

A SUMMER'S TALE

Written by

BARRY L. BRIGGS

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Mercer Island, Washington

FADE IN:

EXT. SAMUEL PARKER'S HOUSE ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

We see SAM PARKER's middle-class house in a residential section of a large Eastern city, Detroit or Brooklyn perhaps. Like all of the houses on the street, it's older, and small, but well kept up. A fading street light down the road a bit provides some illumination.

There is a vacant lot across the street from SAM's house, where some KIDS are gathered.

INT. SAMUEL PARKER'S GARAGE - NIGHT

SAM, a fifty-something working-class man dressed in factory coveralls is working on his car, his prized '69 GTO in his garage. The car is on a jack and he is underneath prying some part of the exhaust. The garage is packed with shelves all of which are stuffed with tools, most old and dirty. There are a bunch of 2x4's in the corner.

We see a CD player, which is playing SAM's favorite, Creedence Clearwater Revival. Occasionally the sound is drowned out by heavy metal music played by the KIDS across the way. SAM looks up and grimaces.

EXT. FIELD ACROSS FROM SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

There are five young people, early twenties perhaps, sitting around a small fire. VERY LOUD heavy-metal music is playing. We see needles scattered carelessly on the ground. The evening is cool, so JACK has his arm around TORI, whose blouse is mostly undone.

JACK

(to TONY)

You glad to be out, man?

TONY

Six months in that fucking place. Fucking prosecutor ... If I find the asshole that put me in there...rip his fucking head off.

TORI

C'mon, we're celebrating.

JACK

You really kill that guy ... in the prison shitter?

TONY

Nah, he ain't dead.

(pointing at TORI)

My baby sister here smuggled some weed in. Guy tried to snitch. Got him where the guards couldn't see and "explained" it to him.

JACK takes a long draw off of a crack pipe.

JACK

Man, good stuff. I'm jacked!

TORI

Yeah, Jack, you're jacked.

(she kisses Jack, and giggles)

Come on Maria, you should try it.

Maria, hands inside her jacket pocket, smiles but shakes her head.

MARIA

No, thanks. I'm ok.

TORI

Don't know what you're missing!

TONY

(to TORI)

Don't be kissing that guy so much.

TORI

Why?

TONY

Fucking gross. Besides look at him, he's got fucking meth mouth.

TORI playfully looks inside JACK's mouth.

TORI

(like a dental hygienist)

Open. Say ah.

(kisses him again)

(to MARIA)

Ain't he the cutest?

MARIA just smiles, but her expression belies her "I'd rather not be here" feeling.

TONY

(to TORI)

I SAID STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM HIM!

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)
 (to MIKEY)
 Let's get outahere. Fucking boring.

MIKEY
 Yeah. Let's get some beer or
 something. Thirsty.

TONY and MIKEY stand, followed by the rest, and head to their car, parked across the street from SAM's house. The music is still LOUD.

TORI
 (to TONY)
 You always get mean when you get
 high.

TONY
 You're my fucking sister, do as
 you're fucking told!

She starts to say something back, but JACK quickly shakes his head. Leave well enough alone, he seems to be saying.

EXT. SAM'S GARAGE - NIGHT

SAM is standing in front of the car fiddling with a socket wrench. He sees the kids approaching and sighs. Just then there is a break in the Creedence CD, and at the same time the KIDS' heavy metal goes silent.

SAM
 Fucking kids.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

This enrages TONY!

TONY
 WHAT DID YOU FUCKING SAY?

As the Creedence CD begins to play "Bad Moon Rising," TONY runs to SAM and stares him straight in the face less than an inch away.

TONY (CONT'D)
 (ominously softer)
 What did you fucking say, old man?

SAM
 (not backing down)
 Get off of my property!

TONY
Apologize.

SAM
Get off my property.

TONY
No, y'know what? Y'know what? You
get down ON YOUR KNEES and
apologize.

SAM
What? No fucking way.

TONY
(in a fury)
On your fucking knees!

MIKEY grabs a lug wrench and strikes SAM on the back of the
legs, forcing him to fall to his knees.

MARIA
No -

SAM
Get. Off. My. Property.

TONY
(to MIKEY)
Gimme that.

MIKEY hands TONY the lug wrench. TONY raises it
threateningly.

SAM
What're you gonna do, hit me?

TONY
You gonna say you're sorry old man?
SAY YOU'RE FUCKING SORRY! OR I WILL
FUCKING SMASH YOUR FUCKING SKULL!

SAM
Fuck off.

Tony hits SAM's head with the lug wrench. Blood splatters.
Both TORI and MARIA scream.

MIKEY
Tony, what the fuck?

TONY
Asshole! Asshole! Fucking asshole!

MIKEY
Let's get out of here.

TONY
No, no, I ain't done with this guy.
Teach him a lesson!

MIKEY
Sure he ain't dead?

SAM groans.

TONY
Nah, he ain't dead. And I ain't
done with him.

Tony sees the 2x4's in the corner.

TONY (CONT'D)
I got an idea.

He grabs two 2x4's and a hammer and some nails. He quickly
nails the two 2x4's into a cross and lays it on the ground.

TONY (CONT'D)
(to MIKEY)
Gimme a hand.

MIKEY
What?

TONY
(points to SAM)
Put him on it!

MIKEY
Man, that's sick.

MARIA
What are you doing?

TORI
(to MARIA)
Don't. No telling what he'll do.

TONY
(to MIKEY and JACK)
You gonna help me or what? Or you
wanna be next?

They put SAM on the makeshift cross. TONY pulls out some
nails.

MARIA

No!

TONY

(viciously, spitting as he
says it)

Shut up!

He nails one hand to the cross, and then the other. SAM starts to wake up and realizes what's going on; he panics and starts to scream. TONY shoves a rag in his mouth! as SAM squirms in agony.

TONY steps back to admire his work as SAM helplessly whimpers.

TONY (CONT'D)

Fuck yeah. Fuck yeah.

He looks at the car.

TONY (CONT'D)

One more thing.

(to MIKEY AND JACK)

Help me push him under the car.

JACK

Dude --

TONY

(to JACK)

Fuckin' junkie makin' out with my
sister, fuckin' help me or this
(waving the lug wrench)
... is going up your ass.

They push him under the car.

TONY (CONT'D)

(to SAM)

Now all I got to do is let the car
down, asshole. Yeah. One little
push ...

TORI

That's enough, Tony!

MARIA

(crying)

Please, please!

Just then a car goes by.

MIKEY

Fuck, cops!

TONY

It's not the cops.

MIKEY

Tony -- man, we gotta get outahere.
C'mon, man, get you some beer.

TONY

(to SAM)

See you soon, asshole.

MARIA

You're just going to ... leave him?

TONY

(pulls out a knife from
his pocket and holds it
to MARIA's throat)

Shut the FUCK up.

To various "Man, that was wicked," "Dude, awesome," TONY and the KIDS go their car and leave.

EXT. SAMUEL PARKER'S HOUSE -- A FEW HOURS LATER

LAURA PARKER returns home from work. By her outfit we can see she is a NURSE. She sees SAM's feet sticking out from under the car and smiles.

LAURA

Still at it, eh?

She walks up to him and slowly grasps what has happened, and SCREAMS.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

SAM is lying in a hospital bed. There is a bandage on his head, and each of his hands also have a bandage. An IV is attached to his wrist. LAURA is at his side, holding his hand.

LAURA

How you doing, baby?

SAM

Still got a helluva headache.

LAURA
Even with the morphine?

SAM
Yeah. Morphine just makes it so I
don't care how much it hurts.

Both chuckle as the DOCTOR enters.

LAURA
Hi, Bill.

DOCTOR
Hi, Laura. How's this guy doing?

LAURA
Says his head hurts but he doesn't
care...what's the verdict on the
swelling?

DOCTOR
(to SAM)
There's still some subcranial
swelling which we're concerned
about.

SAM
What does that mean?

DOCTOR
Well, as your very qualified wife
knows, it means we have to keep you
for a few more days to make sure
the swelling goes down.

SAM
If it doesn't?

LAURA
Then they'll have to open up your
big head and drain it.

SAM
(to DOCTOR)
She use this bedside manner with
her patients?

DOCTOR
She's much gentler here. But in my
experience this sort of thing does
drain on its own, but you're going
to have headaches for a while. Good
news is though no sign of any
infection.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
We pumped you pretty full of
tetanus vaccine and a bunch of
other antibiotics.

SAM
Am I going to be able to use my
hands again?

DOCTOR
Honestly -- I don't know. You had a
bunch of fractures and nerve
damage. There are 27 bones in the
hand and they all have to work
together just right. A lot will
depend on how physical therapy
goes.

SAM
I imagine that'll hurt too.

LAURA
'Fraid so.

The PARKERS' minister, TOM O'CONNOR, enters the room.

TOM
Sam, my God, how are you?

LAURA
Hello, Tom.

SAM
Hi, Tom. Well, I'm here! They tell
me I'll be sprung in a few days, if
they don't have to cut my head
open.

DOCTOR waves as he leaves.

TOM
Look at you.

LAURA
He's very lucky.

TOM
I just wanted you to know we're all
praying for you at the church.

SAM
I'll take all the help I can get, I
suppose.

TOM sits on the bed and takes LAURA's hand, and puts his other hand on SAM.

TOM
Let's pray now.

INT. DUNKIN' DONUTS - DAY

The KIDS, minus MARIA, are drinking coffee and eating donuts. There is a TELEVISION in the corner of the store tuned to local news. TONY is sullen, and quiet.

TORI
I still feel bad.

MIKEY
He disrespected us. Right, Tony?

JACK
Yeah. Yeah. I feel kinda bad too,
you know?

MIKEY
Tony?

TONY
(glares at JACK, then
breathes)
Yeah. Disrespected.

MIKEY
What happens.

They are quiet for a moment, and turn to the TV.

NEWSCASTER
In other news, a local man was
apparently crucified by a youth
gang.

MIKEY
Hey, that's us!

TONY
Shut the fuck up.

NEWSCASTER
While working in his car at his
home, he says he was beaten by four
or five teenaged males and nailed
to a makeshift cross.

The camera cuts to the hospital room where SAM holds up his bandaged hands.

MIKEY

Shit, think he can identify us?

JACK

(to TORI)

See, he'll be fine. Nothing to worry about.

TORI

What the fuck is wrong with you?

TONY

Shut up and listen.

NEWSCASTER

Parker says he remembers little about what happened, and was unable to give a description of his assailants to the police.

TONY

We're fine.

TORI

(to JACK)

Seriously, what is wrong with you?

EXT. ESTABLISHING. ELWOOD METHODIST CHURCH - DAY

We see people, mostly older, appropriately dressed, entering the church.

INT. ELWOOD METHODIST CHURCH - DAY

Sunday services, and MINISTER TOM is delivering his sermon.

TOM

... and I think the lesson that God wanted us to learn from Gideon's travails is that man is weak, but we can always be forgiven, and we can always forgive each other, for our failings.

(beat, as he looks up; his voice becomes emotional)

But here -- here is someone who is not weak! Here is someone who is strong!

The camera pans back and we see LAURA pushing SAM in a wheelchair up the aisle.

TOM (CONT'D)
Welcome back, Sam!

The congregation spontaneously breaks into applause, as parishioners in the front row make room for SAM and LAURA. Several wipe tears from their eyes.

As SAM reaches the front, he looks at his still-bandaged hands, and then up at the crucifix hanging in the nave of the church.

SAM
(sotto voce, to Jesus' figure)
Know how you feel, buddy.

TOM
I -- I can't think of anything more appropriate now than 'Amazing Grace.'
(to congregation)
Will you sing with me?

He nods to the ORGANIST, who begins to play the familiar tune.

ALL
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see ...

EXT. ELWOOD METHODIST CHURCH - DAY

The service is over and people are chatting outside. A small circle has gathered around SAM and LAURA, several parishioners asking what they can bring over to the house, and offering other things to help. Eventually, they start to disperse. JOLEEN, an older woman, comes up to SAM.

JOLEEN
(tentatively)
Hello ...

SAM
Hello.

JOLEEN

Umm, you don't know me, my name is
Joleen Watson, I live over on 34th
Street ...

LAURA

It's nice to meet you.

JOLEEN

I heard what ... happened, and I'm
so ... sorry. But I --

LAURA

What's the matter, Joleen?

JOLEEN

I heard you were crucified ...
(she glances inside the
church)
like ...

LAURA

Well, beaten up.

SAM

Well, no honey, I'd have to say
that's pretty much what happened, I
was crucified all right.

JOLEEN

You see, I ... I have the cancer,
in my brain ... nothing they can do
they say ...
(sniffles)
And I was just wondering ... would
you touch me?

SAM

What?

JOLEEN

Would you put your hand to my head?
Please?

LAURA

Joleen ...

SAM

Joleen, there's nothing I can do
for you.

JOLEEN

(begging, weeping)
Please?

JOLEEN leans over so that her face is level with SAM's. SAM holds up his bandaged right hand and looks at it.

LAURA

Sam --

SAM looks at his hand a moment longer and then lays it on JOLEEN's forehead for a good five seconds. Out of the corner of his eye, MINISTER TOM, talking to someone else, glimpses what is going on.

Then she stands up straight again. Nothing, evidently, has happened.

JOLEEN

Th-thank you.

SAM

I'm sorry.

JOLEEN leaves.

TOM

What was that about?

SAM

Thinks I -- can --

TOM

(places his hand on SAM's
shoulder)

I'm sorry about that, Sam.
Probably'll happen again. People
will grasp on to anything for hope.

EXT. SAMUEL PARKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SAM and LAURA are sitting in rocking chairs on their front porch, sipping iced tea. A POLICE CAR is parked across the street.

SAM

I need to get back to working on
the car. Alternator's shot.

LAURA

Think it'll be a while, dear. How
are your hands feeling?

SAM

They hurt like hell! I think that
physical therapist trained in some
medieval dungeon or something.

LAURA
It's good though, means you might
get some range of motion back.

SAM
(motioning toward POLICE
CAR)
How long you think he'll be with
us?

LAURA
I'm glad he's here. I talked to
your brother today --

SAM
Jimmy?

LAURA
Yes, you were napping. He's good,
sends his love.

SAM
How's that mangy dog of his?

LAURA
Heard him barking at the TV in the
background.

A YOUNG GIRL is walking along the sidewalk.

SAM
Dumbest dog ever.

LAURA
Loves Jimmy, though, and he loves
that dog. Here, let me refill your
iced tea.

LAURA goes inside. The YOUNG GIRL, who we recognize as MARIA,
turns into SAM's yard and approaches them.

MARIA
Mr. Parker?

SAM
Yes, that's me.

MARIA
I, uh ... do you recognize me?

SAM
Should I?

MARIA
Well, no, uh, maybe ... I --

SAM puts it together.

SAM
You were there.

MARIA
Yes, I -- I tried to get them to
stop, I'm so, so sorry!

She starts crying uncontrollably. LAURA returns with the iced
tea.

LAURA
What -

SAM
She was there that night.

LAURA
(anger building)
How -- how could you?

MARIA
They -- were so high, so strung
out, nothing could stop them -- so -
- so -- sorry --

LAURA
Lot of good that will do --

SAM
(holds up hand)
Laura, no.
(to MARIA)
Was that it? Drugs? They were high?

MARIA
(nods)
I was with my friend Tori, I'm new
to the area, we just moved here,
don't have any friends, she said
come hang out with us --

LAURA walks up to MARIA and slaps her in the face, which
makes MARIA cry harder.

SAM
Laura! No ...
(to MARIA)
What's your name?

MARIA
Maria. Maria Gomez.

SAM
Come here. Come and stand in front
of me.

She hesitates.

SAM (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid.

She slowly approaches him.

SAM (CONT'D)
It wasn't your fault. Maybe not the
best choice in friends, though.

MARIA
I could've stopped it.

SAM
No, you couldn't have.

MARIA
I'm so sorry.

SAM reaches up and touches MARIA's forehead.

SAM
It's all right. I forgive you.

LAURA
Well, I don't! Young lady, you
march over to that police cruiser
over there and tell them everything
you told us.

SAM
(still holding his hand up
to her forehead)
I forgive you.
(beat)
I think my wife is right. You would
be doing a good thing if you gave
those officers a statement.

She nods, and walks toward the POLICE CAR. She looks back and
for a moment just stares at SAM.

INT. HOSPITAL. DOCTOR'S OFFICE A FEW DAYS LATER - DAY

SAM and LAURA are seated in DOCTOR's office.

DOCTOR

(looking at some X-rays)
Your hands are coming along nicely.
I'm sorry to say you'll never have
full use of them again, but I think
you'll be at least able to feed
yourself soon.

SAM

Well, that's good at least.

DOCTOR

Not sure you're going to be able to
manage that alternator, though.

SAM

(to LAURA)

Damn.

DOCTOR

But there is something I need to
talk to you about, though. The
swelling in your intracranial
tissues is not going down as fast
as we would like.

A knock at the door.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Perfect timing. Come in!

DOCTOR LEWIS enters.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Sam, this is Doctor Lewis, he's a
neurosurgeon, one of the best we
have.

LEWIS

Hello, Sam. Good to see you again,
Laura, if not under these
circumstances.

DOCTOR

I've asked Doctor Lewis here to
talk to you about the surgery.

SAM

Surgery? But you said --

LEWIS

Relax, we're not sure yet. But if the swelling hasn't significantly subsided in the next week, we're going to have to drain.

SAM

By cutting my head open?

LEWIS

(chuckles)

Actually, it's quite simple. We drill a small hole through the cranium here ---

(points to the back of Sam's head)

-- and insert a catheter. We then drain the contusion. Whole thing takes about five minutes.

SAM

Yeah. Well, we'll hope it goes down by itself.

LEWIS

But if it doesn't -- nothing to worry about, OK? You go home the next day. Feeling much better by the way, no more headaches.

SAM

OK.

LEWIS

OK.

DOCTOR

OK.

LEWIS

Oh ... by the way ... you happen to know a woman by the name of Joleen Watson, by any chance? Says she knows you.

SAM

Uh ... no, I don't think so.

LAURA

At the church.

SAM

Oh, right.

LEWIS

Damndest thing. I've been treating her for advanced malignant glioblastoma. Terribly sad, nothing we could really do, spread throughout her body.

(beat)

Today she comes in, says she feels great. We take an MRI, and there's not a trace of cancer in her body. Not a trace!

LAURA

What?

LEWIS

She's perfectly healthy.

EXT. A SLUM PART OF TOWN -- DAY

Smoking joints, TONY and MIKEY are walking down the street talking trash talk to each other, when suddenly TWO POLICE CARS screech to a stop one in back one in front of them!

OFFICER

FREEZE! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

TONY and MIKEY break into a run, with four cops in hot pursuit! They run fast, down the street, then split up, with MIKEY going down an alley, TONY continuing on the street.

The OFFICERS split up as well, two going after MIKEY and two after TONY. MIKEY scales a fence, and is in another alley, then emerges the next block over -- but the officers are right there -- and one BRINGS HIM DOWN! MIKEY is quickly subdued and handcuffed.

Meanwhile, TONY has gone down a different alley, but he is craftier. He has stopped running and is hiding just around the corner. As the cops turn into the alley, TONY knifes one of them and slashes the other, before running away.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

(to his microphone)

OFFICER DOWN! 101st and Elm!

Suspect headed ... east ... on ..

(passes out)

INT. SAMUEL PARKER'S KITCHEN - EVENING

SAM and LAURA are having meat loaf dinner with MINISTER TOM and MARIA. SAM's hands are still bandaged, so LAURA is feeding him.

TOM

It's ... quite a story.

SAM

What do you think, though? I mean, well, what does it mean?

TOM

I don't know.

LAURA

Was it that woman's faith that cured her? Or was it ...
(she looks at SAM)
... something else?

TOM

I ... I don't know. So many stories of just faith alone, the strength, the absolute certainty in their beliefs, amazing things happen. When I was a missionary in Guatemala I heard of this local shaman, a witch doctor, really. People would go to him, he had no medical training, he'd take peyote and dance and he would tell everybody he was driving out the evil spirits that made the person sick. And these were people who were really sick, you know, cancer, lymphoma, poisonous snake bites, pneumonia ... and the amazing thing is that sometimes it worked. These people, they just *believed* ... and somehow the power of their faith ... I don't know.

(beat)

What do you think, Maria.

MARIA

(smiles beatifically)
I think ... it is wonderful.
(to TOM)
There *are* angels, you know.

TOM looks at MARIA oddly. Does she have a glow about her? She smiles back at him, and her expression conveys a confident, deep understanding ... TOM's mouth drops.

LAURA

You know it was on the news? A bona fide miracle, they said.

SAM

People believe in the strangest things... I haven't changed, I'm still just Sam!

TOM

Well. I'll tell you this, if there's one thing that's true, however it happened, it **was** a miracle. A real one, and I
(chokes up)
... I, uh ... thank ... you for allowing me to be ... part of it.

SAM looks down at his hands. Blood is visible through the bandage.

LAURA

Let me get some fresh bandages for you.

She stands and goes to the other room. On the way she happens to glance out through the front door.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Sam? Tom?

The camera pans to the front, and we see a long line of the faithful, some on crutches and some in wheelchairs, quietly waiting for SAM to come out front.

SAM

What? What should I do?

TOM

(places his hand on SAM's shoulder)
You should go to them.

MARIA

Come, let me help you.

EXT. SAMUEL PARKER'S HOUSE, FRONT - EVENING

SAM, LAURA, TOM and MARIA emerge from the house to the line of people, all hoping for a miracle. Seeing SAM, several cross themselves.

SAM

Should I say something?

MARIA

(smiling)

No. You should just sit down. All of you, just sit down, be comfortable.

They sit. Maria motions the first person up to the porch, a mother with a small child.

SUPPLICANT 1

Please ... my son ... he has leukemia. Please just touch him like you touched ... her ...

SAM

I don't think I can help you, I don't know what happened, I didn't do anything.

SUPPLICANT 1

Please ...

Shaking his head, SAM reaches up with his right hand and touches the little boy for five or so seconds.

SUPPLICANT 1 (CONT'D)

Thank you.

MARIA motions the next one.

SUPPLICANT 2

They say I have terminal metastatic breast cancer.

SAM

I'm sorry, but. ..

SUPPLICANT 2

Please ...

As SAM touches her forehead, the camera pulls back. For a moment we simply see the line of SUPPLICANTS quietly waiting their turns. But then ... we see TONY running through SAM's back yard! He turns into the front yard, and, wild-eyed, sees SAM!

TONY

You turned me in you bastard!

He leaps up on to the porch. SAM and LAURA jump up from their chairs.

SAM

I -- I didn't!

TONY pulls out his knife and before anybody can stop him plunges it into SAM's chest! But before SAM falls he raises his hand and touches it to TONY's forehead.

SAM (CONT'D)

I -- I -- forgive --

TONY's eyes roll up into his head as he lets out an unearthly scream, and he staggers away from the scene, as the POLICE arrive.

SAM falls to the floor, his arms stretched out to either side, the blood on his hands clearly visible.

FADE OUT: