

EMBRACING MERCY

Written by

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EXT. OUTERSPACE - CONTINUOUS

Moving from a VIEW OF EARTH to U.S.A. A strong, motherly, and female VOICE is heard.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Someone once said, "If you pray one prayer in your life, 'Thank you' will suffice." The history of our faith, the history of humanity, is a history of people awakening.

To Los Angeles, to Venice Beach. A couple surfers are coming out of the water. A bird perched on the Venice pier begins flying.

THE VOICE (CONT'D)

Struggling to understand that awakening, and then struggling to help others wake up.

The bird flies past a couple, a homeless man and kids playing. Down MAIN STREET, past the JAVA THE HUT and YOGALICIOUS directly across the street.

THE VOICE (CONT'D)

This is the story of one of my favorite girls. It is a love story. It is Mercy's story.

The bird flies into a nest in a tree just outside an open apartment WINDOW.

THE VOICE (CONT'D)

And now it's time for her to wake up!

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The bedroom is bright, bohemian and eclectic. The bird nests outside the window. A graduation cap and gown hang on the closet door. MERCY, (25, bright, bohemian and eclectic) slumbers.

In the living room are stacks of books, magazines, a stand-up paddle board and a yoga mat. 2000's photo on the bookshelf of a young family. Recent photo of Mercy, her sister, JUSTICE, (30) with niece, CHARLOTTE, (9) and nephew, MAX, (7).

Recent polaroids of her extended group of friends are hung on the fridge. Boxes of designer bakery cupcakes sit on the kitchen counter with a HAND-WRITTEN NOTE that reads, "Don't forget!"

An ALARM sounds from the bedroom.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The alarm still ringing showing 10:40am. A text comes in to Mercy's phone on the bedside table from Justice.

JUSTICE (TEXT BUBBLE)
Don't worry about getting the
coffee. I'll bring it. See ya in a
bit!

A moment later a second text comes in.

JUSTICE (TEXT BUBBLE) (CONT'D)
Don't be late!

Mercy reaches over for the phone and it falls to the floor, still buzzing.

MERCY
(groggy, into her pillow)
Okay! I'm up!

EXT. CALIFORNIA HOLISTIC INSTITUTE (CHI) - DAY

1985 blue Mini Cooper pulls up and parks outside the building. Mercy gets out wearing her unzipped grad gown. She grabs her cap and sees the cupcakes have gotten smashed in the shuffle.

MERCY
Son of a biscuit!

Mercy rearranges the cupcakes in the boxes and licks a finger full of frosting as she goes running up the path, carrying cupcakes.

MERCY (CONT'D)
Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!

INT. CALIFORNIA HOLISTIC INSTITUTE - DAY

Graduation ceremony is underway. Mercy passes off the cupcakes to Justice, who is standing at the back of the room.

JUSTICE
(whispers)
Hey. Listen...

Mercy looks around the room for someone.

MERCY

Where are they? They aren't late
are they?

Justice wipes the frosting off of Mercy's face with her
thumb.

JUSTICE

Mom called me.

MERCY

Wait...what?

JUSTICE

Mercy. They aren't coming. They
waited to call me so they wouldn't
upset you.

MERCY

(loudly)

Wouldn't upset me?!

The kind and nurturing instructor, SARAH, mid 30s, pauses for
a moment and glances back at Mercy. Behind her there is a
banner that reads "We Receive Light to Give Light." Several
people in the audience glare back.

SARAH

We are so glad *all* of you could be
here today.

Mercy glances over at Sarah, embarrassed. Sarah offers a
comforting smile.

SARAH (CONT'D)

As massage therapists, the body is
our guide. We don't have the power
to heal anyone ourselves. Our job
is simply to help the body heal
itself.

Justice looks at Mercy with a comforting glance, puts her
hand on Mercy's shoulder.

JUSTICE

This is *your* day. Forget about Mom
and Dad. Don't let them ruin it.

Justice draws Mercy in to a side hug.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

I am so proud of you! Now go!

Mercy zips up her gown as she joins her fellow grads up front. She picks up a candle off her chair just as GRAD ONE next to her turns and lights Mercy's candle.

GRAD ONE

We receive light to give light.

Mercy, the last grad to light her candle holds it at her heart's center looking out into the audience. She takes a deep breath.

MERCY

We receive light to give light.

Mercy sees Max and Charlotte in the audience and smiles at them making funny faces. And then bursts out in a giggle.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOLISTIC INSTITUTE, RECEPTION - DAY

Grads and guests are mingling around hors d'oeuvre tables. The cupcakes are set up on a cupcake tree next to boxes of coffee with the label "Java The Hut" on them. Mercy stands holding her diploma talking to Sarah.

SARAH

You did it!

MERCY

Thanks, Sarah. But seriously, it's just massage school. I mean, c'mon, I left my MBA program at Brown for this. My parents are super proud.

SARAH

They should be proud. Anyone can learn to massage, but **you** have a real gift.

Mercy looks at Sarah quizzically and takes a step back.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You have a sensitivity to people that is rare, a way to listen to the body. You must continue to develop it.

MERCY

You are one of the best teachers I've ever had. You just,
(beat)
Genuinely cared about me as a human being.

They give one another a hug.

SARAH

Mercy, you are worth being cared
for.

A rush of people brush by interrupting their moment. Mercy
turns and looks back at Sarah, smiling.

Mercy greets her family: Justice, Charlotte, Max, LEWIS, (32,
ginger haired, tech-geek) JASON, (29, fit and extroverted)
stand chatting with Mercy's friends CHRISTY, (30s, Korean-
American, spontaneous) & STEVE, (30s, peaceful, timely, likes
the color yellow.)

CHARLOTTE

Yay! Auntie Mercy!

Max tackles her with a hug. Charlotte joins in.

MERCY

Thanks, guys!

Mercy messes with Max's hair.

CHRISTY

Darling, we are so proud of you!

Mercy gives hugs and kisses to Christy & Justice. Lewis and
Jason, clearly a couple, smile.

LEWIS

Congratulations, Sweetheart!

JASON

Yeah, Baby! We are so proud of you!

Jason squeezes Mercy in a hug and picks her off the ground.

MERCY

Awww, thanks guys!

Laughs and smiles exchanged.

CHRISTY

So, we heading out now?!

MERCY

Oh yeah!

JUSTICE, MERCY, CHRISTY

Girls' Night!!!

Justice gives hugs to Max and Charlotte and passes them off to Lewis.

JUSTICE

Have a great night with your dad
and Jason, sweeties. I'll be home
before bedtime.

Christy kisses Steve goodbye, he holds her waist. Mercy hugs the kids and put her grad cap on Max as she leaves.

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

The ladies have gathered on a blanket with food spread out, nearly completed. Laughing.

CHRISTY

Jack-n-Coke Slurpees, Mercy? Where
did you ever come up with that
idea?

MERCY

I know, right? They're so good.

Mercy glances over her shoulder and sees a yellow Beach Patrol Xterra driving past. She raises her Slurpee and waves.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Don't you want some?

CHRISTY

Nah. I'm good. I'm detoxing for the
month so I'm gonna stick to my
coconut water.

JUSTICE

Ok, ok. I have one last present,
and this one is so you are all
ready for your new life to start
tomorrow!

Justice hands Mercy a small wrapped box. She opens it. Inside are business cards. **Mercy Massage Therapy: Mercy Whitman, LMT** with the Yogalicious logo, Venice Beach, California, and website.

MERCY

Ahhhh! Look at that, I'm licensed!
I have letters after my name!

Mercy gives a card to everyone.

JUSTICE

It looks so good with your logo,
Christy! Like it was always meant
to be!

MERCY

They're perfect! Thanks, guys!

CHRISTY

You're welcome, Love! And I already
have a few clients from the studio
who have booked you out this week.

MERCY

Amazing.

CHRISTY

Well, I'm one of them!

JUSTICE

I can't afford you any more, I have
a business to run and mouths to
feed you know.

MERCY

I could *maybe* give you a discount.
Maybe.

Justice raises her slurpee.

JUSTICE

To the world's best little sister
anyone could ask for. You are
confident and strong. You are
determined to let go of what
everyone else wants for you,

Mercy clears her throat.

MERCY

(under her breath)
Mom and Dad.

Everyone laughs in acknowledgement. Justice nods.

JUSTICE

And you pave your own way no matter
what anyone thinks, and that is
what I love about you.

MERCY

I learned that from you.

JUSTICE

Well, hopefully, all of my screw ups have helped you learn to get more things right than I did.

The girls laugh with Justice.

CHRISTY

Yeah. That was one form of gay marriage I could *not* support!

JUSTICE

C'mon! I didn't know Lewis was gay! We were at Christian college!

MERCY

Everyone knew Lewis was gay!!

JUSTICE

Well, Lewis didn't let on.

MERCY

He did. You just couldn't see it. But then again, he didn't want to see it either.

CHRISTY

Sleeping with your college roommate, Sweetie, it's called a "condom".

JUSTICE

It just happened!

(beat)

It also happened to be the first night I tried tequila.

CHRISTY

That must have been some tequila!

JUSTICE

It happened one time!

MERCY

And then you *married* him!

JUSTICE

I know! I was just doing what...

MERCY

...What Mom and Dad told you to do.

(mocking her dad)

"We wouldn't want the Whitman family name tarnished."

JUSTICE

(laughing)

Well, we messed that up for them pretty bad. Which is probably why they don't like us all that much.

MERCY

What's not to like?!?

CHRISTY

Not living out of your Truth has a tendency to create a lot of discomfort for you and everyone around you.

JUSTICE

Exactly! And *that's* why I thank God every day for my divorce!

CHRISTY

Yeah, so does Lewis!

MERCY

No kidding! And Jason too!

Everyone nods. Laughs. Justice turns toward Mercy.

JUSTICE

Yeah, but, without that decision, I wouldn't have my beautiful babies. So for that I going with gratitude. Even if we are an unconventional family.

CHRISTY

To unconventional families!

Christy raises her coconut water to toast. Justice and Mercy clink their slurpees.

MERCY

To unconventional families!

JUSTICE

To unconventional families!

Justice gets a text, checks her phone, realizing the time.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Good. Right. Well, I need to leave. Lewis will have just finished bath time and I will have one disappointed little boy if I don't make it home to read the next chapter of *The Hobbit*. The trolls are about to turn to stone, so ya know...

CHRISTY

Crucial.

JUSTICE

Yes. Very.

The girls start gathering the leftovers into the picnic basket and fold up the blanket. Mercy notices the sun nearly setting.

CHRISTY

Wow, that's gonna be gorgeous!

MERCY

I think I'm gonna stay a bit longer and catch the sunset. I'm a bit... overwhelmed.

CHRISTY

Don't worry, Girl! The next thing will lead you to the next thing. You just be sure to enjoy *this* moment.

JUSTICE

See you tomorrow; you're gonna be great. Love you.

MERCY

Love you.

Mercy hugs the ladies good-bye and walks toward the ocean as Justice and Christy head to the parking lot.

EXT. BEACH SUNSET - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy closes her eyes, stands in "tadasana" and breathes slowly with intention. She raises her hands over head on the inhale and brings her hands to heart center in "namaste" on the exhale. She opens her eyes looking toward the sunset.

MERCY
(whispering softly)
Thank you.

She stands, looking with wonder and gratitude, in silence, as the sun sets. There is an unusual flash of light as the sun goes down.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
(cheery)
You're welcome.

A wave crashes. Mercy is caught by surprise thinking she heard something and gasps with an inhale. She holds her breath, looks around to see nothing and then shakes it off exhaling slowly. She stands curiously in that moment and then turns to walk back to her car, glancing one last time over her shoulder and shaking her head.

MERCY
What the... What was that?!

FADE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Workers are hanging up a banner under the Yogalicious studio sign that reads "Mercy Massage Therapy. Grand Opening! New Client Special \$129/hr"

Window washers are cleaning the Java The Hut windows and a few homeless people are packing up their shopping carts. A business man exits Java The Hut, holding the door to let a mom and her baby out, and then leaves in a sports car. Mercy pulls up in her Mini and takes the parking spot. She gets out of her car disheveled.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Quarters?

MERCY
What?

She looks around Main Street. She notices a couple squirrels, the mom pushing her baby in a stroller, and some immigrant workers are speaking in Spanish. She notices a HOMELESS GUY, 60s, a ways off.

MERCY (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Oh my god. I am going crazy.

Mercy checks her watch and glances at the parking sign "2 Hour Parking. 10AM to 6PM." She grabs her yoga mat, passes the meter and heads in the coffee shop.

MERCY (CONT'D)
(whispers to herself)
Don't forget! Don't forget! Don't forget!

INT. JAVA THE HUT - MORNING

Mercy enters the coffee shop and greets Justice. She grabs a stack of new business cards and puts them on display by the community board. A balding, Creepy Guy, 40, who just gives off "the ick" notices the cards as he enters behind Mercy.

CREEPY GUY
Oh, I'll take one of those. I could use a good rub down!

Mercy grimaces. Creepy Guy gets in line.

MERCY
Ewwww...
THE VOICE
Ewwww...

Mercy pauses for a moment. Looks around and sees attractive NATE, 45, Irish owner of The Empty Flask & wearing a company t-shirt, who just observed that encounter. He smiles.

NATE
Top o' the morning, Mercy.

MERCY
Morning, Nate. Anything get out of hand last night at the bar?

NATE
Nothin' I can't handle!

Nate winks, passing her on the way out. Mercy blushes, juts behind the counter and puts on an apron to help Justice, on register, with the morning rush. CLARKE, (32, muscular, black) is making drinks. CLARE, (a small framed, fragile, older woman, resembling Jane Goodall) stands at the counter.

MERCY
What can I get started for you?

CLARE
I'll take a skinny hazelnut latte.

MERCY
Extra foam this time?

CLARE

Yes, please! Wow, how did you remember that? I even forgot to ask for it.

MERCY

It's a gift!

Clare heads over to wait for her drink. Mercy turns toward Clarke.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Mornin' Clarke!

CLARKE

Mornin' Sunshine!

Mercy teases with Clarke pestering and poking him and then palpates a muscle on his back and digs her thumb into it.

MERCY

Oh, man! You got something going on right there, Clarke! Your trapezius is not happy to see me. A little stressed out?

CLARKE

Nah. No stress. But I didn't get too much sleep last night, maybe that's it.

MERCY

Could be. Oh, were you up working out again?

Clarke glances over his shoulder at Justice clattering dishes. He smiles, she blushes. Mercy is clueless.

CLARKE

Yeah. Yeah, you could say that.

MERCY

Did I miss something?!

CREEPY GUY

Yes. My order.

MERCY

I'm sorry, sir. What would you like?

INT. JAVA THE HUT - LATER

Mercy stands wiping down a counter. Only a few customers in the shop. The television in the corner plays an entertainment news feed. A "middle school classic" starts playing. Mercy turns to notice.

MERCY

Wow, it's been so long since I've heard that song.

She begins singing along sarcastically and dramatically. One of the customers laughs at her. She blushes.

ANNOUNCER

28 year old, Singer/songwriter, Stanner Collins, the former childhood star and son of rocker, Seth Collins and the late country music icon and activist, Marion Lacey, is reportedly staging his comeback tour this month.

(beat)

Neil Lacey, Stanner's uncle, and his father Seth's former manager is taking over management for the upcoming tour. Our own Jayne Gable met up with Stanner at a charity event last night in Hollywood.

JAYNE

Stanner, we hear big plans are in motion for your comeback tour, is that correct?

On the TV, in the background, NEIL, (52, executive type) stands talking on his phone and checking his watch.

STANNER

"Comeback Tour" makes me sound old, Jayne. I just needed to take some time to focus on my sobriety. But yeah, our tour begins in a couple weeks and I'm looking forward to getting back on the road...

Mercy continues cleaning the counter. Half-paying attention to the report.

JUSTICE

Oh hey! Look at that. Stanner Collins. Man it's been a long time. He's looking good. Wow. Ya know he lives around here?

MERCY

Really? No. I didn't know that.

JUSTICE

Yeah, Nate at The Empty Flask used to tell me stories of him getting completely sloshed, back, well, before...

MERCY

Probably *why* the flask is empty.

On the TV, family photos and pictures of Stanner's "glory days" flash. Then a clip of Stanner's CMA acceptance speech.

STANNER (O.C.)

(slurring)

I'd like to thank my father for this one. To the great Seth Collins. Rocker and legend. I wouldn't be who I am without him. I did it, Dad. Can you see me now?

Stanner stumbles off the stage drunk.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

After winning his Country Music Award for Song of the Year, at age 18, it was Stanner's father, Seth Collins, who influenced his drinking after the tragic passing of Stanner's mother, Marion Lacey, just one year before...

MERCY

Just like his father. What a waste!

JUSTICE

Yeah. Well, c'mon. The guy's been through hell. You gotta give him a break.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

After nearly a decade in and out of rehab, Stanner appears to have gotten his life back on track. But many people still wonder if it's only a matter of time before...

MERCY

I dunno. What's the point of fame and fortune if you are just gonna waste your life like that?

JUSTICE

This isn't about Stanner Collins,
is it? Just because one guy turns
out to be a thoughtless jerk,
Mercy, doesn't mean ALL men are.

MERCY

That does depend on how you define
the word "man".

JUSTICE

It was a complete betrayal for
Michael to cheat on you at Brown.
You were right to leave him! And
I'm glad, 'cause it brought you
here. But not all men are like
that.

Justice turns towards Mercy and grabs her from behind in a
humorous embrace.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

You just need to be adored!

A clamor comes from the back room. Clarke has clanked a few
clean milk carafes bringing them to the front.

MERCY

Yeah, I'm not holding my breath
that a man like that even exists in
real life.

Justice glances over at Clarke who gives a look & wink. Mercy
still clueless.

JUSTICE

Believe me, they exist.

MERCY

I think I've been ruined for love.

The interview has ended and something else comes on the TV.

CLARKE

You're not ruined Mercy,

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You're late.

MERCY

What did you say, Clarke?

CLARKE

You're not ruined?

Mercy turns and sees Clarke. Wondering. She notices the time.

MERCY

Oh shoot! I'm gonna be late for
class. Again! *What* is my problem?!

She rips off her apron. Grabs her yoga mat and bolts out the door.

JUSTICE

Oh! Have fun on your...

The door clanks shut.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

...first day.

Clarke comes and puts an arm on Justice's waist.

CLARKE

Do you think she knows?

JUSTICE

She's clueless!

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Mercy bolts outside. The Homeless Guy, holding a sign reading "quarters" looks at her.

MERCY

Oh, not today. Sorry.

Mercy passes her car without thinking about the meter. She crosses the street to the Yogalicious studio without stopping and frantically enters.

INT. YOGALICIOUS - DAY

Mercy checks in at the front desk with the receptionist JESSICA, (18, young and cute.) The clock reads 10:04am.

JESSICA

You're late.

MERCY

Ugh! Without fail!

Mercy rolls her eyes and takes off her shoes and strips her t-shirt and enters Studio 1. She makes her way to the center of the room where another girl moves her mat to make room. Christy smiles at Mercy and continues her meditation.

CHRISTY

Let's continue taking deep breaths.
You can begin using your Ujjayi
breath if that is a part of your
practice.

Mercy sits down and takes a deep breath.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Now let's move into some cat-cows.
Cat on the inhale lifting your
heart center, and exhale, rounding
the spine into your cow.

(beat)

Today is all about awareness. Your
body is your guide. And it is
always speaking to you, for your
good, to invite you into deeper
healing.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(softly)

Mercy?

Mercy looks to her right where there is the solo MALE YOGI
not looking at her. Curious.

CHRISTY

Now follow Surya Namaskara A into
Eagle pose.

Christy leads the class through Surya Namaskara A into Eagle
pose.

Mercy follows, nervously getting in the pose.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(louder)

Mercy!

Mercy startled, loses her balances and falls to the floor,
embarrassed.

INT. YOGALICIOUS - LATER

Class is sitting on mats, cross-legged, facing center.

CHRISTY

Great work today. Let's finish
class with one united 'Om'.

CLASS

Ommmmmm.

MALE YOGI

Aaaaa-men.

Mercy skips toward the bathroom.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - DAY

Just outside the therapy room Jessica hands Mercy a clipboard.

JESSICA

She's a sweet lady. But she's pretty old and can't hear very well.

MERCY

(scoffs)

It'll be fine! I'm a professional.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Get ready for it...

Mercy spins around like a cat cashing its tail.

MERCY

What? Seriously, *what* is going on?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Watch out.

MERCY

(to herself)

Oh my god, I am going crazy.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY, TREATMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mercy knocks and enters room to find Clare, "skinny hazelnut latte extra foam", buck-naked on the table.

MERCY (CONT'D)

(flustered)

Oh! Oh! Ok. Ma'am, you need to be on the table. **Between** the sheets! Between the sheets!!

Mercy backs out the room closing the door, embarrassed.

CLARE (O.S.)

I only have one breast honey, is that ok?!

MERCY

Ummm. Yeah. We won't be massaging **that** today.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - LATER

Mercy walks robed Clare out of the room and hands her some water and says goodbye. She meets robed Christy in the Lobby.

CHRISTY

I'm next!

MERCY

Oh, thank god, it's you!

CHRISTY

That bad, huh?

MERCY

Not *bad*, but, you have *no* idea!

They hug and Christy walks back with Mercy. Jessica passes with dirty sheets.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY, TREATMENT ROOM - LATER

Christy is face up on the table. Deeply relaxed.

CHRISTY

Mercy, this feels amazing. It's like you have the hands of Jesus or something.

MERCY

Are you saying I have "man hands"?

CHRISTY

No! I mean it feels soooo good. It's just so, healing.

MERCY

Well, thank you.

CHRISTY

Mercy, sometimes you just need to receive the compliment, without the wise-crack.

MERCY

Yeah, I know.

Mercy moves draping to begin stomach massage. She receives a sort of electric jolt in her hands.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

She's pregnant.

MERCY

You're pregnant?!?

CHRISTY

What!? Oh my god, Mercy. *How* did you know that?!

MERCY

Oh my god, wait. What?! You're pregnant?!

CHRISTY

Yeah. But I just told Steve last night. *Nobody* knows that. How did you know that? Was it the coconut water on the beach?

MERCY

What? No! I don't know. It just sort of, came to me. How far along are you?

CHRISTY

12 weeks. But with all the... We just wanted to wait to be extra sure.

MERCY

Christy, I am so happy for you! It'll be ok. This time it'll be ok.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

It's a boy.

MERCY

(stunned)

It's a boy?

CHRISTY

What?! Mercy I'm twelve weeks. Penises don't even start to form til like, week 14 or something.

MERCY

Actually the penis forms at 8 weeks, but I was, just, uh, guessing?

CHRISTY

(teary)

You mean I could have formed a little pee-pee inside me already?

MERCY

Pretty much.

She turns her attention to Christy's stomach. Performs some Energy Massage.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - LATER

MERCY

Visualize your little man just like you tell me to do with my muscles in class. I know it sounds crazy, but it works. Think about him and his tissue healthy and growing. It will bring you good. I just know it.

CHRISTY

I'm telling you, you have Jesus-hands.

MERCY

Man-hands. Thank you.

Christy blows kisses and leaves the lobby.

CHRISTY (O.S.)

God's hands, Mercy! Receive the love, Girlfriend! Receive. The. Love.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Mercy crosses the street, a parked Ducati next to her Mini catches her eye and she does not notice a parking ticket on her windshield.

MERCY

Sweet ride. Sheesh!

She enters Java The Hut.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy heads straight away to the bathroom not noticing the crowd of people to her left by the sofa and chairs.

CLARKE

Mercy! How'd the first day go?!

MERCY

Ohmigosh! I have to pee so bad! Can
you get me a...

CLARKE

Already on it!

INT. JAVA THE HUT ALL-GENDER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy pauses to lock the door.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You wanna double-check that lock?

Mercy has to pee so bad she doesn't stop and enters the
single stall.

MERCY

I locked it. Jeez!

A MAN walks into the restroom and uses the urinal letting out
a sigh. He looks around and notices Mercy's shoes in the
stall. Mercy freezes.

STANNER

Sorry mate, didn't know this was a
private one.

MERCY

(grunting as if a man)

Uh. Yeah. No problem, dude.

The man looks a bit bewildered and leaves after washing his
hands. Mercy freaks out in the stall as if silently shouting.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy walks out the bathroom covering her face. She walks by
the counter and grabs a coffee she believes to be hers and
exits the shop. Stanner is in the corner signing an
autograph, notices Mercy (and her shoes) leave.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy drops her bag in the car and notices the parking
ticket. Facing the street, holding her coffee she opens it
bummed and realizes it's for \$73.

MERCY

(to herself)

Seventy three bucks? Dagnabbit.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
That's a lot of quarters.

In frustration Mercy turns around in a flash, looking up to the sky.

MERCY
God! *What* do you want with me?!

Stanner is standing by his Ducati facing Mercy.

STANNER
(southern drawl)
Well, Darling, I generally like to let the ladies I encounter, relieve themselves in private if given the choice.

Mercy is flustered. Embarrassed. Stunned. Realizing it is **the** Stanner Collins.

STANNER (CONT'D)
It's not everyday I get the privilege to take a leak right next to someone so lovely,
(imitating her man-voice)
Dude.

Stanner laughs. Mercy is humiliated but laughs along.

MERCY
Oh, my god.

STANNER
And, I think you grabbed my coffee.
That is, if your name is,

He turns to read the cup which looks like "Meray".

STANNER (CONT'D)
"Meray"?

MERCY
It's a 'C'. Clarke has horrible penmanship. My name is 'Mercy'.

STANNER
Mercy? Great name. Unusual. My name's Stanner.

Mercy glances at the cup she is holding that says in very clear penmanship "Stanner".

MERCY

Yeah. Um. I see that now. It's nice to, uh, meet you?

They shake hands. Mercy pauses. Mercy feels a electrical jolt in her hand and pulls it away awkwardly.

STANNER

Don't worry, I washed 'em.

MERCY

Yeah. No. I know. I mean, I heard you wash them. I'm...

(softening)

This is just really, awkward. I wasn't yelling at, you, just so you know...

STANNER

Who were you yelling at then?

MERCY

I can't really explain it. But I, think I am going a little crazy.

STANNER

I can see that.

MERCY

What?

Stanner motions to Mercy's hand holding the envelope.

STANNER

Parking ticket?

MERCY

Uh? Yeah. It's ridiculous! Seventy three bucks! I mean, c'mon!

Stanner checks his watch and then looks up at the sign. He moves toward Mercy, they exchange beverages. There is a chemistry.

STANNER

They are notorious about that around here.

MERCY

I know! It's ridiculous.

STANNER

Did you just run out of time?

MERCY

No. I actually didn't put any,

MERCY (CONT'D)

THE VOICE

Quarters.

Quarters.

MERCY (CONT'D)

...in the meter.

Mercy glances around frantically.

STANNER

Huh? What is it?

MERCY

What? Oh! Nothing. Sorry.

Stanner pulls the parking ticket out of Mercy's hands and places it back on the windshield.

STANNER

Well, listen, it seems this will adequately cover your parking for the entire day.

Stanner looks into Mercy's eyes and leans in whispering in her ear.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Let me take you for a ride.

Stanner pulls back and grabs his helmet offering it to Mercy.

STANNER (CONT'D)

You look like you could use some fresh air.

Mercy is stunned. But curious. She takes a deep breath.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You can trust him.

Mercy glances back toward The Empty Flask where Nate is talking to the Homeless Guy. Then back at Stanner.

MERCY

Well, why not?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Enjoy yourself, Sugar.

MERCY

Oh my god, I *am* crazy!

STANNER

Trade me. I'll get ya another.

Stanner notices people starting to stare, takes the coffees, hands Mercy a helmet and tosses the coffee in the trash.

Mercy puts on the helmet and Stanner starts & revs the engine. Mercy climbs on the bike and puts her arms around Stanner. She holds on tight as they pull out on Main Street.

EXT. PCH - AFTERNOON

Stanner and Mercy ride North up the PCH heading to Malibu.

EXT. MALIBU PIER, MALIBU - LATER

Mercy and Stanner are sipping green juice from "The Farm" and strolling back down the pier.

STANNER

So, Mercy, that's an unusual name.
Where did it come from?

MERCY

Takes one to know one...Stanner?

STANNER

Don't be smart, with me!

MERCY

Oh, that would be like asking me
not to be human!

STANNER

Seriously though, how'd you get
your name?

Mercy grins. Stanner jokingly shoves Mercy, acting playfully. Passers by stare at him and take selfies.

MERCY

My parents. My sister's name is
Justice.

STANNER

Justice? Really. Mercy and Justice?

MERCY

I know. Don't even get me started.
They're super religious, and not in
a good way.

(MORE)

MERCY (CONT'D)

If we had had a brother they probably would have named him "Condemnation!" ...We don't talk all that much anymore.

STANNER

Why is that?

MERCY

I'm not exactly their prize daughter. Actually, neither's my sister. I think we just, disappointed them, with who we became.

STANNER

And who did you become?

MERCY

Free. Independent.

STANNER

And how can *that* be such a disappointment?

MERCY

Because I'm not like them.

STANNER

Well, how are they?

MERCY

Stable. Secure. Safe.

STANNER

And you don't want those things?

MERCY

It's not that I don't want those things, it's that I want to have those things and still be, myself. Just to be loved for who I am right now, ya know?

STANNER

I'm sorry you didn't have that.

MERCY

Well, what about you? Do your parents love you that way?

Horried realizing how far down her throat she just shoved her foot, Mercy retracts.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I am so sorry. I...I...

STANNER

It's ok.

MERCY

I wasn't thinking. I swear, I have a medical condition!

STANNER

Really?

MERCY

Well, I think I do. Whenever I open my mouth, it get's me in trouble.

STANNER

Sounds pretty serious.

MERCY

I'm afraid it's terminal.

Mercy is still horrified and humiliated. Stanner smiles.

STANNER (CONT'D)

It's ok. Seriously. I know you didn't mean anything by it.

MERCY

I'm sorry.

STANNER

Stop apologizing.

Stanner shoves Mercy playfully. She nods and blushes.

Stanner stops walking and looks off toward the ocean, deep in thought.

STANNER (CONT'D)

There was a time, when all I ever knew was that feeling of deep acceptance.

(beat)

I mean, sure, other people seemed to love me for what I did or because of my family name, or our money.

(beat)

But my mother really grounded me in her love. Her love protected me. And for so long it's all I knew.

Stanner's voice trailed off. Mercy compassionately reaches up and gently touches Stanner's shoulder and lets her hand stroke his arm.

MERCY
That's beautiful.

STANNER
Well, it's gone now.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Mercy, look at him.

Mercy looks puzzled then glances up at Stanner catching his gaze for a moment. Then he looks away nervously. She touches him again and he looks back at her.

MERCY
Hey. Thank you.

STANNER
(emotional, defensive)
For what?

MERCY
For telling me your story.

Stanner softens, grabs Mercy's hand to lead her off the pier.

STANNER
Here, come with me. You hungry?

MERCY
Always!

EXT. FOOD TRUCK, MALIBU PIER PARKING LOT - LATER

Mercy and Stanner are waiting in line for their order to be ready.

MERCY
Um. Why are there horses painted on the outside of this taco truck? That's just weird.

STANNER
Oh, that's because these are horse-meat tacos, didn't I tell you?

Mercy stunned looks like she is about to throw up.

MERCY

Gross! Yeah, no. You failed to mention that.

STANNER

That's why I brought you here. Best horse-meat tacos in Southern California. Why do you think there is such a long line?!

He grabs Mercy by the shoulders flirting. She looks horrified.

STANNER (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. You're hilarious!

Stanner awkwardly stops and drops his arms. He notices another customer forgot his Coronas and he grabs them to hand it to the guy. Stanner notices overweight, PAPARAZZI 1 & PAPARAZZI 2 taking photos of him.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Oh shoot. That is not gonna be good for me.

Stanner calls out to the guy in the food truck.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Can we get that order to go please, Jorge? Thanks, Man!

(to Mercy)

C'mon, you okay to go back to my place? It will be quieter.

MERCY

Sure.

Stanner grabs their food order and puts a \$100 in the tip jar. They both hop on the bike and speed away.

PAPARAZZI 1

I got it. Oh man this is gonna be gold!

PAPARAZZI 2

Who was the girl? Did you notice the girl?

PAPARAZZI 1

Really? Notice *that* girl. Must've been his cousin or something, 'cause she did not look like any of his others.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stanner unlocks the door and opens it to let Mercy in. She is stunned at his gorgeous, modern, beach-front property. She immediately goes to the balcony to see the ocean.

MERCY

Oh, my god! This is beautiful!

STANNER

Yeah. Thanks.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Yeah. Thanks.

MERCY

(giddy)

You could practice yoga out here there is so much space. And I can't even imagine waking up to the sound of the ocean every single morning?!?

STANNER

I like your enthusiasm.

MERCY

I love the ocean. I just feel like it, speaks to me, or something.

Mercy puzzled. Begins to connect dots. Curious.

STANNER

Well, right now, my stomach is speaking to me. I'm starving. C'mon inside, let's eat.

(shouting)

Horse meat tacos!!!

Stanner goes back inside. Mercy stalls for a second. Turning to the ocean, taking a large inhale.

MERCY

Thank you.

The balcony light flickers. Mercy pauses and notices. She heads inside.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE - LATER

Mercy and Stanner half way through dinner are talking, laughing, sharing a moment.

STANNER

So you are a masseuse?! That must be nice.

MERCY

Massage Therapist.

STANNER

What's the difference?

MERCY

Well, a 'masseuse' seems to be someone you might find on Craigslist, who gives, uh, a little extra, if you know what I mean.

STANNER

Ahhhh! You mean 'The Happy Ending!' You don't like happy endings?

MERCY

That. Uh, No comment.

STANNER

(teasing)

No comment? C'mon!

MERCY

Ok, no, I would never give happy endings...I'm not *that kind of* professional.

STANNER

You're not that kind of professional?

MERCY

I'm not even that kind of girl! You have no idea.

STANNER

What? About people assuming you do one thing when really that's got nothing to do with who you really are? I might have a small idea about that.

MERCY

Oh. Yeah. True. You're right.

Stanner looks at Mercy and grins deflating the tension.

STANNER

Ok, so why Massage Therapy?

MERCY

I dunno exactly. I moved to LA to get away from a bad break-up, and I sorta feel like it found me more than I found it.

(beat)

Going to school was like a year of body-therapy. I didn't even know how much I needed it.

STANNER

I'm sorry about the bad break-up.

MERCY

Are you though?

STANNER

Ouch.

MERCY

I'm sorry...

STANNER

There you go apologizing again!

(awkward pause)

Someone didn't treat you well?

Mercy nods, reflective. The mood shifts.

STANNER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

MERCY

Now you're apologizing!

Stanner bashful, shrugs. There is an awkward silence. Mercy fiddles with her food. Stanner just watches her, pondering.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I love massage. To be able to touch other people and bring healing. It is very, mystical.

STANNER

Mystical? How so?

MERCY

I can't explain it exactly. It's like when I touch someone's body,

Mercy reaches over and pauses just shy of touching Stanner's hand.

MERCY (CONT'D)

May I?

Stanner is taken aback but impressed that she asked and didn't just try to get something from him for her own gain. ***This one is different.*** He nods consent. Mercy makes contact.

MERCY (CONT'D)

...and there is this connection,
this energy, it's like I can hear
their body tell me what it needs.

There is a pause in the moment. Then Stanner pulls his hand back and nervously leans his face on his hand.

STANNER

(teasing)

So you hear things?

MERCY

Yeah. I guess I do.

STANNER

Then you *are* crazy?

MERCY

Yeah. I guess I am, smart aleck.

STANNER

Hey, I think everyone could use a
little more crazy in their lives.

Stanner grins at Mercy and winks. Mercy smiles, blushes and laughs to herself. Stanner stands up to clear the dishes.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Here, you finished? Let me show you
something.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Stanner is leading Mercy through a tour of his house.

STANNER

So, the bathroom is down the hall
and that way is the garage. And
then in here is what I wanted to
show you...

Mercy looks in Stanner's personal spa room and gasps. It's a beautifully tranquil massage room with gray comforter, indoor waterfall, mood lighting and fully stocked.

MERCY

Oh my goodness, are you kidding me?! It's gorgeous. You must get massaged all the time in here!

STANNER

Never used it once. I've never had a massage.

MERCY

What?!? Why!?

STANNER

I have a hard time trusting people, enough to, let them into my house.

MERCY

You let me into your house...

STANNER

Yeah, I did.

MERCY

(giddy)

Would you let me massage you?

Stanner pauses.

STANNER

No. What, now?

MERCY

Yes! Now.

Mercy gets into professional mode, goes around the room turning everything on, warming up the lotion and table.

STANNER

Uhhhh....

MERCY

I'm going to step out of the room, sir, and you can undress to your comfort-level and go face-down between the sheets.

Stanner looks stunned, but eager.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Why else would you have shown me this room if you didn't want a massage? Get on **my** table, I'll be right back.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, MASSAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy enters quietly and begins placing her hands on Stanner in silence. Holding some aromatherapy under the face-cradle.

MERCY

I want you to start by taking
three, deep breaths. Now, let it
all go...

Mercy works in silence. Very in-tune to Stanner's body. Keeping very professional, she holds back a smile when she undrapes his leg and realizes he has gotten completely naked, exposing his glutes as she works on his leg.

Mercy bites her lip and continues massaging professionally. Stanner is relaxing, letting her do her work.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, MASSAGE ROOM, LATER

MERCY

Alright, now I'm gonna have you
flip over and come down on the
table.

STANNER

You're very good.

MERCY

I am. Now, be quiet.

Stanner flips over and Mercy can see how well-endowed he is beneath the thin sheet. To keep her composure, and not blur any lines, she places a blanket over his waist to cover him.

As she comes to the hands and arms she is working with her eyes closed. Stanner opens his eyes and looks curious and tenderly on Mercy. The chemistry is building.

Mercy finishes with a face and scalp massage. She is drawn in to Stanner as she caresses his forehead, cheeks, chin and ears. Mercy wraps up the session by grounding out, placing her hands on Stanner's shoulders.

MERCY (CONT'D)

There you go, Mr. Collins. How are
you feeling?

STANNER

You have just ruined me for any
other massage. That was remarkable,
Mercy. Thank you.

MERCY

It was my pleasure, Stanner. You're welcome.

Stanner jumps off the table naked and puts on his pants before startled Mercy can leave the room.

STANNER

Ok. Now it's your turn.

MERCY

What?

STANNER

Ok, fine. It's *my* turn. I get to massage you.

MERCY

You want to massage me?

STANNER

Yeah. C'mon! I want to practice some of your tricks! Get on *my* table!

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(whispering)

Trust him.

MERCY

Ok, but you need to leave the room.

STANNER

As you wish.

Stanner leaves the room and Mercy is freaking out. She undresses, leaving on her panties, and crawls between Stanner's used sheets.

MERCY

Oh my god!

Fidgeting, settling and then breathing in his scent on the sheets, Mercy places her face in the face-cradle and exhales. Stanner knocks on the door and enters.

STANNER

You all set?

MERCY

Yeah, I'm good.

STANNER

(mocking)

Now all you need to do is let go.

Stanner, shirtless and barefoot, begins massaging Mercy pouring oil down her back and noticing her tattoos. He is clearly enjoying this work, but keeps it above board. After some time, Mercy starts snoring. Cute snores. Stanner grins. Completely charmed.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

The waves crash outside and light fills the bedroom. Mercy opens her eyes at the sound of a crash and bolts up in bed. She reactively grabs her boobs and looks under the sheet, realizing she is undressed yet alone in Stanner's disheveled bed.

Mercy hears music coming from far away and gets out of bed looking for her clothes. She spots Stanner's t-shirt from yesterday and puts it on, pausing to smell it. She swoons.

Looking around the walk-in closet she notices PHOTOS on the dresser of a small child with his mother. She grabs a pair of sweats from a drawer and puts them on.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy wanders down the hallways following the music and comes to a cracked door. She looks in to the studio and sees shirtless Stanner from behind playing a song (the beginnings of "Mercy's Song") on his guitar and creating a melody.

Mercy is captivated. She listens in.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Mercy looks on as the door creaks open alerting Stanner to her presence. He stops playing.

STANNER

Good morning, Sunshine!

MERCY

Uhhhh... morning.

STANNER

You're wondering what happened last night?

MERCY

Did we.... ?????

STANNER

Have our hands all over each
other's bodies all night long? Yes.

Mercy is stunned silent.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Did we sleep together last night
making passionate love for hours?

Mercy looks at Stanner nervous and uncertain.

STANNER (CONT'D)

No. I've been in the studio all
night, working on a new song.

MERCY

(relieved)

How...?

STANNER

I started massaging you last night,

MERCY

I remember that part...

STANNER

And then you fell asleep. Hard.

MERCY

Hard?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Hard.

STANNER

You were snoring.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Cute snores!

STANNER

And I couldn't wake you, so I just
wrapped you in the sheet,

MERCY

You wrapped me in the sheet?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

I was there, he wrapped you in the
sheet. No peeking!

STANNER

And carried you to my bed,

MERCY

(swooning)

And you carried me to your bed?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Yes, ma'am. All the way down the hall. He even got you an extra blanket and sang you a lullaby, just like his mama used to.

MERCY

You sang me a lullaby just like your mama did?

STANNER

What the heck? Of course not! Why on earth would you say that?

MERCY

(horrified)

I am so sssorr... oh... ok.

Mercy catches herself apologizing and stops. Stanner notices.

STANNER

It's fine. Stop. Your body just needed the rest.

MERCY

Oh my God. I feel bad. I should go.

STANNER

Don't feel bad. You can stay.

MERCY

No, I really should go. I have, overstayed my welcome.

Mercy begins to turn to leave and Stanner puts down his guitar to follow her.

STANNER

Mercy!

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

STANNER

Here. Let me at least take you back to your car.

MERCY

Ohhh, kay.

STANNER

It's 6:00am. I've been up all night. Can we please just have a cup of coffee first?

Stanner pulls out two mugs, pouting playfully. Mercy rolls her eyes and nods. Stanner pours from a fresh pot, handing the cup to Mercy.

MERCY

I can't say 'no' to coffee.

Mercy smells the aroma and takes a sip. Stanner smiles.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN

Stanner's bike is parked next to Mercy's Mini. Streets are still empty. Stanner gives Mercy a proper hug and plants a kiss on her head. Nervously she leans back against her car.

Stanner reaches over to the windshield grabbing the parking ticket and slips \$73 cash into the envelope. He hands it to unsuspecting Mercy.

MERCY

Oh, right. Ugh.
(to herself, whispering)
How am I gonna pay this?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You'll see.

Mercy pauses and musters her courage. Looks at Stanner. She reaches out and touches the top of his hand resting on her car door.

MERCY

I, had a really good time with you.

STANNER

I had a better time. I haven't had a day so normal in a really long time.

MERCY

Thank you for trusting me with,
your...everything.

STANNER

Yeah, I don't really do that much.

(beat)

I guess there's just something
about you.

MERCY

I told you I have magical powers.

In the silence, Stanner leans in to kiss Mercy's cheek; she turns her head abruptly brushing by his lips, startled, she bites down and makes his lip bleed.

STANNER

Ouch! What are you, part vampire?

MERCY

I am so sorry. Oh my god, I'm such
a klutz!

STANNER

I'm fine. I was joking. It's not
that bad.

Stanner looks at Mercy shakes his head and brushes hair off her cheek with his finger. She fidgets, changes the subject.

MERCY

Hey. My sister is having a few
people over for a barbecue later
today. If you want to come?

STANNER

That sounds nice.

Mercy grabs a pen out of her car and scribbles on one of her new business cards. Hands it to Stanner.

MERCY

I can't promise how 'normal' it
will be, but, here. Two o'clock.
Only if you want to make it.

STANNER

I'll try.

Stanner grabs Mercy's face and holds it steady as he leans in and kisses her cheek. Mercy closes her eyes and exhales.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Mercy Whitman.

MERCY

Goodbye,

Mercy turns and gets into her car and starts her engine.
Stanner nods, revs his bike and speeds off.

MERCY (CONT'D)
Stanner Collins.

She glances down in the envelope and sees the \$73.

MERCY (CONT'D)
Holy crap.

Mercy sits in shock, unable to suppress her joy.

EXT. MOTHER'S BEACH, VENICE - MORNING

"H2O Flow" class in session on the water.

CHRISTY
Breathe into the posture and become
more aware of what your body is
telling you.

Mercy is on her Stand Up Paddle-board in downward dog.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Mercy?

Mercy checks her balance startled.

CHRISTY
Ok. Now move through your last
vinyasa and prepare for savasana.

The group moves through the final flow and lays on their
boards.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)
The energy of Life connects us to
all things; to nature, to other
people and to God. The Divine-
Indwelling is always seeking to
communicate with us. All we have to
do is be present to the connection.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Mer-cy?

Mercy closes her eyes in savasana.

MERCY (V.O.)
Oh my god, you are never gonna quit
with this are you?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Mercy?

MERCY (V.O.)
(hesitant)
Fine. Yes?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
I love you.

Mercy opens her eyes, shocked.

MERCY (V.O.)
What?

Mercy closes her eyes.

MERCY (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I am crazy.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
I want you to know that I love you.

Mercy opens her eyes, looking around.

MERCY (V.O.)
Who are you?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
You know who I am.

Mercy closes her eyes.

MERCY (V.O.)
Am I going crazy?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
No, Honey, you're not crazy. The
fact that you are finally aware of
me makes you more sane than you
have ever been.

MERCY (V.O.)
That does not make any sense!

THE VOICE (V.O.)
It will.

MERCY (V.O.)
Um. Can I ask you a question?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Always.

MERCY (V.O.)
Why is this happening to me?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
(laughing)
You're my favorite girl!

Mercy opens her eyes, shocked.

MERCY (V.O.)
Your favorite girl? Yeah. Not the
answer I was expecting.

CHRISTY
Alright, let's wiggle our fingers
and our toes as we move out of
Savasana and carefully come to a
seated position on our boards.

Mercy seated on her board with hands in "namaste".

MERCY
(whispering)
Oh my God, I am crazy.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Exactly. All of my favorite ones
are, m'dear.

MERCY
Not. The. Answer. I. Was.
Expecting.

CHRISTY
Today let's open our hearts to
continue listening. Namaste.

MERCY
(scoffs, smiling)
Namaste.

EXT. MOTHER'S BEACH, SHORELINE - DAY

Mercy and Christy are cleaning off their boards as the class
dismisses.

MERCY
So, I know this may sound crazy,
but do you think this In-dwelling
Divinity can actually talk to us?

CHRISTY
What do you mean?

MERCY

I mean can you actually hear his
Voice?

CHRISTY

His Voice. Her Voice. No voice.

Mercy shoots a glance at Christy intrigued.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

I suppose it is different for
different people. Divinity speaks
to me through nature. Through art.
Through Love. And through people
who bear it's Light.

MERCY

Hmmm...

CHRISTY

There have been many enlightened
people throughout the ages who have
documented audible communion with
the Divine, but that is a rare
gift.

MERCY

Why do you think it is so rare?

CHRISTY

I don't think people listen for
that Voice anymore. Our lives are
too crowded. Too chaotic. A Voice
like that could only be heard by
the person who truly listens. And
even then it would be a gift.

They continue cleaning gear. Pick up their boards and start
heading for the car. Mercy is quiet.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Why do you ask?

MERCY

No reason. Just curious I guess.

EXT. JUSTICE'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY

Friends & family are gathering at Justice, Lewis & Jason's
happy, chaotic and bohemian home for a summer barbecue. Max &
Charlotte are running through the yard playing with Jason,
Clarke and the dogs. Lewis & Steve are heating the grill
while Christy, Justice and Mercy are prepping the food table.

JUSTICE

So?

MERCY

So what?

JUSTICE

So when are you gonna tells us
about your date?

MERCY

What date?

JUSTICE

With Stanner Collins!

MERCY

How did you know about that?!

JUSTICE

Because the entire shop was pressed
against the window drooling
watching the two of you talk and
then speed off on his bike!

CHRISTY

GIRL!!! Oh. My. Goodness, Mercy!
The Stanner Collins? I can't even
believe it! Why didn't you tell me?

JUSTICE

Yeah, and when I locked up at 10PM
your car was still parked outside!

THE VOICE (V.O.)

That's true.

Mercy looks around; tries to shake it off. The Voice is
EVERYWHERE!

CHRISTY

No! Mercy! Tell us everything!

JUSTICE

Yeah. Like how did that happen? I
thought you couldn't *stand* that
guy.

MERCY

(defensive)

I never said I couldn't stand the
guy.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Yes, you did.

MERCY

No. I take that back. I *couldn't* stand that guy. But. I, just, I didn't know him then.

CHRISTY

And you *know* him now?!

MERCY

No! I don't *know* him.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

I'd say you're getting to know him.

MERCY

I mean I know him now, but I don't *know* him!

CHRISTY

(whispering)

Did you end your "man famine"?!

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(giggling)

Your "Man famine?!" That's cute!

JUSTICE

Christy!

(to Mercy)

Well. Did you?

MERCY

No! No. He's not like that.

CHRISTY

What do you mean he's not like that? He's Stanner Collins. He's like that!

MERCY

Well, I'm not like that.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

That is true.

MERCY

Besides, the guy I was with yesterday, he's just, not like that.

JUSTICE

Well, what's he like then?

MERCY

He's, different. He's kind. He's quiet. He's funny. Like really funny! I don't know what it was, he was just, nice.

CHRISTY

Oh my. Well, did you hold hands or kiss, or anything?!

MERCY

No, not really.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(clears throat)

Mmmmmhmmmm...

MERCY

Peck on the cheek. But that's probably just cuz he's Southern. He was a gentleman.

JUSTICE

So if you didn't sleep with him and you didn't make out with him,

CHRISTY

And you didn't drink with him, because he's sober, right?

JUSTICE

What exactly did you *do*?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(tickled)

You gave him a massage...

MERCY

We just, went for a ride and hung out.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

And you fell asleep in his bed.

CHRISTY

That's gotta mean something!?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

And he might be falling for you.

MERCY

I don't know about that.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

I do!

MERCY

He wouldn't want me. Just like he's not gonna show up here today.

JUSTICE

Here?

MERCY

Oh. Yeah. I might have invited him here.

JUSTICE

You what?!

MERCY

It's not like he's gonna come.

JUSTICE

Here???

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You sure about that?

MERCY

I was saying good-bye.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

This morning.

MERCY

And I, all of a sudden invited him to come over.

Mercy shakes her head trying to dismiss the voice in her head.

CHRISTY

Well, is he coming?

MERCY

No! I mean, why would he want to?

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Girl. We gotta work on that ego.

Outside the gate the sound of a motorcycle revs.

CLARKE

Uh...Mercy? I think you're
boyfriend is here.

MERCY

What?

Stanner comes to the gate. Mercy runs over and meets Stanner
and lets him in.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You came!? I can't believe you
came!

STANNER

I guess I was curious to see what
your idea of "normal" is like.

MERCY

Funny. Here, let me introduce you
to my family.

Mercy leads Stanner toward the group.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Hey everybody! This is, um, my,
this is Stanner.

Everyone waves and greets Stanner from a distance. Jason
comes over.

JASON

How did you meet *him*? Girl! He is a
scoop full of deliciousness!!

MERCY

We, uh, hung out yesterday, and
well, after the stuff I've seen him
eat, I figured he could use a good
home-cooked meal.

JUSTICE

Smooth Mercy.

MERCY

Stanner, I would love for you to
meet my sister, Justice Whitman.

STANNER

Justice, good to meet you. Oh, I've
seen you at the coffee shop. Right?

JUSTICE

It's a pleasure to meet you.

Mercy and Justice smile.

MERCY

Stanner, this is Christy, who I think you might know?

STANNER

You own the yoga place?

CHRISTY

That's right. Do you practice?

STANNER

Yeah, no. I'm, well...

CHRISTY

Oh, you're not a tree-hugging vegan?

STANNER

It's my dad who'll think I'm becoming a hippie-dippy, tree-hugging vegan if he finds me practicing yoga!

CHRISTY

Hasn't he ever heard of Sting? So many guys practice these days. That's not even a thing anymore.

STANNER

It will probably always be a thing for my dad.

CHRISTY

And don't even get me started on how Sting says yoga has enriched his...

MERCY

Christy! Can we at least pretend to be normal for 5 minutes before you go all tantra on him?!

STANNER

I don't mind her going all tantra on me...

STEVE

I might mind!

CHRISTY

Yes! Let's talk about the divine-awakening!

(MORE)

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

(to Mercy)

Oh I like this one!

Christy shakes her head at Mercy, laughing, while pulling Steve into a cuddle. Stanner holds back a grin, winks at Mercy who blushes embarrassed.

MERCY

This is Christy's husband, Steve.

STEVE

Pleased to meet you.

Stanner looks a little nervous after his last comment. Steve shakes Stanner's hand and pulls in to a bro-hug.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Christy knows what she's talking about. You should try the yoga.

STANNER

I might have to now!

Mercy, oblivious to their secret conversation, leads Stanner to the kids.

MERCY

Here's my niece and nephew,
Charlotte and Max.

Max comes running at Stanner with a karate chop.

MAX

Hi-yah!! The name's 'Max'. But I go
by 'Axe' for short.

STANNER

Axe, huh? With a name like that I'm
surprised you don't go by "*The*
Axe"?

MAX

(gasping)

The Axe! I. Love. That!

Max goes running off. Mercy smiles at Stanner, curious.

STANNER

What? It's cool for U2's "*The Edge*"
and he's a grown man.

Mercy shakes her head, grinning.

CHARLOTTE

Hello, Stanner! My name is
Charlotte and one day I'm going to
be a famous writer.

STANNER

A writer, huh? Wow. What kinds of
things do you write?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, lots of things. Right now I'm
working on my memoir.

STANNER

Memoir? Really. How old are you?

CHARLOTTE

Nine years old. What? It's not like
I sit around playing stupid video
games all freaking day. I've been
living!

JUSTICE

Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

What? It's true!

JUSTICE

Language!

CHARLOTTE

Oh. Sorry.
(to Stanner, whispering)
But it's true!

STANNER

Well, then. Famous writer it will
be. Could I have your autograph?

CHARLOTTE

Mmmmm...Ok.

Charlotte pulls out a sharpie pen and her notebook and signs
a page and gives it to Stanner. He puts it in his pocket.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Now it's your turn.

Charlotte hands Stanner the pen, pulls her shirt back
slightly and pushes out her chest.

MERCY

Charlotte!

JUSTICE

Charlotte!!

CHARLOTTE

What?! He's a rockstar, right?!
Don't all rockstars sign their
names on girls' boobs? I saw it on
TikTok.

Char!!

JUSTICE

LEWIS

Charlotte Esther!!

MERCY

Well, then you'd have to actually
have boobs, sweetheart!

CHARLOTTE

I do too have boobs! I've been
growing them out for years!

Jason rushes over interrupting, pulling at his shirt.

JASON

Oh!! I want him to sign my boobies!

LEWIS

Jason! You are not helping!

JASON

What?! I want in on the action!

MERCY

Jason! Stanner, you don't have to,

STANNER

Here, Charlotte. How 'bout you're
arm? I'll put it here like a
tattoo.

CHARLOTTE

That's fire!

JUSTICE

Char, will you *please* keep your
clothes on in front of our guests
for the rest of the afternoon?

Out of nowhere Max goes running through the yard wearing
nothing but tighty-whites and a super hero cape.

MAX

Ahhhhhh! Nobody messes with The
Axe!!

CHARLOTTE

He can practically run naked
through the yard and you're worried
about a little nip slip?!

(fuming)

You all are ruining my creative
process!

Stanner whispers to Mercy.

STANNER

You have a great family!

MERCY

I warned you we were crazy!

STANNER

Yes, you did. Still. You have a
great family.

Mercy blushes, leads Stanner over toward where Lewis is
sitting.

MERCY

This is Lewis, Max & Charlotte's
dad. And this is his partner,
Jason.

JASON

Did Mercy tell you that in college
I had a poster of you hanging...

Stanner notices Jason's shorty shorts and his "Ruff & Ready"
t-shirt.

STANNER

No, she failed to mention that.
(changing the subject)
What do you do?

JASON

I am a personal trainer to both
canines and homo sapiens. Do you
need any working out?!

Mercy gives Jason the stink eye totally mortified.

JASON (CONT'D)

What did I say?

MERCY

Stanner, Lewis here works for
Google.

Lewis shakes Stanner's hand. Stanner nods.

LEWIS
Good to meet you.

Mercy grabs Stanner's hand and leads him through the house.

MERCY
Here. Come with me, I'll show you
around.

LATER

Mercy leads Stanner back outside to the tables.

MERCY (CONT'D)
So yeah. Lewis & Jason live in the
house with the kids and Justice
renovated the garage to remain
close. It's a little weird. But it
seems to work. I mean, having both
their mom and dad in the same
place? It's the best divorce I've
ever seen.

STANNER
That's remarkable.

MERCY
It's not always easy, but they make
it work. Definitely an
unconventional family!

JUSTICE
Dinner's ready!

EXT. JUSTICE'S HOUSE - LATER

The family is finishing up desert. Conversation slows.

MERCY
Well, I hate to cut out early, but
I gotta get home.

STANNER
Yeah, I should probably split too.

JASON
Oooooooh!! You hunnies have plans?!

MERCY

No. I've reached my limit. I'm gonna need a quiet night after spending time with you ya-hoos.

STANNER

I get that. I'm that way too.

JUSTICE

Well if you have to go, be sure to take the flowers, I picked them out especially for you!

Justice pulls the bouquet of Gerber Daisies out of the vase and hands them to Mercy. Stanner takes notice.

MERCY

My favorites. Thank you.

CHRISTY

Stanner, it was lovely to meet you. Come by anytime for a class. We'd love to have you. We are starting another Stand Up Paddle Board, "H2O Flow" Yoga session again if that's more your thing.

STANNER

Thanks. That sounds great, but I think I better start off on solid ground, before I hit the waves.

Everyone says goodbye. Stanner and Mercy head out.

EXT. JUSTICE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

STANNER

Thanks for inviting me. This was great.

MERCY

I'm glad you came.

Stanner winks at Mercy. Mercy grins bashfully.

STANNER

So, things are getting pretty hectic with the tour starting. But I want to be in touch. If, you want that to?

MERCY

Oh? Uh, yeah. Ok.

STANNER

I will, I promise. This is nice
with you. Goodbye, Mercy.

Stanner gives Mercy a huge hug and as he is squeezing her he plants a tender kiss on her right temple. He smiles at her, gets on his bike and leaves. Mercy watches him go.

MERCY

(sighing)

Thanks, for paying my parking
ticket...

INT. YOGALICIOUS - EVENING

Christy and Mercy are the last two in the studio putting away yoga props.

CHRISTY

Hey. How's Stanner doing?

MERCY

I haven't heard from him. It's been
over a week, but he did say he was
gonna be busy.

CHRISTY

What's wrong?

MERCY

What? Oh. Nothing.

CHRISTY

No, what is it? You're afraid of
something.

MERCY

Stanner seems to be a great guy,
and I like him. I'm just worried it
will turn out like with my ex,
Michael and the other girls. I
don't want to be hurt again like
that.

CHRISTY

If you want to be open to love you
have to risk being hurt.

Mercy is hesitant. Christy pushes.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

The path to true love can sometimes be a painful process. But it teaches you what you are really looking for.

MERCY

Everything belongs, huh?

CHRISTY

That's the pattern. Hey, just keep listening. The Universe is working for your Good. Trust it.

MERCY

I'm trying.

Christy pats Mercy on the back as Mercy picks up her yoga mat and bag.

CHRISTY

Don't be so hard on yourself. Keep breathing. I'll see you tomorrow.

MERCY

Good night.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DUSK

Mercy wanders to her car and sees a leaflet on her windshield. She pulls it off the car and glances around checking to see if they are on other cars as well.

Leaflet reads: Seeking Silence in the City? Retreat Center. 3401 Serra Road Malibu, CA *Solviture ambulando "It is solved by walking."* -St. Augustine

MERCY

"It is solved by walking?"

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Sounds interesting to me.

EXT. PCH - AFTERNOON

Mercy is driving up the coast listening to an old Stanner album in her Mini and singing along to a super fluffy, mindless, candy-floss song.

She turns off the PCH up the road to the SERRA RETREAT CENTER. A few Franciscan monks walk the grounds. A gardener is tending the plants.

Mercy parks near the end of the crowded parking lot. She walks over toward the Stations of the Cross and sees the Labyrinth.

INT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER AA MEETING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A group in a circle are going around sharing stories. JAVIER, 27, shaved head, Latino, with tattoos is sharing. BROTHER DOMINICK, early 40s, sober, laid-back surfer type facilitates the discussion.

JAVIER

Yeah, so it's been rough. Some days are better than others. But I have a little girl to be living for. So keep riding my butt to stay on the straight and narrow.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Thank you, Javier. Your life is a Light, and I see you growing brighter every day. Ok. Who's next?

STANNER

I'll go.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Thank you, Stanner. What's on your mind?

STANNER

I'm Stanner. I've been sober now for 1 year 3 months 7 days.

ALL

Hello, Stanner.

STANNER

Right. So things have been going well. Really great actually. I've been extremely busy gearing up for these new shows. Yet when I think about this tour coming up, I don't know. Something is, off.

BROTHER DOMINICK

What do you think it is?

STANNER

I'm afraid.

BROTHER DOMINICK

What do you think you're afraid of?

STANNER

Afraid I will get on the road and want to drink. Afraid I won't be able to do this thing I love without drinking. Afraid that I'll just become like my father, and fail.

BROTHER DOMINICK

What do you think made your father a failure in your eyes?

STANNER

He gave up. He quit.

BROTHER DOMINICK

So what does that say to you?

STANNER

To never give up. I mean, I know he loved my mom. But it's like when she died, that love sort of, ruined him. And he quit living. He quit trying. He changed.

BROTHER DOMINICK

And he took you with him.

STANNER

(defeated)

Yeah. He did.

BROTHER DOMINICK

So what can you do about that now?

Stanner sits in silence for a moment.

STANNER

I guess I have to stop giving him the power to hurt me anymore.

Stanner glances out the window and sees, but cannot recognize Mercy in the distance. He stares at her, peaceful.

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, LABYRINTH - AFTERNOON

Mercy begins walking the labyrinth in silence, slowly.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Mercy.

(pauses)

Believe that I have Good for you.

(MORE)

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You never have to go back to
unLove.

She puts her hands at "namaste" and breathes deeply, nodding.

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, AA MEETING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The AA Meeting empties out as Stanner hangs back to talk to Brother Dominick.

STANNER

Thanks, Brother Dominick.

BROTHER DOMINICK

God is always inviting us to live
in freedom, and in the grace of a
second chance. Your music is a
gift, so enjoy it.

STANNER

I appreciate that.

BROTHER DOMINICK

God is always with you, seeking to
help you, have your eyes and your
heart open to his Divine messages.

Brother Dominick puts a fatherly arms on Stanner's shoulder.
A moment of connection sinks in. Stanner receives the
kindness.

BROTHER DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Peace be with you, my brother.

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Mercy walks through the parking lot. She sees a group of
"gangster-like" Latinos and white guys, one being, GARRETT,
smoking and talking. She gets in her car and tries to start
the engine. It turns over, but won't start. The engine makes
a loud noise and smokes.

MERCY

Seriously?! This cannot be
happening.

Stanner comes out of his meeting and passes the guys who
motion to Mercy's car.

STANNER
(laughing)
Having trouble?

MERCY
You scared the bananas outta me!

THE VOICE (V.O.)
I'd say!

STANNER
I just...

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Awe, that's sweet! He's trying!

MERCY
Sheesh! I have never seen you
before. How am I now running into
you everywhere I go? That's creepy!

STANNER
I have meetings here.

MERCY
Meetings? With those guys?

STANNER
A.A.

MERCY
(softening)
Oh. Right. Sorry.

STANNER
Stop apologizing!

MERCY
I'm sorry!

Mercy is clearly distraught.

STANNER
Mercy! What's wrong?

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Mmmm. Now that's a man.

MERCY
I don't know. It won't start.

STANNER
Did you, run out of gas?

MERCY

I'm not *that* stupid!

STANNER

Calm down, Princess. But tell me, the voices, in your head, you know, your imaginary friend, he didn't warn you about this?

MERCY

Hah. Hah. No. *She* failed to mention it.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

That is true.

STANNER

She huh? Okay. Good to know what we are dealing with here.

Mercy smiles annoyed. Stanner is enjoying the banter.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Ya know if I heard voices, this is the kinda thing I'd want them to warm me about.

MERCY

Thanks. I'll pass that along.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Noted.

STANNER

Here. Pop your hood. Let me look.

Stanner opens the hood and smoke pours out, he turns to the group of guys.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Hey, Javier! Help me out over here?

The group walks over. Mercy gets out of the car.

MERCY

You don't have to...

STANNER

Garrett, Javier, guys, this is Mercy. She's a, personal friend.

They all nod. Mercy feels a little uncomfortable but settles thinking Stanner called her a "personal friend". Javier looks under the hood.

JAVIER

Your water pump is cracked, you
can't drive it. I could fix it this
evening if we got it back to my
shop.

He notices Mercy's Mini and then glances to Stanner's truck,
a ginormous Ford, F150 Hybrid, and then to the group of guys.
Javier grins.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Mmmhmmm, you're welcome.

Mercy bites her lip realizing her predicament.

EXT. PCH - LATER

Stanner drives Mercy in his truck south on the PCH with the
Mini in the truck-bed.

INT. STANNER'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy is looking at all the state-of-the-art console
features.

MERCY

Oh my god! Look at this thing! It's
like you could shoot rockets out
the back or something!

STANNER

(laughing)

Yes. Yes, you can.

Stanner laughs. Mercy fiddles with the stereo turning the
volume up. A rough cut of "Stanner's Song" is playing.

MERCY

Is that you?

STANNER

Yeah, it's a new track. Lemme put
the radio on...

MERCY

No! Leave it. I want to hear it!

STANNER

Have you heard my music?

MERCY

Your Stanner Collins, who *hasn't* heard your music?

STANNER

Well, do you like it, then?

MERCY

Ummmmmm....

STANNER

(sarcastic)

Tell me what you *really* think.

MERCY

I don't know. Your old stuff just seems kinda, flat.

STANNER

Flat?

MERCY

Yeah. Well, like not off-key. But like, I don't know, I'm not musical. But like, lacking depth, maybe.

STANNER

Lacking depth?

MERCY

Yeah. Like, what I mean is that, I don't know. It's like, well, just listen.

She listens to a few bars.

MERCY (CONT'D)

There. It's like you are singing out of your pain. Out of your loss. There is depth. Like you sing with a certain authority now, that you didn't have before. Or maybe you had it, but it was hidden away somewhere.

STANNER

Hmmm.

MERCY

It's beautiful, really. Or, at least I think so. It just, speaks to me, more than the old stuff.

STANNER

Great. Just what we need, more things "speaking to you." I'm changing it.

He hits the radio and A-ha's "Take On Me" comes on.

MERCY

Oh! I love this song!

She starts singing & seat-dancing hysterically. Stanner shakes his head and laughs at her.

STANNER

You are one crazy girl.

Mercy blows him a kiss sarcastically, laughing.

EXT. VENICE ALLEY - EVENING

Stanner's truck is parked with an empty truck-bed.

Stanner holds Mercy's hand and leads her down a back alley.

STANNER

Here. Come with me. There's something I'd like to show you.

Mercy intrigued follows along.

INT. VENICE WEST - MOMENTS LATER

Stanner and Mercy enter a Club and are escorted to a private table. A jazz quartet are deep into a set. Stanner is greeted by a few old timers. Mercy is charmed and welcomed feeling like family.

They steal glances. Catch feelings. **Both wonder what any of this means, because it's like nothing that has happened before.** The band plays on.

INT. STANNER'S TRUCK - LATER

Stanner's truck is parked outside Mercy's apartment building.

STANNER

Well, thank you for indulging me, my mom used to...she, jazz was her thing.

MERCY

No. That was incredible. I loved it. And thank you for saving me.

Stanner looks at her curious.

MERCY (CONT'D)

My car! I have no idea what I would have done with out you today. So weird how that happened.

STANNER

(nodding)

Yes. A strange coincidence.

MERCY

The Universe has quite a sense of humor, I'm finding.

Stanner pulls out his phone to text Mercy. Her number is already in his phone.

STANNER

Right. Well. Here's Javier's direct number. You can call him tomorrow about your car.

Mercy's phone dings. She plays it cool, but is excited she just got a text from Stanner's cell.

MERCY

Thanks.

STANNER

So, uh. You know I'm leaving soon.

MERCY

Tour. Right. Yep. That'll be fun for you.

They both sit in an awkward silence.

STANNER

Yeah. So. I don't know, I just.

MERCY (CONT'D)

It was really, I'm so glad I...

MERCY (CONT'D)

No. You go.

STANNER

Ok. Listen, if you, uh, stop hearing voices and need someone else to talk to. The road can get kinda, boring.

MERCY

Boring? I can't imagine you getting bored anywhere. I mean you're on tour! Isn't that "Living the Dream"?

STANNER

Yeah. Being stuck on a bus with a bunch of smelly dudes day after day is a lot less glamorous than it actually sounds.

MERCY

Yeah. That doesn't sound so...

STANNER

Anyway, I'll text you. We could talk, if you want to.

MERCY

Oh. Um. Ok, yeah. I want to!

STANNER

Cool. I'll hit you up.

Stanner leans over and gives her a hug. They pause briefly as their cheeks brush one another. Stanner leans back and then moves in for an intentionally sweet kiss on the lips.

STANNER (CONT'D)

G'night, Mercy.

MERCY

(breathless)

Goodnight, Stanner.

The chemistry is electric. Mercy gets out of the truck and heads to her door.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You like that one, huh?

Mercy turns back toward Stanner's truck & waves.

MERCY

Yeah. I like that one.

Stanner waits til she is inside, safe. Then leaves.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY - DAY

Mercy is finishing massaging side-lying Christy with a growing baby-bump to soothing spa music.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

Stanner plays an acoustic song. On the bus to himself.

MONTAGE: "Stanner's Song"

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - DAY

Mercy finishes with a client and grabs her stuff and checks her phone. She finds Stanner's contact and sends a text, which is subtitled on the screen:

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
Hi.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Stanner checks his messages and sees Mercy's message. Replies back:

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Hello, Princess.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - EVENING

Mercy is helping customers and sees her phone vibrate. She checks the message and sees Stanner's reply and giggles.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
What are you doing right now?

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stanner receives the text and texts back.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Texting you.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy receives it. Shakes head. Blushes. Replies.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
Duh! Try again!

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stanner smirks. Some band-mates enter the room.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Just pre-show rituals.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy checks her phone and sits in the weight of the response.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
Sounds important. I won't disturb
you then. Have a great show! *smile
emoji*

Mercy pulls her phone to her chest over her heart breathing in the moment.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mercy sits on the toilet, peeing.

MERCY (TEXTING SUBTITLE)
Today we begin Question of the Day:
(QotD): What is your greatest
irrational fear? Mine is that
something will come up out of the
toilet and bite me in the bum.

Mercy glances over her shoulder down at the bowl as she gets off the seat. Mercy flushes the toilet and comes out of the bathroom in bathrobe and hair up in a towel she flops on the bed looking at a TikTok of Stanner's band.

INT. VENUE - NIGHT

Stanner is on stage and the band is singing full version of the same "Stanner's Song".

During drum solo Stanner checks phone from side-stage and replies:

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Leprechauns. They're really
freakin' creepy.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Stanner receives text and smiles.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
You're funny. *laughing emoji,
heart emoji*

NEIL, the band manager enters and throws a tabloid on the table with the photo of Mercy & Stanner by the food trucks.

NEIL
We need to talk about this.

STANNER
What's this?

NEIL
That's what I'm asking you.

STANNER
She's just a friend.

NEIL
(angered)
Not the girl!

STANNER
Then what? That was *months* ago. I completely forgot about that.

Stanner picks up the paper and stares at Mercy's picture.

NEIL
Don't mess with me, son. Our careers are connected!

STANNER
Nobody is jacking up their career, Neil. It was just a beer. And it wasn't even mine. I was handing it to the guy. C'mon man, you know I'm sober. Why did they release this now?

NEIL
Because your tour is successful! Everybody loves you again, and so the paparazzi would love to create a scandal. You have to understand this is *not* good for us, Stanner.

STANNER

Ok Neil, I get it. Enough. Stop acting like my dad already.

NEIL

Well maybe if he did, I wouldn't have to.

STANNER

You son-of-a-...

Stanner hauls off to punch Neil in the face. His BANDMATE comes in and pulls him back.

NEIL

You Collins' boys are not tanking my career again.

STANNER

You wouldn't even have a career if it weren't for us. I don't care if you're family. You leave me the hell alone!

BANDMATE

Stanner! C'mon man. Get your head on. It's showtime, mate. You ready?

STANNER

Yeah, I'm ready. Ugghghhh!!

Stanner wipes his jaw and then turns to leave.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Mercy walks down the street in the fall, to her car while texting. Passes a billboard for upcoming movie "Sunset Sympathy". School bus passes her on the street. She passes the Homeless Guy.

MERCY

Oh! I have some quarters for you today!

Homeless guy nods saying nothing. They share a smile for a brief moment. Her awareness goes back to her phone and she hits send.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE) (CONT'D)

QOTD: How old were your parents when they met?

INT. VENUE, OFF STAGE - NIGHT

Stanner sends a text then hands Neil his phone. Neil's lip is bandaged. Stanner pats him on the shoulder, clearly they have made up. Stanner grabs his guitar and head out on stage.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
19. Met at a New Year's Eve party.
Love at first sight.

EXT. BEACH EAST OF VENICE PIER - MORNING

Mercy on shore, toweled. Checks her bag and gets her phone. Sits on a towel facing the ocean.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
Where is your favorite place to be
in the whole world?

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Stanner is reading in his bunk. He looks at the message again and replies.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Home.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - NIGHT

Mercy, in "Princess Leia" costume, is serving drinks at a Halloween gathering. She sneaks to a quiet space to text.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
QotD: If you were a superhero what
powers would you want to have?

EXT. VENUE - NIGHT

Stanner reads text while cutting through the crowd of screaming girls after a show and pushes his way onto the tour bus. He sends his reply as he enters the bus.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE)
Invisibility.

Stanner looks up to see his dad, SETH COLLINS, 53, on the tour bus, drunk. Stanner's shocked.

STANNER (CONT'D)
(defensive)
Who let you on here?

SETH COLLINS
I'm Seth Collins, it wasn't that hard.

STANNER
You shouldn't be here.

SETH COLLINS
Your mom would have been proud of you, Son.

STANNER
Don't.

SETH COLLINS
Look at you! I'm proud of you.

STANNER
Proud? Proud! This is pride alright, but it's *not* for me! You're not welcome in this part of my life any more, Dad. Please leave.

SETH COLLINS
But, Son, I...

STANNER
Look at you! You are no *father*. Ruin your own life! I'm not gonna let you ruin mine anymore. Get out.

Seth gets up to leave but turns to give Stanner a hug. Stanner resists. They struggle and Stanner finally pushes his drunk father away.

STANNER (CONT'D)
(Shouting)
Get out! You've done enough.

Seth stumbles off the bus. Neil grabs him and leads him away. Stanner turns angry, riled and punches a wall. He slumps in his chair, looks at his phone and sends Mercy another text.

STANNER (TEXT BUBBLE) (CONT'D)
And super human strength.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mercy awakes to Stanner's second text at 3AM. Smiles and replies.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE)
Invisibility. I love that for you.
Mine would be Mind-reading and
teleportation,
cuz then I could know what you
think all the time and I would come
visit you right now.

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE) (CONT'D)
blushing emoji

MERCY (TEXT BUBBLE) (CONT'D)
I miss you.

Mercy smiles hugs her phone and falls back asleep.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Stanner & band-mates are sitting around talking and laughing. Band-mates are drinking. Loads of girls around. Stanner sees message from dad, deletes it. He then get's a text from Mercy and acts disturbed. Guarded.

Controlling his emotions, he goes numb and lights another cigarette. He does not reply and puts his phone in his jacket.

A model-type girl approaches with a beer for Stanner, seductive. He refuses and kinda shoves her away. His band-mate takes the beer and draws the girl in. The girl turned off by Stanner's response warms up to the bandmate.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - DAY

Mercy comes out of yoga class and checks her phone. No response.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY - AFTERNOON

Mercy checks her phone again. No response.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - EVENING

Mercy checks her phone again. No response. She begins texting and then deletes it, defeated.

INT. VENUE - NIGHT

Montage Song ends and Stanner exits stage. Manager hands him his phone. Sees 4 messages from Mercy & 2 from his dad. Shakes head. Puts phone in back pocket. And a SEDUCTIVE MODEL, (24) greets him and hands him a pack of cigarettes and exits with him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAVA THE HUT - DAY

Mercy looks disheveled, restless, agitated. Justice is there serving customers. An entertainment news report comes on the television, flashing a picture of him surrounded by girls.

REPORTER

Stanner Collins and his band will be taking a brief hiatus from their current "Break Away Tour" to return to LA for a few weeks. This decision comes right after an alleged fight broke out between Stanner and his father, rocker, Seth Collins.

Mercy, forlorn, continues cleaning a counter.

JUSTICE

Hey. Sweetie, c'mon.

Justice pulls Mercy to the back of the store. Clarke takes over serving customers.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

How are you holding up?

MERCY

I just don't get how someone can be so nice and then just disappear. It doesn't make any sense.

JUSTICE

You're not the first person to be ghosted, but I'm so sorry it's happening to you. Maybe it's best to just, let him go.

MERCY

I don't want to let him go. He *IS* a good guy. I know it. I feel it. I...

Mercy glances back to the tv, not wanting to care, but incapable of looking away.

REPORTER

The senior Collins is rumored to be falling back into the alcoholism that devastated him after the tragic passing of his wife, Marion Lacey, in 2013.

JUSTICE

What do you mean you *feel* it?

MERCY

I can't explain it, Justice. It's like I am connected to him. Like, to his energy or something. So I can't just let him go.

(beat)

I feel sick. Like I know he is not in a good place right now. I have to do something!

JUSTICE

What are you going to do?

MERCY

I don't know.

REPORTER

It is believed that Stanner Collins, still maintaining his sobriety will be attending the "Sunset Sympathy" movie premiere tomorrow night in Hollywood, in which one of his songs has been gaining Oscar buzz...

Mercy stares up at the tv in a daze and grabs her bag from behind the counter and leaves the store.

MERCY

I gotta get out of here. I gotta do something.

JUSTICE

Mercy! Mercy! Lord have mercy.

INT. MERCY'S MINI - NIGHT

Mercy pulls up to the theater and looks out on all the glitz and glam.

MERCY

Hello? Are you there?

Nervous Mercy checks her make up in the mirror.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I don't know where you disappeared
to, but I could really use your
help tonight?

Mercy looks around, agitated.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Hello?

Mercy lets out a sigh, grabs her bag and exits the car.

EXT. MOVIE PREMIERE - NIGHT

Celebs, fans, paparazzi & press all crowd & fill the red
carpet and surrounding areas.

Mercy tries to get to a closer view but can't get past the
crowd. She weaves her way along the outskirts until she sees
a service entrance with access to the side. There she sees
Garrett, Stanner's friend from A.A.

MERCY

Garrett!

GARRETT

Mercy? What are you doing here?

MERCY

I came to see Stanner, but I can't
get through.

Garrett looks at her uncertainly, yet tenderly.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Please Garrett. I've got to see
him. Can you help me?

GARRETT

Anything for you, sweet Mercy.
C'mon.

Garrett pulls Mercy beyond the barrier and weaves her through
press, over to a hidden corner before entering the venue.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Wait here. He should pass right by.
And take this, no one will bother
you if you wear this.

Garrett hands Mercy his VIP Backstage Security Pass.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

I'm gonna leave you here. But good
luck with whatever you need to say.
He's a good man, Mercy. Even if he
never lets anyone see it.

MERCY

I saw it.

GARRETT

Yeah, I know you did.

She smiles a knowing smile as he turns to depart. People pass
by in groups. After a few minutes, Mercy sees Stanner on a
video cam in the distance. As he approaches she steps out to
connect with him.

MERCY

Stanner! Stanner!

Stanner turns and notices her in the corner. He's shocked,
but he excuses himself from his entourage. Turns to his date,
the Seductive Model from the show.

STANNER

Give me a minute.

Stanner walks over to Mercy.

STANNER (CONT'D)

(cold)

What are you *doing* here? How'd you
get in here?

Stanner glances down and sees her pass and realizes Garrett
helped her through.

MERCY

I, I wanted to see you.

Stanner just looks at her, annoyed.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I wanted to know why you stopped...
What did I do?

STANNER

(aloof)

You didn't do anything, Mercy. You were just, being you.

MERCY

And you stopped liking me being me?

STANNER

Listen, Mercy. You seem like a nice, girl. You do. But I don't let anyone in. I just don't. That's just me. It's how it works for me. So you are just *never* gonna get what you think you are looking for with me. I just can't give you what you want.

MERCY

How do you know what I want?

STANNER

I know what every girl wants.

Stanner turns to go.

MERCY

Wait!

Stanner stops, turns to Mercy wanting to soften.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I just want you to know that (beat)
I love you. I love you because you are...

STANNER

Are what?

MERCY

(thoughtful)

You just **are**. I've loved getting to know you.

Stanner's gone cold. Walled. Angry. Mercy stands stunned. Tears forming in her eyes. Speechless.

STANNER

How could you even "know me"?
That's crazy.

Stanner sees Mercy tearing up, shaking.

STANNER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Mercy, but you and me,
we're just platonic. There is
nothing here.

Stanner pats Mercy on the shoulder awkwardly. Mercy is in shock. Speechless. Stanner turns and leaves rejoining his group. He whispers something in the girl's ear that he'd come with. She hands him a glass of champagne. He turns and glances back at Mercy, and throws it down in one gulp.

Tears forming in Mercy's eyes, she glances around, staring back at Stanner entering the venue in the distance. Mercy covers her mouth, holding back sobs and runs off the other way. Garrett sees her leave.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Mercy is drunk and is flailing in the moonlight. Drinking straight whisky and screaming into heaven. (Swears) are muffled by the sound of waves crashing on the shore.

MERCY

I hate you! I,
(wave crashes)
...Hate you! How could you let this
happen? Again! Every single time
something good comes into my life
you,
(wave crashes)
...Rip it away before I am ever
happy. Is this a joke? Are you
laughing?

Mercy takes another swig.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Ha! Ha! Ha!
(wave crashes)
...Mercy! My little pawn. My little
puppet! How should we mess with her
today? Ha! Ha! Ha!

Mercy throws the empty bottle into the ocean. Screaming.

MERCY (CONT'D)

(wave crashes)
You! You are not sufficient for my
pain! Why do you always seem to
hurt me? That's it. I am not gonna
believe in you anymore!
(screaming)
Uggggggghhhhh!

Mercy falls over exhausted, weeping. She collapses and passes out on the sand.

FADE TO:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Mercy is asleep on the beach covered in a heavy blanket. She opens her eyes to the sound of music and the waves. She sits up startled and realizes that the Homeless Guy is sitting nearby on the beach playing ukulele and singing to himself.

MERCY

What? What did you do to me? What did you do?

The Homeless Guy looks over at Mercy, but is silent. The empty whiskey bottle sits next to him on the sand. The kindness of his eyes convinces her nothing happened but she is still freaked out.

She gets up to leave realizing he had covered her; protected her. She hands the blanket back to him but cannot thank him. And turns to leave, guarded. Shaken.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Dishes, garbage strewn throughout the apartment. Clothes everywhere. Mail. Disarray. Mercy lays in bed playing through voicemail on speaker.

JUSTICE (V.O.)

Mercy, where've you been?
Everyone's worried. Please call.

CHRISTY (V.O.)

You haven't been to class. Jess has rescheduled some of your clients for this week.

(beat)

I want to give you some time, Love, but we should talk. Get back to your mat. Things will get better.

Mercy deletes them all. She flips through old messages and finds an old one of Stanner's.

STANNER (V.O.)

Hey. It's Stanner. Send me a text when ya get a chance. 310-555-6575. Alright. Hope you're doing well. Bye.

Mercy puts her phone down. Rolls over and lays in bed. Sad. She hears a knock on the door but doesn't answer. Then keys, and the sound of the door unlocking.

CHRISTY

Girl. It's time to get up. You've been in here long enough.

MERCY

Christy, no. I don't want to.

CHRISTY

Well, I don't care what you want. Maybe it's not always about you and the little pity party you've got going on in your head.

MERCY

What? That's not nice!

Christy begins cleaning Mercy's apartment.

CHRISTY

No? Do you know what today is?

Mercy slumps and rolls over in bed looking unsure. Christy comes and sits on her bedside rubbing her pregnant belly.

MERCY

No! Your baby shower??

CHRISTY

Listen. I know your heart is breaking. Right when you started hoping and trusting again. And that is so hard.

Mercy begins crying.

CHRISTY (CONT'D)

Life is a choice, Mercy. And no one can choose it but you. But in choosing to stay here, you are missing out on invitations to find gratitude and love in your life as it is right now.

Christy squeezes Mercy's hand and gives her a kiss on the forehead.

MERCY

I know.

She gets out of bed, takes a deep breath and grabs her bathrobe.

EXT. JUSTICE'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - EVENING

Balloons and decorations fill the patio. Christy and Steve sit with cake and presents all around them. Everyone is gathered. Steve grabs Christy's hand and they lovingly kiss.

MERCY

I have one more gift. Just a little something that has meant a lot to me and I want your little guy to have it too.

She gives Christy a small rectangular package.

CHRISTY

Thank you, Mercy.

MERCY

I couldn't miss this for the world.

Christy unwraps a framed picture of the group with an inscription "Family is Everything" Mercy cracks a smile, and laughs.

CHRISTY

So cheesy! It's perfect!

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

Mercy has gone for a long walk to meditate and be alone.

MERCY

Hi. I'm just gonna assume you can hear me even though you've stopped talking to me.

(beat)

I know I told you to "take a hike" and that I stopped believing. And I'm sorry. Maybe I was a little angry at the time...

Mercy passes a visibly mentally insane, homeless, Venice-type person talking to himself as he passes her on the beach. She laughs to herself.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Ok. So maybe I'm not crazy. But what is it then? Did I make you mad? Do you hate me now?

(MORE)

MERCY (CONT'D)

I just really liked this guy. And it seemed like he liked me too.

(beat)

And I just thought you were doing something good there. Almost like you made it happen. Like it was a gift or something. And then you just took it away. And now he's gone. And you're gone. And I'm all alone again. And it hurts. And I don't know what to do. So I'm just talking to myself like a crazy person! Great.

Mercy passes a couple older ladies who look at her funny. She lifts up her phone and starts talking into it.

MERCY (CONT'D)

(loudly)

What's that? I think I'm losing you. I'll call you right back.

Mercy sneers and smiles at the ladies who look away and keep walking.

MERCY (CONT'D)

On the off chance you can still hear me, will you just tell me what to do? Please?

Mercy breaks down sobbing. The sun begins to set. She stands to watch it. Then turns around and realizes she has walked so far down the beach she is standing in front of Stanner's house in the distance.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Of course I wind up here.

Mercy turns and faces back to the ocean. Lets out a deep sigh and sits down, letting go of all outcomes. She is at peace.

MONTAGE: "SONG OF PARADOX"

INT. YOGALICIOUS - DAY

Mercy sits alone in the studio on her mat seated in meditation. The class begins to fill and Clarke comes in placing a mat down next to Mercy. She smiles.

INT. VENUE - NIGHT

Stanner begins another song. He is singing before a big crowd. Not fully enjoying it like before. Lost in his own world. An air of rawness and vulnerability. A curiosity. A seeking.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY - DAY

Mercy, at peace, is massaging Justice. She finishes face and shoulders. Does a little energy work and then grounds out.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Stanner is in a bar with bandmates, girls, chaos. Drinking, smoking, laughing. Yet a bit distant, distracted, empty.

INT. MERCY MASSAGE THERAPY/ YOGALICIOUS LOBBY - DAY

Mercy is saying good-bye to Clare after a session. Talking to Jessica who is putting out new flower arrangements.

MERCY

You're beautiful, Jess, that color
looks really good on you!

Jessica smiles. Mercy grabs the previous flower arrangement and walks outside.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Clare is seated on a bus stop bench. Mercy approaches, sits next to her and hands her the arrangement.

CLARE

For me?! Oh, aren't these lovely!
(beat)
Mercy, this gift you have, hearing
from God, it's a treasure. Treat it
like a treasure.

Mercy nods, holding it deeply. Clare holds her hand tenderly, as a mother would. They smile and sit in silence, together.

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Stanner sits alone, smoking. Thomas Merton's "No Man is an Island" sits worn but closed on the table. Bottles of beer around. Stanner looks worn and closed.

EXT/INT. MAIN STREET, JAVA THE HUT - DAY

A city bus pulls away as Mercy enters Java The Hut. Christy and Steve sit on a couch drinking coffee, rubbing the belly and reading "Your Pregnancy Week-by-Week." Justice and Clarke are having a bit of a whip cream battle behind the counter. Clarke pulls Justice into an embrace and licks some whip cream off her nose. They kiss. Max and Charlotte enter Java The Hut and give hugs to Mercy, Justice and Clarke.

I/E. VENUE - NIGHT

Getting ready to leave to get on the bus, there is a flood of fans and paparazzi outside barraging Stanner. He goes back inside for a moment as his Manager grabs him to tell him.

NEIL

Stan, it's your dad. We just got reports that he's been checked into St. John's in Santa Monica. He tried to O.D. I've booked you on a flight back to LA tonight. You need to deal with this.

Stanner is stunned. Shocked. Silent.

EXT. JAVIER'S AUTO BODY - DAY

Mercy stops by Javier's shop bringing cupcakes. Javier's daughter is there and they all laugh, eat, lick frosting and just savor the moment. He is a good father.

INT. THE EMPTY FLASK - NIGHT

Stanner sits at the bar. Nate pours him another drink. A newspaper sits on the bar telling Seth Collins' story and his condition. The byline says Stanner hasn't visited and has gone MIA.

[MONTAGE ENDS.]

INT. YOGALICIOUS - NIGHT

The studio is only lit by candlelight. Clock shows that it is nearly midnight. They move through the finishing sequence to the sound of live drumming and then lay down in Savasana. Mercy is content. Peaceful. Herself.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Mercy and Christy notices Nate, shoving Stanner out of The Empty Flask. Stanner stumbles, swearing and shouting. Mercy runs over.

MERCY

Oh my! Christy, come quick!

Christy runs over to help Mercy. Mercy grabs Stanner to help him from stumbling.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Stanner! It's me. Look at me.

STANNER

(slurring)

Oh, I know you!

NATE

That guy's is a jerk! Just because he's a Collins he thinks he can...

MERCY

I've got him, Nate. Please. Stop! Just give the guy a break.

NATE

A break? Do you know what he did to my...

MERCY

Look what he's done to himself, Nate? I'll take care of his tab. Whatever He's done. I'll cover it.

STANNER

(slurring)

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy.

NATE

(softening)

Mercy. I don't know why you do it, that guy's a waste of your time. You're too good for him.

MERCY

I'm not throwing any stones, Nate.

Nate nods. He goes back in the bar. Stanner is falling all over Mercy. And getting all touchy-feely.

STANNER

Whoops. I just touched your boobies!

MERCY

Yes. Yes you did. And now you can stop. Gah you stink!

Mercy pushes his hand away and tries to help him stand but he falls over and pukes in the bushes. He takes her down with him and she sits there holding him. Strong, but uncomfortable. Stanner's passed out.

CHRISTY

What should we do?

MERCY

Here, help me get his phone.

Christy puts her bags down and helps Mercy locate Stanner's phone. Mercy unlocks the passcode on the first try.

CHRISTY

How'd you know that?

MERCY

It's his Mom's birthday. Just a guess.

CHRISTY

Good guess!

Mercy makes a call. The phone is ringing.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Hello? Hi, this is Mercy Whitman. I'm a, friend, of Stanner Collins, and I didn't know who else to call. I need your help.

EXT. THE EMPTY FLASK - LATER

Mercy sits holding Stanner. Stroking his hair, massaging his face and just looking over him. Sad. Sorrowful. Lovingly. Christy has covered them in a blanket and waits along. Nate hands Christy a hot tea and walks back inside. Christy holds space.

MERCY

You have no idea how long I've been wanting to do this. I just never imagined it would be quite like this.

A car pulls up and turns off the lights.

BROTHER DOMINICK
You must be Mercy. I'm Dominick.
I'm so glad you called.

MERCY
Thank you for coming.

Brother Dominick and Christy help Mercy to stand up and get Stanner in Br. Dominick's car. Christy hugs Mercy who keeps staring at Stanner.

CHRISTY
Call me in the morning.

MERCY
Ok. Love you.

Christy leaves as Mercy gets in the car with Brother Dominick.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mercy and Brother Dominick get Stanner settled on his bed. Mercy looks around seeing the memory of waking up in that room.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brother Dominick brings Mercy a cup of tea. They sit at the table together.

MERCY
I really don't know what I would
have done without you tonight.

BROTHER DOMINICK
I'm glad it was you who found him,
Mercy. Others would not have been
as kind.
(beat)
I can see Stanner means a lot to
you.

MERCY
Oh! We're just friends. Or, we
were. Or, I don't know exactly.
Does anyone ever know with Stanner?

BROTHER DOMINICK

Stanner has a lot of people in his life, Mercy. But he has very few friends.

MERCY

He doesn't like to let people in.

BROTHER DOMINICK

And yet, you are the one here with me at this table right now.

MERCY

Yeah. But if he was sober, he wouldn't want me here.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Sometimes the Soul wants something that the body or the mind hasn't yet figured out.

MERCY

I'd like to believe that is true.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Have patience, Mercy. All things are working for Good. Keep your heart open to Love.

MERCY

But what *is* Love, Brother Dominick?

BROTHER DOMINICK

Beauty. Truth. Love. God. If we strip away all the labels. What do we have?

Mercy looks up from her tea with longing, wanting so desperately to believe in the Good.

BROTHER DOMINICK (CONT'D)

My faith tradition believes in the Incarnation of Love, in the power of Jesus Christ. It's not so much that we find Love but that Love finds us. And many times that kind of Love comes to us in the most unlikely way.

Br. Dominick glances over to the bedroom where he sees Stanner asleep, peaceful on the bed. Mercy stares off too.

MERCY

I should go. I love him, but if Stanner wants to stop hurting people he has to want sobriety, for himself. I can't wish it on him.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Don't worry for Stanner. The hands of God are holding him close. What looks like death is usually just the beginning. Take care of *your* heart, Mercy. Love is leading you home.

Mercy grabs Brother Dominick's hands and looks to his eyes, teary.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - DAY

Mercy is making drinks at the counter. Justice & Clarke are working.

Mercy glances outside and sees the Homeless Guy crouched outside the shop. She digs quarters out of the tip jar and then pauses. She goes back and makes two perfect cappuccinos and bags a scone.

EXT. MAIN STREET, JAVA THE HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Mercy heads outside. Sees the Homeless Guy and sits down next to him. For a moment, she is silent.

MERCY

Uh. I brought you some quarters. I haven't seen you for awhile. You been ok?

Homeless Guy smiles. Mercy notices the kindness of his eyes. They sit in silence for a moment.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I, I wasn't sure what you'd like.

Again a silence. Homeless Guy takes the coffee.

MERCY (CONT'D)

And here's a scone. Blueberry, my favorite. I just thought, maybe you'd like a treat?

He takes it, breaks it in half and offers some to Mercy. They sit in silent communion.

Homeless Guy gathers his things and gets up, patting Mercy on the knee. Mercy watches him wander down Main Street.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Remember me?

Mercy recognizes The Voice and is startled.

MERCY
You're back!

THE VOICE (V.O.)
(chuckling)
Back? I never left you. How could I
ever leave you? You are my favorite
Girl!

She sees Homeless Guy glance over his shoulder back at Mercy and winks.

MERCY
Wait. What? Is that you? You have a
really messed up sense of humor!

Mercy stands floored. Bursts into a smile. Thankful.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Darling, if you open your eyes and
look, you can see me *in* everything,
and everyone. Even yourself.

Mercy takes it in. Starting to believe on a deeper level.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SERIES OF BEATS:

- Stanner opens his eyes and sits up in bed sweating, shaking.
- Huddled by the toilet puking. Br. Dominick in the background.
- Stanner screaming and collapsing.
- Stanner sitting in bed, fingering his guitar.
- Sharing a modest Thanksgiving meal with Br. Dominick at the table.

INT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER AA MEETING ROOM - DAY

Stanner and Br. Dominick are sitting facing each other about 4ft apart in the center of the room. Chairs circle them from a distance with Javier, Garrett & others.

The mood is somber. The group are serious as death, eyes closed looking down to their feet. Stanner fidgets and Br. Dominick looks on him with compassion.

BROTHER DOMINICK
What do you love the most?

Stanner flinches at the question and hesitates before answering.

STANNER
My mother.

The room erupts in loud shouting from every man.

ALL
LIAR!

Stanner is startled and looks up glancing at the men, shaken. Br. Dom is holding space calmly.

BROTHER DOMINICK
What do you love the most?

STANNER
My music.

ALL
(erupting)
LIAR! LIAR!!

Again, Stanner is thrown. Shaken. Agitated.

BROTHER DOMINICK
What do you love the most?

STANNER
Myself?

ALL
(shouting)
LIAR! LIAR!!

Stanner can no longer look up, feeling threatened.

BROTHER DOMINICK
(compassionate)
What do you love the most?

Stanner pauses, his gaze goes inward.

STANNER
(defeated)
Alcohol.

A sole hand clap begins from Garrett, joined by other creating a loud rainfall of stomping and clapping.

The men rise to their feet giving Stanner a standing ovation. Brother Dominick lifts Stanner's gaze and helps him to stand.

One by one in silence the men form a line and begin hugging Stanner, holding him close. First Garrett, then Javier and on.

Stanner loses it, weeping. Embraced in the healing of honesty, community, and acceptance.

INT. JAVA THE HUT - EVENING

Mercy looks out the widow to across the street, where on the bus stop bench, sits Clare talking to Homeless Guy who had brought her a bouquet of wildflowers. Mercy smiles.

The halls are decked for Christmas. Everyone is celebrating. Justice gets a call and quiets the crowd.

JUSTICE
Quiet! Quiet! I can't hear. What?!
Now?? Oh my goodness, Ok!

Justice turns to everyone in the shop.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)
Guy! It's time! We're closing early
tonight! We are having a baby!!

Everyone celebrates; gathers their things.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - EVENING

Mercy parks her car and gets out. Heads in to the elevator. In the distance, the sounds of Stanner's bike engine cuts off. He's parked just beside her Mini but a big wall blocks the view. As neither are aware of the other, Stanner runs to the elevator shouting,

STANNER
Hold it!

Mercy fumbles for the button but hits the wrong one and accidentally hits floors 2 and 4 in addition to her floor 5. From inside the elevator she shouts,

MERCY

Sorry! Whoops. Poor guy.

Stanner pushes the button and hops on a new elevator while Mercy's had stopped at floor two. No one entered.

Both elevators are ascending side by side.

Mercy becomes aware of something. She put her hands on the side of the elevator.

Stanner looks over for a second, sees his reflection and fixes his hair. Both doors open on floor 4.

MERCY (CONT'D)

So dumb! Ugh. Hurry up!

Mercy pushes the close button and Stanner pauses for a second gaining his bearings. He crosses the view of Mercy's elevator just as the door shuts.

INT. HOSPITAL, SETH'S ROOM - EVENING

Stanner enters his dad's room and sees him sleeping on the bed. He enters and takes a seat looking at his father. His dad starts coughing and Stanner grabs him a cup of water with a straw and offers it to him.

STANNER

Dad? It's me.

His dad, a little groggy comes to.

SETH COLLINS

Stanner? Did you come here to pay your respects?

STANNER

Sorry, Seth. Not this time.

SETH COLLINS

Then what. What do you want? Maybe it's best if you just leave me alone.

STANNER

No. I'm not leaving you. Not this time.

SETH COLLINS
Why? You should go. I don't
deserve...

STANNER
You don't deserve what? Love? Have
you had your fill? You don't need
any more? Is that it?

Stanner moves in closer and places his hand on his dad's arm.

STANNER (CONT'D)
You had the greatest love any man
has ever known. And we lost her.
But, Love has no quota, Dad.
(beat)
Love never quits. So I'm not going
to either.

Seth starts weeping.

SETH COLLINS
I'm so sorry. Marion, I'm so sorry.
Please, forgive me!

STANNER
She does. I know she does.

SETH COLLINS
How do you know that?

STANNER
Because I forgive you, Dad. And if
I can, then she already has.

Stanner wipes his dad's tears and brushes back his hair.

STANNER (CONT'D)
Now, Shhhh. You need to rest. I'll
be here when you wake up. I'm not
going anywhere, Pops. I love ya.

Seth relaxes his tension and closes his eyes to rest.
Thoughtful, Stanner begins to pace the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL, DUAL ROOMS - EVENING

Mercy & the friend crew is gathered in Christy & Steve's
recovery room. Mercy is cooing over the baby, seated next to
the bed. Blue balloons and flowers line the room.

CHRISTY
Mercy. It's a boy!

Mercy stands in awe.

MERCY
What's his name?

CHRISTY
Jude. Jude Anthony Miller.

MAX
Yeah, his initials spell "JAM"! How cool is that?!

Max makes drum noises with his mouth and pretends to play a drum-solo on the pillows scattered on the bed.

MERCY
Can I hold him?

CHRISTY
Of course!

Mercy picks up baby Jude and touches his little fingers. She kisses his head and begins pacing with him.

Christy's room is directly a floor above Seth Collins' room. Mercy starts pacing the floor holding the new baby boy,

Stanner stands up in Seth's room and is mirroring Mercy's pacing step-by-step. Without pattern, as if a dance; unaware yet drawn by a stronger force.

INT. STANNER'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Stanner brings Seth coffee on the balcony. He throws down a yoga mat and begins stretching while listening to a cut of "Mercy's Song".

SETH COLLINS
So tell me about her?

STANNER
Who?

SETH COLLINS
The girl! The woman in the song.
Who is she?

STANNER
Just someone I met in another life
I suppose.

SETH COLLINS

Stanner. I never knew what Love was until I met your mother. When I encountered her Love, *everything changed*, especially the songs.

Stanner looks at him, apprehensive.

SETH COLLINS (CONT'D)

A love like that ruins you for everything else.

STANNER

How do you mean?

SETH COLLINS

Once you have been around one authentically loving person, there is a part of a Soul that will never be satisfied with anything else.

STANNER

I don't know...

Stanner is thoughtful.

SETH COLLINS

What's her name?

STANNER

Mercy. Mercy Jane Whitman.

SETH COLLINS

Does she make you want to be a better man?

Stanner sits in silence. Nodding. Somber.

STANNER

Always.

SETH COLLINS

Then what are you doing, son?! Get off your butt, be a Collins, and go after her!

STANNER

Now?

SETH COLLINS

Yes! Now!!

Stanner gets off his mat and goes inside, with a grin.

EXT. PCH - DAY

Mercy is driving windows down, yoga mat in car, singing a song, then realizes it's one of Stanner's.

RADIO DJ

*So much for bad blood, it seems
Seth Collins is making a full
recovery, now out of the hospital
and convalescing at his son,
Stanner Collin's home in Venice
Beach. It sounds like a Christmas
Miracle!*

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, LABYRINTH - DAY

Mercy pulls in to the parking lot and sees Brother Dominick waiting there for her.

BROTHER DOMINICK

Sweet, Mercy! Thank you for coming.

MERCY

Of course! I was so glad to get
your call. How've you been?

BROTHER DOMINICK

I've been well.

MERCY

I'm glad.

Mercy hesitates, awkward, but is comforted in Dominick's presence. Brother Dominick leads Mercy on a path to the back side of the retreat center and the stone labyrinth. Dom gets a call on his cell phone.

BROTHER DOMINICK

I have to take this. Do you mind?

MERCY

No, I'll be fine.

BROTHER DOMINICK

I'll just be a few minutes.

Brother Dominick leaves Mercy and she begins to stroll through the Labyrinth.

LATER

She comes back to the beginning and glances down. On the opposite side of the Celtic cross is a Gerber daisy and a note reading, "Follow me."

She glances around. Mercy realizes a ways off is another Gerber daisy. She follows it.

Another and another leading her to the Grove.

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, THE GROVE - DAY

Mercy comes around the corner holding several daisies. She looks up thinking she'll see someone there. There is no sign of anyone. She sighs.

Mercy walks down the steps towards the cross as if finding home. She approaches the cross. Takes a deep breath. Looks up at the St. Francis statue.

MERCY
(whispering)
Thank you. For *this* moment.

Then- Stanner approaches from behind the cross startling her.

STANNER
Hey you.

MERCY
What are you doing here? You scared me!

Stanner charmed at Mercy, smiles.

STANNER
I'm sorry.

MERCY
Stop apologizing.
(sarcastic)
Are you stalking me now?

STANNER
Yeah, I guess I am.

The banter is natural. Stanner peers into Mercy's eyes.

STANNER (CONT'D)
I see you got the flowers I sent.

MERCY
My favorites. How did you even remember that?

STANNER
Something like that I would never
forget, Darling.

Mercy stands stunned. Mercy looks to the ground, biting her lip. Stanner takes Mercy by the hands and tenderly smiles.

STANNER (CONT'D)
Come here.

Stanner leads Mercy to the bench, overlooking the ocean in the distance, and sits her down. His guitar is there. He picks it up and begins to play: Intro to "Mercy's Song".

STANNER (CONT'D)
I've had a hard time being honest.
The deeper I look into your eyes,
the more clearly I see myself. The
more clearly I see love...

While Stanner is playing, Mercy looks on, stunned.
Overwhelmed.

[MONTAGE "MERCY'S SONG"]

Series of beats interspersed with Stanner singing to Mercy:

A) INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Steve and Christy lay in bed watching their baby napping.

B) INT. JAVA THE HUT - DAY

Clarke and Justice smile and carry on lovingly while serving customers. Max, dressed as "The Axe" super hero & Charlotte are handing out free samples.

C) EXT. THE EMPTY FLASK - AFTERNOON

Clare is helping Nate put beds of new spring flowers outside the bar.

D) INT. JUSTICE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jason, Lewis, Charlotte & Max and a couple dogs are snuggled in Jason & Lewis' bed watching a movie together. Laughing. Jason takes Charlotte's bunny ears and puts them on Lewis' head.

EXT. SERRA RETREAT CENTER, THE GROVE - MOMENTS LATER

Stanner finishes "Mercy's Song" and puts his guitar away. He lifts up her chin. Brushes back her hair. The sun glows. He takes her hand and stands. Stanner looks at Mercy who is beaming, full of light and love.

STANNER (CONT'D)

Mercy, your love rescues me in
every way. And I'd be the crazy one
not to want you in my life.

Mercy blushes. Smiles. Laughs. She wipes tears and snot off her nose with her sleeve.

MERCY

That is so gross!

STANNER

Yes. It is. And, I'll take you
every disgustingly cute way that
you are.

Chuckling, Stanner uses his thumbs to wipe the tears from her cheeks and the snot from her nose. Stanner studies Mercy's face. With trepidation, she settles into the gaze, softening.

STANNER (CONT'D)

You've helped me learn to love even
the most unloveable parts of
myself.

(beat)

Mercy, I've fallen in love with
you.

MERCY

How did this happen to me?

STANNER

You're my favorite Girl!

THE VOICE (V.O.)

You're my favorite Girl!

Mercy is beaming. Breathless.

MERCY

I love you too.

STANNER

Come here.

Stanner pulls Mercy into a long embrace. Holding her tightly. Covering her.

MERCY

Thank you.

STANNER

No, Mercy. You cracked my heart
wide open.

(beat)

Thank you.

He cradles her face as he gently kisses her lips. She melts into him. Takes a deep breath. Smiling. Laughing. And then kisses him back, willingly. He's thrown and thrilled. They laugh. Tenderly embracing.

A bird flies from out of a nest built in the St. Francis statue and up into the sky. PAN BACK from Malibu to California. To Earth. To view from Space.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

(laughing)

You're both welcome.

(mumbling in the distance)

Sheesh! Took ya long enough!

Sometime this free-will business,
just needs a little nudging, and a
few answered prayers...

Stanner stands, embracing Mercy. He pulls back, skeptical.

STANNER

Whoa, did you hear that?

MERCY

(giggling)

Welcome to Crazy Town!

She distracts him with a kiss. The Voice giggles.

FADE TO BLACK.