Track 1

“Sam & Nellie”

Written by

Joshua Safran

Directed by

Jesse Peretz

PRODUCTION DRAFT
March 11, 2018

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Track 1 – “Sam & Nellie”
Production Draft (Full)
3/11/18

CHARACTERS

Sam Campos
Nellie O’Brien
Dante Campos
Joanna
Hugh O’Brien
Margot Weston
Annette Hunter
Gigi Dumont

GUEST CAST
(in order of appearance)

Surly Teen
Levi Gordon
Coworker
Troy Peltier
Leah
Barry Campos
Boss
De’Andra Green
Man
Freshman
Terry Gross (O.S.)
Ajay
Patty
LAPD Officer
Teacher
Voice (O.S.)
SETS

INTERIORS
Los Feliz Upper Duplex
   Bedroom
   Kitchen
   Bathroom
   Closet Area
Horace Heidt Apartment
Los Angeles College of Art & Design
   Office
Nellie’s Car (Moving)
Silver Lake General Store
El Conquistador Restaurant
High School
   Hallway
   Empty Classroom
Dive Bar
Echo Park House
Sam’s Car (Moving)
Sam & Barry’s Apartment
   Bedroom
Transpacific Music Group
   Cubicle
   Boss’ Office
   Server Room
Gigi’s Apartment
   Nellie’s Room
Hop Louie Chinatown Restaurant
   Bathroom
Ritter Elementary School
Dal Rae Restaurant
The Echo
The Echoplex
Highland Park Bedroom

EXTERIORS
Los Feliz Duplex
Los Feliz Street
Elementary School Playground
Parking Lot
Alleyway
Section 8 Housing Development
Compton Ave. Block Party
Valet Stand
Garden Behind House
Downtown Los Angeles Street
Studio City Street
Cesar Chavez Ave.
Street
Office Park – Parking Lot
The Echo
The Echoplex
Horace Heidt Apartment – Pool
Sunset Blvd.
Silver Lake General Store
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### SONGS

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Nellie
Side A
ACT ONE

CLOSE ON: the open, bright-eyed, hope-filled face of SAMUEL CAMPOS, 32, looking directly at us somewhere in Los Angeles. We have never met this man, but we feel safe with him. Maybe it’s his eyes, or his smile, or the fact that he’s just so fucking excited right now to explain that:

SAM
Every song is a love song.

He waits for our reaction. Continues.

SAM (CONT’D)
Okay, start with songs about desire, or longing -- those are obvious, right? Then there’s songs about the struggle to find love. Falling in it, being tested by it, jealous of it, heartbroken from it. Then there’s metaphors and analogues. Songs about God are about the love for him or her or it. Political songs are love for your country. And if you’re disillusioned with it? That’s just another form of heartbreak, right? Songs about your family, your squad, your regrets, hell, even a diss track -- hate is passion. Biggie loves to hate Tupac, Fleetwood loves hating Mac, Taylor hates, and loves, well, everyone. No one sits at a piano or picks up a guitar or a cello or their sticks with apathy. Only emotion. One emotion. Which is why every song we hear, from the day we’re born ‘til the day we die, from that first lullaby your mom sang to you to the hymn you won’t hear at your funeral, it tells us: love. Whoever, whatever, whenever. It’s what we’re here for. Everything else is just wasting time.

He waits for whoever’s opposite him to agree or disagree.

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - BEDROOM - MORNING

Where NELLIE O’BRIEN, 26, wakes with a smile. She’s that dreaded anomaly: a morning person. She carefully rolls out of bed so as to not wake her sleeping boyfriend, the unfairly hot LEVI GORDON, 28. Nellie exits out and into:
INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - KITCHEN - MORNING

Where she opens her tiny balcony doors to a standard east side foggy morning. She hits a favorite on her phone and as it rings, we INTERCUT with:

INT. HORACE HEIDT APARTMENT - MORNING - INTERCUT

Where the sixty-something hand of the still-rakishly handsome HUGH O’BRIEN reaches for his phone on the nightstand.

HUGH
... Hello.

NELLYIE
You hit snooze. So you’re not up.

HUGH
Of course I am. I’m talking to you.

But that’s when his ALARM CLOCK goes off. She smiles:

NELLYIE
You hit snooze.

He smiles back; this is their routine.

HUGH
I’m up now.

NELLYIE
Love you, Dad.

HUGH
Love you too, honey.

She hangs up. We STAY with Hugh for a moment as he sits up in his sparsely-decorated 400 square-foot, low-ceilinged, parquet-floored prison cell of an apartment.

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - BATHROOM - MORNING

Nellie, still smiling, brushes her teeth in front of the steamed-up mirror. A thought overtakes her. Using her finger, she draws a doodle in the steam. Even this rudimentarily, we see she’s talented. She hesitates, then wipes it off. CUT TO:

INT. LOS FELIZ UPPER DUPLEX - CLOSET AREA - MORNING

Nellie is getting dressed in the cramped dressing area so as not to wake up Levi. As she does, something strikes her. She takes a pencil from wherever and draws the doodle from the mirror on the back of a receipt pulled from her pants pocket. Then the pencil goes in her hair, the receipt in her pocket.
As Nellie walks down the Spanish steps to the courtyard, she passes the neighborhood feral cat. She stops, tries to get close. The cat runs away. Nellie looks after her.

NELLIE
Some day you’ll be mine.

Nellie gets into her car, turns on the RADIO, which is suddenly way too loud, so she jumps and turns it down. And then: turns it the fuck back up again. She knows this song! Without turning it off, she jumps out of the car and runs back through the courtyard and up the steps and back into:

Where she jumps on the bed waking up Levi, yelling:

NELLIE
You’re on the radio! You’re on the radio!

LEVI
What the hell are you--

As she fumbles for the NPR app on her phone and plays it, Levi is up and jumping with her, kissing her. Then he breaks. This is a major moment for him. For them. The moment could turn into something more private, but then...

NELLIE
You gotta tell the band!

LEVI
(dials, then)
Benj, it’s me. Turn on NPR right--
Yeah, can you friggin’ believe it?

Nellie looks after him, proud. She loves him.

As Nellie re-approaches her car, the stray cat is sitting on the hood. Is today that someday? But the cat dashes off, revealing it was planted on a parking ticket. As she takes it, she doesn’t lose her smile. Nothing can get her down.

Nellie’s in her janitor’s-closet-of-an-office, drawing the doodle from the mirror/receipt on a real piece of paper now. It’s grown into something beautiful; she’s not just talented, she’s exceptional. There’s a KNOCK at the door.
COWORKER
Time for the next tour.

As Nellie puts her pencils down, we CUT TO:

12 INT. LOS ANGELES COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN - DAY

Nellie leads a prospective STUDENT and her parents on a school tour. Nellie is kind, effervescent, knowledgeable.

NELLIE
I believe in this school. I believe a good foundation for a career in art starts here. You can learn all the basics and hone your skills while having your dreams nurtured and protected at the same time.

But the teenager is surly. Turns to her parents.

SURLY TEEN
Why should I even go to school? Every cool artist working today didn’t.
(to Nellie)
Did you?

NELLIE
Of course. I went here.

SURLY TEEN
See?

But even that can’t get Nellie down. Not today. She smiles.

13 INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Nellie sits in traffic somewhere, two bags from TJ’s in the backseat. She continues to work on the drawing in the car.

14 INT. HORACE HEIDT APARTMENT - DAY

Nellie unpacks boxed dinners from Trader Joe’s into Hugh’s freezer, dumping half-eaten ice cream cartons as she does. Hugh, in his well-worn ill-fitting suit, sits at the counter opposite her taking cartons out of the trash that she’s put in, smelling them and then dropping them back.

HUGH
You don’t have to take such good care of me.

NELLIE
Just repaying the favor.
HUGH
Speaking of favors... It was my night to buy the rounds at Hank’s. More people showed than I thought.

Nellie knows this routine. From out of her bag, she fishes her last 40 bucks. Gives it to him. He sees the drawing poking out of the bag. He lifts it, she protests—

NELLIE
Don’t, it’s nothing--

He unfurls it. It takes his breath away. Her work often does.

HUGH
How did someone like me have someone so talented like you?

NELLIE
You have to say that.

HUGH
Yeah, I do. And also, you are.

NELLIE
I gotta go.

She kisses him goodbye and runs out the door, and we CUT TO:

INT. SILVER LAKE GENERAL STORE - DUSK

An ornately gel-manicured hand turns the sign from OPEN to CLOSED. The constantly chipper and externally chic GIGI DUMONT returns to where coworker TROY PELTIER, an all-American jock who is the best salesman in a woman’s clothing store, stands with Nellie.

GIGI
We told our boss Pandora was down so we could have KCRW on. They’ve played Levi’s song at least twice.

TROY
What’s it like to date someone actually talented in LA?

GIGI
I’m just excited we won’t have to man the band’s merch table anymore. VIP section, here we come.

NELLIE
Guys. What if I’m wrong about tonight?
GIGI
It’s your third anniversary and he made the dinner res. Levi’s never made a res in his life. If it didn’t come from a stand, a box, a bag, or a truck, he wouldn’t know what to do. A res is a bold move. A res only means one thing.

TROY
And if you’re gonna get a ring on that finger tonight, you’re sure as shit gonna have the dress to go with it.

Troy pulls a dress out and holds it to skeptical Nellie.

NELLIE
No way.

TROY
ONLY way.

GIGI
If you get it back to us before we open, no one will know.

NELLIE
It’s too beautiful. I couldn’t.

GIGI
Neither could Jean Dubrowski from Dearborn. But Gigi Dumont of Silver Lake can. And so can you.

NELLIE
You changed your name to wear dresses?

GIGI
I didn’t change. I just stopped holding on to the girl I grew up as and allowed myself to be the woman I should be.

Troy and Gigi look at each other. Time for full honesty:

TROY
Look, babe: The clothes you’re wearing right now? They say “Date me. I’m fun and practical.” But this dress? It says “Marry me.”
GIGI
It says “I will never stop surprising you.” It says “I’m the woman you’re going to share your life with.”

TROY
As do these earrings, these shoes and this bag--

Troy and Gigi toss them to Nellie faster than Cinderella’s mice. They guide Nellie to the changing room. Nellie stops at the door. Asks the question that’s been plaguing her all day:

NELLIE
Am I allowed to feel this good?

GIGI
Not out loud. But inside? Hell yeah.

As Gigi closes the curtain on us, we CUT TO:

INT. EL CONQUISTADOR RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nellie walks into the restaurant, on cloud nine. She’s holding the drawing she made, rolled and wrapped with a ribbon. Levi, in de rigueur denim on denim, stands and greets her nervously.

LEVI
Hey. You look amazing.

He kisses her on the cheek, then pulls out her chair for her to sit. The full court press -- it’s totally happening tonight. The waiter brings over a cocktail:

LEVI
I ordered your favorite.

As she holds up the cocktail to cheers with Levi’s Stella, she beams, on the biggest high of her life. And we CUT TO:

- Appetizers are now on the table. No proposal yet. And not much conversation either.

LEVI
How is it?

NELLIE
Good. Great. It’s great. And yours?

LEVI
Same. Great. Yeah.
This small talk, akin to a first date, is raising Nellie’s hopes, Levi’s awkwardness a sign of good to come. CUT TO:

- Entrée time. No ring yet. Nellie’s now nervous, her leg shaking under the table, TAPPING the terra cotta below.

    LEVI
    What’s that sound?

    NELLIE
    (stops her leg)
    I don’t hear anything.

She looks at her phone hidden in her lap. It LIGHTS UP with a returned text from Gigi that follows Nellie’s still no: Cut it out. Who proposes pre-dessert? It’s coming. CUT TO:

The waiter takes the entrées off the table. No one is talking. Nellie can’t handle the tension, so she thrusts her drawing across the table with:

    NELLIE
    I got you this.

Levi takes it, hesitates, then unfurls it. We see for the first time what it is: Upon first glance it looks like a landscape, but on closer inspection, it’s two faceless bodies entwined. It’s simple and intricate at the same time, and wholly beautiful. He regards it. Then can’t wait any longer.

    LEVI
    I’ve been doing a lot of thinking.
    I wanted to make sure this was absolutely the right choice...

She sits up too fast, wine glass wobbling. She stops it. Relaxes. This dress, this moment, will not be ruined.

    LEVI
    Everything is about to get so crazy. And, when I think about, I mean really think about it, which I’ve done a lot... I just don’t think it’s fair to either of us if we continue like this right now.

    NELLIE
    Continue what?

    LEVI
    I’ve worked so long and hard for this moment. With your amazing support, of course.
    (MORE)
LEVI (CONT'D)
But I need to focus all my
attention on my career right now.
You only get one shot like this.
And I don’t see a way to give you
what you deserve and get what I
need, too. I’m so sorry.

He’s crying now, like all men do when they don’t know how to
take responsibility for the pain they’re causing someone
else. Nellie’s still not getting it. Still smiling, because
to let go of that smile would mean she’s processed it.

LEVI
My mom said I gotta let go of the
duplex since I’ll be on the road for
a year. I told the landlord we’d be
out by the end of the month--

That’s when the SOUND DROPS, along with the proverbial ground
beneath Nellie’s feet. The LIGHTS SHIFT as Nellie stands and
takes off running away in slow motion, the people at the
tables she passes trying to grab her and sling-shot her back
as she lip-synchs our first HUGE PRODUCTION NUMBER.

SONG: ELASTIC HEART (Sia)

NELLIE
AND ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST
OH WHY CAN I NOT CONQUER LOVE?
AND I MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THAT WE WERE ONE
WANTED TO FIGHT THIS WAR WITHOUT WEAPONS
AND I WANTED IT, I WANTED IT BAD
BUT THERE WERE SO MANY RED FLAGS
NOW ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST
YEAH, LET’S BE CLEAR, I’LL TRUST NO ONE

She makes it to the door and pushes it. It opens & we CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY (SONG)

CLOSE ON: A group of 8-year-old girls in uniforms jump rope.
A group of 8-year-old boys whisper to each other and point.
Our Nellie appears on the blacktop, looking for something.

NELLIE
YOU DID NOT BREAK ME
I'M STILL FIGHTING FOR PEACE

Which is when she sees the boys and girls are egging on her 8-
year-old self, about to have her first kiss with a classmate.
Our Nellie watches helplessly as young Nellie kisses the boy,
who pushes her away, disgusted, landing her hard on the
blacktop. Our Nellie crosses over and helps young Nellie up.
NELLIE
I'VE GOT A THICK SKIN AND AN ELASTIC HEART
BUT YOUR BLADE, IT MIGHT BE TOO SHARP

The boys and girls laugh at her. Our Nellie turns and is in:

21  INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY (SONG)

Where she moves through a swarm of high schoolers like a
ghost. She makes it to a classroom door, looks inside to see:

    NELLIE
I'M LIKE A RUBBER BAND UNTIL YOU PULL TOO HARD
YEAH, I MAY SNAP AND I MOVE FAST

22  INT. HIGH SCHOOL - EMPTY CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS (SONG)

15 y.o. Nellie kisses a 15 y.o. jock, hidden from view.

    NELLIE
BUT YOU WON'T SEE ME FALL APART

23  EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT (SONG)

Nellie and the jock make love in his car in an empty lot. Our
Nellie watches from a distance. She knows what’s coming:

    NELLIE
'CAUSE I'VE GOT AN ELASTIC HEART

24  INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY (SONG)

15-year-old Nellie approaches the jock the next morning,
elated, until she sees: He's holding the hand of a different
girl. Our Nellie is also there, watching.

    NELLIE
I'VE GOT AN ELASTIC HEART
YEAH, I'VE GOT AN ELASTIC HEART

15-year-old Nellie turns and cries on Our Nellie’s shoulder.

We CUT TO: a succession of Nellie’s bad relationships, all
under the watchful eye of Our Nellie on the sidelines:
- 18-year-old Nellie walks in on her boyfriend with her
  college roommate.
- Nellie, a boy’s number drawn on the palm of her hand, walks
  with a friend who eggs her on to make the call on her cell.
  As she does, she gets “This number is not in service.” Her
  smile dies.

    NELLIE
OH, OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH
OH, OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH
INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (SONG)

23-year-old Nellie sits at a dive bar table with some friends (including Gigi), smiling up at 26-year-old Levi on stage, playing a song just to her. Our Nellie sings her warning:

NELLIE
OH, OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (SONG)

23-year-old Nellie kisses Levi by the stage door as the band exits to load up the van. As he breaks, and she leans against the wall, smiling, Our Nellie walks out into:

NELLIE
OH, OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH OH OH OH OH, OH OH

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (SONG)

Where she is just in time to see the van drive off. She turns and sees she’s not alone after all: Lines of all the men in her life that disappointed her somehow flank her. She tries to push through them, but there are more and more. She’s encircled by the backs of countless men. She has no choice but to start climbing them.

NELLIE
I’VE GOT A THICK SKIN AND AN ELASTIC HEART
BUT YOUR BLADE, IT MIGHT BE TOO SHARP
I’M LIKE A RUBBER BAND UNTIL YOU PULL TOO HARD
YEAH, I MAY SNAP AND I MOVE FAST
BUT YOU WON’T SEE ME FALL APART
’CAUSE I’VE GOT AN ELASTIC HEART
I’VE GOT AN ELASTIC HEART

She’s finally reached the top, all her bad relationships beneath her. Just as she gets a foothold, all the men collapse under her and she falls, the song coming to its close as she lands:

INT. EL CONQUISTADOR RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Right back in her seat at the restaurant just as the waiter, turning away from the table with the dessert and candle, knocks her glass of wine all over her borrowed dress. As Nellie lets out frustrated:

NELLIE
FUUUU--

But since we listen to the FCC, we CUT TO the title card:

END OF ACT ONE
A light-filled house high on the hill, but with all the rooms empty. Sam, our bright-eyed monologist from the opening, leans against a wall, alone, regarding one particular empty room. We can tell from the sun-bleached outlines of bedposts against a wall that this was a bedroom.

Sam checks the emptied closet one last time and finds inside, tucked in a corner: a guitar case. He hesitates reaching for it, which is when the cutest six-year-old ever captured on digital, BARRY CAMPOS, passes the door with a box way too big from him. Sam races to grab it before Barry drops it, but:

BARRY
No. I wanna see how far I can get without putting it down.

Barry passes out of view. Sam calls after him:

SAM
Think you can make it to the car?

The sound of a CRASH tells us the answer is no. Sam smiles, shakes his head. Takes the guitar after all, heading out after Barry ‘til he’s stopped by something. Sticking out from under a baseboard is a scrap of paper. Sam fishes it out. From his face we know it means something to him. Barry comes back into view with the box:

BARRY
The wall didn’t break anything!

SAM
Success!

BARRY
Whatever that is!

Sam pockets the paper, takes the box, and walks out with him.

The fruit trees and juice joints of former hipster climes have turned to the shitty roads and fast food blocs in lower LA as Sam and Barry drive south. In the backseat, Barry fills out a LYFT DRIVER APPLICATION on Sam’s phone.

BARRY
How old are you?
SAM
Thirty-two.

BARRY
That’s a number?

SAM
Okay, wise guy, what’s next?

BARRY
What’s your address?

SAM
Remember the song you memorized?

BARRY
“9320 Compton Avenue. Watts, Calif--”

SAM
Watts isn’t a city. It’s still LA.

BARRY
(looking out the window)
Are you sure?

SAM
Next question?

BARRY
How many hours do you want to work?

SAM
With my job, I’ve only got nights and weekends, so, let’s see...
(cringes)
Thirty-six?

BARRY
Married, single, or divorced?

Sam didn’t see that coming. He takes the phone from Barry.

SAM
It’s called widowed.

BARRY
That wasn’t there.

SAM
Because not many people are.

Sam does the parent trick of turning on the radio to end the conversation. It works. As the MUSIC COMES UP it takes us to:
Sam’s U-Haul is next to a low-income housing block in South Central. Sam hands his aunt, ANNETTE HUNTER (50, African American, warm, pragmatic) one of the last boxes. She crosses off as he turns to walk with the last box, almost bumping into a passing woman (let’s call her JOANNA, 32, beautiful, guarded) as she moves to a coworker’s parked car.

JOANNA
Sorry.

SAM
Totally my fault.

Joanna pauses in that way you do when you want to start a conversation but don’t know how. But Sam’s missed it, ‘cause:

BARRY (O.S.)
Dad! It’s apartment twelve! You didn’t put that in the song!

Sam moves up a flight of stairs to the balcony outside an apartment where Barry is. Joanna moves off to her car, the moment passed. Annette crosses to Barry, standing with her precocious daughter LEAH, 15; hands him a dollar.

ANNETTE
Ice cream truck comes soon.

SAM
What do we say?

BARRY
Thanks, Aunt Annette.

SAM
(heartfelt)
Thanks, Aunt Annette.

ANNETTE
I’m so glad this place came up. You can thank Dante for that. Don’t know how he knew, but he did.

LEAH
We share a wall, B-man. We can make a code and knock it at each other.

An LAPD HELICOPTER flies way too low above their heads.

BARRY
Hey dad, look! A helicopter! Wow!
LEAH
You’ll be seeing a lot of those.

Barry chases after it along the balcony. Sam and Annette share a look. Leah heads after Barry.

ANNETTE
Your job, how’s it been? Any opportunities for your songs?

SAM
I’m a support tech. They don’t even know us by name. Which is good, because the way the music industry is, they keep getting laid off, but my job is safe. Client Services is always the last to--

Before Sam can answer, he’s tackled and grabbed into a bear hug. Well, a koala bear hug, as the benefactor of said hug is Sam’s diminutive cousin, the 5’6” Afro-Latino DANTE CAMPOS, 28, a jittery live wire (and Annette’s firstborn).

DANTE
Sam-UEL! You look so old. Your eyes are like six inches in, like a sad skull! You need some rest, cuz!

SAM
You don’t look nearly as busted as I thought you would.

DANTE
What else you gotta do in the joint but pump all day, you know? You should try it, gordo.

He lifts his shirt to show his abs. As well as his chestful of tats. Dante’s a tough guy. Sam pulls Dante’s shirt down:

SAM
Bear, come meet your cousin. Dante, this is my son, Barry.

Dante bends to skeptical Barry, though he doesn’t have to.

DANTE
Sorry to hear about your moms, kid.

BARRY
Why don’t I know you?
SAM
It’s okay, I’m honest with him.
Dante just got out of prison for possession and assault. He was in for four years.

DANTE
Shoulda been five, but the warden had a thing for me. Having you and your pops as my neighbs is the best release present ever.

ANNETTE
Dante’s always looked up to you. You’ll be a good influence like when you were kids, help him stay on the straight and narrow.

DANTE
Your dad and me, we used to get up to it, know what I’m saying?

SAM
More like whatever he got up to, I had to clean up.

BARRY
I thought you were from Mexico?

SAM
I moved back there when I was ten.

A twinge of guilt in this for Sam. Dante senses it, too.

DANTE
If you come to my party, maybe we can loosen him up again, chulo?

LEAH
It’s not his party, it’s a block party that just happens to be the same week he got out.

DANTE
Why you gotta bust me, sis!

SAM
Whatever it is, we’ll be ther--

DANTE
(sees something)
Oh damn, crazy legs still lives here? Piernas Alocadas en la sala!
Ejercita esas piernas locas!
And with that, Dante is gone as fast as he arrived. Like most (former?) addicts, you don’t have his attention for long. Annette can see Sam’s overwhelmed. She motions for Leah.

ANNETTE
Why don’t you boys settle in. We’ll be next door if you need anything.

Leah KNOCKS twice, then once more. He does the same thing back. She gives him a thumbs up -- they have their code.

INT. SAM & BARRY’S APARTMENT - LATER

We find Sam in the bedroom, putting together Barry’s bed.

BARRY
Where you gonna sleep?

SAM
The sofa.

BARRY
I can trade with you sometimes?

Sam looks at his son, proud to have raised such a good human. Barry takes something out of a box, look at it intently.

SAM
How ‘bout you put that up?
(Barry shakes his head)
It’s been over a year, bear. Maybe it’s time to talk about it?

Barry shakes his head, takes the drawing from the box, puts it in the trash, then exits. Sam watches him, concerned. Looks to the drawing in the trash. Should he leave it?

EXT. COMPTON AVE. BLOCK PARTY - DUSK

A full-on block party is in effect, this extended family of a community in full force. Sam watches Barry, already a star of the under-8 set, showing his dance moves to a group of kids.

VOICE (O.S.)
You can let him out of your sight.

DE’ANDRA GREEN, 29, a fast and feisty spitfire, reaches in with a beer. Though her clothes may leave little to the imagination, you’re not getting anywhere without her respect.

DE’ANDRA
South LA isn’t the Central of nineties movies and your childhood anymore.

(MORE)
DE’ANDRA (CONT’D)
Roy Choi opened a restaurant here. Jordan Downs is an “urban village.” We’ve got charter schools, public transportation, one of the best hospitals in the county.

SAM
If you believe all that, how come you moved to Highland Park, D?

DE’ANDRA
It’s closer to my hospice?

SAM
Closer to other things, too. You gonna tell him?

Before she can answer, Dante runs in, calling off-screen to:

DANTE
Yo, Snuffy! What’d I tell you ‘bout no Drill? Turn up some John Legend, make my white cuz COMFY.
(fake holds his chest)
De’Andra Green, you know how to stop a brother’s heart from beatin’!
(they kiss)
For real tho, thought you had night school tonight?

DE’ANDRA
It’s Friday. And it’s not “night school,” it’s med school, dumbass.

DANTE
How could I forget my girl’s gonna be a fancy doc; set me up for life.

He kisses her again. Her knees go weak a little. She loves him, in spite of better judgment. To wit, when they break:

DANTE
Yo, doc, you got any funds? Juana’s Tamales pulled up and I’m tapped.

DE’ANDRA
Only if you bring me a tamale back.

DANTE
Un puerco en hoja de platano comin’ up.

As soon as he’s gone, Sam snarks, with smile:
SAM
You know there’s no tamale truck, right?

DE’ANDRA
All this time I thought prison wouldn’t change him. Nothing else had. But what if it did?

We can feel this is a major concern for her. Sam squeezes her arm, knows there’s more going on here than they can even say. Their eyes fall on Barry, having the time of his life.

SAM
He still won’t talk about her.

DE’ANDRA
He’ll talk when he’s ready.

Annette butts in, buzzed from her many Solo cups of beer. She puts her arms around Sam and De’Andra and hangs there.

ANNETTE
Ready for what? Dating? Now I know you’re not talkin’ ‘bout that, ‘cause this man has joined the priesthood. Sammy, saint of celibacy.

SAM
You only get one great love in your life, and that’s if you’re lucky. I had mine.

ANNETTE
Oh please. That was the line they used so people stayed in bad marriages like their parents. Now we know better. There are many “ones” out there. How many times have I been married?

DE’ANDRA
Three?

ANNETTE
(Sam mouths “four”)
And those are just the ones I told you about.

SAM
You’ve also been widowed or divorced four times.
ANNETTE
I was in love four times. That’s what counts. Not how it ends.

SAM
It’s too soon. For Barry’s sake.

ANNETTE
Barry wants what every child wants: their parent to be happy. Maybe he isn’t talking about Eleanor not ‘cause he can’t face it, but because he’s trying to help you move on from it? When’s the last time you even picked up your guitar?

SAM
I need to provide for my son.

ANNETTE
(points to his heart)
You need to provide for you too. You helped her go after her dreams. But now she’s gone, and all that’s left is yours. It’s your turn.

Sam’s PHONE DINGS. He looks at it, not sure if it’s good news:

SAM
Lyft just came through.

DE’ANDRA
There go your nights and weekends.

ANNETTE
Leah and I’ll take good care of B.

Annette squeezes Sam’s hand; she knows how hard this all is. As she moves off, De’Andra pats Sam on the shoulder:

DE’ANDRA
I’m gonna go find myself a tamale.

She exits. Sam, alone, sees Dante break off from a few members of his former gang. As Dante passes Sam, he smiles. Sam looks at him, wary. Dante reads it, and:

DANTE
All good, bruh. They try to reel me back but I ain’t biting. Just gotta look like it, y’know? Where’s D at?
He holds up a tamale. Sam looks at it, feels instantly bad for judging Dante. Dante moves off, leaving Sam alone. As he watches Barry play, his PERSONAL SONG begins.

**SONG: BETWEEN ME AND YOU** *(Brandon Flowers)*

**SAM**

**BETWEEN ME AND YOU**
**I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE AND**
**BETWEEN ME AND YOU**
**I THINK I'M LOSING IT NOW**

Barry runs by with the other kids, smiling.

**KIDS**

**HEY!**

33 **INT. SAM & BARRY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (SONG)**

Sam has put Barry to bed. He watches his tucked-in son sleep.

**SAM**

**BETWEEN ME AND YOU**
**I'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE AND**
**BETWEEN ME AND YOU**
**I THINK I'M LOSING IT NOW**

34 **INT./EXT. MONTAGE - DAY/DUSK/NIGHT (SONG)**

- Sam in his cubicle at a company like Universal Music Group, in a uniform like the other techs around him.
- Sam driving his car with Lyft passengers in the backseat.
- Sam the valet getting tossed a car’s keys by a patron and hopping in to park it.
- A drained Sam fixes his boss’s computer as his boss practices his golf putt as if Sam’s not even there.
- A depleted Sam drives his car with passengers in the back.
- A bushed Sam gets out of someone’s car and gives them their keys at the restaurant.

**SAM**

**ALL MY LIFE**
**I'VE BEEN TOLD**
**FOLLOW YOUR DREAM**
**BUT THE TRAIL WENT COLD**
**AND THE HEART DON'T LIE**
**AND THAT'S A GOOD LUCK CHARM**
**BUT I'M WATCHING IT TEAR OUT OF MY ARMS**
EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - MORNING (SONG)
Sam walks up to the apartment after a night of working.

SAM
AND THERE'S A POWER IN LETTING GO
I GUESS I DIDN'T WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

INT. SAM & BARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY (SONG)
Sam enters, dead on his feet. Barry’s already gone to school. Sam starts to change into his uniform for work.

SAM
THESE HOURS I'M WORKING AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
SOMETIMES IT’S LIKE A BULLET CAME
AND BLASTED ME RIGHT OF OUT OF THE BLUE

OMITTED

INT. OFFICE - DAY (SONG)
Sam is falling asleep at his desk.

SAM
BUT I'M DOING MY BEST
NOT TO LET IT GET
BETWEEN ME AND YOU

EXT. GARDEN BEHIND HOUSE - DAY (SONG)
Sam’s memory of his wedding day in a spectacular English country garden somewhere. He stands, beaming, under an arbor watching a beautiful woman walk toward him down the aisle.

SAM
I REMEMBER YOU IN WHITE IN THE GARDEN
IT’S BEEN TRIAL AFTER TRIAL
THROUGH THE RINGER IN THE BACK
OUT THE WINDOW, OFF THIS TRACK
I WAS JUST TOO PROUD TO KNOW

MAN
COME ON CHILD!

Sam wakes up with a start at the valet stand where a MAN is waiting with his ticket, pissed. Sam hops to it.

INT. SAM’S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT/DAY/NIGHT AGAIN (SONG)
And now we’re back with Sam, as he drives with a succession of people in the backseat.
The passengers look at their phones, make calls, eat, fight, vape, make out, puke, sing to the radio, sleep, dance. Sam never looks back, just gets more and more tired, the days and nights taking their toll:

SAM

THESE HOURS I'M WORKING AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH
SOMETIMES IT'S LIKE A BULLET CAME
AND BLASTED ME RIGHT OF OUT OF THE BLUE
AND I FEEL LIKE I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SHOW
FOR THIS LIFE AND I'VE BEEN WONDERING
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO

But what Sam *doesn’t* notice is that his last passenger is Joanna, the woman he almost bumped into outside of his apartment. She, however, recognizes him. As he doesn’t notice her trying to work up the courage to say something:

SAM

BUT I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET
AND I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET
YES I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO LET IT GET

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES STREET - MORNING (SONG)

Sam pulls over, the ride concluded. Joanna doesn’t move.

SAM

BETWEEN ME AND YOU

The song ends, but Joanna’s still sitting there. Sam, just wanting to get home to his son, doesn’t even turn around:

SAM

This is it, right?

JOANNA

It is. Yeah. Th-- Thanks.

And again, unable to summon the courage to talk to Sam, she gets out. In the car, Sam takes one moment to himself to breathe. He texts Annette: coming home now. Annette texts back: Barry just left. Sam shakes his head and drives off.

ANGLE ON: Joanna, still on the curb. She sees Sam drive off. As she opens the Lyft APP to look at his profile, she sees his name: Sam -- and his photo. As she moves her fingers across the screen to see if the photo opens wider, she touches the star ratings by mistake, giving Sam one star.

JOANNA

Oh no!
She tries to go back but it’s not possible. (Truly: It’s not possible. Someone should fix that.)

IN THE CAR: Sam’s APP registers the low rating -- he lurches a little on the brake. Shakes his head. Another fucking ding on his shit life. That’s when his PHONE RINGS. He answers. What he hears is abject panic:

BOSS (ON PHONE)
Campos! Thank God you’re there.

SAM
What’s going on?

BOSS (ON PHONE)
I was right; we are launching our own streaming service. The COO wants to run a test Thursday to see if the servers can take it. I asked everyone but no one can get here before ten. If you do, I’ll put you up for analyst when it launches?

Even though it’s clear Sam’s boss doesn’t want him, Sam straightens up at this potential way to get back to his and Barry’s home. He smiles for the first time in days. Fuck yes:

SAM
I’ll be right there.

END OF ACT TWO
Nellie
Side B
ACT THREE

46 CLOSE UP ON: A SCREEN

... as someone types Levi Gordon and hits enter. A NEWS ITEM pops up with his photo: Phillips 66 announce arena tour. We PULL BACK to REVEAL Nellie, getting ready in her new bedroom in Gigi’s apartment. The confusion and pain of her breakup is still roiling within her as she lip-synchs her PERSONAL SONG:

SONG: LOVE IS A LOSING GAME (Amy Winehouse)

NEILLIE
FOR YOU I WAS A FLAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME
FIVE STORY FIRE AS YOU CAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

The apartment: a wall-to-wall-carpeted, vertical-blinded, 70s Studio City monstrosity. As Nellie exits, grabbing her bag, she passes the living room (where Gigi and Troy are on the couch with face masks). They look after her with concern.

47 EXT. STUDIO CITY STREET - DUSK (SONG)

Nellie comes to her car. A different stray on the hood. This one wants a pet. But she passes it and gets into her car.

NEILLIE
ONE I WISH I NEVER PLAYED
OH WHAT A MESS WE MADE
AND NOW THE FINAL FRAME
LOVE IS A LOSING GAME

48 INT. HOP LOUIE CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - NIGHT (SONG)

Nellie sits in a chair as it moves around a restaurant, landing at one table after another, a succession of different first dates opposite her, but she doesn’t connect. She changes her clothes as she moves, days passing, her hair messier, her makeup less careful, her mood more IDGAF.

NEILLIE
PLAYED OUT BY THE BAND
LOVE IS A LOSING HAND
MORE THAN I COULD STAND
LOVE IS A LOSING HAND
SELF PROFESSED, PROFOUND
‘TIL THE CHIPS WERE DOWN
KNOW YOU’RE A GAMBLING MAN
LOVE IS A LOSING HAND

The song ends at:
INT. HOP LOUIE CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Where Nellie waits for her next (last?) date. An 18-year-old FRESHMAN in a Supreme hoodie enters and walks toward Nellie with confidence, even as his Nikes SQUEAK.

FRESHMAN

Nellie?

NELLIE

... Maybe?

He nods -- Alright! -- and sits opposite her. She looks around.

FRESHMAN

It’s Cam. You probably don’t recognize me; I shaved.

NELLIE

Are you in high school?

FRESHMAN

Nah, man, I’m a frosh at SC.

NELLIE

This is so not happening.

She stands, fast, knocks over her water glass and it spills directly into her open purse still on her chair. She heads to the bathroom as the Freshman shrugs and downs her wine.

INT. HOP LOUIE CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nellie enters the ladies’ room, dumps the water from her purse, drip-drains her cell.

WOMAN’S VOICE (O.S.)

Rice. If you put your phone in rice, it should be okay.

She looks down the mirror to where the beautifully sad Joanna is staring at herself in the mirror.

NELLIE

Good tip, thank you.

There’s a pause. Nellie sees how closely Joanna is examining herself. It’s not the good kind of examining. It’s the kind you do when you’re trying to see the thing someone else said.

NELLIE

This is none of my business, but... you look awesome.
JOANNA
Why is it I can love myself all day; wake up and not need coffee, get to work in a real twenty, not an LA one, empty my inbox by noon -- but the wrong look from some rando guy and it’s back at one. A total do-over.

NELLIE
That bad, huh?

JOANNA
Stood up bad. And not by some blind date, if those even exist anymore. By someone I’ve been chatting with for weeks. Clearly he came, he saw me, and he ran. Better than most of my dates, which usually feel like a Groundlings showcase: two people yelling topics across a table at each other hoping one sticks.

A beat. Nellie holds up her pot of lip gloss to Joanna. Joanna takes some, tries it on her lips. It looks good.

JOANNA
Whatever happened to passing someone on a street, or catching their eye at a club, or from your car and feeling that thing? The hairs-on-the-back-of-your-neck adrenaline rush, an instant connection? Like if you just talked to that person, they’d be the one? We know so much about each other now, before we even show up, there’s no chance for that head rush, and even if there was, our arms are always in front of our faces we can’t even see who’s passing by. Does anyone ever meet anyone anymore? Or do we all just kinda know each other so why bother?

NELLIE
No one really knows anyone. I was with someone for years, and on Monday it was great, and on Tuesday it was over. Nobody could have seen it coming. Even half a year later it makes no sense. Did he not love me? I know he did. Was he not ready to settle down? Seemed like he was. Did I put too much pressure on him? Did I miss some signals? Did I--
Someone else walks into the bathroom, shattering the moment.

    NELLIE
    I guess I should grab that rice.

    JOANNA
    (a beat)
    Hey. I got something I think you might need more than me.

She hands Nellie the fortune from her fortune cookie.

    JOANNA
    Family tradition. Pass to the left.

Nellie looks at it. It reads: **Your luck is about to change.**

    NELLIE
    God, I hope so.

As the two women smile, and walk out together, then move off separately, we CUT TO:

51 INT. NELLIE’S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Nellie is driving her dented car home from her “date” when she turns on the RADIO. And wouldn’t you know it:

    TERRY GROSS (ON RADIO)

Nellie tries desperately to turn off the radio, but her fingers don’t find the knob. Looking down for a millisecond, the car **jumps the curb**, the tire **POPS**, and the radio goes **FULL BLAST**. After a beat, she takes out her cell.

52 EXT. CESAR CHAVEZ AVENUE - NIGHT

Nellie is sitting on the curb next to her car when another car pulls to a stop behind her. She rolls her eyes.

    NELLIE
    Of course you didn’t send someone.

    HUGH
    I answer the phones at Triple-A.
    I’m someone. Besides, this is the only way I get to see you. You have’t called or come by in weeks; you just text. I don’t have a daughter anymore, I have an emoji.
    (beat)
    You don’t look so hot, kiddo.
NELLIE
‘Cause I’m not so hot, Dad.

Nellie helps her dad roll the spare to her car.

NELLIE
No matter where I go, Levi seems to follow me.

HUGH
That’s a bit of an exaggeration, don’t you think?

She points to a billboard of Levi and his band over their heads. Hugh shrugs; okay, maybe not. As they change the tire:

NELLIE
I don’t know what to do. I don’t seem to be able to connect to anyone or anything. I’ve stopped drawing. I don’t eat.

HUGH
You haven’t showered...

NELLIE
I haven’t showered. I’ve given up at work. Hard to tell kids their dreams can come true when mine clearly haven’t. Worst thing of all? What if Levi was right? What if I was holding him back?

HUGH
You weren’t holding anyone back with him but yourself. You were halfway through your book when you met and then... What happened!

NELLIE
They’re not called books; they’re graphic novels. And it was a graphic memoir, actually--

HUGH
Whatever it was, you gave it up for him when you should’ve been a team. He dreams a little, you wait. You dream a little, he waits. That was the problem with me and your mom. There was never any room for my dreams. We had to get divorced for me to become who I am today.
NELLIE
Minus the fraud and embezzlement?

HUGH
Who knows? Maybe time’ll show even that was worth it for some reason. So I can no longer work where I used to. Just means I’m not meant to.

NELLIE
Bright side all you want. I still need to know why. I want the answer.

HUGH
And you’ll get it. But clarity comes with time. It doesn’t come when you need it.

But Nellie has stopped listening. Because she’s received a GOOGLE ALERT on her phone: **Grammy Nominee Levi Gordon announces engagement to supermodel Lina Carr**...

NELLIE
(shows phone to Hugh)
So he was ready to settle down. With the woman he was clearly sleeping with while we were together!

HUGH
Great! You got your answer. Now you can move on.

But Nell’s already on her phone, a devilish glint in her eye.

NELLIE
Troy. Does that couple you used to sleep with still work at Atlantic? There’s a show we need to get into tomorrow night...

She’s moving on, alright. Moving on to the fight of her life!

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

A PAIR OF SPOTLESS VALENTINO HEELS

... walk across broken pavement & up a flight of stairs.

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - MORNING

Sam, parking his car after his long night of driving, sees the woman with the shoes enter his apartment. Shit.

INT. SAM & BARRY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sam’s elegant and beautiful 50-something mother-in-law, MARGOT WESTON, is helping Barry tie his shoes.

MARGOT
Nice to see you, Annette. And this guy, of course.

She hugs Barry. He hugs her back. They are very close. Margot looks at the place, tries to hide her distaste.

SAM (O.S.)
What do you think, Margot?

BARRY
Dad!

Barry releases his hold on Margot to run to Sam, having entered behind her. Despite her abundant warmth and regal calm, Margot and Sam have a complicated relationship.

MARGOT
It’s... smaller than I expected.

SAM
We prefer “homey.”
(to Barry)
Hey, bud, why don’t you grab a sweater? It’s chilly today.

Annette takes Barry into the bedroom; she knows what’s going on. Sam sees Margot’s eyes land on his guitar in the closet. He steps in front of her so she has to change her focus.

MARGOT
There’s a great house for rent in Echo Park, one block from your old one. You could work on your music there, rent-free. Guilt-free.
SAM
And my son?

MARGOT
You and I have our differences, but I know how much you love Barry. I know you want what’s best for him.

SAM
And he has that living here, with his father. We’ve been over this...

MARGOT
Do you really think Eleanor would have allowed this, Sam? The crime statistics for this neighborhood alone. The education attainment level. I looked it up. Six percent of kids go to college.

SAM
Then he’ll be one of the six.

MARGOT
You’d see him all the time if he lived with me. He’d just have the right school in Brentwood, better housing, a yard, full-time care.

SAM
By a revolving door of strangers while you’re off doing your next Hallmark movie in Alberta?

MARGOT
I’m just trying to help. You lost your wife; you don’t have to lose your dreams, too.

SAM
Well, I don’t want to lose my son, either. I appreciate the offer, Margot. I know it comes from your heart. But I’m on track for a promotion at work that’ll give me more time here, and--

MARGOT
More time?

Up ’til that moment, Sam forgot Margot doesn’t know how hard he’s working. How he’s never home. It adds instant fuel to the fire of Margot’s fears for Barry. Annette comes back in.
ANNETTE
You’re going to be late.

MARGOT
Didn’t you just get home?

BARRY
Dad’s a superhero. He has three jobs.

MARGOT
Who picks up Barry from school?

ANNETTE
(nods to Leah in the doorway)
Me and my daughter live next door.

LEAH
Just a reminder, I have SAT prep today.

Sam and Annette clearly forgot. Annette to Sam:

ANNETTE
The hostess is on maternity leave.

Sam doesn’t want to look like he doesn’t have this handled.

ANNETTE
That’s why we asked Dante.
(to Margot)
My firstborn. Just moved back in.

Dante, having his morning smoke al fresco, hears his name.
Sam looks to Annette; this a good idea? Annette nods, small.

ANNETTE
You’re picking up Barry from school today, remember?

Dante understands what’s going on fast; no fool he. He also is buoyed by this; means a lot to be considered trustworthy.

DANTE
See you at two, B-man?

SAM/LEAH/ANNETTE
Three.

They look at each other -- oops. Margot takes Barry’s hand.

MARGOT
Want to put the address into the GPS for after we have breakfast?
BARRY
I know how to go. Dad taught me.

A wary Margot leaves with Barry. Sam turns to Dante. Clearly worried he may be making a mistake. But Dante isn’t worried.

DANTE
I’ll do you proud, cuz. I got you.

Sam’s PHONE DINGS with a text from his boss: on your way?
Grabbing his uniform from the closet, we CUT TO:

INT. TRANSPACIFIC MUSIC GROUP - SERVER ROOM - DAY

It’s vast, hot, and full of machines making MACHINE NOISES, as an exhausted but hopeful Sam checks the stability of one server after another. His coworkers/friends PATTY (45) and AJAY (25) take a coffee (Ajay) and vape break (Patty).

AJAY
Awful lot of work for one human. Is he testing the servers, or you?

PATTY
He’s always had it out for you.

SAM
And while he may be a racist prick, I’m going to get the promotion and get far away from him.

PATTY
You’re lucky you’re in here, anyway. The interns are listening to unsolicited demos in CR3.

AJAY
They’re looking for new voices for a writing camp; I overheard Shelley in A&R. Must really be dire if they had to open it up to unsoliciteds.

PATTY
What’s a writing camp?

AJAY
It’s when a bunch of songwriters get put up in a hotel for a weekend so an artist like Drake or Rihanna can go room to room looking for hooks, lyrics, new collaborators. It’s how Madjid Jordan, Ingrid, even Charli XCX got started.
SAM
The writers who get to go to camps are famous. I have no chance.

PATTY
I’ve literally never heard of anyone he just said.

SAM
Point is you don’t get to audition without being someone. What do you want me to do, break into Shelley’s email, find out where the camp is and crash it? I’d get fired.

That’s when JAKE, their boss, lands. An unctuous man just a few years older than Sam, he has a habit of not making eye contact -- but only with Sam.

BOSS
What’s going on in here?

SAM
I’m about halfway.

BOSS
You’ll be all the way by five?

SAM
Five... Thursday?

BOSS
Don’t screw with me, Sam. Get it done. I’m counting on you.

As he exits, shoulders still hunched, Sam shakes his head. Ajay covers his mouth:

AJAY
OH MY GOD he set you up! He told you Thursday when he meant today!

Sam’s CELL RINGS. As he reaches for it:

SAM
I’m sure I just misheard him this morning; I was barely awake. I’ll get it done. It’s only thre--

VOICE (ON PHONE)
Mr. Campos? This is Joy from Ritter Elementary. It’s fifteen minutes past pickup and your son’s still--
SAM
I’ll get right back to you.

He hangs up, pissed, pulls up Dante’s contact, dials. Straight to VM. Tries again, same thing. Worried, he calls:

SAM
D, it’s me. Dante hasn’t picked up Barry like he was supposed to--

DE’ANDRA (ON PHONE)
I spoke to him an hour ago; he was getting ready to leave.

SAM
Damn. Damn damn damn.

He hangs up and stands. Looks to Ajay and Patty.

PATTY
I’ll take over. We got you covered.

SAM
I’ll be back within an hour.

INT. RITTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Sam races into the school looking for Barry. But he’s not in the classroom. He’s not on the playground. He’s not in the principal’s office. He sees the school LAPD OFFICER:

SAM
Have you seen Barry Campos, he’s new, he’s-- This is him: (holds up a photo on his phone)

OFFICER
Yes, he was here a little while ago. You sure he wasn’t picked up?

SAM
I don’t know. Maybe he was by now--

Sam sees a TEACHER round the corner, with none other than Joanna, looking professional in a smart suit, with a supervisor she works with and a distraught parent and child.

JOANNA
‘ana asif, lakaniy ‘eaduk ‘an hadha hu al’iijra’ almueyari--

Joanna stops when she sees Sam. He’s too busy panicking to notice her notice him, even as he runs over and interrupts, turning to the Teacher, with:
SAM
Have you seen my son? My son, from your class--

TEACHER
Excuse me, I’m in the middle of--

SAM
I don’t CARE what you’re in the middle of, YOU lost him--

JOANNA
It’s okay. We can help find...

SAM
Barry.

JOANNA
Barry. That’s a more urgent matter. My supervisor here can stay with Mrs. Hamdi. Okay?

Sam looks at Joanna, feeling calmed by her. They start walking. It’s an odd moment for Joanna, having seen this man so many times before. Sam doesn’t notice, just feels relieved having Joanna by his side. Until he sees Dante, however, also looking for Barry. He sees Sam, explains, fast:

DANTE
Did they call you? Do you have him?

SAM
What the hell, Dante?

DANTE
It’s not my fault, man. You know how busted my car is, it didn’t start. I called and told them I was late ‘cause I had to walk--

SAM
They didn’t tell me you’d called.
   (he looks in Dante’s eyes)
Are you high right now?

Joanna hears that, wishes she hadn’t. Her supervisor heard it too, having come to find her. The Officer circles back:

OFFICER
Mr. Campos, an aide said she saw Barry on the playground five min--

Sam starts to run. Dante does too, but Sam stops him.
And he runs, Joanna left behind. She looks to Dante, then takes out a pad, writes a note she wishes she didn’t have to.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam drives down alleyways, main avenues, side streets, looking for Barry. And then he screeches to a stop, because in an alley he sees Barry walking, like nothing in the world is wrong. He reverses the car fast, yells out the window:

SAM

BARRY!

Barry jumps as Sam leaps out of the car.

SAM

What the HELL are you doing?

BARRY

Wa-- Walking home.

Sam grabs Barry, tight. Sam’s fear immediately scares Barry.

SAM

I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU DID THAT!

BARRY

Dad-- Daddy, you’re scaring me!

I’m sorry. I’m not mad at you, I’m mad at myself. This never would’ve happened if your mom was here.

BARRY

(pushes Sam off him)

Why do you keep talking about her?

Stop talking about her!

Sam looks at Barry; still with this? He climbs into the car, pissed, and tries to strap himself into the booster again. But he can’t clip the clip. Of course. Sam’s PHONE DINGS with a text from Patty: He’s looking for you. Trying to stall.

INT. DAL RAE RESTAURANT - DAY

Sam deposits Barry with Annette in her cramped general manager’s office at the restaurant.
ANNETTE
Hey baby, wanna help me put the specials in the menu for tonight?

BARRY
I’m not a baby.
(but he starts anyway)
Flounder? Like in the movie?

ANNETTE
I’ll bring him home when I get off.
Get that promotion!

EXT. OFFICE PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY
Sam pulls his car into his spot and runs. Trips a little, but catches himself. Slows down. He’s running on the fumes of fumes, but he can do this. As soon as he gets the door, his Boss is waiting for him. Sam stops running.

INT. TRANSPACIFIC MUSIC GROUP - BOSS’ OFFICE - A MINUTE LATER
Jake the Boss sits across from Sam. As predicted, there’s a gross smug smile on his face.

BOSS
So of course I had to finish it myself.

SAM
My son was missing.

BOSS
I assume you found him?

Sam starts to answer, but the Boss wasn’t really asking.

BOSS
I know things have been hard for you since... But I’ve given you time, and your work has not improved. You come in looking like a zombie, leave looking worse. This job is too stressful for you.

SAM
That’s not true. I just need to sleep more. I can find more focus. I need this. Anything you want me to do, I’ll do it. Please. I can’t lose my benefits. My kid--
BOSS
Sam, Sam, stop. There’s nothing you
can do. I’m sorry, but you’re--

But before he can say the word “fired,” Sam starts singing:

SONG: SMILE (Mikky Ekko)

SAM
SMILE
THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE’LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN
GOT NOWHERE TO GO
WE COULD BE HERE FOR A WHILE
BUT THE FUTURE IS FORGIVEN, SO SMILE

As his Boss drones on, Sam stands and crosses to him, singing
in his ear, in his face. He spins his Boss’ chair.

SAM
WE’RE TRYING SO HARD
TO GET IT ALL RIGHT
BUT ONLY FEEL LONELY AT THE END OF THE NIGHT
WELL I WANNA BE SOMEWHERE
AWAY FROM THIS PLACE
SOMETIME JUST A LITTLE CLOSER TO GRACE

Sam pushes his Boss out of his way. Then he clears the desk
with his hands. Then the bookcase. The art from the walls.
Takes a golf club, smashes the picture frames. Then the
computer on his desk. Patty and Ajay and other assistants
cheer him on from outside the window.

SAM
I’LL SMILE, THE WORST IS YET TO COME
WE’LL BE LUCKY IF WE EVER SEE THE SUN
GOT NOWHERE TO GO
WE COULD BE HERE FOR A WHILE
BUT THE FUTURE IS FORGIVEN, SO SMILE

As Sam takes a prized signed baseball from its perch and
throws it at the floor-to-ceiling glass window, we CUT TO:

Sam, back where he was in his seat, in front of his Boss.

BOSS
--fired.

SAM
Thank you. Thank you for your time.

And he gets up, and walks out.
MASHUP
ACT FIVE

EXT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

A live music venue off Sunset Blvd. in Echo Park. A line leans down the block for cancellation tix to what the marquee calls Phillips 66 Grammy Nom Party. Nellie and Gigi, looking hotter than hell and primed for a fight, walk to the front where Troy is waiting for them.

TROY
Here they are. Peltier, plus two.

The A&R asst. at the door nods and lets them, and us, into:

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

Dark, crowded, loud. N, G & T walk past the merch table with tons of Phillips 66 shit laid out.

GIGI
Ghost of literal Christmases past, nine o’clock.

Nellie picks up a T-shirt, incredulous:

NELLIE
He’s still using my art?

Troy takes it out of her hands. Gigi steers them away.

TROY
What’s the plan here, babe? Mezcal to the face before he goes on? Death glare from the floor so he screws up his solo? Or full onstage knock-down-drag-out ‘til you’re pulled off?

NELLIE
I just need to see his face. That’ll tell me what happens next.

GIGI
Whatever it is, you can’t be sober for it. Come on.

As they walk toward the bar, we CUT TO:

EXT. THE ECHOPLEX - NIGHT

Around the corner is The Echo’s sister club, more nightclub dive bar than a venue. Sam walks up to find De’Andra waiting.
Samantha

Dante’s inside, isn’t he.

De’Andra smiles a guilty smile:

De’Andra

Don’t be mad. He wanted to apologize in person. I thought someplace neutral was best.

(off Sam’s face)

He got to school late. That’s all.

You saw him there yourself. He has changed. But if the people he cares about most don’t believe that, why should he stay that way?

Samantha

On one condition: If you believe he’s changed, tell him. Or break it off before he finds out.

Which is when Sam’s tackled in another shock hug from Dante.

Dante

Thank you thank you thank you for showin’. Ahora la fiesta ya puede empezar!

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT

Troy, Gigi and Nellie look for Levi, drinks in hand. Nellie grows a little pale before our eyes.

Nellie

Okay, I’m having second thoughts.

Troy and Gigi hand Nellie their drinks. She downs them.

Nellie

Do I do this, or do we leave? I can’t tell if I need a pep talk or our parking validated.

Gigi

It’s now or never, whatever it is. You gotta burn it down before you can rise from it, right? So do it.

Nellie looks at Gigi; she’s right. As they move to find Levi:

Troy

Gotta thank my guys. I’ll find you.
INT. THE ECHOPLEX - NIGHT

Dante, with Sam, has found a quiet(er) area by the bar. Behind them, a band sets up on stage.

DANTE
It never shoulda happened. I’m spending all my gate money to get the car fixed so it never happens again. I get you probs won’t ever ask me again, but just in case--

SAM
I appreciate that.

DANTE
I appreciate you, man. You getting out, you don’t know what that did for me. Watching you get the house, the family, reach for your dreams.

Sam winces, small; he’ll always feel guilty for leaving Dante behind.

DANTE
You inspired me, man. That’s why I got released sooner. Then when I heard Eleanor died--

SAM
If it inspired you, why’ve you been hanging with your old crew?

DANTE
I dabbed with them a little, but they offered. I can’t say no right away. You got out, so you don’t know what it’s like here. They stood by me. Looked out for my moms and sis while I was in. For you, too. Who do you think got rid ‘a those people so you could move in?

SAM
What? Got rid of who?

DANTE
I’m on the hook, bro, but it’ll be okay. I just gotta pretend I’m still with ‘em before I pull away. I don’t want anything to happen to you. ‘Specially Barry.

Sam grabs Dante, a bit too hard.
SAM
What are you talking about? Did you put me and my son in danger?

DANTE
Of course not, cuz. I’m out in front of it. It’s all good.

Before Sam can ask more, his CELL RINGS: Annette. Sam answers and moves toward the door where he can hear:

ANNETTE (ON PHONE)
Leah just got home. Told me someone from Child Protective Services was at school today to see Barry.

SAM
What? Why? I don’t under--

ANNETTE (ON PHONE)
Apparently they were at the school yesterday when you were there, dealing with another student, and they overheard something? Now they have questions about Barry’s care. They can take Barry away from you, do you understand? They can put him in foster care...

Sam’s world spins. Dante smiles at him from the bar. A smile that cuts Sam to the core. Does Dante know what he’s wrought?

INT. THE ECHO - NIGHT/INT. ECHOPLEX - NIGHT - INTERCUT (SONG)

Gigi and Nellie have made it close to the stage, pushing through a crowd of bodies. And then she sees him. Levi, talking to his A&R rep by the stairs to the stage, his truly beautiful fiancée standing with him.

Nellie’s face falls. This is the truth, right in front of her. And it hurts. Before she knows what she’s doing, she moves straight for Levi. He sees Nellie crossing through the crowded dance floor to him, and gets his hackles up. Suddenly the last song begins, our MASHUP, with Nellie and Sam, each in their private moments. Nellie sings to Levi, starting our MASHUP: SUPERCUT (Lorde)/BELIEVER (Imagine Dragons)

NEILLIE
IN MY HEAD I PLAY A SUPERCUT OF US
ALL THE MAGIC WE GAVE OFF
ALL THE LOVE WE HAD AND LOST
IN MY HEAD THE VISIONS NEVER STOP
THese RIBBONS WRAP ME UP
BUT WHEN I REACH FOR YOU THERE’S JUST A SUPERCUT
As Levi looks at her, dancers from the crowd back her up.

AT THE ECHOPLEX: Sam approaches Dante, trying to keep his rage in check:

**SAM**

FIRST THINGS FIRST I’MA SAY ALL THE WORDS INSIDE MY HEAD
I’M FIRED UP AND TIRED OF THE WAY THAT THINGS HAVE BEEN
OOH-OOH
THE WAY THAT THINGS HAVE BEEN, OOH-OOH

**NELLIE**

I PLAY A SUPERCUT OF US

**SAM**

I WAS CHOKING IN THE CROWD
LIVING MY BRAIN UP IN THE CLOUD
FALLING LIKE ASHES TO THE GROUND
HOPING MY FEELINGS THEY WOULD DROWN
BUT THEY NEVER DID, EVER LIVED, EBBING AND FLOWING
INHIBITED, LIMITED ’TIL IT BROKE UP AND IT RAINED DOWN
IT RAINED DOWN LIKE -- PAIN
YOU MADE ME A, YOU MADE ME A BELIEVER, BELIEVER
YOU BREAK ME DOWN AND BUILD ME UP, BELIEVER, BELIEVER
OH LET THE BULLETS FLY, OH LET THEM RAIN
MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY DRIVE, IT CAME FROM PAIN!
YOU MADE ME A, YOU MADE ME A BELIEVER, BELIEVER

**NELLIE**

IN MY HEAD, IN MY HEAD I DO EVERYTHING RIGHT
WHEN YOU CALL I’LL FORGIVE AND NOT FIGHT
BECAUSE OURS ARE THE MOMENTS I PLAY IN THE DARK
WE WERE WILD AND FLUORESCENT
COME HOME TO MY HEART

We CROSS-CUT between our leads, as Nellie tells Levi exactly how she feels, and Sam the same to Dante. They are exorcising their demons. The more Nell sings, the less angry she is. She feels stronger, more alive. It’s cathartic for Sam, too, expressing his anger & disappointment over his life. The dancers back Nellie up, feeling her same catharsis.

**NELLIE**

'CAUSE IN MY HEAD
IN MY HEAD
I DO EVERYTHING RIGHT
WHEN YOU CALL
WHEN YOU CALL
I’LL FORGIVE AND NOT FIGHT
BECAUSE OURS ARE THE MOMENTS
I PLAY IN THE DARK
WE WERE WILD AND FLUORESCENT
COME HOME TO MY HEART

**SAM**

YOU MADE ME A, YOU MADE ME A
BELIEVER, BELIEVER
YOU BREAK ME DOWN, I’LL BUILD
ME UP, BELIEVER, BELIEVER
PAIN!
OH LET THE BULLETS FLY, OH
LET THEM RAIN
MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY DRIVE,
IT CAME FROM PAIN!
YOU MADE ME A, YOU MADE ME A--
As the song ends, Sam, six inches from Dante, looks down at him. Has he gotten his message through? He pushes his finger into Dante’s chest.

SAM

Get your house in order. ‘Cause it’s my damn house now, too.

AT THE ECHO: Gigi sees Echo security coming and dives in to grab Nellie, pulling her away from the stunned Levi. As they pass us -- and a stunned Troy -- we see the huge grin on Nellie’s face.

IN THE ECHOPLEX: A bouncer appears and pulls Sam away from Dante, even as De’Andra tries to intervene. But it’s no use. Sam’s thrown out into:

EXT. ECHO/ECHOPLEX - NIGHT

Out on Sunset, Troy rushes out after Nellie and Gigi.

TROY

Guess I’m never sleeping with them again! But who cares: You okay?

NELLIE

Okay? I’m AMAZING! Guys... That life is done. I’m ready for what’s next.

As they run off, laughing, we PAN DOWN to find, under the overpass, a pissed and despondent Sam walking away from where Nellie just was, his world crumbling around him...

INT. SAM & BARRY’S APARTMENT - DAWN

A fired-up Sam sits on the sofa. Sees his guitar in the corner. An emblem of brighter, more hopeful days. One he has to destroy right away. He grabs it, opens the door, gets ready to hurl it, but:

BARRY (O.S.)

Dad? What’re you doing?

Sam turns. Barry is standing in the bedroom doorway. Sam catches his breath, trying not to show Barry his anger.
SAM
I-- I didn’t mean to wake you.

BARRY
I want to show you something.

He takes Sam’s hand, and leads him into:

INT. SAM & BARRY’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As soon as they enter, Sam immediately sees: Barry has put up the drawing of him, Sam, and Eleanor. Sam can’t hold back. His eyes fill with tears. He tries to be strong, but it’s not possible. He breaks down. Through his tears to Barry:

SAM
Sorry. I’m sorry.

BARRY

Sam is overwhelmed at his son finally talking. He holds him tight. They both cry.

BARRY
Tell me how you and Mommy met.

Sam collects himself. Has an idea.

SAM
How ‘bout I show you instead?

EXT. HORACE HEIDT APARTMENT - POOL - MORNING

Nellie and Hugh are having breakfast burritos, their feet in the pool. They eat in silence for bit, until Hugh puts his burrito down, fixes her with his dad look.

NELLIE
Food down? I know what that means.

HUGH
I think it’s time you got your life in order.

NELLIE
Funny coming from you. I pay your rent.

HUGH
Hey. I’m parenting you right now.
NELLIE
What makes you think my life isn’t in order?

He takes out his phone and holds it up so she can see herself. She sees her now-streaky smokey eyes, unkempt hair. She grabs the phone from his hands.

NELLIE
Point taken. But I feel much better than I look, just so you know.

She wipes her eyes with her napkin, smooths her hair down.

HUGH
When’s the last time you spoke to your mom?

NELLIE
Around the last time you did?

HUGH
You’ve rejected everything that ever came from her, even the name she gave you. If she weren’t here, that’d be one thing. But she’s three miles away...

NELLIE
I don’t want to think about Mom right now. Which works for her too, ‘cause she doesn’t think of herself as a mom. What I need is a fresh start. Something’s coming. I’ve cleared the way. Once I know what it is, then maybe I’ll call. Maybe.

HUGH
Finish your book at least, can you promise me that? (she can’t)
Oh, and before I forget...

NELLIE
How much? Forty? Sixty?

As she takes her wallet out of her purse, she notices:

NELLIE
Wait. Where’s my-- Did I leave my credit card at the club last night? (she did)
I kept my tab open but was thrown out before I paid...
Hugh
This is really good for my thesis about your life.

Nellie
I’ll come by tomorrow. Here.

She hands him a wad of cash and rushes off.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - MORNING

Sam and Barry walk down Sunset Boulevard. They stop in front of The Echo. Barry looks up at it, confused.

Sam
See this club? Eight years ago, I’d been out with friends -- including your Uncle Dante -- all night. He’d gotten us into a party we weren’t invited to, some after-hours thing. We were leaving here at eight in the morning when I bumped into your mother. Literally. The door opened, and wham! Right into her. Like something out of a dumb movie. And the second I reached to help her, the second we touched, we both felt it. Like we were supposed to be there at that moment, even if it made no sense. Like when you hear a song for the first time and without even knowing the words, something about it hits you right here.
(touches Barry’s chest)

Barry
(giggles)
I don’t know what you’re saying.

Sam
You will. And when you do, it’ll be the best feeling you’ve ever had.

Barry
Okay, but Dad? I have to pee.

Sam
There’s a bathroom inside.

Barry
I want to do it myself.

As he opens the door for Barry to head in, the door hits Nellie!
Standing right behind it, having been putting her credit card back in her wallet. As the contents of her wallet fly to the ground, she and Sam both bend down to pick them up. Their hands meet over her driver’s license -- and it’s like a shock goes through both of them. The good kind.

SAM
My God, I’m so sorry. That was so stupid of me.

But Nellie doesn’t hear it. She’s too busy feeling that feeling Joanna talked about. We feel it too. But we also notice: Barry is gone. Not only that, but Sam looks different: different haircut, different clothes, younger. And there’s Dante, coming out of the club, also younger, cleaner.

DANTE
Yo Sam, man, I’m thinking pancak--

He’s about to pull Sam away when he sees Nellie. He knows enough to stand out of the way. As Sam picks up Nellie’s driver’s license from the ground, he reads it.

SAM
That’s not a name you hear anymore.

NELLIE
I don’t use it. Haven’t since I was a kid. Most people call me Nellie. But... I’ve been thinking about going back to it. Maybe.

SAM
I like it. Eleanor.

If we didn’t know by now, it’s just clicked for us: Nellie is Sam’s future late wife, Eleanor. Her story has been in 2010. And Sam and Barry’s is in 2018. We haven’t just been looking at a love that’s about to start, we’ve also been looking at it after it’s over. You can’t have a Side A without a Side B. Sam and Nellie/Eleanor feel a pull toward each other.

DANTE
Get her number man, call her later. I really need some food.

SAM
I’m going to do something I promise I’ve never done: ask a complete stranger for their number.

NELLIE
I’ll put it in your phone?
SAM
I don’t have a smartphone...

NELLIE
Now I know I like you.

She fishes in her bag for paper, finds a scrap, and takes out one of her pencils. Draws a cartoon of her number on the back of the scrap. As she hands it to Sam:

NELLIE
That piece of paper’s done well for me. Think it might for you too.

As he looks at it, we see it’s the scrap he picked up in the house. And as he turns it over, it’s also the fortune Joanna gave Nellie at the restaurant. Your luck is about to change.

Sam watches Nellie go, but we see it’s 2018 Sam, and Nellie is gone. Barry comes out of the club.

BARRY
I did it myself!

SAM
I’m so proud of you! Let’s go home?

OVER WITH NELLIE, the smile on her face as she walks away from 2010 Sam is real. It’s huge. And it’s not going away.

CLOSE ON: a guitar case unzipping. PULL BACK to REVEAL:

INT. SAM & BARRY’S APARTMENT - DAY (2018)

Sam enthusiastically holds his guitar, laptop open in front of him. Barry lies on the floor nearby, drawing.

BARRY
What are you going to play?

SAM
I’m not going to play, I’m going to write. Something new. Something great. And get it heard.

And now we see: He’s hacked into Shelley from A&R’s inbox and found the email about the music camp. He’s going to crash it!

EXT. SILVER LAKE GENERAL STORE - DAY (2010)

Gigi is opening up as Nellie runs up, grabs her, spins her.

GIGI
What the-- Are you on something?
NELLIE
No. Yes. I dunno, the future, maybe?
Gigi: I think I just met my guy.

As Gigi opens the door, the store RADIO is playing Levi.

GIGI
Wait here, I’ll turn it off.

NELLIE
Don’t! Turn it up! I want to dance!

As she starts to dance through the store:

INT. SAM & BARRY’S APARTMENT – DAY (2018)

As Sam tunes his guitar, Annette gently KNOCKS.

ANNETTE
Sam? The caseworker’s here for a random check. She wants to observe.

SAM
No problem.

ANNETTE
You’re so calm. Is everything okay?

SAM
No one is taking my son away. Not my mother-in-law, not your son’s "friends," and not the city. My luck is about to change. Again. Even if I have to change it myself.

INT. SILVER LAKE GENERAL STORE – DAY (2010)

Gigi and Nellie dance through the store, totally free. Nellie sits to catch her breath. Looks in her bag. Pulls out a Moleskine book. It’s her graphic novel, and it’s beautiful. She turns to the last page, and starts to sketch: Sam.

INT. HIGHLAND PARK BEDROOM – MORNING (2018)

De’Andra lays awake in bed, her boyfriend asleep next to her. Her CELL RINGS -- Dante calling. We realize that’s not who’s next to her. This is what Sam was referencing; she didn’t wait for Dante, but he doesn’t know that. She doesn’t answer.

EXT. SECTION 8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT – MORNING (2018)

Dante sits on the balcony, on his cell. De’Andra’s not answering. He hangs up. Sees one of his gang cronies motion him to come down. Dante goes with him. This is not good.
Annette opens the door to let Joanna in.

BARRY
What are you gonna write?

SAM
I don’t know. But I’m pretty sure it’ll be a love song.

BARRY
A love song? Why?

As Joanna enters to quietly observe, she suddenly stops. Something happens that she didn’t expect: Sam actually looking at her, and not only that, but seeing her, for the first time. Unlike all the other times. We PULL AROUND Sam to see: the hairs on the back of his neck standing up. That thing he’s felt only once before. The thing we don’t have to feel only once, if we’re lucky.

Worlds colliding again, this next mixtape begins. Joanna sits next to Barry, open, kind -- doing her job.

JOANNA
I don’t mean to interrupt. What were you talking about, Mr. Campos?

SAM
Sam. And I was just telling my son something important.

JOANNA
Oh yeah? And what’s that?

He smiles at his son. Smiles at this stranger. And he begins.

SAM
Every song is a love song.

We CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW