

PENFOLD

an original screenplay by

23-DE05-W25

A geeky teenage boy must overcome the school bullies  
before he can impress the girl he wants to take to  
the school dance.

EXT. BETHEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - DAY

Establish.

INT. BETHEL EXAM ROOM - DAY

A digital timer counts down: 3,2,1,0. Beeps.

A bored TEACHER [45] looks at the timer and rises.

TEACHER

Time.

UNIFORMED STUDENTS in separated desks stretch, add a last answer to their papers, put personal equipment away...

PETER PENFOLD, a lanky 16 year old with perfectly combed hair drops his pen, disappointed.

He looks down at his Math paper, paging through what he has not even attempted.

Two students in front of him give the thumbs up, as they tidy their desks, smiling.

Peter offers a wry smile, quickly scoops his equipment into a pencil bag and picks up his Math book from under his desk.

He checks a flyer inside the front cover: *Bethel Christian School. Auditions for Specialist Band. Music Room. 3:20pm*

Peter checks his watch.

EXT. BETHEL EXAM ROOM - DAY

Peter hurries from the exam room, Math book and pencil case under his arm, flyer in hand.

BILL [17], a senior student sitting by the door, extends his leg, tripping Peter.

Peter crashes into BIFFO [17], another bully and Bill's mate.

Biffo shoves Peter off.

BILL

Oh sorry, Penfold. You okay?

Bill retrieves the flyer as Peter checks for injury and regathers his book and pencil case.

BILL (CONT'D)

What's the hurry, Petey?

PETER  
I have an audition.

BILL  
This?  
(indicates flyer)  
Penfold, this ain't a worship band.  
It's for rock musos, not Bible nerds.

Peter gets to his feet.

PETER  
They need a keyboard player.

BILL  
(ironic)  
Well, I'll pray that you get in.

Peter takes the flyer from Bill and hurries off.

EXT. BETHEL MUSIC COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Peter runs through the courtyard when he hears a sound - a sob - in an alcove.

He glances, but keeps running a few steps before stopping.

Peter checks his watch, looks at the door to the Music Building, then darts back to the alcove.

He suddenly stops, wide-eyed.

PETER  
Gracie?

GRACIE, a pretty, unpretentious girl [16], stifles another sob, turning her face away.

Peter gently steps toward her.

EXT. BETHEL MUSIC COURTYARD - LATER

Peter and Gracie sit side by side on a bench, Gracie with a tissue, face a little blotchy from crying.

Peter stares straight ahead.

GRACIE  
... you know... I mean...Cruise is  
so hot.

Peter nods - unconvincingly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
 But he's taking Beth to the dance.  
 There's nothing I can do about it.

Peter nods again.

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
 I know what you're going to say.

PETER  
 What?

GRACIE  
 What would Jesus have me do?

PETER  
 It's not a bad question to ask.

GRACIE  
 Were you? Going to ask that?

PETER  
 No, I was just going to listen.

GRACIE  
 You're a good friend, Peter.

PETER  
 Um, I've got an audition I'm supposed  
 to be at. Can I come back after?

GRACIE  
 Oh I'm so sorry. No, I'll be fine.  
 I'll talk to Jesus.

Peter acknowledges his thanks with a smile.

PETER  
 See you later.

He hurries off.

GRACIE  
 (calling after)  
 Good luck.

PETER  
 Thanks.

INT. BETHEL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Peter rushes into the Music Room.

In the far corner a BAND MEMBERS jam together - electric  
 guitar, drums, base, and a keyboard player.

The MUSIC TEACHER meets him at the door.

PETER  
I'm here for the audition, Miss J.

The Music Teacher checks her watch.

MUSIC TEACHER  
Oh, I'm sorry, Peter. You're late.  
The audition's over.

PETER  
But... can I still...?

MUSIC TEACHER  
(indicates the band)  
I've already filled the roles. Maybe  
next time.

Peter nods, turns away, trying to hide his disappointment.

EXT. BETHEL SCHOOL CAR PARK - DAY

Peter walks slowly through the almost empty school car park.

A few students, including Bill, Biffo and Gracie, still hang around the cars flirting with each other.

Peter's pathway takes him past Bill's car.

Gracie breaks away from a group and joins Peter as he walks.

GRACIE  
How'd you go?

PETER  
(shrugs)  
I didn't get in.

GRACIE  
Awww... maybe next time.

Peter nods, half-smiles.

Bill slouches on his car hood as they pass.

BILL  
Whassamatta, Penfold? Didn't make  
the band?

Peter keeps walking.

Bill jumps up and walks next to Peter, putting his arm around Peter's shoulder.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Man, I tol' you. Wrong kinda band.

Bill's arm moves into a head lock pulling Peter's head down.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Get real, Petey. It's a rock band.  
Look at this hair.

Bill rubs Peter's hair hard, messing it up.

PETER  
Do you mind?

Gracie looks on, unsure.

BILL  
(mocking)  
'Do you mind?' Toughen up, Petey,  
then maybe you got a chance.

GRACIE  
Bill! Give it up!

He shoves Peter off, who stumbles, as Bill steps right up to Gracie, leering.

BILL  
Gracie... I can 'give' a lot more  
than he can.

GRACIE  
Get lost.

Bill smiles. He lets his tongue moisten his lips.

BILL  
Another time, maybe.

Gracie grimaces in disgust.

GRACIE  
Never.

Bill moves back to Biffo, laughing. Biffo high-fives him.

Peter stares after them, unconsciously combing his hair with his fingers.

His eyes move to Gracie. She's looking at him.

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
Why don't you do something?

PETER

Like what?

Peter turns away and continues on his way home.

Gracie watches him go.

INT. PETER'S HOME - NIGHT

Peter plays on the piano, the improvised tune reflecting his mood of frustration.

His fingers crash into the keys, building the tension in the piece.

Suddenly he stops.

He looks at his hands.

INT. PETER'S HOME: BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter is on the bed, propped up against pillows. He's more ripped than before - the T-shirt is tighter.

He's reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Peter stares at the page.

The words seem to jump out at him.

PETER (V.O.)

*I wish it need not have happened in  
my time, [said Frodo]*

GANDALF (V.O.)

*So do I, [said Gandalf], and so do  
all who live to see such times.*

GANDALF (V.O.)

*But that is not for us to decide.  
All we have to decide is what to do  
with the time that is given us.*

Peter lowers the book, lost in thought.

INT. PETER'S HOME - DAY

MONTAGE

Peter flips out an exercise mat. He's changed into T-shirt and shorts.

He forms a plank on the mat - not very good.

The stopwatch next to him shows the seconds increasing - less than 30 seconds.

Peter performs arm curls with 2kg weights.

Peter sweats.

Peter struggles to do a chin up.

Peter lies exhausted on the exercise mat.

EXT. BETHEL OUTDOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Bill and Biffo shove Peter up against the wall.

Peter takes a swing at them - misses.

Bill drives his shoulder into Peter, who is thrown back into the wall again.

Bill delivers a kick to the solar plexus.

Peter goes down.

Biffo adds a kick or two for good measure.

INT. PETER'S HOME - DAY

Peter, different T-Shirt, looking tighter now, curls 10kg weights.

He completes successful chin ups.

Peter practices a palm-heel thrust in front of a tablet.

TABLET (V.O.)  
...forcefully drive the heel of your  
hand up, on the nose...

Peter imitates the move, palm up, fingers bent.

TABLET (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...imagine you're driving the nose  
through the back of their head...  
like this...

Peter practices the move faster.

He does it again, then again and again, adding a shout.

END MONTAGE



EXT. BETHEL OUTDOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Peter and Gracie sit alongside each other eating lunch. Peter pops the last of his sandwich into his mouth. Gracie's is untouched in her hand, waving it about as she talks.

GRACIE

... I never understood it before.  
Jesus spends all this time, you know,  
preparing for...

Peter nods, listening.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

...his appointed time, and then he's  
like really struggling in the garden  
of gethsemene...

PETER

You going to eat that?

Gracie hands him the sandwich.

GRACIE

It was his time, but even Jesus  
struggled to go through with it.

Peter takes a big bite of the sandwich.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Don't you think that's amazing?

PETER

(through mouthful)  
Sure.

INT. PETER'S HOME: BATHROOM - DAY

Peter stands in front of the bathroom mirror. He's looking fresh and clean.

He flexes an arm muscle, smiles, addresses the mirror.

PETER

Hey, Gracie. How 'bout we go to the  
dance together?

He picks up his toothbrush and holds it like a flower.

PETER (CONT'D)

For you.

EXT. BETHEL MUSIC COURTYARD - DAY

Peter fidgets nervously near a corner of the building. He glances around the corner, and pulls back quickly. He's holding a beautiful white rose.

Footsteps approach.

Peter takes a deep breath.

CRUISE (O.S.)  
Hey Gracie.

Peter grimaces.

GRACIE (O.S.)  
Cruise. Hi.

CRUISE (O.S.)  
Who you going to the dance with?

GRACIE (O.S.)  
Oh, I dunno. So many to choose from...

Peter listens - smiles slightly.

CRUISE (O.S.)  
I've seen you hanging out with 'perfect' Peter.

GRACIE (O.S.)  
(laughs)  
Peter? You're kidding.

Peter stops breathing.

CRUISE (O.S.)  
Not your type?

Peter turns and slinks away as quietly as possible.

GRACIE (O.S.)  
No way. He's a good listener, but.

CRUISE (O.S.)  
A man's gotta do more than listen to please a woman, hey.

EXT. BETHEL OUTDOOR CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Peter hurries around another corner of the building.

He checks that he's alone.

He looks at the flower he's holding.

He crushes it slowly in his fist, drops it to the ground,  
and crushes it further with his shoe.

EXT. BETHEL OUTDOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Peter sits on the bench, eating his sandwich.

Gracie plops down next to him.

Peter does not react.

GRACIE  
Are you avoiding me?

Peter shrugs a shoulder.

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
Well, maybe that's...[fair]  
(she pauses)  
You know, I was reading about Jesus  
on the cross, and those horrible  
Priests said, come down if you're  
the Son of God... and I wanted him  
to come down and... why didn't he  
come down and smash them?

PETER  
Dunno.

Beat.

GRACIE  
I'm sorry, Peter.

PETER  
What for?

GRACIE  
Oh, I've been a jerk, sometimes.

EXT. BETHEL SCHOOL CAR PARK - DAY

Peter walks home through the half empty car park, half a  
smile playing on his lips.

BILL (O.S.)  
Petey. Li'l Petey Penfold.

Bill and Biffo sit on the hood of their car.

Peter ignores them and keeps walking.

Bill leaps from his car.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Hey! I'm talking to you.

Peter stops.

PETER  
Enough's enough, Bill.

BILL  
(mocking)  
'Enough's enough.' I'm a fairy, my  
name's 'nough.'

Peter turns and looks Bill in the eye.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Whatcha gonna do about it, Li'l Petey?

Peter remains steady, eyes on Bill.

His hand flexes into position for a thrust to the nose.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Oh, you wanna take a swing, don't  
ya? Well, c'mon. Let's see you do  
it.

Suddenly Biffo grabs Peter in a bearhug from behind.

Peter wrenches forward, then back with his head into Biffo's  
nose, at the same time bringing an elbow sharply into Biffo's  
solar plexus. Biffo's grip loosens.

Peter lifts a foot and comes down hard on Biffo's instep.

Biffo stumbles away.

BIFFO  
Ow, me foot...

Bill stares in shock.

Peter moves towards him, hands coming into position for the  
palm-heel thrust to the nose.

Suddenly, Peter notices Gracie, beyond Bill, watching.

Time stands still for Peter.

His eyes flick from Gracie back to Bill, his hand ready to  
strike.

Peter drops his hands and walks on.

EXT. BETHEL SCHOOL CAR PARK - CONTINUOUS

Gracie catches up to Peter, walking next to him, shoulder to shoulder.

She glances up at him as they keep walking.

GRACIE  
You could've smashed him.

Peter gives a single nod.

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
Why didn't you?

Peter slows to a stop, thinking.

PETER  
Because I can. And because I can, I don't need to.

GRACIE  
I wanted you to.

PETER  
There's a time for everything. Now wasn't that time.

GRACIE  
You amaze me.

Peter shrugs off the comment.

They walk on again in silence.

Gracie glances at him, breathes in as if to speak, but the words aren't right. Then...

GRACIE (CONT'D)  
Can I go to the dance with you?

Peter looks at her, surprised.

PETER  
I'll think about it.

But his smile says it all!

Gracie shoulder bumps him.

GRACIE  
Meanie.

He shoulder bumps her back as they walk on, both smiling.