. One drop and it's "drama time," so it'll be a dry night if that's okay.

SAM
No problem.

CLAIRE
And my brother is mentally challenged, but he is lovable. Big comics fan, by the way. If he likes you, then your are in, but he can turn on a dime.

Claire starts talking faster.

CLAIRE
And don't mention spiders or rats; he'll have a meltdown. In fact, don't mention any kind of vermin at all. And...

SAM
Claire, relax. I'll do anything
you want.

CLAIRE
(anxious)
So we need to have a nice quiet
dinner and then get the hell out of
there.

SAM
We will.

CLAIRE
This is major. I don't bring boys
home.

SAM
Why?

CLAIRE
The last guy... oh, let's not go
there.

SAM
Did you go and break someone's
heart?

CLAIRE
Yeah, well, shit, I don't know.

SAM
(pause)
Did he ever try to settle the
score?

CLAIRE
What do you mean?

SAM
I know guys who... Well, men can be
pretty vindictive sometimes.

CLAIRE
Are you?

SAM
No, but I've seen other guys-

CLAIRE
Let's talk about something else.

Pause.

SAM
Okay. Make room for dessert.

CLAIRE
All this food and no exercise. Any suggestions?

SAM
I might be able to think of one.

Sam gets up and starts back to the kitchen.

CLAIRE
Sam?

She can't find the words.

SAM
It's okay. You can drop the L-bomb. I won't kick you out.

She smiles. Sam exits.

CLAIRE
(to self)
I love you.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Sam, dressed casually, sits on a bench enjoying the sunshine. Two KIDS walk by holding skateboards arguing about something. They stop in front of Sam as one of them makes a final point.

KID 1
It's no contest, man. Hulk would win because he can, like, turn into the Hulk.

KID 2
He can't do it anytime he wants. He's not in control of it.

KID 1
How do you know that?

KID 2
It's true.

KID 1
Prove it.

SAM
He's right.

KID 1
How would you know?

SAM
He was a scientist exposed to a gamma bomb that turned him into the Hulk, but it's triggered by anger, fear. He is as strong as he is mad.

The kids are impressed.

SAM
I was a kid once, you know.

KID 1
Dude, no one your age was ever a kid.

Sam smiles, stands and grabs the kid's skateboard. He jumps on it and executes a series of outstanding skateboard tricks.

KID 2
No way! Hey, can you teach me that?!

Sam looks at his watch.

SAM
Sorry, I have to go. But, hold up... You guys want to make some money?

KID 1
Maybe.

KID 2
How much?

Sam walks over to the bench and picks up two manila envelopes.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - ELSEWHERE - CONTINUOUS

Jack nervously sits on a bench. Kid 1 whizzes by and drops one of the envelopes on the bench next to Jack. He looks confused for a moment and then picks up the envelope.

Written on the outside is, "Brenda is now my friend more than yours. Love, Sam." Jack opens the envelope, which contains photos of him in various states of compromise with many different prostitutes.

A few seconds later, the other kid rolls by and drops another envelope. Written on this one is, "Embezzling is a federal offense. Love, Sam." Jack opens the envelope, which contains various financial documents showing incriminating evidence.

Jack shakes his head as his phone rings.

JACK

Hello?

SAM

I assume that says it all?

JACK

Sam, we can work something out.

SAM

Here's the deal; if you ever contact my office or Claire again, one envelope goes to your wife and the other goes to the IRS. If you don't, you can continue being the asshole you are. We understand each other?

JACK

Yes.

SAM

I'll be watching you for a long time, Mr. Daniel Richter of Queens. No one plays me like that.

JACK

Listen, you don't understand.

SAM

Perhaps I've not made myself clear. One to the wife, one to the IRS. Now, stay away from Claire.

JACK

I will. Just don't do this.

SAM

See you around.

The line goes dead. Jack sweats.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Sam hangs up the phone. He walks a little further and then stops at a jewelry store. He walks in.

INT. JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

The shopkeeper, JIMMY, greets Sam.

JIMMY
If it isn't my best customer.

SAM
Well, this will be my last purchase.

Sam looks into a case of rings.

JIMMY
Whoa, not your usual section.

SAM
Not a usual girl.

JIMMY
What makes this one so special?

SAM
She's the one.

Jimmy sees that Sam is taking great care looking at rings.

JIMMY
Hey, come over here. I didn't realize you were serious.

Jimmy brings Sam to the other side of the shop and takes out a Mahogany box.

JIMMY
I didn't think I'd ever show you these.

He opens the box, revealing a particularly spectacular set of engagement rings.

SAM
Now that's what I'm talking about.

JIMMY
These will cost you.

SAM
Like I said. Last one.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Sam holds flowers, tossing the ring box in his hand as he walks down the street. He stops at an office high-rise and enters.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Sam approaches the RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you?

SAM
Hi, Claire Dupree?

RECEPTIONIST
She's not in. Can I tell her who came by?

SAM
I'm Sam.

No reaction.

SAM
Sam Patterson. Claire's boyfriend.

The Receptionist raises an eyebrow.

SAM
Trust me.

RECEPTIONIST
I don't trust anyone, especially men holding flowers.

SAM
Listen, can I just leave something on her desk?

RECEPTIONIST
Give it to me. I'll put them in water.

SAM
Um, yeah. Do you have a vase?

RECEPTIONIST
I'll get one later.

SAM
But I don't want them to wilt.

The Receptionist exhales and stands.

RECEPTIONIST
Fine. Who should I say they're
from?

SAM
Sam. Thanks a lot.

He hands her the flowers.

They both walk to the hallway, and Sam presses the elevator button. He waits until the Receptionist turns the corner and then races back into the office.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks into Claire's office and looks around. He places the box on different spots, trying to find the best way to surprise Claire.

He opens the drawers, trying to place the ring there when he spots a manila folder with his name on it. He ponders for a moment and then snatches and opens it.

What he finds is a dossier on himself that looks eerily similar to the ones he works up for his victims. There are post-it notes with messages:

Favorite food: Lasagna.

Hobby: Comics.

Likes: Women who can hang with the boys.

Worst fear: Being dumped first.

Favorite movie: Butch Cassidy...

Drop date: TBA

He snaps the folder shut and collapses into the desk chair. He puts his face in his hands.

After a moment, he collects himself and starts to walk out. He stops short of opening the door and looks back at the desk. He calmly walks back and puts the folder where he found it.

SAM

So, you don't do drama? I'll give you some drama.

He leaves.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam sits at his desk with his feet up, reading a Watchmen comic. Jen comes in.

JEN

There you are. I called you on every phone we have. Uh oh, Watchmen? You must be in a bad mood. You only read that when dark clouds have appeared.

SAM

I hate to do this to you. We're back to her as the mark.

JEN

Thank God. I'll call Jack and try to get the first half again.

SAM

Forget it. He was a fake. Where he came up with the first twenty grand is a mystery.

JEN

Holy shit. You mean he's not a billionaire?

SAM

Let's just work on her and get this over with.

JEN

Um, okay. But what's the point if we're not going to get anything out of it? Why not just walk away?

Sam flips the pages of the comic.

JEN
Sam? Sam, just tell me what you
want me to do.

SAM
Call the movers. We'll be done in
two weeks.

JEN
I mean about Claire Dupree.

SAM
I'll take care of it myself. After
all your help with Jack, I figure I
can do it without any problems.

JEN
Sam, I'm sorry. I...

SAM
Just leave me alone.

JEN
How are you going to play it?

SAM
I'm gonna improvise, okay?

JEN
Okay. I've never seen you like
this. What did she do?

SAM
Let's just say, like most women,
she isn't what she pretended to be.

JEN
Call me if you need anything. I've
always been here for you.

SAM
I know that.

JEN
What will it be? Operation Dinner
With The Family?

SAM
That's usually where it hits the
hardest.

Jen leaves. Sam stares for a moment longer at the comic.

SAM
Watchmen. What a bunch of wimps.

INT. SAM'S CAR - NIGHT

Sam and Claire ride together.

CLAIRE
Nervous?

SAM
No. You?

CLAIRE
Yes.

SAM
Why?

CLAIRE
I don't know. The "meet the
parents" thing has always meant
something to most people.

SAM
We'll have a nice time. I brought
some of those cookies from
Landel's.

CLAIRE
Now Dad is a bit gruff and Mom has
got the June Cleaver thing going.
So if at anytime you want to go,
just give me a signal.

SAM
Claire, nothing is going to make me
want to go. I wouldn't miss this.
Now relax.

CLAIRE
I can't help you, Sundance.

SAM
Huh?

CLAIRE
That can be the signal.

SAM
Claire, we don't need...

CLAIRE
Hey, it's our favorite movie.

SAM
(annoyed)
Yeah, what a coincidence.

CLAIRE
You okay?

SAM
I'm fine. Tonight will be great.

CLAIRE
Take this left. Two blocks up.

The car pulls into a driveway.

EXT. DUPREE HOUSE DOORWAY - NIGHT

Sam and Claire step up to the door. Claire rings the bell.

SAM
You don't have a key?

CLAIRE
No, wait. When he asks you for the password, say "banana split with extra chocolate sauce and way too much whipped cream."

SAM
Uh, okay.

DAVID (O.C.)
Who is it?

CLAIRE
A superhero.

DAVID (O.C.)
Which one?

CLAIRE
Wonder Woman.

DAVID (O.C.)
No.

CLAIRE
Batman.

DAVID (O.C.)
No.

CLAIRE
Green Lantern.

DAVID (O.C.)
No.

SAM
Spiderman?

Claire shakes her head vigorously.

CLAIRE
Aquaman.

DAVID (O.C.)
No.

SAM
Flash?

CLAIRE
Flash!

DAVID
YES!

The door whips open, and DAVID hugs Claire very hard; and then sees Sam and gives Sam a hard stare. David is clearly mentally challenged. Sam waits to be asked for the password for a long time. It doesn't happen, so he goes for it...

SAM
Banana split with extra chocolate
sauce and way too much whipped
cream.

David squeals with delight and gives Sam a crushing hug and tussles his perfect hair. They go inside.

INT. DUPREE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

The David, Claire, Sam, MR. and MRS. DUPREE sit at the dinner table, which is loaded with home-cooked food.

MR. DUPREE
Shall we?

The family all holds hands for Grace.

MR. DUPREE

Lord, we thank you for all that you have given us. We are thankful for this food. We are thankful for this family. We are thankful for our health. We are thankful for our friends. Especially our new friend, Sam, and trust that he will bring happiness to our daughter. Finally, we ask for forgiveness. Amen.

DAVID

AMEN!

The meal commences.

MRS. DUPREE

So, Sam, how did you and Claire meet?

CLAIRE

Sam's a pool shark.

SAM

Oh no. I can see it's going to be a long night. Claire is full of sh... She's teasing me.

DAVID

Claire is the best pool player in the whole wide world!

SAM

She sure is. She is like a pool superhero.

DAVID

Which one?

SAM

Well, she is like Flash because she can move around the table quickly. She is like Wonder Woman because she can hit the balls really hard, and she is like Batman, um, because she looks good in black.

DAVID

Yes! I like your new husband, Claire!

CLAIRE

He's not my husband sweetie.

DAVID
I didn't like your last husband.

Sam raises an eyebrow.

DAVID
He was mean and had funny ears.

CLAIRE
He wasn't my husband.

MRS. DUPREE
This is Claire's new boyfriend.

CLAIRE
What are the chances of changing
the subject?

SAM
I'll need your dad's permission
before I can marry her, David.

MR. DUPREE
Trust me, getting David's approval
is much harder. Looks like you're
in.

DAVID
A toast! To Mr. and Mrs. Claire
Dupree.

They all laugh and raise their glasses.

INT. DUPREE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mr. Dupree and Sam sit and talk.

MR. DUPREE
So. You seem like a straight
shooter.

SAM
I like to think so.

MR. DUPREE
You going to be good to my
daughter?

SAM
I have so far.

MR. DUPREE

So I've heard. She's about as independent as they come, but I'm still pretty protective of her. You could understand.

SAM

I do.

MR. DUPREE

This family, well, no matter the ups and downs, we've stuck together. What I'm saying is that Claire is as protective of us as I am of her. So you must be a good guy for her to actually bring you here.

SAM

Thanks. I feel welcome.

MR. DUPREE

Well, you are.

Mrs. Dupree comes in with a tray of coffee.

MRS. DUPREE

Cream, no sugar.

SAM

How did you know?

MRS. DUPREE

Claire gave me your profile.

SAM

(a bit taken aback)

Oh, did she? What else did she tell you?

MRS. DUPREE

All good stuff. All good. Actually, she told me two seconds ago.

SAM

Oh, I forgot. I've got something delicious in the car. I'll go get it.

MRS. DUPREE

A treat?

SAM
Exactly.

EXT. DUPREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sam walks to his car and gets in.

He takes out of the glove box a clear plastic case containing two live tarantulas and sets it on the seat.

He then takes out three mini bottles of whiskey with post-it notes on each. They read: bathroom cabinet, garage, sock drawer. He puts them on the seat.

DAVID (O.C.)
I can always spot a super villain!

Sam is shocked to see David standing outside the car window. He quickly covers up the bottles and spider case with a newspaper.

He rolls down the window.

SAM
What did you say, David?

DAVID
I said I can always spot a super villain.

SAM
That right?

DAVID
I have a power that tells me if someone is bad or good.

SAM
Oh, well maybe you could join the Justice League or become one of the X-Men.

DAVID
No. I only use it to protect Mom, Dad and Claire. Sometimes Claire meets super villains.

Uncomfortable pause.

DAVID
I can tell you are a good guy. It just took me a while. Why are you out here? Are you leaving?

SAM
Um, no. I just wanted to get these.

Sam hands the box of cookies to David.

DAVID
Yes!

David runs back into the house.

Sam breathes a sigh of relief. He watches the Dupree family through the living room window as David brings in the cookies. Sam puts the bottles and spider case back in the glove box and locks it. He goes back in the house.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam lies on the floor with comic books all around reading Little Lulu.

JEN (O.S.)
Hello? Sam?

She comes in.

JEN
What are you doing here? Oh no. So you're down to Little Lulu? How did the dinner thing go? Are we done?

SAM
It didn't go as planned. But yeah, we're done. I'm gonna split.

JEN
What about the grand scheme? How did you mess up the dinner? How did you dump her?

Sam gets up and starts cleaning up his comics.

SAM
Forget, it okay. Those people didn't do anything to me. I'm not going to pay Claire back. I'm just going to leave.

JEN
Sam, why don't you let me come with you?

I can still work for you and we could start something new wherever you are going.

SAM

No. I'm out. And you don't need to know where I'm going.

Jen comes closer.

JEN

Sam, forget her. I'll take care of you.

SAM

Who says I need taking care of?

JEN

I can make lasagna better than her. Hell, I'm actually Italian.

Sam smiles at her efforts to comfort him. She puts her arms around him.

JEN

And I bet you won't be nervous our first time in bed.

SAM

Stop playing around, Jen. I'm not in a good mood.

Jen goes to the door suddenly looking a bit nervous.

JEN

Well, I'm going home. I'll pick you up tomorrow and take you wherever you want to go. I'll bring you a bagel and coffee. Cream, no sugar.

SAM

Fine. I mean, I'll get there myself. I mean... nevermind.

Sam looks confused for a second as Jen closes the door.

SAM

Jen.

JEN

(hopefully)
Yes?

SAM
How did you know she made me
lasagna?

JEN
(stumbling)
You told me.

Sam gets up and moves toward Jen.

SAM
For that matter, how did you know I
was nervous in bed with her the
first time?

JEN
I, well, I...

SAM
What the hell is going on, Jen?
Did you talk to her?

JEN
You tell me stuff, Sam. We are
partners. I'm your closest friend.

SAM
No, you are not, and I never told
you that stuff.

JEN
Sam, wait.

SAM
When did you talk to her?! Why
would you talk to her?!

JEN
Sam, listen.

Sam grabs her by the shirt and pushes her up against the
wall.

SAM
Tell me what's going on! I'm in
love with her.

JEN
(snapping)
No you're not!

SAM
This is the person I've been
waiting for!

JEN
No she is not! I am! That's why I
hired her!

SAM
What?

JEN
I hired her, you stupid idiot! I
hired her and Danny AKA Jack
Stoddard! They've never even met.
I never even got the twenty grand
from Danny. I paid him two
thousand to act like a big shot.
He's an actor.

SAM
Why would you do that?

JEN
Because you needed to be taught a
lesson! You've had the perfect
woman under your nose, and you just
can't see it! I'm the one you've
been waiting for, not her! I'm
perfect for you! Can't you see
that? I'm just like you.

SAM
Why would Claire do that to
someone?

JEN
Because I paid her to. Only she was
totally unreliable.

Pause.

SAM
Get out.

JEN
Sam...

SAM
I said get out!

JEN
Can't you see what a great team we
are? I know your every move. You
trust me. You know me. I've
always been there for you.

SAM
I can't believe this. I just can't believe this.

JEN
You love me. I know you do.

SAM
I don't love anything anymore. I'm leaving.

JEN
(composing herself)
Well, I guess this is what's supposed to happen; a big mess for everyone. You got in over your head. Danny got in over his head. Claire wanted out of this a long time ago because she's in love with you. A perfect mess. And I learned it all from you.

Jen leaves. Sam picks up his stack of comics and throws them against the door.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Jen walks to her car. As she puts the key in the lock, she is knocked over the head with a handbag. Claire grabs her by the scruff of the neck.

CLAIRE
You said two dates. Now this thing is way out of hand. Here.

Claire pulls out an envelope and shoves it into Jen's chest.

CLAIRE
Take your damn money back. I thought this was a silly little game. I had no idea you were completely creepy. Now leave me and Sam alone. Is that understood?

JEN
There are things you don't know about him.

CLAIRE
I know everything I need to know.

JEN
He's a heartbreaker. I mean,
professionally.

CLAIRE
I know who he is. Now stay away
from us.

JEN
I can give you names! He does this
for a living! You were going to
get dumped! He gets paid to do it!

CLAIRE
That's the stupidest thing I've
ever heard.

JEN
Really? You were going to do it.

Claire takes this in. Jen makes the phone gesture with her
fingers. She pretends to be both Claire and Sam's mom.

JEN
Who is this? *Um, this is Claire.*
I'm on a date with your son.
Well you tell him that he is in big
trouble for calling me at this
hour. Now what do you want?
I guess I need to know if he's a
good guy. He seems okay to me.
Now you sound like a very nice
young girl so have a good time and
tell Sam he is in big trouble.

CLAIRE
That was you? What's going on
here?

JEN
Golly, I'd love to tell you all
about it. Would you mind letting
me go?

CLAIRE
Fine. What's this all about?

JEN
It's a long story.

Claire leans against the car and Jen straightens herself out.

JEN

First of all, I'm out of a job because of you. Everything I planned is in the toilet because the jerk is totally in love with you.

CLAIRE

Everything you planned?

JEN

Okay, here it is from the start. But don't say I didn't warn you.

INT. UPTOWN RESTAURANT - DAY

Claire and Anne sit together. Anne has her arms folded. Claire has her face in her hands.

ANNE

This is really jacked-up, Claire. Can't you just walk away? I've seen you dump guys over their limited vocabularies.

CLAIRE

He's gone. His office is empty. I don't know where he is.

ANNE

What about his apartment?

CLAIRE

I never went there. Besides, he always moves out after...

ANNE

Claire, he was a gigolo. Get that through your head.

CLAIRE

He was done with all that.

ANNE

Do you have any idea how naive you sound? It's been two months. He's gone.

CLAIRE

Stop talking to me like I'm some damsel in distress. This was different, okay? I wish you would believe me.

ANNE
Okay! What do you want from me?

CLAIRE
Stop patronizing me and start helping me.

ANNE
How?!

CLAIRE
Think.

ANNE
Well, where do you think he would go? Siberia? West Virginia? Does he have a secret Bat Cave or something?

Claire gets bright-eyed. She jumps up and puts on her coat.

CLAIRE
You are a genius.

ANNE
Oh well, glad you finally figured that out. What the hell are you talking about?

CLAIRE
I gotta go. Thanks, Love.

Claire rushes out.

ANNE
(shouting)
Oh don't worry. I'll pick up the check. I think it was my turn anyway!

INT. LONG ISLAND - CASTAWAYS BAR - DAY

In a hammock with beer bottles underneath, a man snores. He is in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, has a shaved head, an unkempt beard and a beer belly. It is Sam.

He tries to roll over in the hammock and promptly falls to the floor. The bartender, TERRY, is disgusted.

TERRY
Shit. Not again. Mike! Pick up Sam, will ya?

MIKE, JOE and RICHIE, the Castaways barflies, pick up Sam and set him at a table with a few other drunk guys.

SAM
(slurring)
Thanks, Mikey.

MIKE
(slurring)
No problem. Sam, you are really a mess. You've got to get yourself together.

SAM
I'm perfectly fine. I'm retired with no pliblems. Poblams. You know what I'm saying.

JOE
Nobody ever knows what you are saying, Sam.

SAM
Well, they are not listening. Insight is not for the faint of heart. Understanding does not necessarily mean claire...claire...

JOE
Clarity?

SAM
That's the one! Claire...clarity.

Sam gets a distant, albeit bloodshot, look in his eye.

MIKE
Oh great. Here we go.

SAM
Four in one week! Did I tell you guys? I dumped four in one week. And everyone of them deserved it. You know why?

MIKE
Sam, relax. Have a beer.

SAM
'Cause they ALL deserve it. Books and covers, my friends. You'll get sold a bill of goods. She'll come off all confident, like nothing gets to her and wham!

You even look at another girl or
God forbid talk to one...

RICHIE
That's it. Let it out.

SAM
Then, of course, after they
meltdown, there is the oblitatar,
obligtaren, OBLIGATORY suggestion
that I've got the problem!
Hypocrites!

MIKE
Sam, you're gonna get bounced. Now
shut up!

SAM
It's all their own baggage dressed
up as intuition!

RICHIE
Preach, brother!

SAM
Find me the woman who will actually
take responsibility for her own
neuroses!!

Three GIRLS in bikinis come in and sit at a table.

SAM
Watch. I'll show you.

Sam tries to compose his drunken self and heads over to the
table of girls.

SAM
Hello, ladies. What can I get you
to drink?

GIRL 1
Mojitos!

SAM
Ah, the party drink! Are you all
here looking for love this weekend?

GIRL 1
Maybe.

GIRL 2
If the right guy comes around.

SAM
Now tell me, what would your ideal
guy be like?

GIRL 3
Tall, cute butt.

GIRL 2
A huge... huge... bank account!

Giggles all around.

GIRL 3
Yeah, someone to treat me like the
princess I am.

SAM
Now that doesn't sound like the
basis for any kind of lasting
relationship. What about honesty,
trust and companionship?

GIRL 1
Do you actually work here?

SAM
I'm the staff psychologist!

GIRL 2
Dude, you're weird.

SAM
Be that as it may, you have proven
yourselves shallow and unworthy of
true love.

GIRL 1
Oh, and I suppose you are?

SAM
(a bit confused)
I... I... well. I thought I was
recently. I... you girls are too
young to... I was... she was...

Sam throws-up on the table. The girls squeal and run away.
The barflies run over. Terry runs over and yells. Sam
passes out.

INT. LONG ISLAND - SAM'S BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

The phone rings in the living room. Sam eventually comes out of the bedroom in a pink kimono, fat and dishevelled. He picks up the phone.

SAM

Hello?

DEXTER

Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

SAM

Good God! Do you have any idea how hungover I am?

DEXTER

I got it! I, well, I will get it!

SAM

Stop shouting, I've already got Armageddon going on in my head.

DEXTER

Dude, I haven't talked to you in like, forever. I had to get this number from your mom.

SAM

Is there a reason for this call or are you just trying to piss me off?

DEXTER

I got it.

SAM

What?

DEXTER

Number Fifteen.

SAM

You're kidding.

DEXTER

Well, I don't have it in hand, but they guy is going to bring it to the convention.

SAM

How did you find it?

DEXTER
 This is what I do my friend. Some schmuck upstate doesn't even know what it's worth.

SAM
 How much?

DEXTER
 Let's just say I saved us a bunch of money. Now, our new booth is ready to go. You do not know how psyched I am. Gosh, if I only knew if my business partner will be there.

SAM
 I told you I'd be there. Now leave me to my pain.

DEXTER
 Whaaaaaaaaaaa!

Sam hangs up the phone and walks like a zombie back to the bedroom.

INT. HOLY GRAIL COMICS - NIGHT

Dexter plays an on-line battle game of some sort. He's quite into it.

DEXTER
 That's right! Feel the pain, you mortal slugs! I got you right where I want you! You are no match for Tyrannosaurus Dex!

Claire walks in unnoticed and waits for Dexter to finish.

DEXTER
 OOOOOOOOH, bonus powers! Can you handle it!? Can you take the sheer mastery of my abilities!? I will take no prisoners!

The game ends with Dexter in victory.

DEXTER
 Once again! I am victorious over you fledgling novices. I have only one thing to say!

Dexter turns around and pulls his shorts down so his fat butt faces the screen. He starts slapping it.

DEXTER

That's what I have for you! This is all you deserve and there is more where that came from!

Dexter opens his eyes to see Claire standing in the middle of the shop watching him.

DEXTER

Oh, dear Lord.

CLAIRE

Hi ya, Dexter. Did I come at a bad time?

DEXTER

(embarrassed)

Uh, no. It's you.

CLAIRE

It certainly is. Look. We need to talk. Why don't you pull up your pants so we can have a little heart to heart. Or do you need to have a cigarette now?

DEXTER

Okay. I'll be with you in a moment.

CLAIRE

Can't wait.

INT. "COMIC-CON" CONVENTION - DAY

Sam wanders around the booths of memorabilia, comics and people dressed as various comic book and superhero characters. He finally gets bored and looks at his watch.

He finds the "S&D" comic booth. He is impressed and watches dorky Dexter in the distance flirting with a girl dressed as Princess Lea.

Sam waves, but Dexter ignores him. Dexter brings out some choice comics and the girl is impressed, but soon, a rather jealous Chewbacca comes and drags her away.

SAM

Almost had her there, Dex.

DEXTER

How am I supposed to compete with a Wookiee with a laser? Hell, Sam, you look terrible. You're almost as fat as me.

SAM

Yeah, but in two weeks, I'll look great again. You are hopeless.

DEXTER

Hey, hotshot, this is my turf. I'm like a rock star around here. These are my people.

SAM

Okay. Let's see it.

DEXTER

That's the thing, Sam.

SAM

You didn't get it. I should have known. You are so full of...

DEXTER

No, it's just that...

SAM

What? Where is it? I've waited a lifetime for that thing. It's Amazing Fantasy Fifteen!

DEXTER

I sold it.

SAM

What!? How could you? It's the cornerstone of our collection!

DEXTER

Someone convinced me.

SAM

This is bullshit, Dexter. Who could possibly be more convincing than me?

DEXTER

(pointing)

Her.

Sam sees Claire about fifty yards away with a smile on her face. Sam's shock gives way to a relieved smile.

They walk toward each other when Sam spots the treasured comic in her hand. His smile disappears and his face turns to anger.

Claire sees the change and does the only thing possible; she runs.

Sam chases Claire all through the Comic-Con convention, past T-shirt displays, past children dressed as droids and ghouls, past people taking their picture next to The Hulk, etc.

She rounds a hot dog stand and grabs the mustard bottle. The vendor protests. Sam arrives on the other side of the stand and grabs the ketchup.

SAM
You lied to me!

CLAIRE
You lied to me first!

SAM
Did not!

CLAIRE
Did too!

VENDOR
Did you two want hot dogs or not?

CLAIRE
You were going to dump me!

SAM
You were going to dump me!

They both squirt the bottles and cover each other's faces with ketchup and mustard. Claire runs off again, and Sam chases her.

SAM
Give me my comic!

CLAIRE
No! Not until you talk to me!

SAM
Give me that comic!

CLAIRE
You are such a baby!

Claire runs up to a child holding an ice cream cone and takes it away.

CLAIRE
Someone paid you to break up with
me!

SAM
I didn't get paid! I quit because
I couldn't go through with it!

CLAIRE
I took you to meet my family!

SAM
I love your family!

CLAIRE
You got fat!

SAM
You run like a girl!

Claire chucks the ice cream and nails Sam in the face.

Claire turns the corner and falls over a popcorn vendor. She is now covered in ketchup and popcorn. Sam falls on top of her, and they wrestle for the comic.

SAM
You tricked me! Give it!

CLAIRE
I called Jen after the second date
and said I was in love with you!
And I know you love me!

SAM
Oh yeah? What makes you so sure?

CLAIRE
'Cause you couldn't get it up the
first time!

Sam stops grabbing for the comic and sits with his mouth open in horror. Claire promptly stuffs a handful of popcorn in his mouth and runs off. The chase continues.

SAM
(running and spitting out
popcorn)
Fine! I'm in love with you! I
already told you that! Now give me
that comic!

CLAIRE
 (running - looking back)
 No! Say it louder!

SAM
 I LOVE YOU, NOW GIVE ME THAT!

Claire runs by a DARTH VADER chatting with LUKE SKYWALKER and grabs a lightsaber along the way. Sam runs by and grabs one too.

She stops in front of a Wonder Woman display and squares off. Three WONDER WOMEN step back.

Sam runs up and takes a ready stance. With both of them covered in ketchup, mustard, popcorn and ice cream, the battle is about to begin.

SAM
 You can't win.

CLAIRE
 You are way out of your league.

WONDER WOMAN 1
 Hey, can you do this somewhere else?

Luke and Darth Vader come up behind Sam.

DARTH VADER
 Dude, that's not cool. Give those back. They aren't cheap.

SAM
 (to Claire)
 This is just like a woman. Take something from a man and then pretend you don't know why he's angry. No wonder you all need therapy.

WONDER WOMAN 2
 What did he say?

WONDER WOMAN 3
 Kick his ass, girlfriend. You go ahead.

CLAIRE
 Look who's talking? Things get just a little bit sticky and you run away to some secret hideaway. Men are such cowards!

LUKE
Now wait just a minute.

DARTH VADER
Dude, are you going to take that
shit?

WONDER WOMAN 3
(to Darth Vader)
Leave her alone! This has nothing
to do with you!

LUKE
(to Wonder Woman)
She started it!

Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker high-five behind Sam. The
Wonder Women and Darth and Luke start arguing back and forth.

A crowd forms around Sam and Claire, who are still
brandishing their plastic lightsabers.

SAM
Shut up! Everyone, be quiet!

The crowd hushes.

SAM
Listen, Claire. I got out of that
last job because I fell in love
with you. I could never hurt you,
but I couldn't believe I had been
tricked.

CLAIRE
Sam, I'm sorry. I thought the
whole thing was a game. I never
intended to hurt you and never
could after the first time I laid
eyes on you. Can't you forgive me?

The Wonder Women swoon.

LUKE
(whispering to Sam)
Use the Force.

Sam elbows Luke in the stomach.

SAM
Claire, of course I forgive you.
Can you can forgive me too?
Forgiveness...

Sam can't believe what he's about to say.

SAM

Forgiveness is the most powerful force in the universe. The ultimate goal of any lasting relationship is trust and forgiveness. And all I want in this universe is you.

The crowd gives a collective sigh and then there is dead silence as everyone awaits Claire's answer.

CLAIRE

Oh puke! Did you really just say that? Did you read that on the back of a romance novel or something?

SAM

I have a hard time believing I said it myself.

CLAIRE

If I promise to stay with you forever, do you promise to never say stupid shit like that again?

SAM

It just came out.

CLAIRE

I mean you are really embarrassing me in front of... my posse.

SAM

If you promise to stay with me, I'll do anything.

Claire smiles, drops her lightsaber and the comic book. Sam drops his lightsaber and they rush together to kiss. The crowd goes wild with cheers.

The Wonder Women brush back tears as Darth and Luke put their arms around each other. The two lovers leave and the crowd disperses.

MOMENTS LATER

A janitor cleaning up the mess left from the fight sees the comic book on the ground. He picks it up, glances at it carelessly and then tosses it into his garbage can.

EXT. SAM AND DEXTER'S COMIC SHOP - DAY

Dexter talks on the phone.

DEXTER

Yes, I put the order in yesterday. My man in New York has a line on that very title. I'm thinking two, three weeks. Okay, I'll give you a call then.

Two men walk into the shop. It is Roger and Bill from Sam's retirement party.

DEXTER

Can I help you?

BILL

We're looking for Sam Patterson. Some crazy person told us he actually owns this place.

DEXTER

He does. I'm his partner, Dexter.

ROGER

I can't believe it. Is he around?

DEXTER

He's at his other job today.

BILL

Other job?

ROGER

Oh, we are aware of his other job.

DEXTER

Not that one. Here, I'll give you the address. It's in Long Island.

INT. CASTAWAYS BAR - DAY

The bar is packed with people dancing, drinking and having fun as a band plays. Sam sits at the keyboard, jamming away. He is back to his thin, coiffured, sexy self, looking happy as can be. The bartender gives him thumbs up. The old barflies are dancing drunkenly with arms around each other. As the song slides into the final vamp, Sam pulls his mic closer.

SAM
 (into the mic)
 Hey, Claire!

The back of a woman is seen taking a shot on the pool table. She sinks the eight ball to finish a game, and an opponent reluctantly gives up his money.

SAM
 Hey Claire!

A very pregnant Claire turns around and waves at Sam.

SAM
 You, in or what?

She shows him the money and then starts for the stage. The crowd lets her through as she makes her way up and straps on the guitar. The song ends. She and Sam quickly kiss.

CLAIRE
 (into the mic)
 Let's see if he can keep up this
 time. ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR!

The band breaks into a groove and Sam and Claire waste no time trading solos and battling it out. The crowd goes wild.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A FEMALE CLIENT sits in a chair nervously wringing her hands.

FEMALE CLIENT
 Yes, I'm mad. Of course, I'm mad.
 He made a commitment. We were
 planning a life together. He's
 such a liar. I want him to pay for
 this. I want him to be hurt. This
 needs to be done right. This needs
 to be creative.

An office chair spins around to reveal Jen. She is without her glasses, in cool make-up and a suit. This is the new, sexy Jen.

JEN
 Well, I might have a few ideas.
 (beat) So, cash is cool with you?

FADE OUT.