

FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM, TERRA COLLEGE - DAY

A classroom with far more seats than STUDENTS. At the front of the class is NICK DIMAS, a curmudgeonly professor, 60's. Dressed impeccably in suit and tie.

With precision, he opens his leather briefcase. Takes out a stack of papers.

MR. DIMAS

On the whole, I was rather
disappointed with your essays.

Several students slump down in their seats. One goth girl, VANESSA, plays with her sleeve. Her dyed black hair almost entirely covers her face.

Mr. Dimas SNAPS his fingers at LARRY, a nervous student in the front row. Larry takes the stack of papers, and starts handing them back to the class.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Grammatical errors were abundant,
and I'm under the impression that
at least half of you did not read
the book at all.

Larry hands a paper to BUD, an obvious athlete, whose head hits the desk when he sees his grade.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

This is unacceptable. I expect vast
improvement from all of you on the
next essay.

LAUGHTER is heard from outside. All heads turn to look.

Outside, a LARGE CLASS can be seen sitting on the grass. They surround a young man, HUGH THEOS, 31. He is dressed in t-short and shorts, and sports a moustache and beard.

Mr. Dimas clicks his tongue in disapproval.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Two million dollars worth of
renovations completed on these
buildings, and Mr. Theos doesn't
see fit to use them. I pity those
students. Who knows what they're
learning?

Mr. Dimas' students have now turned their attention to the clock. Class is almost over. The rustling of papers being shoved into backpacks. Zippers. Books slamming.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Uh-uh.

The students freeze where they are. Mr. Dimas shakes his finger and glances up at the clock. It is five seconds till 2:00. Five, four, three, two, one...

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

You are now dismissed.

The students scurry out of the room.

Bud approaches Mr. Dimas.

BUD

Um, sir?

MR. DIMAS

Not now, Bud. I have a tutoring session with Vanessa. Please come and see me during my office hours.

BUD

(frustrated)

But your office hours are during my football practice...

MR. DIMAS

Perhaps you should speak to your coach, then.

Bud sighs and ambles out the door.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Vanessa?

Vanessa approaches his desk listlessly, and never makes eye contact.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

I think we may need to add an extra tutoring session each week. It has become evident that one is not enough.

Vanessa's head drops further.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Let's go over your essay.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Mr. Dimas enters the room and sits down. MR. SEYMOUR FARIS, Faculty Chairman, nods at him.

MR. FARIS

Nick.

MR. DIMAS

Seymour.

Mr. Faris looks at Mr. Dimas a moment, then leans in to whisper to him.

MR. FARIS

Your toupee's crooked.

Mr. Dimas flinches, a flicker of alarm in his eyes. He checks his reflection in the window across the room. He makes a small, panicked adjustment to his toupee, then breathes deeply with relief. Sits down, folds his hands in his lap.

Several other DEPARTMENT HEADS sit down. Mr. Faris clears his throat.

MR. FARIS (CONT'D)

I'll try and keep this brief. I think we all know why we're here.

He picks up a few papers.

MR. FARIS (CONT'D)

Mr. Hugh Theos came highly recommended to us. He is bright, young-- perhaps a bit too young-- and had some fresh ideas. But it has come to my attention that not only does he refuse to follow the curriculum, but his teachings are often in direct conflict with the foundational principles of this institution.

Mr. Dimas nods gravely. MR. WEED, a reedy man in his 40's, pipes up.

MR. WEED

He's very popular with the students.

MR. FARIS

Of course he is. They're too ignorant to know what's not good

MR. FARIS (CONT'D)
for them. I've had innumerable requests by students to join his class, though he is already at capacity.

Mr. Dimas looks down, slightly ashamed at the recollection of his own small class.

MR. FARIS (CONT'D)
This could become a dangerous situation if allowed to continue, and therefore I ask you all to take it upon yourselves in the next few days to consider whether it might be in the school's best interests to fire him. We will have a formal vote on Thursday... thank you all for your time. And best of luck keeping your sanity during midterms...

A few chuckles from around the room.

INT. HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Mr. Dimas walks down the hall. He slows as he passes Hugh's room, and then stops. He peeks through the window in the door.

Hugh is with Vanessa, but she looks very different. Her hair is pushed back, she is standing up straight, she is looking Hugh in the eye... and she's smiling.

A twinge of pain goes through Mr. Dimas's face. He watches, entranced, yet deeply aware of his own shortcomings.

Suddenly, Hugh and Vanessa turn towards the door. Mr. Dimas ducks out of sight, then hurries away.

EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

Mr. Dimas sits in his car, waiting.

MR. DIMAS POV

Hugh gets in his car, starts it up. Pulls out of the parking lot.

END POV

Mr. Dimas puts his car in drive, and follows Hugh.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Hugh walks along the shore, dressed lightly. Mr. Dimas jogs up beside him, clutching a coat around him.

Hugh hears the footsteps, looks behind him.

HUGH
Mr. Dimas...?

Mr. Dimas nods in acknowledgement, but doesn't respond to the inquisitive tone.

MR. DIMAS
Windy tonight.

HUGH
Isn't it great?

Mr. Dimas ignores this.

MR. DIMAS
I wanted to ask you a couple questions.

Hugh looks at him with a small smile.

HUGH
(friendly)
Walk with me.

EXT. OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Hugh and Mr. Dimas walk side by side. The wind has picked up.

MR. DIMAS
You've got the gift, that's for sure. I've had her in my class for two years in a row and I've never seen her like that. What technique do you use?

HUGH
I don't use any technique. At least, not in the way that you mean.

Mr. Dimas looks at him, frustrated.

HUGH (CONT'D)
When you look at Vanessa, what do you see?

MR. DIMAS

Artificially dyed black hair. Too much eyeliner. Lots of metal. Why, what do you see?

HUGH

A brilliant artist. She's got so many paintings inside her just dying to come out. But when she was in kindergarten, her teacher yelled at her every time she colored outside the lines. And she's never touched a paint brush-- or a crayon--since.

MR. DIMAS

Did she tell you all this?

HUGH

No.

Mr. Dimas laughs sardonically.

MR. DIMAS

You can't expect an old man like me to learn all that new-age mind-reading hoodoo.

HUGH

You're not hearing me. You won't be able to truly see her until you have been changed.

MR. DIMAS

Look, I can see you've been able to reach her. Just tell me how you did it??

Suddenly, a gust of wind blows Mr. Dimas's toupee clear off his head. It soars through the air and lands in the ocean.

Mr. Dimas gasps, and runs straight into the ocean, searching for the toupee. He grabs at it-- and then realizes it's just a piece of seaweed.

An incoming wave knocks him off-balance and he falls fully into the water. He picks himself up and continues to look around frantically.

HUGH

It's gone, Mr. Dimas.

Panting with exertion, Mr. Dimas finally gives up. He stands helplessly in the knee deep water, the waves breaking against his legs. Thoroughly soaked. Defeated.

He trudges back towards Hugh.

HUGH (CONT'D)

I've got a towel in my car.

EXT. BY THE CAR - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

A big fluffy towel is being rubbed over Mr. Dimas's head. The towel drops around his shoulders and his bald head pops out, like a newborn baby.

Mr. Dimas quickly pulls the towel back up, so it covers his baldness.

HUGH

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

MR. DIMAS

Sure, you and your full head of hair can say that... you haven't had to live with this all your life-

He didn't mean to let this slip. Hugh looks at him with eyes of compassion. Embarrassed, Mr. Dimas attempts to speak with levity.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Alopecia areata. Sounds beautiful, doesn't it? For something so abhorrent.

HUGH

How old were you...?

MR. DIMAS

Eight. Eight when the hair started falling out... first it was just patches... then it got worse...

He can't quite meet Hugh's eyes.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

My mother took me to so many doctors... nothing helped...

He turns to look at the ocean.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

You know, my mother used to paint landscapes like this.

(pause)

She always told me to get out of the way because I was ruining the scenery.

Mr. Dimas chuckles sardonically, but a well of emotion is rising up inside him. Hugh instinctively steps closer to him.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

When she had guests over, she'd lock me in my room till they'd left, and say I was at a sleep-over. Told me not to make a sound. One time I had to go to the bathroom, but I couldn't get out of my room and I...

The painful memory comes back to him, renewed afresh. Mr. Dimas's lip begins to quiver. He attempts to smile, but when he looks up to see Hugh's eyes, full of love yet sharing his pain, the dam bursts.

Mr. Dimas sobs uncontrollably, emotions from long ago finally being released. Hugh pulls him into a hug, holds him tightly.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

I just wanted... her to love me...
just wanted... to be loved...

Hugh's eyes have watered up. It is almost as if he is taking the pain upon himself.

HUGH

Everybody wants that. But you see... everybody *has* that. The tragedy is... most people don't realize they are loved.

(softly)

And how much they are loved.

Mr. Dimas's sobs have begun to subside. He snuffles, pulls away. Looks at Hugh, fully into his face for the first time. Watches him with awe... this man so kind, so comforting.

A troubling thought occurs to him.

MR. DIMAS

They want to fire you.

HUGH

I know.

MR. DIMAS

But where will you go?

HUGH

Wherever the wind blows.

Mr. Dimas looks at Hugh, unable to fathom this.

Hugh looks at him warmly, his eyes smiling through his tears.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -TWO DAYS LATER

A vote is being taken on whether to fire Hugh.

Hand after hand raised high in the air...

...till Mr. Dimas. He sits calmly with his hands in his lap. His bald head uncovered. Looking unwaveringly at Mr. Faris.

Curious looks are thrown his way. Mr. Faris looks at him suspiciously.

INT/EXT SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Mr. Dimas stands just inside the door. Hugh approaches the door, carrying a satchel and some papers. He stops and puts his hand on Mr. Dimas's arm.

HUGH

Take care of Vanessa for me.

And he disappears out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mr. Dimas looks through the window into Hugh's classroom.

A hand erases "Mr. Theos" off the chalkboard. Quickly writes "Mr. Faris." The hand drops the chalk and Mr. Faris turns around and looks at the class.

Mr. Dimas watches sadly.

INT. CLASSROOM, TERRA COLLEGE - DAY

Mr. Dimas looks out the window, lost in thought. The students look at each other questioningly, shuffling uncomfortably.

Mr. Dimas turns and smiles at the class.

MR. DIMAS

It is such a beautiful day
outside... I suggest you all go and
enjoy it.

The class doesn't move.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Go on. Get out of here.

Larry fidgets nervously.

LARRY

But it's only 1:35.

MR. DIMAS

Yes. You have twenty-five minutes
of lovely freedom before scurrying
off to your next class. Enjoy it.
Perhaps you'll find inspiration for
your next essay.

Slowly the class begins to make its exodus.

Vanessa stumbles down to the front of the class. She glances
at Mr. Dimas, then lowers her eyes. He looks up, sees her.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

No tutoring today. You don't need
it.

Vanessa looks at him a moment, then heads toward the door.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Oh- Vanessa?

She turns around.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

I realize this is a bit
unconventional, since this is a
writing class, but-- I would like
you to paint your next assignment.

Her brow furrows.

VANESSA

But it's an essay question.

MR. DIMAS

Yes. And I want you to paint your
answer.

VANESSA

I don't, like, own any paints or anything...

Mr. Dimas takes a charge card out of his pocket.

MR. DIMAS

If you go to the college bookstore you'll find a complete set of paints, brushes, and canvasses being held there under your name. Charge it to this.

He hands her the card. Vanessa takes it hesitantly.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Okay?

Vanessa nods. Mr. Dimas smiles. Vanessa studies him for a moment.

VANESSA

What happened to your...?

She gestures to his head.

MR. DIMAS

Oh... it went the way of the world.

VANESSA

Mmm. Well, don't sweat it, Mr. Dimas. Bald's kind of in right now.

Mr. Dimas smiles with amusement.

MR. DIMAS

Thank you, Vanessa.

She nods, then leaves. Mr. Dimas looks after her, appreciatively.

EXT. CAMPUS PATH - DAY

Mr. Dimas walks happily down the path. Bud runs up to him, flustered and sweating.

BUD

Mr. Dimas I'm sorry I missed class-- I can explain...

MR. DIMAS

I'm really in the mood for a hot
chocolate right now, how about you?
You like hot chocolate?

BUD

...ye-ah...

MR. DIMAS

Great.

Mr. Dimas switches direction (towards the coffee shop). He
gestures to Bud.

MR. DIMAS (CONT'D)

Walk with me.

Bud trots up next to him, as they continue down the path.

FADE OUT