

THE GROWING SEASON

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS - MCKENNA FARMS - PREDAWN

Silhouettes of a large farmhouse and nearby barn give way to detail as the emerging sunlight gently rolls back the indigo sky.

Thick and lush cultivated fields begin showing form and color. All is quiet except for the distant LOW ROAR of a tractor.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

An old tractor, dimly lit by a roof light, drags a moldboard plow turning over the black earth.

LUKE MCKENNA (34), well-built, weather-worn with an easy, likeable face at the wheel. Wears ear buds.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Happy Saturday to all you vampires,
night owls and early risers out
there.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Small town charm.

JANELLE TRAVIS (32), an unassuming beauty sits in front of a microphone wearing studio headphones. Confident and poised.

JANELLE
This is Morning Star and it's my
pleasure to be with you, here in
the heart of farm country. So sit
back, relax and pour yourself that
first cup of coffee.

INT. MCKENNA KITCHEN - MORNING

CLAIRE MCKENNA (61) unwrinkled with kind eyes, stares out the window, drinking coffee while BILL MCKENNA (65) grizzled yet handsome pours himself a cup and joins her. Both study Luke plowing in the distance.

BILL
That boy does the work of ten men.

CLAIRE

And it's going to kill him if we don't do something.

She takes a sip.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

We're not going to lose another son. That I'm sure of. We need to set him down --

BILL

-- And what are we gonna say to Luke he hasn't heard before?

CLAIRE

... I don't know. I'm praying this time will be different.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

Janelle waits for a COUNTRY SONG to end before turning to MAYNARD, the baby-faced Engineer in an adjacent glass booth who nods.

JANELLE

It's coming up on eight o' clock and you all know what that means.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Luke plows.

LUKE

Wake those slackers up, Reuben.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Maynard hits a button. Several COCK A DOODLE DOOS blast out.

JANELLE

Who needs an alarm clock when you've got Reuben around. Time now for some foot stompin' fun.

A lively BLUEGRASS TUNE kicks into overdrive.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Luke hops off his tractor and calmly picks up a snake in his path. Gently relocates it.

INT. MCKENNA FARMS - DRIVEWAY - DAY

SAMANTHA (SAM) MCKENNA (8), a freckled-face tomboy, roars along on her bicycle, with KIRBY, the family German Shepherd running alongside. In her front basket, a walkie talkie bounces around.

She waves to the workers opening up the General Store and pedals toward the Farm Stand at the bottom of the long driveway along a main road.

LUKE (V.O.)

This is Papa Bear. Come in, Baby Bear.

She stops and grabs the walkie talkie.

SAM

Baby Bear here.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Luke leans against the idling tractor.

LUKE

Did grandma feed you this morning?

INTERCUT - WALKIE TALKIE CONVERSATION

SAM

Uh-huh.

LUKE

How was the porridge?

Sam giggles.

SAM

Just fine.

LUKE

Mine was too hot.

Bigger giggles.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Is the big bad wolf with you?

Sam watches Kirby on his back scratching out an itch.

SAM
He's right here.

LUKE
Good. Call me if you need me.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

An old wooden structure open in the front with long shelves along the inside walls. A chair and table rest against the back wall.

TUCKER, (late 20's) a slim, good looking farmhand wearing a Boston Red Sox baseball cap, assists workers shelving small baskets of strawberries, various produce and jars of homemade honey and jams.

Workers leave as Tucker perfects the display.

Sam and Kirby arrive. She leans her bike against the side and snatches her walkie talkie.

SAM
Hi, Tucker.

TUCKER
Morning, Boss Lady.

He kneels down and lets Kirby lick his face.

TUCKER (CONT'D)
And I love you too, Kirby.

Sam giggles.

TUCKER (CONT'D)
I think you're ready for the big Saturday stampede. I'll be back to check on you in a bit.

He slaps the walkie talkie hanging from his tool belt.

TUCKER (CONT'D)
You call me if you start running out of anything.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

Janelle notices Maynard giving her the wrap-up cue and nods.

JANELLE

... Folks, it's still strawberry
season so get yourselves out there
and pick up a basket or two.

She perks up as WILD HORSE WILLIE, a white-bearded, mountain
of a man appears outside the booth. She motions him in.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

In the studio now is Wild Horse
Willie who will be taking you
through the rest of your morning.
This is Morning Star. Listen for me
again on Monday.

Beat.

MAYNARD

And we're clear. Another great
show, Janelle.

She removes her headphones and stands. Willie kisses her
cheek.

WILLIE

Thanks for waking them up for me,
darling.

JANELLE

You know that's what I live for.

Willie settles in at the microphone.

MAYNARD

Willie, coming to you in one
minute.

WILLIE

For someone as bored as you say you
are, you sure do hide it well.

JANELLE

Never let them hear you yawn.

WILLIE

Still got your eyes on New York?

JANELLE

Now if I can only get their eyes on
me.

WILLIE

Can't think of any place I'd rather
be living than right here.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

Several cars fill the small parking lot while a dozen more
line both sides of the road. Customers inspect the produce.

SUNGLASSES LADY, a shapely, attractive older woman in stylish
sunglasses looks on as Sam bags a bundle of beets.

SAM

In some cultures people believe if
a man and woman eat from the same
beetroot, they'll fall in love.

SUNGLASSES LADY

You think it'll work on my husband?

SAM

Don't see why not.

Sunglasses Lady displays an impish grin.

PHYLLIS

Maybe it'll get him to stop playing
so much golf.

As Sunglasses Lady leaves, Sam's face drops.

FRANCINE MILLER, a graceless, yet attractive woman in her
thirties, bumps and excuses her way through the customers
until she reaches Sam. Carries a neatly piled cluster of
brownies perfectly wrapped in plastic on a china plate.

FRANCINE

I wanted to drop these off for
Luke. Just made them this morning.

Sam takes the plate and sets it down.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Be sure he gets them. Double
chocolate, double nut fudge
brownies and never from a mix. Take
one or two for yourself if you
like. They're still warm.

SAM

Yes, ma'am. And thank you.

FRANCINE

Samantha, make sure to keep them covered. So many bugs flying around.

SAM

It's Sam. Not Samantha.

FRANCINE

And I keep telling you, Samantha has such a pretty ring to it.

Sam scowls. Francine shakes her head as she leaves.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Why do I even try?

SAM

(to self)

Try all you want. You'll never be my new mom.

PUDGY MAN shuffles over with an armful of vegetables. He eyes the brownies.

PUDGY MAN

Are those for sale?

SAM

Made from scratch this morning and still warm.

INT. JANELLE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Janelle stumbles in, juggling several grocery bags.

KATIE, the soft-featured, grey-haired nanny stops unloading the dishwasher.

KATIE

Janelle, let me help you with that.

Katie carefully places the bags down on the counter.

JANELLE

I got everything on your list.

KATIE

Thank you, dear.

JANELLE

Where's Mandy?

KATIE

Where else, but in her room. She says she's like totally wicked bored. How can that be? She's only been out of school a week.

Janelle sighs.

JANELLE

(calling)

Mandy? C'mon, sweetheart, we're going shopping.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Luke and Sam face a headstone that reads: Jessie McKenna. Emma McKenna. In our hearts forever.

Sam flattens out a wrinkled photo from her pocket.

INSERT - PHOTO

A young, vibrant couple in their mid-thirties with their arms wrapped around each other. Both making goofy faces.

BACK TO SCENE

Sam studies the photo.

SAM

It still hurts when I think about them.

LUKE

Sam, it hasn't even been two years since the accident. Just give it some more time,

Luke squats down and rests his hand on her shoulder.

LUKE (CONT'D)

It won't always feel like this. I promise.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

You remember when Boomer died and you told me how much your heart hurt?

SAM

Uh-huh.

LUKE

When you think of Boomer now, does it still hurt?

SAM

No.

LUKE

That's because when you lose someone you love, the heart slowly empties out the hurt and fills it back up with happy memories.

SAM

(giggles)

Like when Boomer used to chase his tail every time Grandpa played the fiddle.

Luke playfully squeezes her nose.

LUKE

Exactly.

INT. CITY MALL - DAY

Janelle and her daughter, MANDY (10), a cute, little princess, stroll along, holding shopping bags. Chatting away.

ASHLEY and CANDACE, (early 30's) perfect clothes, hair and makeup, also loaded down with shopping bags stops them.

Janelle is startled at first and then the three women squeal with delight.

ASHLEY

Janelle, this is so weird. We were just talking about you.

CANDACE

And how it's been like forever since the three of us just hung out.

JANELLE

I know. I've been meaning to call you guys.

ASHLEY

You are such a liar.

The three huddle.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

So last week Tiffany catches
Chester coming out of that jewelry
store right over there.

(gestures)

She asks him, what's going on? He
plays dumb --

CANDACE

-- Which he's really good at.

ASHLEY

But she finally gets it out of him
that the ring he just bought is not
for her --

CANDACE

-- But wait. It gets better --

ASHLEY

-- So much better... But this has
got to be just us big girls.

CANDACE

Why can't Mandy go to a movie?

ASHLEY

There's got to be a theater in here
somewhere.

Janelle looks over to see Mandy waiting patiently.

INT. JANELLE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Janelle turns to Mandy before starting the car.

JANELLE

Sweetheart, I want you to know you
have a much better chance of
growing wings than seeing a movie
by yourself before you turn thirty.

MANDY

(trying to be serious)

But what if I hire a black belt
ninja warrior?

JANELLE

Can you rent them by the hour?

MANDY
I don't see why not.

JANELLE
(feigns deep thinking)
... I'd still have to think about
it.

Janelle gently caresses her cheek.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Did I ever tell you how much I love
being your mom?

Mandy sparkles.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Did I?

MANDY
... More than there is sand on the
beach.

JANELLE
More than there are stars out of
reach.

MANDY
More than there are fish in the
sea.

JANELLE
And that's how much.

MANDY
You love me.

Janelle gently kisses her head.

INT. MCKENNA DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nothing fancy.

Bill, Claire, Luke and Sam finishing dinner. Luke sits at
the head with Bill and Claire on each side.

LUKE
Looks like Francine paid us another
visit. Isn't that right, Sam?

Luke pulls Francine's china plate out from under his chair.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Tucker found this under some planks
behind the farm stand.

SAM
May I be excused? I have to study.

LUKE
All right. But we're not done
talking about this.

As Sam leaves the table, Bill stops her.

BILL
(leans in; quietly)
How much you make?

SAM
(whispers)
Twenty two fifty.

BILL
That's more than last time.

SAM
Who doesn't like fudge brownies.

LUKE
Sam, I thought you had to study.

SAM
Good night, everyone.

LUKE
I'll be up to tuck you in, in a
bit.

Sam hurries off with Kirby close behind. As soon as her
upstairs bedroom door SHUTS --

BILL
Last week was apple spice muffins.
Today, brownies. She's making it
real clear she's interested.

CLAIRE
She's had her sights on you since
ninth grade.

BILL
Granted she has all the grace of a
wrecking ball.

Claire gives Bill a look of mild surprise.

CLAIRE

But she does have some very nice qualities.

BILL

Unfortunately being tactful is not one of them.

CLAIRE

... Bill, can we get on the same page here?

BILL

What your mother and I are trying to say is no one's perfect, so why not give her a call and get yourself back out there.

CLAIRE

I heard she broke up with that cop from Deerfield she met online.

BILL

Seems like every time things don't work out for that gal, she starts baking for you again.

CLAIRE

There's more to life than working yourself into an early grave. Before the accident you knew that better than anyone.

BILL

All them girlfriends you used to bring around.

CLAIRE

(chuckles)

I couldn't keep track of half of them.

BILL

Who knows. Maybe things will work out with you two. If they do, Sam will warm up to her. You'll see.

Claire lovingly rests her hand on Luke's shoulder.

CLAIRE

(softly)

... And you don't have to keep making up for him not being here.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
You weren't the one behind the
wheel of that truck.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

A wall-to-wall science lab. Plants grow everywhere. In jars under different colored lights. Under heat lamps. Rows of emerging sprouts under ultraviolet light.

Sam studies one experiment with a magnifying glass and records her findings in a notebook.

INT. MCKENNA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke washes the dishes and Claire dries while Bill reads the newspaper.

CLAIRE
... And it wouldn't hurt Sam to
make a new friend or two.

Claire dries off a plate and puts it away.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
She keeps herself so isolated here
helping you out and in that science
lab of hers. It's not how she
should be spending another summer.

Luke hands Claire the last plate.

LUKE
Did you know she's trying to figure
out the effect ultraviolet light
has on bean sprouts.

CLAIRE
You need to show her there's life
outside this farm.

Claire puts the last plate away and closes the cupboard door.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Time for you and Sam to come out of
those shells you've been hiding in.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam snuggles into bed while Luke, holding a book, pulls up a chair. Kirby jumps up and settles in at the foot of the bed.

LUKE
Grandma thought you might like
this.

Luke shows her Mary Poppins.

SAM
Mary Poppins? That's for kids.

She hands Luke a book from her night stand.

SAM (CONT'D)
I want to learn about cauliflower.

Luke takes the book.

LUKE
Okay. We'll get to Mary another
time.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A sparkling, black Mercedes zips along through the rolling
pastures and fields of farm country.

INT. BRANDON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

BRANDON YORK (33), perfectly groomed and handsome, at the
wheel, with Janelle in the passenger seat looking out. Mandy
in the back wears ear buds, her body gently swaying as she
quietly sings along.

BRANDON
... And so Phil's getting ready to
sink this twenty foot putt for
birdie when his wife calls. She
just had lunch with Julie, who's
sleeping with Chuck.

JANELLE
Your boss Chuck?

BRANDON
The old horndog himself.

JANELLE
(quietly forceful)
Brandon.

Brandon chuckles. Glances in his rear view mirror.

BRANDON

Not to worry. She's still in her own little world back there.

Janelle turns to check on Mandy who is looking out the window softly singing.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

... So Chuck's on his phone in the hotel bathroom and she overhears him say it's now down to just three of us: me, Jay and Kevin.

JANELLE

I can't imagine either one of them putting in the hours you do.

BRANDON

You've been great through all this and let me just say it hasn't gone unnoticed.

Janelle offers a weak smile. Brandon beams.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Big promotion. The perfect girlfriend. What more could this guy want?

Beat.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Once I get it and I'm all settled in, I promise to cut back on the hours.

JANELLE

Maybe the three of us can finally take that vacation to Montreal.

BRANDON

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, okay?

Something catches Mandy's eye. She pulls out the ear buds.

MANDY

Mom, it says organic strawberries up ahead. Can we stop?

BRANDON

You can get them at the supermarket.

MANDY

But Mom, they're farm fresh.

Mandy searches.

MANDY (CONT'D)

And they're organic. You're always telling me to do my part to help the planet.

BRANDON

Can we save Mother Earth another day?

MANDY

But, Mom.

Janelle playfully bats her eyes at Brandon and gives him a pretty-please look.

BRANDON

I can see I'm outnumbered... once again.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - MOMENTS LATER

A few customers mill about.

As Mandy approaches, she stares at Sam giving Kirby a drink from the garden hose. Sam then takes a drink herself.

MANDY

(grimaces; to self)
That's so gross.

Sam walks back over to her chair with Kirby close behind.

MANDY (CONT'D)

How are the strawberries?

SAM

(sits down)
Best around. Did you know that today, strawberries are grown on every continent except Antarctica.

MANDY

Why would I know that?

Sam shrugs.

SAM

I'm Sam. Never Samantha.

MANDY
I'm always Mandy.

SAM
Haven't seen you at school? You new?

MANDY
I go to a private school.

SAM
You mean like with nuns?

MANDY
Yeah. My grandmother went there, my mom went there and now I go there.

SAM
You like it?

MANDY
It's okay. Wish it had boys.

SAM
Mine's got plenty.

MANDY
You like any of them?

Sam reels back.

SAM
Are you crazy?

MANDY
When you get to be my age, they don't seem so creepy.

SAM
How old are you?

MANDY
Ten and a half.

SAM
I'll be nine next May.

MANDY
You have any brothers or sisters?

SAM
Nope.

MANDY

Me either.

INT. BRANDON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Brandon taps his fingers on the steering wheel.

JANELLE

I'll hurry her along.

BRANDON

Please do.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - MOMENTS LATER

Janelle approaches the girls.

JANELLE

Mandy, did you pick out a basket
you like?

She scans the small baskets of strawberries and is about to
pick one up when --

SAM

-- You don't want that one.

Sam reaches underneath the table and brings out another one.
Richer in color and plumper.

SAM (CONT'D)

This comes from my private stash.

DOUBLE HORN HONK from the parking lot.

Janelle looks back and gives Brandon the just-a-minute
gesture.

MANDY

Mom, can I also get some jellies?

JANELLE

We have to go, sweetheart.

MANDY

But Mom, you're always telling me
to do my part to support local
businesses.

Janelle flashes Sam a self-conscious half-smile.

JANELLE

All right. But please don't take
all day. You know how he gets.

Janelle scoots off.

MANDY

First it's the double honk and then
the blast.

They listen.

HORN BLAST roars out. Mandy rolls her eyes.

MANDY (CONT'D)

If Brandon becomes my new dad, I
swear I'll run away.

SAM

I got the same problem with
Francine and it's getting worse.
I sure wish I could choose who
Luke's gonna marry.

MANDY

You call your dad, Luke?

SAM

It's complicated.

Mandy nods.

MANDY

I'd better get going before he
drives off without me.

Beat.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Sam... do you know what a horndog
is?

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Luke gets down from the tractor as Tucker sprints to him.

TUCKER

You called for me, Boss?

LUKE

Think you can finish this for me?

TUCKER
Why, you sick?

LUKE
I have supplies to pick up in town.

Tucker, excited, jumps into the tractor seat.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Now remember --

TUCKER
-- I've plowed bean fields before,
Boss, just not here.

LUKE
And watch out for snakes and toads.

TUCKER
Snakes. Toads. Sure thing, Boss.
Gotta keep them around to eat all
them bugs.

INT. EMERALD CAFE - DAY

Small town perfect. Fairly quiet. A collection of coffee mugs each marked with the owner's name dangles on hooks across a long wooden bar above the cash register.

Luke enters and sits at a window booth.

RUTHIE, a spunky old gal comes out from the back and flashes a big smile. Grabs a menu and dashes over.

RUTHIE
What are you doing here middle of
the day? That old tractor of yours
finally call it quits?

LUKE
No, and my farm didn't fall into a
sinkhole either.

RUTHIE
It's a miracle. On the seventh day
Luke McKenna finally rested.

LUKE
I'm in town picking up supplies.

RUTHIE
We thank you for gracing us with
your presence just the same.

LUKE

And I had to come by and see your smiling face. It's been a while.

RUTHIE

It's been longer than that.

LUKE

I see my mug's still part of your collection.

RUTHIE

I knew you'd be back.

She leaves. He scans the menu.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

So how'd you like the brownies?

Luke looks up to see Francine in a waitress outfit leaning over.

She slides into the seat across from him.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Nice and moist, right? Chewy, but not too chewy.

LUKE

Best you ever made.

FRANCINE

I know what you like.

LUKE

You know what I'd like?

She leans forward.

FRANCINE

Tell me, McKenna.

LUKE

Coffee.

Without missing a beat.

FRANCINE

I'll blow the cobwebs off your mug and be right back.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Janelle's Prius passes one homespun small store after another before stopping at a red light in front of the Emerald Cafe, a large, beautifully restored old-time diner.

INT. JANELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Janelle at the wheel. Mandy looks out from the passenger seat and perks up.

MANDY

Mom, can we stop at the Emerald Cafe? Check out how cool it looks.

JANELLE

(glances over)

Katie is already making us a nice pot roast. We'll be home soon.

MANDY

But Mom, how come the only time we're ever in town is when we drive through it?

JANELLE

This town really isn't our style, sweetheart.

Mandy gives her a puzzled look.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

What I mean is, it's perfectly fine if you're shopping for farm equipment, fertilizer --

MANDY

-- Or strawberries.

JANELLE

They were really good, weren't they?

MANDY

Can we go back there? I want to see Sam again?

JANELLE

You liked her that much?

MANDY

Uh-huh. She's not stuck up or mean like most girls at school.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

A monstrous compound sits behind perfectly manicured lawns and shrubbery.

A large, battered truck slowly grinds its way up the ascending front driveway. On the side it reads: McKenna Farms. Hadley, Massachusetts. Since 1924.

INT. TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Luke drives while Sam reads a book.

SAM

Did you know a single toad can eat thousands of nasty pests like sow bugs, earwigs and slugs in a single season?

LUKE

And did you know that Mary Poppins was a farmer before she became a flying nanny?

Sam giggles. Looks up.

SAM

Nice try.

Suddenly a series of quick HORN HONKS breaks the quiet followed by one LOUD BLAST.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brandon's black Mercedes slides into view behind the truck and then ROARS past them, zooming up to the front entrance where valets open all doors.

Brandon and Janelle exit first followed by Mandy, Janelle's father, HENRY, a silver fox and Janelle's mother, PEGGY, prim and proper. All nicely dressed.

Peggy takes Mandy aside and fixes her hair. Janelle marches over to Brandon.

JANELLE

You can be so unbelievably rude
sometimes.

BRANDON

The driveway is for members only.

JANELLE

Since when?

HENRY

Let's all calm down now and have us
a nice lunch.

BRANDON

I'm with you, sir.

Brandon hands one of the valets a bill and pats him on the
shoulder.

THE TRUCK

backs up to a side entrance and stops. Sam catches Mandy
waving and waves back. Luke sees Mandy skipping over.

LUKE

Is this Mandy?

SAM

She is so cool. Can I go say hi?

LUKE

Sure, Sam.

Sam jumps out of the truck and hurries over. Both excited to
see the other.

SAM

What's with him and car horns?

MANDY

I know. It's a real sickness.

BEHIND THE TRUCK

Luke appears, opens the lock and is about to raise the pull-
up door when Sam suddenly appears.

SAM

They want to meet you before they
have lunch. C'mon.

LUKE

Now?

FRONT ENTRANCE

Sam leads Luke by his shirt over to the group as he wipes his hands on a bandana.

Janelle steps forward.

JANELLE

Hi, Luke, I'm Mandy's mom, Janelle.
I wanted to meet you since it looks
like our daughters are becoming
fast friends.

LUKE

Sure looks that way to me too.

JANELLE

(gestures)
This is my dad, Henry; my mom,
Peggy and Brandon --

Brandon steps forward.

BRANDON

(confident)
-- The boyfriend. No hard
feelings, sport.

Luke crosses his arms and glares. Brandon flashes him a quick smile.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

So now that we got all that
straightened out, I'll let Roger
know we're here. Maybe he can seat
us early.

PEGGY

(to Brandon)
This place is so fancy. Are you
sure you can afford it?

HENRY

Peggy, please. He's a gold card
member here.

BRANDON

(to Peggy)
Besides, it's not every day you
turn forty. Or is it thirty-five?

Peggy blushes and chuckles.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

Henry watches Brandon exit.

HENRY
(to Peggy)
That boy certainly does take good
care of us.

Janelle turns to Luke.

JANELLE
We stopped by your farm stand
yesterday.

MANDY
To get strawberries.

Luke squats down to her height.

LUKE
How were they?

MANDY
Amazing. So much better than the
ones we get at the supermarket.

SAM
(to group)
Did you know that the strawberry
was a symbol for Venus, Goddess of
Love because of its heart shape and
red color?

HENRY
I don't know about the rest of you,
but I'm impressed.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - DINING ROOM

Exquisite. Every table is full of the well-to-do drinking and
dining.

Brandon approaches ROGER, the impeccably dressed maitre d'
standing at his station, thumbing through the reservations
book.

ROGER
Mister York. So good to see you.

BRANDON
I know we're early, Roger.

ROGER
I don't believe that'll be a
problem, sir. Just give us a few
minutes.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Yoo-hoo! Brandon! Over here!

Brandon turns to see Ashley and Candace seated at the adjacent bar, drinking. Both appear a bit tipsy. Ashley waves him over.

BRANDON
(to Roger)
Will you excuse me for a moment?

BAR

Upscale and fully stocked.

Brandon slides over.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Hello, ladies.

CANDACE
Hello, yourself.

ASHLEY
How come I never hear from you
anymore?

BRANDON
You know I'm with Janelle now.

ASHLEY
You didn't let that little detail
stop you a few months ago.

Candace playfully slaps Ashley's arm and laughs.

CANDACE
You are so bad.

Ashley slides her business card over to him.

ASHLEY
It's got my number. In case you
forgot.

Brandon hesitates for a moment, then scoops up the card.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Good boy.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The group huddles around Sam.

SAM

... And make sure you order the strawberry soup. It's not as good as Luke's but it's still pretty good.

PEGGY

A man who likes to cook. How refreshing. Perhaps you'll share your recipe with Janelle if it's that good.

JANELLE

Mom, you know it's best to keep me out of the kitchen.

(to Luke)

Fires start. Dogs howl. Cats hiss. Not a pretty sight.

Luke chuckles.

LUKE

That's like me on the dance floor. I know one dance. Sam calls it --

SAM

-- The Frankenstein Shuffle.

Sam stomps around with her stiff arms outstretched. Everyone laughs.

Peggy pats Janelle's shoulder.

PEGGY

This one here started dancing at three. Ballet. Then it was tap.

HENRY

Ballroom. Swing. You name it, she did it. And what's that one you're teaching that has everyone jumping around like their pants are on fire.

JANELLE

Zumba, Daddy.

HENRY

That's the one.

Luke studies Janelle. And then his eyes light up.

LUKE

I knew you sounded familiar.
You're Morning Star aren't you?

SAM

No way.

MANDY

Oh yes way.

SAM

Luke listens to you all the time.

Mandy drags Sam a short distance away.

MANDY

You want to hang out? All my
friends go away for the summer.
I'm stuck here, bored like crazy.

SAM

How can you be bored?

MANDY

I'm really a big city girl like my
mom. So you want to hang out?

SAM

Sure.

MANDY

... So what's the deal with Luke?

SAM

He's not my real dad. He's my
uncle. My real parents died two
years ago.

MANDY

That stinks. My dad got remarried
and lives in France. He never
visits, but he does pay for school
and Katie.

SAM

Who's Katie?

MANDY

My nanny. She lives with us because my mom has to get up so early for work. She says I'm not old enough to be left alone.

FRONT ENTRANCE

Luke and Janelle locked into conversation. Henry talks on his cell phone, while Peggy checks herself carefully in a pocket mirror.

LUKE

... I've been listening to you ever since you took over for Ramblin' Red Rover three years ago. You're a lot easier on the ears.

JANELLE

I was so nervous that first day. My voice must have cracked a hundred times the first hour.

TWO SHOT - SAM AND MANDY

Sam and Mandy look over at Luke and Janelle talking and enjoying a hearty laugh together.

SAM

I haven't seen him this happy in such a long time.

MANDY

She never laughs like that with Brandon. Never.

A big grin forms on Sam's face.

SAM

Since you don't want your mom to marry Brandon, and I don't want Francine to be my new mom, why don't we come up with a plan to make sure that'll never happen.

MANDY

Like what?

SAM

Why don't we match Luke up with your mom.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
Before you know it, they'll be
married and we'll be sisters.

MANDY
Actually we'd be stepsisters.

SAM
I would love that.

MANDY
Me too.

They look at each other with big smiles.

MANDY (CONT'D)
And I thought this summer was going
to be boring.

FRONT ENTRANCE

Brandon appears at the doorway.

BRANDON
Everyone, it's time!
(gestures)
Mandy!

TWO SHOT - SAM AND MANDY

Mandy takes a pen out of her purse.

MANDY
Let me see your palm.

Sam holds it out and she scribbles something down.

MANDY (CONT'D)
Here's my cell phone number.

SAM
You have a cell phone?

MANDY
You don't?

Sam shakes her head.

MANDY (CONT'D)
We'll have to work on that.

Mandy pulls out her cell phone and slides next to her.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Selfie!

SAM

(excited)

I've never done one of these before.

MANDY

Just relax and smile.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

Janelle sees Wild Horse Willie arrive and motions him in.

JANELLE

... I see the Horse is back in the barn, which means it's time for this Morning Star to fade.

EXT. MCKENNA FARMS - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Luke and Tucker load heavy sacks into the bed of Luke's battered pickup truck. A radio rests on top of the cab. Both stop loading when --

JANELLE (V.O.)

But before I go, a big shout out to Sam for her strawberry soup recommendation. My mother hasn't stopped talking about how wonderful it was.

EXT. RADIO BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Maynard gives Janelle the wrap-up cue while Willie looks on.

JANELLE

So Luke, if yours is better, she wants the recipe. Thank you all for making me part of your morning.

Beat.

MAYNARD

And we're clear. You're on in one minute, Willie.

WILLIE

You must be talking about Luke McKenna.

JANELLE

Yeah. I met him yesterday.

WILLIE

His dad used to play one hot fiddle. The wife and I would go into town every Friday night and listen to them boys.

MAYNARD

Thirty seconds, Willie.

JANELLE

... So what can you tell me about him?

WILLIE

Luke's a fine, decent boy. No one should ever have to go through what he did.

JANELLE

What was that?

WILLIE

If he likes you, he'll tell you what happened.

INT. EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Cold-blooded glass and metal. Brandon and JAY RUSSELL, both in crisp business attire, sit across from each other at a large glass table, avoiding eye contact.

LOUISE, (late 20's) young, pretty and eager, nicely dressed blows in.

LOUISE

He's just tying up some loose ends before his trip to New York.... Can I get either one of you anything?

JAY

I'll take a sparkling water, Louise.

BRANDON

I'm good. Thanks.

Beat.

JAY

On second thought. I'm good too.

LOUISE
Are you sure? It's no trouble.

JAY
Thanks anyway.

LOUISE
He shouldn't be too much longer.

Louise leaves.

BRANDON
You totally blew it. Don't you know they have all these tests they do to check you out. See how you do under pressure. See how decisive you are. And you just tanked on decisiveness.

Before Jay can respond --

-- CHAD PARKER, their turbo-charged boss storms in.

Brandon and Jay sit up.

CHAD
Sorry to make this brief, but I've got meetings all afternoon at corporate. The board will be making its final decision in the next few weeks. And one of you is heading to the winner's circle. Questions?

JAY
Have a safe trip to New York, sir.

Jay doesn't catch Brandon's venomous eyes aimed at him.

INT. MCKENNA BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Sam bursts through the back door where Luke, Bill and Claire all have coffee.

SAM
Luke, can Mandy come over and spend the night this week? She's never been on a real farm before.

CLAIRE
Of course she can... But Luke has the final say, of course.

LUKE

You tell her it's okay with us.

Sam bursting with excitement hurries off.

Claire pats Luke's hand. Big smile.

CLAIRE

Did you see how happy she was?

INT. MANDY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Spotless. Everything perfectly arranged. An assortment of stuffed animals lies across the pillows of a perfectly made bed.

Mandy at her computer, on her cell phone.

MANDY

That's great. Let me ask my mom.

INT. JANELLE'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Organized. Lots of framed pictures of Mandy. Janelle stares at her laptop screen and sighs.

Mandy walks up behind her. Big hug. She looks at the screen.

MANDY

Any luck?

JANELLE

They all want someone with more experience.

MANDY

Luke would hire you in a second.

Beat.

JANELLE

... Was there something you wanted, sweetheart?

MANDY

Sam invited me over to her house to spend the night. Everyone said it was okay.

Janelle thinks.

MANDY (CONT'D)

It'll be my first time on a real farm.

Mandy searches.

MANDY (CONT'D)

It'll help make me a better citizen of the world... Or just consider it a summer science project.

JANELLE

Find out when.

INT. MCKENNA LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Modest furnishings. Sam on the phone.

SAM

That's great. We'll have plenty of time to work on the plan while you're here.

INT. MANDY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mandy looks concerned.

MANDY

But we have to act fast. She's been trying to get a job in New York. No luck so far.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SAM

You ever been there?

MANDY

Oh sure. Lots of times. The Statue of Liberty. The top of the Empire State Building. I saw The Lion King on Broadway three times. And the shopping is so amazing.

Beat.

MANDY (CONT'D)

But I'm starting to like it here.

SAM

Then let's get started and before you know it they'll be married and we'll be sisters.

MANDY

Actually, we'd be stepsisters.

SAM

I can't wait.

MANDY

I know. Me too.

EXT. MCKENNA FARMHOUSE - SUNSET

Janelle's car pulls up to the front walk up as Sam comes flying out the front door, bounding down the stairs.

Mandy jumps out and they hug. Janelle still seated, waves to Sam.

Sam waves back and the girls pull the heavy overnight bag out of the back seat. Sam slowly drags it up the front walk.

Mandy walks around to the driver's side. Janelle gets out, kneels down and fusses with Mandy's clothes and hair.

JANELLE

I packed you antibacterial spray.

MANDY

Mom, it's a farm, not a zombie village.

JANELLE

When it comes to your health, young lady, I worry.

MANDY

Too much sometimes.

JANELLE

Just you wait until you're a mother.

Janelle stops fussing.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

All right. You look so beautiful, sweetheart.

Janelle kisses her cheek and they hug. Mandy runs off to help Sam lug the bag up the stairs.

Luke appears and holds the door open for them. He steps out and waves to Janelle, who waves back.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
(calling)
What time do you want me to pick
her up tomorrow?

LUKE
She can stay for supper.

JANELLE
Are you sure?

Luke heads down the stairs. Janelle slowly walks towards him, looking a bit reserved.

LUKE
It's no trouble. After working her
in the fields all day, seems only
right to feed her.

Janelle nervously laughs.

JANELLE
How does seven sound?

LUKE
Seven will be just fine. And if
you'd like to join us be here
around six.

JANELLE
No, that's okay.

They stop a few feet apart.

LUKE
Anything I need to know?

JANELLE
... Like what?

LUKE
I don't know. Food allergies?

JANELLE
Anything good for her.

Luke chuckles. Janelle relaxes.

LUKE
Hope she likes squirrel.

Janelle is taken aback for a moment.

LUKE (CONT'D)
No wait. We had that last night.

JANELLE
She'll be so disappointed.

LUKE
How does she like possum?

JANELLE
If she's like me, it's from a distance.

Luke laughs.

LUKE
In that case, it'll have to be Cowboy Casserole.

JANELLE
Sounds interesting. What's in it?

LUKE
Come by at six and see for yourself.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Brandon working at his computer, catches Jay leaving.

BRANDON
(calling out)
Hey, Jay!

Jay walks back.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
What's going on? It's still early.

JAY
My wife will kill me if I miss another one of my son's baseball games.

BRANDON
I guess we all have our priorities, don't we, buddy.

EXT. MCKENNA BACKYARD - NIGHT

A tent is up. A campfire CRACKLES.

Sam and Mandy roast marshmallows while Luke sits in a chair watching the fire.

On the back porch Bill plays the fiddle while fellow band members on banjo, guitar, mandolin and bass play a bouncy BLUEGRASS SONG with youthful exuberance.

MANDY

This is way better than I thought it would be. This is like my first live concert.

SAM

They come by every now and then. Luke thought you'd enjoy listening to them.

MANDY

What's their name?

SAM

The Blue Mountain Boys.

MANDY

I wonder if my mom's ever heard of them? I should ask her.

Mandy delicately grasps her golden brown marshmallow and gently pulls it off the stick. Takes a small bite.

SAM

They used to play in town every Friday night, and at weddings and parties on weekends, but that was before my time.

Sam blows the flame off her black crusty marshmallow and bites it whole off the stick.

INT. MANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Janelle stands at the doorway holding a glass of wine and looks around wistfully.

She puts the glass down, takes out her cell phone and dials. A look of disappointment crosses her face.

JANELLE

... Hi, it's me. I know you're working late, but Mandy's at her first sleep over and well... call me. Love you.

EXT. MCKENNA BACKYARD - NIGHT

The band plays on.

Sam and Mandy roast more marshmallows.

SAM

Your dad never comes to visit?

MANDY

Never. But we do Skype once a month.

SAM

What's Skype?

MANDY

Don't you have a computer?

SAM

No.

MANDY

That's something we'll have to work on.

Mandy carefully inspects the uniform golden brownness of her marshmallow while Sam licks the white goo off her fingers.

MANDY (CONT'D)

And he sends me postcards of all the places he's been. I keep them in a shoebox under my bed.

SAM

I got mushrooms growing under mine.

INT. MANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Janelle sits on the bed next and dials. Plays with a stuffed penguin.

JANELLE

... Hi Ashley. I know it's last minute but if you want to go out for a drink or something I'm definitely up for it. Mandy's at her first sleep over so it can be a late night. I'll even drive.

EXT. MCKENNA BACKYARD - NIGHT

The campfire is about out. The Blue Mountain Boys put away their instruments. Luke gets out of his chair.

LUKE

Another few minutes before you girls need to turn in.

Luke leaves.

Quiet now, except for the constant CHIRPING of frogs.

MANDY

What's making that sound?

Sam listens.

SAM

Those are just peepers.

MANDY

What's that?

SAM

Little frogs that like to sing at night.

Sam catches Mandy looking a little uneasy.

SAM (CONT'D)

They don't bite and they won't jump into the tent if that's what you're worried about?

MANDY

They still creep me out.

Sam shows off a satisfied smile.

SAM

We'll have to work on that.

INT. JANELLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Janelle on her cell phone, sprawled out on the couch, clutches the stuffed penguin.

JANELLE

Hi, Mom, it's me... Oh nothing.
Just snuggling up to Barney.

Janelle tenses and quickly sits up.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Mom!... Mom!... Brandon and I are
fine!... Would you please calm
down. Barney's a penguin.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Sam and Mandy inside sleeping bags, the only light coming from their flashlights.

SAM

... And so we agree. The plan is
I'll start telling Luke how great
you mom is and --

MANDY

-- I'll do the same with my mom.

SAM

They'll fall in love and get
married..

MANDY

What a great plan.

SAM

And then we'll be sisters.

Mandy is about to speak, but stops herself and thinks for a moment.

MANDY

I can't wait.

SAM

Me too. Good night.

MANDY

Sleep tight.

Sam snuggles into her sleeping bag.

SAM
Don't let the bed bugs bite.

Sam turns her flashlight off.

MANDY
... I think I'll leave mine on.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

A few customers browse. Sam and Mandy sit in the back with Kirby at their feet.

Sam finishes writing in a small spiral notebook.

SAM
... So tell me more about your mom.

MANDY
She flosses every day. She's a really good speller. And she doesn't snore.

Sam writes.

SAM
That's important. Luke needs his sleep.

She finishes writing. Stands up suddenly.

MANDY
Where you going?

SAM
Bathroom. You're in charge.

MANDY
(anxious)
What do I do?

SAM
Just do what you've been doing.
Only now, take their money.

MANDY
What if something happens?

Sam reaches down and plops the walkie talkie on the table.

SAM
Call Luke. Or you can do what I do.

MANDY

What's that?

SAM

Tell them Kirby used to work for Homeland Security. That always makes them think twice about messing with a little kid.

EXT. MCKENNA FARMS - BARN - DAY

Luke drinks coffee as he watches Tucker with clipboard in hand, dole out jobs to the Workers.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

MAN IN SHORTS, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and sandals listens to Mandy.

MANDY

... And he practically tore the guy's arm off because he left without paying.

Man in Shorts studies Kirby, who looks like he's smiling. Tail wags constantly.

MAN IN SHORTS

But he seems so mellow.

MANDY

That's exactly what the other guy said.

Francine, carrying a pie covered in plastic wrap, charges in and bumps Man in Shorts out of the way.

FRANCINE

And who might you be?

MANDY

Mandy.

FRANCINE

Where's Samantha?

MANDY

Bathroom.

Francine places the pie on the table.

FRANCINE

I'm going to leave this here with you. It's Luke's favorite. Lemon merengue. Made from scratch. You be sure he gets it. And keep it wrapped. I don't want bugs to get all over it.

EXT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

Janelle and Willie switch places.

WILLIE

Have those New York eyes locked in on you yet?

JANELLE

I sent out a demo reel of new material, but nobody's returning my calls or emails.

WILLIE

You keep pounding on enough doors, you're bound to knock one off its hinges.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Brandon stands in front presenting Power Point charts to a group of executives. Chad looks pleased and flashes him a thumbs up.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

Sam returns. Mandy holds up the pie.

MANDY

Some lady dropped this off for Luke. She called you Samantha. What a dork.

SAM

Francine strikes again. She must be stopped.

MANDY

Let's sprinkle ants on it.

SAM

I got a better idea.

Sam takes the pie and rips off the plastic wrap.

SAM (CONT'D)
Here you go, Kirby.

And lowers it to the ground. Kirby WOLFS it down.

EXT. MCKENNA FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Sam and Mandy swing from a big tractor tire, watching Luke and Janelle talking on the front porch.

SAM
They sure do like blabbing, don't they?

MANDY
(looks at cell phone)
I timed them. Fifteen minutes and counting.

SAM
That's got to be a new record for Luke.

MANDY
Here she comes.

Janelle approaches carrying a large casserole pan, wrapped in aluminum foil, grinning.

JANELLE
I can't remember the last time a man cooked for me. Good night, Sam.

Janelle walks over to her car. Mandy hops off the tire. Sam stays on.

SAM
This could be easier than we thought.

They look back to see Luke waving to her.

MANDY
We'll be sisters by next week.

INT. JANELLE'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Janelle at the computer. Mandy slides in.

MANDY

Mom, how'd you like the Cowboy Casserole?

JANELLE

Sweetheart, you asked me that three times already.

MANDY

Oh yeah. I forgot... I bet it'll still taste great for breakfast.

JANELLE

You're not having that for breakfast. Katie will make you something else.

MANDY

Luke's a really good cook.

JANELLE

Yes, he certainly is.

MANDY

And that's what's so great. He could do all the cooking because I know you hate it and since he's got a farm we'd get all the eggs for free and --

JANELLE

-- Sweetheart, what are you talking about? You're not making sense.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Luke in his usual reading chair. Sam under the covers. Kirby sleeping in his usual spot on the bed. He bookmarks the page.

LUKE

Tomorrow we'll finish up with how to avoid tomato blight and then we're on to Mary Poppins.

He gets up. Adjusts the covers.

SAM

It was so much fun having Mandy here. Can we do it again?

LUKE

Of course we can.

SAM
I sure do like her.

LUKE
I do too.

SAM
You like her mom?

LUKE
Do you?

SAM
I sure do. She's pretty and smart
and she always smells good and
she's the first celebrity we've
ever met.

LUKE
I'm glad you like her.

SAM
And you do too, right?

LUKE
Sam, why all these questions?

SAM
You know me. I'm just curious by
nature. Good night, Papa Bear.

Luke bends down and kisses her cheek.

LUKE
Sweet dreams, Baby Bear.

INT. MCKENNA LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sam on the phone, looks around carefully before speaking.

SAM
(quietly)
This is going to be a lot harder
than I thought. Luke started asking
questions.

INT. MANDY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mandy on her cell phone. Bedroom door is closed.

MANDY

I know. My mom did too. This job is too big for just the two of us. Got any ideas?

EXT. THE EMERALD CAFE - DAY

Tucker standing on the sidewalk, opens the passenger door of the truck to let Sam and Mandy out. Sam holds her school backpack.

TUCKER

I got a whole bunch of errands to run, so I'm gonna be a while.

SAM

That's okay.

MANDY

We've got plenty to do.

TUCKER

What are you two up to?

Sam and Mandy strain not to giggle and dash into the cafe.

Tucker spots Francine pouring coffee. She catches his smile and smiles back.

With flair and confidence, Tucker suddenly breaks out into a few elaborate dance moves. He flicks his baseball cap off his head, spins around and catches it just before it hits the ground. Francine laughs and applauds. Tucker dramatically bows.

INT. CAFE - WINDOW BOOTH - DAY

Francine brings menus over to Sam and Mandy.

FRANCINE

Well, isn't this a nice surprise.

(to Sam)

Hi there.

(to Mandy)

Hello, Mindy.

MANDY

It's Mandy.

Sam opens her backpack, pulls out the pie dish and gives it to Francine.

SAM

Luke loved your pie so much he
licked it clean.

MANDY

I told him you made it from
scratch. And we kept the bugs off.

FRANCINE

I knew he would love it. That man's
got the biggest sweet tooth in
town.

SAM

He sure does and now, that's become
a real problem.

FRANCINE

What problem is that?

SAM

He found out he's got three
cavities.

MANDY

Big ones.

Sam opens her mouth and Mandy points.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Here. Here. And a really bad one
here.

SAM

Last time he had a cavity was in
high school.

MANDY

The dentist said no more sweets
until he gets them filled. He
doesn't want anyone to know.

SAM

You would really get on his bad
side if you told him you knew.

MANDY

And you don't want that, do you?

FRANCINE

... You better let me know when I
can start baking for him again.

SAM
You can count on us.

Francine smiles.

FRANCINE
All right. I'll be back in a jiff
to take your order.

Francine leaves.

SAM
She's terrible with names, but I
will miss her brownies.

EXT. MCKENNA KITCHEN - DAY

Claire washes the dishes. Looks outside. Smiles.

CLAIRE
Bill! Bill! You have to see this.

Bill enters holding a newspaper.

BILL
What's with all the ruckus?

CLAIRE
Take a look.

BILL'S POV

Luke asleep in a hammock.

BACK TO SCENE

They both gaze out.

CLAIRE
Thank God, that runaway train has
finally slowed down.

BILL
Never thought I'd live to see the
day.

CLAIRE
Now he just needs a girlfriend.

BILL
Please, Claire. One miracle at a
time.

INT. EMERALD CAFE - DAY

Sam and Mandy eat lunch.

Ruthie comes out of the back. Sees the girls, smiles and
hurries over.

RUTHIE
Francine told me you were out here.
You're getting to be so big, Sam.

Ruthie gives Sam a big hug.

SAM
This is my friend, Mandy.

Ruthie shakes her hand.

RUTHIE
Which makes you my friend. Luke
came by here the other day. I was
so shocked, I almost swallowed my
teeth.

Sam and Mandy giggle.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
So what are you two rascals up to?

SAM
We're working on a plan.

RUTHIE
What kind of plan?

MANDY
Top secret.

RUTHIE
Those are the best kind.

SAM
We're trying to match Luke up --

MANDY
-- With my mom.

SAM
(to Ruthie)
You'd really like her.

Ruthie sits down.

RUTHIE
Sounds like an awfully big job for
just the two of you.

MANDY
That's why we're here. We need your
help.

RUTHIE
You know Sam, when Luke's fiance
left him just days after the
accident, why I wanted to hunt her
down and shoot her dead. We all
did.

Mandy's eyes widen.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
It seems like his heart just shut
down after that.

SAM
He's been listening to Mandy's mom
on the radio since she first
started and he finally met her and
we're pretty sure he really likes
her.

MANDY
And we think she really likes him
too.

RUTHIE
Well, that tickles me to no end.
I would like nothing better than to
see that man happy in love again.
And I know plenty of folks around
here who feel the same way.

SAM
We can't let Francine know. I don't
want her to be my new Mom, but I
know she wants to be.

RUTHIE
I know Francine can be a bit too
much at times. So how can I help?

SAM

When is Francine's next day off?

RUTHIE

Tuesday. She always takes Tuesdays off to visit her mother in Springfield. She doesn't get back until late.

SAM

Tuesday it is.

RUTHIE

So what's this super secret plan of yours?

INT. EMERALD CAFE - FOLLOWING TUESDAY

Lots of folks look out the windows. Some kneeling in booths, some standing. Excitement builds.

Ruthie, on a step ladder, looks out. Sees something.

RUTHIE

Here they come!

And everyone scrambles.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Luke stroll, each carrying several hard-bound library books.

LUKE

Which one would you like me to read tonight?

SAM

I'm thinking the one about having good bugs in your garden like parasitic wasps and hover flies.

Luke holds up a copy of Charlotte's Web.

LUKE

How about Charlotte's Web? She's a good bug.

SAM

She's gonna have to wait with Mary.

Sam stops just outside the Emerald Cafe.

SAM (CONT'D)
Can I get something cold to drink?
I am so thirsty. Really thirsty.

INT. EMERALD CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam and Luke enter. Every seat is taken except for a booth in the far back.

SAM
(excited; points)
There's one left.

As they make their way over several smiling customers slap Luke on the back and shake hands.

They settle in and plop their books on the table.

Ruthie waltzes over with menus.

LUKE
I've never seen this place so packed.

RUTHIE
I can't believe it either. How 'bout you, Sam?

Sam giggles. Ruthie eyes the books.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Looks like someone's been to the library.

LUKE
A little bedtime reading.

SAM
Organic pest control. Crop rotation. You know, the usual stuff.

RUTHIE
What can I bring you two?

SAM
A lemonade.

LUKE
Make that two.

RUTHIE

Two homemade lemonades coming right up.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Mandy hurries along. Janelle tries to keep up.

JANELLE

Mandy, grandma's birthday is not until February.

MANDY

I know, Mom. But you're always telling me don't wait until the last minute to buy birthday presents.

Mandy stops in front of the cafe. Looks around.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Grandma would love some homemade scented candles. Sam told me the store was right around here and they're having a big sale and today's the last day.

Janelle points to the cafe.

JANELLE

Maybe someone in there knows.

INT. EMERALD CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Janelle and Mandy enter. Mandy suddenly tugs on Janelle's arm.

MANDY

Mom, look who's here!

And runs over. Janelle follows.

Luke looks up. Stands.

LUKE

Well isn't this a surprise. What brings you two into town?

JANELLE

Fragrant candles. We're looking for this store called Common Scents.

Sam leaps out.

SAM
I'll show you where it is.

MANDY
... Mom?

Mandy gives the oh-please-Mom look.

Ruthie appears with a pot of coffee and two mugs.

RUTHIE
Coffee, anyone?

LUKE
Time for one cup?

Janelle digs into her purse and pulls a bill out of her wallet.

JANELLE
Pick out something nice. But
nothing too sweet or too strong.

Mandy kisses Janelle's cheek.

MANDY
You're the best mom ever.

And they dash off. Janelle slides in across from Luke.

LUKE
Ruthie, this is Janelle, Mandy's
mom.

RUTHIE
(big smile)
Very pleased to meet you, Janelle.
Such a pretty name.

She pours.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
You two need anything else, just
howl.

Ruthie leaves. Janelle fixes her coffee.

JANELLE
Your Cowboy Casserole was amazing.

LUKE
I'm glad you liked it.

JANELLE
I need to return your dish.

LUKE
There's no hurry.

Suddenly ERNIE (70's) a jovial, mustached man in a plaid jacket and bow tie pops over.

ERNIE
Luke, you old son of a gun. Where you been hiding? And who's this lovely burst of sunshine?

LUKE
Ernie, this is Janelle.

Ernie kisses her hand.

ERNIE
Enchante, mademoiselle.

Ernie looks at her and grins.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Did I just hear you say he made you his famous Cowboy Casserole?

Before Janelle can respond --

ERNIE (CONT'D)
(winks)
That must mean he likes you. And I'm old enough to know when to leave two lovebirds alone.
(to Luke)
And you, don't be such a stranger anymore. We've missed you.

Ernie glides away.

LUKE
I haven't been getting out much lately.

JANELLE
And why is that?

Beat.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. If you don't want to talk about it, I understand.

EMERALD CAFE KITCHEN

Sam and Mandy sneak back in and join Ruthie who hands Mandy a Common Scents bag.

RUTHIE
Here's your candles and change.

SAM
Now what do we do?

RUTHIE
We just watch.

MANDY
And hope the plan works.

WINDOW BOOTH

Janelle picks up one of the books and opens it.

JANELLE
Charlotte's Web, one of Mandy's favorites.

LUKE
I'm trying, but Sam would rather hear about soil management and pest control. Is there one where Charlotte saves the farm from potato bugs?

Janelle chuckles.

JANELLE
No, I'm afraid not.

RALPH and AUDREY, (30's) a free-spirited looking couple dressed in paint-splattered clothes pop over.

RALPH
Luke, it's good to see you out and about, man.

Smiles at Janelle.

RALPH (CONT'D)
And who's your friend here?

LUKE
Ralph, Audrey, this is Janelle.

JANELLE

Very pleased to meet you.

AUDREY

Any friend of Luke's is a friend of ours.

RALPH

If it wasn't for Luke I'd be wearing an artificial right leg. You remember that don't you, Luke?

LUKE

Ralph, we were seven.

RALPH

I remember it like it was yesterday.

AUDREY

You better hold onto this one, sister, if you know what's good for you.

They leave.

JANELLE

Members of your fan club?

LUKE

I wouldn't say that. Folks around here are just friendly.

KITCHEN

Sam, Mandy and Ruthie watch.

SAM

Oh, no. They stopped talking again.

MANDY

And they were doing so well.

RUTHIE

Let's not give up on them yet.

WINDOW BOOTH

Janelle leans forward.

JANELLE

I am so sorry about your brother
and his wife.

Luke looks up.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Sam told Mandy, but she didn't go
into much detail... So what
happened, Luke?

Luke shifts his weight. Gathers his thoughts.

LUKE

The two of them hadn't been on a
vacation for quite some time. Emma
heard about this fancy health spa
on the Maine coast that offered all
sorts of services including mud
facial masks for men. And so I
bought them a weekend pass for
their anniversary.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Emma was going to convince Jessie
to get a mud mask and then sneak in
and take a picture of him with the
cucumber slices over the eyes and
post it on Facebook for all his
macho friends to see.

Luke chuckles.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Jessie is the last person in the
world who would ever go for
something like that, but Emma was
sure she could talk him into it.
She was quite the joker and we
loved that about her.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

On the way there, they stopped for
a red light, but the semi behind
them didn't.

Janelle puts her hand on his.

JANELLE

So what happened... to you?

Luke searches.

LUKE

I was engaged to Charlene at the time and made it clear to her, I was adopting Sam. She told me she just needed a little time to sort things out... Last I heard she was living in Vermont with her lawyer husband and three chocolate labs.

JANELLE

Losing your brother and then becoming a single dad... I would have hibernated too.

INT. LUKE'S TRUCK - DAY

Sam gets in. Luke starts it up.

SAM

So how was coffee?

Luke smiles.

LUKE

Coffee was good.

Sam looks pleased.

SAM

... Good.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A five star dining experience. Janelle and Brandon dressed nicely, dig into their entrees.

BRANDON

I need to keep giving one hundred and twenty percent until I get that promotion.

JANELLE

And then you'll make time for Mandy?

BRANDON

Absolutely.

JANELLE

I think it's really important the two of you spend some alone time together.

BRANDON

Just write down the things she likes to do.

JANELLE

Don't you know?

BRANDON

Skydiving. Fight Clubs. Drag racing.

JANELLE

I'm serious.

BRANDON

Don't tell me she outgrew them already?

Standoff. Janelle blinks.

JANELLE

Fine. I'll give you a list.

BRANDON

Is she still into bungee jumping?

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Janelle and Mandy wait as a matronly Librarian wearing tethered eyeglasses, checks out their books with methodical precision.

JANELLE

I am so happy you decided to put together a summer reading list.

MANDY

Mom, you're always telling me if I don't keep my brain stimulated, I'll end up on drugs.

Librarian stops what she's doing.

JANELLE

Mandy, I don't think those were my exact words.

Librarian looks at Janelle over her glasses with raised eyebrows.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
 (to Librarian)
 Well, they weren't.

As they head to the exit, Ruthie enters carrying books.

RUTHIE
 Janelle, Mandy, what a nice surprise. You're both coming to our Fourth of July Celebration this Saturday, right?

Suddenly, BETTY and GERTIE, two animated, middle-aged women appear.

BETTY
 (to Ruthie)
 Well of course they are.
 (to Janelle)
 It's always so much fun.

GERTIE
 Good, clean fun

BETTY
 Good old fashioned, clean fun.

GERTIE
 Games. Food. Music.

BETTY
 The kind of fun every decent parent wants for their kids.

The three women wait for a response. Mandy looks up like a dog begging for a treat.

JANELLE
 When does all this fun begin?

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A festive sight with an assortment of games of chance and food booths off to the sides.

In the middle, an elevated gazebo holds the high school band, being led by the Music Teacher. They knock out a SWINGING TUNE.

Several center steps lead down to couples dancing on a large makeshift, wooden floor, under strings of red, white and blue lights.

Luke keeps busy working the grill inside one booth, while Sam takes the money and shouts back orders.

The song ends and the crowd applauds as the MAYOR, a balding, chubby ball of energy skips up the steps to center stage holding a wireless handheld microphone.

MAYOR

I'd like to welcome you all to our
35th Annual Fourth of July
Celebration. Tonight we'll be
giving out some fabulous prizes to
a lucky few.

The growing crowd buzzes with excitement.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I want everyone to find the ticket
you were given when you first got
here. Blue ticket for the guys.
Pink for the ladies.

FOOD BOOTH

Luke and Sam look over at the crowd.

LUKE

Wonder what's going on?

SAM

Beats me.

CENTER STAGE

Mayor scans the audience.

MAYOR

Everyone got theirs?... Okay, good.

Ruthie wheels out a table holding two big glass fish bowls, one with blue tickets and the other with pink ones.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Ruthie would you please mix up the
tickets for us.

(to the Music Teacher)

How 'bout a little music, maestro.

Ruthie hand mixes the tickets. The band obliges and stops on cue.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
And now pick one from each bowl.

She does and hands them to Mayor.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Thank you, my dear.
(looks at both tickets)
Blue 25 and Pink 49. Who's got those tickets?

Mayor spots something, smiles and motions.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Meet me on the dance floor.

LOUIE, bearded and burly and TAMMY, pretty and perky make their way to the dance floor and join the Mayor.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Are you two ready?

Mayor sticks the microphone in Louie's face.

LOUIE
Ready for what?

Mayor feigns surprise.

MAYOR
Oh, I'm sorry. Did I forget to mention that this is our version of So You Think You Can Dance?

Band starts playing a ROCK AND ROLL SONG.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Start twisting you two, but don't throw your back out, Louie.

They twist.

JANELLE AND MANDY

stroll along, enjoying their ice cream cones.

MOLLY, a cheerful white-haired lady rushes up to Janelle.

MOLLY

Please excuse me, Morning Star for barging in on you like this, but Ruthie told me you'd be here. I'm Molly. Used to teach sixth grade math and science, but I've long since retired.

JANELLE

How can I help you, Molly?

MOLLY

People say your picture on the station's website doesn't do you justice and they're right.

JANELLE

(embarrassed)

... Why, thank you... So --

MOLLY

-- So, I need to ask a really big favor?

Molly pulls out a piece of paper.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Would you please read this on your next show? I wrote everything down for you.

Molly unfolds the paper and hands it to Janelle, whose smile grows as she reads.

JANELLE

Happily married for fifty years.
(to Molly)
Congratulations, Molly. Yes, I would be happy to share this news with my listeners.

MOLLY

But not too early. Fred likes to sleep in.

MANDY

Monday morning. Eight fifty-five. Right before Willie takes over would be the perfect time.

MOLLY

I'll make sure he's listening.

JANELLE

Oh I'm sorry. Have you met our new station manager, Mandy?

Molly chuckles.

MOLLY

Awfully nice to meet you. Hope you both enjoy yourselves tonight. Should be a lot of fun. I'd better go find Fred. He's probably in the beer tent with his buddies.

Molly leaves.

MANDY

(points; excited)

That's their booth over there.

FOOD BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Janelle and Mandy arrive. Luke and Sam hard at work.

LUKE

Good evening, ladies.

Mandy ducks into the booth and hugs Sam. She whispers in her ear.

JANELLE

Is there anything you don't do?

LUKE

I'm just here helping out the school. Everything we make goes for new band uniforms. Care for a burger?

Sam quietly sneaks off to the back and picks up the walkie talkie hidden under her jacket.

SAM

(quietly)

Ruthie, Pink 34.

DANCE FLOOR

Mayor watches a young red-haired boy and tight-lipped older woman doing the Chicken Dance, their heads bobbing and their bent arms flapping. CHICKEN DANCE MUSIC rings out.

Ruthie discreetly walks up to Mayor and whispers in his ear. He nods.

FOOD BOOTH

Janelle is enjoying the last of her burger when TERRY BAKER, a gangly, teenage boy gently taps her on the shoulder. She turns.

TERRY

Excuse me, Miss Morning Star for interrupting your dinner like this, but I have a favor to ask.

JANELLE

And you are?

TERRY

Where are my manners? I'm a little anxious. Never talked to a real live celebrity before.

Janelle smiles.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I'm Terry Baker. This fall I'll be starting high school.

JANELLE

How can I help you, Terry?

Terry fishes out a folded piece of paper from his shirt pocket and hands it to her.

TERRY

Could you read this on your next show.

Janelle pops the last bite of her burger into her mouth, wipes her fingers, opens the paper and reads.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's a poem I wrote for my sick mom. I know if she heard it read by you it would make her feel a whole lot better.

Janelle is deeply touched.

JANELLE

This is so beautiful, Terry. Yes, I'll read it at the end of my show on Monday.

TERRY

Much obliged. Monday's her birthday and I can't think of a better present to give her.

JANELLE

Neither can I.

TERRY

Hope you all enjoy yourselves this evening.

As Terry leaves, Janelle's cell phone RINGS. She watches him walk away for a moment or two before answering.

JANELLE

Oh hi... We're down here at the Fourth of July celebration watching...

SAM

The Chicken Dance.

JANELLE

The Chicken Dance. Care to join us?... I didn't think so... Yes, I know. A hundred and twenty percent... Okay. Love you.

DANCE FLOOR

CHICKEN DANCE MUSIC ends as Mayor makes his way over to the dancers and hands each one an oversized plastic Boston Red Sox bat.

MAYOR

(to dancers)

When I said we had fabulous prizes, I bet you didn't think they'd be this fabulous, did you?

(to crowd)

How 'bout a nice round of applause for our dancing chickens. I thought they did an egg-cellent job.

The crowd groans.

FOOD BOOTH

Francine struts over to see Luke and Janelle talking outside the booth.

FRANCINE
Hello, everyone.

Francine sizes up Janelle.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
I don't believe we've met.

LUKE
Francine Miller, Janelle Travis.

SAM
Better known as Morning Star.
She's a famous radio celebrity.

JANELLE
I wouldn't say that, Sam.
(to Francine)
Early morning five days a week and
sometimes Saturdays on the local
station.

FRANCINE
I'm more of a satellite radio girl,
myself.

SAM
Francine's a waitress at the
Emerald Cafe.

MANDY
But never on Tuesdays.

Luke clears his throat.

LUKE
Suppose to get a meteor shower
tonight. Should be a perfect night
for it, don't you all think?

Silence.

CENTER STAGE

Mayor digs his hand into both bowls and pulls out a ticket
from each one.

MAYOR
Who's got Blue 52 and Pink 34?

FOOD BOOTH

Sam shows Luke his ticket.

SAM
Luke, that's you!

Sam grabs Luke by the arm and drags him a few feet.

SAM (CONT'D)
Frankenstein Shuffle. Now go!

And gives him a big push.

CENTER STAGE

Mayor scans the crowd.

MAYOR
I see Luke coming up, but who's the
lucky lady?
(singing)
Where oh where is Pink 34? Oh where
oh where can she be?

FOOD BOOTH

MANDY
Mom, where's your ticket?

Janelle glances at it. And then her face freezes in disbelief.

JANELLE
This can't be happening. I never
win anything.

Mandy waves her arms.

MANDY
She's over here!

Mandy gets behind her and pushes her along.

MANDY (CONT'D)
She's on her way!

DANCE FLOOR

Luke and Mayor watch Janelle join them.

MAYOR
You two crazy kids know each other?

JANELLE
Our daughters are friends.

FOOD BOOTH

Sam and Mandy move out of earshot of Francine.

MANDY
Time to go.

SAM
Good luck.

DANCE FLOOR

Mayor walks around with his hand stroking his chin.

MAYOR
I'm thinking of a nice slow waltz.
Audience, what do you think?

Mayor puts his hand to his ear. Audience shouts out different dances.

JANELLE
(to Luke)
If it's a waltz, it's a count of
three. One, two, three. One, two,
three. And remember, you're not
stomping out a fire.

LUKE
Janelle? How 'bout we relax and
have fun no matter what the count
is.

JANELLE
I can do that.

Mayor comes back to them.

MAYOR
The audience has spoken and a waltz
it shall be.

As he leaves the dance floor, the band plays a SLOW WALTZ and they slowly move around.

JANELLE

I wouldn't mind teaching you a few dance steps sometime. You want to be able to dance at Sam's wedding, don't you?

LUKE

You teach me how to dance and I'll teach you how to cook.

Suddenly the Mayor bursts in.

MAYOR

Stop! Stop! Stop!

Luke and Janelle stop dancing. The band stops playing.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

This is all fine and dandy, folks, but I'm starting to fall asleep back here and nobody wants to hear me snore. Just ask my wife.

WOMAN'S VOICE IN CROWD (O.S.)

He's right.

Laughter.

MAYOR

(to Music Teacher)

Mr. Music, can we hear what five shots of espresso sounds like?

And the band jumps into a fast IRISH DANCE SONG. The audience claps to the beat.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Now that's more like it.

Luke and Janelle look at each other. Luke grins.

LUKE

Hold on tight.

And they boogie, shuffle and twirl around the dance floor, improvising and laughing all the way.

FOOD BOOTH

Sam spots Francine looking on, achingly.

SAM

Looks like you could use a drink.

Hands her a cup.

SAM (CONT'D)
Ice cold lemonade. On the house.

FRANCINE
Thanks, Sam.

DANCE FLOOR

Janelle breaks off and performs an impressive solo that brings out big applause.

Luke then solos with goofiness and lightheartedness.

They hook up again and gallop around to the crowd's delight.

Finally the song ends and they stop, out of breath to wild applause.

FOOD BOOTH

Sam reaches down and picks up the walkie talkie. Turns her back to Francine.

SAM
(quietly)
Mandy, we are go for launch.

DANCE FLOOR

Luke and Janelle still catching their breath when --

-- A spectacular display of fireworks begins. They look up to see the sky EXPLODING with color.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Sam and Mandy play on swings while Luke and Janelle sit on top of a nearby picnic table, talking. Janelle wears a Red Sox cap and Luke holds a big Red Sox foam cheering mitt.

In the background workers disassemble the lights and stage.

JANELLE
I have to say that's the most fun
I've had in a very long time.

LUKE
Same here.

JANELLE

... You know. We need to get out more often.

Luke looks on with quizzical delight. Janelle playfully bumps her shoulder into his.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

I didn't mean with each other.

LUKE

(playing along)

Oh good. You had me worried there.

They both nervously chuckle.

LUKE (CONT'D)

... So what was life like before Morning Star arrived?

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I ask that question to all my dance partners.

JANELLE

(smiles)

... Okay, I'll give you the short version.

LUKE

Just don't leave out the good stuff.

A self-conscious smile forms on her face.

JANELLE

I got a degree in Broadcasting from Boston University. Followed my boyfriend to California. I got pregnant. We got married. He got bored. We got divorced. I got depressed and moved back home.

LUKE

I can't believe you got all that out in one breath.

JANELLE

From high school valedictorian to unemployed, single mom living in my old room.

Janelle playfully drills her finger into his shoulder.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

So don't think you're the only one who hibernated.

LUKE

So what happened after the long snooze?

JANELLE

I applied for a sales job at the radio station. They saw something in me they liked and a few years later, ta-da, Morning Star is on the air.

LUKE

And mornings at McKenna Farms have never been the same since.

Janelle tempers her smile.

JANELLE

I've been totally up front with them about wanting to break into the New York market. No luck so far.

LUKE

That seems like an awfully big jump.

JANELLE

I don't think so.

SAM

New York's gain is our loss.

Janelle raises her eyes to his when --

-- Her cell phone RINGS. She looks at the number.

JANELLE

I really have to get this.
(into phone)
Oh, hi.. What?... I'm sorry, I didn't know it was so late. Yes. Yes, we're on our way.

INT. JANELLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mandy twirls around as she walks through the front door.

MANDY
Tonight was simply divine.

JANELLE
I'll be right up to tuck you in.

Mandy heads up the stairs.

Janelle sees Brandon walking over to her with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

BRANDON
Right now Jay is probably asking himself, why did I only give a hundred percent?

JANELLE
You got the promotion?

Brandon beams.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Congratulations!

They embrace.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
With all those hours you put in, you certainly earned it.

BRANDON
Tomorrow I fly to New York for two weeks of training.

STAIRS

Mandy sits unnoticed, smiles broadly.

MANDY
(excited; to self)
Two weeks? I can't wait to tell Sam.

She quietly hurries upstairs.

BRANDON

moves in for a kiss, but Janelle gracefully holds him back.

JANELLE
Let me put Mandy to bed first.

She turns.

BRANDON

How was the big Fourth of July
bash?

JANELLE

... Oh, you know. Games. Food.
Dancing. Fireworks. Small town
stuff. Mandy had fun.

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

Janelle at the mike, while Wild Horse Willie and Maynard
watch.

JANELLE

... And a very Happy Birthday to
you, Mrs. Baker. I hope that poem
Terry wrote for you stays with you
always. I know I speak for everyone
here at the station in wishing you
a speedy recovery... And that'll do
it for today. I'll be here
tomorrow. Hope you will too.

She pauses.

MAYNARD

And we're clear. Nice touch with
those closing announcements.

JANELLE

People kept coming up to me all
night long.

Willie enters and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

WILLIE

If I didn't know any better I'd
swear you found a soft spot for
these folks.

JANELLE

These folks just happen to be some
of the kindest, most decent people
I have ever known.

Willie smiles broadly.

WILLIE

No telling what can happen...
(taps his chest)
(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)
... when you let this old town
inside.

EXT. MCKENNA DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Luke, Janelle, Sam and Mandy enjoying Sloppy Joes.

MANDY
Mom, I can't believe you actually
made these.

JANELLE
I did have a little help.

LUKE
All I did was supply the recipe,
the ingredients and the fire
extinguisher, just in case.

Janelle playfully slaps his arm.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(to Sam and Mandy)
And guess what?

Luke motions for the girls to lean in. They do.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Kirby didn't howl once.

Sam and Mandy giggle.

EXT. MCKENNA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke and Janelle bring in the dishes. Janelle looks around.

JANELLE
Dishwasher?

LUKE
You're looking at him.

JANELLE
Then I'll dry.

Luke turns on the radio and a COUNTRY SONG plays. As they
wash and dry, their bodies move to the beat.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Mandy happily watch their parents and fist bump each other.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - PREDAWN

Janelle enters with a cup of coffee. Maynard watches. On her desk is a stack of papers.

JANELLE
Maynard, what's all this?

MAYNARD
Those are all requests faxed in.
Seems like half the town has some
kind of message they want you to
announce.

Janelle looks surprised.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
It's like having our very own
talking bulletin board.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Luke and Janelle lay out a tablecloth as Sam and Mandy carry a picnic basket.

An outstanding view of the town and river below spreads out before them.

They all settle in. Luke and Sam take off their shoes and socks.

MANDY
(to Sam)
Why you doing that?

SAM
Because it feels good.

MANDY
But what if something bites you?

LUKE
You just gotta be careful, that's
all. Especially with those killer
chipmunks we have around here.

Luke looks at Sam with a crazed look.

SAM
(giggles)
Oh no.

Luke grabs her leg and pretends to gnaw on it.

EXT. HILLSIDE - SUNSET

Luke and Janelle sit back, watching the sunset, while Sam and Mandy chase something in the grass.

She leans against his shoulder as Mandy comes running to her, holding a large toad.

MANDY
Mom! Mom! Look, I'm not afraid. Can
we keep him?

INT. RADIO BOOTH - DAY

Janelle on the air. In front of her rests a stack of papers.

JANELLE
... And now we get to what has
become my favorite part of this
show, The Morning Bulletin Board.
Got quite a few of these to get
through today, so have a listen
because one of them just might be
for you.

MONTAGE - BECOMING A FAMILY

-- Janelle teaches Luke how to dance.

-- Luke teaches Mandy how to drive the tractor while Janelle and Sam nervously look on.

-- Sam proudly shows off one of her plant experiments to Janelle who looks at it through a magnifying glass.

-- Janelle on air, trying not to laugh as Luke, Sam and Mandy make faces.

-- Luke, Sam, Bill, Claire, and Mandy, all sit around the McKenna dining room table. Janelle enters from the kitchen holding an elaborate dish. Everyone applauds.

-- Luke dances with Janelle with noticeable improvement.

-- Katie showing Sam and Mandy how to cook.

-- Luke, Janelle, Sam and Mandy stroll down Main Street. Get stopped by several people who hand Janelle slips of paper. Lots of chatting.

-- A much improved Luke dances with Janelle.

-- The four of them at the Emerald Cafe. Ruthie comes by with menus and discreetly winks at the girls.

INT. JANELLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Luke sits on one side of the couch. Janelle lays down with her stocking feet in his lap.

Sam and Mandy sit in the floor, sharing a big bowl of popcorn. All watch a movie.

The front door suddenly opens and Brandon enters, startling everyone. Holds a large shopping bag.

BRANDON

Well isn't this cozy.

Janelle jumps up.

JANELLE

Well, hi... We weren't expecting you back until tomorrow.

BRANDON

I see that.

He pulls out a pair of designer handbags from the shopping bag.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(to Luke)

You won't find these in town.

He gives one to Janelle and the other to Mandy.

JANELLE

... Mandy?

MANDY

(lukewarm excitement)

Thanks, Brandon. They look really cool.

BRANDON

For what I paid for them, I was hoping they looked way cool.

JANELLE
And they do. Very thoughtful of
you.

BRANDON
Luke, can I speak to you outside?

LUKE
Sam, you wait here.

EXT. JANELLE'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Luke and Brandon square off.

BRANDON
I know what you're doing and it's
going to stop.

LUKE
Let's ask her what she has to say.

BRANDON
Did she tell you about New York?

LUKE
Yes she did. But she's a small
town girl --

BRANDON
-- With big city dreams.

Brandon struggles to keep his cool.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
It's going to happen for her. And
do you know how I know that?
Because I'm going to make sure it
does. After what she's been
through, she deserves that.

Luke is about to speak when --

BRANDON (CONT'D)
-- The four of you are not a
family, so stop acting like one. If
you want a family so badly, go out
and get your own and leave mine
alone.

Brandon takes a step forward.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
If not for you, do it for your kid.

The front door opens and Janelle comes out with Sam.

JANELLE
 (to Luke)
 It's probably best if you left.

Luke and Brandon don't move.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
 ... Please.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Luke reads to Sam in bed.

LUKE
 ... And if you follow these
 instructions, you'll have a twenty
 percent increase in your acorn
 squash harvest.

SAM
 I love happy endings.

Luke closes the book and tucks her in.

SAM (CONT'D)
 ... Can I invite Mandy and her mom
 to join us for the End of Summer
 Picnic this Saturday?

LUKE
 Sam, I don't want you to call or
 see Mandy for a while. Okay?

Sam tears up.

SAM
 But why? Are you mad at them?

LUKE
 Mad? No, of course not.

SAM
 It's because Brandon came back,
 isn't it?

Luke searches.

SAM (CONT'D)
 When can we see them again?

LUKE
I don't know, Sam.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Sam walks her bike up the front steps.

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

Sam, stern faced, walks her bike down the hallway until she comes to a RECEPTIONIST, matronly with a friendly face.

RECEPTIONIST
Hello, Sam.

SAM
I need to speak to the Mayor. It's a matter of life and death.

RECEPTIONIST
(hides a smile)
Oh. Well in that case, I'll see if he's in.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Modest and tasteful.

The Mayor sits behind his desk. Sam sits across.

MAYOR
How is my favorite cupid doing?

SAM
Mr. Mayor, I must call on you again for your help.

MAYOR
Sounds serious.

SAM
They were together, but now they're not. He doesn't even listen to her show anymore and he used to listen to her all the time.

MAYOR
What happened?

SAM
Brandon.

MANDY

Who's Brandon?

SAM

If Mandy's mom marries Brandon,
that'll make Mandy really sad and
she'll run away.

MAYOR

Well, we can't have that, can we?

SAM

They just need to see each other
again. Then they'll want to be
together and this time, it'll be
forever.

MAYOR

(thinking)

Sam, you're in the right ballpark,
just not the same one I had in
mind.

INT. JANELLE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Janelle stands over the stove cooking, on her phone. Brandon
sits at the table, texting on his cell phone.

JANELLE

... Are you sure?... Well, okay
then. Why not? It sounds like
fun... Good night to you, Mayor.

BRANDON

What did he want?

JANELLE

This Saturday is the End of Summer
Picnic and they always start off
with a softball game. It's real
informal. Anyone can play. And they
want me to be the announcer.

BRANDON

But you don't know anything about
softball.

JANELLE

That didn't seem to matter.

INT. JANELLE'S LIVING ROOM

Janelle sits on the couch watching a Red Sox game.

Mandy walks in with a bowl of ice cream.

MANDY
What are you doing?

JANELLE
Homework.

Mandy joins her.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Bite?

Mandy hands her the bowl.

MANDY
Save me some.

LATER

Janelle asleep on the couch. Mandy watches intently.

SPORTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... And they go down one, two,
three as we head to the bottom half
of the fourteenth inning of this
nail biter with the score still
tied at seven each.

EXT. BALLPARK PARKING LOT - DAY

Luke, wearing a McKenna Farms baseball cap and Sam exit their truck and watch Janelle, Mandy and Brandon make their way to the entrance. Janelle wears her Red Sox cap.

Brandon, decked out in a full New York Yankees uniform, carries a cooler.

Luke puts his hand on Sam's shoulder.

LUKE
Stay here, Sam.

EXT. BALLPARK - DAY

Metal bleachers run along the first and third base lines. Behind home plate are more bleachers with the announcer's booth perched on top.

An elevated old-time wooden scoreboard sits just beyond the left field fence. A worker on the walkway in front, sorts through a box and puts up numbers to mark each inning.

The packed crowd settles in as the Mayor makes his way to the pitcher's mound, holding a wireless microphone.

MAYOR

I'd like to welcome you all to our Annual End of Summer Picnic, which wouldn't be complete without our traditional softball game. We're honored to have a very special guest calling today's game. If you're up before the sun, her voice is no stranger to you. Say hello to Morning Star, our very own Janelle Travis.

He points to the booth. Crowd applauds as Janelle and Mandy wave.

Luke, standing in front of one dugout, looks up while Brandon in front of the other one stays focused on stretching.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle at the microphone, while Mandy, seated next to her, eats a hot dog and slurps on a big cup of soda. Janelle opens a bag of in shell peanuts

JANELLE

Hello everyone and welcome. What a beautiful day for a ball game.

SCOREBOARD

Worker puts on the final letters of each team.

JANELLE (O.S.)

And we've got quite a match-up for you today with the Fire Ants taking on the Yellow Jackets.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle cracks open a peanut and tosses it back.

JANELLE

I don't know about you, but I
wouldn't want to mess with either
one of them.

FIRE ANTS DUGOUT

Brandon wearing eye grease offers some to his teammates. They
all decline.

BRANDON

Don't come crying to me if you lose
the ball in the sun.

He places his cooler by his feet.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy finishes her hot dog and washes it down with soda.

JANELLE

The Yellow Jackets won the toss, so
they'll be taking the field and
here they come.

BLEACHERS

Sam sits by herself. Francine comes by with a soda and hot
dog.

FRANCINE

Thought you might like this.

Sam takes it.

SAM

Thanks.

She thinks.

SAM (CONT'D)

You can sit here if you want. Just
don't talk. I need to concentrate.

HOME PLATE

Luke spins his cap around and joins the UMPIRE, an imposing figure. Both settle into position.

KEVIN HARPER, good looking high school freshman with his game face on walks to the plate.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle gestures for a drink of soda. Mandy obliges.

JANELLE

And stepping up to the plate is Kevin Harper. Here's a fun fact about Kevin. While recovering from the mumps last year he tried teaching himself the banjo and kazoo. Got pretty good with the banjo, but gave up on the kazoo. Said it was too hard.

HOME PLATE

Kevin's game face goes away and he smiles. He takes his stance.

LUKE

Hey Kevin, how's your Dad doing?

Kevin swings. Strike one.

KEVIN

Surgery went real well. He should be home end of next week.

Kevin swings. Strike two.

LUKE

Tell him, I'll stop by.

KEVIN

He would really like that.

REVERSE ANGLE

The pitch. He swings and hits a blooper over the shortstop. Holds up at first.

ON DECK CIRCLE

Brandon claps loudly.

BRANDON

Okay. That's how we start it off.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy opens a bag of popcorn.

JANELLE

Next up wearing Derek Jeter's hand-me-downs is Brandon York. Brandon is the most punctual man on the planet. He's never late for anything, including his own birth which was six weeks early.

HOME PLATE

Brandon taps his cleats with the bat.

LUKE

How many hours ahead do you set your watch?

Brandon takes his stance.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Let's face it, she's just a small town girl.

The pitch and he clobbers it. Looks back.

BRANDON

With big city dreams.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle leans forward.

JANELLE

This ball is hit deep into right. Elmer goes back.

RIGHT FIELD

Elmer runs back. He misjudges the ball and it drops behind him.

JANELLE (O.S.)
But he can't make the play.

Kevin sprints for third. Brandon charges around second.

JANELLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Brandon on his horse rounds second.
Elmer throws to Floyd at short

Kevin crosses home. Brandon sprints across third, galloping home.

JANELLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Kevin scores and here comes Brandon
heading for home.

Luke blocks the plate, waits for the throw. Floyd guns it to Luke.

JANELLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Here comes Brandon. Here's the
throw. This is going to be close.

Luke catches the ball just as Brandon plows into him. A forearm uppercut sends Luke falling back. The ball rolls out of his mitt.

UMPIRE
Safe.

Tucker rushes over.

TUCKER
(to Brandon)
There's no need for that. This is a
friendly game.

BRANDON
That should teach him not to get in
my way.

Brandon walks away and Tucker helps Luke to his feet.

TUCKER
You okay, Boss?

LUKE
Yeah, Tucker. Thanks.

FIRE ANTS DUGOUT

Brandon opens his cooler.

BRANDON

All right. Which one of you Ants
took my power bar?

SCOREBOARD

Fire Ants ahead 3-0 in the bottom half of the third inning.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle shifts her weight. Looks a bit uneasy.

JANELLE

Leading off for the Yellow Jackets
here in the bottom half of the
third inning is Luke McKenna.

Mandy waits for more. Janelle shrugs. Mandy grabs the
microphone.

MANDY

Who is the coolest dad I know. Hi,
Sam. I'm up here.

Mandy waves.

BLEACHERS

Sam looks up and waves back.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy leans out.

MANDY

I miss you!

HOME PLATE

Luke watches this and tenses up. He grinds his back foot into
the dirt and waits.

REVERSE ANGLE

The pitch. Luke annihilates it. The ball screams to left
field, over Brandon's head, heading to the scoreboard.

And smashes it so hard, some of the number and letters fly off.

Brandon punches his fist into his mitt and kicks the ground.

As Luke heads home he sees Sam and Francine standing up applauding. He smiles and tips his cap to them.

SCOREBOARD

Yellow Jackets are ahead in the bottom half of the fifth inning 4-3.

INFIELD

Tucker on second. Brandon on third.

JASPER FLETCHER, built like a bull with a soft face walks to the plate.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle cracks open several peanuts.

JANELLE

With one out and two on and trailing 4-3, here comes Jasper Fletcher. Jasper got married eight months ago and has yet to sleep on the couch, so it looks like this marriage will probably go into extra innings.

Mandy hands Janelle a folded up piece of paper.

MANDY

Some woman just dropped this off.

JANELLE

(unfolds paper)

I've just been handed this note from your wife, Amber.

As Janelle reads her face lights up.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(overjoyed)

She says, "Honey, we're pregnant!"

HOME PLATE

Jasper finds his wife in the bleachers and blows her a kiss.
She does the same.

Crowd applauds.

LUKE
Congratulations.

JASPER
Thanks. We've been trying for some
time now.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Janelle throws back several peanuts. Suddenly launches into a
coughing fit. Puts her hand over the microphone.

JANELLE
(to Mandy; raspy)
Peanuts... down... the wrong way.

Mandy, anxiously hands her the cup of soda.

MANDY
Here, Mom. Drink this.

She does.

MANDY (CONT'D)
(worried)
... Better?

She nods and then starts coughing even harder.

Mandy looks out, gripped with panic.

MANDY (CONT'D)
Mom! Mom! He's in the wind up.

Janelle still hacks.

INFIELD

Pitcher throws.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy snatches the microphone.

MANDY

Here's the pitch. And Big Daddy
Jasper rockets this one to left.
Roger's on his horse.

LEFT FIELD

Roger runs, looking up.

MANDY (O.S.)

He's going back, back to the
fence...

Roger is under it and makes the catch.

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy in control.

MANDY

... And snags it! Jasper is robbed
of a home run.

Janelle looks at her with astonishment.

BLEACHERS

Sam looks up surprised.

SAM

(to self)
Mandy?

ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

Mandy focused.

MANDY

Brandon takes off. Roger fires it
to Floyd at short.

INFIELD

Brandon at full speed heads for home. Luke digs in his back
heel and waits.

MANDY (O.S.)

Floyd bobbles it, but recovers.
Brandon coming home.

(MORE)

MANDY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Here's the throw to the plate. This
 is another close one, folks.

At the last second the ball flies way over Luke's head.

Brandon smashes into Luke who doesn't give an inch and
 Brandon is knocked back.

UMPIRE
 ... He's out.

Fire Ant Player runs over.

FIRE ANT PLAYER
 What do you mean he's out? Luke
 never had the ball.

UMPIRE
 No, I mean he's out. Out cold.

Brandon lies there, knocked out.

EXT. BALLPARK PARKING LOT - DAY

Luke and Sam spot Janelle, Mandy and Brandon heading to his
 car. For a moment, Mandy stops when she sees Sam, but Janelle
 ushers her away.

LUKE
 Let's go, Sam.

Sam gets in. Luke opens his door and just as he is about to
 get in --

JANELLE (O.S.)
 -- Luke?

Luke turns.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
 Can I talk to you for a minute?

Luke closes his door.

LUKE
 ... Go ahead.

JANELLE
 Luke, things are a little fuzzy for
 me right now.

Luke sees Brandon holding Mandy's hand.

LUKE

Things look pretty clear to me.

JANELLE

I just need a little time to sort things out. Okay?

LUKE

Those are words I hoped I'd never hear again from a woman.

JANELLE

I'll call you.

Janelle tears up. She quickly kisses him on the cheek and hurries off.

INT. JANELLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brandon gives Janelle a glass of wine. She looks tired and distracted.

JANELLE

It took forever to get her to sleep.

BRANDON

While you were upstairs I got a call. They offered me a job at the New York home office.

JANELLE

You're moving to New York?

BRANDON

Not me. All of us. While I was there, Chuck got me a meeting with some radio hot shots.

JANELLE

Are you serious?

BRANDON

I told them all about you. I even let them hear your new material and they said you sounded perfect for what they're looking for.

JANELLE

Early morning? No wait. Satellite radio and I get my own show.

BRANDON

We didn't get into any specifics.
They said once you're settled in to
give them a call.

INT. EMERALD CAFE - DAY

Luke and Janelle sit in a booth. Two full cups of coffee
remain untouched. Luke leans forward.

LUKE

... And this is what you really
want?

JANELLE

You knew I came back home because I
was an unemployed, single mom with
nowhere else to go. And now I have
a job waiting for me thanks to
Brandon.

LUKE

It sure looked like you and this
town were a pretty good fit.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Damn near perfect.

JANELLE

I wouldn't change one thing about
this summer, Luke, but the summer's
over and now it's time for all of
us to move on.

LUKE

If only it was that easy.

JANELLE

(quivering)

... Would you please bring Sam by
tomorrow, so the girls can say
goodbye.

EXT. JANELLE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Luke leans up against his truck parked across the street.

Sam and Mandy stand on the front lawn, crying. Mandy hands
her a piece of paper.

MANDY

Here's our new address. You better write me. I don't know anyone there.

SAM

I will. Every day. I never had a best friend like you before in my whole life.

MANDY

Me either.

Janelle and Brandon watch from inside the house.

Sam runs to Luke who squats down and catches her in his arms.

MONTAGE -- THE BROKEN FAMILY

-- Luke, Tucker and workers harvest cabbage.

-- Janelle taking a Zumba class.

-- Mandy, dressed in her school uniform sits in class gazing out the window.

-- Francine flirts with a distracted Luke at the Emerald Cafe.

-- Sam on her new computer skpyes with Mandy. Both look sad.

EXT. NEW YORK FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Janelle looks over the produce in one of the booths. Vendor keeps a close eye on her.

Janelle picks up a broccoli crown.

JANELLE

Did you know that Thomas Jefferson liked broccoli so much he imported seeds from Italy and planted them at his home in Monticello?

Vendor shakes open a small plastic bag.

VENDOR

You touched it, lady. You bought it.

EXT. STREET - LATER ON

Gridlock.

A blend of CAR HORNS and YELLING.

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

The DRIVER, a grumpy old geezer just stares straight ahead.

Janelle sits in the back with her grocery bags. She looks out the window. Starts fidgeting.

JANELLE

(to self)

I don't remember it ever being this loud or crowded.

(to Driver)

Excuse me, but is it always this noisy?

No reaction.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(louder)

How can you stand all this noise?
... Excuse me. I'm talking to you!

Nothing.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Hey!

She pounds on the window that separates them.

He quickly turns around and pulls out his ear plugs. Glares at her.

GEEZER

Lady, you trying to give me a heart attack?

EXT. APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

Great view of Manhattan.

Mandy sits on a small couch swing looking down at her cell phone.

Janelle comes out.

JANELLE
What are you doing?

MANDY
Nothing.

JANELLE
Sounds like fun.

She sits down next to Mandy and looks over.

MANDY
You haven't seen these yet.

Mandy hands Janelle her cell phone and she begins finger sliding.

CELL PHONE SCREEN - SERIES OF PHOTOS

Sam and Mandy posing at the farm stand.

Kirby eating the lemon merengue pie.

Mandy eating a gooey marshmallow.

Sam in her science lab with the magnifying glass up to her eye.

Luke pretending to be a monster while Sam cowers.

Several shots of Sam and Janelle goofing around trying on different hats in a boutique.

A candid shot of Luke and Janelle dancing in the living room.

Several candid shots of Janelle with dish soap bubbles on her head, plopping a pile of bubbles onto Luke's nose. Both laughing hysterically.

A posed shot of Luke, Janelle, Sam and Mandy goofing around with a sunset behind them.

JANELLE
(holding back tears)
How 'bout some ice cream? One big
bowl and two spoons.

MANDY
Mint chocolate chip okay?

JANELLE
Perfect.

Mandy leaves.

Janelle forwards through a series of photos of Luke carefully teaching Mandy how to build a birdhouse.

And she stops on the one of Mandy proudly showing off her new birdhouse.

Mandy returns with the ice cream.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Sweetheart, where are the ones of
Brandon?

MANDY
There aren't any.

INT. MCKENNA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bill, Claire and Sam eat supper. Luke enters, wearing jacket and tie.

CLAIRE
Well don't you look spiffy.

SAM
Where you going?

LUKE
I'm taking Francine out.

SAM
You mean like on a date?

LUKE
We're going out to dinner.

SAM
Why can't she eat here?

BILL
Sam, I think they want some
privacy.

Sam's face drops. Luke squats down and kisses her cheek.

LUKE
I won't be late.

SAM
But what about my bedtime story?

CLAIRE

I'll read to you tonight. And I know just the one. Mary Poppins. One of my favorites when I was your age.

BILL

Have a good time, son.

Luke leaves and the front door CLOSES.

SAM

I'm not feeling well. I think I'll go to my room. Good night.

Bill and Claire watch Sam trudge off with Kirby trailing.

CLAIRE

Such a shame things didn't work out with Janelle.

INT. FRANCINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Francine opens her front door, looking all dolled up. Big smile.

FRANCINE

Well don't you look yummy? Do you want to come in? Oh right, dinner first. I do get ahead of myself sometimes.

LUKE

That you do.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A long stretch of darkness, only lit by the front light of Sam's bicycle. She pedals like mad.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Elegant.

Luke and Francine with full glasses of wine, look at menus.

INTERCUT - SAM ON BIKE/LUKE ON DATE

Sam zips along. Cars pass her.

Francine flags down a waiter and motions for another glass of wine.

Sam waits for traffic to stop before pedaling across a major intersection.

Francine playfully holds out a buttered dinner roll, coaxing Luke to bite.

EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Dimly lit by a single streetlight. Sam parks her bike.

INT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Sam walks up to the ticket window where Kevin (the high school freshman from the softball game) reads a Red Sox magazine. He spots Sam and raises an eyebrow.

KEVIN

What are you doing here, Sam?

SAM

I need a one-way ticket to New York.

KEVIN

Last bus to New York left two hours ago. Next one won't be until 6:30 in the morning.

SAM

That's okay. I'll wait.

INT. LUKE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Francine snuggles up to Luke.

FRANCINE

How about coming in for a slice of sugar free Coconut Cream Pie, McKenna.

Beat.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

I know about your teeth, and there's nothing to be ashamed about.

Suddenly his cell phone goes off.

LUKE
Let me get this.

Luke grabs his cell phone.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Hello?... Oh, hi Kevin... What?

Luke looks worried.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay, I'll be right there.

EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Sam sits on the bench outside next to her bike which has a hand-written For Sale sign on it.

Luke pulls in, parks and walks over.

SAM
Please don't be mad. I left you a note on my pillow.

Luke sits down next to her.

LUKE
Sam, I'm just glad you're okay. Don't you know you're the most important person in my life. If anything should happen to you it would kill me.

They hug. Sam sobs.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Promise me you'll never do anything like this ever again.

SAM
I promise.

Luke wipes her tears away.

LUKE
You were going to sell your bike?

SAM
I didn't have enough for the bus.

LUKE
You miss Mandy that much?

SAM
I miss her a lot, but that's not
why I was going.

LUKE
Then why, Sam?

SAM
I was going to ask Mandy's mom to
marry you.

Luke looks deeply moved and kisses the top of her head.

LUKE
Oh, Sam.

SAM
I just know she'd say yes if I
asked her and then we'd all be a
family again.

Luke fights back tears.

LUKE
Sam, that's just not how it works.

SAM
Why not?

LUKE
She made her decision and I was not
part of it.

SAM
Why didn't you make her stay?

LUKE
Sam, she's got to be with me not
because she feels pressure and
thinks she has to, but because she
knows she must. That's the kind of
love your parents had.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)
And I want that for you.

SAM
What about you and Francine?

Luke laughs.

LUKE
How 'bout we sit back and see how
that plays out.

SAM
She's a little kooky.

LUKE
That she is.

SAM
But I do like her brownies and she
didn't bother me at the ball game.

LUKE
That's a start.

SAM
... If you're getting close to
marrying her, would you let me
know?

LUKE
You'll be the first one I tell.

Sam smiles.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Let's go home.

Luke takes her by the hand and walks her bike with the other
as they head for his truck.

SAM
How was the date?

LUKE
A little kooky.

Sam giggles.

INT. RADIO STATION LOBBY - DAY

Janelle looking stunning in business wear, sits patiently
with other women.

ROXANNE, a stylish young woman enters holding an electronic
tablet.

ROXANNE
Ms. Travis?

Janelle stands. Roxanne touches the screen a few times.

ROXANNE (CONT'D)
Hi, I'm Roxanne. They're ready for
you now. Please follow me.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nicely furnished.

Janelle enters, fuming.

KITCHEN

Brandon opens the oven door and takes a look inside.

He sees Janelle standing in the doorway with her arms
crossed.

BRANDON
There she is. I'm making us all
pizza. It's just about ready.

He closes the oven door.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
So how'd the interview go?

JANELLE
Oh it was just peachy, until they
told me it was for a sales
position... Entry level.

BRANDON
(calm)
So how'd it go?

JANELLE
Sales! Sales! You told me you lined
up interviews for me.

BRANDON
I did.

JANELLE
But you told me they were for
deejay positions.

BRANDON
No, you just assumed they were.

JANELLE
You lied to me.

BRANDON

(growing anger)

Did you actually think you'd blow into this town and snag a job like that with only three years at the mike doing farm reports?

He points at her.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

It's that small town girl mentality that's going to keep tripping you up.

Brandon calms down.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

You were good in sales, and I bet you still are. I even hired you a voice coach, which I'll pay for and believe me the good ones don't come cheap.

JANELLE

You did what?

BRANDON

Look, the point is you're here now and isn't this where you want to be?

JANELLE

I can't believe you tricked me.

BRANDON

If you want to make it here you can start right now by kicking that small town girl out of you and toughening up.

JANELLE

I happen to love that small town girl.

BRANDON

If you love her that much, job or no job, what the heck is she doing here?

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

A festive Harvest Dance. Lots of food and drink. Couples dance to a country band.

The music can't quite drown out the HOWLING wind and heavy rain SLAPPING the roof.

Luke, dressed in jacket and jeans, walks over to Francine and offers her a cup of steaming hot chocolate. She accepts.

FRANCINE
Thank you, kind sir.
(takes a sip)
Care to dance? I hear you've gotten quite good.

LUKE
Maybe later.

She pokes his shoulder.

FRANCINE
I'm going to hold you to that.

They watch Sam, wearing work boots and a dress decorated in farm animals and vegetables stomping around on the dance floor with CLEM, a boy her age who keeps looking down.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
What's she doing out there?

LUKE
It's called The Frankenstein Shuffle. I taught her that.

FRANCINE
I'm seeing dance lessons in her future.

LUKE
If that's something she wants.

Luke smiles and waves to Sam. She waves back.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Thanks for taking her shopping.

FRANCINE
That dress wasn't my first choice.

LUKE
Seems rather fitting for a Harvest Dance, doesn't it.

Francine sips her hot chocolate.

FRANCINE

You know, I was thinking maybe this Sunday we could take in a movie.

Francine cuddles up.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Unless there's something else you'd rather do, McKenna.

Suddenly the wind kicks open the front doors and the rain blows in.

Everyone looks to see Janelle and Mandy standing in the doorway, soaking wet holding suitcases.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Oh, c'mon.

Tucker appears out of nowhere.

TUCKER

Your coach awaits my fair maiden.

He offers his hand. She takes it.

FRANCINE

My hero.

And he whisks her away. The band stops. The crowd on the dance floor parts, creating an aisle.

Mandy scans the room and spots Sam.

MANDY

(to self)

... Sam.

She sprints down the aisle. Sam sees Mandy coming. Big smile.

SAM

Clem, I like you. But let's take a break.

CLEM

Good. You keep stepping on my feet.

Mandy arrives, stops and sniffs.

MANDY

You wearing perfume?

SAM

It's Luke's after shave.

MANDY

Shut up.

SAM

You shut up.

Sam looks her over.

SAM (CONT'D)

Why you so wet?

MANDY

The taxi got a flat tire. We
couldn't wait to get here. You ever
try running with suitcases?

They cry and hug.

Luke kneels down and puts his jacket over Mandy's shoulders.

She suddenly hugs him tightly.

LUKE

I missed you too, Mandy.

They slowly let go.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Would you like some hot chocolate?

She nods.

Suddenly a hand holding a cup of hot chocolate appears. He
takes it and gives it to her.

Everyone turns to Janelle who is already making her way down
the aisle.

As she walks, a hand reaches out with a handkerchief. She
takes it and wipes the rain off her face.

Someone else drapes a blanket over her.

A hand offers her a cup of hot chocolate and another hand
dumps in small marshmallows.

She stops when she comes to Sam and Mandy. Sips the hot
chocolate.

JANELLE

(turns to the crowd)

This is really good. Thank you.

She squats down to Sam's height.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Now that's a killer dress, Sam.

SAM
You like it?

JANELLE
I love it. Perfect for a Harvest
Dance.

SAM
(giggles)
That's exactly what Luke said.

Janelle smiles and glides her hand along Sam's cheek.
Mayor steps forward as Janelle rises.

MAYOR
More marshmallows, my dear?

JANELLE
No thanks. I'm good.

Janelle looks at the crowd.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Mandy told me all about your
matchmaking plan. I have to say you
were all very convincing.

MAYOR
Actually, the truth is, even though
the plan was cooked-up, and I know
I speak for the whole town when I
say, the love we ended up feeling
for you was not. You're family now
and we couldn't be happier.

Janelle wipes her moist eyes.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
In the words of my dear old daddy,
Thaddeus, who spent most of his
adult life in prison, it's not
where you live, it's where you
belong.

Crowd laughs.

JANELLE
(to Luke)
And I belong here.

LUKE
We all knew that.

Janelle touches Luke's face.

JANELLE
I want you. I want there to be an
us and I want us to be a family.
And I want our family to be part of
this really big family.

Janelle turns to the crowd.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
And I want to have you all over for
supper.

Crowd goes wild.

Janelle turns back to Luke.

LUKE
Cowboy Casserole for two hundred?

JANELLE
(beaming)
Just what I had in mind.

And they kiss. Everyone applauds.

EXT. MCKENNA FARM STAND - DAY

Sam reads Mary Poppins while Mandy handles all transactions.
Pumpkins line the shelves. Kirby rests by their feet.

JANELLE (V.O.)
Today looks to be another beautiful
fall day, so make sure you take a
light jacket or sweater with you
when you're out selecting your
Halloween pumpkins.

Francine blows through holding a plate of wrapped cookies,
nods to the girls and marches over to Tucker, who is
unloading a cart full of pumpkins.

She hands him the plate and then lays a big kiss on him.

Luke pulls up in his pickup and motions Sam and Mandy to get
in.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Janelle looking so much more at ease at the microphone.
Maynard looks on, smiling.

JANELLE

Did you know the world's largest
pumpkin weighed in at just over two
tons. That's right. Two tons. And I
heard it squashed the competition.

Maynard presses a button and a couple donkey HEE-HAWS blasts
out, followed by a SLIDE WHISTLE and a RINGING GONG.

EXT. MCKENNA BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The Blue Hill Boys perform for Claire and a few neighbors.

JANELLE (V.O.)

Tonight at the Town Hall there's a
special treat for you. The reunion
of the Blue Mountain Boys.

EXT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

A large sandwich board stands out front, showing a photo of
The Blue Mountain Boys smiling at camera. It reads: Saturday
Night - The Blue Mountain Boys Reunion.

JANELLE (V.O.)

Hope to see you there because this
is one show you don't want to miss.

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH - LATER

Maynard quietly passes Janelle a folded note and exits.

JANELLE

Maynard, our engineer who does such
a great job keeping everything
running around here has just handed
me what'll be the last announcement
for today.

Janelle unfolds the paper.

INSERT - NOTE

It reads: Look up.

BACK TO SCENE

Janelle looks up to see Luke, Sam and Mandy on the other side of the glass, holding up a homemade banner that reads, "We love you, Mom."

Janelle beams.

JANELLE

It's from my family letting me know they love me.

Beat.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

... These past few months I've learned that everything takes its own time to grow. You can't rush the beets, the corn, the tomatoes or the pumpkins.

She turns to see Luke, Sam and Mandy smiling at her.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

And that goes for people too. Each one of us has our own growing season. And if you're as lucky as I am, then those who truly love you will wait. This is Morning Star and that's my wish for all of you.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Luke, Janelle, Sam, Mandy and Kirby all get into position.

PHOTOGRAPHER, (50's) nicely dressed man makes some final tweaks and then gets behind his camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Everyone looking here. Big smiles. Very nice.

Everyone smiles. Looks perfect.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

On the count of three. Ready?
One... two... three.

The camera flashes to reveal -- everyone making goofy faces.

FADE OUT.