

## Summary

In an arctic research station, three scientists are working alone on a vital project when one of them gets sick with a terminal disease that will become contagious in a matter of days. What do you do when a coworker and friend becomes a ticking time bomb?

## Dramatis Personæ

DANIEL (*Man in his late 20s, a scientist from a blue-collar background.*)

MATT (*Man in his late 20s, friend of DANIEL's since college. Bro-like but empathetic.*)

JOHN (*Man in his early 30s, a strait-laced and hardworking scientist. Calculating and often cold.*)

JESSIE (*Woman in her late 20s, wife of DANIEL. Nervous but kind.*)

FIGURE 1 (*Female.*)

FIGURE 2 (*Male.*)

## **ACT I, Scene X**

*(Lights up on MATT, JOHN, and DANIEL sitting down at individual microscopes, looking at them intently. DANIEL might subtly look like he's having difficulty. There is a pause before DANIEL speaks up.)*

DANIEL

This damn microscope.

MATT

What's that?

DANIEL

This microscope.

MATT

What about it?

DANIEL

It's not focusing! No matter how hard I try.

MATT

Let me see.

*(MATT looks inside the microscope. He adjusts it a miniscule amount and quickly has it come into focus.)*

You're getting in your own head, Dan. It's fixed.

DANIEL

Let me see.

*(He looks in the microscope.)*

Are you pulling my leg? *(beat)* It's still blurry.

MATT

Are you pulling *mine*? I thought I'd fixed it.

*(MATT nudges DANIEL over and checks inside the microscope. The image is sharp; MATT begins to move the slide in confusion to see if he's missing something. Simultaneously, as DANIEL quickly gets back up from being moved, he nearly loses his balance. He clutches the table and bows his head, trying to steady himself. JOHN looks up at DANIEL at the sound of his hands smacking the table.)*

It seems like everything's fine.

JOHN

With the microscope, maybe. Daniel, are you feeling alright?

DANIEL *(struggling slightly)*

Uh... yeah... yeah. No, I'm fine. I must not have eaten enough last night.

JOHN

Ah, lightheaded?

DANIEL

Yeah... wow, the room's spinning.

JOHN

Must be it. I saw you picking at your stew. No-one likes the stuff, but this is what happens when you don't eat.

FIGURE 1 *(offstage)*

You have to eat.

*(MATT looks up from the microscope.)*

MATT

Yeah, Dan, you look like hell. You look like you've seen a ghost.

DANIEL

Here, let me look at the microscope again.

*(DANIEL goes back to the microscope, and JOHN does too. MATT goes back to his station but is still looking up.)*

Do I need glasses??

*(Slowly, DANIEL's head begins lolling away from the microscope, but he attempts to keep reorienting himself. He practically seems drunk.)*

MATT

You should have something to drink and lie down for a bit.

DANIEL

No, come on. I'm fine.

MATT

You can't even see straight!

DANIEL

Stop being hysterical. It'll pass.

MATT

Or you'll pass out...

FIGURE 2 *(continuing, offstage)*

...The tests in a minute. Eyes on your own paper.

*(DANIEL looks up and toward the source of the sound. Long pause.)*

MATT

You okay? ...Dan?

DANIEL

Oh... yeah. Yeah, I'll be fine.

MATT

God, this is why we should be taking care of ourselves-

DANIEL

-I'm fine. Seriously!

MATT

At least drink or eat something so that you *will be* fine!

DANIEL

You're being stubborn!

MATT

*I'm* being stubborn!?

FIGURE 1 (*offstage*)

Come on, your parents will *never* find out.

DANIEL

Oh, they will!

MATT

What?

DANIEL

What!?

MATT

Listen, I'm sorry for being weird. You don't look good. Seriously. You have to take care of yourself.

FIGURE 2 (*offstage*)

Take care.

DANIEL (*automatically*)

You, too.

*(While the last few lines are happening, JOHN walks up to DANIEL and, while saying the following, puts a hand on his shoulder.)*

JOHN

Go get some rest, Daniel.

## ACT I, Scene X

*(Spotlight only on DANIEL, lying down in bed asleep. His sleep appears troubled. A low murmur of sound with reverb can be heard that is hard to make out, but it crescendos as DANIEL's sleep becomes more and more troubled. Finally, the sound cuts as DANIEL sits upright in bed. At the same time, lights up on stage left, where there is a wrestling mat and nothing else. A subtle fog covers the side of the stage. DANIEL scrambles to the wrestling mat on stage left as JOHN, dressed in a wrestling outfit as COACH, walks in from upstage left saying the following line.)*

COACH

Has anyone seen him? Where is that troublemaking twerp?

DANIEL *(out of breath)*

I'M HERE!! I'm so sorry I'm late!

COACH

Oh, don't give me that.

DANIEL

I'm sorry, sir. It's just that I had to help my mother--

COACH

--Yeah, yeah. One of a million excuses. It doesn't stop the fact you missed important stuff.

DANIEL

I'm-- I'm sorry.

COACH

Well, you're gonna learn the lesson one way or another. Hey Tom!

*(FIGURE 2 emerges from upstage left)*

FIGURE 2

Yes, coach?

COACH

Show Daniel what we learned today.

FIGURE 2 *(starting to get down on the mat)*

Ok, well, to do this safely, you have to...

COACH

Come on, no time for explanations. We've got 10 minutes left of practice. He's never gonna be able to watch and learn. Gotta get on the mat with him.

*(Pause)*

Well, on with it, then! ...And hey, don't go easy on him, T. You're *this* close to making the team. Show me what you know.

FIGURE 2 *(hesitantly)*

Yes, coach.

*(FIGURE 2 lunges for DANIEL on the mat, they both struggle until FIGURE 2 manages to get him into a cross-face cradle. DANIEL lets out a long, loud groan of pain.)*

COACH *(over DANIEL's cries)*

That's called the cross-face cradle, boy. You would have learned this if you'd bothered to show up!! *(Beat)* Alright then, T. Show him what else you did today.

*(FIGURE 2 lets go of a dazed and pained DANIEL and they struggle - DANIEL halfheartedly - until DANIEL is lying on his stomach. FIGURE 2 performs a gut wrench on him and flips him onto his back, nearly pinning him. There is a struggle.)*

There's the gut wrench! Not always legal, but it teaches you important principles for other moves. You've got him now, Tom.

*(DANIEL visibly struggles to not get fully pinned to the mat for a few seconds. After one final push of effort, he collapses onto the mat, fully accepting his fate and struggling no more.)*

1... 2... 3!!

*(All the lights go out. Beat. An ethereal voice is heard offstage.)*

JESSIE

They just left you here!?! That's so awful. Here, I'm gonna go get you some ice. My name's Jessie, by the way. I saw you sitting over here from cheer practice.

## ACT I, Scene X

*(Lights up on stage left, including a light on the back wall of the stage that is obscured by a plastic shade, similar to a marquee. It is pure white and covers the back wall of stage left entirely. There is a very subtle fog. FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2 are sitting in chairs, dressed in matching prom attire. DANIEL has walked offstage and into a hidden section stage left where he is, preferably, in the house, unseen; if this cannot be done, he may be offstage in front of (or at) the proscenium.)*

FIGURE 1

He's going to be late.

FIGURE 2

Eh, he's always late.

FIGURE 1

It's kind of important this time, though! Jess's parents will kill him if everything isn't just right.

FIGURE 2

Oh, come on. Not *kill* him. Not legally speaking anyway.

FIGURE 1

I suppose. Jess's dad did bring out that baseball bat that one time, though.

FIGURE 2

Oh, ha! I forgot about that. Wild.

FIGURE 1

I wonder if something like that would be admissible in court?

FIGURE 2

I don't know. It's his home. Stand your ground laws are a thing.

FIGURE 1

Ugh. Those are awful.

FIGURE 2

They're ugly, but they make sense. You do what you have to when you're in danger. Can you blame anyone for that?

*(DANIEL comes from the front of the house, crawls up to the lip of the stage, and walks toward FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2 with his back toward the audience.)*

FIGURE 1

Hey, look who made it!

FIGURE 2

We thought you were gonna be fashionably late, dude.

*(He pulls at DANIEL's plainclothes as if they're a tux jacket.)*

Emphasis on *fashionable!* Damn, dude. You're gonna make Jess swoon.

DANIEL

Thanks. You guys look nice, too.

FIGURE 1

He's only gonna make Jess swoon if her parents let him get through the door! We should probably get moving.

FIGURE 2

She's right.

DANIEL

Yeah, let's get going.

*(He flashes his keys.)*

FIGURE 2

Shotgun.

FIGURE 1

Tom!! *Seriously!?* You can't be a gentleman?

FIGURE 2

Sorry. Gotta protect what's mine.

FIGURE 1

Yeah, yeah. Stand your ground. Let's go.

*(FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2 head out stage left quickly, with DANIEL trailing behind. He slows down and stops before heading offstage, and slowly walks forward and stares past the audience with a glazed look.)*

DANIEL

Gotta protect what's mine. Yessir. I'll protect her. I promise. You have my word. *(He glances down, perhaps in self critique. He glances back up.)* No sir, she hasn't said anything like that to me. I haven't noticed anything. N-not that I've seen her indecently, of course!! She's in good hands, sir. *(Glance down. Glance up.)* You see, after what happened with my mom, sir... well, I'm sensitive to these things.

*(FIGURE 2 is now dressed in a slightly less formal uniform. He walks up behind DANIEL and puts both hands on his shoulders.)*

FIGURE 2

You're a good kid, Daniel. You'd make your mother proud. You and Jessica have fun tonight, okay? I apologize for scaring you.

*(He squeezes DANIEL's shoulders tightly. DANIEL looks slightly uncomfortable.)*

I do it because I care about her. And about you. I hope you know that.

*(FIGURE 2 turns and leaves where he came. DANIEL has not broken his far-out stare to the audience. Long beat until FIGURE 2 is offstage.)*

DANIEL *(nods)*

Yessir.

*(He still stares. The click-clack of small heels - JESSIE's - reverberate with an ethereal timbre. They are too loud to be coming from her, but this does not matter. JESSIE enters far upstage left, entirely silhouetted in black from the light. Upon reaching center stage, she turns and faces DANIEL - still silhouetted. A smile slowly appears on DANIEL's face. His face very slowly grows more and more elated until the emotion and tension cannot be sustained any longer. He quickly turns his head to her with an immediate cut to black.)*

## ACT I, Scene X

*(Lights up on stage left, including the back-wall light as well as a subtle fog. The first verse and chorus of "Parade" by birthday is playing with intense, long reverb - it sounds far away but can still be made out. A low hum of chatter is buried beneath it - the talking sounds raucous, but is muffled and entirely unobtrusive. Perhaps figures move behind the back-wall light to imitate the bustle of a prom. FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2 stand holding visibly empty cups, but drink from them as if they're full. They're conversing in silence by a table with a white cloth and three black folding chairs, all affixed to a rolling platform. DANIEL is behind them, and walks up to them to begin talking.)*

DANIEL

Hey, guys!

FIGURE 1

Hey, Dan! Finally got to say hi to the little people, huh?

DANIEL

I was dancing with Jess, I--

FIGURE 1

--Come on, I'm just messing with you. You guys looked great out there. *(beat)* Now if I can just get *this one* to dance... *(she half-tickles, half-nudges FIGURE 2).*

FIGURE 2

Hey, cut it out! You know I'm saving a dance for you when it's over.

FIGURE 1

No, I know. You're sweet in your own stupid little way.

FIGURE 2

Besides, it'll be less crazy without all the losers here around.

DANIEL

I wouldn't say *losers*...

FIGURE 2

Well, I would.

*(There is a slight, awkward pause.)*

Hey, don't look at me like that! You're all thinking it, too.

*(FIGURE 2 sits down onto one of the folding chairs, with the other two following suit in their own time.)*

Seriously. You can't tell me you haven't been dying to get out of this place.

DANIEL

I mean, yeah. I guess I'm getting ready to go.

FIGURE 2

You got into Columbia, man! That's an accomplishment.

FIGURE 1

Yeah, I'm only heading to Salem State. You've got a lot more ahead of yourself than I do.

DANIEL

Oh, stop with that! I'm gonna be in the stodgiest university out there. At least you're gonna get a chance to party some.

FIGURE 1

Ok, yeah, fair point.

FIGURE 2

I don't know, though! I've heard the Ivies work hard and party harder.

FIGURE 1

But this is *Dan* we're talking about. I've only ever seen him get high off lab fumes.

DANIEL

I'm not *that* much of a buzzkill.

FIGURE 1

I never said you were a buzzkill!

DANIEL *(playfully)*

Well, what would you call that then!?

FIGURE 1 *(playfully)*

Just... nerdiness.

DANIEL

Hey, I resent that!

FIGURE 1

And you can resent it all the way to Columbia, nerd!

DANIEL

Oh, I can go *so* much harder than you though!!

FIGURE 1

I'll give it to you that you're the life of the party, but you're such a lightweight. I've got you beat there.

FIGURE 2

Girls, girls, you're both pretty. Can I go home now?

*(FIGURE 1 elbows FIGURE 2.)*

But I'm being serious here. Aren't you guys excited to leave? To explore what happens after all this?

DANIEL

I guess. I'm gonna miss this place, but... I suppose there really is so much more out there.

FIGURE 2

Exactly!

DANIEL

I'll marry Jessie someday, of course. Have some kids.

FIGURE 2

Now you're talking!

DANIEL

Travel the world. I wanna see Ireland. Find the place my ancestors grew up in. Maybe learn the language and take a tour of Japan.

FIGURE 2

Weeb.

DANIEL

Hell, I even wanna see Cuba, if that ever opens up again. No reason except because I can say I did it when I couldn't before.

FIGURE 1

Wow, I didn't realize you had this all planned out.

DANIEL

I wouldn't say planned out, but...

FIGURE 2

Well, you've got your hopes and dreams, at least. I feel you. I wanna move to the U.K. for grad school, maybe stay there if I like it.

FIGURE 1

And if it works out, I'll come along too.

*(FIGURE 1 & 2 hold hands across the table. Beat.)*

DANIEL

Well, what're your plans, then, Sam?

FIGURE 1

...I don't know. Gonna study English. See where it all takes me.

DANIEL

That's good. Not getting too attached to anything.

FIGURE 1

Yeah.

*(FIGURE 1 looks away. There is a long silence before a sudden start again.)*

...You guys ever worry that... this is it?

DANIEL

What do you mean?

FIGURE 1

Like... it sounds stupid to say, but. You know how they say some people peak in high school?

*(Beat)* What if this is our peak?

DANIEL

Don't be ridiculous!

FIGURE 2

Yeah, there's no way!

FIGURE 1

Well, it's easy for you both to say. You both have the brains for a bright future. And the money.

*(Long pause.)*

Y-you know what, I'm sorry. It's stupid. I'm just... getting in my head. It's just... I hate the idea that someday I might look back on this as like, the good old days. I'm sitting here in a 300-dollar dress for one night of bad lighting, sweaty bodies, and a mix of songs that I could do a better job of making on my iPod. This isn't important. ...I mean, I get it. It is. Everything about this *screams* that it wants to be. But nostalgia is fuckin weird, man. I pity the memories future me thinks she has.

FIGURE 2

Babe, are you okay?

DANIEL

I understand.

*(No-one hears him. DANIEL gets up from the table and off the platform.)*

FIGURE 1

Yeah, yeah. It's just... woof, a lot of emotions right now. Having a tiny existential crisis. I know you guys don't get it. But I'm fine, I swear.

*(The table begins to roll slowly offstage. Neither FIGURE 1 nor FIGURE 2 notice, but DANIEL does. The music and chatter begins to distort and swell.)*

DANIEL

I under/stand!

FIGURE 2 *(overlapping)*

/It's all gonna be okay. Everything works itself out in time. We have each other. You know that, right? I promise, we'll always have each other.

FIGURE 1

You can't make that promise, don't you realize?

DANIEL

I UNDERSTAND!!!

*(The table is now fully offstage. The music and chatter continues to swell as DANIEL becomes more and more disoriented. Once the music hits its breaking point, all the noise cuts off at once with a long reverb tail. At this very moment, DANIEL falls backward, unconscious. Also concurrently, the lights on stage sharply shift to their maximum brightness. FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2 are now behind the white wall, their silhouettes in a slow-dancing position. After a few seconds, their following lines occur miked or pre-recorded with an ethereal, long reverb. The delivery is relaxed.)*

FIGURE 2

I told you I owed you a dance.

FIGURE 1

Yeah.

FIGURE 2

Everything's all right now?

FIGURE 1

Yeah. It's all right now. Now that we're both here. *(She squeezes FIGURE 2's shoulders.)*

FIGURE 2

...Shame Dan had to leave so early. Guess he's got a lot ahead of him.

FIGURE 1

He really does.

FIGURE 2

Seemed kinda ambivalent about graduation. Did you catch that?

FIGURE 1

Oh, you know Dan.

*(She pulls FIGURE 2 into an embrace.)*

He'll never really be ready to leave.

**ACT I, Scene X**

*(Lights up on MATT sitting by DANIEL's bedside. DANIEL fades between asleep and awake, but is consistently unaware of the world around him. He mutters a bit and MATT says hushed platitudes back. Enter JOHN, though he stands discreetly by the "door" of the room and looks on. After taking it all in, he moves to MATT.)*

JOHN

We have to get to work.

MATT

Just give me a minute.

JOHN

You've already had a minute, you're getting us behind schedule.

MATT

Just. A. Minute.

JOHN

*(sighs)* Well, all right. 60 seconds and you need to be out there. We're on an awful time crunch, especially after we lost *that* one.

*(He directs his head toward the cot. MATT gets up in a huff, grabs his outerwear, and brushes past JOHN and out of the room. At the "door" between the base interior and stage right, MATT puts on his outerwear in agitation; JOHN follows him.)*

That was fast.

MATT *(dangerously)*

Ohh, let up.

JOHN

Not until you let up and start paying more attention to our work.

MATT

I'm doing fine, under the circumstances.

*(He begins to walk out the door, into the tundra.)*

JOHN

Under the circumstances? Under the circumstances, we have to be doing *more*.

MATT

I swear to *God*, John, I'm giving you 3 seconds...

JOHN

This job is more important than anything else!

MATT (*suddenly turning on his heel*)

NO!! No it FUCKING isn't!! We're dealing with human life, here! I don't CARE what circumstances we're under. There is no circumstance under which you don't care for a human life. How can you not get it?? What is it about you?? ...You know, let me tell you a story. You wanna know the last normal thing I did before we came to this hellhole? I went grocery shopping, to get things to make my last meal with my wife. Like a fucking death row inmate, but I was judge, jury and executioner. And I got up to that counter. I was scared. Terrified. I was taking in everything like it was gonna be my last time seeing the same shit I've been bored by for 20 years. And yet when that 16-year-old who looked like they wished they could put that scan gun to their head and *not* to get a price quote gave me a "Hi, how are you?" I said "Good! How are you!?" with the biggest fucking smile on my face. And I felt *better*, you know that? The both of us so obviously wanted to drink the bleach I was buying for the bathroom, but I still engaged with him. Did I care how he was? No. Did *he* care how *I* was? Fuck no. But even just pretending. Allowing myself to hope even when it was a lie. That's what instantly made it better. He could've just started scanning groceries, and I could've just handed over my card right then. It's not always about the transaction, John. Sometimes it's about being human. You can't operate on nothing to get anything but nothing. Only *people* can make something out of absolute zero.

JOHN

Listen, I know you're upset. I--

MATT

You are too. YOU. ARE. TOO. God, I've met too many people like that in this field, John. Don't make me die with someone like that. You need the transaction? Fine. Dan's taking from you. Taking, and taking, and taking. And he's taking from me too. The difference between me and you is you're not letting him give you anything back. And if you think we're gonna finish this green machine before he takes everything from you, you're already running the clock into overtime. Your work has been slipping, too. It's game over soon, John. We've been in this together for months, now, us three. I know you're hurting. It's been written all over every fucking thing you've done for the past day.

(*Pause. The words start to catch in his throat.*)

And I'm hurting, too. Can't you see? If not for yourself, help *us* get through this as a team.

*(Beat)*

I'm gonna miss him, John. I want to miss him together.

*(Long beat. Jericho. JOHN crumples to the floor in a fit of sobbing. After a moment of hesitation, MATT moves in to comfort him. Slow fade to black.)*

## ACT I, Final Scene

*(Lights up stage left, out in the tundra. MATT is pacing while JOHN has his head bowed.)*

MATT

No, no. I'm not sure this is right. This isn't the right thing to do!

JOHN

No-one said it's supposed to be right, Matt. It's not right at all.

MATT

So then why can't we find another way??

JOHN

There *is* no other way. You wouldn't think we'd come to this without being backed into a corner?

MATT

There's got to be.

JOHN

I'm telling you, there isn't.

*(Long pause.)*

It bothers me that you could even think I'm just being cruel here.

MATT

*(beat)* I'm sorry.

JOHN

*(beat)* Yeah, I'm sorry too. ...I really, really am.

*(MATT slumps down and sits on the ground, in a daze. JOHN does anything to not see him on the ground, and after a long pause he sits down next to MATT.)*

What are you thinking about?

MATT

I'm not sure that I even am thinking. Poor Daniel... poor, poor Dan... *(he begins muttering similar exclamations to stave off crying).*

JOHN

I know this is going to be difficult for the both of us. Now--

MATT

*(close to tears)* Difficult for the both of us?? You mean for ME. Shit, we went to high school and college together. We studied in the same program! And now... and now? It's not fair, it's not fair...

JOHN

I am here for you. I'm aware how difficult this is, and I'm here to support you however I can.

MATT

Could it KILL you to be less hollow about it!?

JOHN

...I'm sorry. I wish I could give you more than I'm giving. You *know* that I do. But... this is how it has to be.

*(There is a long pause as Matt collects himself.)*

MATT

Fuck. This is really it, then.

JOHN

I'm afraid it is.

*(After another moment of silence, the two of them approach the base. Lights go up on the bedroom area as lights dim on the arctic outdoors. JOHN and MATT interact with a very out-of-it DANIEL in an extremely careful way.)*

MATT

Hey, Dan. How're you feeling?

DANIEL

I'm so sleepy, but I've never been better.

MATT

Yeah? That's good to hear.

DANIEL

*(He looks straight at MATT with concern.)* Ya know, I think I'm really overdoing it in wrestling practice, Tom.

MATT  
Oh, you are?

DANIEL  
I think I'm gonna have to ask coach to bench me for the next match if I'm feeling like this. It's a shame and all, ya know, considering coach doesn't like me so much. I kinda feel like a screw-up whenever I go to practice so he's gonna think I'm not applying myself. But I wanna do well! Make my mom proud of me somehow. I miss my mom. Don't tell anyone I said that. We should practice our wrestling moves sometime, Tom.

MATT  
Yeah, we should.

DANIEL  
You brought a friend with you, too? Sammy's the name, right?

JOHN  
My name's John, actually, but it's good to see you again.

DANIEL  
It's nice to finally meet you! I've heard so much about you. *(He bends up for a handshake which JOHN unwillingly gives and tumbles off balance back into his cot.)*

JOHN  
Yeah, listen, I have a phone call you're gonna make, Daniel, it's to your wife.

DANIEL  
Hey, don't pull my leg. That's a sure thing, there. Give it to me and I'll talk. It sounds like a plan, Sammy.

JOHN  
So Ma-- uh, Tom, is gonna step outside and connect the call ok? Uh, the service is bad in here.

DANIEL  
My cheap-ass parents won't pay for a better phone company. I miss my mom.

JOHN

Yep.

*(He motions for MATT to leave, who does so. MATT begins dialing on a sleek-looking phone outside.)*

Daniel. Can you make a promise to me?

DANIEL

...Maybe.

JOHN

This is a very important call, so I want you to listen closely to your wife on the phone, okay? Spend some quality time with her.

DANIEL

Hey, you don't have to tease me so hard. I get what you're tryina do. Sure, I'll be close.

*(Lights up on MATT, and lights up on the kitchen, where JESSIE is chopping vegetables. A phone rings in the kitchen, which is in very close reach of JESSIE. She anxiously picks up the phone the very moment it rings.)*

JESSIE

Hello!?

MATT

Hi, Mrs. Smith, it's Dr. Moran, calling about your husband.

JESSIE

Oh, my god... how is he?

MATT

He's not very lucid but he's pretty alert nonetheless. I don't think he's in too much pain. Please, take whatever comfort you can.

JESSIE

Oh, god... okay.

MATT

Are you ready?

JESSIE

I have to be.

*(MATT brings the phone back into the tent.)*

MATT

Dan, phone's for you! *(He puts the phone next to DANIEL on speakerphone.)*

DANIEL

Who is it?

JESSIE

Hi honey! It's Jessie.

DANIEL

Jessie! I've heard that name around. *(He looks at JOHN and MATT.)* You know, she's got such a pretty face, and she's kind, to boot. She looks beautiful in that prom dress. I'm gonna marry her someday, Tom, I swear to god. I'd love to spend the rest of my life with her. A girl like her would make my mom proud.

*(JESSIE is in visible anguish at hearing this but is trying to keep her composure over the phone.)*

JESSIE

Haha, w-well, you're in luck, Danny, you're talking to your wife!

DANIEL

Hey, who's pulling my leg here?

JESSIE

No-one, Danny. I'm your wife. Remember? We got married down at St. Lazarus's two summers ago.

DANIEL

Well, I'll be! So I don't know if I told you, but I'm in our hometown right now, hon. I'll say hi to your mama for you and I'll be home as soon as I can. If your parents ever let me leave, that is! Maybe your dad will bring out that bat. I miss you lots.

JESSIE

*(starting to sob a bit)* I... I miss you so much too.

DANIEL

Aww, don't cry, baby! I'll take the next plane out and be with you. I'm gonna be with her forever, I swear. Tell coach I'll be late for wrestling practice. I'll see you very soon.

JESSIE

I-I know baby. We'll be together soon. *(She looks down sadly at the knife she's using to cut vegetables. A very long pause.)* I love you so, so much okay?

DANIEL

Hey, who's pulling my leg here? ...I'm kidding. Love you too Jessie.

*(Brief pause. JOHN walks over and hangs up the phone. Upon hanging up, JESSIE lets out a wail of despair and puts her head on the counter, sobbing. Lights dim on the kitchen.)*

That was nice. Thanks for the call, I'd better get going soon.

*(He attempts to get up. He falls back onto the cot and begins spitting up. As he says this next line, MATT approaches him and JOHN grabs a pillow from the corner of the room.)*

Wow, I really am tired. Maybe I can head back tomorrow. Could you guys remind me to book a flight tomorrow?

*(MATT reluctantly but easily pins DANIEL's arms down as DANIEL looks into space. JOHN approaches, holding the pillow.)*

MATT

Yeah, I can do that, Dan.

DANIEL

Hey, what's this? You trying a new wrestling move on me? You always were a sly one, Tom. This is just like old times.

MATT

Y-yeah, coach taught me this. I'm sorry if it hurts you.

DANIEL

You're not hurting me, you're going easy on me. This is all in good fun. I'm so tired though, you've totally got me beat. Come on, count it then!

*(Beat while MATT hesitates.)*

Come on, count it! I'll start it for ya! 1!

MATT

2. / 3!

DANIEL (*overlapping*)  
3! I'm out!

*(Right as DANIEL says this, JOHN lunges forward with the pillow. The second he makes contact with DANIEL's face, blackout.)*

*(END)*