

elsewhere

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAR, HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A downpour. Windshield wipers thwack against the rain.

INT. CAR

KYLE LAFFERTY (20's) drives, angrily wipes condensation from the glass.

KIMBERLY BROOKS (20's) sits shotgun. Sulks.

Kyle and Kimberly. High School Sweethearts.

KYLE

Me, smiling like a fool. "It's fine, hon, we'll talk in the car." This is not fine. I'm not fine.

LIGHTNING rips at the night. A DISCO BALL ORNAMENT hangs from the rearview, scatters the light.

KIMBERLY

I just need more time. So do you.
You just won't--
(looks at road)
Kyle. Slow down.

A TRACTOR TRAILER rumbles past.

SPLASH. The windshield's doused. Wipers flail.

KYLE

Everyone was there tonight. We should've told them. "Thanks for coming. Oh and Kim needs more time."

Ahead, a CAR slams its brakes. Kyle swerves.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Damn it.

He scrubs off some speed. Twists the defrost to HIGH. Wipes again at the foggy glass.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I was out of line.

Kyle reaches over, puts a hand on hers.

KYLE (CONT'D)

You're scared. I get it.

She pulls her hand away.

KIMBERLY
No. No, you don't.

He takes his eyes off the road, turns to her.

KYLE
What are you saying?

KIMBERLY
I love you, Kyle. I do, but--

Oncoming HEADLIGHTS illuminate Kimberly's face.

The disco ball catches the light - throws it around the car.

BLINDING LIGHT.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Trauma Unit. STAFF scramble, prep for--

Doors burst open. Paramedics pull in GURNEYS.

DR. TORY BENEFIELD (50's) meets them. She's commanding, calm.

DR. BENEFIELD
What do we have?

PARAMEDIC
Severe head trauma, depressed cranial fracture. Glad you're here tonight, Doc.

The gurneys are lined up. Nurses hang bags, cut clothing.

Benefield moves to Kyle's stretcher. He struggles to breathe.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)
Name's Kyle.

DR. BENEFIELD
Kyle. You're going to be fine.

PARAMEDIC
BP's seventy over forty-five. Status post four liters normal saline.

Not good. Benefield stays cool.

DR. BENEFIELD
Nora-epi, four mgs stat.

An angry red SEATBELT BURN cuts across Kyle's chest.
Benefield feels for other injuries. Quick. Efficient.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Kyle? Can you hear me?

But Kyle's not looking at her. His eyes are focused on the gurney to his right. Kimberly. Unconscious, bloody.

Doctors work frantically on her body, block Kyle's view.

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You stay with me, Kyle.

His eyes slide shut.

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
O.R. three.

Kyle forces his eyes open, tries to hold them on Kimberly as he's wheeled away...

The FLASH of overhead fluorescents.

FLASH.

At one care station, there's a DOCTOR with a crying CHILD...

More lights overhead. FLASH. FLASH.

An ELDERLY WOMAN getting oxygen...

FLASH. FLASH.

A NURSE bandaging a YOUNG WOMAN's forehead...

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let's move it.

FLASH FLASH FLASHFLASHFLASH...

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Plain room. Shadows blacken corners, only the BED sees light.

Kyle's on his back. Stares a hole through the ceiling.

The sun comes up, goes down, comes up.

He blinks. Once.

Another revolution of the sun. Light... dark... light.

All while he lies, motionless. Staring.

EXT. CEMETERY - TWO DAYS LATER

More rain. Wind, thunder.

Kyle leans on a CRUTCH, against a black Cadillac. The rain seems to target him. He's oblivious.

An UMBRELLA moves in, blocks the water.

LYDIA LAFFERTY (50's), holds the umbrella over her son's head.

MOURNERS step up, offer condolences.

LYDIA
Where's Sam?

Kyle nods toward the car. AN ELDERLY MAN comes up to him.

ELDERLY MAN
It was a beautiful service...

The sound trails off. The man's lips form unheard words.

Kyle looks around. Rain slaps the car... trees sway in the wind... people shuffle over wet pavement, talking...

But there's no sound.

Then the silence is broken by his mother's voice:

LYDIA
Ready, honey?

Sounds come flooding back to Kyle. *What the--*

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Is it your head? Do we need to take
you back? The doctors said--

KYLE
That I might be fuzzy for a while.
That's all it was. Let's go.

She opens the car door, he slides into the back seat.

INT. CADILLAC

SAM ANDERSON (20's), rough-cut hammer-head with a Mack Truck build, is slumped in the seat.

He sits up, pretends he wasn't crying. Kyle lets him play it off, pulls the door shut.

LAUNDRY ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Kyle pulls a load of LAUNDRY - whites - from the dryer. They're all tinted PINK.

He digs through the clothes. There: a pair of RED PANTIES.

FLASHBACK - BEDROOM

Wearing nothing but the panties, Kimberly wiggles her ass at him, grins over her shoulder.

She turns, shakes RED CHEERLEADING POM-POMS that she's holding in front of her breasts.

END FLASHBACK

Kyle rubs his eyes. *Damn.*

BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

KIMBERLY (V.O.)
(urgent)
Kyle. Wake up.

Kyle wakes in a sweat. Reaches for the lamp.

A SHADOW crosses in front of the door.

He freezes. Then shoots from the bed, races to the hallway.

KYLE
Kimberly. Kim.

He looks around, hopeful.

But no. He's alone.

LIVING ROOM - DAYS LATER

Rain lashes the windows.

Kyle's on the sofa. He stares at the TV. It's OFF.

Lydia's at the door.

LYDIA
Leftovers are in the fridge. I'll
see you tomorrow?

Kyle doesn't respond. She opens the door, and her umbrella.

KYLE
Mom. Be careful...
(beat)
In the rain.

There's no reply. Kyle turns to his mom... but she's gone, and the door's closed.

INT. KITCHEN - MONTHS LATER

Kyle comes in through the back door. His hair's a shaggy mess. He's really let himself go.

He drops groceries onto the table.

Then: he hears hushed VOICES. A conversation. Words unclear.

Someone's here.

KYLE
Mom?

He heads into...

DINING ROOM

Stops. Listens. Voices still muffled.

He moves more slowly, into...

LIVING ROOM

Can't get a bead on the voices. *Where are they coming from?*

Then, suddenly, loud and clear:

SAM (V.O.)
Hey. It's Sam.

There, right next to him: the ANSWERING MACHINE.

SAM (V.O.)
I don't even know if you're going to hear this, but I gotta tell you, I just saw your mom. She's real worried about you. We all are. You have to hang in there.
(beat)
Just try. Okay?

Kyle stares at the machine.

INT. BAR - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Sam sucks the bottom from a MILLER LIGHT... belches.

KYLE
Forgot how classy you are.

SAM
That's what happens when you ignore
your friends for three months.
(studies Kyle)
You look like shit.
(beat)
We all lost her. We all miss her.

Kyle rubs his temples. A FLASH behind his lids:

SAM (V.O.)
(muffled)
I should have said something.

KYLE
What?

SAM
Sunday. The guys. A game. You in?

Kyle hesitates. *That's not what he heard.*

SAM (CONT'D)
Hey, no worries if it's too soon.

Nothing from Kyle.

SAM (CONT'D)
Forget I mentioned it.

KYLE
She was dumping me. For good this
time. Soon as we left the party, she
laid it on me. Didn't want to marry
me. Said she loved me. But.

SAM
But what?

Kyle's silent. Sam seems desperate to know.

SAM (CONT'D)
She loved you, but what?

KYLE
That's it. Last thing she said. I
love you. But.

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Kyle wears a PRESSED SHIRT, tucks the hem into his pants. Hair's still too long, but he's cleaner, shaved.

He picks up a bouquet of PINK TULIPS. Steals himself.

EXT. CEMETERY - THAT AFTERNOON

Kyle stares at an enormous bouquet of STARGAZER LILIES on a grave. On the gravestone: KIMBERLY BROOKS

He sets down his tulips next to the Stargazers.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Once upon a time there was a man.

Kyle turns. No one's there. Huh.

He rubs his temples. Takes a TYLENOL BOTTLE from his pocket, dry-swallows a couple of TABS.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He was sad and alone.

He turns again... and sees MARLEY PHELPS (20's), standing around a headstone behind Kyle. *She looks familiar.*

KYLE
Do I know you?

Marley shifts, looks around. He's definitely talking to her. She shakes her head. No.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Did you say something?

MARLEY
I didn't think you'd hear me.

KYLE
"Once upon a time?" Was that you?

MARLEY
I... tell stories. For kids mostly.

KYLE
You write children's books?

She thinks on that. Nods, smiles.

MARLEY
I write children's books.

Kyle studies her. *She's a little strange.*

MARLEY (CONT'D)
You must have the worst headache.

How the...? Oh, the bottle of Tylenol in his hand.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
You should eat. It's time for lunch.

KYLE
I... guess it is.

She waits. Expectant. When Kyle says nothing:

MARLEY
Now you.

KYLE
What?

She's patient. Kyle's confused.

MARLEY
Okay, I'll do it. Let's get lunch.

KYLE
Oh. Thanks. But I can't.

MARLEY
He smiles and says, "That sounds fun."

KYLE
Strange conversation we're having.

MARLEY
He smiles and says, "That sounds fun."

Marley waits, then:

MARLEY (CONT'D)
He says...

It's so weird, Kyle cracks a smile, and:

KYLE
That sounds fun?

MARLEY
It does, doesn't it?

EXT. PUBLIC PARK POND - LATER

Kyle and Marley crumble their left-over SANDWICH BREAD.

KYLE
Since when is there a pond here?

She shrugs. Then squeals as a DUCK snaps at the bread in her fingers. He studies her face.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I do know you. We've met.

Marley looks at him as if he's gone mental.

MARLEY
We have. About an hour ago. I was there, you were there...

KYLE
Now you're just making fun of me.

MARLEY
Yes.

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Kyle sits on the floor, stares at an OPEN BOX in front of him, jaw tight. One of his hands is in a FIST.

In the box: Kimberly's belongings found in the car the night of the accident. Purse, shoes, scarf.

He picks up the DISCO BALL ORNAMENT, looks at it as it dangles from his fingers.

Lydia walks in.

KYLE
I hated this stupid thing.

LYDIA
Kyle. Don't.

KYLE
I need to put these things away.

LYDIA
Leave them. I'll do it.

KYLE
Her mother wants--

Lydia closes the lid. Puts the box in the closet.

KYLE (CONT'D)
How are we supposed to do this, Mom?

LYDIA
We keep going, best we can. Let time
heal what we can't.

She starts to head out...

LYDIA (CONT'D)
I brought some dinner. Come down.

She leaves him alone.

Kyle looks at his clenched fist. Opens his fingers.

Kimberly's ENGAGEMENT RING twinkles in his palm.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAYS LATER

Kyle places more flowers on Kim's grave.

He lingers, reads tombstones.

Notices a small one. Moves closer.

LAURA PHELPS, *REST WELL SWEET ANGEL*

MARLEY (O.S.)
My sister.

Kyle's startled. Turns to her.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
She was my hero. Loved me just the
way I was. Didn't matter to her if I
was different. Or sensitive. I
wanted to be just like her.

KYLE
How old were you when she--

MARLEY
Just turned twelve. Twins.

He looks at the dates on the stone.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Identical, in almost every way.

KYLE
What happened?

MARLEY

Oh, I don't tell sad stories anymore.
I'm happy to see you again. Walk?

EXT. PARK - LATER

MARLEY

Shoot. I forgot to bring bread.

KYLE

There should be a...

Kyle immediately spots a HOT DOG VENDOR.

KYLE (CONT'D)

There. We'll buy some.

She smiles like he created the vendor out of thin air.

EXT. POND - LATER

Marley feeds one of the ducks.

Kyle watches a RED MONARCH BUTTERFLY flutter on the far side of the pond. Wings damaged, it struggles to stay airborne.

MARLEY

You said she was your friend. But she was more, wasn't she?

The Monarch painfully flies across the pond... toward them.

KYLE

Yeah, she was more.

The butterfly's almost there. Closer... closer...

KYLE (CONT'D)

But she didn't make it.

Wings fail. The Monarch drops onto the water's surface near the shore. Struggles.

Kyle gently scoops it up. His eyes drop to the water. *Hold up - something's not right.*

The pond's surface reflects an overhanging TREE BRANCH. Kyle glances up, sees the branch right above him. Looks back down, sees its reflection...

But not himself. He moves closer to the water's surface. Nothing. Like he's not even there.

What. The. FUCK?

Marley pretend-shoves him, breaks the moment. She laughs.

The butterfly falls from Kyle's hand, drifts away.

MARLEY
Oh, poor thing.

He looks again into the water. Now his reflection's there.

Marley leans over his shoulder, peers into the water-mirror.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
You look like a prince.

INT. KYLE'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Kyle rolls pasta around a fork.

LYDIA
Sounds like a nice girl, so what's
going on inside that head of yours?

KYLE
I barely know her, but it's... she's
so easy to be with. But, Kim.

LYDIA
Kimberly would want you to be happy.

KYLE
Would she? I told her... I told her
it would be forever.

LYDIA
Oh, honey. That's not fair.

But for Kyle, the conversation's over.

EXT. PARK

Kyle walks, looks around. Finally, he sees her.

Marley plucks BUDS from a cherry tree, uses her dress as a basket.

She sees him, stares for a beat, then lets the blooms fall to the ground.

MARLEY
You've decided not to see me.

Kyle stops. *How did she...?*

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I'm not surprised. Just sad.

KYLE
I've just lost someone. I'm sorry,
Marley. It's not you. It's...

A BREEZE blows a swirl of blossoms from the tree. Marley
watches them drift to the grass, joining her dropped buds.

Kyle starts to go, but... she looks devastated.

KYLE (CONT'D)
(gives in)
We can be friends, can't we?

A moment... then she brightens.

MARLEY
We'll be friends.

Another WIND GUST, and blossoms surround her. She smiles at
him through the whirl of petals.

It's magical.

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Kyle tosses his jacket onto the bed. A CHERRY BLOSSOM falls
from the fabric. He picks it up. Smiles.

He places it next to a PICTURE of Kimberly on his night stand.

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

A phone rings. Kyle's groggy, reaches for the cordless. But
that's not doing the ringing.

RING RING. He gets up, grabs his cell. Nope.

RING RING. *Where? Wait... no. No.*

He moves to KIMBERLY's PURSE, opens it. RING RING. Her cell.
The caller ID: UNKNOWN.

KYLE
Hello?

Crackles... distant voices... buzzing. Through static:

PHONE (V.O.)
Can... ear me? Come on... have to...

KYLE
Who is this?

The line goes dead - the phone's out of juice. Kyle pulls his cell's charger, plugs it into Kim's phone.

He sits in a chair, stares at the phone... and waits.

MORNING

Kyle wakes. He's back in bed. Reaches for Kim's cell. It's not there.

Wait... what?

He gets out of bed, looks for her purse.

It's not where he left it. Only one place left to look.

CLOSET

The box. Kyle hesitates. Pulls back the lid.

Kimberly's stuff: scarf, shoes, and... her PURSE.

Kyle grabs it. Her phone's inside.

He checks the call history: NO NEW CALLS. He throws the phone onto the bed. *Shit!*

EXT. JOGGING TRAIL - THAT DAY

Kyle runs, Sam barely keeps up.

SAM
That's some shit, dude.

KYLE
Swear it wasn't you?

SAM
Some sick prank? Jesus. No way.

Kyle stops. Sam pants.

KYLE
What then? Think it has something to do with... you know...

He points to his head.

SAM
Okay. Hang on. You woke up in your bed. It was a dream.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
An effed-up dream, but that's all.
Your head's fine. You're okay.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

It's steaming. Kyle steps from the shower. Wipes fog from the mirror. As he wipes...

FLASHBACK - CAR

He angrily wipes fog from the car's windshield.

KYLE
Damn it.

END FLASHBACK

Kyle shakes away the memory. Stares at himself. Pushes back his long hair to reveal: a RED SCAR at his hairline.

He traces it. Tugs at his hair. Too long.

EXT. PARK - DAYS LATER

Kyle's got a new haircut. Marley studies the scar.

MARLEY
Does it hurt?

KYLE
Bad headaches, and sometimes things are... strange.
(beat)
They said the accident could've been worse. I'm not so sure about that.

MARLEY
What happened?

KYLE
Kimberly... it was the night she...

MARLEY
Oh. Don't say any more. It's okay.

KYLE
I think I need to talk about it.

Marley waits. Finally:

KYLE (CONT'D)
It was raining. Really coming down.
I was driving. We were fighting.

LATER

Kyle's finished his story. They sit in silence, until...

KYLE (CONT'D)
Didn't mean to lay all that on you.

MARLEY
It's good. Knowing these things
about you. Knowing you.

A nice quiet between them. Then:

KYLE
Let's get out of here.

LATER

They walk. The mood's lighter.

KYLE
I was the editor of my college paper.
Wanted to be a journalist.

MARLEY
You gave it up? Why?

KYLE
I don't know anymore. It's the only
thing I was ever good at.

MARLEY
You should do it. Be a writer. Then
we'll both be storytellers.

KYLE
You're a good listener, Marley. I'm
glad I met you.

MARLEY
Me, too. I like having a friend.

KYLE
You have friends.

MARLEY
None who talk with me the way you do.

INT. GROCERY STORE

Kyle's at the MEAT COUNTER. To the BUTCHER:

KYLE
Rib-eye. Two please, fresh cut.
Special night tonight.

BUTCHER
You got it.

LYDIA (O.S.)
Kyle?

Kyle looks, doesn't see her. *Huh.* Turns back to the counter.

THUMP. The butcher drops the ribsteak onto the SLICER.

The butcher's shadow is against the wall, following his movements. As he puts his hands on the machine, the shadow does too. But: they're not totally in sync. Kyle sees it.

The butcher leans over the machine. The shadow leans also: but LONG HAIR flows over the silhouette's shoulder.

The electric blade spins up. There's no WHIR sound. Instead: the SCHLURP of sucking fluid, the SWHOOF of expelled air.

The shadow's arm reaches for the slicer...

...and Kyle feels FINGERS through his hair. He whirls. Lydia. Her hand in mid-air.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I thought you heard me.

Kyle glances back at the butcher. BZZRD - the man makes a cut. The machine sounds normal. His shadow's normal.

KYLE
Man, I am losing it.

LYDIA
Still fuzzy?

KYLE
I'm so sick of this, mom.

LYDIA
My poor boy--

THUD. The butcher drops the packed meat onto the counter.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
(to Kyle)
Who are these for?

INT. DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Kyle, Marley, and Lydia sit at the table. Eating, laughing.

MARLEY

And Smelly Kelly rode away on her
bicycle made of feathers, never to be
heard from again.

Lydia applauds, catches Kyle watching Marley. Likes it.

KITCHEN

Kyle helps Lydia load the dishwasher. They speak low.

LYDIA

Can we keep her?

KYLE

Mom, I told you, it's not--

LYDIA

Yes it is. And it's good.

KNOCK. KNOCK. The back door.

Sam lets himself in. Holds a SIX-PACK.

SAM

Hey. Thought we could hang.

(beat)

Am I interrupting something?

LYDIA

We're just having dinner with Marley.

SAM

Who's Marley?

EXT. PUBLIC PARK FIELD - AFTERNOON

Kyle, Sam, other MEN play rough touch football. They form up for another play.

SAM

It's just like changing channels for
you, isn't it?

KYLE

Leave it alone, Sam.

Kyle calls the play. The men scuffle around the field.

Sam walks through the play, his back to Kyle.

Kyle fires the ball, hits Sam in the head. Sam turns, shoves.

SAM
How many times she break up with you?

He twists his fists in Kyle's collar.

SAM (CONT'D)
Seven. Seven times since we were in
the ninth grade--

KYLE
And she was about to do it again.
But she died. What am I supposed to
do? Pine forever? Stop breathing?

Sam backs off.

SAM
Kimberly was too good for you.

He stalks off the field.

EXT. POND - AFTERNOON

Kyle lies on the grass, lost in thought. Marley studies him.

MARLEY
What are you thinking so hard about?

KYLE
She's really gone.

His hair looks so shiny in the sun. She reaches out... plucks
a DANDELION instead.

KYLE (CONT'D)
And now Sam. Shit.

MARLEY
It's hard to be the one who messes
up.
(off his look)
I did it again, said too much.

KYLE
No, it's... I swear it's like you're
speaking my thoughts or something.

MARLEY
Sorry.

KYLE

Don't be sorry. You understand me.
In a weird sort of way.

Marley flinches. Turns away, she pulls a piece of her long hair into her mouth. Chews nervously.

MARLEY

I don't like that word. Weird.

KYLE

I wasn't saying you're weird. Wait,
are you weird?

He's teasing. She sniffs her flower.

KYLE (CONT'D)

You are, aren't you?

He loops a finger into the hair, tugs it from her lips.

MARLEY

I'm scared.

KYLE

Of me?

MARLEY

You look at me and you see me. I
don't know what that means.

KYLE

Not following.

MARLEY

No one really sees me.

The sun beams around her. She's beautiful.

KYLE

How could anyone not see you?

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE

Lydia and Kyle roam the Men's section. She picks a BLAZER.

LYDIA

Try this one on. You want to look
casual but professional.

Kyle shrugs on the jacket.

KYLE

Sam's right. I am moving too fast.

LYDIA

What does Sam know?

KYLE

He was in love with Kim.

Lydia looks at him. *She knew that.* She adjusts the collar.

LYDIA

I watched you with Kimberly since you were ten years old. Once you set your heart on Kim, no one else would do. One thing I know about you, you're a hopeless romantic.

KYLE

Mom--

LYDIA

You've got a lot of days ahead of you. They could all be like this one. Or, you could take a chance. Set your heart on someone else.

Kyle's silent.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Here's another thing I know. You've never been a coward. You fight for what you want. Question now is: what do you want?

KYLE

(beat)

You really can railroad a guy.

LYDIA

I'm your mother. That's what I do.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Kyle and Marley are on the sofa.

MARLEY

Told you! I'm always right.

KYLE

I just showed him some editorials I wrote in college, and bam. Hired.

MARLEY

You're a wonderful writer.

KYLE

You haven't read anything I've
written.

MARLEY

I don't need to.

She impulsively touches his chin, but pulls back right away.
Her fingers go to her own mouth. Her lips quiver.

He freezes. Has anything so innocent ever been so sexy?

MARLEY (CONT'D)

My stomach's all fluttery.

Kyle's captivated, but... he takes her hands.

KYLE

Marley...

MARLEY

Don't you feel that?

He does, but...

KYLE

I'm sorry. It's too soon.

She slumps, stands to leave.

MARLEY

Okay. I'll go.

KYLE

You don't have to leave.

At the door she turns back.

MARLEY

I'll wait for you, Kyle.

BEDROOM - LATER

Kyle yanks back the covers, crawls under.

He tosses, opens his eyes. Stares at the PHOTO OF KIMBERLY.

Slides out of bed, walks over to the closet door. Opens it.
Looks at something on the floor.

Kimberly's belongings.

KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

KNOCK. KNOCK. Lydia.

LYDIA
Are you sure, honey?

Kyle moves aside to let her in. He turns, picks up the box.

KYLE
I'm sure.

Lydia hugs her son, takes the box.

KYLE (CONT'D)
And this.

The engagement ring. Lydia takes it.

LYDIA
My brave man. I love you.

EXT. CEMETERY

Kyle finds Sam putting flowers on Kim's grave.

Sam turns. Busted. He runs his hand along the gravestone.

SAM
Marley. She makes you happy?

A long beat.

KYLE
I'm not going to give up the rest of
my life. Kim wouldn't want me to.

SAM
I know. Christ. Let's get a beer.

EXT. PARK - A FEW DAYS LATER

Kyle holds a LARGE YELLOW KITE. Passes it to Marley.

She runs. Tries to get the kite to grab air. She lets go.
It drags behind her.

She turns with a pout.

MARLEY
We need some...

KYLE
...wind or something.

A GUST sweeps by, tugs at the kite. Yes!

Kyle hands her the REEL. She lets the STRING run through her fingers. The kite soars.

KYLE (CONT'D)
That's it.

He moves behind her, guides her hands.

The kite yanks toward the sky. Her fingers loosen.

It starts to slip away...

Kyle wraps his hand around hers.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You're supposed to hold onto it.

MARLEY
But it's trying so hard to get away.
Shouldn't we let it go?

KYLE
No, that's the whole point.

MARLEY
But it looks so sad.

He gives the kite a confused look. *Ummmm... Okay.*

Marley sulks. Reels in the kite.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
(whispers to kite)
Sorry.

PARK - LATER THAT DAY

Marley and Kyle walk. He reaches out. Their fingers touch... and he takes her hand. She stops.

KYLE
Okay?

MARLEY
Yes. Very.

They cross a SMALL STREET that cuts by the pond.

CHILDREN play in the park around them.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I'm really glad you and Sam made up.

KYLE

Marley. Men don't "make up." We just kind of say, "Dude, you know how it is" and "that's all right, man."

MARLEY

That's not making up?

KYLE

Nope.

He pulls her to a stop. Gathers his courage, leans in.

She raises her face, catches her breath...

Their lips touch. The gentlest of kisses. He pulls away.

MARLEY

That was--

Suddenly: her eyes widen. She jerks away.

She rushes into the street, grabs a GIRL (5) off the blacktop.

Kyle trots toward her. *What the hell?*

Marley marches fiercely toward the other kids. She sets the little girl down, grabs another GIRL (12) by the shoulders.

MARLEY (CONT'D)

Is this your sister?

The girl nods, frightened.

KYLE

Marley?

MARLEY

(to the girl)

You're supposed to watch out for her. Do you know what can happen if she runs into the street like that? You have to always protect her. That's your job.

(coming unhinged)

What if she... what if...

KYLE

Marley.

MARLEY

(to the girl)

She could have been killed. Your mother would hate you for that.

The MOTHER storms in.

MOTHER
Take your hands off my daughter.

MARLEY
You let her run into the street.

The kids are scared. Crying. The mom's furious. Kyle's confused, concerned.

KYLE
Marley. Stop.

She pulls away from him and runs.

MOTHER
She's crazy.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Marley slumps next to her sister's grave. Kyle goes to her.

MARLEY
You can leave now, I know you want to.

KYLE
I'm not going anywhere.

MARLEY
I didn't mean for it to happen, I swear. I miss her so much.

KYLE
Tell me.

MARLEY
No sad stories.

KYLE
Just this once?

Marley runs her fingers around a RUBY PENDANT she wears.

MARLEY
I always wore yellow. No matter what. Yellow made me feel good. Like sunshine.
(beat)
I was a weird kid. Not like Laura. Daddy said I was sensitive, but Mom said...
(MORE)

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I always knew she loved Laura more,
but that was okay, 'cause I loved her
more, too.

INT. GIRL'S ROOM - FLASHBACK

Marley (12) and LAURA (12) speak, hushed.

LAURA
It's just for today.

Laura's decked out in BRIGHT YELLOW.

MARLEY
But my yellow.

LAURA
Keep your ribbon. This way you'll
still have yellow, but everyone will
think you're me, and I'm you.

Marley's not convinced. She pulls a lock of hair into her mouth. Chews.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I'll take care of Ben Pope and nobody
will ever mess with you again. Ever.

Laura sweetly plucks the strands from her sister's lips.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - JUST OUTSIDE THEIR HOUSE

The girls wait for the bus in each other's clothes. Parked cars line the quiet street.

Laura's excited. Marley, not so much.

MARLEY
Nobody's going to believe I'm you.

LAURA
Yes, they will. Oh, shoot.

She unlatches her necklace - the RUBY PENDANT.

LAURA (CONT'D)
We forgot these. Give me yours.

Marley removes her own YELLOW SAPPHIRE PENDANT, hands it over. Works at getting Laura's necklace around her own neck.

Laura grumbles. Marley sees that her necklace is caught in her sister's hair. Laura tugs the necklace...

...it flies from her hand, lands in the street.

Both girls laugh.

Marley clasps the ruby around her own neck. She looks up:

Laura's leaning between two parked cars to get the necklace.

That's when Marley sees the CAR. Laura steps into the street...

MARLEY

Laura!

Tires SCREECH. A THUD.

The DRIVER jumps out.

DRIVER

I didn't see her. Oh, my God!

Marley's MOTHER rushes from the house. Runs to Laura. Tries to tend to her daughter... it's no use. She's gone.

She pulls the girl's broken body into her arms, howls.

Marley stands over Laura and her mother.

MARLEY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

The woman grabs onto Marley, clutches her like a lifeline.

MARLEY'S MOM

Oh, God.

MARLEY

(crying)

Sorry.

MARLEY'S MOM

Oh, Laura. Sweetheart. Thank God it wasn't you.

The child in her arms stiffens.

The mom gets a good look at her face. Oh, no.

The light goes right out of Marley's eyes. Her spirit fades... then blinks out.

MARLEY'S MOM (CONT'D)

Oh, no. No, baby. Marley.

Nothing.

MARLEY'S MOM (CONT'D)
Marley?

EXT. CEMETERY - END FLASHBACK

MARLEY
I went to a hospital. It got dark.
I don't remember much after it got
dark. Just the hospital. And the
plants, they let me water the plants.
(beat)
I should've put the necklace on her.
I'm so stupid. Stupid and broken.

KYLE
It's not your fault. Look at me.

Her eyes meet his.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You are not stupid. Or broken.
You're... perfect to me.

She looks at him, unwilling to believe...

MARLEY
You're really staying?

KYLE
I'm staying.

Marley wipes her eyes. He takes her hand, kisses her fingers.

KYLE (CONT'D)
No more sad stories. I promise.

INT. KITCHEN

On the table, remnants of a nice dinner.

LIVING ROOM

Candles flicker. Soft music plays.

Kyle tends a FIRE. Nervously adjusts the logs just so. Looks around the room.

There's an overwhelming romantic vibe.

KYLE
I'm just realizing this is so staged.
Seduction super-cheese.

Marley takes it in. Kyle moves to sit beside her.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I wanted it to be perfect for you.
This seemed, well...

MARLEY
I love what you've done.

Marley shyly touches his face. His scar.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I'm not the only mind-reader.

BEDROOM

They're on the bed, half-dressed. Heavy petting.

Marley wrenches her mouth from Kyle's. Takes deep breaths.

KYLE
You okay?

MARLEY
Oh, yes. I just...

KYLE
What?

Suddenly she's self-conscious. Self-conscious and wanton. A heady mix. Her fingers clench and unclench in his hair.

MARLEY
I didn't know it would feel so good.

Kyle studies her sweetly... kisses her again.

LATER

Kyle and Marley are curled together, asleep. Blissful.

Until Kyle twitches. Moans. Twitches again.

The SOUND of a car crash.

CUT TO: CAR

RAIN smacks against metal. Kyle opens his eyes.

The rain drenches him through a gaping HOLE in the windshield. Flashing RED LIGHTS bounce off the DISCO BALL.

The reflected light makes it look like it's raining blood.

He tries to move... he's pinned.

Kimberly's HAND is in his lap. Red water pools in her palm.

KYLE
Kim? Kimberly?

Ringing on the car's center console: a CELL PHONE. It rings and vibrates its way across the console...

...until KYLE'S able to read the display: KIM CALLING

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM

Kyle's eyes pop open. Damn. He shakes off the dream.

He rolls over to Marley-- and looks into the face of Kimberly.

KIMBERLY
Don't do this. Don't let go.

Kyle snaps fully awake. Marley wakes, reaches for him.

KYLE
Kim, no--

MARLEY
It's me. Marley. It's all right.
It was only a dream.

KYLE
I saw Kim. It was so real. She's
haunting me.

MARLEY
She's not haunting you.

KYLE
I hear her in my head, talking to me.
Telling me to listen to her.

Marley puts her hand on Kyle's cheek...

MARLEY
Look at me. Kyle.

...she moves his head so that their eyes meet.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Don't listen to her. Listen to me.

Kyle looks at her. A beat. He pulls her to him.

INT. A NEW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A YEAR LATER

Kyle walks Lydia to the front door.

LYDIA
Sure you have nothing to tell me?

KYLE
Um... love you?

LYDIA
Why thank you, dear. Anything else?

His grin nearly busts his cheeks.

KYLE
She said yes!

LYDIA
Ha!

She smothers him in a hug.

Suddenly, he grabs his head as agony stabs through it.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Kyle? What is it?

The pain passes. He relaxes.

KYLE
It's fine. I'm fine.

LYDIA
How often does this happen?

KYLE
Just twinges now and then. But
nothing like that. I'm okay now.

LYDIA
No. The accident was two years ago.
Get it checked out. Please.

KYLE
Okay. Fine. I will.

Kyle opens the front door.

LYDIA
Beautiful night. Look at those
stars.

Kyle looks up. One STAR shines brighter than the rest. It twitches. Swells.

Suddenly the star SURGES at him, its hot light consumes everything as it hurtles towards him.

FWOMP! Silence. Kyle's... somewhere. No ceiling, no floor. Just white. In every direction.

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.)
Hey, there. You with me?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The whiteness drains away, the light fades.

KYLE
Sorry. That was... so bright.

DR. BENEFIELD, the E.R. surgeon, releases his eyelid. Pockets her pen-light.

DR. BENEFIELD
Pupils are dilating fine. You haven't hit your head? Nothing?

KYLE
Um. Not since the accident.

Benefield glances at an X-RAY IMAGE on a touch-screen tablet.

DR. BENEFIELD
Scans are clean.

KYLE
So I'm okay?

DR. BENEFIELD
I can't explain the headaches and that bothers me some, but there's nothing physically wrong with you. So, I'll tell you what I tell everybody. Try not to get too stressed, get enough sleep - blah, blah, blah. You're going to live a good, long time.

She writes out a scrip...

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Take these if the headaches get too bad. Don't take too many at once, or that whole "living a good, long time" goes right out the window.

KYLE
Yes, ma'am. Got it.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW YEARS LATER

Marley, older and more beautiful, arranges PAPER-DOLL MAGNETS on the refrigerator. Her wedding band sparkles.

She hears the front door.

MARLEY
You're late.

KYLE
I have a surprise for you.

She looks at him, coy.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Ha. You'll get that surprise later.

He sweeps her up, settles her on the island counter.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Guess who got his own column?

MARLEY
(playful)
Who?

KYLE
Uh-huh. That's it.

He slings her over his shoulder, heads out the kitchen.

BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Marley pants against Kyle's chest.

MARLEY
I like this surprise game. I want to give you one.

KYLE
It's your happily-ever-after. You can do whatever you want.

She reaches over the side of the bed. Pulls up a GIFT.

Not what he expected, but okay.

KYLE (CONT'D)
For me?

Marley nervously pulls some of her long hair into her mouth.

He stops her with a smile.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I'm sure I'll love it.

MARLEY
I hope so. Because it's done now.

Unwraps the present. Freezes.

He tugs from the box a soft yellow BLANKET, a baby's sleeper GOWN, and tiny SOCKS.

Silence. Marley can't stand it anymore.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Do you like it?

KYLE
I love it.

BEDROOM - NINE MONTHS LATER

Marley sleeps on her side, Kyle behind her. His hand rests on his wife's ripe abdomen, protecting.

NURSERY - ONE WEEK LATER

Marley sits in a rocking chair, nursing her newborn DAUGHTER.

MARLEY
Just like a baby doll.

Kyle's at the doorway.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
(whispers to the baby)
Elizabeth. Daddy's here.
(to Kyle)
We made her.

Kyle looks at his family. Spellbound. Takes Marley's hand.

KYLE
How did I ever find you?

LIVING ROOM - SEVEN YEARS LATER

The room's lit only by the twinkle of a Christmas tree.

Two gorgeous girls, ELIZABETH (7) and SARAH (4), chase one another around the room, sticking GIFT BOWS to each other.

Marley and Kyle, worn out, snuggle in a corner of the couch.

Kyle sees something. Near the tree, on the wall behind the girls. Two SHADOWS.

They're adult silhouettes, moving in silent conversation.

KYLE
Girls. Stop. Be still.

The girls freeze. Look to their father.

MARLEY
Oh let them be, they'll wear
themselves out soon enough.

But Kyle looks past them, to the shadows. Still moving.

He reaches over, turns on the lamp.

Light fills the room, but the shadows remain.

KYLE
Marley, do you--

The silhouettes freeze, their heads snap toward him.

And then they're gone.

MARLEY
What?

KYLE
(beat)
It was nothing. Let's get to bed.

GIRL'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Mom and Dad tuck in their angels.

KYLE
Night, sweethearts.

MARLEY
How much do I love you?

ELIZABETH
More than anything.

Marley can't help but say it:

MARLEY
And I love you both the same.

SARAH
Love you, too, Mommy.

She strokes their heads. Her self-control suddenly snaps.

MARLEY
(urgently)
And remember, always watch out for
each other...

Kyle tugs Marley from the room.

HALLWAY

KYLE
Baby, you've got to stop telling them
those things.

MARLEY
That I love them?

KYLE
You know that's not what I mean.

MARLEY
I'm so afraid of messing up.

KYLE
You won't. You won't.

EXT. FRONT YARD - THREE YEARS LATER

Elizabeth (10), Sarah (7), and Marley are dressed as FAIRIES, wings and all. They run around the yard waving their WANDS.

Kyle laughs from the porch.

SARAH
Come on, Daddy. It's fun.

MARLEY
They grow up so fast.

Marley flutters to the steps. Plants a CROWN on his head.

KYLE
There goes my manhood.

MARLEY
Play with us. You have to. You're
my Prince Charming.

Sarah chases a BUTTERFLY: a red Monarch butterfly. She's almost got it... reaches out... just a foot from the street.

Marley stiffens.

KYLE
Sarah. Not so close.

The Monarch flies away. Sarah comes back into the yard.

Kyle watches the butterfly as it disappears into the sky.

EXT. STREET

Kyle, briefcase in hand, gawks at a SIX FOOT WHITE PICKET FENCE that surrounds his entire property. *What the?*

He walks around the fortress-like structure, finally locates a security DOOR.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Kyle looks for Marley.

KYLE
Marley? What's with the fence?

He heads up the stairs. Peeks into the girls' room. His daughters lie together on a bed, crying.

GIRLS' ROOM

Kyle soothes the girls.

KYLE
What happened?

SARAH
I didn't mean to. Our ball bounced and then it was in the street.

The street. Oh no.

KYLE
Where's Mommy?

The girls cry harder.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Where is she?

ELIZABETH
We can't find her.

HOUSE - VARIOUS

Kyle frantically searches each room. Nothing's out of place.

The only thing missing: Marley.

He races to the front door.

EXT. HOUSE

It's dark out.

Kyle steps into the yard. Cold wind rips the trees, storm clouds churn overhead.

He crosses the yard, toward the street. As he nears the pavement...

CRACK! Lightning burns the clouds - down the street, a TRANSFORMER's hit.

BOOM! The transformer explodes in fireworks of sparks. Then:

Pop... pop...

What's that? Kyle fights to see through the hard wind.

At the end of the block the STREET LIGHTS are popping off, one by one, the outage heading toward KYLE...

...pop... POP... POP...

Inky blackness rolls behind the popping lights, like a dark tidal wave surging toward him.

The light above him POPS out and darkness slams down on Kyle.

He tries to see through the night. Holds out a hand. His palm's visible, but his fingers disappear into shadow.

KYLE
Marley! Marley!

A small SCREAM, behind him. It's Sarah and Elizabeth, in the doorway, terrified.

Kyle runs back to the house, picks them up.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Storm's coming. Let's get tucked in.

ELIZABETH
I want Mommy.

KYLE
(beat)
Me too, honey.

BEDROOM - LATER

Kyle lies on the bed, a child tucked in each arm. He stares blankly at the ceiling.

The children stare blankly, too.

The sun comes up, goes down, and comes up again.

All while they lie motionless.

KITCHEN

The kids eat Cheerios. Kyle stares at his bowl, untouched.

GIRL'S ROOM

Kyle brushes Sarah's hair. Elizabeth sits at his feet. Reads a children's book.

Kyle glances at the pages as she turns them.

She gets to a page that's been completely BLACKED OUT with a marker. She flips past it.

KYLE

Wait. That page. Turn back.

She does. It's not blacked out at all. Just an illustration of a duck pond. Like the one Kyle and Marley visit. *How?*

Elizabeth closes the book. The cover: *Liza Saves the World*, by Marley Lafferty.

LIVING ROOM

Kyle watches as dust floats in the air. His eyes track one mote, then another.

The SCRAPE of a key. The front door swings open. Marley.

Kyle rushes for her. Stops short. Something's off.

KYLE

Where have you been?

She shrugs. He approaches slowly. Gently embraces her.

KYLE (CONT'D)

You're freezing. Where did you go?

MARLEY

I don't know.

Kyle pulls her to the couch.

KYLE
I came home and you weren't here.
What happened?

MARLEY
It was... dark. I don't know.

KYLE
Honey help me out. You disappeared.

Marley sits. Unblinking.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley.

Nothing. He snaps.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You've been gone for two days. Where
the fuck were you?

That gets her attention.

MARLEY
Don't say that word to me.

KYLE
Then answer me.

MARLEY
(getting hysterical)
I don't know. I don't know.

KYLE
I'm sorry.

MARLEY
I don't like when you yell.

KYLE
I'm not yelling now. Help me
understand. That fence...

MARLEY
Something happened. I needed a
fence.

KYLE
The girls told me.

MARLEY
And you still love me?

Such a simple question.

KYLE
God, honey. Yes.

She flies into his arms.

BEDROOM

Kyle watches Marley sleep.

She opens her eyes. Stares into his.

MARLEY
You're leaving me.

KYLE
What? Marley, no. I'm not leaving.

But it's clear she doesn't believe him.

LATER

Kyle wakes. Alone. *Oh, no.*

He tries to stay calm. Slips from the bed.

GIRLS' ROOM

Kyle's in the doorway. Marley lies on one of the beds, curled up with both girls wrapped around her.

Her broken whispers drift into the hall.

MARLEY
I love you. I love you. I love you.

HOME OFFICE - DAYS LATER

The girls play a BOARD GAME on the floor.

Kyle types on his laptop. The screen flickers. *Shit.*

He checks the power plug in the back. It's fine.

But behind the laptop, peeking out underneath: some PAPERS.

He pulls them out. They're ILLUSTRATIONS - all scribbled through with a black marker.

KYLE
Elizabeth. You do this?

ELIZABETH
No.

SARAH
Mommy did that. It's her new book.

Kyle stares at the pages.

KYLE
(calls out)
Marley?

STAIRS

He heads up the stairs. Stops.

There's a BRIGHT YELLOW PILL on the step. *What the hell?*

Two more steps. A PINK TABLET. Then a GREEN, two RED.

HALL

Outside the bedroom door there's an empty PILL BOTTLE. He picks it up. No label. Empty.

BEDROOM

Dozens more empty bottles are piled on the bed. All empty.

He looks around. The bathroom door. Closed.

No. *Please, God.*

He rushes to it. Locked. He pounds on the door.

KYLE
Marley!

A mumble from inside.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Open the door.

Marley cracks the door and slips through, one fist clenched.

MARLEY
What? I didn't want to be interrupted.

He grabs her by the shoulders. Notices her closed hand. Pries it open. More pills.

He tries to take them but her hand shuts tight.

KYLE
How many did you take?

MARLEY
Why are you mad?

He tries to force open her hand.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Don't. I need those.

KYLE
Where did you get all these?

MARLEY
They're pills.

KYLE
I know they're pills, Marley.

MARLEY
They're mine.

KYLE
How many did you take?

MARLEY
Stop it.

KYLE
How many?

MARLEY
All of them.

She jerks back into the bathroom. Slams and locks the door.

KYLE
Marley! Damn it.

He beats against the door. Stands back, kicks at the knob.

CRACK!

BATHROOM

Inside, Marley's kneeling, completing her task. She turns, scowls at the ruined door.

MARLEY
Look at what you did.

But Kyle's looking at the floor.

On the marble: an immaculate MOSAIC OF A STARGAZER LILY.

Made completely of pills.

INT. HOSPITAL

Kyle seems lost in the emergency room crowd. He's looking for someone. Moves to the nurses' station.

KYLE

I'm looking for Dr. Benefield.

NURSE

Her office is in the medical plaza.

The nurse looks over Kyle's shoulder.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Lucky you.

Benefield pulls a SCRUB CAP off her head.

DR. BENEFIELD

Kyle. Headaches again?

KYLE

It's my wife.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Benefield strides down the hall. Kyle struggles to keep up.

DR. BENEFIELD

How many did she take?

KYLE

None. Technically.

DR. BENEFIELD

You should talk to a psychiatrist.

You don't want a neurosurgeon telling you how to think. Believe me.

KYLE

You're the only doctor I know.

Kyle peeks into the passing rooms, filled with injured people.

DR. BENEFIELD

I'll be happy to recommend someone.
In fact, I've got a good friend...

Her voice fades. It suddenly sounds as though Kyle's hearing Benefield through a waterfall.

Other hospital sounds filter through the roar. There's a steady BEEPING. Also, the muffled CONVERSATIONS of nurses.

NURSE (O.S.)
We won't know anything until the doctor returns. She'll be able to...

A woman cries. Hushed tones of sympathy.

FEMALE DOCTOR (O.S.)
It may be a few weeks. It may be longer. It's just too early to tell.

Kyle passes another room. Catches sight of a WOMAN leaning over a wreck of a MAN. One leg hangs in traction. The patient's head is heavily bandaged.

Kyle's vision goes blurry, dim. He tries to shake it off.

His legs turn lead-heavy, fighting each step.

KYLE
(croaks)
Dr. Benefield.

His knees hit the floor. Benefield turns, runs to him. Kyle can barely see her.

DR. BENEFIELD
What is it?

KYLE
Can't... I can't... see.

INT. MRI MACHINE

Kyle stares at the slick white interior of the MRI. The machine scans his brain, CLICKS echo in surround sound.

KYLE
I told you it's fine now.

Benefield's tinny voice filters in from a speaker:

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.)
Be still. Go to your happy place.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE

On an LCD screen, Benefield shows Kyle his MRI results.

DR. BENEFIELD
Nothing abnormal. Or if there is, I can't find it.

KYLE
Then there's nothing wrong.

DR. BENEFIELD
The scan says no, but... we can't pretend to know exactly what goes on in the human brain. There's still so much we're finding out.

(re: the scan)
Something is hiding from me, and I don't like it.

INT. GIRLS' ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Kyle's in the doorway, stunned.

All the furniture's crammed into one corner. A large paint-splattered TARP covers the carpet.

Brightly-colored small, medium, and large hand and footprints climb one wall. The opposite wall's smeared with artful juvenile body splats.

Is that a purple butt mark?

He presses his palm against one of the tiny handprints.

He squinches his eyes shut. Rubs his temples.

KYLE
Ow, damn.

BATHROOM

Kyle steps into the bathroom. His family's in the tub.

They look like a set of Russian Nesting Dolls. Three matching human angels, each one smaller than the next.

Marley and the girls are up to their necks in bubbles.

Streaks of paint run across their necks and shoulders. They giggle. Innocent. Beautiful.

He hears a slight pounding in his ears.

MARLEY
Hey, you. Come here.

ELIZABETH
Daddy. We decorated our room.

Kyle chuckles. Painfully. It hurts.

KYLE
I saw that.

Pain stabs through his head. His eyes close.

MARLEY
Kyle?

Blood roars in his ears.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Honey?

His knees buckle.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Kyle!

She scrambles from the tub. The girls whimper.

Marley rushes to Kyle. He looks into her face.

CUT TO: FUTURE

Marley's in her 40's. She lays that winning smile on him.

MARLEY
Kyle, he's only a boy.

Elizabeth, a lovely teen, glowers at him.

ELIZABETH
This is so not fair.

Marley whispers in his ear.

MARLEY
It's her first date, behave yourself.

CUT TO: PRESENT

A wet, naked Marley cradles Kyle's head.

MARLEY
Please don't do this.

FUTURE

Kyle dips Marley in a sweeping flourish. Both in their late 40's. He captures her lips in a passionate kiss.

Sarah, a half-grown rebel, turns up her nose.

SARAH
Oh, God. Spare me.

A laughing Kyle lunges for his daughter, who squeals and runs.

PRESENT

The children cry.

MARLEY
No. No, don't go. No more sad
stories. You promised.

FUTURE

Kyle stands at the altar. Elizabeth, the bride, on his arm.

PREACHER
Who gives this woman to be wed?

KYLE
Her mother and I do.

PRESENT

Kyle's body seizes, his eyes roll back.

KYLE
Marley...

MARLEY
I'm right here.

FUTURE

Marley and Kyle, in their fifties, stand at the hospital
bedside of Sarah, in her 20's.

She holds a NEWBORN CHILD in her arms.

KYLE
Will you look at that.

PRESENT

Kyle goes limp.

MARLEY
You said you wouldn't leave me.

She cries, full of anguish. The sound slowly mutates into a
low-level HUM. Her voice fades.

MARLEY (V.O.)
I love you.

A mechanical hum. Then into a rhythmic BEEP... BEEP... BEEP.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kyle's eyes open.

His POV: intense light, two NURSES leaving the room.

He tries raising his hand, fumbles with the IV in his arm.

NURSE (O.S.)
Left my pager. Meet you down there.

Through watery eyes, Kyle sees the nurse re-enter. His hand trembles mid-air.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Page Dr. Benefield!

Kyle tries to speak. But instead, slips back into darkness.

HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

His eyes open again. Benefield leans over him.

DR. BENEFIELD
Welcome back, Mister. You gave us
quite a scare. Can you hear me?

Kyle tries to nod. His head bobs like a marionette. He tries to speak, throat like sandpaper.

KYLE
My--

DR. BENEFIELD
Don't talk.

KYLE
(rasps)
My wife.

His... oh, her.

DR. BENEFIELD
Don't try to move. I'll get her.

She leaves.

Voces outside the room:

WOMAN (O.S.)
(tearfully)
Can I talk to him?

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.)
He won't be able to carry on much of
a conversation, but he can hear you.

Benefield comes back in.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Someone's very happy you're awake.

A WOMAN comes into the room.

It can't be.

KIMBERLY. ALIVE. Still 24 years old.

Her right arm's in a sling, a fresh scar's on her forehead.

She leans over to stroke his hair.

KIMBERLY
Hey. Oh, my God. Hey.

Kyle stares, eyes wide. Disbelieving.

Hand trembling... he reaches out. No. *She can't be here.*

His fingertips touch her cheek. She smiles.

He recoils.

KYLE
(fights to speak)
N... no...

She holds his hand to her cheek, tears slide onto his fingers.

KIMBERLY
It's okay. You're awake now.

Kyle takes a gulping breath. Lungs heave. Eyes slide shut.

KIMBERLY (V.O.)
Kyle!

INT. KYLE'S AND MARLEY'S BEDROOM

Kyle lies on his bed. Marley strokes his hair.

KYLE
What happened?

MARLEY
You fell in the bathroom.

She clings to him.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I thought you were really gone.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Kyle's eyes open. The hospital.

His sees a vase: two Stargazer Lilies.

Lydia sits in the bedside chair, talking softly, as if to herself. Her hand absently strokes his arm.

She doesn't notice he's awake.

LYDIA
Looks like it might rain from now on.
It's drowning my roses. Someone
brought you lilies. Pretty ones.

KYLE
Mom.

Lydia gasps. Plants mommy-kisses all over his face.

LYDIA
I thought I'd never hear that again.

KYLE
What's wrong?

LYDIA
You're in the hospital, honey.

KYLE
I fell. Hit my head, I think.

LYDIA
(beat)
Do you remember anything?

Kyle looks confused.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
You were in a car accident, with Kim.

KYLE
Mom, that was years ago.

Now Lydia's confused. Years ago?

LYDIA

You've been... asleep. In a coma.

KYLE

What?

(beat)

How long?

LYDIA

Five weeks.

KYLE

Where's Marley?

LYDIA

Who?

Kyle blinks. Wait.

Accident. Coma. Five weeks. *That's impossible.*

Wait...

FLASHBACK - CAR

Kyle drives. Looks over at Kimberly.

KIMBERLY

I love you, Kyle. I do, but--

FLASHBACK - TRAUMA UNIT

Fluorescent lights overhead.

Kyle watches nurses work on Kimberly.

Benefield's face leans over him...

DR. BENEFIELD

What do we have?

FLASHBACK - BEDROOM

Marley holds him close.

MARLEY

I thought you were really gone.

END FLASHBACKS - PRESENT

KYLE

I've gotta get out of here.

Kyle starts to sit up, but he can't move his right leg.

He's got a full CAST, hip to ankle.

LYDIA
It's over now. Things will be back
to normal in no time. You'll see.

He starts ripping the IVs from his hands. Tries to stand.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Nurse! I need a nurse in here.

Kyle's good leg crumples beneath him. Lydia breaks his fall.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Someone, please!

Two NURSES rush into the room.

One injects Kyle with a SYRINGE. They get him back into bed.

Kyle's eyes slump, getting groggy...

KYLE
I don't... Kimberly's alive?

LYDIA
Of course she is, darling. She's
been here every day.

Kyle fights the sedative, but it pulls him under.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Kyle's upright in the bed. Benefield reads his chart.

DR. BENEFIELD
I had no idea you were going to be so
much trouble.
(beat)
Blurry vision? Headache? Dizziness?

She pulls the covers over Kyle's plastered leg.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
You have any idea how lucky you are
you didn't re-injure this?

He ignores her.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Chart says they're removing the cast
tomorrow. Good news, huh?

Silence.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Listen here, I'm pretty sure I didn't
tinker with your vocal chords, and I
know you don't have brain damage. So
you want to explain the freak-out?

Finally:

KYLE
This is not where I'm supposed to be.

DR. BENEFIELD
Where else would you be?

He hesitates. *Should he?*

THUNDERING FOOTSTEPS in the outside hall...

Sam bursts into the room. He immediately breaks into a
touchdown-style VICTORY DANCE.

SAM
Bro, you're awake. That's what I'm
talking about.

Sam sees Benefield.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'll come back.

DR. BENEFIELD
Oh, I don't think so. You stay right
here, Bro.
(to Kyle)
Any symptoms and you have one of the
nurses call me, got it?

She heads out.

SAM
Dude, this is so--

KYLE
Thought maybe you'd be glad to be rid
of me.

SAM
(beat)
What kind of drugs they giving you?

KYLE
Is something going on? With Kim.
And you?

SAM
What the hell, Kyle? I'd never do
that to you. Never.

Kyle reads his friend. Sam's telling the truth.

KYLE
Shit.

Sam relaxes. Sits in the chair.

SAM
The hell did that come from?

LATER

Sam's more than a little stunned.

SAM
A hallucination, maybe. Dream? It
wasn't real.

KYLE
It felt real. Still feels real.

SAM
Come on--

KYLE
What if I told you that nothing you
know is real: Kim, me, your parents--

SAM
Okay, that's jacked up.
(beat)
Wait. What about Kim? Do you...?

Sam waits for the answer.

KYLE
That was twenty years ago.

SAM
That was last month. You best--

KIMBERLY (O.S.)
Hey, fellas. This the party room?

Kimberly. A duffle in hand. Sam stands.

SAM
Yep. Party room. Whoop!

Kimberly chuckles... then starts to cry.

KIMBERLY
God, Kyle, I was so scared.

Kyle stares, still can't believe he's seeing her again.

KYLE
Kim...

KIMBERLY
I know. I know.

She rushes to the bed, hugs him.

Behind her, Sam motions for Kyle to hold her. Kyle doesn't. Kim lifts her head, wipes her tears.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
Look at me, blubbering.

She looks between the two of them.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
Were you two fussing?

KYLE
We were just--

SAM
Kyle had a nightmare.

Kim rubs Kyle's chest.

KIMBERLY
It's okay now. I'm right here.

An echo:

MARLEY (V.O.)
I'm right here.

Kyle grabs Kimberly's hand, lifts it off his chest.

Sam intercepts, puts his hand over both of theirs.

SAM
(to Kyle)
But that's all it was. Just a dream.

HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Lydia shaves Kyle's face.

KYLE
I can do this myself.

LYDIA
Almost done.

She wipes off traces of shaving cream. Hands him a MIRROR.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
There. Good as new.

Kyle stares at his 24-year-old face. *So young.*

KYLE
I look like a kid.
(beat)
God, I *am* a kid.

HOSPITAL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Kyle wakes to see Kimberly prepping a makeshift BED across two chairs. She pulls a blanket from her duffle.

It's covered in RED MONARCH BUTTERFLIES.

FLASHBACK - POND

A red butterfly drops onto the water's surface. Drifts away.

FLASHBACK - FRONT YARD

Sarah chases a red butterfly toward the street.

END FLASHBACKS

KYLE
Let me see that.

KIMBERLY
Sorry, I wake you up?

KYLE
The blanket.

Confused, she hands it over. He studies the butterflies.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Did you sleep here while I was...

KIMBERLY
Yeah. A few times.

KYLE
Did you say anything to me?

KIMBERLY
I asked you to wake up. I'd tell you
not to--

KYLE
Let go. You said that, didn't you?
"Don't let go."

KIMBERLY
That's right.

Kyle tries to process this.

Kimberly misunderstands his silence.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. About the wreck. Your
leg. The way this all happened.
(beat)
What I said, in the car...

KYLE
I almost got you killed, Kim.

KIMBERLY
I distracted you.

KYLE
Don't.

Kyle gives her the blanket. Closes his eyes.

KIMBERLY
Tired?

Awkward silence.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
You asking me to leave?

Kyle doesn't answer.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
Okay, then. I'll see you tomorrow.

She leaves. He presses the call button. A moment, then:

NURSE
Are you all right?

KYLE
My leg's killing me. Can I get more
morphine?

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Benefield strolls in. Checks his I.V. line.

DR. BENEFIELD
You want *more* dope? Forget it.

KYLE
Do you live here?

DR. BENEFIELD
Sure seems that way. Here, best I
can do.

Hands him a tiny PILL CUP. Kyle takes it. Ponders...

KYLE
Do you believe in love?

She looks at him. He looks right back at her.

DR. BENEFIELD
I'm a scientist. I require proof,
with my own eyes, before I believe in
anything. That said, I've seen the
way your mother loves you. Your
girlfriend and your friend Sam. They
love you. Is that what you mean?

KYLE
No. But I have my answer. Thanks.

BEEP. Benefield presses "STOP" on the bedside INFUSION PUMP.

KYLE (CONT'D)
What's that?

DR. BENEFIELD
Your morphine. Talk or suffer.
Who's Marley? Ex-girlfriend?

He studies her. She's sincere.

KYLE
Do people in comas... dream?

DR. BENEFIELD
Tell me why you're asking, I'll tell
you what I know.

KYLE
You're tough. Okay. I have...
another life. A wife. Marley.
(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)
Two daughters. I have to get back
there. They need me.

DR. BENEFIELD
I don't understand. When was this?

KYLE
Yesterday.

DR. BENEFIELD
Yesterday you were here. And the day
before that, and the day before that.

KYLE
But you were there, too. You were my
doctor.

DR. BENEFIELD
(beat)
Maybe you heard me talking. In
comas, some people are still aware--

KYLE
But I saw you there. We had
conversations.

DR. BENEFIELD
You opened your eyes a lot. Looked
right at me. Maybe these dreams you
had, you incorporated me, and other
people, into them. People you saw.

KYLE
What about Marley? My kids.

DR. BENEFIELD
Let me ask you something. That
family with Marley, the kids, was it
the perfect version of your life?

Kyle doesn't answer. He doesn't need to.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Kyle, your family's here. In this
room every day, waiting and praying
for you to heal. Perfect or not,
they love you. And they need you.
More than you need your dreams.

Benefield releases the closure on the IV, walks to the door.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Hey. You're going to be all right.

LATER

Kyle drifts off...

CUT TO: KYLE AND MARLEY'S HOUSE

Kyle looks around his living room.

There's his furniture. The BOOKCASE with Marley's books.

He picks *The Incredible Misadventures of Ally the Brat*. Runs his fingers across the cover.

Suddenly, he realizes where he is. He races into the kitchen.

Yes! It's all still here.

Up the stairs. His legs churn. No cast. No injury.

KYLE
Marley! Girls!

He bursts through the bedroom door...

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Kyle wakes. Looks around the hospital room.

He runs his hands over his chest, as if he's lost something.

KYLE
No, damn it.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT DAY

Kimberly stands over Kyle's bed, duffle clutched in her fist. They're fighting.

KYLE
I can't do it again, Kim.

KIMBERLY
If you'd tell me what's going on with you maybe I could help.

KYLE
You can't.

KIMBERLY
You don't know that.

Kyle watches her, comes to a realization. And very inappropriately, he laughs.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
What's funny about this?

KYLE
Don't you see? We're so young. This
fight, this *scene*, it's ridiculous.
Can't we just be honest for once?

KIMBERLY
Honest about what?

KYLE
Why were you breaking up with me?
Breaking up with me again, I mean.
Come on, Kim. Lay it on me.

Kimberly stares. Then she turns on her heel... and is gone.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Ah, shit.

HOSPITAL THERAPY ROOM

Kyle forces each step. He white-knuckles the support bars.
He starts to fall. The physical therapist, HENRY, grabs him.

HENRY
You're almost there. A few more.

Benefield walks in.

KYLE
Just in time for the show, Doc.

HENRY
He's doing fine.

Kyle's knees give out. He hits the floor.

KYLE
Damn it.

DR. BENEFIELD
That's enough for today.

MINUTES LATER

Benefield wheels Kyle down the hall.

KYLE
When's the last time you pushed a
wheelchair? Don't you have, like,
people to do this?

DR. BENEFIELD
Ha ha. I wanted to talk to you.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Benefield helps Kyle out of the wheelchair. An iPad lies on the bed - Benefield picks it up as Kyle climbs into bed.

The iPad opens to a PHOTO of Kyle, Kimberly, and Sam. Kim's in a cheerleading uniform, Kyle and Sam in football gear.

She swipes the touchscreen. Another PIC of Kyle with friends.

DR. BENEFIELD
Looking through old memories?

KYLE
Looking for Marley.

Oh. Benefield puts the iPad on the nightstand.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I thought maybe I'd seen her somewhere. Hard to believe I just made her up.

DR. BENEFIELD
That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I've been doing some reading. About coma cases and dreams.

Kyle looks up, hopeful.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Seems it's pretty common. People wake up with memories that never happened. Because they dreamed them.

Kyle deflates.

KYLE
It's true, then. They're gone.

DR. BENEFIELD
They're not gone, Kyle. They were never here.

LATER THAT EVENING

Kyle looks through more photos. Studies them. Finds nothing. Tosses the iPad onto the chair.

KYLE
Just a dream. A fucking dream.

He looks up: Kimberly's at the door.

Kyle tries, but can't contain it: he starts to sob.

KIMBERLY
Kyle.

She goes to him. He reaches out, grabs her hand.

She sits on the bed, wraps her arms around him.

MORNING

Kyle stirs. Burrows closer to the warm body in his bed.

Fingers brush across his forehead. His eyes slowly open.

KIMBERLY (O.S.)
You're awake.

Kimberly keeps stroking his hair. He squeezes his eyes shut.

KYLE
Yeah. I'm awake.

Suddenly, Kimberly freezes. She's staring at the door.

Sam's there.

SAM
Right. Okay. Good.

But it's not good. Sam leaves.

KYLE
You want to go after him?

KIMBERLY
(beat)
No.

MID AFTERNOON

Kyle ignores the lunch in front of him.

LYDIA
Spit it out. What's wrong?

KYLE
Do you think I'm the type to settle?

LYDIA
Kim said she stayed here last night.

Kyle nods.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
If settling means you'll be happier,
why not?
(beat)
Not the answer you wanted?

KYLE
I don't know anymore.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Kyle sleeps. Eyelids twitch.

CUT TO: KYLE AND MARLEY'S BEDROOM

Kyle's in the bed. He opens his eyes.

Marley's by the window. She's been crying.

He gets up, reaches for her. She stops him.

MARLEY
If you love her, why are you here?

He takes her in his arms. She pushes him away, hard.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Go back to her, then. Just go.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Kyle wakes in a sweat.

HOSPITAL THERAPY ROOM - NEXT DAY

Sam watches Kyle work through his steps.

SAM
Man, I wish I could do that for you.

Kyle comes to a shaky stop.

KYLE
I know you would. Do it for me.

Henry helps Kyle to a chair. Leaves them alone.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I've been a shitty friend to you.

SAM
No--

KYLE
You were right. She's broken up with
me seven times since the ninth grade.
Now I think I understand why.

SAM
Wait. What are you saying?

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Kyle leans against the window frame, looking out.

KYLE
Dream tonight.

He hobbles to the bed.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Dream of Marley. Dream.

EXT. POND

Kyle reels, then realizes where he is. Marley's beside him.

She starts to speak - he stops her.

KYLE
I love you. I didn't know how much
until I thought I'd lost you.

MARLEY
I've always been right here.

And like an whispered echo, he hears it again:

VOICE (V.O.)
...been right here.

Kyle looks around for the source. He and Marley are alone.
But, by the lake: a SHADOW sits. A silhouette. *What?*

KYLE
Marley. You're not real.

MARLEY
I'm as real as she is. Feel this?

She traces his lips.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
What about this?

Marley kisses him. His eyes close. He pulls back.

KYLE
Everyone, they're telling me--

MARLEY
Don't listen to them, Kyle.

CUT TO: HOSPITAL ROOM

MARLEY (V.O.)
Listen to me.

Kyle jerks awake. Looks around. No one.

His head falls against the pillow. Defeated.

He rubs his hands over his face. Sucks in a deep breath...

Wait. There's something. A scent.

He breathes in again. Nothing.

Straightens his blanket and catches the smell again.

The blanket. He pulls it to his nose. That smell. It could only be one thing. Somehow. Some way.

She was here.

KYLE
Marley.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - NEXT DAY

Sam pushes Kyle down a cement path.

SAM
Now you're just making shit up.

KYLE
She's real. I don't care if no one believes me.

SAM
Well, that's something you can count on. No one's going to believe you.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Benefield reads Kyle's chart. Kyle talks rapid-fire.

KYLE
And my blanket, it smelled like her.

Benefield reaches for the MORPHINE PUMP.

DR. BENEFIELD
I'm going to lower this dosage.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Kyle cringes as Kimberly fumes.

KIMBERLY
Another girl. From your coma. How stupid do I look? You push me away and when you finally decide to tell me why... it's because of a dream!?

KYLE
I wanted you to know that it has nothing to do with you.

KIMBERLY
It has everything to do with me. I'm not your *dream girl*. Got it.

KYLE
I know it sounds crazy--

KIMBERLY
Sounds crazy? That broken leg is the least of your problems.

KYLE
Kim, stop. Why are you so angry? You don't even love me.

That stops her cold.

KYLE (CONT'D)
That's okay, I don't love you either.

KIMBERLY
Goodbye, Kyle. Have a nice imaginary life. With your coma girl.

She storms out. Sam peeks in from outside the door.

SAM
Ouch.

KYLE
How much did you hear?

SAM
Sorry.

KYLE
Think we could smuggle in some beer?

SAM
And have Doc break your other leg?
(beat)
You think she'll be okay? Kim?

KYLE
Yeah. But maybe you should call her.

Sam doesn't want to betray his friend...

KYLE (CONT'D)
We've talked about this. Call. Her.

INT. THERAPY ROOM - NEXT DAY

Kyle struggles through therapy. Benefield and Henry watch.

DR. BENEFIELD
Unclog your damned ears for a minute,
all I'm saying is--

KYLE
I heard what you said about science,
seeing things with your own eyes.

DR. BENEFIELD
It's not only that, Kyle. You're
choosing to believe something so...

Kyle stumbles. Henry moves to him, braces his legs.

HENRY
Five more, you're done.

Kyle's leg trembles. He takes the step.

DR. BENEFIELD
I just don't want you to expect--

KYLE
Not listening.

His leg starts to buckle. He tries to hold on.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Can't. I can't do anymore.

Benefield steps in front of him.

DR. BENEFIELD
Come on. You're tougher than this.

But he crumples. Benefield helps him to the floor. Kyle turns from her, his face empty. Beaten.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Henry, bring us some water, please.
(to Kyle)
Hey. Hey, look here.

Kyle clenches his jaw, keeps his head turned away.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Kyle. What's going on?

KYLE
My wife. My kids. I miss them.

Benefield takes a beat. Makes a decision. *Shit.*

DR. BENEFIELD
Fine. You've convinced me.

KYLE
Yeah right.

DR. BENEFIELD
I believe you. Against everything I
know to be true, I believe you.

KYLE
Stop.

DR. BENEFIELD
I'll prove it. I'll do whatever I
can to help you find her. But only
if you help yourself. Five more.

Kyle takes a beat. Then he hefts himself up. Resolved.

Benefield backs away.

Henry's at the door with the water. She gestures him over.
Kyle works through his steps, dogged.

HENRY
(whispers to Benefield)
You don't really believe him?

DR. BENEFIELD
No. But I need him to believe it.

Kyle looks to them, a grin on his sweaty face.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Kyle has the iPad on his lap, Internet White Pages on the screen. Benefield stands beside the bed.

He jots one more name to a LIST he's making.

DR. BENEFIELD
Never been on a wild goose chase.

KYLE
Deal's a deal.

He gives her the list. She tucks it into her pocket, gestures to a wheelchair.

THERAPY ROOM

Step after step, Kyle makes his way across the room. Still on the support bars. Real close to giving up.

Benefield watches from the doorway.

DR. BENEFIELD
Where did we leave off? The duck pond, wasn't it?

KYLE
(exhausted)
Her very favorite place. Said she always felt happy there.

DR. BENEFIELD
Tell me more.

KYLE
The birds. She loved those birds.

His spine straightens, he moves more determinedly.

Benefield sees it.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Benefield gives Kyle back his LIST - dozens of names crossed out. Each name is PHELPS, from Amelia to Luther.

Written in the margin: "wrong number," "disconnected," "wrong number," "no kids."

KYLE
You called all of them?

DR. BENEFIELD
It was a thrilling Saturday night.
What about you?

Kyle shows her his list, M through Z. No luck.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT DAY

iPad in front of him, Kyle searches the 'Net. Nothing.

He sighs, puts down the iPad.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Kyle teeters beside his bed. Alone. Releases the bed rails.

Stands for a moment. His right leg crumples.

KYLE

Ow. Shit.

LATER

A nurse checks Kyle's morphine drip. His shoulders drop.

It's no damn use.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Benefield shines a light into one of Kyle's eyes.

DR. BENEFIELD

Don't pull another stunt like that.

KYLE

Am I ever going to walk again? Level with me.

He's discouraged. She changes the subject.

DR. BENEFIELD

I keep thinking about Marley and that flower made of pills.

KYLE

Yeah? It was the weirdest thing. I was glad you were at the hospital that day.

DR. BENEFIELD

I don't know why. I'm no psychiatrist, and you certainly--

KYLE

--don't want a neurosurgeon telling you how to think.

Benefield's surprised. *Took the words right out of her mouth.*

KYLE (CONT'D)
That's what you said then, too.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - A FEW DAYS LATER

Kyle's propped on crutches, Benefield next to him.

DR. BENEFIELD
You sure you're ready for this?

KYLE
She needs me.

DR. BENEFIELD
(beat)
One time around the nurse's desk.
That's all.

Lydia rounds the corner, stops in her tracks.

LYDIA
You're walking.

DR. BENEFIELD
Three weeks before schedule.

LYDIA
That's great, sweetheart.

A hug.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Excuse us for a minute, honey. I
need to speak with Dr. Benefield.

KYLE
About what?

LYDIA
About getting the house ready for you
to come home.

Benefield brings over a nurse.

DR. BENEFIELD
(to nurse)
One time around.

The nurse leads Kyle away.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
He's been working very hard.

LYDIA

How dare you encourage these
fantasies of his? He has a life
waiting for him outside this place,
or didn't you remember that?

DR. BENEFIELD

(whoa)

I'm doing what it takes to keep him
motivated.

LYDIA

Why don't you take him on a trip to
Oz while you're at it?

DR. BENEFIELD

You want him better, don't you? He's
walking weeks before he should.

LYDIA

Of course I want him better. But I
don't want him thinking he gets to
leave here and play house with some
imaginary wife.

Kyle shuffles up to them.

KYLE

You two look serious.

LYDIA

Just chatting.

Kyle doesn't believe that for a second.

DR. BENEFIELD

(to Kyle)

I'll see you tomorrow.

She leaves. Lydia helps her son to his room.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

LYDIA

Kim's on her way over.

KYLE

Mom. You have to stop meddling.

LYDIA

I know you two can work through this.

Kyle makes his way to the bed, sits.

KYLE

You need to trust me to take care of myself. Kim, Sam, and I, we're adults. We can handle a little conflict.

She looks at him for a beat.

LYDIA

When did you get to be so grown-up?

Kimberly steps in.

KYLE

Hey.

KIMBERLY

Hey.

LYDIA

(beat)

Okay, then.

She leaves, Kim sits in the chair. After an awkward silence:

KIMBERLY

I've been thinking about what you said, really thinking about it.

KYLE

So have I.

KIMBERLY

I love you, I do, but...

She trails off.

KYLE

You don't know how long I've waited to hear this. But what?

No answer.

KYLE (CONT'D)

But... Sam.

KIMBERLY

What?

Kyle just gives her a knowing look.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Nothing's happened.

KYLE

Maybe something should.

KIMBERLY

Kyle, if this about that night--

KYLE

I've had a lot of time to think about that night. A lot of time, Kim. I was angry. Selfish. I should have listened to you. You were right.

(beat)

Kim, you're my best friend. I love you, too... but.

KIMBERLY

(starts to cry)

That's what we are, isn't it? We are best friends.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

KYLE

There's nothing to be sorry for.

A nice silence. Then:

KIMBERLY

You're so different, after... I can't explain it. But it's nice.

KYLE

So. You gonna call him?

KIMBERLY

I am not talking about Sam with you. Not yet. Besides, I'm ready to hear about this angel of yours.

LATER

Kimberly takes it all in.

KIMBERLY

Wow. That's-- are you sure?

KYLE

Yeah. I'm sure.

KIMBERLY

I'm just scared that you've--

KYLE
Gone mental?
(beat)
I know I'm right. She's out there.
I'm going to find her.

KIMBERLY
Well, I know better than to try and
talk you out of something you want.

Kimberly hugs him goodbye.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)
Good night, Kyle. Sweet dreams.

She leaves.

Kyle squints, rubs his temples. He buzzes the nurses station.

KYLE
Can I get some Tylenol, please?

LATER THAT NIGHT

Kyle sleeps. Fitful.

FLASH

Whimpers. Pitiful, heartbreakin sounds.

Kyle follows the noises.

Out his hospital room. Down the hall.

Through a door... into his daughters' room.

GIRLS' ROOM

Marley and her girls cower in a corner, cling to each other.

MARLEY
They'll find me in a minute.

Her hair hangs in limp strands. Eyes sunken, hollow.

He hesitates, then gathers his family close.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I can't stay. I want to but I don't
know how.
(beat)
Please, don't leave me here.

The girls have stopped crying. They've stopped... moving. He looks at them. They're dolls. Ragged baby dolls.

What? He looks around. Behind him:

The hospital. Benefield. A nurse with a syringe.

Marley grips his arm. He turns to her. They're back in the girls' room.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
Don't leave me.

KYLE
Where are you?

MARLEY
Kyle.

KYLE
Marley, where are you?

CUT TO: KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Kyle wakes. *My God.*

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Kyle hobbles down the empty hall, on a mission. Passes through some double doors. A CHARGE NURSE rounds the corner.

KYLE
I need Dr. Benefield. Can you find her for me?

CHARGE NURSE
This is Critical Care. You're not supposed to be in here.

At the far end of the hall, doors swing open. Benefield with another DOCTOR. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

DOCTOR
You tried, Tory. You couldn't have done anything more than you did.

Benefield shrugs off his hand. He leaves her alone.

She stares at her SCRUB CAP, speckled with blood.

Kyle makes his way to her.

KYLE
I need your help.

She's not happy to see him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
It's Marley. She's in trouble.

DR. BENEFIELD
I don't want to hear another word
about Marley. It's time for you to
let this go.

KYLE
I knew it. You lied.

DR. BENEFIELD
I just lost a patient. I wish I
could dream that away, but I can't.

She walks away, he struggles to follow.

KYLE
Wait!

DR. BENEFIELD
We can continue this discussion if
you can keep up with me.

He limps in earnest. It gets harder and harder, but he goes
all out - and collapses about ten steps in.

Benefield catches the arm of a passing INTERN.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Get him on a stretcher and back to
room four-seventeen.

She walks away.

HOSPITAL - WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Benefield's now in street clothes. She slams a LOCKER. Picks
up her bag, heads out.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

The intern helps Kyle into bed. He collapses onto his pillow.

A NURSE enters, re-attaches Kyle's I.V. line.

NURSE
Always an adventure with you, Mr.
Lafferty. Here, I'll bump your
morphine a bit. Help you sleep.

She adjusts the drip rate, leaves.

Kyle stairs at the ceiling. *Waitaminute.* He turns to the MORPHINE INFUSION PUMP.

He thinks, reaches over and presses the "STOP" button. BEEP.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Benefield walks down the hall, empty at this hour.

She pushes through some double-doors, takes a left. Another left. Stops at an elevator: OUT OF ORDER

DR. BENEFIELD
Perfect.

She starts to head back. Catches a glimpse of SOMEONE skirting around a corner. She stops. Takes a second look.

Nothing.

She starts walking again.

Waitasec. A WHISPER of sound. She stops again, tries to hear. There. Faint. Sing-songy.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME

Kyle sleeps. A SHADOW leans in. FINGERS trace his lips.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Benefield glances down at her watch. 2:36 AM.

She hears the PLUNKS of someone walking on stairs.

She opens a door. The feet are heading down. Toward her.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

A dainty HAND lays a gentle palm against Kyle's cheek.

STAIRWELL

The footsteps are close. Benefield looks up...

It's a JANITOR. He goes past her, carrying a CLEAR TRASH BAG filled with STARGAZER LILIES.

Benefield can't take her eyes off them.

He goes through the stairwell door. BAM - the door slams.

Silence. Then, a far-off voice calls:

FAR-OFF VOICE (O.S.)
Marley.

Benefield strains to hear it.

FAR-OFF VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come on, now.

Did she just hear... ? She waits, listens. Nothing.

DR. BENEFIELD
Okay, don't be stupid.

She opens the stairwell door. But it drifts to her again:

FAR-OFF VOICE (O.S.)
Marley.

That IS what she heard. She bounds up the stairs.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

The hand hovers just over Kyle's chest, settles at his heart.

STAIRWELL

Benefield stops. Listens.

VOICE (O.S.)
Marley!

Definitely louder. She grabs the door, it doesn't budge. A sign: FIFTH FLOOR - PSYCHIATRIC WARD

She touches her badge to a KEY-CARD READER. BEEP. She's in.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Kyle's in REM sleep. Eyelids flutter.

CUT TO: KYLE AND MARLEY'S BEDROOM

He stretches. Rolls over. Opens his eyes.

Marley, mid 40's, comes in from the bathroom in a YELLOW ROBE.

MARLEY
It's quiet here with the girls gone.

She slides onto the bed. Curls up against him.

KYLE
Please tell me this is real.

MARLEY

It's real, all right. Our little
birds have flown the coop.

KYLE

Are we really here?

MARLEY

What? Did you drink wine again?

KYLE

Marley.

MARLEY

Yes?

KYLE

Keep talking.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSE'S STATION

Benefield reaches the station, hands her badge to the PSYCH
WARD NURSE.

DR. BENEFIELD

You're going to think I'm nuts, but--

That gets her a stern look.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(beat)

I overheard someone yelling.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 1

People in this ward do tend to yell,
Doctor.

Another nurse comes over with a WATERING CAN.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 1 (CONT'D)

(to the nurse)

Any sign of her?

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2

(re: watering can)

I found this in the west stairwell.

INT. KYLE AND MARLEY'S BEDROOM

MARLEY

Sarah called. She's met some boy.
Wants to bring him to dinner.

KYLE

Hey, when's the last time I told you
that I love you?

MARLEY

The last time you saw me.

INT. NURSE'S STATION

Benefield nods to the watering can.

DR. BENEFIELD

Is that who you're looking for?

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2

She's probably just snuck down to the
children's unit to watch them sleep.

DR. BENEFIELD

You let her roam?

PSYCH WARD NURSE 1

She's not dangerous. She's been here
practically her whole life. Marley's
a sweet girl.

DR. BENEFIELD

Marley... Phelps?

PSYCH WARD NURSE 1

That's right.

DR. BENEFIELD

Marley Phelps is in this ward?

INT. KYLE AND MARLEY'S BEDROOM

Kyle strokes the hair from Marley's face. Studies her.

MARLEY

What are you doing?

KYLE

Memorizing your face. I'm afraid
that I'm going to wake up and you
won't be here.

MARLEY

No. Talk about happy things.

INT. PSYCH WARD - MARLEY'S ROOM

Benefield steps through the door.

The walls are covered with HAND-DRAWN PICTURES. Exquisite.

The artist is talented. Faces captured in startling detail.

Every one of them is of Kyle and Marley. Sometimes children are included - two girls. Scenes from their life together.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
We didn't even know she could draw.
She just started working on those
about two months ago.

DR. BENEFIELD
(beat)
Eight weeks.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
Then three weeks ago she crashed. We
don't know what happened.

But for Benefield, the drawings tell the tale. One of them is of Marley in the rocking chair with baby Elizabeth.

DR. BENEFIELD
Remarkable.

Benefield goes to the small WRITING TABLE.

On it, a JOURNAL lies open. Neat handwriting fills each line. She looks up from the desk.

And that's when she sees it, out the window:

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
The new neurosurgery wing.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
Once they broke ground we couldn't
tear her away from this window. Now
she sits all day, watching people
come in and out of the rooms.

DR. BENEFIELD
And at night...

Benefield's eyes scan the building across from them. *There:*

Marley's window looks directly down into Kyle's room.

It's dark, but a young woman is visible, sitting in Kyle's bedside chair, head resting on his chest.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
I think I found your girl.

EXT. DUCK POND

Kyle and Marley walk hand-in-hand beside the water.

MARLEY

You mean we're just going to rattle
around that big house all alone?

KYLE

We'll occupy ourselves somehow.

MARLEY

I'm happy to be alone with you.

KYLE

Me, too.

MARLEY

(beat)

Let's get a dog.

Right then, a huge GREAT DANE bounds up to them. WOOF!

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

The MORPHINE INFUSION PUMP blinks "OFF."

And Kyle opens his eyes.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Benefield, the Psych Ward Nurse, and two orderlies hurry toward Kyle's room.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Marley hasn't noticed that Kyle's awake.

He stays still and listens to her speak.

No longer a part of the story.

MARLEY

(whispers)

A Great Dane. I've always wanted a
big dog. And he's sweet, too.

She's smaller than she was in the dream, more frail. Lank hair. Pale, almost translucent skin.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Benefield and the staff round a corner.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
I hope he doesn't try to interact
with her.

DR. BENEFIELD
Why?

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
She can't take direct contact. It's
one of her triggers.

Benefield breaks into a run.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

MARLEY
(whispers)
Let's name him Howard, okay?
(excited)
Oh. We should play in the rain.
Make it rain, Kyle.
(beat)
Hello... Earth to Kyle...

CUT TO: DUCK POND

The Great Dane gallops up to Marley with a STICK in his mouth.
But Marley's looking at Kyle, standing still next to her, like
a frozen-in-time mannequin.

MARLEY
Why are you just standing there?

Then suddenly: he vanishes.

INT. KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM

A tear rolls down Kyle's cheek. Marley's still whispering:

MARLEY
Where did you go? You're supposed to
make it rain and say...

KYLE
I love you.

She stiffens. She's frozen, like an animal trapped by its
predator, just waiting for the attack.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley? Baby? It's me.

She pulls her head from his chest and creeps away from him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
It's me. Kyle.

She trembles, her eyes are blank, staring off into a world he can no longer see.

Kyle sits up, and Marley darts out of the room...

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

...right into the arms of the orderlies. She struggles. They immediately let her go.

She scuttles to the end of the hallway, cowers in a corner.

Kyle stumbles to the doorway.

KYLE
Marley!

Then Benefield's there, in front of him.

DR. BENEFIELD
Don't.

KYLE
What's wrong with her?

DR. BENEFIELD
Wait. Just wait.

The orderlies and the Psych Ward Nurse inch toward Marley.

She whimpers. They turn their eyes away, don't look directly at her. Marley grunts, tugs at her hair.

The nurse approaches. Slow, eyes down.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2
My goodness, Marley. You're a long way from home. Did you find some thirsty plants over here?

Marley peeks at her. Thinks about that. Nods.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
Did you give them all their water?

Another nod.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
What a good girl.
(beat)
I'm sleepy. How about you?

Benefield watches, fascinated. Kyle struggles to understand.

Eyes still turned away, the nurse holds out her hand. Marley inches toward it.

She's about to take the hand but pulls back a little.

Then, she touches a finger to the nurse's palm. Does it again, as if testing to see if the fingers will capture her.

The nurse holds her hand perfectly still. Marley cautiously places her fingers against the palm.

The nurse's fingers close, slowly, around Marley's hand.

PSYCH WARD NURSE 2 (CONT'D)
Bedtime. Okay?

Nurse and Marley walk away, hand in hand. Kyle can't tear his eyes away. He remembers.

FLASHBACK - TRAUMA UNIT

The FLASH of overhead fluorescents.

At a care station, a DOCTOR with a crying CHILD...

More lights overhead. FLASH. FLASH.

An ELDERLY WOMAN getting oxygen...

FLASH. FLASH.

A NURSE - the same Psych Ward Nurse - bandages a YOUNG WOMAN's forehead. The nurse moves aside and we see the patient's face. It's Marley.

Her eyes lift, lock onto Kyle's...

END FLASHBACK

KYLE
(to Benefield)
It's her.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - NEXT DAY

Kyle and Sam sit on a bench, some crutches next to Kyle. He stares up at MARLEY'S WINDOW.

SAM
I should have believed you. Kimberly says Marley's... sick.

KYLE
Doc says it's a "broad spectrum de-personalization disorder." Soli--
solipsism syndrome.

SAM
Oh yeah. That. Sure.

KYLE
For Marley, the world is in her head.
She believes everything she sees is
only in her imagination. She lives
in her own story.

SAM
So, she was telling you a story.

KYLE
(turns to Sam)
When I woke up last night and she was
there - she was waiting for me.

SAM
Waiting?

KYLE
Waiting for me to add to it. That's
what I've been doing all along. It
wasn't a story. It was our story.

SAM
Dude. That's not possible. You were
in a coma.

Kyle's eyes go back to Marley's window.

KYLE
I know I can reach her. I'm the only
one who can.

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

Benefield and Kyle, on crutches, head through the halls.

DR. BENEFIELD
You're absolutely not supposed to be
here, but I wanted you to see this.
She's still in the rec room, so we
have maybe fifteen minutes.

KYLE
I need to see her. I scared her the
last time - she didn't know I was
going to wake up.

DR. BENEFIELD
She isn't the Marley you loved, Kyle.

KYLE
But if I could just--

DR. BENEFIELD
I said no. You promised you wouldn't
do this if I brought you here.
(beat)
I'm going to show you her room. In
and out. Otherwise, we leave now.

KYLE
Okay. I want to see it.

INT. MARLEY'S ROOM

Kyle takes it all in. He walks the perimeter of the room,
fingers tracing Marley's face in each drawing.

KYLE
It's all here. Every moment we spent
together.

DR. BENEFIELD
She told you all these things. It's
no surprise you recognize them.

Kyle takes a look around. *Maybe the doc's right.*

He turns to leave...

...when one drawing catches his eye.

It's of a DISCO BALL, hanging from a rearview mirror.

He unpins the paper from the wall.

KYLE
This. This was the last thing I saw
before the crash. I told her this.

Another drawing: a large oak, initials carved in the bark.

KYLE (CONT'D)
My third grade crush. I carved her
initials. I told Marley about her.

And another - a shaggy pup, tongue wagging.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Rufus. My first dog.

He hands Benefield the disco ball drawing.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Only one way she could have known to
draw these things. We were together.

VOICES approach from outside the room.

DR. BENEFIELD
Time to go.

PSYCH WARD

Kyle follows Benefield.

One of the orderlies from the previous night turns a corner,
heads toward them.

DR. BENEFIELD
Shit.

Benefield pushes Kyle back around the corner.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Don't let him see you.

She steps back into the hall.

ORDERLY (O.S.)
Hey, Doc. Come to see our Marley?

As Kyle waits, he sees a SIGN: an arrow points in the
direction of the RECREATION ROOM.

Benefield and the orderly walk past.

Kyle waits another beat, then slips down the corridor.

OUTSIDE REC ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He looks through the window and there she is.

Marley. Alone in a corner. Holding TWO BABY DOLLS.

REC ROOM

Kyle makes his way to Marley. He's surprisingly fast, urgency
pushing his bad leg forward.

The other PATIENTS ignore him, WARD NURSES chat in a corner.

Kyle kneels in front of Marley. Takes her hand.

KYLE
Marley?

He pulls from her mouth the hair she's been chewing on.

PSYCH WARD

Benefield returns. No Kyle. Sees the rec room SIGN.

DR. BENEFIELD
Damn it. Damn it!

REC ROOM

Marley's eyes swim into focus... and focus on Kyle.

And for one moment they are together. Eyes locked in love.

Marley's hand lifts. But then her eyes cloud over and she's pulled back into herself. She cowers.

Kyle reaches for her.

KYLE
Marley, don't be afraid. It's me.

DR. BENEFIELD (O.S.)
Kyle, no!

He pulls Marley to him. A tortured HOWL rips from her throat.

Kyle reacts by hugging her tight. But Marley's howl only grows louder. Pure torment. She THRASHES in his arms.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
Kyle, let her go. Kyle!

Kyle relaxes his hold, Marley breaks free. She runs to a wall... and BASHES her head against it. Again. Again.

Again. BLOOD smears the plaster.

KYLE
Marley!

Pandemonium. Nurses race over.

Kyle tries to get to Marley, but rowdy PATIENTS block his way. They shout, throw books and chairs.

The nurses get through the crowd, try to restrain Marley. She screams and claws, her head bleeding badly.

Finally her voice starts to give out. Her eyes roll back. And she goes limp.

Two beefy ORDERLIES drag Kyle away.

INT. OFFICE OF THE HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR - AN HOUR LATER

Benefield paces.

DR. PIERCE (60's), enters. Slams the door behind him.

DR. PIERCE

You have placed me and this hospital, in an impossible position. Thanks to you, we now have seven patients who had to be forcibly restrained, four with broken bones, three who needed sutures. What were you thinking, Tory? This isn't like you. Tell me what I'm supposed to do here.

A KNOCK on the door.

NURSE

Doctor, you wanted me to let you know-

DR. PIERCE

Thank you, Anna. Tory, let's go.

DR. BENEFIELD

Where?

DR. PIERCE

To try and clean up some of this mess you've made.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pierce stops in the doorway, motions Benefield to enter.

Kyle's in bed. In RESTRAINTS.

KYLE

Doc, get me out of these.

Benefield's barely in the room when she turns on Pierce.

DR. BENEFIELD

(fierce whisper)

Restraints? Is that necessary?

DR. PIERCE

They wouldn't be needed if you had properly controlled your patient.

DR. BENEFIELD
This is not--

DR. PIERCE
I'm in charge now. The message to that young man is this: you and I, we're on the same page. You stand with me, or you're fired.

He steps past her, into the room.

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
Mr. Lafferty. I am Dr. Weldon Pierce, chief administrator of this hospital. Dr. Benefield is no longer the physician in charge of your care.

KYLE
What?

DR. PIERCE
You and your doctor have been involved in an incident that has left another patient of this hospital in critical condition.

KYLE
Marley.
(to Benefield)
How bad is it?

Benefield can't look at him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
How bad?

She shakes her head, stares at the floor.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley's... dying?
(beat)
How long?

DR. PIERCE
Few hours. Maybe less.

Kyle FIGHTS against the restraints.

KYLE
Take me to her. I've got to see her.

DR. PIERCE
There will be no more of that. Dr. Benefield, you're done for the day.
(MORE)

DR. PIERCE (CONT'D)
Go home. Mr. Lafferty, you consider
getting yourself an attorney.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

DR. BENEFIELD
What the hell was that?

DR. PIERCE
That was exactly what you would have
done eight weeks ago. Walk away from
that boy and never look back.

He leaves her. She's still within earshot of Kyle.

KYLE (O.S.)
Please. I promised her. No more sad
stories. I promised.

Benefield wavers. Then steels herself and walks away.

WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Benefield sits on a bench. Stares at the WALL CLOCK.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

She pulls her eyes away, opens her locker. Her hospital ID
BADGE hangs inside, mocking her. She reaches for her jacket.

Another look at the clock.

DR. BENEFIELD
Do you believe in love...

Fuck it. She grabs her badge.

KYLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kyle's still in restraints. Tears track his cheeks.

The door opens. He doesn't bother to look up.

KYLE
What do you want?

DR. BENEFIELD
We don't have much time.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE PYSCHE WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Two ORDERLIES block Kyle's entrance into the ward.

Through the double-doors, Benefield ARGUES with a third ORDERLY and the Psych Ward Nurse.

It gets heated. Benefield comes back through the doors.

DR. BENEFIELD
Pierce put them on alert.

KYLE
I'm not leaving. Not 'til I see her.

DR. BENEFIELD
She's non-responsive. She won't even
know you're here, Kyle.

KYLE
Why isn't she in the ICU?

Benefield says nothing.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You mean they're not even going to
try to save her? They're just going
to let her die?

DR. BENEFIELD
That's all they can do.
(beat)
It's her family's wishes that she be
as comfortable as possible.

KYLE
Family?

Just then a WOMAN comes out of Marley's room. Older, still
quite beautiful. She has Marley's hair, her eyes.

This can only be: ELIZABETH PHELPS. Marley's mother.

The nurse says something to her, points toward Kyle.

Elizabeth's eyes meet Kyle's. She pushes through the doors...

...and SLAPS Kyle hard.

ELIZABETH
You. It was you.

Another SLAP. Kyle takes it. Elizabeth pulls at his shirt.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Why? You son of a bitch. Why did
you have to touch her?

KYLE
Marley's the world to me.

ELIZABETH
Don't you say her name.

KYLE
Please, just wait. Let me explain--

ELIZABETH
How you killed my daughter? How you
took from me the only thing left that
I care about?

KYLE
Marley's the only thing I care about.
She's my wife.

Elizabeth backs away, turns to the orderlies.

ELIZABETH
This man is crazy. Keep him far away
from this room.
(to Kyle)
You stay away from my daughter.

She stalks away.

KYLE
I know what happened to Laura.

This stops her cold.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I know everything. Marley told me.

ELIZABETH
You're lying. Marley never speaks.

She opens the hallway door, but...

KYLE
When Marley was nine, her hermit crab
fell into the heating vent. She
cried for weeks.

Elizabeth freezes. *How?*

KYLE (CONT'D)
When Laura's baby teeth fell out
before Marley's, Marley pulled out
her own front teeth. That's the
first time you took her to a
psychiatrist.

Oh, my God. She turns to him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I know that you sang Twinkle Twinkle Little Star to them every night. You sang all the verses. Marley's the only person I've ever known who can sing every word of that song. Because you taught it to her.

ELIZABETH
Marley doesn't talk. To anyone.

KYLE
She talks to me.

He looks to Benefield. She nods. *Go on.*

KYLE (CONT'D)
Elsewhere, in another time or place or... existence, Marley is my wife. I need to be with her. I can't let her do this alone. Please.

MARLEY'S ROOM

Kyle moves to the bed. Marley's on her back, head bandaged.

He forces his bad leg to bend, sits beside her.

Elizabeth, Benefield, the Psych Ward Nurse and the Orderly are all there.

KYLE
(to Benefield)
Will I hurt her?

DR. BENEFIELD
No. You won't hurt her.

Kyle slides his arms beneath Marley and carefully pulls her up against his chest.

His eyes track the room, the drawings. Their life together.

He closes his eyes. Leans down to Marley.

KYLE
Marley? I'm here.

A beat. Nothing. Tries again.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I don't know how to do this. Come on
baby, help me.

Another long beat. Then, suddenly, the world tilts...

CUT TO: KYLE AND MARLEY'S HOUSE

Kyle opens his eyes. Yes!

The house is empty, no furniture, nothing. Except some PAGES scattered around the living room.

KYLE
Marley!

Kyle runs into the kitchen... up the stairs... the bathroom... the bedrooms...

Nothing. No one.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley!

CUT TO: MARLEY'S ROOM

Kyle's back in the hospital. Frustrated.

KYLE
I can't find her. I don't know how.

He looks to Benefield. She's sympathetic but has no answers.

His eyes go back to the drawings.

And that's when he sees it, stuck down in a corner of the wall, nearly hidden by the others.

Scribbled blackness, covering an illustration.

Oh no. He turns back to Marley. His eyes close, focuses...

CUT TO: KYLE AND MARLEY'S HOUSE

He's back in the empty house.

Those papers on the living room floor. Kyle grabs one, turns it over. It's scribbled black. Flips another: all black.

FLASHBACK - GIRL'S ROOM

Elizabeth reads from a book, flips past a black page.

KYLE
Wait. That page. Turn back.

She does. It's an illustration of the duck pond.

END FLASHBACK

Kyle looks at the blacked-out paper in his hand.

KYLE
That's where you are.

He rushes to the door. Opens it.

Inky BLACKNESS grips the house. No light, no sound.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley?

EXT. HOUSE

Kyle steps onto the dark lawn. A chill WIND picks up.

KYLE
Light. Give me light.

Nothing. He takes a step, blindly feels his way.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Give me light, damn it!

Kyle's got his arms out, searching.

KYLE (CONT'D)
How did you do this, Marley?

It hits him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
The story. Tell the story.
(out loud)
He... sees a light?

In the distance: a LIGHT. Yes! But it's too far, too faint.

KYLE (CONT'D)
The light becomes brighter.

The glow shimmers, expands...

KYLE (CONT'D)
It leads him... to her.

From the light, a warm burst rushes along the ground, toward him, making a luminous PATH that stops at his feet.

He takes a step onto the glowing trail. Then runs.

EXT. POND - LATER

The path's taken Kyle to the park. He jogs around the pond. Stops. Catches his breath. Darkness is pushing in.

KYLE
Marley. Where are you?

He closes his eyes. Concentrates.

KYLE (CONT'D)
He sees her. She's sitting alone, by
the edge of the water.
(beat)
Please, God...

Kyle opens his eyes.

And there she is. Standing in front of him.

MARLEY
I was tired of sitting.

He laughs, grabs her, twirls.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
I knew you'd find me.

She runs loving hands across his face. He squeezes her tight.

KYLE
Let's get you out of here.

She doesn't move.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Come on.

MARLEY
I can't.

KYLE
It's easy. Follow me.

She shakes her head. No.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Your... your mother's there.

MARLEY

Mom?

KYLE

She wants to see you. So badly.

MARLEY

Please tell her something. Tell her it wasn't her fault. Please.

KYLE

Tell her yourself.

MARLEY

Kyle. I have to stay.

KYLE

That's not true. Come with me.

MARLEY

It was the life I always dreamed of. Thank you.

KYLE

No. No, Marley. Stop.

He wants to fight it. But he knows she's right.

He looks around the pond, at the blackness closing in.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Why here? Why this darkness?

MARLEY

After Laura died, this is where I went. It's where I've been ever since. Except, when I was with you.

And that's when Kyle understands. Resolve hardens his face.

KYLE

No. Not like this. I'm not letting you stay here.

MARLEY

It's where I belong--

He pulls her to him. Kisses her. It's THE kiss. Full of sureness, fire.

She gives herself to him.

Then his lips drift to her ear:

KYLE
Listen to me.
(beat)
This is the kind of party you
deserve. So many people love you.
Happy Birthday, Marley.

CUT TO: THE DUCK POND

A BIG BAND plays DIXIELAND JAZZ while party-goers whoop it up.

Kyle and Marley, late 70's now, hold each-other in a slow dance - defying the upbeat music.

Marley looks around at the park, now filled with lights and joy. But then she sees Kyle's creased face. Her aged hand.

MARLEY
We're so wrinkly.

KYLE
It's our story. And this - this is
our happy ending.
(beat)
You see that over there?

Marley looks over.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Your damn ducks, begging for food.

A little girl, the spitting image of Sarah at 5, runs up.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Look who's here to tug on your skirt.

MARLEY
Casey-Belle. You want to dance?

Kyle hoists the girl into Marley's arms. The three of them dance as the sun sinks closer to the horizon.

Their daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah, both now middle-aged, gather their families closer to Kyle and Marley.

A woman in her 20's, looking like Marley did at that age, takes Casey from Marley and Kyle's arms.

She leans in to touch her cheek to Marley's.

YOUNG WOMAN
Happy Birthday, Granny.

Parents, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren all pile onto the dance floor.

KYLE
Do you know how very much I love you?

MARLEY
More and more every day.

He presses old but tender lips to her creased eyelids.

She opens her eyes. Over his shoulder, Marley sees something. Something... wonderful.

Kyle follows her eyes, turns. He tries to see through the crowd. Dancers step to the right, whirl to the left.

KYLE
What is it?

MARLEY
I see her.

KYLE
Who?

MARLEY
I see Laura.

KYLE
Laura?

He searches the crowd...

KYLE (CONT'D)
I don't see her.
(realizes)
That means--

Kyle breaks. Tears slide down his face.

Her eyes go back to him. Sad. Happy.

MARLEY
She's waiting for me.

One more sweet kiss. And Kyle feels the world slipping away.

MARLEY (CONT'D)
My prince.

KYLE
Marley. Please don't go.

A SOUND calls to him. It's a faint BEEP.

MARLEY (V.O.)
I love you.

INT. MARLEY'S ROOM - HOSPITAL

The BEEP of Marley's heart monitor. Slowing.

Kyle kisses Marley's closed eyes. Her breathing's shallow.

ELIZABETH
I was never able to hold her like
that. She hasn't let me touch her
since Laura died.

KYLE
Come here.

ELIZABETH
She hates me.

KYLE
No. Never.

Elizabeth wants to believe it. But can't.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Marley loves you. She always has.
(beat)
She named our first daughter for you.

Her eyes go to her Marley. Yearning.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Come here.

Elizabeth takes Kyle's place on the bed.

KYLE (CONT'D)
She wanted me to tell you something.

Kyle puts Marley into the arms of her mother.

KYLE (CONT'D)
She said, it wasn't your fault.

The words take Elizabeth's breath away.

ELIZABETH
My sweet, sweet girl. Forgive me.

She cradles her daughter close, rocks her.

Kyle watches them. Then sees a vase of STARGAZER LILIES.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I brought them to her every week.
She was fascinated by the color.

KYLE
She saw them. They're her favorites.

He looks at Marley, lying still in Elizabeth's arms. He shifts weight off his bad leg, stands awkwardly.

ELIZABETH
It's okay. Sit with us.

He sits, cradles Marley's fingers. Elizabeth lays her hand over their joined hands.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Thank you.

DR. BENEFIELD
Kyle?

She holds out a SMALL BOOK.

DR. BENEFIELD (CONT'D)
This was on the desk.

It's Marley's journal. On the cover: a drawing of a YELLOW KITE, pulled by the wind.

Kyle opens it. Reads. Then, just a glimmer of a smile.

KYLE
Did you know Marley wrote children's books?

ELIZABETH
I... I don't know much about her.
(beat)
Will you tell me about my daughter?

KYLE
I'll tell you everything.

EXT. PARK - SOME MONTHS LATER

A bright yellow kite lies on the grass. A strong breeze catches it, the toy skitters across the ground...

...lifts into the air and is pulled taut.

Kyle tightens his grip, the kite hovers above the trees.

It TUGS forcefully.

He rolls out more string, lets it fly higher.

Satisfied for only a moment, the kite TUGS again.

Kyle laughs. Then, a sigh. Bittersweet.

His grip loosens, the kite pulls.

Fingers open, the string slips through his hand.

He... lets go.

The kite's nylon ripples, as if dancing. It sways from side to side. Teasing him. Playing with him.

Then the wind catches it. The kite flies away, just a tiny yellow dot in a big blue sky.

Kyle watches its journey.

KYLE
Go, baby. Go.

And just like that - it's gone.

Free.

FADE OUT.

THE END