

FADE IN

INT. PROFESSOR DOUGLASS' COLLEGE WRITING CLASS - EARLY
AFTERNOON

JOSHUA sits at a desk in the classroom doodling in his notebook. PROFESSOR DOUGLASS stands before the class of STUDENTS reading from an essay.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS
...but the most important choices
are not the ones we make for
ourselves, but the choices we make,
that benefit others...These are the
words written by your classmate,
the winner of the Summerfalls
Community College essay contest,
Joshua Thompson.

Joshua stops his doodling and smiles as he receives applause from his class.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
And now I will present Joshua with
the prize of a five hundred dollar
check!

Joshua stands as Professor Douglass walks to his desk, shakes his hand, and hands him the check.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS (CONT'D)
We wish you the best of luck as
your essay advances to the state
level...now class remember, your
journals are due at the next class
meeting. I DO read them, so make
sure they are complete! You are
dismissed.

The students hurriedly pack their bags and make their exit. CLASSMATE #1 and CLASSMATE #2 congratulate Joshua as they pass.

CLASSMATE #1
Great job Josh! Congrats man!

CLASSMATE #2
That was an awesome essay Josh,
you're really smart!

JOSHUA
Thanks guys!

Joshua grins at the compliments as he packs his bookbag. He throws the bag over one shoulder and exits the classroom.

EXT. SUMMERFALLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARKING LOT - EARLY AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

PAUL THOMPSON sits behind the wheel of his late-model sedan. Joshua approaches the car from the passenger side and hurriedly hops in, holding out the envelope for his father.

JOSHUA

Dad, look! Read this! I won!

Paul accepts the letter from Joshua and adjusts his glasses for a closer look. A smile spreads across his face.

PAUL THOMPSON

Wow, that's great son! I'm proud of you! My son, the writer...and a five-hundred dollar prize? Well, that will-

Paul's speech is cut short by a severe coughing fit. He covers his mouth with a fist and hacks for a few moments.

JOSHUA

Dad, are you okay?

INT. THOMPSON HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - EVENING

Joshua steps into the kitchen holding his prize check and finds a lone envelope placed on the counter. He opens the envelope to find a letter from the insurance company. Scanning it he sees the words

EXTREME CLOSEUP - "LUNG SPECIALIST" and

EXTREME CLOSEUP - "REQUEST DENIED"

Joshua glances back and forth between the prize check and the insurance letter in deep thought. After a few moments, he reaches over and picks up the cordless phone from the receiver on the kitchen counter, and dials a number.

INT. DOCTOR OFFICE WAITING ROOM - MORNING (THE NEXT DAY)

Joshua and Paul Thompson sit in the waiting room of a specialty clinic. After a few moments the door opens and a doctor steps into the room and greets Joshua and his father. The doctor smiles warmly and invites the two of them back into an exam room.

INT. PROFESSOR DOUGLASS' COLLEGE WRITING CLASS - THE NEXT DAY
(END OF CLASS)

Professor Douglass dismisses the class and collects their journals. He stops Joshua on his way out.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

Joshua?

JOSHUA

Yes Professor?

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

The financial aid counselor needs to see you before you leave today.

JOSHUA

Okay, thank you.

INT. FINANCIAL AID OFFICE - AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

Joshua sits before the desk of JUDY PAXTON, SCC's Financial Aid Counselor.

JUDY PAXTON

I'm afraid I have some bad news.

JOSHUA

Wh-what is it?

JUDY PAXTON

Well...it's a big complicated mess. But basically what is going on is that the state is cutting government funding across the board, and one of the areas taking a big hit is education.

JOSHUA

Okay, so what does that have to do with me?

Joshua shifts in his seat as Judy Paxton leans forward in her chair before she delivers the bad news.

JUDY PAXTON

Joshua...as of 9:00am this morning, your financial aid has been cut.

Joshua's eyes widen in shock before he responds.

JOSHUA

Cut?

JUDY PAXTON
Yes, cut. And that's not it.

JOSHUA
There's more?

JUDY PAXTON
Yes...should you want to continue
your classes here at Summerfalls,
you will have to pay the remainder
of your tuition costs.

Joshua swallows hard before asking his next question.

JOSHUA
And how much is that?

Judy Paxton pecks at the keyboard on her desk and pulls up
Joshua's student profile.

JUDY PAXTON
That would be...\$943.26.

Joshua grips the armrests of the chair to steady himself.

JUDY PAXTON (CONT'D)
Now, the school is going to give
you one week-

JOSHUA
-one week?

JUDY PAXTON
Yes, one week to arrange payment
for the remainder of your tuition
costs. If you are unable to arrange
a payment plan, then you will have
no choice but to formally withdraw
from Summerfalls.

JOSHUA
Withdraw?

JUDY PAXTON
Yes, withdraw. I know it's not the
news you want to hear, but remember
that your transcript will remain on
file should you decide to re-
enroll.

JOSHUA
Okay...

JUDY PAXTON

Well...just come back and talk to me when you figure things out okay?

Joshua nods his head in reply before exiting Judy Paxton's office.

EXT. SUMMERFALLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARKING LOT - EARLY AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

Joshua walks toward his father's sedan where Paul Thompson waits. His pace is slower and his head hangs low. Paul picks up on Joshua's sunken mood and consoles his son.

PAUL THOMPSON

What's bothering you son?

Joshua sits in the passenger seat with his head down and remains quiet for a few moments before responding.

JOSHUA

Dad...how would you feel about my withdrawing from Summerfalls?

Paul is taken back by his son's question.

PAUL THOMPSON

Joshua, why would you even consider that? You know how important education is.

JOSHUA

I know Dad, it was just a thought-

PAUL THOMPSON

Making yourself into a better person is the best cause. When I was your age, college wasn't a choice for me. After high school, it was straight into the coal mines to work alongside your grandfather for me. I have (cough) worked hard so that you could be granted the opportunities I did not have (cough). And I know with this college education you will have the chance to grow morally and in wisdom-

Paul's speech is cut off by a minor cough. Paul reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out an inhaler. He takes a puff of the inhaler, breathes deep, and sighs.

PAUL THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Whew...you know son, I'm very thankful for what you did.

JOSHUA

Aww Dad, you know you would have done the same for me.

PAUL THOMPSON

You could have spent that check on anything, and instead, you helped me get better. I can't tell you how thankful I am for that. Now, let's get home so you can get to your homework.

JOSHUA

Yeah...

Joshua turns to stare out the passenger side window with a long face as his father drives the car home.

INT. PROFESSOR DOUGLASS' COLLEGE WRITING CLASS - EARLY AFTERNOON (THE NEXT DAY)

Joshua sits in Professor Douglass' class slouching at his desk. He is leaning to one side and propping himself up with one arm, waiting for Professor Douglass' dismissal.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

I have your journals to return to you, and you may leave when you get yours. Be sure to keep up with these, you may return to them later for future inspiration.

Professor Douglass lays Joshua's journal on his desk in front of him. An envelope peeks out from inside the cover. Students begin exiting the classroom as Joshua slowly opens the cover of his journal. He focuses on the sender of the envelope

EXTREME CLOSEUP - "DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION"

The classroom is empty except for Professor Douglass and Joshua as he opens the letter. He pulls a letter out and begins to skim the body of the page.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS (CONT'D)

Well...?

Joshua's hands fall to his sides.

JOSHUA

I didn't win.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

Joshua...I'm so sorry. Don't let this get you down though, you've got a lot of great talent as a writer-

Joshua begins to tear up.

JOSHUA

It's not that...I have to withdraw from Summerfalls now.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

What do you mean?

JOSHUA

My financial aid has been cut. That's why I had to see Ms. Paxton the other day. If I can't pay my account in the next few days, then I have to withdraw.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

But what about your prize money from the college's contest? You could put that towards your account.

JOSHUA

I can't...I've spent it already.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

Oh.

JOSHUA

My father has been sick for quite some time, and his insurance denied a request to see a specialist. I used all my prize money to get him an appointment.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

I see...that was very considerate of you.

JOSHUA

Yeah, and my father is getting better now. But I guess this will be the last time I have your class. Thank you Professor Douglass.

Joshua exits the classroom, leaving Professor Douglass in thought.

EXT. SUMMERFALLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARKING LOT - EARLY AFTERNOON (FIVE DAYS LATER)

Joshua pulls into a parking space in the lot of Summerfalls Community College. Putting the vehicle into park, he lets out a long sigh before pulling his bookbag from the passenger seat and exiting the vehicle.

INT. FINANCIAL AID OFFICE - EARLY AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

Joshua knocks on Judy Paxton's office door before entering.

JUDY PAXTON

Why hello Joshua...how can I help you?

Joshua pulls the withdrawal form from his bookbag.

JOSHUA

I'm here to withdraw from Summerfalls.

JUDY PAXTON

Withdraw?

JOSHUA

(hesitates) Yes.

JUDY PAXTON

Even after your student account has been paid in full?

JOSHUA

Wait...what? Paid in full? But how? I haven't made a payment in the past few days-

JUDY PAXTON

Your account was paid in full this morning. Professor Douglass took care of it.

JOSHUA

Professor Douglass?

Joshua turns and runs out of Judy Paxton's office.

JUDY PAXTON

Joshua?

INT. PROFESSOR DOUGLASS' COLLEGE WRITING CLASS - EARLY
AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

Joshua bolts into Professor Douglass' classroom to find his classmates, Professor Douglass, his father and COLLEGE STAFF waiting for him. The room erupts in applause when he enters. Joshua stands in the doorway dumbfounded until Professor Douglass steps forward.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

Joshua...you're probably wanting to know what exactly is going on.

JOSHUA

(laughs nervously) Yeah, I'm a little confused you could say.

PROFESSOR DOUGLASS

Joshua, we have all read your essay, "The Choices We Make," and all of us have been touched by your words. You've inspired everyone in here to make better choices not only for themselves, but for other people. Because of that, we all have something to give you.

RICHARD DAVIS (one of COLLEGE STAFF) steps forward and holds out a certificate for Joshua and his other hand to shake.

RICHARD DAVIS

Joshua, as President of Summerfalls Community College, I hereby grant you this Writing Scholarship for \$3,000!

The classroom erupts in applause as Joshua accepts the scholarship from Richard Drake.

JOSHUA

I...I don't know what to say.

Paul steps forward and places his hand on his son's shoulder.

PAUL THOMPSON

Just say that you'll keep up your studies, you will keep on writing and inspiring those around you with your words.

JOSHUA

I will dad, I promise.

The classroom cheers and applauds again as Paul and Joshua hug.

FADE OUT