

HIGH SCHOOL REDEMPTION

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Music from inside the gym echoes through the propped open doors into the parking lot.

Students in formal wear arrive for their big night.

SUPER: SENIOR PROM NIGHT - WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL (1992)

INT. FORD MUSTANG - NIGHT

The handsome young captain of the football team, DANIEL, blonde hair, chiseled features, drives.

Nestled up close to Daniel is his equally good-looking high school sweetheart, NICOLE, also a natural blonde.

DANIEL

Are you ready for this?

NICOLE

Sure. Why wouldn't I be?

DANIEL

Well, you know God may not like you dancing up close to me like you're going to.

NICOLE

Daniel, I've asked you not to talk like that. You know how that bothers me.

DANIEL

Well then, pray for me like you always do and...let's go dance.

Nicole sighs as she shakes her head.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Daniel exits the Ford from the driver's side, trots around to the passenger's side and opens the door for his date.

The music grows louder as hand-in-hand they approach the double-door entrance to the gym.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

The gymnasium has been transformed into a ballroom for the kid's big night.

Couples are already out on the dance floor.

Daniel and Nicole enter the gym and stop for a moment to admire the setting.

DANIEL

Wow! Look at this place!

For a brief moment, time seems to stand still as kids take notice of the newly arrived couple.

DANIEL

Wow, I knew you were beautiful,
but I didn't know we'd get this
much of a reaction.

NICOLE

Yeah, right.

Daniel is approached by one of his friends, RICHIE, a petite kid with thick brown hair and big brown eyes.

RICHIE

Hey, Man, how are you?

DANIEL

Richie, my man!

The two boys execute their secret handshake...interlocking thumbs, a release, then a waving of the fingers ending with index fingers pointing at each other.

DANIEL

Who did you end up bringing?

RICHIE

Are you kidding me? Take a look
around. There's at least two
girls to every guy. It's open
season!

Daniel and Nicole laugh at Richie's remark.

RICHIE

I'll catch up with you two a
little later. It's time for me to
go do a little hunting.

Richie goes on his way.

DANIEL

I gotta make a bathroom run. Are you going to be okay alone for a couple of minutes?

NICOLE

Sure, no problem.

DANIEL

Maybe you can go find us a place to sit.

A nod from Nicole.

Daniel gives Nicole a quick kiss on the cheek and heads off for the men's room.

April, a tall and slender girl with long dark hair, comes to Nicole's side.

APRIL

Wow, look at you. You are absolutely stunning.

Nicole gives her friend's prom dress a once over look.

NICOLE

You too, April! Very nice!

APRIL

Thanks.

NICOLE

Where's John?

APRIL

He said he was going to put some early requests in with the DJ, but I think he really went to spike the punch.

The girls laugh.

TIMMY, a shy kid with bright red hair, freckles, large eye-glasses and a crooked smile, walks up to the girls.

TIMMY

Hello, ladies.

Timmy stares at Nicole.

TIMMY

I'll never know what Daniel did to deserve you. You're definitely the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

April smiles as she rolls her eyes and shakes her head.

NICOLE

Well, thank you, Timmy.

TIMMY

(with a bow of the head)

You're very welcome. It was definitely my pleasure.

NICOLE

Who are you here with?

Timmy sighs.

TIMMY

Just myself. Since you were already taken...

Nicole takes hold of Timmy's hand.

NICOLE

Oh, come on, Timmy. You're a wonderful guy and I know that you'll find someone who will love you the way you deserve to be loved.

TIMMY

Yeah but...

NICOLE

Maybe, in another lifetime, things could be different but...

April busts out laughing at Nicole's all too sincere words to Timmy.

Timmy looks down and notices the ring on Nicole's finger.

TIMMY

Is that just part of your costume jewelry, or is there something important we don't know about?

Nicole quickly withdraws her hand.

NICOLE
I gotta go find Daniel. See you
guys later. Enjoy the prom.

TIMMY
Sure. See you later.

Nicole walks away. April rushes to catch up with her.

APRIL
You know, you really should give
that guy a chance.

NICOLE
Actually, Timmy's okay. You
know...a nice guy. However, he's
not my type.

APRIL
Right, but Daniel is.

NICOLE
Well, of course.

APRIL
And every other female in the
world's type too!

They laugh.

After a moment.

APRIL
However, Timmy did ask a valid
question.

She takes hold of Nicole's left hand and holds it up to
reveal the ring.

APRIL
What's this?

NICOLE
It's nothing.

APRIL
Oh, come on!

NICOLE
Really. It's just a promise ring.

APRIL

Yeah, right. That's a pretty good size promise.

NICOLE

It is! Daniel wanted to make a new promise to me, like we're starting out fresh.

APRIL

Well, that's some promise ring but he definitely owes you a fresh start.

Nicole pulls her hand away, smiles and timidly looks down at the ground.

INT. GYM - REST-ROOM AREA - NIGHT

Daniel steps out of the restroom and looks around for Nicole. He spots an older gentleman that he doesn't quite recognize, dressed all in white, standing on the other side of the dance floor. The man seems to be staring directly at him.

With a nod of his head, the man in white turns and walks away.

Daniel does a double-take as ghost-like, the man appears to walk through (rather than around) the kids between him and the door.

DANIEL

What the...

Daniel's jaw drops and he stares at the door where the man exited. Then, a tap on the shoulder and he snaps out of it. It's an ex-girlfriend, AMBER.

Daniel turns to face her, but his attention is obviously elsewhere.

DANIEL

Hey...ah...Amber.

AMBER

Where are you at?

DANIEL

What do you mean?

AMBER

You look, I don't know, like
someone who just saw a ghost.

A forced laugh from Daniel.

DANIEL

Yeah, I just saw a ghost.

AMBER

Sure you did. You look amazing by
the way.

DANIEL

Thanks. You too. Who are you
here with?

AMBER

Nobody in particular. Where's
Nicole?

DANIEL

Oh, she's around here somewhere. I
was just trying to find her when I
'saw the ghost'.

AMBER

Yeah, sure.

For a moment Daniel and Amber just stand there exchanging a
look, as if remembering old times.

DANIEL

I, ah, better go find Nicole.

AMBER

Yeah, sure. Maybe I'll see you
later.

DANIEL

Yeah, maybe.

Amber takes hold of Daniel's arm before he can walk away.

AMBER

Maybe we could have a dance
together for old time's sake. You
know, it's our last year of high
school.

Daniel gently pulls away.

DANIEL
Sure, why not. I gotta find
Nicole. Catch you later.

Daniel turns and walks away.

Amber calls out after him.

AMBER
Yeah, later.

As Daniel walks away, he looks back over his shoulder in the direction he saw the man in white. He walks headlong into his best friend JOHN, a burly kid with short brown hair.

JOHN
Hey, Man!

DANIEL
Sorry, John. I was
ah...distracted by something.

JOHN
Obviously, but as long as we just
happened to bump into one
another...

DANIEL
Yeah?

JOHN
How about we kiss and make up?
(quickly)
Not literally of course! I mean,
I don't even remember what we were
arguing about and since we've been
best friends since third grade...

DANIEL
Second grade.

JOHN
Was it second grade? Maybe it was
second grade. Time goes by fast
when you're having fun.

They share a laugh and then do the secret handshake thing.

JOHN
Where's Nicole? You two did come
together, didn't you?

DANIEL

Yeah, of course. Why wouldn't we?
I need to go find her. I'll
catch you later.

JOHN

Yeah, sure. Catch you later.

Daniel turns to walk away and spots April and Nicole on the edge of the dance floor swaying gently to the music. He gently smiles and goes to join them.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DANCE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole sees Daniel approaching.

NICOLE

Hey, I was wondering where you
were.
(a big smile)
Had me worried that maybe you fell
in and got flushed.

Daniel sighs and shakes his head as he joins Nicole and April in their subtle dance.

DANIEL

Nah, I'm right here, Baby.

NICOLE

Yeah, I can see that.

Suddenly the lights go dim and the DJ's voice rings out.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

Dance off!

A spotlight turns on, illuminating the center area of the dance floor. A young man jumps into the circle of light and goes into a break-dance routine.

Other kids chant and clap their hands to the music, urging the break dancer on.

After a minute, the dancer jumps to his feet and exits the circle of light. Another young man quickly takes his place and performs his dance routine.

On the sidelines, John breaks into a comic break-dance routine and his friends laugh and clap to the beat of the music.

The circle of light widens and more dancers make their way front and center to show off their dancing ability.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

Can you believe that, people? How do they m-o-v-e like that? Now we're going to do a complete 360 and go with a more traditional dance form but with a West Point High School twist.

More kids move out onto the dance floor in anticipation of what's to come.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

Instead of musical chairs, we're going to play musical partners. Whenever the style of music I'm playing changes, you've got to find yourself a new partner and no fair going back to an earlier one.

It has to be a new dance partner every time. Y'all got that? When the music stops, quickly find someone new before the next style of music begins. If you're left standing alone when the new music plays, you're out of the game and must leave the floor. And NO CHEATING! A different partner every time! I've got spotters watching you.

Laughter and a few of the guys bow to their ladies as if they're asking for this dance the old-fashioned way.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

We'll begin with arm-in-arm, skipping around, square dancing...now!

The first song plays and kids maneuver themselves into a square dancing formation, some laughing, others with a good old "Yee-haw."

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

Swing your partner round and round, don't look down, it'll make you frown. After going round and round, switch your partner to this sound.

The music stops and kids scurry around to find their next partner.

Daniel breaks away from April, turns, and finds himself facing Amber.

Amber smiles and takes Daniel by the hand.

April and Richie pair up, as do John and Nicole.

They all sway to the temp of the new song, a ballad.

AMBER

Are you sure you've made the right decision? You know you're going to leave her when you go off to college anyway.

Amber kisses Daniel gently on the cheek and he puts up his hands and backs away.

DANIEL

I can't do this, Amber. Now now. It's been way over two years. Get over it already. You know I'm with Nicole now. I have to go.

Daniel turns and walks away, leaving Amber alone on the dance floor.

AMBER

Why am I not good enough for you? We have a great history together and you know I would follow you anywhere. What's so special about her?

Daniel looks down and shakes his head.

The music stops and the kids laugh and joke around as they seek out new partners.

A new song begins and the dancing resumes. Amber remains still, staring after Daniel as he walks to an exit and leaves the gym.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM BACK ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel steps out into the night air and takes a deep breath. He turns back to see if anyone has followed him out of the building. He sees that he's alone, puts his hand in his pocket, pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

The dance game continues with only a few kids left on the floor, Nicole and Timmy among them.

All the other kids look on from the sidelines.

The DJ speaks over the music.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

Okay, everybody. We're about to find out who our winners are! Here we go!

The music stops and the remaining kids quickly try to match up, but only two of them are able to pair up. They are Nicole and Timmy.

Timmy gives his new dance partner a big smile.

TIMMY

Hey!

Smiling, Nicole shakes her head in wonder at the idea her new partner is Timmy.

NICOLE

Hello.

New music, a disco tune begins, and they dance.

Applause for the winning couple and after a moment, the DJ fades out the disco tune.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM)

We have our winners! We'll let them have the dance floor all to themselves now for one last dance.

A slow song plays and Timmy and Nicole embrace as they sway to the beat of the music.

TIMMY

I can't believe it!

NICOLE

What?

TIMMY

That I could be so lucky.

NICOLE
Yeah, really. Just the luck of
the draw, I guess.

As they dance, Nicole takes a quick look around the room.

NICOLE
Have you seen Daniel?

TIMMY
No. Not lately.

NICOLE
I wonder where he got off to.

INT. GYM BACK ENTRANCE WAY - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel steps back into the gym and sees Timmy and Nicole
slow dancing.

DANIEL
What the hell is this?

He goes to confront them.

John sees what's about to go down.

JOHN
Great. Here we go.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Daniel approaches Timmy and Nicole and interrupts their
dance.

DANIEL
What do you think your're doing?

TIMMY
What?

DANIEL
I said, what do you think you're
doing?

TIMMY
We won the...

NICOLE

We ended up winning the dance contest, Daniel. It's no big deal.

DANIEL

Yeah, right. He's drooling all over you.

Daniel takes Nicole's hand and pulls her away from Timmy.

TIMMY

Hey!

DANIEL

No geeks allowed, Kid.
(to Nicole)
Come on.

Timmy just stands there, arms to his side, trying to find something to say.

TIMMY

But...

DANIEL

But what?

Timmy becomes visibly upset.

DANIEL

What? You going to cry now? Get a life, you Geek, for God's sake.

The DJ, seeing what's going down, kills the music and speaks over the PA system to Daniel.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM) (O.S.)

Whoa, Dude! The contest is over and the winners get the last dance. You'll have to leave the dance floor.

Nicole looks uncertain...doesn't know what to do.

DANIEL

This is my girl. I'm not going anywhere. And don't call me 'Dude', okay?

John walks up behind Daniel.

JOHN

Come on, Man. It's just a stupid game.

DANIEL

Don't even start with me, John.
Come on, Nicole. We're out of here!

Everyone stares as Daniel half drags Nicole off the dance floor and to the main entrance, where other kids stand in their path.

Daniel gives them a harsh look and speaks up.

DANIEL

Look, if you know what's good for you, you'll get the hell out of my way.

They "get the hell out of the way" and Daniel, pulling Nicole along at his side, exits the gym.

John, Richie and April follow Daniel and Nicole out the door.

DJ (ON PA SYSTEM) (O.S.)

Well, somebody around here needs to loosen up! Meanwhile, back at the party!

An old fashioned hard rock and roll song booms out across the room.

The kids break out in cheers and applause before once more hitting the dance floor.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel and Nicole, with his hold now released, walk outside as John, April and Richie catch up with Daniel.

JOHN

What's up with you, Man? Have you lost your mind?

DANIEL

Nobody touches or dances with my fiancée but me.

A look of shock and disbelief comes instantly to John's face.

JOHN

What?!

APRIL

I knew it!

JOHN

Look, Daniel, Nicole wasn't doing anything wrong. It was all part of a stupid contest.

DANIEL

And maybe you need to learn to mind your own business?

Daniel roughly takes a hold of Nicole's arm again.

JOHN

Maybe I need to make it my business if you're going to treat Nicole like she's your personal property, dragging her around however you like.

The girls and Richie look on helplessly.

Daniel laughs and gives John a nasty look.

DANIEL

Let me get this straight. You are concerned about my girlfriend's safety?

JOHN

I am, Daniel. She's my friend too.

NICOLE

Guys!

Daniel gives Nicole a look, shutting her up.

JOHN

And she deserves to be with someone who'll treat her right.

DANIEL

And maybe you think that "someone" should be you? Right?

John lunges at Daniel placing his forearm directly under the smaller boy's chin and pushing him up against the car. He looks daggers at his "best friend".

JOHN

You need to choose your words more carefully around me, Buddy, and grow up.

John releases his grip, and Daniel pushes him away.

DANIEL

The hell with you, Man!

JOHN

I'm telling you as your best friend, if you don't watch it, you're going to lose the best thing that ever happened to you.

DANIEL

Used to be, best friend! From now on, you just stay away from me. I'll go my way, you go yours.

He turns to face Nicole.

DANIEL

Get in the car.

Teary-eyed, Nicole gives her friends a little wave and gets in the car.

Daniel climbs into the driver's seat and slams the door behind him.

A few moments later, John and the others look on as the Mustang lays rubber and speeds across the parking lot out into the street.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - AFTERNOON

FADE IN:

20 YEARS LATER

The banner draped across the far wall reads:

"Welcome Class of 1992 Twenty Year Reunion"

The front exterior of the gym, which seems to be a little less kept, is briefly shown as the sun shines brightly.

A heavier April with shorter hair than the young April,

along with another woman, MEAGAN, approach John where he sits waiting at the bar.

John's got a little less hair, but he looks like he's still in shape and has aged fairly well.

APRIL

Meagan, this is my husband, John.

MEAGAN

Wow, April, nice catch.

John smiles and extends a hand to Meagan.

JOHN

Thanks. It's nice to meet you.
Did you go to school here, Meagan?

They shake hands.

MEAGAN

No, I guess you could say I
married into the class of 1992.

JOHN

Oh?

APRIL

Remember Matt Bonner? The one
with the crazy hair-do? That's
her husband.

JOHN

Oh yeah. The bone man. Where is
he? I need to say hi.

Meagan looks around but doesn't see her man.

MEAGAN

Oh, he's around here somewhere.
Guess maybe I should go find him.
Nice meeting you, John.

JOHN

Yeah, you too.

MEAGAN

(to April)

Come find me before you leave,
okay? Don't you dare leave
without saying bye.

APRIL

Sure thing. See you later.

Meagan walks off. April smiles, leans in, and gives John a kiss on the cheek.

APRIL

Have you caught up with all of the old gang yet?

JOHN

I think so...well, almost.

APRIL

Do you think they'll even show?

JOHN

Who knows. I tried everything I could think of to get a message to him about wanting to see him. Whether or not he listened is anybody's guess.

APRIL

Well, if I know Nicole, she'll show up with or without him. At least that's the impression I got from the RSVP e-mail I received from her about the reunion.

John does a double take and nods his head in the direction of the gym's main entrance.

JOHN

Speak of the devil...

April turns to see Daniel and Nicole making their grand entrance. They still look like they should be the king and queen of the prom.

APRIL

There they are. They haven't changed a bit.

JOHN

Well, come on. Let's go say hi.

As they approach the royal couple, Nicole and April lock eyes.

NICOLE

Sheesh! Look at this place. Talk about dejavue.

They hug.

APRIL
Yeah, tell me about it.
(pulling back)
You haven't changed a bit.

John casually extends his hand to Daniel and they shake.

JOHN
Good to see you again, Daniel.

DANIEL
Yeah, likewise.

APRIL
Excuse me, boys, but us girls have
a lot of catching up to do.

Nicole looks at Daniel and John.

April takes Nicole by the hand and they walk off to join a group of girls on the other side of the room.

Daniel watches Nicole's every move as they walk away.

JOHN
Hard to believe it's been twenty
years. Seems like it was just
last week.

DANIEL
Yeah, it does. What's that saying,
"Time waits for no man"?

JOHN
Something like that. You want to
grab a drink?

DANIEL
Sure.

JOHN
So, tell me...what have you been
up to these past twenty years? You
guys been getting along okay?

DANIEL
Yeah, it just seems like all I
ever do is work.

JOHN

Yeah, I know what you mean. Life was so easy when we were in high school and it seemed like it would last forever.

DANIEL

Tell me about it. We didn't know how good we had it. Youth being wasted on the young.

They share a laugh.

JOHN

I hate that we weren't able to make it to your wedding.

DANIEL

Yeah, us too.

JOHN

I guess, maybe, our invitation got lost in the mail?

Daniel flashes a questioning look at John and then looks away.

JOHN

Hey, that's the story I told myself when you didn't show up at mine and April's wedding.

Daniel casually nods his head.

JOHN

Look, it's been hard on the girls, Daniel. Maybe it's high time we clear the air. It wasn't right the way we left things off.

DANIEL

Yeah, I know.

JOHN

I just want to say that I'm sorry, okay. Maybe I made a few bad assumptions. I know it's hard having to deal with the issues you were dealing with at such a young age.

DANIEL

It's okay. We'll get past it.

JOHN

When? It's been twenty years.

Daniel takes a sip from his drink and looks down.

After an awkward few moments of silence...

JOHN

Anyway, what are you doing for a living these days?

DANIEL

Oh, I'm a construction supervisor.

John nods his head thoughtfully.

JOHN

Sounds like a pretty good gig.

DANIEL

It is. An old pal of mine owns the company and the pay is pretty good. What about you?

JOHN

Well, after college I went to work as a graphic designer for a small company in Oklahoma. I was there for about four years.

DANIEL

Cool. Did you design anything I might be familiar with?

JOHN

Have you ever heard of the Ruff Mix Dog food?

DANIEL

Yeah, it sounds familiar.

JOHN

Well, I designed their company website.

DANIEL

Wow. Are you still doing that kind of work?

JOHN

No. I work for April's uncle now. He's got a manufacturing facility in Texas. I head up the marketing team there.

DANIEL

Sounds like a lot of responsibility.

JOHN

It can be pretty demanding at times, but I enjoy the work.

DANIEL

Yeah, that's important.

JOHN

Yeah, it is.

The two quietly share a drink and after a few moments, John breaks the silence.

JOHN

Your long lost friend really seems to have it together.

DANIEL

Oh? Who would that be?

JOHN

Do you remember your old buddy, Timmy Stratton?

DANIEL

Timmy? How can I forget? That kid gave me the creeps all through high school.

JOHN

Well, he's doing pretty good these days. Seems he started a networking company a few years back and it's worth a small fortune now.

DANIEL

Really? Is he here?

JOHN

No. He sent April e-mails. Says he's too busy running his company at the moment to take time out.

DANIEL

Really? Do you know if he ever married?

JOHN

I don't think so.

DANIEL

Yeah, even with a ton of cash, he still can't find a girl dumb enough to take him. He's probably still crushing on my wife and holding out for the impossible.

Daniel giggles as John looks out over the happy crowd. Some are dancing and others are standing around catching up on old times.

JOHN

Pretty good turnout.

DANIEL

Yeah. Have you seen Amber lately?

JOHN

No, she pretty much skipped town right after graduation just like you did. I'd be really surprised if she were to show up here unless, of course, she knew you were asking about her.

Daniel calmly nods his head with a smirk of a smile on his face. John notices.

JOHN

Man, are you ever going to let it go? What is this silent hold she seems to have over you?

DANIEL

There's no "hold". That's ancient history. I'm just trying to catch up on old friends.

JOHN

Really? After you left, all I could think about was how egotistical and arrogant it was of you to think everything had to go at your pace and on your own time.

Daniel chuckles and shakes his head.

DANIEL

Come on, Man! Not now. Okay?

JOHN

Look, I have to get this off my chest, so just hear me out. Nicole never deserved to be isolated from her friends, taken for granted and treated like an object by anyone, let alone the likes of you. Neither did Amber, or anyone else for that matter, just to satisfy your insecurities and selfish desires.

DANIEL

Amber? What does she have to do with this?

JOHN

Come on, Daniel, that whole blow-up with her was mostly your fault. Maybe much of your attitude with Nicole was simply a carryover from Amber?

DANIEL

You have absolutely no idea what you're talking about, and for God's sake, all that was twenty plus years ago! As long as us men get what we want, that's all that matters, right? Trust me, John...Nicole never has, nor will she ever want for anything.

Daniel gives John a couple of friendly pats on the back and gets to his feet, again looking around the room.

DANIEL

When's Richie going to show up? Guess he still has to be late for everything.

A serious look from John.

JOHN

What? You didn't hear?

DANIEL

Hear what?

JOHN

Daniel, I'm sorry to tell you this, but Richie was killed in a car accident.

DANIEL

What?

JOHN

Happened several months ago. A drunk driver going in the wrong direction on the expressway ran into him head on. Richie never knew what hit him.

Stunned, Daniel slowly sits back down.

DANIEL

Why didn't anybody tell me?

JOHN

Really? Richie's brother tried tracking you down, I tried tracking you down but it was as if you had quarantined yourself from the whole world. I didn't want you to find out about it in an e-mail and apparently you had told Nicole not to be giving out your number. I wanted to talk to you directly. I knew how devastating it would be for you.

For a long moment, Daniel simply stares off into space.

JOHN

Man, I'm sorry you had to find out about Richie like this, but we honestly did try to personally contact you.

DANIEL

What about the other guy...the other driver? Were there ever any charges brought against him?

JOHN

No. He died in the accident. Richie's wife, who was eight months pregnant, was also in the car with him. She never had a chance either. It was really a tragic incident. We had a

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)
memoriam set up for him.

Daniel looks down as he tries to regain his composure.

JOHN
What happened to you, Daniel? We all used to be so close. Now you're so...distant and it seems you want to close Nicole off from everyone else as well.

DANIEL
When did you become a shrink, John? Huh? You're not exactly perfect either, and I think you know what I'm talking about.

JOHN
April and I have gotten past all of that. We now share a beautiful and trusting marriage. We've learned how to love and let die.

DANIEL
"Love and let die"? Are you serious? What's that supposed to mean?

John puts his hands up, palms out, as if he's ready to fend off a verbal attack.

JOHN
Alright, I'm sorry if I offended you. It's obvious that we'll never see eye-to-eye on some things.

DANIEL
That doesn't answer my question about your comment.

JOHN
It's just that we need to get over all of our old pent up anger and disagreements. You know...let it all go and truly love again. It's all about learning to move on.

Daniel gets to his feet while shaking his head.

DANIEL

It's been real talking with you John. Right now I'm going to go find my wife.

JOHN

Yeah, okay. You want to catch up again later?

DANIEL

Yeah, later.

As Daniel walks away, John calls out after him.

JOHN

One of these days maybe you'll finally get it!

Daniel stops and turns around.

DANIEL

What are you talking about, John? Get what?

JOHN

Get what it means to truly love and be loved in return.

DANIEL

Really?! I had that once until God decided to take it away from me. Just leave it alone, John!

JOHN

You have somebody that loves you so much. Hopefully, when and if you do finally "get it", it won't be too late.

Daniel shakes his head in mock disgust, turns and walks away.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - OTHER SIDE OF THE GYM - CONTINUOUS

Nicole and April reminisce.

APRIL

We tried everything we could think of to maintain communication with you throughout the years. What has he done to you?

Nicole is immediately taken aback by April's comment.

NICOLE

What?

APRIL

Oh, come on, Nicole. Don't play dumb with me.

NICOLE

I guess he thought he was doing what he had to do to protect me.

APRIL

To protect you? Protect you from what? From living a life? He's hid you from all of your family and friends for twenty years. How is that protecting you?

April leans over and takes Nicole by the hand to observe her wedding ring.

APRIL

However, he sure knows how to pick out a wedding set. The first time I saw the engagement ring, or as you said promise ring, it took my breath away. But tell me, what's the point in hiding you away like that?

NICOLE

I don't know, April. I've been asking myself that very same question for many years now. He had a bad childhood. Maybe he just can't find a way to work through his issues and I don't want to be the one who pushes him over the edge.

APRIL

Really? Have you ever considered leaving him?

NICOLE

A couple of times, but he wouldn't hear of it.

APRIL

What? It's not his place to say whether you leave or stay. If you're not happy, you should

(MORE)

APRIL (cont'd)
leave.

NICOLE
Yes, but...

APRIL
But what?

NICOLE
It's not that easy. After
everything, I still love him. I
don't know what I'd do without
him.

They see Daniel heading their way.

APRIL
There he is now. I'm going to go
find John, leave you two love
birds to yourselves. Why don't
you come and find us a little
later?

NICOLE
Yeah. See you later.

As April walks away, she flashes a look at Daniel. He
answers her with a phony smile.

DANIEL
How are you doing, Honey? Enjoying
yourself?

NICOLE
Yes, I am. It's really nice
seeing everyone again.

DANIEL
Maybe for you.

NICOLE
What is it with you, Daniel? It's
been twenty years since we've seen
our high school friends. Maybe
you should think about making
amends with these people, maybe
starting with John...especially
with John.

Daniel's response is to stare at the ground and chew on his
lower lip.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - EVENING

A few of the reunion folk are outside getting some air as the sun begins to set...A gorgeous sunset.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - LATER

Daniel sits alone at the bar, sipping on a drink.

John approaches.

JOHN

Any interest in a game of darts?
They've got a board setup and it's
open at the moment.

By now, Daniel's speech is a little slurred.

DANIEL

Sorry, but Nicole and I have got
to get on our way. Long drive
ahead of us.

JOHN

Yeah sure, I definitely
understand.

Daniel turns up his empty glass over his mouth as if trying to catch the last drop.

JOHN

Maybe you should find some place
to spend the night here and then
go home tomorrow.

DANIEL

No, I'm fine. We'll stop for
coffee as needed.

He looks around the room.

DANIEL

Got to find Nicole.

Daniel takes a step and nearly trips over his own feet.

John steps forward and places his arm around him as if to assist him in walking. Daniel immediately pulls away.

DANIEL

I don't need any help. I'm fine.
Just got to find Nicole.

Looking around the room, Daniel spots a small group cluttered in a far corner of the gym.

DANIEL

What's going on over there?

JOHN

I don't know, but whatever it is I see April. I think Nicole's there, too.

John strides off toward the commotion with Daniel a few steps behind him.

As they get closer, John recognizes the red-headed man who seems to be the center of attention. It's Timmy, all grown up and looking rather distinguished, actually.

He looks back at Daniel and sees the sour expression on his face.

JOHN

Here we go again.

Daniel catches up.

DANIEL

Is that who I think it is?

JOHN

Yep. That's our class millionaire.

Daniel makes his way through the small crowd to Nicole's side. He takes hold of her arm.

DANIEL

We got to go.

NICOLE

What? Why can't we stay? The reunion's not over and there's still...

Daniel interrupts his wife.

DANIEL

It's over for us.

Then from behind Daniel, a voice from the past.

TIMMY

Daniel?

Daniel turns to find himself face to face with Timmy.

TIMMY

It's me...Timmy. How are you?
It's really good to see you.

DANIEL

Oh, yeah. Hey, Timmy.

They rather awkwardly shake hands.

TIMMY

My friends call me "Tim" these
days.

DANIEL

That's nice, "Timmy".

Timmy quickly withdraws his hand.

TIMMY

Still the same old Daniel, huh?

Without another word, Daniel takes hold of Nicole's arm and they head for the exit.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL -GYM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel and Nicole step out into the night air and head for the parking lot.

NICOLE

Maybe I should drive?

DANIEL

No, I'm fine.

They arrive at their car and Daniel opens the passenger side door for Nicole.

He looks back and sees that John and April have followed them out of the gym.

DANIEL

Great!

JOHN

Hold up, Daniel. I really don't
think you should be driving.

DANIEL

Thanks for your concern, but I can manage.

JOHN

Seriously. It's not just your own neck you have to consider. You've got Nicole with you too.

DANIEL

I said, I can manage!

Daniel gives John a dirty look.

JOHN

You know he's had too much to drink, Nicole, and shouldn't be driving. Think about what happened to Richie.

Nicole considers the situation for a moment and then...

NICOLE

He's right, Daniel. You shouldn't be driving and I'm not getting in the car with you.

DANIEL

What? Get in the car, Nicole! I don't have time for this. I am fine.

NICOLE

No. John and April can take me home.

Nicole glances over at John as he nods in agreement.

DANIEL

Sure, like John's going to drive four hours there and four hours back?

JOHN

I will if I have to.

DANIEL

I'm not going to tell you again, Nicole. Get in the car, now!

At first it appears that Nicole might refuse to obey her husband's order but then she climbs into the car and Daniel slams the door after her.

All John and April can do are stand by and watch as Daniel walks around to the driver's side of the car.

DANIEL
It's been real, people!

JOHN
You know, you haven't changed a bit since high school.

Daniel opens the car door and gets behind the wheel.

DANIEL
Right on, John. I was perfect then and I'm still perfect now.

Daniel closes the driver's side door.

He starts the car, backs out of the driveway and spins out as he takes off out of the parking lot and down the road.

April takes hold of John's hand.

APRIL
How immature! If he hurts her, I will personally kill him myself.

John pulls her to him and puts an arm around her.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR ON THE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel takes his eyes off the road and looks at Nicole.

DANIEL
Since when do you not trust me?

NICOLE
It's not that I don't trust you, Daniel.

DANIEL
Then what is it? You would really prefer staying there with all of those losers?

NICOLE
If it meant not having to risk my life.

Daniel shakes his head and laugh.

NICOLE

Look, Daniel, you may be above a lot of things in life, but you're definitely not above the influence of alcohol. Nobody is. I'm not interested in dying young in a car accident.

DANIEL

So you think I don't have your best interest at heart?

NICOLE

How could you? If you did, you wouldn't want me in the car with you while you're driving half loaded!

Daniel turns to confront Nicole and for a moment loses control of the car. It's all over the road. A car coming in the opposite direction barely misses them. He regains control of the car and steps on the gas.

DANIEL

(out the car
window)

Are you crazy?! Man, some people!

NICOLE

Daniel...

No response.

NICOLE

Daniel! That's enough! What are you trying to prove? Slow down.

Daniel turns to face Nicole...

DANIEL

Everything's under control. When are you going to learn to trust me?

...and veers over into the wrong lane.

NICOLE

Daniel!

Nicole's warning cry is too late. Their car slams head-on into a pickup truck and rolls like a toy, clear off the road and into a gully.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT - LATER

From Daniel's point of view, hanging out the driver's side window, the scene slowly fades in as he regains consciousness.

Daniel quickly finds that he's stuck in the smashed up car. Groaning in pain, he tries to free himself, but with no success. Then it hits him...where's Nicole? Through his pain, he calls out for her.

DANIEL

Nicole!

No response.

He strains to look back in the car, but doesn't see any sign of her.

DANIEL

Nicole! Please, answer me!

He tries again to free himself, slowly and painfully pulling himself the rest of the way out of the car and falling to the ground. He cries out in pain as he hits the ground.

DANIEL

Nicole! Where are you?

He rolls over, looks to his right, and sees Nicole's limp body in an unnatural position on the ground a short distance away.

DANIEL

Oh God, please be alive!

With tears streaming down his cheeks, Daniel manages to half crawl, half walk to his wife's side. He lifts her up, and holding her tightly in his arms with her head against his chest, begins rocking slowly back and forth.

DANIEL

Don't die on me. Please...I'm so sorry.

Daniel looks around and then calls out...

DANIEL

Help! Can anybody hear me?

He turns around and sees that the other car is overturned and resting against a tree. There's no sign of life in that direction.

DANIEL

Oh, you've got to be kidding me!
Help! Somebody help me!

Daniel's attention is drawn to what could be a man standing at the side of the road a short distance away. There's a bright glaring light around whatever it is, so it's hard to make out who or what it is.

Daniel squints his eyes trying to discern if it is in fact a man. He addresses the object.

DANIEL

Hello? Can you help us?

The object remains motionless.

Daniel begins to sob as he sincerely calls out to God.

DANIEL

Please, God, I ask of you to come
save me from this turmoil. I need
you in my life more now than ever.

The WAIL OF SIRENS approaching distracts Daniel and when he looks back, whatever the brightly lit object was is gone.

An ambulance pulls up at the side of the road.

Two EMTs rush out of the ambulance. One runs to Daniel and Nicole's side, the other two the second car.

The first EMT kneels down and takes a quick look at Nicole.

EMT #1

She's not breathing. She needs
immediate attention.

The EMT removes Daniel's arm from around Nicole's body.

DANIEL

You have to save her...please.

Another SIREN, and a second ambulance arrives on the scene. The newly arrived EMTs exit their vehicle.

EMT #1 calls out to them.

EMT #1
I need a back board and a
respirator!

The newly arrived EMTs tend to Nicole. EMT #1 turns his attention to Daniel.

EMT #1
Where do you hurt?

DANIEL
Mainly my heart.

The EMT can't hear him.

EMT #1
What's that?

The EMT has to lean in close to catch Daniel's words.

DANIEL
There was a man and he was
glowing. I've seen him before. I
know I'll see him again, very
soon.

Daniel's eyes close.

INT. WEST POINT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - DANIEL'S ROOM - DAY

Daniel, lying very still in bed, stares at the ceiling.

A KNOCK on the door, and without waiting for a response, police detective ROBERT PATTERSON enters.

He sees that Daniel appears to be in a daze.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Mr. Spencer?

No response.

He moves a little closer to the bed.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Daniel Spencer?

Daniel snaps out of it and becomes aware of Patterson's presence.

DANIEL

What...?

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

My name is Patterson...Detective Patterson.

Daniel looks the visitor over.

DANIEL

Are you a police officer?

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

Yes, Daniel. I'm with the West Point police department. I'd like a few words with you. Do you feel up to answering a couple of questions?

DANIEL

Yes, Sir, I guess so.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

Well, let's get started.

He approaches the bed.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

Mind if I sit down?

A "why-not" shrug from Daniel.

Patterson sits down in a straight-back chair parked close to the bed.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

I hate to get right to the point, Daniel, but I need to know exactly what happened last night.

DANIEL

Okay.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

Had you been drinking or using any other mind-altering substances prior to the accident?

DANIEL

Yeah, you really do get right to the point.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

It's important that we clear you of any wrong doing as quickly as possible...eliminate you as a suspect.

DANIEL

A suspect? Suspected of...?

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

Manslaughter, Daniel.

DANIEL

What?

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

The folks in the other car...well...

DANIEL

They...?

Daniel can't get the words out.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

The two kids in the back seat were DOA. The two in the front were in critical condition on arrival at the hospital. Neither made it through the night, Daniel.

Daniel struggles to catch his breath and then with great difficulty, he looks like he's going into a panic attack.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

You need to calm down and try to breathe normally.

Slowly, Daniel regains his composure.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON

In order to clear you, Daniel, I need your complete concentration and for you to answer my questions as accurately as possible. Okay?

DANIEL

Yes, Sir.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Were you drinking last night?

DANIEL
I had a few beers at the reunion,
but that's it. It wasn't like I
was drunk or anything.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
How many beers is "a few"?

DANIEL
I don't remember exactly. Maybe
three or four. We were fighting.
I was distracted.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
What's that?

DANIEL
My wife, Nicole, and I...we were
fighting just before the accident.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
What were you fighting about?

DANIEL
I'm not sure. I can't really
remember. Me and my ignorance,
maybe. At the reunion, she wanted
friends to drive her home. That
bothered me. It was like she
didn't trust me.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Why did she want friends to drive
her home? Did she think you had
too much to drink?

DANIEL
I guess. I yelled at her...made a
scene.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Why would you yell at her when she
was only trying to protect
herself?

DANIEL
I don't know. I really don't. I
guess I let my ignorance overcome
my judgement. I've never been one
who liked being told what to do,
(MORE)

DANIEL (cont'd)
by anyone.

An elderly man in scrubs, DOCTOR EVANS, enters the room followed by a nurse with a tray upon which rests a syringe and a cotton swab.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
I need a little more time, Doc.

The look on the doc's face speaks volumes. Daniel notices.

The doc looks away from Detective Patterson and stares straight at Daniel.

DANIEL
What? What is it?

DOCTOR EVANS
I'm sorry, Daniel. We did everything we could. Apparently a blood clot...

DANIEL
Who...Nicole?

DOCTOR EVANS
She's gone, Daniel. I'm so sorry.

Daniel goes into shock, not speaking, not crying, just staring straight ahead. After a moment, he turns his head to find a heartbroken April and John staring at him through the hospital room window. He slowly turns the other way.

DANIEL
(repeating himself)
This can't be right...can't be right.

DETECTIVE PATTERSON
Mr. Spencer? There's some business I need to take care of. We'll talk soon, so don't think about going anywhere.

It appears that Daniel doesn't even hear him.

DOCTOR EVANS
That would be best. You know he's not going to go anywhere.

Detective Patterson exits the room.

Doctor Evans sits down on the edge of the bed.

DOCTOR EVANS

Mr. Spencer.

No response.

DOCTOR EVANS

Mr. Spencer?

DANIEL

This is not right. She can't be gone.

The nurse moves closer and Doctor Evans takes the syringe from the tray.

He takes a hold of Daniel's arm and gives an injection in the upper arm.

As if in a daze, Daniel looks at his arm and then at Doctor Evans.

DANIEL

What...?

DOCTOR EVANS

Something to help you sleep.

Daniel's eyes close and he quickly drifts off to sleep.

Doctor Evans gets to his feet and takes from his pocket a small cloth bag held closed by a drawstring. He places it on the bedside table.

INT. WEST POINT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - DANIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

While in a cold sweat, Daniel suddenly awakens and looks around the room.

DANIEL

It wasn't a nightmare.

He notices the cloth bag on the bedside table, picks it up and empties its contents into his hand. It's Nicole's wedding ring set.

Daniel breaks down in tears.

After a moment, he manages to pull himself together enough to pray.

DANIEL

Oh, God...could you please give me a second chance? I know I can fix things. I promise to never hurt a single soul again.

Daniel continues crying uncontrollably.

DANIEL

Or, at the very least, give Nicole her life back and take mine instead.

After a moment, a voice calls out.

GABE

Daniel, if your heart is true, I'm here to take you up on your offer.

Daniel raises his head to behold a very attractive, dark-haired stranger dressed in a white leisure suit, standing at the foot of the bed. The stranger has a luminescent glow about him.

DANIEL

What? It was you. You were there, at the accident. And, before that, you showed up at my senior prom in high school. Who are you and what do you want from me?

GABE

My name is Gabriel. You can call me "Gabe." I come as a messenger.

DANIEL

Wait a minute. Am I still dreaming? This has got to be a dream.

GABE

No, Daniel. This is not a dream and you are very much awake.

A NURSE, making her rounds, enters the room.

NURSE

How are you doing, Mr. Spencer?

The nurse apparently is unaware of Gabe's presence.

DANIEL
Can you see him?

NURSE
I'm sorry, see what?

Daniel points to the foot of the bed.

DANIEL
There! Can you not see him?

NURSE
See who?

DANIEL
Him. The man standing right
there!

The nurse looks around the room and then gives Daniel a
condescending smile.

NURSE
Sir, there's nobody here but you
and me. Maybe I should call the
doctor?

Daniel looks at Gabe questioningly. His only response is a
shrug.

DANIEL
No, it's okay. I probably just
need some more sleep.

NURSE
Well, if you need anything, push
this button on the side of your
bed. Okay?

DANIEL
(never taking his
attention off of
Gabe)
Okay. Thank you.

The nurse exits the room.

DANIEL
Is this some kind of joke?

GABE

No, Daniel, this is no joke. It is only you who can see or hear me. And, you must not reveal my presence to anyone, if I am to help you.

DANIEL

I don't understand. Are you the angel of death or something?

Gabe walks over to the bedside chair and sits down.

GABE

On the contrary, Daniel. I'm the angel of life. It is actually through Nicole's prayers that I am responding to your cry for help.

DANIEL

What? Nicole was praying for me?

GABE

Yes. Nicole prayed everyday for you to find that peace within your heart. Because of her prayers and your sincere request, I have come to deliver.

DANIEL

She really did care for me, didn't she?

GABE

Yes, Daniel. You were her spouse, her partner and she knew you were hurting.

DANIEL

But, why me? Why now? What makes me so special?

GABE

I know you have an honest heart, Daniel. However, this is a chance for you to look beyond the physical realm and open your heart to new possibilities. Perhaps even learn how to truly love again.

Daniel winces in pain as he sits up further in the bed.

GABE

Your vow, as well as your desire to seek God, has been seen and heard. Your offer to sacrifice your own life for that of your precious wife so that she might live again will play out, per divine intervention. Just remember that you must hold up your end of the bargain, and that is to never hurt a single soul again.

DANIEL

Yes, I definitely meant what I said, but I'm sorry, I'm not quite understanding the situation.

GABE

Daniel, I see in your heart that you are sincere in your offer. So, I have been advised that you will be given a second chance. A trial so to speak. If you can keep your promise, Nicole's future will be saved and this tragedy avoided. If not...

DANIEL

Yes, Sir, I understand. I could never thank you enough for this.

GABE

Don't thank me just yet, Daniel. You must hear me out for the most sensitive part of the deal. Nicole will remember nothing from the present time stream, but you will. Your impulse will be to deny it. That would be a terrible mistake. You will be sent back to your junior year of high school when the relationship with Nicole first began. This is required in order to allow you that chance of truly learning the concept of sacrifice, avoiding tragedy and saving a life. Some things will change but the overall story will remain the same. So, remember to keep everything in mind that I have told you. Do you understand?

Daniel nods his head questionably but thoughtfully.

GABE

You must learn what it means to be a true friend...the meaning of personal sacrifice. Nicole must come to know you as a platonic friend and the intimacy at this point should be avoided in order to accomplish that. You must find that inner peace within yourself, Daniel. No matter how far you have to go.

DANIEL

What does this mean for me and my future? I don't know if I can do this. I'm not quite sure I understand.

GABE

I must go now, Daniel. Please keep in mind everything that I have told you or all of this will have been in vain.

DANIEL

Wait! You can't leave!

A nearly blinding FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT and the room vanishes.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The SOUNDING of a bell and teenaged Daniel awakens and lifts his head up from his desk.

With a somewhat confused look on his face, Daniel takes in his surroundings.

As the others leave the class room, a familiar face approaches Daniel. It's Richie.

RICHIE

Hey. Did you have a nice nap?

DANIEL

Richie?

RICHIE

Snap out of it, Man. You slept through Mrs. Sanders' entire class. You're lucky you weren't
(MORE)

RICHIE (cont'd)
smacked on the head with a ruler.

Daniel slowly gets to his feet.

DANIEL
Richie? Is it really you? Oh,
Man! Am I glad to see you!

Daniel attempts to give Richie a hug. He pulls away.

RICHIE
Whoa! What's going on with you?
There's girls in here, Dude.

DANIEL
You look the same way you did the
last time I saw you.

RICHIE
Of course I do. That was just
last period.

DANIEL
Have I ever told you how grateful
I am to have you as my friend?

RICHIE
Wow! Who are you and what have
you done with our Daniel?

DANIEL
No, I really mean it, Richie.
Don't forget that.
(remembering Nicole)
I've got to go find Nicole! Is
she okay?

RICHIE
Of course she's okay. Why
wouldn't she be? Except maybe...

DANIEL
Maybe what?

RICHIE
Maybe she was abducted by aliens
since I last saw her in home room.

Richie lets out a sarcastic laugh with not even a smile from Daniel.

DANIEL

I need to see her right now. Come on, go with me.

He rushes out of the room with Richie following right behind him.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

RICHIE

Where are you going?

DANIEL

To find Nicole. Hey, what year is this?

RICHIE

"What year is this?" How could you forget what year it is? You been smoking or something?

DANIEL

Come on, Richie, don't ask stupid questions. Just tell me what the year is.

RICHIE

Well...next year we become the seniors of '92, so I'm assuming that since we're only juniors, it's now '91. It's been 1991 all year long. What's with you? Did you really get that wasted last night?

DANIEL

Oh, my gosh. It really happened. I'm really back.

RICHIE

What really happened? Back where?

DANIEL

Ah...nothing. You just have to learn to trust me.

He speeds up.

Daniel stops at the doorway and looks into the room. He sees teenaged Nicole in the room talking to another girl. The sight of her takes his breath away.

DANIEL
I can't believe it.

Richie looks past his friend into the room.

RICHIE
Can't believe what? That she
wasn't abducted by aliens after
all?

DANIEL
Absolutely beautiful. Thank you.

RICHIE
What?

DANIEL
Nothing, Richie. I'm thankful
that everything's okay. Just a
bad dream. That's all.

RICHIE
Yeah, I was looking out for you
last night.

DANIEL
Oh my gosh, she is so beautiful.

RICHIE
What?

DANIEL
Oh, nothing. Sorry.

Daniel and Richie both step back into the hallway, out of view of the door, as the other students walk around them heading to class.

RICHIE
I was looking out for you.

DANIEL
Do what? You were looking out for
me?

RICHIE
Yes, of course I was. I know that
Nicole really likes you, and
regardless of what your state of
mind was last night, she was
willing to let you take her home
even after you refused to let her
drive.

DANIEL

What?

RICHIE

You don't remember? What's going on with you? You really must have been half in the bag last night. I offered to take her home, just like every other guy there, but she insisted on going with you even if you were half lit.

DANIEL

Really? Well, what happened?

Richie gives Daniel an odd look.

RICHIE

Well, obviously you made it home. I followed you to make sure you were both going to be okay. You can just imagine what could have happened, with you under the influence like that. You really got lucky.

DANIEL

(taken aback)

Yes, Richie. I am very aware of what could have happened. Thanks for looking out for me. I really appreciate it. I think I've definitely learned my lesson. That will never happen again.

RICHIE

Hey, that's what friends are for, right?

DANIEL

You bet.

RICHIE

Hey, Man. I've got to go! I don't want to be late for class. You better come on too. Mr. Ingram is just dying to have a reason to expel you. All you need is one more tardy.

Richie starts off down the hall.

Daniel takes one more look into the classroom at Nicole, smiles, and then catches up to Richie.

DANIEL

Richie, look...I know I haven't always been the best friend in the universe, but I want you to know I'm going to make up for all those times I've been a jerk.

Richie gives his friend a quizzical look.

RICHIE

What's this, the new and improved Daniel Spencer?

Daniel smiles and puts an arm across Richie's shoulders.

DANIEL

Yeah, something like that.

They arrive at their next class as Richie ducks into the room.

RICHIE

Better yet, go to the bathroom and find your old self. Later!

DANIEL

Yeah, I'll do that.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - LATER

Daniel sits in the back of a classroom, slowly observing his surroundings.

TEACHER

...and please remember, book reports are due tomorrow. I don't want to hear...

The bell rings and kids scramble for the door.

TEACHER

(louder to be heard over the commotion)
...any excuses!

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As Daniel walks along, he observes all the faces from his past as, if seeing them for the first time.

He approaches Nicole and April, who stand talking to a boy he doesn't recognize.

In observing the new kid, Daniel suddenly realizes who it is. The kid is Timmy, but not the old Timmy. He is now filled out, rather than bare-bone skinny, and he no longer wears glasses.

DANIEL

Timmy?

TIMMY

Hey, Buddy. I was wondering when you might show up. You partied pretty hard last night.

The girls laugh as Timmy takes Daniel's hand to initiate the infamous private handshake.

Daniel steps back mid-stream with a look of confusion on his face, surprised that Timmy now knows the secret handshake.

TIMMY

What's wrong? Are you okay?

DANIEL

What's going on? Where are your glasses and why are you here?

TIMMY

My glasses? I've had contacts for years now. What happened? Wiped your memory clean last night, did you?

The girls laugh. Daniel gives Nicole a look.

Timmy pats Daniel on the back.

TIMMY

You know I'm just kidding, right?

Daniel still has a confused look on his face.

TIMMY

I've got to go, guys. Are we all still on for tonight? My parents will be home but it's cool.

APRIL
Yes, we are definitely on for
tonight! I don't care what
anybody says.

They share a laugh and Timmy heads off down the hallway.

DANIEL
Am I missing something here?

APRIL
Probably. You always seem to be
missing something.

The girls laugh.

NICOLE
What do you mean, Daniel?

Daniel, hearing Nicole speak for the first time since the
accident, is somewhat taken aback and helplessly stares at
her for a long moment.

Nicole waves her hand in front of his face.

NICOLE
Hello? Anybody home?

Daniel snaps out of it.

DANIEL
I'm sorry. What were you saying?

NICOLE
I seriously think you need to
catch up on some sleep tonight.

DANIEL
Yeah, you're probably right.
What's the plan for tonight?

APRIL
Tonight? What, you forgot about
the bonfire party too? How could
you forget that? We've been
planning this for weeks.

DANIEL
A bonfire party?

APRIL
Yes. At Timmy's house. Remember?

DANIEL

Since when do we hang out at
Timmy's house?

Nicole gives Daniel an odd look.

NICOLE

Seriously? I thought you guys
have known each other for years.

DANIEL

Yes, we have known each other for
years but not as friends. Whatever
gave you that idea?

APRIL

I wish you would get off his back,
Daniel. Timmy's parents are the
ones that provide the funding for
extracurricular school activities,
especially football. Remember the
time that we needed more uniforms
and his dad was there to pick up
the slack? The team thought they
were going to have to forfeit that
whole season.

DANIEL

So, his family has money. Is that
a good enough reason to hang out
with him?

APRIL

What is your hang-up, Daniel? It's
almost like you think you're
better than him, which we all know
isn't true. You'd think that
after he saved your life you would
be more appreciative of him. I've
got to get to class.

April turns to walk away and Daniel takes her by the arm,
turning her back towards him.

DANIEL

What do you mean, "saved my life"?

APRIL

What do I mean? Don't tell me
you've forgotten about your drunk
driving accident too. God,
Daniel. You would think you would
have at least learned something by

(MORE)

APRIL (cont'd)
now. Especially considering...

NICOLE
Yeah. Just be thankful you were
alone in the car. Had someone
been on the passenger side, they
probably would have died
instantly.

Daniel stares at Nicole in disbelief of the conversation.

APRIL
Yeah, and if Timmy hadn't of come
along and given you CPR...

She shakes her head.

APRIL
Anyway, I've got to get to class.
I don't want to be late.

NICOLE
Yeah, me too.

April and Nicole head off for their next class.

Daniel just stands there, severely taken aback.

DANIEL
So, this is it? I'm not quite
sure I understand the implication.

Daniel lets out a sigh, turns around to head to his next
class, and a figure materializes a few feet in front of him,
startling him. It's Gabe.

Daniel glances around at the other students.

DANIEL
Whoa, Gabe. You know you can't
just do that!

GABE
Good to see you too, Daniel.
Remember the deal that you have
vowed to keep, regardless the
circumstances. You must not stray
from that. Everything has its own
time, purpose and reasoning for
existing.

DANIEL

Okay...? I totally get that but you can't talk to me like this. People will think I'm nuts. Anyway, I've got to go to class.

Daniel goes to walk around Gabe, but Gabe quickly sidesteps and Daniel walks through him without any movement from Gabe. Daniel immediately turns around in question as Gabe continues staring right at him.

DANIEL

Look, if you keep throwing curve balls at me, it will be harder for me to concentrate on this.

GABE

Now how much fun would the game of life be without a few curve balls? I have to keep you on your toes, Daniel. I must make sure that you are prepared for anything and everything. If so, you will not lose your concentration. You must maintain your focus.

DANIEL

And you're telling me this because...?

GABE

Trust me, Daniel. You'll figure it out in time. You must have patience.

Gabe turns away from Daniel and walks down the hallway, slowly disappearing from sight.

DANIEL

Patience or admittance that I may be losing my mind?

EXT. TIMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel sits in his car in silence, watching the other kids laughing and chatting with each other.

DANIEL

Huh, I don't know if I can do this.

Daniel slowly pulls the car keys out of the ignition and placing them in his pocket, he is surprised and confused to find Nicole's wedding ring set there.

He studies the ring set for a moment and then puts them back in his pocket. He shakes his head, not understanding what's going on.

DANIEL

Man, that's weird. How did that get in there?

After a moment of silence, Daniel is interrupted by someone outside the car.

JOHN

There's my man!

Daniel gets out and closes the door behind him. John approaches, carrying a paper bag in one hand.

DANIEL

John?

John initiates their secret handshake.

JOHN

Hey, Man. Glad you could make it.

DANIEL

(in disbelief)

Yeah. Wouldn't miss it for the world.

John reaches into the paper bag and comes out with a beer, which he offers to Daniel.

DANIEL

Thanks, but no thanks. I'm not up to drinking tonight.

JOHN

After the partying you did last night, I'm surprised you're even up to socializing at all.

John laughs and heads off to join the other kids while Daniel remains a few steps behind.

Daniel glances out towards the crowd and lets out a sigh as he speeds up to walk alongside John.

As they approach the group, Daniel notices Nicole sheepishly

smiling at him and then turning away.

Richie walks up to Daniel and they do their secret handshake.

John raises his hands in the air in an attempt to get everyone's attention.

JOHN

Okay, I think we're all here now and I have some news I'd like to share with you all.

The crowd responds with a unanimous moan.

JOHN

No, really. This is good news. I've made a decision on my educational career and college of choice.

RICHIE

And what exactly would that be?

JOHN

Okay, are you ready for this? The Full Sail Center for the Recording Arts.

RICHIE

Recording arts? Oh, please. You had me thinking Harvard.

Laughter.

RICHIE

So, instead of practicing law, you're going to make sure movies have good sound?

John replies in a sarcastic manner.

JOHN

That's right. And when you turn on your TV and hear that theatrical audio booming out at you, you'll think of me.

DANIEL

I don't know, John. I kind of think you would be better suited for something more elaborate.

The group immediately directs their attention at Daniel.

JOHN
Oh? Like what?

Daniel tries to act calm.

DANIEL
Well, seeing as how good you are
with computers, maybe designing
corporate websites?

JOHN
Designing what?

Daniel looks around and notices the confusion of the group.

DANIEL
(recovering)
Or, maybe April's uncle can hire
you to run his company's marketing
team.

John gives April a look and then busts out laughing.

JOHN
Man, you really do have a sense of
humor.

Daniel glances back over in Nicole's direction and sees that she's looking at him.

Their eyes meet and Nicole immediately turns away.

Daniel turns and walks away.

JOHN
Hey, Man. Where are you going?
We're just playing around.

DANIEL
Sorry, I need to go find a
bathroom. I'll be back.

Daniel walks towards the house but stops and sits down on the ground behind a huge old oak tree, out of view from anyone. He puts his head in his hands.

DANIEL
I don't know if I can do this. I
don't even know what I'm doing
here. If you're around, Gabe, can
you please give me some direction?

There is a brief pause.

GABE (O.S.)

So, do you recall a particular night like this?

Once more, Gabe's sudden luminescent appearance gives Daniel a start.

DANIEL

Please, Gabe, you know this can't be good for my heart. Is there not an easier way to come to me?

GABE

Sorry, Daniel. Didn't mean to alarm you. Just remember that I am always here, whether you can see me or not. Keep that in mind and the sudden appearances won't startle you as much.

Daniel chuckles at Gabe's comment as he slowly nods in agreement.

GABE

So...? What exactly do you recall about a similar night like this?

Daniel lets out a long sigh.

DANIEL

Well, Nicole and I shared our first kiss at a bonfire party.

GABE

Interesting...remember, Daniel, the idea behind this agreement is for you to use the restraint needed to truly learn what you are here to learn.

Daniel interrupts.

DANIEL

But what if I can't, or maybe not have the strength to?

GABE

You must find a way to sustain that strength, Daniel. If you fail, Nicole dies. That you must remember or nothing else will

(MORE)

GABE (cont'd)

matter.

Daniel resorts to tears.

DANIEL

I'm trying, Gabe. I truly am. I just don't know if I can do this.

GABE

Do you honestly love Nicole, Daniel? Do you love her more than life itself? If not, then let her go and the trial will be over.

Daniel watches Gabe as he begins to fade, at first becoming translucent.

GABE

Think about it, Daniel. You now have the opportunity to do the right thing. Don't let your selfishness deter you from that. Your future, as well as Nicole's, depends on it.

With a slight popping sound, Gabe vanishes entirely.

As Daniel walks back to rejoin his friends, he sees that they're laughing and having a good time. He notices Timmy and Nicole enjoying each other's company.

INSERT QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS (MONTAGE) - past images of he and Nicole arguing the night she died.

Daniel retrieves the ring set from his pocket and looks down at it.

John approaches from behind and pats Daniel on the back. Daniel quickly puts the ring set back in his pocket.

JOHN

Hey, Man. I've been looking for you. Is everything okay?

DANIEL

Yeah, everything's fine.

Daniel again glances back towards Timmy and Nicole, still obviously enjoying each other's company. John notices and speaks up.

JOHN

So, when are you finally going to go for it?

DANIEL

What?

JOHN

Nicole, Goofy. When are you going to ask her out?

Again, Daniel looks back at Nicole.

DANIEL

I don't know. I think she probably deserves better than me.

JOHN

Are you kidding? She thinks you hung the moon. You're the only thing she ever talks about.

DANIEL

Really? Then what's the deal with Timmy, of all people?

JOHN

Timmy? What do you mean?

DANIEL

Yeah, like how does he fit in? It's not like he's always been a part of the group. What's the deal?

John shrugs his shoulders.

JOHN

I don't see that there is a deal. Maybe if you took a chance to get to know him a little better, Daniel, you might just find that you actually like the guy.

DANIEL

Really? Nah, I don't think so.

JOHN

Yeah, Daniel. You know how generous his dad is? Well, Timmy's the same way. In fact, he's bailed me out a time or two and even saved your life. That alone should win him an

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)
opportunity with you.

DANIEL
I don't know. Just the idea of
someone different than me and you
in the group, I guess.

JOHN
Not different, Daniel...better.

For a moment they watch their friends enjoying themselves,
neither boy speaking.

Then...

JOHN
Just to give you an idea as to
what kind of guy Timmy really
is...

DANIEL
Yeah?

JOHN
Just look at him. He's head over
heels for Nicole, but he knows she
only has eyes for you so he
doesn't make a move out of
consideration for her feelings.
You know, not wanting to
complicate things. You, on the
other hand, seem to think the
entire universe revolves around
Daniel Spencer. It's all about
what you need and what you want.

DANIEL
Or, perhaps it's a given that a
girl like Nicole would never be
interested in someone like Timmy.

JOHN
Who says...Hmmm? Watch what you
say, Daniel. Let me tell you that
anything is possible. Come on.

John starts back towards the group.

Daniel follows John's lead.

Timmy looks up and greets them as they approach the group.

TIMMY

Hey! We were starting to wonder
if you two got lost or something.

Timmy approaches John and they do the secret handshake. He then extends his hand to Daniel, who immediately coughs into his hand rather than doing the handshake thing.

DANIEL

Sorry. I've been a little sick
lately.

TIMMY

That's okay. I understand.

Timmy calls out to the group...

TIMMY

Don't forget that we're grilling
over by the pool. Burgers and
dogs, all you can eat!

Timmy heads off towards another group.

John, Nicole, April and Richie head toward the pool. Daniel follows a few steps behind, all the while casually keeping his eyes on Nicole.

JOHN

Have you guys ever wondered what
it would be like to know the
future before it happens? Think
of all the heartache and drama you
could avoid.

This remark catches Daniel's attention.

DANIEL

Why would you say something like
that?

JOHN

I don't know. It just kind of
popped into my head. If there is
a possibility of that ever
happening though, I want to be the
first in line.

The crowd laughs as John looks up in wonderment.

Daniel again glances at Nicole, and then...

DANIEL

Guys, I'm sorry but I've really got to be heading out.

RICHIE

What? Before we even eat? You're usually the one who closes the place down. What's wrong?

JOHN

Yeah, Dude. What's up with you?

DANIEL

I just feel...I don't know...a little down tonight. I would hate it if I brought everyone else down.

JOHN

Get something to eat. You'll feel better.

DANIEL

I don't really feel like eating, either. I'm sorry. I guess it's just something I need to work out on my own.

Nicole goes to Daniel's side.

NICOLE

Can I walk with you to your car?

DANIEL

Sure, I guess. Why not?

Together, Daniel and Nicole walk away.

RICHIE

What do you think is going on with him?

JOHN

I don't know, but yeah, he's been acting kind of strange. He hasn't been himself at all here lately. Maybe he's just going through some sudden changes. Who knows?

RICHIE

Yeah, really. When it comes to Daniel, who knows?

EXT. TIMMY'S DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Without words, Daniel and Nicole approach the car.

As Daniel opens the car door, Nicole grabs his arm and spins him around.

NICOLE

Is it me?

DANIEL

I'm sorry?

NICOLE

Is it me? Am I the reason you're leaving early?

DANIEL

No, of course not. Why would you even think that?

NICOLE

It's just that you're acting so...so distant. That's not the Daniel I was introduced to. Am I the reason for the change? Do I need to distance myself from the group?

DANIEL

No, not at all, Nicole. Please don't think that. I'm sorry if I've come across that way. That's not my intention. I've just had a lot on my mind lately. Everything's fine. See you tomorrow at school, huh?

NICOLE

Yeah, sure. See you tomorrow.

Daniel and Nicole share a silent but brief moment.

Daniel slowly gets in his car as Nicole looks on and drives off.

NICOLE

It is about me. I can feel it. I'll convince you that I'm the one for you, though. You'll see.

As the tail lights from Daniel's car vanish from view, Nicole turns and starts back towards the others.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR ON THE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel removes the ring set from his pocket and looks it over while driving.

Without a word, he looks in his rear view mirror and begins to cry.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - LOCKER AREA - DAY

Daniel goes through his locker desperately searching for something. He throws up his hands in despair.

DANIEL
Dammit! Where is it?

A familiar laugh...

AMBER
Watch the language, Mister.

Daniel turns and finds himself face-to-face with Amber.

AMBER
Knowing you, you probably never had it in the first place.

DANIEL
Amber?

AMBER
Hi. How are you?

DANIEL
Oh, my gosh!

Daniel gives Amber a quick hug.

DANIEL
When did you get here?

Daniel closes his locker and the two of them walk together down the hallway.

AMBER
Well, I just got back into town. My dad's old boss offered him a promotion and a raise to come back. So, here I am!

DANIEL

Yeah, I remember. I mean...that's great!

Amber pauses for a moment from confusion as John joins them.

JOHN

Hey, Brother. Feeling better? You look beat.

DANIEL

Yeah, I'm okay.

They do the handshake thing.

AMBER

You guys still doing the "secret" handshake that's so secret everyone in the school has seen you do it a million times?

JOHN

Good to see you Amber.

AMBER

Hey, John.

JOHN

You're back.

AMBER

Yeah, hopefully for good this time.

She stops in front of a classroom door.

AMBER

See you boys later. It's good seeing you again.

She enters the classroom.

JOHN

Wow. That was totally unexpected, seeing her here.

DANIEL

Yeah, really. I thought we'd never see her again.

They continue on their way down the hall.

JOHN

So, do you...? You know.

DANIEL

What?

JOHN

Oh, come on, Daniel. Do you still have feelings for her?

DANIEL

What? Come on, John. That was ages ago. We've both moved on.

JOHN

Yeah, but she's still looking good. I think Nicole has just as much to offer though, if you want my honest opinion.

DANIEL

Yes, I'm aware of that. Why do you keep throwing Nicole up to me?

JOHN

Because, Dude, something tells me there's a story there. I'm just waiting to see how it develops.

John pats Daniel on the back as he smiles and walks off.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

Nicole and April walk across the football field heading for the bleacher.

NICOLE

Can I ask you something?

APRIL

Sure, what's up?

NICOLE

Well, have you ever felt like you had a strong connection to someone you just met but couldn't quite figure out why or what it was?

APRIL

Like you knew them from another lifetime or something?

NICOLE

Yeah, hadn't thought of it that way, but that's kind of what I'm getting at, I guess.

April laughs and jokingly nudges Nicole's arm.

APRIL

And just who might this lover from another lifetime be?

NICOLE

I think you probably know.

APRIL

Do you really believe in past life stuff or lives that co-exist with each other?

NICOLE

I don't know...maybe. Kind of like dejavue. I guess there could be something to it. Almost like another realm of life we don't know about.

APRIL

Seriously? Well, it is an interesting concept, I guess. What would that consist of, though? I mean, a chance for do-overs from a select chosen few? The new souls versus the old souls?

Nicole laughs.

NICOLE

I don't know...perhaps. I haven't been given that opportunity for a do-over so I wouldn't know.

April laughs.

APRIL

You know, not that I believe it or anything, but they say that the concept behind reincarnation is that in each life, there is a lesson to be learned. The more lives you live, the more lessons you learn.

NICOLE

Some more than others, huh? Well, my lesson is simply learning how to deal with guys.

APRIL

Guys...or Daniel?

Nicole sighs.

APRIL

Who knows. Maybe its for him to learn how to care for somebody else first for a change and maybe you're the prize he wins if he gets it all right.

NICOLE

Or, he can have what's behind curtain number three!

They laugh.

APRIL

Okay, enough of this deep thinking stuff. Let's move on to something more important.

NICOLE

Like the latest gossip from around school?

APRIL

Exactly!

NICOLE

Yeah, so what's up with this girl named Amber? From what I've heard, her and Daniel have quite the steamy history together.

APRIL

Oh yeah, there's definitely a history there but I can assure you that's all it is.

Nicole slowly shakes her head as to be in deep concentration as April lets out a long sigh.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - STUDENT PARKING LOT - EVENING

It's well past the end of the school day and the lot is pretty much deserted except for Daniel who stands in front of his car, poking around under the open hood.

A jerk of his hand and Daniel pops up, hitting his head on the hood.

DANIEL

Dammit!

From behind him...

AMBER

Wow, just can't control that language, can you?

Daniel turns and sees Amber walking his way.

AMBER

Well, this is a sight.

DANIEL

Hey, Amber. What are you doing here this late?

AMBER

I'm getting some private tutoring from Mrs. Foster. You know, catching up. You?

Daniel sighs.

DANIEL

Car trouble.

AMBER

Do you know what you're doing?

DANIEL

No, not really.

Amber places her books on the ground, goes to Daniel's side and looks under the hood.

AMBER

What's it doing or not doing?

DANIEL

Turns over but it won't start. How about I try to start it again and you see if maybe you can figure out what's wrong.

Daniel gets behind the wheel and a moment later, the engine turns over, but only sputters for a bit and then quits.

AMBER

When is the last time you changed the spark plugs?

Daniel laughs to himself.

DANIEL

A while. You think that's the problem?

AMBER

Either fouled plugs or the fuel pump is shot. Hopefully it's your plugs. That's the cheapest fix, so I'd try that first.

DANIEL

Where did you learn about cars?

AMBER

You forget, I grew up with three brothers who do nothing but talk cars. Couldn't help but learn a thing or two.

Daniel and Amber casually smile at each other as they immediately look away. Amber closes the hood and walks to the side of the car.

AMBER

Do you need a ride?

DANIEL

Yeah, I guess I do.

Amber picks up her books and they walk to her car parked a short distance away.

EXT. STEPS OF THE SCHOOL FACING THE LOT - CONTINUOUS

Nicole looks none too happy as she watches Amber drive off with Daniel riding shotgun.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

John, lunch tray in hand, takes a seat at an empty table and digs into his lunch.

A moment later, Nicole sits down next to John but with no lunch.

JOHN

Hey, Nicole. Aren't you going to eat?

NICOLE

I'm not really hungry.

JOHN

Are you okay?

Nicole sighs as John opens his drink and begins to eat.

NICOLE

Not really.

John stops eating and gives Nicole his full attention.

JOHN

Talk to me, Girl.

NICOLE

Am I wasting my time?

JOHN

On...?

NICOLE

On Daniel. I think he's still into Amber. They used to date when she lived here before, you know.

John laughs.

JOHN

Yeah, I know.

NICOLE

I'm afraid they might be picking up where they left off. Do you think he's interested in me at all?

JOHN

The only person who can truly answer that question is Daniel. As I recall, they didn't break up because Amber moved.

NICOLE

Oh?

JOHN

Look, you didn't hear this from me, but Daniel broke it off to have a fling with this college chick.

NICOLE

No kidding?

JOHN

No kidding. He told Amber that he thought they were getting too serious too fast and that she needed to back off. When he found out that she went out with a college guy that very same weekend, he played the victim's game. Got himself in a lot of trouble.

NICOLE

How so?

JOHN

Well, that Sunday afternoon, Richie, Daniel and I went to the lake. Richie and I drove out together and Daniel joined us later. He brought a bottle with him...got really smashed. When he went to drive home, we tried our best to stop him but it was no use. He ended up nearly killing himself in a car wreck. After that, his attitude changed. It was like before he would date a girl, she had to meet "all" of his standards. It was almost as if he was blaming all females for everything. Even the death of his parents.

NICOLE

Huh?

JOHN

Yeah. What's so ironic about all of this is that he lost both of his parents at a very young age to a car accident. It was a head-on collision by a drunk driver and not just any drunk driver, a female drunk driver. He stayed with his grandmother for a short bit but has practically been raising himself since he was a young teenager. Has never been the same since.

NICOLE

Wow. That's horrible.

JOHN

Yeah, tell me about it.

NICOLE

So, what does that say about me? I don't measure up to his "standards?"

JOHN

Look, Nicole...I think Daniel really likes you, but he needs some time. Or, maybe he's just waiting for that right moment to ask you out. Who knows? He's been really hard to read lately. It's pretty obvious he never truly cared for Amber. However, the way things have been going lately, I could be wrong.

Nicole sighs as she leans in to John and places her head on his shoulder for comfort. John places his arm around her and gives her a friendly kiss on the forehead.

JOHN

It'll be alright. He'll come to his senses at some point. We'll just keep our fingers crossed and hope that it's sooner than later.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel enters and immediately takes notice of John and Nicole, her head still resting on his shoulder.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS (MONTAGE) - Daniel holds Nicole's limp body with her head on his shoulder after the accident.

Daniel closes his eyes, remembering the agony of that moment.

Somebody walks up behind Daniel and taps him on the shoulder, snapping him out of his reverie. He turns and sees that it's Amber.

DANIEL

Oh, hey.

AMBER

Hey yourself. What are you doing?

DANIEL

I was just thinking about something. That's all.

Amber follows Daniel's look and sees that April and Timmy have joined John and Nicole. They're laughing and enjoying each other's company.

AMBER

Want to join me for lunch? There's some people I want you to meet.

DANIEL

Yeah, sure. Why not?

JOHN'S TABLE

Nicole sees Daniel with Amber. She becomes suddenly serious and gets quickly to her feet.

JOHN

Where are you going?

NICOLE

I've got to get some fresh air before class. I'll see you all later.

Nicole leaves the table.

APRIL

What's that about?

Timmy nods in the direction of the table where Amber sits talking with Daniel.

Timmy gets to his feet.

TIMMY
I'll be right back. I just want
to make sure she's okay.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - FRONT STEPS - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole sits on the front steps looking rather forlorn.

Timmy approaches and places a hand on her shoulder.

TIMMY
Nicole?

Nicole looks up and stares straight ahead, tears running
down her cheeks.

Timmy sits down next to her.

TIMMY
Do you want to talk about it?

NICOLE
I just don't understand it.

TIMMY
Neither do I.

This remark gets Nicole's attention.

NICOLE
What don't you understand?

TIMMY
How a heart belonging to someone
as beautiful as you can be so
easily broken.

Timmy takes Nicole's hand in his.

TIMMY
You need someone who will love you
the way you deserve to be loved.

Laughing through her tears...

NICOLE
You have someone in mind?

TIMMY
Of course. I can be that someone
if you'll just let me in. Why do
you have to wait on Daniel? He is
obviously not boyfriend material,
(MORE)

TIMMY (cont'd)
or at least trustworthy material,
anyway.

Nicole puts her hand on Timmy's knee.

NICOLE
I'm sorry, Timmy, but...we're just
too different and I would never
want to hurt our friendship.

Nicole withdraws her hand and wipes her eyes with the back
of her hand.

TIMMY
What does that mean, "different
people?" Look, I know I'm not the
best looking person in the world
but is there truly something that
wrong with me? Wouldn't you like
to be treated better than this?

NICOLE
What are you talking about?

TIMMY
Look, just give me a chance to
prove myself, Nicole. I mean, why
do you think I'm so different from
you anyway? Just like you, I cry
when I'm sad, I smile when I'm
happy, I shake when I'm nervous
and I pray when I'm scared, just
like you. So, what is it that's
wrong with me? You know, they say
beauty is only skin deep. We
aren't really that different and I
can prove it to you...if you would
just give me a chance.

Nicole gets to her feet.

NICOLE
I'm sorry, Timmy. I just don't
want to hurt you.

TIMMY
You mean, how Daniel is hurting
you?

She walks away, leaving Timmy alone on the steps.

INT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Daniel walks down the hall among the many students.

John rushes to catch up to him.

JOHN

Hey. What are you doing?

DANIEL

Hey, John. I'm following through the motions and walking to my next class. What does it look like I'm doing?

JOHN

Really? It looks to me like you're causing a lot of unnecessary heartache.

DANIEL

Oh? How's that?

JOHN

She has a ton of admirers and why she only has eyes for you, no one will ever know. It's almost like you have some kind of hold on her.

DANIEL

What are you talking about?

JOHN

Nicole...It's like she's stuck waiting for you to make a move...or not.

DANIEL

What do you want from me, John? I'm handling the situation the best way I know how. You think this is easy for me?

JOHN

Okay...? Look, I'm sorry. It's like you're just being selfish. Maybe you should just knock it off. I don't know.

DANIEL

I'm selfish? How am I selfish?

JOHN

If you don't want her, let her go.
That's all I'm saying. Stop
stringing her along.

DANIEL

What makes you think I'm stringing
her along?

JOHN

Come on, Daniel. It looks to me
like you're leading her on and at
the same time, trying to keep your
options open. It's almost like
you're keeping her at bay so that
no one else can have her.

DANIEL

Oh, come on!

JOHN

I'm serious. You don't want her,
but you don't want anybody else to
have her either.

DANIEL

Is that what you think?

JOHN

No, that's not what I think...it's
what I know. Come on, Daniel.
Don't let her life slip right
through your fingers.

DANIEL

What did you say?

Daniel pauses as he looks at John in question.

JOHN

Sorry. I meant her love. I'm
telling you, Daniel, this girl is
a winner. I hate seeing my best
friend make the biggest mistake of
his life.

DANIEL

Being with her would be a mistake.

JOHN

What?

DANIEL

Nicole and I being together...It would be a complete and total mistake.

JOHN

For who? You or her? How can you even say that?

DANIEL

I don't deserve her, John. She needs to be with someone else. There are things you just don't understand.

JOHN

Oh? Try me.

DANIEL

I wish I could, but this is something I have to do on my own.

JOHN

What does that mean?

DANIEL

It means that you don't know what I'm going through. There's things in life that are difficult to explain. I have to figure this out for myself. Nicole, as my girlfriend, is just not in the cards right now.

JOHN

So, let me see if I have this straight. You're just going to let her sit on a shelf until you decide what it is you want?

DANIEL

God, John! Would you give it a rest? That's not what I'm saying, so just drop it.

JOHN

I have no idea what you're saying because it makes no sense.

Nicole approaches from behind the boys.

Daniel blurts it out.

DANIEL

I told you, I'm no good for her.
If Nicole ends up with me, she'll
die.

JOHN

What?

Nicole can't believe what she just heard.

JOHN

What the hell are you talking
about?

DANIEL

I'm talking about me being no good
for her. She deserves much
better. Trust me. If anybody
knows that for sure, it's me. Now
get off my case and mind your own
business.

NICOLE

What? What's going on?

Daniel turns to Nicole and looks like he's ready to pass
out.

Then Amber approaches and places a hand on Daniel's
shoulder.

AMBER

What's going on? Are you okay,
Daniel?

Amber looks at Nicole.

AMBER

What did you do?

Daniel appears to be hyperventilating.

DANIEL

Nicole didn't do anything. It's
me. It's always been me.

Daniel looks around at his friends like a trapped animal.

DANIEL

I'm sorry. I have to go.

Daniel runs down the hall and out the front door.

EXT. WEST POINT HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - LATER

School's out and Richie runs through the exiting crowd to catch up with John.

RICHIE
John! Wait up.

John turns and waits for Richie.

JOHN
Hey, Richie!

RICHIE
What the heck happened with you and Daniel?

JOHN
How do you know something happened?

RICHIE
Really?! The whole school's talking about it.

JOHN
To be honest, I have no idea what happened. It's like Daniel dissed Nicole in front of half the school and for the craziest reason I've ever heard. I actually felt sorry for Nicole.

RICHIE
Why would he do that? I thought he liked Nicole.

JOHN
Yeah, I thought so too. Apparently not. I'm so tired of his crap. He's never going to grow up. I've had it with him.

RICHIE
Come on, John. As far as you and Daniel go back? I mean, you two have been friends for far too long to let a girl come in between you. I hate to see you ruin a good friendship over what might just be a big misunderstanding.

JOHN

It's not a misunderstanding, Richie, and it's not about just some girl. It's been building for a while now. Do you remember when he dated April that short time, before she and I got together?

RICHIE

Yeah, how could I forget?

JOHN

Well, it's the same old thing. He needs to be taught a lesson of how to act cordially and treat people, especially women, with respect. It's almost like he blames everybody for the death of his parents or something. I don't know.

RICHIE

Well, there may be some truth to that, John. It was a woman that killed his parents. Fortunately, that's not something that we've had to endure.

JOHN

Yeah, I know.

RICHIE

Come on. Obviously Daniel's got some issues he's trying to work through. Let's just be his friend and be there for him whenever he needs us. He'll work it out.

Richie pats John on the back and walks off.

EXT. WEST POINT CITY PARK - DAY

Daniel sits on a park bench. He wipes the tears from his eyes, trying to regain his composure. As he sits with a look of deep contemplation on his face, he is interrupted by a female voice.

Daniel looks up as a happy family (mom, dad and two kids) walk by with a dog in tow.

He wipes his eyes again.

A happy couple walks by.

Daniel takes the ring set from his pocket and rolls the rings around in his hand.

QUICK FLASHBACK - In this very park, Daniel, on one knee, proposing to Nicole.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

Hey, Boy. You here alone?

Daniel snaps out of his reverie to find an ELDERLY BLACK MAN sitting beside him on the bench.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

You look like you could use a friend, Son. What's your name?

DANIEL

Daniel. My name's Daniel.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

You okay?

DANIEL

Sure, if you can define what "okay" is. I don't really know anymore.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

Well, whatever it is that's bothering you, Son, I know it hurts now but there's something I've learned in all my years that you should know...

DANIEL

Yeah? What's that?

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

That those things in life that seem so important to us usually don't amount to much in the greater scheme of things. They ain't really all that important. We're all striving to get to the same place. We just have to help each other along the way.

Daniel gives the man a disgruntled look.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

We each struggle with our own problems. That's what makes us so different, yet so much alike.

DANIEL

Yeah?

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

Yes, Sir. You really want a riddle worth figuring on?

Daniel now gives the man his undivided attention.

The old man gets to his feet as a young girl walks up to him, followed by a young white man and a black woman.

ELDERLY BLACK MAN

What's the most important thing in your life? The one thing you can't truly live without? Think on that riddle a while, Boy. You'll figure it out. Life is short, but it will all come to us soon enough.

The man tips his hat, takes hold of the young girl's hand and shuffles off.

INT. TIMMY'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Timmy (looking more like his "old" self) sits on the couch reading a book with his glasses and ball cap on.

There's a knock on the door.

TIMMY

I got it, Mom.

Timmy puts his book down on the coffee table and goes to answer the door.

TIMMY'S FRONT HALLWAY

Timmy opens the door and finds Nicole standing there looking like she's been crying.

He steps out onto the porch and closes the door.

TIMMY

Nicole? Are you alright? What happened?

NICOLE
You were right.

TIMMY
What?

NICOLE
You were right about everything.

TIMMY
I don't understand.

NICOLE
We're really not that different.
Remember?

Nicole reaches out and grabs Timmy's hand.

NICOLE
Just like you, I cry when I'm sad,
I smile when I'm happy, I shake
when I'm nervous and I pray when
I'm scared. I know that now. I
just refused to see it before.

Timmy's heart drops as he swallows hard, trying to maintain his composure.

NICOLE
I looked beyond all of the
superficial factors and I saw what
reminded me of you. It was me.

Timmy grabs Nicole and pulls her close. They share an embrace.

A CRACK of thunder, a FLASH of lightning, and it begins to rain.

TIMMY
Come on, let's get in the house
before we get soaked.

Timmy holds the door open for Nicole. As she steps into the house, Timmy does a double-take as he notices Daniel discretely standing on the other side of the road, seeming not to care about the rain.

Daniel genuinely smiles at Timmy and very slowly goes through the motions of the secret handshake, ending with his index finger pointing squarely at Timmy.

Timmy, slowly removing his cap and dropping it to his chest,

follows Daniel's finger motion as he moves to point out something on the steps. Timmy sees that it's a little box. He goes to it, picks it up and looks back at Daniel.

Daniel puts his hand over his heart.

Timmy opens the box and finds that it contains the ring set. He looks back up in question and sees that Daniel is nowhere to be found.

Another CRACK OF THUNDER and Timmy steps into the house, closing the door behind him.

EXT. INNER CITY RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Daniel, now soaked to the bone, stumbles along the tracks alternately mumbling to himself and laughing out loud.

The noise of an approaching train and Daniel turns around at the sound. He trips and smacks his head on the tracks. He tries to get to his feet but again falls down.

Very loud now, the SOUND OF THE APPROACHING TRAIN.

A hand reaches out and pulls Daniel off the tracks, just in time.

The train roars by and Daniel looks up to see that the hand belongs to Gabe, who stands there with the usual bright white glow surrounding him.

Daniel holds his hand in front of his eyes to shield them from the light.

DANIEL

Gabe?

GABE

Daniel, it's not up to you to decide when it's over.

DANIEL

But it is over.

GABE

On the contrary, the best part of your mission has just begun.

DANIEL

I don't understand. What does that mean?

Gabe reaches down, takes Daniel's hand and pulls him to his feet.

GABE

You must continue on until your job here has been completed. Only "He" decides when that time has come.

A FLASH of lightning, a CRASH of thunder and then complete and utter silence.

EXT. INNER CITY ALLEY NEAR RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Daniel lies asleep in the mud.

He opens his eyes. Groaning in agony, he manages to sit up. He looks around.

DANIEL

Where am I? Have I been dreaming?

A car enters the alley and parks a few feet away. It appears that a young woman is behind the wheel.

DANIEL

Nicole?

The car door opens and the young woman gets out. It's Amber.

She runs to Daniel.

AMBER

Oh my gosh, Daniel, are you alright?

DANIEL

Amber? How did you know where to find me?

AMBER

I didn't. John called and said that you were missing. He asked if I knew where you were. I've been driving around all night looking for you.

She looks around the decrepit alley.

AMBER

How in the world did you end up here?

DANIEL

I don't know. I thought I had just awakened from a terrible nightmare.

With Amber's help, Daniel manages to get to his feet.

They go to the car and Amber opens the passenger side door for Daniel. He all but falls into the front seat.

INT. AMBER'S CAR DRIVING THROUGH TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel leans back against the headrest.

AMBER

What's going on with you? You really have everyone worried. Is it something somebody else has done? Is it something I have done?

DANIEL

No, it's none of that. It's actually something I have done.

Amber lets out a sigh and shakes her head. As she drives, she periodically glances at Daniel.

Finally, Daniel breaks the silence.

DANIEL

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt helpless, just knowing that the worst was about to happen and you couldn't do anything to stop it? Then, as you focus more on the problem, you realize that the real issue isn't out there.

He taps his chest.

DANIEL

(continuing)

It's in here...what you harbor in your own heart. I've hurt a lot of people in my life, Amber, including you. I got a second chance, though. A chance to make

(MORE)

DANIEL (cont'd)
things right and I hope that's
exactly what I did.

Daniel sighs as he places his head back against the head rest and stares out of the window.

Amber takes her attention off the road and looks closely at Daniel who still looks out the window.

AMBER
So, what happens now?

DANIEL
I don't know. I guess we just
have to have faith that God will
lead us in the right direction and
simply trust in him.

AMBER
Yeah, that's true. Maybe it's
something that's never meant to be
figured out. Maybe that's it. I
guess we just have to learn to
follow our hearts.

Daniel immediately looks at her as she once more takes her attention off the road.

Suddenly it appears to Daniel that Amber's about to drive into opposing traffic. He lunges for the steering wheel and manages to get around an oncoming truck while also barely missing a tree.

The car begins to roll like a toy, clear off the road and into a gully.

Daniel's head smashes into the dashboard and everything goes BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCENE OF ORIGINAL ACCIDENT - NIGHT

Daniel finds himself on the ground holding Nicole's limp body.

Then a very loud voice.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Are you crazy?!

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE OF HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel finds himself standing on the side of the road.

He looks up and finds Gabe standing on the opposite side.

Gabe genuinely smiles at Daniel and very slowly goes through the motions of the secret handshake, ending with his index finger pointing squarely at Daniel (the same as what Daniel did with Timmy).

Gabe slowly bows his head and directs Daniel by the motion of his finger, pointing out something directly behind him.

Daniel slowly turns to find Amber holding him tightly in her arms with his head against her chest while rocking slowly back and forth.

He immediately turns back towards Gabe who is now standing directly in front of him.

DANIEL

I don't understand. What's going on?

GABE

You did it, Daniel. You followed through with your promise and now Nicole has her life as well as her future back. The two things that you had so selfishly taken from her.

DANIEL

So, she gets to live?

GABE

Yes, Daniel. She gets to live. And, by the way, it was all good for your heart for it is now in a much better place.

Daniel again turns to see that Amber is trying to revive him, all the while screaming his name. He looks down at his hands and notices that he is now becoming more translucent.

He slowly turns back towards Gabe who has now transformed into a beautiful angel with soft cottony wings of white.

GABE

There's a couple of people who
have been waiting patiently to see
you, Daniel.

DANIEL

What?

GABE

And I think you've been anxiously
waiting to see them too.

Gabe extends his hand to Daniel.

GABE

It's now time, Daniel. You must
come with me.

Daniel begins to laugh hysterically through obvious tears of
joy.

He joins Gabe as they begin to walk away, slowly fading into
thin air with each step they take.

Amber's cry becomes more ecstatic in the background as she
realizes that Daniel has now passed on.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS (MONTAGE) - Nicole, Timmy, John,
April, Richie and his pregnant wife all laugh as they sit
around a table, talking about "old" times, sharing family
pictures and enjoying each other's company.

Underneath the drapery that reads "Welcome Class of 1992
Twenty Year Reunion," a framed junior prom picture of
Daniel is sitting on the table with a plaque that reads "In
Loving Memory of Daniel Spencer, a friend to all
(1974-1991)."

FADE OUT.