

## LIVE IN CONCERT

“Okay, Sam, let’s go through the rules,” Bill, the Travel-n-Time lottery official, pushes his readers up his nose as he readies himself to start his spiel. I already read all the paperwork, but I sink back into our living room sofa to let him do his job.

“There is nothing to be nervous about.” Bob says as he eyes my jittering leg. I press a hand down on it and it stops.

“It is not possible to change any major events.” He laughs as the sunrise peaks into the living room window. “No trying to kill Hitler, reroute the 9/11 air flights, or buy up Apple stocks. We would know. No messing up history.” He narrows his eyes.

“Got it. I have decided—”

“Wait, wait,” Bill admonishes and checks his list. “The operation of any vehicle is dangerous. This includes traveling on the titanic,” Bob smirks, “to riding a bicycle.”

My stomach clenches, “No moving vehicles.”

“No visiting yourself in the past.” He pauses again waiting for confirmation.

“Of course,” I nod. Because everyone heard last year’s winner is now a permanent patient in an undisclosed rubber room.

“No metal objects.” Looking at my gold wedding band, he frowns. “Are you sure you don’t want to bring a travel companion?”

“I’m sure,” I twist my ring off and place it on the coffee table in front of me.

“Oh, and you have 24 hours as of now.” He puts a final mark on his check sheet.

“Questions?”

“Nope.” I try to keep my voice casual and not show my impatience to get going.

“Okay,” Bill’s voice turns cheery, “Where to and when?” He rubs his hands over his open laptop in anticipation.

Live in Concert by N.E. Rule

“Right here on Saturday, July 29, 2015.”

“Here? In Louisiana?” His voice flattens.

“Yes, right here in this house, please.”

“What if you run into yourself?”

“Not possible, I was away on business that weekend.”

“Okay, what was so special about Bossier City ten years ago?”

It’s not in the winner’s contract that I reveal details, but I tell him anyway, “It was the Eagles’ last concert with Glenn Frey before he died in 2016.”

Bob frowns, “Well, I am sure it was great, Sam. But seriously? Past winners have witnessed the construction of the pyramids!” I reel back as he’s shouting in my face. Bob notices and says much quieter, “Another winner watched the Wright Brothers’ initial flight.”

I nod, smile, but say nothing. I know what I want.

“One person attended the birth of Jesus.” He continues to stare. And for a tense moment I think he will reject my wishes. But his top lip curls. “Okay, if you’re sure.” Bob snorts, “A rock concert.” He exhales and shakes his head.

I check my watch, “Has my time already started?” The sun is now in full view through the window.

Bill purses his lips and punches the date and address into his laptop. The screen flashes crimson and counts down from 10. When the screen turns Kelly green, he pulls out the USB key. He pries off a plastic cover, and with pinched fingers retrieves a flat silver disc the size of a nickel. He holds it up like it’s the host during a Catholic mass. I lift my tongue, and he places the microchip beneath it. A buzzing vibration goes off in my mouth like I have trapped bumblebee. My saliva thickens and I swallow. The taste of copper burns as it slides down my throat.

Live in Concert by N.E. Rule

Then there is a whooshing in my ears. The room spins. I squeeze my eyes tight. I might have fainted. When I open my eyes, Bill's gone. I look around. Not much has changed but my whole body tingles. I run up the stairs and see Amy's form under the covers. I jump on the bed and pounce on her.

"Oh my God! Sam, you scared me." She laugh-screeches. Her eyes are sleepy and confused. "What are you doing back? What about your conference?"

"It was boring. I left early." I take her face in my hands and breathe in her familiar scent of vanilla and dove soap.

Her eyes rove over my face and she frowns. "You look tired, are you okay?"

"I didn't sleep great at the hotel." I look into her own puffy eyes. "I'm so sorry." I sift my fingers through her 'bedhead' hair. Tresses fall softly to her shoulders. I breathe in her familiar Herbal Essence shampoo and place kisses along her jawline.

Her head tips back to look at me. "Are you okay? Maybe you should stay in bed today."

"Can't. We're going to the concert." I announce.

"What about our other priorities?"

"No, you were right. It could be their last concert."

She squeals and pulls my face in for a kiss which quickly becomes heated. I stretch out beside her and wrap myself around her warm body. My lips slide from her mouth to her ear. "What else did you want to do today?" I place open kisses down her neck to her collar bone. She moans. Over her shoulder, I see the closet door is ajar and her clothes spill out. I can't believe that site ever bothered me.

"It seems like you have a few ideas." She snickers as she pops open the button on my jeans.

\*\*\*

Live in Concert by N.E. Rule

After spending the morning in bed, we look online for Eagles' tickets. The scalpers tickets are listed at \$800 each.

"We can't," she gasps. "That's a few mortgage payments and moving to a bigger--" she lowers her eyes. "Sorry, I didn't mean to bring that up and spoil our truce."

"No, you're right. This house is fine." Nothing will spoil this day.

"Okay, who are you and what have you done with my husband?" She puts a hand to my chin to lift my head and look into my eyes.

"I just needed time to think," I say and before she can argue, I hit 'BUY' on the screen. "Now let's get some food before round two," I growl into her neck. She laughs and pushes me towards the kitchen.

We cook a big breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast and home fries. We do the Saturday crossword together and then go for a long walk in the park. It starts to rain, so we run for the picnic shelter. It is full of cobwebs, and she says, "No way!" So, I wrap her in my arms and slow dance with her in the rain. She laughs, "There isn't any music!" so I sing, "Peaceful Easy Feeling" in her ear.

During her shower, I go to the garage. I wrap a chain lock through the wheels of her bike and drop the key down my golf bag.

We walk to the concert, which is, of course, amazing. We dance in the aisles. Then, at home, we make love again while listening to their CD.

Later, while Amy sleeps, I wrap myself around her and whisper in her ear, "please don't leave tomorrow." She murmurs 'hmm', but I shush her and cup her belly. Holding her, I try to stay awake as long as possible to capture the last of my 24 hours, but my body finally succumbs.

It is morning when I wake to an empty bed. "Amy!" I call out and feel the microchip pop out from under my tongue. I spit it into my palm. I watch as it sizzles and disintegrates into a

Live in Concert by N.E. Rule

silver puddle. I don't understand the technology. Was it all just an elaborate dream? Not willing to relinquish the trace of hope I carry in my heart; I walk to the closet and yank open the door. Her side is empty.

I go to the garage and find her bike. A chain lock is still threaded through the now rusted spokes in her tire. But my bike that was there yesterday is missing. I guess her switching bikes did not cause a major change.

I walk to the cemetery, then fall to my knees at Amy's grave. "Thank you for the beautiful day," I whisper and run my fingers over the writing etched into the cold stone front.

*Rest in Peace to*

*Amy and her unborn daughter*

*May 15, 1988, to July 30, 2015.*