

HUGHES

by

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IN BLACK

The even patter of RAIN.

Titles FADE IN, one after the other, gray against the black...

In the 1980s, John Hughes wrote, produced, and/or directed nine films, including *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink*, and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

Together, those films comprise one of the most successful single-decade bodies of work in cinema history.

But in 1994, still at the height of his success, Hughes left Hollywood without explanation, granting few interviews and never returning to studio filmmaking.

It is still unknown why Hughes left Hollywood or how he occupied himself until his death in 2009.

What follows is speculation.

FADE IN:

A 500-ACRE FARM hugging the northern border of Illinois.
RAIN beats down on its tidy rows of SOY... on its distant ORCHARDS...

To the east of the fields is what the Hugheses refer to as their "FARMHOUSE": a sprawling complex, luxurious but bland, built to the tastes of the suburban rich.

GIBBS (PRE-LAP)
Let's put this in context, shall we?

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S STUDY -- LATE AFTERNOON [2001]

First: meet ELLIOT GIBBS, a graying, genteel reporter who's brought with him from his native Savannah a lilting accent and a kill-them-with-courtesy affect.

At present, Gibbs stands by a bay window, looking out at the puddling fields, a cup of coffee in his hand, a Premiere Magazine press credential dangling from his neck.

GIBBS

This is the first time you've gone on record since you spoke to the *Times* in '96, when you said-- and I've committed this to memory-- you were speaking about Los Angeles, and you said-- "There is no city on earth less warm, no city less worthy of esteem. I highly doubt that there's one complete person in that irredeemable wasteland... that godforsaken town..."

Now, Gibbs turns toward the center of the room.

GIBBS

Well now your son is in that "godforsaken town"; he's written his first film; I think it's fair to assume he aspires to write more. So I guess what I have to ask is the same question beat reporters ask to grieving mothers and stickup victims: how do you feel?

Now, see Gibbs' interviewee: a man in his early 50s, with wounded eyes and a frame on the verge of surrendering to obesity. This is JOHN HUGHES, almost a decade into his self-imposed Hollywood exile. At present, he smokes a cigarette and regards Gibbs with hard, inaccessible eyes.

HUGHES

I feel like a proud parent. James did a great job with the film, and I have no doubt that the public will agree.

Gibbs smiles gently.

GIBBS

Forgive me if that doesn't sound like fatherly praise to my ears so much as... the evasive maneuvers of a spokesman.

But John is even.

HUGHES

My son did a great job writing his first movie, Mr. Gibbs. And I have no doubt the public will agree. Now-- you asked for my feelings; there they are. You can write them down.

For a moment, no one moves. But then-- Gibbs shifts gears, pouring himself more coffee and speaking amiably:

GIBBS

You're credited as a producer on the film; why don't you tell me about that?

(MORE)

GIBBS (CONT'D)

Were you involved? Did you help Jamie or the director out at all?

HUGHES

(relaxing a bit)

Well, I gave some advice here and there-- though I doubt either Jamie or Kyle would characterize my involvement as "help."

GIBBS

(chuckles at that)

Uh-huh. So you were on set, then?

HUGHES

When they made the mistake of inviting me.

GIBBS

And how'd that go? Did it make your megaphone fingers itch at all?

(off John)

What I'm asking is, can your fans expect your forthcoming reunion with the director's chair?

Hughes' flirtation with geniality comes to an end. Icy--

HUGHES

You know, the only reason you're here is, I was promised this article would be about Jamie and his movie and that's it. Not about me.

GIBBS

Oh, and it *will* be-- but in order to shine the light on your son's film, we've first gotta move it out of the shadows of these-- eclipsing questions.

HUGHES

(unimpressed)

"Eclipsing questions."

GIBBS

That's right. The questions, you can't go an hour at any decent Hollywood bull session before they begin to bubble up:

(as John begins to object--)

Now they're not of my invention; I'm just *relaying* what's being *asked*-- which is, Why did John Hughes leave Hollywood? And is he coming back?

As if on cue, THUNDER rumbles outside.

At the same time, there's a KNOCK at the (open) door, and Hughes looks over to see a SUPERVISOR (male, Hispanic) who indicates that he has some farm-related matter to discuss.

So John ushers the Supervisor into the HALLWAY, where the two men exchange a couple of words in mumbled Spanish.

Gibbs, meanwhile, returns to the bay window and watches LIGHTNING crackle over the fields-- an exotic sight for an Angeleno, and a beautiful one.

HUGHES

There's something I gotta deal with, it may take the rest of the day.

GIBBS

What a shame. When can we pick this up again?

HUGHES

I'm not sure that's a good idea.

GIBBS

(smiles)

John, you can't evade these sorts of questions forever. The public demands to know-- and it has a way of getting what it wants.

HUGHES

You may be right, but-- It's not gonna get it from me. Not today. And not from this bait-and-switch piece you're trying to write. Excuse me.

With that, John exits into the HALLWAY. Gibbs calls after--

GIBBS

I wouldn't call what I'm writing a *piece*, John. Or... not *merely* a piece. My principal effort at this particular moment is... more of a *book*.

John reappears in the doorway, his features arranged into a mask of hostility. Gibbs, undeterred, produces a manuscript from his attache and sets it down on an end table...

GIBBS

I was going to tell you, of course, but I wanted to wait 'til the moment was ripe. As a farmer, perhaps you can appreciate that.

Hughes picks up the manuscript-- whose cover page reads, **UNTITLED JOHN HUGHES BIOGRAPHY**. John narrows his eyes, flips a couple of pages... in raw disbelief...

HUGHES

Is this a joke?

GIBBS

Well it's a *draft*. As to whether or not it's a joke, that's why I'm asking for your reaction.

HUGHES

You think I'll *cooperate* with this?

GIBBS

I think if you do, Premiere will run the story on Jamie's film. And I think it will be a very flattering piece. And I think he won't get that sort of publicity anywhere else, not for a small film without studios or stars, and I think you know I'm right.

By way of response, Hughes hollers into the HALLWAY--

HUGHES

Tom! You can show Mr. Gibbs to the door.

Now, Hughes' personal assistant TOM (35) appears.

GIBBS

Manohla is writing one too. Even more explosive than mine, from what I'm told.

TOM

If you'll follow me...

GIBBS

You can tell your story, John, or it can be told *for* you. But we're in the 21st century now-- I'm afraid *reclusion* is no longer an option.

He lets that sink in a moment. Then, he sets down his coffee cup, pulls on his coat, and heads for the exit-- stopping only to say--

GIBBS

Whenever you're ready to talk-- I'm in Chicago. The Four Seasons. The Author Suite.

And with that, he tips his hat and allows Tom to show him out.

EXT. FARMHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Gibbs heads to his car, his umbrella open. But before he can climb in, his attention is seized by something back at the Farmhouse:

WHAT HE SEES: in a dormer window, from behind partly-drawn drapes, a WOMAN'S GREEN EYE stares out at him, with distress, with disapproval...

For a moment, Gibbs simply observes this eye, not moving a muscle, betraying no emotion. Then, he nods cordially, folds his umbrella, and climbs, unperturbed, into the driver's seat.

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S STUDY -- SAME

Hughes stands, holding the manuscript, paralyzed, seething.

He clocks his MANTLE, on which are displayed his awards and trophies, most of them from his days in advertising.

HALLWAY -- SAME

Tom heads back into the house-- but he's suddenly stopped by something:

SOUNDS OF WANTON DESTRUCTION coming from John's Study: glass and metal SMASH, CLANG, and SHATTER against the floor...

Tom frowns, but he doesn't seem altogether shocked.

JOHN'S STUDY -- MOMENTS LATER

Hughes leans his exhausted bulk against the newly naked mantle whose previous contents now lie shattered at his feet.

In spite of himself, he glances down at Gibbs' manuscript. On its first page is an epitaph:

"When you grow up, your heart dies." Allison, *The Breakfast Club*

John stares down at that with stormy, troubled eyes... and it seems to cut through his shell of rage... to stir something soft and fragile within him...

And so, tentatively, he flips the page to **CHAPTER ONE**-- which begins with a quote, this one from **Molly Ringwald**:
"The first time I heard John's name..."

As John reads, as Molly's VOICE begins to fill his head, a sort of chemical change seems to occur within him: a tenderness begins to reveal itself in his eyes... a vulnerability... a thawing...

MOLLY (V.O.)

The first time I heard John's name was in late May. The summer of '83. I remember like it was yesterday:

FLASHCUTS OF MOLLY RINGWALD... on a Lake Michigan beach...
in a dressing room painted pink...

MOLLY (V.O.)

I was on the phone with my agent, Hildy Gottlieb. She'd just told me about this movie, *Sixteen Candles*, being made by a guy named John Hughes.

FLASHCUTS OF JOHH, on set, in his element... laughing...
hopeful and unstoppable in simpler, happier times...

MOLLY (V.O.)

Well I thought that was about the most boring name I'd ever heard. And Hildy-- she said she didn't really know that much about him. Just that he'd written for the *National Lampoon* the last couple of years... that he'd been in advertising before that...

FLASHCUTS OF JOHN ON SET WITH MOLLY... she's Sam Baker in *Sixteen Candles*... she's Claire Standish in *The Breakfast Club*... she's Andie Walsh in *Pretty in Pink*...

MOLLY (V.O.)

She said as far as she could tell, he was just another midwestern kid who'd run to L.A., fleeing boredom, hoping to find the country's pulse.

John, now on the sofa, reads, shaken...

MOLLY (V.O.)

Well that has to be as wrong as anyone's ever been about anything. I think John was looking to give the country a pulse, not to find one...

ON JOHN'S EYES, closer and closer to tears...

MOLLY (V.O.)

As for where he was from-- it's hard to see him as being from anywhere-- he wanted so much for the world to be a reflection of John Hughes, it's hard to imagine *him* as the product of any environment...

AS WE SLOWLY FADE:

MOLLY (V.O.)

But I guess... I guess that's not how it works, is it? I guess even geniuses have to come from somewhere...

TITLE: **Hughes**

MOLLY (V.O.)
...right?

And now, the sounds of the STORM morph into a din of RUNNING and SHOUTING and CHEERING, building and building *and building* until we POP IN ON--

EXT. A HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT

A frantic, explosive game is underway, made muddy and messy and damp by an early-autumn STORM.

Now, a pass is thrown... and a FOOTBALL arcs, higher and higher into the air...

TITLE: **Northbrook, Illinois
1966**

THE CONCESSIONS

The first thing we see: A PENCIL, DRUMMED ON A TABLE.

The table itself has a banner that reads CROWN DOGS, the name of a local joint that gets to hawk its junk at the games.

As for the drummer, he's a bored teenage employee whose face is obscured by a Crawdaddy music magazine (a sort of precursor to Rolling Stone).

ON THE FIELD

The pass completes, there's a flurry of activity, and Glenbrook North, the fighting Spartans, scores a TOUCHDOWN!

The CROWD loses its mind! DADS in ball caps pump their fists! Gaggles of TEENS holler attaboys at their friends down on the field!

But DEEP IN THE STANDS, a pretty, RED-HEADED GIRL claps with notably less enthusiasm than everyone else. Maybe football isn't her thing, or maybe "everyone else" isn't her thing. Either way, she seems to have had enough, and she turns, slipping away from her whooping friends, unnoticed...

BY THE CROWN DOGS CONCESSION

The bored drummer-boy is still lost in his music mag when--

RED-HEADED GIRL (O.S.)

Hey. Can I get a frank, ketchup and mustard?

And now, the magazine is set down-- revealing, behind it, a stringy high school kid with a "mod" haircut he'll later come to regret: this is 16-YEAR-OLD JOHN. When he sees the Red-Headed Girl, it's pretty clear that she means something to him-- but he tries to play it cool.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Coming right up.

Now, John goes to work on the frank, humming softly to himself. The girl picks at a stain on her pink flamingo dress. Seeing that--

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey, you mind if I ask, is that a Manfred Mann reference?

RED-HEADED GIRL

...Sorry?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Your dress. You know, Manfred Mann, the Brit rockers? They got that "Pretty Flamingo" song. I didn't know if-- maybe you're riffing on that?

RED-HEADED GIRL

Oh... I've never heard of them.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Oh. Well. Don't worry. I mean, a lot of people don't know 'em yet, stateside.

The Redhead grins, amused by that-- *stateside*.

RED-HEADED GIRL

Well I'll try not to let it bother me.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

'kay, well, that'll be eighty-five cents.

RED-HEADED GIRL

Right.

(digs in her coin purse)

Oh shoot, I forgot, I loaned Abbie Foster a quarter.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Oh. Well. It's okay. I can float you the difference.

RED-HEADED GIRL

No, come on.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

No, it's fine, you can pay me back.
You're in the homeroom right next to me,
I'll see you tomorrow morning.

RED-HEADED GIRL

You will? I mean... I am?

Before John can respond, a good-looking MANAGER (17) appears, changing out bank bags. He snaps at John--

MANAGER

Hughes, next time I see you without the crown, it's a write-up, y'understand? We're Crown Dogs. If you blank on the dress code, look at the sign.

Humiliated, but plainly having no choice, John affixes a DIPPY PLASTIC CROWN to his head and mumbles to his boss...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Sorry.

MANAGER

(shit-eating grin)

Sorry, Miss. It's hard to get good help nowadays, what with all the flunkies and riffraff floating around.

RED-HEADED GIRL

Uh-huh, well the thing is, *Bruce*, I asked him to take the crown off, so I could see how good-looking his hair was.

John perks up-- he's not used to being defended, especially by pretty, red-headed girls.

RED-HEADED GIRL

And isn't the customer always s'posed to be right? Or isn't that true at Crown Dogs?

"Bruce" locks eyes with her a moment. Then, pissy--

MANAGER

Keep your station clean, Hughes.

And with that, Bruce storms away-- leaving John to look up at the redhead with appreciation shading into wonder.

RED-HEADED GIRL

Well. My friends'll be wondering where I am, but-- I guess I'll see you... in next-to-home-room.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Right, I'll be there.

She starts to go-- but stops--

RED-HEADED GIRL

And hey-- that jerk, he called you Hughes?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

John Hughes, yeah.

RED-HEADED GIRL

I'm--

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Tiffany.

He knows her name. That makes her smile. As she heads off, John permits himself the dimmest hint of a grin.

EXT. STADIUM -- NIGHT

The CROWD pours out of the stadium... mostly rich kids and happy families... while John, still in his Crown Dogs uniform, heads for his car...

None of his classmates greet or seem to know or notice John. He is, for all intents and purposes, invisible.

INT. JOHN'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

It's a real junker, but inside is something exceptional: a CARRYING CASE chock-a-block full of 8-track tapes. John's treasure trove.

John opens the case, runs his finger down the spines-- stops at *Revolver*-- and takes it out of its case and pops it in.

INT./EXT. JOHN'S CAR / NORTHBROOK -- NIGHT

John floors it, speeding down **Shermer Road**, windows down, hair flapping, blasting "Got to Get You Into My Life" from his stereo.

In the ritzy part of town, he passes a HOUSE PARTY, full of attractive, wealthy TEENS, whose antics have now spilled into the driveway, onto the walk, onto the lawn.

He makes note of the party, of the kids, of the camaraderie... and a pang of longing flashes across his eyes.

But soon, he's racing again down Shermer, out of the wealthy North Field, crossing the railroad tracks (tracks we'll later see in *Some Kind of Wonderful*), into...

A WORKING CLASS DEVELOPMENT

Pre-fab houses, some better-maintained than others.

John pulls into the driveway of one such HOUSE-- a tract home beginning to go to seed.

He cuts the engine and kills the stereo, and when he does, he hears, from inside his house-- a SCREAMING FIGHT.

He darkens, angry but hardly shocked.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Shit.

For a moment, he just sits there, just breathes. Then, he drags himself out of his car. As he does, he hears a VOICE--

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

You can stay over here, if you want.

The Voice belongs to a FRUMPY BLONDE (16) who sits on the porch of a neighboring house, smoking a cigarette.

FRUMPY BLONDE

I just mean, til they've worn 'emselves out.

John assesses the girl's proposal dimly-- but then, he looks back toward his house, where his scrapping parents seem to be kicking it up a notch.

FRUMPY BLONDE

It's some'n about-- how your dad lost his company?

(drags)

I think you may have to move.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

(sharp)

What are you, the eight o'clock news or some'n?

FRUMPY BLONDE

(shrugs)

Sorry. I wasn't snooping or anything.

(MORE)

FRUMPY BLONDE (CONT'D)

It's just-- they've been a little hard to miss is all.

(then)

Hey, you want a smoke?

John considers that. He *does* want a smoke-- but just then, the sound of a CRASH comes from within his house-- then a woman's SCREAM-- and John decides--

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I'd better go.

And with that, he takes off--

FRUMPY BLONDE

Okay, well-- if you need anything...

But by now, John is gone, down his driveway and through his yard. So the Blonde completes her thought to the empty night...

FRUMPY BLONDE

...I'm always here.

INT. JOHN'S PARENTS' HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

John, scrawny but fired-up, is in his burly FATHER's face, holding the older man's arms, trying to get him to see reason:

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey! Dad! C'mon. What're you doing?

MOTHER

Johnny, go to your room.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

C'mon, get a hold of yourself.

FATHER

You do what your mother says.

Now, John looks at his MOTHER-- a small woman of faded elegance, who sits, forlorn, in the far corner of the room. John can't help but feel his mother's radiating despair, his father's blinding rage... but he responds with optimism, with empathy...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey: if something's wrong: I mean, if you-- if you lost the business or whatever-- we'll figure it out. Okay?

FATHER

What, did it make the evening edition or some'n?

MOTHER

John. Sweetie. Just go to bed.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

But--

MOTHER

There's nothing to "figure out." Okay?
What's done is done.

A beat. Then, softly...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

But-- I'm sure there's *something* we can
do. I could get a second job--

FATHER

Johnny, it's not that kind of thing, it
wouldn't help.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Or I could get a *third* job. Or--
(as his Father protests)
Or-- or I could-- or I could sell my car,
or I could--

FATHER

DAMMIT!

CRASH-- John's Father has sent a PLATE FLYING ACROSS THE ROOM.

To be clear-- he didn't throw the plate at anyone-- far from
it-- but John nevertheless runs over to shield his mother,
his arms out wide.

FATHER

Just *listen* to me for once: It's *done*,
okay?, it's *over*. In less than a month,
this'll all belong to the bank. It's the
same thing as happened to my old man,
prolly the same as happened to *his* old
man, if anyone could remember...

John frowns. He's never seen his father so fatalistic before.

FATHER

Look... the way the world works...
there's people who get the breaks and
people who don't... And maybe you haven't
experienced that yet, but... But if
you're anything like the men who came
before you...

That thought is too terrible to finish-- but John, struck by
by its meaning, by what it augurs, says the unsayable...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 ...One day I will.

EXT. FARMHOUSE -- BACK PORCH -- MAGIC HOUR [2001]

John traverses the patio of his magnificent estate.

He looks out on his grand, glistening Redwing Farm, aglow with the golds and crimsons of post-storm dusk.

Whether he realizes it at the moment, whether it's forever on his mind, or whether it's unthinkable-- he has, by any method of accounting, come a long way since 1966.

In the near distance, a family of RABBITS hops through the eastern soy field. But John doesn't seem to mind; there's bounty enough for all. But then--

Tom walks onto the porch, a phone in his hand...

TOM
 John? Jamie for you.

...and now, John's jaw begins perceptibly to clench.

INT./EXT. HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT COMPLEX -- DAY [2001]

JAMIE HUGHES (23) makes his way through a sun-baked, 70s-era complex, heading from his starter car, up the stairs, toward his starter apartment.

In one hand, he carries a brown paper bag; with the other, he presses his cell to his ear. He simmers with barely-concealed rage.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Did you tell Elliot Gibbs to go fuck himself?

INTERCUT.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 Jamie...

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Cuz what I heard is, you told him to fuck himself and now he's killing our story.

But John says nothing.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Dad? You wanna tell me what's going on?

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 ...Nothing is "going on." He's a reporter, you can't believe a word that he says, I thought you knew better than that.

Jamie exhales in silent rage.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Look, Dad: I made a promise to these producers. You think if I don't deliver-- you think they'll work with me again?

Hughes, at a loss, defaults to anger.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 And what's so great about "working with them again"?

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 (sighs)
 To write more movies, to have a career.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 (scoffs)
 Writing movies-- the work of the desperate for the depraved.

Now, Jamie lets himself into his APARTMENT--

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Okay, look: I'm not gonna fight with you. Not about L.A., or about the industry. You've made your feelings on all of that very clear...
 (as he removes a fifth of Jack from his bag, as he fixes himself a drink)
 And look, I get it. You hate it. Okay. But I don't. So maybe it's changed in the last few years...

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 Pfft.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Or maybe I'm just not you.

A beat. Shifting gears...

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Dad-- please-- I have put everything on the line for this.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 (re: a sound)
 Are you drinking again?

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 (ignoring)
 This film is my *one shot*. It is
everything I have. I don't expect you to
 understand that, but please, for *my sake*--
 can't you pick up the phone and ask Gibbs
 to try again?

John frowns, registering that. Misreading the silence--

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 Fine. Well... can you tell me why *not*, at
 least? What's so much more important to
 you than me?
 (a pause; then)
 Dad? Are you there?

But John is looking out over his fields... and sees that the
 Rabbits are starting to burrow.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 I have to go.

And he hangs up, leaving his son to stew in confusion and
 misery.

INT. JOHN'S PARENTS' HOUSE -- JOHN'S ROOM -- NIGHT [1966]

John lies on his bed in a room that's mostly bare, save for
 his Donovan posters and his self-made Beatles art.

Elsewhere in the house: sounds of WANTON DESTRUCTION.

John drums his pen elaborately on his hand, as he did at the
 Crown Dogs table. Then, he checks the time: **8:15**. Seeing
 that, he sighs, gets up-- and takes a peek in his CLOSET:

He's looking for something "nice," but there isn't much that
 fits the bill, save for a single button-down shirt and a
 pair of slacks, mostly unworn, all the way in the back...

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S CLOSET -- DUSK [2001]

Hughes looks in his spacious closet, where everything is
 "nice"... save for a pair of overalls, mostly unworn, all the
 way in the back.

EXT. REDWING FARM -- SOY FIELD -- DUSK [2001]

Hughes, now in (new) overalls and (new) boots, tromps between soy rows, closing in on the offending Rabbits.

But he takes a bad step (he's clearly not used to working the fields) and-- *SPLASH*-- he trips, landing, prone, in a puddle.

He stays there a moment, watching his reflection begin to resolve as the muddy water settles. What looks back at him is the image of a man who looks faintly ridiculous, out of place. Over--

TIFFANY (PRE-LAP)

What are you doing here?

EXT. RICHIE HOUSE -- NORTH HILLS -- NIGHT [1966]

16-Year-Old John, done up in his "nice" duds, sits on a stone bench in the front yard of a sprawling McMansion in which a high school party is currently raging. To say that he looks nervous and out-of-place in this setting would be to understate the case rather drastically.

Tiffany approaches, having just left the bash herself. If John wasn't so caught up in his own anxieties, he'd notice that she's not having the greatest night of her life.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hm?

TIFFANY

I said, what are you doing here?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Oh. Well-- I, uh, I heard there was a party?

TIFFANY

(nods; then)

You want a tip? A house party, it tends to be *inside* the house.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

...Yeah, I know.

And now, Tiffany notices that John hasn't come empty-handed:

TIFFANY

Wait, did you bring a bottle of *wine*?

She half-grins, trying to see what John has in his hands-- but of course, he hides it-- which induces her to pursue--

TIFFANY

Oh my gosh, it's French and everything!

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Yeah, I know, it's-- it's stupid. I'm stupid. I shouldn't've come here, I just-- I'll see ya around.

He scrambles to his feet and begins to hurry off, when--

TIFFANY

No. Wait. Don't go. Look, all I meant-- it may be a little too good for the pieces of shit who come to these things.

John stops.

TIFFANY

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have laughed. I guess-- you're a little bit out of your element, huh?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

At a Richie party in Highland Park? Yeah, just a bit.

She considers that a moment.

TIFFANY

Well, I dunno if this helps at all, but... believe it or not... I'm out of my element too.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

("yeah, right")
Really? You hide it well.

TIFFANY

I know. And tonight I think I found out it's cuz I'm out of my element everywhere, so I've racked up plenty of practice.

John notices now, for the first time, the slug trails of mascara running down Tiffany's cheeks. But before he can say anything, a hot CHEERLEADER-type steps out of the house, scans the lawn, and hollers at Tiffany--

CHEERLEADER

Tiff? What're you doing? We're about to play spin-the-bottle!

TIFFANY

Um, I'm kind of trying to talk to my friend here.

CHEERLEADER

Joey Barnes asked you to play! He told me you're in his top five for prom--

TIFFANY

Well you tell him, it's an honor just to be nominated, but--

RANDOM HOT GUY

(to the Cheerleader)

Giggles! Hey, c'mon, the party's inside!

That would be a RANDOM HOT GUY who's just come outside, pursuing the Cheerleader-- who now tickles her, until she SHRIEKS and is so overcome with hilarity that it's all she can do to scramble back into the house. To John--

TIFFANY

That would be Candice.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Yeah. I know who she is. She's like the most popular girl in school.

TIFFANY

Yeah well, under that polished shell, you'll find... more shell.

(when John smiles)

That's not even the funny part. The funny part is... she's my best friend.

A beat. Then, Tiffany starts to take off...

TIFFANY

Well enjoy your party.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

W-wait. Are you leaving?

TIFFANY

That's the general idea.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Wait, it's just-- Look-- the only reason I came to this-- I was hoping... I thought-- I dunno-- maybe I'd find you here?

Hearing that, Tiffany stops.

TIFFANY

Don't you think that's a bit presumptuous?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

You mean-- cuz you're a Richie and I'm a Zoid?

TIFFANY

No of course that's not what I *mean*. I *mean*, cuz we've barely met. I *mean*, what makes you think I even remember your name...

And now, John turns his eyes toward the pavement, ashamed...

TIFFANY

...John Hughes?

And he looks up-- to see Tiffany flashing a dazzling smile.

EXT. NORTHBROOK -- NIGHT

Quiet, leafy blocks and foggy, tree-lined thoroughfares. Some sights we may recognize-- the churches from *Home Alone*, from *Sixteen Candles*...

In every shot, a pink '64 Mustang rolls along, Tiffany at the wheel, John at her side. We HEAR their conversation over--

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Tell you what, I won't go home on one condition: I'm not staying here to spin-the-bottle with Joey Barnes.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

(laughs)

Works for me. Where do you wanna go?

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Anywhere else. Just not the park-- that's where Coach Vernon takes his wife for their date every Friday night.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

Christ. You think we'll ever be like them?

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Yes.

INT./EXT. '64 MUSTANG -- NIGHT [MOVING]

The car is hugging the edge of Lincoln Park, making its way south, as suburban calm gives way to metropolitan energy.

TIFFANY

How much further is it?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Like the northwest corner of Old Town.

TIFFANY
 (embarrassed)
 I don't really know the city.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 It's not too far.
 (a beat; then)
 And hey-- thanks for driving. I know the
 guy is supposed to drive. It's just...

TIFFANY
 Your car in the shop or something?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 Or something. I had to sell it. My dad
 kinda went bust.

Tiffany watches the road, processing this new information.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 But hey, do me a favor: don't sit there
 feeling sorry for me.

TIFFANY
 I'm not.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 Yeah, sure.

TIFFANY
 No, I was actually-- I think I was
 feeling *jealous*.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 Jealous?

TIFFANY
 Sure. I was just thinking... if *my* dad
 went bust... maybe my mom would finally
 wise up, you know? Ditch the creep.

John considers that. With a half-grin, he makes a confession:

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 Y'know, ever since my dad lost his
 business, you know what he's decided he
 really likes? His real passion in life--
 is throwing shit.

TIFFANY
 (laughs)
 Well ever since my dad got really
successful, he's decided his real passion
 in life is... nobody ever bothering him.
 Ever.

John's smile fades. Clocking that--

TIFFANY

Now hey, it's not fair for you to sit there feeling sorry for *me*. I'm fine. I think families are just tough. You know?
(then)

I mean, if they weren't, people would live with their parents forever. Right?

Careful viewers will recognize that as a *Breakfast Club* quote.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey-- it's right up there on your left.

He points to a driveway up ahead.

TIFFANY

Doesn't it say "No Public Access"?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Yeah, it's alright.

So she pulls into a **DRIVEWAY**, where a music club manager, SCOOP (African-American, 40s) is smoking a cigarette.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey Scoop. You got any room for us?

SCOOP

(lights up at the sight of him)

Always for you, Johnny, always for you!
Just hang a right at the crime scene.

There's a permanent/ironic "crime scene" at the edge of the lot (chalk outline, police tape, etc.).

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Thanks.

SCOOP

Oh and Johnny-- that band you got us? Those cats are oughtta sight. No bullshit; we got these stiffs hoppin' tonight. So lemme do this for you: y'all can go in the back way, and the liquor's on us tonight, you understand?

Off Tiffany-- thinking she may have misjudged the odd, sensitive boy in the passenger seat of her car.

INT. OLD TOWN MUSIC CLUB -- NIGHT

As John and his date enter the cozy dive, packed shoulder-to-shoulder with the HIP and SOPHISTICATED, Tiffany clings to John. She's the outsider here, the uninitiated-- a new feeling for her and not an entirely welcome one...

TIFFANY

What did that guy mean when he said you "got" the band?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Oh, just-- I've been hanging around so much, some of the clubs have put me to work, scouting bands.

(off her)

Trust me: it's small venues for crap pay: it's not a big deal.

TIFFANY

Not a big deal? You're 16.

John considers that, as if for the first time.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I guess... if I don't wanna end up like my dad, I figure-- I better work as hard as I can as young as I can. You know?

Tiffany says nothing. The boys in her circles don't "figure" things like that.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Hey, listen-- what do you think of these cats?

By "cats," he means the BAND-- a harmony-rock group in the tradition of The Byrds. Tiffany listens a moment.

TIFFANY

They're good. Kind of different...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

(getting lost in the music)

The song's about how they don't wanna be like their parents. Which, I mean, I know that sounds kind of obvious, but it's like... They do wanna have ambition. You know? They do wanna have big lives, just-- Big on their own terms... Not their dads' ideas of "big"... They don't-- The way our parents went to sleep? They don't wanna do that... They wanna stay *awake*... *Feel* things... Love and... the opposite of love... and everything else besides.

Tiffany looks at him as if she's witnessed a display of magic.

TIFFANY

You know what I just realized?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

...What?

TIFFANY

That you're gonna have an amazing life.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

(smiles sadly)

You barely know me.

TIFFANY

I know that.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Well-- it's not exactly the Hughes way.

TIFFANY

Then in that case... I guess you'll make your own way.

And now, John looks into Tiffany's eyes... and pulls her into the first KISS of his young life.

This is not a kiss that any high schooler has ever experienced: it's a kiss that brightens the lights, a kiss that swells the music. It's a kiss so perfect and promising and pure that it could only occur... well, in a John Hughes production.

We DOLLY AROUND this impossible kiss, which is somehow, at once, both perfectly chaste and wholly ecstatic. We absorb its improbable jubilation in 360 degrees before we...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH -- DAY [1970]

John's wedding. We're coming in right at the climax, just as the groom is planting a kiss on his beautiful bride.

The ONLOOKERS applaud: John's parents sob and grin... Scoop whoops... relatives *aww*... and Tiffany claps and smiles...

LET'S REVISIT THAT: Tiffany's in the crowd. Which, of course, raises a question as to who, exactly, John is marrying...

But when the newlyweds make their way down the aisle, we get our answer: John is holding hands with Frumpy Blonde who lived next door to him, to whom he barely gave the time of day.

CLOSER on John: he's smiling like he's supposed to smile-- but his grin doesn't register happiness; his eyes don't register bliss.

When he locks eyes with Tiffany, however, it is instantly, utterly clear that he's still in love with her. For her part, she holds his gaze a beat, then looks away.

Oblivious to this, but clearly conscious that something is conspicuously "off" with the newlywed couple, Tiffany's date (JOEY BARNES) leans down and whispers-- perhaps a little too loudly and definitely too soon--

JOEY BARNES

I give it six months.

From a blizzard of RICE to...

INT. HUGHES FARMHOUSE - NANCY'S ROOM - DUSK [2001]

NANCY HUGHES, the once-frumpy girl, is now a matronly woman, some 24 years after her wedding day.

At present, she sits in her bedroom, tatting doilies. Our first impression of her is that of a weary spouse, one whose inner light has dimmed over the years, the victim of too many minor slights and indignities.

Behind Nancy, John comes to the door, a cordless phone pressed to his ear. He peeks in at his wife, then moves on, (silently) closing the door behind him.

As soon as he's gone, Nancy looks up, aware of his presence, her Green Eyes obviously troubled-- this is a woman who knows more than she lets on.

HUGHES (PRE-LAP)

Hank. It's Hughes.

HALLWAY -- SAME

John heads down the corridor, en route to his study--

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

I have what I assume you'll receive as happy news: I'm finally going to sue somebody.

INT. MANHATTAN LAW FIRM -- DAY

HANK (50s), wearing the suit of a hotshot attorney, heads down a flight of marble stairs and speaks into his cell.

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 Aw, who's the lucky girl? Wait, don't tell me, let me guess: is it by any chance Elliot Gibbs of Premiere Magazine?

INTERCUT.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 You know about this?

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 We were sent the book a couple of days ago. I only just found out about it myself.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 Well it is 24-karat slander.

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 I believe you 100%. And if we had a chance of convincing a jury of that, trust me, I'd beat down the door of the Clerk of Court in a New York minute.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 ...Excuse me?

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 Look, John-- the thing about slander, it's almost impossible to prove. You have to show that the book is malicious and false and that he *knows* it's false.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 Of course he knows!

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 Really? What makes you so sure? Have you talked to him about it? Given him evidence of its errors?

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 That's exactly what he *wants* is for me to comment!

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 You see the problem.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
 Can't we just, I dunno, tie it up in court?

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
 Well we could give it a shot, but-- his publisher's pretty committed.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
His "publisher"?

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
HarperCollins. Who apparently gave him a pretty obscene advance. Which I believe increases to "pornographic" if he gets you on the record. Look, the only way out is if you could somehow prove his sources were fabrications, which you can't, which nobody ever can.

John registers that. As he does, Hank ducks into an EMPTY OFFICE and closes the door. In a graver tone...

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
Look: my advice: prepare Nancy, prepare the kids. If your family makes it through this thing in one piece, that's a victory.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
...If they "make it through"? What are you talking about?

A beat.

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
John, you have read the book, haven't you?

Hughes just stands there, stock-still.

HANK (INTO THE PHONE)
...John? ...Hello?

JOHN'S STUDY -- LATER

A MAID is cleaning up Hughes's trophy shards-- but when John walks in, she pads immediately, soundlessly out of the room.

HUGHES (O.S.)
I mean, I gave it a shot, but I have an allergy to bullshit.

HANK (O.S.)
Well dip into Chapter Four, it'll clear your sinuses right up.

Hughes sits at his desk, opens Gibbs' book to Chapter Four.

HUGHES (O.S.)
Why? What do you mean? What does it say?

CLOSE ON THE BOOK, whose Chapter Four begins with a quote from **Michelle Manning**: "**The first time I heard of John...**"

HUGHES (O.S.)
 What does he say in Chapter Four?

CUT TO BLACK.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
 The first time I heard of John Hughes, I
 was working for Francis Ford Coppola.

INT. AMERICAN ZOETROPE OFFICES -- DAY [1982]

A funky, bustling office with expansive views of the bay. *Apocalypse Now* art on the walls. At a desk in the far corner...

...find MICHELLE MANNING (23, peppy, driven), who is, at present, extracting a script from a courier envelope-- which she throws in the trash, where it lands alongside a DOZEN IDENTICAL ENVELOPES.

This is, in other words, an average day in the life of a small prodco employee in the early 1980s (though, for whatever it's worth [and it's worth zero], Michelle's official title at Zoetrope is "production supervisor").

MICHELLE (V.O.)
 John had written *Mr. Mom* and *Vacation* at that point, but nothing had been released, so he was basically unknown.

Wearily, Michelle cracks open *Sixteen Candles*.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
 Now in Hollywood, an unknown writer is a bit like an unknown drug-- a little intriguing, but nobody wants to be the first to try it.

She begins to read... AND LATER, she's reading from a bean bag... AND LATER STILL, she's reading from a daybed, now in full recline. By now, she's deep in the script, and her mood and carriage and demeanor have shifted: she's fully engrossed, and her eyes have a new focus, a new luster...

MICHELLE (V.O.)
 But when I got into *Sixteen Candles*... well, it's a little hard to explain... but it was like... like I was moving back in time... You know?... Like I was suddenly back in high school... feeling those old feelings... This script-- I mean, it was like nothing I'd ever read before.

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Michelle is curled up in bed, petting her fluffy CAT, looking more and more like a teen herself, as she (re-?)reads John's script...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I mean, it wasn't just *about* teens, but *for* them... It was told in their own *language*. It took them *seriously*. We may take that for granted now, but-- this was the era of *Porky's* and *Animal House*. In '82, a movie like this, it had never been made before.

She closes the script. Looks at the Cat. Knits her brow.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

But as soon as I finished the script, I got this crazy idea in my head, like...

MICHELLE

(to her Cat)

I'm gonna make this movie.

On the Cat, deeply skeptical.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

The problem-- as with most of the problems I'd have in my professional life-- could be summed up in two words: John Hughes.

INT. NATIONAL LAMPOON OFFICES -- DAY [1978]

A tribe of HIPPIES (aka "the writing staff") loafs around, getting stoned, while John, dressed in mall clothes, sits at his desk, typing fluently, working diligently.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Before coming to town, John had written for the National Lampoon. Before that, he'd done a decade or so in advertising...

INT. LEO BURNETT ADVERTISING AGENCY -- DAY [1976]

A frat of BUSINESS BROS stands around, swapping conquest stories, while John, dressed in mall clothes, sits at his desk, typing fluently, working diligently...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

The thing you always heard was that he was fast-- lightning-fast.

(MORE)

MICHELLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But his biggest achievement at that point was an ad called the Credit Card Challenge.

FOOTAGE: AN EDGE SHAVING CREAM SPOT

SPOKESMAN

With an ordinary credit card, we're going to prove that Edge lets you shave faster than the leading foam.

As the SPOKESMAN proceeds to demonstrate Edge's wonders...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Now-- that isn't exactly the kind of resume that makes studio bosses light up with visions of dollar signs and statuettes. And John was attached to direct. But when I went to work for Ned Tanen, I thought he might be okay with that; after all, his reputation was, he liked to take chances on new directors...

INT. CHANNEL PRODUCTIONS -- TANEN'S OFFICE -- DAY [1982]

Michelle sits across from the legendary NED TANEN (51), in whose hands she places *Sixteen Candles*.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

He'd given George Lucas one of his first movies, and John Landis, and Joel Schumacher, Amy Heckerling-- and a whole long list of others. So I handed him the script and I said, "I think you should make this."

MICHELLE

I think you should make this.

NED TANEN

Okay.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

And he said okay!

On Michelle, *beaming--*

MICHELLE (V.O.)

And I regretted it every day for the next year and a half.

EXT. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS -- DAY [1983] [ESTABLISHING]

I./E. JOHN'S CAR / GATE 3 -- SAME

A MERCEDES pulls through the left lane, a LAMBORGHINI through the right. Behind them is a '79 CHEVY NOVA-- John's car. John, we'll note, is still dressed in mall clothes.

GATE GUARD

Well look who it is: the only director I've ever met, drives a Nova.

HUGHES

(smiles)

Hey, I'm from the Midwest. We're practical people.

THE GATE GUARD grins, hands John a pass.

HUGHES

Say, Rick, do you happen know if...

(whispers)

...if Ms. Manning is on the lot?

MICHELLE (O.S.)

GOD DAMN YOU, JOHN HUGHES!

HUGHES

(tiny beat)

I withdraw the question.

And now we see...

Michelle Manning, standing a few paces away from the gate (she's clearly been waiting for Hughes). She is, at present, waving a MEMO at John-- the way you'd wave a chewed-up throw pillow at your dog while bawling it out--

MICHELLE (PRE-LAP)

What is the *meaning* of this?!

INT. JOHN'S NOVA -- LATER

Michelle rides shotgun, as John navigates the winding streets of the lot.

MICHELLE

(re: the memo)

You wrote the President of Production that you, "Respectfully decline his casting suggestions for the role of Sam Baker"?

HUGHES

Well... it means I decline his suggestions for the role of Sam Baker.

(MORE)

HUGHES (CONT'D)

The "respectfully" part was admittedly dishonest, and I regret it.

John turns into a small lot.

MICHELLE

But Sam Baker's the lead part! And that no-name girl you wanna cast--

HUGHES

She has a name.

MICHELLE

She *cannot*. Carry. A movie. Of this size!

HUGHES

You've never seen her.

MICHELLE

Neither have you! That's the point! She's been in *one* movie that nobody saw!

By now, John has parked, and he's already out of his car. Scrambling after him--

MICHELLE

We are not finished discussing this!

EXT. OFFICE COMPLEX -- CONTINUOUS

John, a spring in his step, approaches a squat, pretty building as HILTON GREEN (60), his line producer, intercepts--

GREEN

Hey, John.

HUGHES

Morning, Hilt!

GREEN

(re: some paperwork)

Say, I was working on this last night, and I think I can make the budget work, so long as we shoot in L.A.

HUGHES

But we're shooting in Chicago.

MICHELLE

(catching up)

What does it matter? This story can take place anywhere.

HUGHES

But making it here won't be any fun.

And with that, he heads into the building.

In John's wake stands a bewildered-looking Green, who appears as if he's suddenly concerned with his aural processing. He turns to Michelle--

GREEN

Did... Did he say "fun"?

MICHELLE

Thanks, Hilt. I'll take it from here.

She takes Green's paperwork and follows John into...

INT. UNIVERSAL -- OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

...where John bounds up a FLIGHT OF STAIRS. Calling after--

MICHELLE

John!

HUGHES

(waves her off)

I've spent years working for clients, Michelle, for editors, for people whose only mission in life is to make sure that nothing is like it's supposed to be. Well this is my chance to do things *right* for once, which means *shooting. in. Chicago.* I mean, the story takes place in Shermer, *Illinois* for Chrissake.

As they turn a corner--

MICHELLE

What's wrong with Shermer, California?

HUGHES

Shermer, Calif--? There isn't any such place!

MICHELLE

It's a fictional town, John! You just pulled the place out of your ass.

HUGHES

And *that* is the magic of movies, Michelle: that you can bring to life the contents of your ass!

MICHELLE

John, will you please--?

HUGHES

Hooray for Hollywood!
America's dream mill!

John goes off-- and this time, Michelle elects not to pursue.

CASTING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

As John makes a bee-line for the end of the hall, his casting director, JACKIE BIRCH, approaches, keeping pace--

BIRCH

John-- I heard there's a casting session?

HUGHES

I wouldn't call it that.

BIRCH

Okay, well, you are aware that I'm the Casting Director, right? So probably, you should inform me when there's a session.

HUGHES

There isn't a session.

BIRCH

Look, I saw the girl from "Tempest" come in-- Molly Ringston?

HUGHES

Molly Ringwald.

BIRCH

Well look, she was great in the movie--

HUGHES

Was she really? I haven't seen it.

BIRCH

But you know as well as I do she isn't a star. Which means the Black Tower will have an absolute cow if you try to make her the lead. But if you want her to come in and read--

HUGHES

She isn't reading.

BIRCH

She isn't reading?

HUGHES

She isn't reading. But thanks for the input, Jackie. That's all for now.

He enters an OFFICE, shutting the door behind him.

BIRCH

But that's my office.

INT. UNIVERSAL -- CASTING OFFICE -- DAY

John enters and says...

HUGHES

I'm sorry to keep you waiting.

...at which point, a rolling chair spins around to reveal...

MOLLY RINGWALD (15), possessed of what Pauline Kael called a "charismatic normality," adorned by what *Time* described as "waxed-candy lips semaphoring a smile."

IT IS INSTANTLY CLEAR THAT (THE ACTRESS WHO PLAYS) MOLLY BEARS AN UNLIKELY, UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO TIFFANY: she's even done up in Tiffany-esque clothes; her hair is even teased into a Tiffany-esque do.

This, to be clear, is the first time John has seen Molly in the flesh, and the sight of her seems to repair something deep within him... as if he's been running on low voltage for the last couple of decades and the power has finally been restored. Extending his hand...

HUGHES

I'm John Hughes.

MOLLY

(shaking)

I'm Molly.

HUGHES

Molly, you look...

(beams)

...exactly like your headshot!

MOLLY

(confused)

Well-- aren't I s'posed to?

HUGHES

Yeah. But... Well... People aren't always what they're supposed to be.

A beat. Then, snapping out of his reverie--

HUGHES

Can I get you something to drink? Coffee?
Water?

MOLLY

I'm okay.

But he heads to a Mr. Coffee and begins brewing himself a pot.

HUGHES

Did you have a chance to read the script?

MOLLY

Of course I read it.

HUGHES

And? Whaddya think? You wanna do it?

MOLLY

Well-- that's why I'm auditioning.

HUGHES

You're not auditioning.

MOLLY

I'm... I'm not?

HUGHES

(measuring grounds)

What did you think of it? And be brutal:
I want your unvarnished opinion.

MOLLY

I don't-- wait, I'm not auditioning?

HUGHES

No. You're not auditioning.

MOLLY

But my agent... She said, you wanted me to
come in and... she said I was s'posed
to... I don't understand.

Hughes turns to her.

HUGHES

Well: see: I had your headshot as part of
a stack I got maybe a year ago from your
agency. From ICM. And-- I kept it taped
up over my desk while I was writing
Sixteen Candles, so... you might say, in
a way, it was written for you.

MOLLY

It was? I mean-- you did?

John nods.

HUGHES

I saw you every time I looked up. Every
morning, noon, and night. Every day for
five days.

MOLLY

You--? Wait, you wrote the script in *five days*?

HUGHES

That's actually kind of a lie. I actually wrote in *three*, but... well... it was five til I could stop looking at you.

He stares at her. She shrinks from his gaze.

MOLLY

I don't understand.

HUGHES

(sits beside her)

You have-- You can call it whatever you want. "Presence." "Star power." But it's so strong, it even comes through in a lousy headshot.

MOLLY

It does?

HUGHES

(smiles)

You are everything I'm looking for. And I can tell just from talking that you'll be perfect in this movie.

MOLLY

You can?

John nods.

MOLLY

But-- but that doesn't make any sense-- I mean, how can you tell that just-- from a conversation?

John lets out a hearty laugh, as if that's a charming, childish question.

HUGHES

Well I guess you'll just have to trust me.

(then; leaning in; intense)

Do you? Trust me?

Molly feels off-balance, out of control... but then, what can she really say except...

MOLLY

...Okay?

Just then, the Mr. Coffee BEEPS, and John jumps up to grab a cup--

HUGHES

Great! Then it's all settled. I mean, assuming you'll have me.

MOLLY

Have you?

HUGHES

Well you never answered my question. Whether you liked the script.

MOLLY

Oh-- well yeah-- I mean, it's good--

HUGHES

You mean that?

MOLLY

Well yeah, I really liked it--

HUGHES

(turns)

Cuz if that's true-- I have others. Four others. A couple of 'em even better than this one. Between you and me, I see this as just the first in a series of movies we'll make together. Ringwald-Hughes. Hughes-Ringwald.

On Molly, for whom the odd is transforming into the surreal...

MOLLY

...I-- are you offering me *five parts*?

HUGHES

Well sure. But that's just for starters.

MOLLY

But you don't even know if I can *act*!

HUGHES

I don't know if I can *direct*! So what the hell, let's bankrupt Universal together, you and me. Whaddya say?

For Molly, this has now passed "absurd" and has entered the realm of straight-up, looney-tunes nuts. So she responds in the way that people respond to zaniness, which is to say, she lets out a big LAUGH. Hughes smiles.

HUGHES

I'm gonna take that as a yes. Here--

(tosses her a phone)

Call your agent. Tell her you're booked up til 1991.

MOLLY
 (along for the ride)
 Okay.

John heads for the door-- but stops to say--

HUGHES
 But yeah, you should *actually* call her:
 we shoot in less than a month.

He's again about to leave-- but again turns back--

HUGHES
 You're gonna love Chicago, Tiffan--
 (catches himself; then)
 Molly.

From John's euphoric face to...

JOHN III (PRE-LAP)
Why did the superhero flush the toilet?

INT. HUGHES RENTAL HOUSE -- DINING ROOM -- DUSK [1983]

...John, possessed of an extremely different demeanor, as he eats dinner with his family. Around his wife and children, he seems quiet, reserved-- and every inch the adult.

He sits with Nancy (33), YOUNG JAMIE (4), and the Hughes' eldest son, JOHN III (7). The atmosphere is formal, stiff-- against which mood, John III ("Jack") is attempting a joke.

JOHN III
 Mom?

NANCY
 I dunno, Jack. Why'd the superhero flush
 the toilet?

JOHN III
 Because it was his doody.

Nancy smiles at that. A genuine smile-- she likes the joke.

NANCY
 That's funny. You gonna write jokes like
 Daddy when you grow up?

Now, everyone looks at John, whose response is only...

HUGHES
 We let him talk like that at the dinner
 table?

JOHN III
 (apologetic; confused)
 It's... it's not... it's a homonym.

Nancy looks at Jack-- *it's okay*. Everyone looks back at their plates... eating in silence... until--

HUGHES
 Hey, speaking of flushing the toilet--
 turns out, we're out of here on the 20th.

NANCY
 ...I thought we were going back to
 Chicago the twenty-eightth.

HUGHES
 Well. It changed.

JOHN III
 What about Disneyland?

John looks at him.

NANCY
 He's supposed to go on the 21st.

HUGHES
 (shrugs)
 It's work. It's not like I had a choice.
 He goes back to his food; the discussion is closed.

HUGHES (PRE-LAP)
 (hyper-enthusiastic)
 Hey! I got an idea!

EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT -- DUSK [1983]

A 747 touches down...

HUGHES (O.S.)
 You said you've never been to Chicago;
 why don't we get there a week early, do
 some prep?

MOLLY (O.S.)
 Like, to rehearse?

INT. O'HARE -- BAGGAGE CLAIM -- NIGHT

Two wheeled SUITCASES roll past a luggage carousel...

HUGHES (O.S.)

What? No, you don't need to rehearse.
You're a natural. What we need is just to
hang out together, spend *time* together,
get *comfortable*. You know?

MOLLY (O.S.)

...Okay?

A MARBLE FLOOR

The Suitcases roll over a marble floor...

HUGHES (O.S.)

I'll get the three of us joined rooms at
the Skokie Hilton, so hopefully, it'll be
a little like summer camp.

...and the Suitcases come to a stop.

MOLLY (O.S.)

Wait-- what do you mean, "the three of
us"? Like you and me and... who else?

And now, we TILT UP to reveal that the marble floors are in
the **LOBBY OF A HOTEL** and that the Suitcases belong to John
and to...

A 15-YEAR-OLD KID who is, at present, elaborately drumming
his pen against his hand-- the same gesture we saw John
perform repeatedly in his youth. To Molly (who's been
waiting in the lobby for the guys to arrive), John offers a
formal introduction:

HUGHES

This is Anthony Michael Hall. Michael,
Molly. Molly, Michael. He's your co-star,
and you will love him, guaranteed.

MOLLY

Hey.

MICHAEL

Hey.

That completes their repertoire of small talk. So...

MOLLY

I guess I'll love you guaranteed.

MICHAEL

(laughs)

Cool.

HUGHES

You will. And you know why? Cuz he reminds me of me-- and you're gonna love me.

And with that, JOHN'S HAND FINDS ITS WAY ONTO MOLLY'S BACK... and it gives the back a little RUB, the shoulder, a little SQUEEZE.

It's their first touch. Molly TENSES at it... John SMILES... and Michael FROWNS-- though, for the moment, he does his best to ignore it.

But John removes his hand, and the moment is over as quickly as it began. With a nod of his head, he signals the kids to follow him to the Front Desk...

HUGHES

Well. I guess we should get checked in, get to our rooms, huh? Tomorrow's a big day.

MOLLY

(exchanges a look with Michael)
Wh-- why? What happens tomorrow?

HUGHES

Oh, I got a list of a thousand things I'm supposed to do.

MICHAEL

Whoa.

HUGHES

Yeah. Good thing I'm blowing it off, huh?

MICHAEL

You are?

MOLLY

What do you mean?

HUGHES

I *mean*, I have better things to do tomorrow than a "studio call on the shot list."

MOLLY

Like-- like what?

HUGHES

(stops, grins)
Like hanging out with my new friends!

Off the kids, not entirely sold on John, nor entirely un-
charmed...

INT. SKOKIE HILTON -- JOHN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

John, with a weary sigh, sets down his luggage, then strolls to the picture window, where he looks out and breathes in. He takes in the sights, the sounds, the smells of the north shore suburbs... the only place he'll ever consider home.

Then, his eyes fall on something-- something that excites him-- a lit-up sign just across the street that reads...

**SHERWIN WILLIAMS
MERCHANDISE AND SERVICES**

He gets an idea... and he futzes with the blinds until they're about three-quarters closed, until the sign reads...

**SHER
MER**

John stares at the altered sign, smiles at its fortuitousness-- as if it's no coincidence, but an omen auguring favorable winds. As we FADE OUT, the name of John's fictional town burns into the darkness for a beat-- before vanishing into...

BLACK.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

What happened during that week before production, nobody knows. If you asked Michael or Molly or John about it-- they'd just stare into space and laugh.

A SERIES OF SHOTS: MOLLY, MICHAEL, AND JOHN'S DAY OFF

A collage of images that directly quote Ferris Bueller, as John, Molly, and Michael partake in the prototype of what will be a "day off" for Ferris, Cameron, and Sloane...

Our trio cheers at **WRIGLEY FIELD**... they appreciate beauty at **THE ART INSTITUTE**... they look out from **THE SEARS TOWER**... they make mischief at **THE MERCANTILE EXCHANGE**...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

As near as I can tell, it was Ferris Bueller's Day Off. Except it wasn't a day off; it was a week. And except that John wasn't Ferris Bueller; he was a 30something man in charge of a major motion picture.

The trio ends a magical day at dusk, hanging out on the **NORTH SHORE LAKEFRONT**, sipping Cokes, watching the sun dip below the water. They seem, by now, like real friends.

And when John puts his arm around Molly, she seems less bothered by it than before. Michael darkens at the sight-- but the darkness quickly passes...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

But as John and the kids were busy cavorting around Chicago, well, progress on *Sixteen Candles* simply wasn't being made... Still-- it wasn't so much what John *ignored* during that week that almost sunk the ship-- it was what he *did*...

...John pulls Molly close...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

...the *relationships* he made...

THE "FUN MONTAGE" SEGUES INTO A "WORK MONTAGE", as...

The Sixteen Candles CREW sets up for an exterior shot of **JAKE RYAN'S HOUSE**. (We may recognize this place: it's the house that hosted the party John tried to attend when he was 16.)

They shoot a scene in **SAM'S HOUSE**... and another in the **GYM OF NILES EAST HIGH SCHOOL** (which, here, is dressed to portray "Shermer High").

MICHELLE (V.O.)

See, the thing about *Sixteen Candles*-- part of the reason it got made-- it was s'posed to be fast and easy: "lean, mean, and teen." It was mostly a few locations. Mostly dialogue. No effects. And there was no reason it couldn't be shot in 35 days... except one:

The Crew is shooting the scene in the **AUTO SHOP** where Sam Baker (Molly) begins to bond with Farmer Ted (Michael). We **CUT** through take after take, during which John goofs around, cutting up with his teenage stars...

MICHELLE (V.O.)

The scenes with Michael and Molly-- he did take after take after take. Days went by where they horsed around so much, there wasn't a usable frame. I'd scheduled the shoot meticulously-- I'd planned for every exigency; I'd imagined every catastrophe; I'd war-gamed every scenario. But as the shoot wore on, it became clear that I'd failed to account for a major variable... the variable whose name was...

EXT. BEHIND NILES EAST -- NIGHT

MICHELLE

JOHN HUGHES! YOU WILL LISTEN TO ME FOR
ONCE, SO HELP ME GOD!

Hughes is currently having a smoke break while Michelle is
having a psychotic break.

HUGHES

I'm sorry-- did you say something?

MICHELLE

You canNOT keep doing 50 takes of Michael
and Molly's scenes! It is costing us
money! You're having playtime with *other*
people's money!

HUGHES

Isn't it great?

As John heads for the door--

MICHELLE

We are *days* behind schedule, we're over-
budget, I'm *losing my hair*-- we'll *never*
work again if this doesn't get under
control--

HUGHES

Well before you lose what's left of your
voice-- or your dignity-- or your...
hair?-- You should check out Daily
Variety.

MICHELLE

What's in Variety?

HUGHES

(smiles)

I'll send a PA to fetch you a copy.

And he's gone. Left alone, Michelle takes her hair in her
hand... and pulls out a CLUMP. To the clump--

MICHELLE

God damn you, John Hughes.

CUT TO:

C.U. A DAILY VARIETY BEING THROWN ONTO A BEACH BLANKET

The headline:

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VACATION SCORES \$8.5M OPENING.
Chevy Chase Vehicle Directed by Harold Ramis, Written by John Hughes.

REVEAL WE'RE AT:

EXT. A LAKE MICHIGAN BEACH -- NIGHT

John (who's just thrown the *Variety* onto a beach blanket) high-fives with Michael (who had a supporting role in *Vacation*).

John and Michael and Molly are, at present, huddled around a BONFIRE that CRACKLES and ROARS and sends SPARKS into the air. Around them, the night is cold and crisp and promising.

HUGHES

Eight-and-a-half! Eight-and-a-damn-half!

Hughes lets out a WHOOP. Michael FOLLOWS SUIT. Molly watches them, grinning, like Wendy watching the Lost Boys.

HUGHES

And I'll tell you something *else*:
 "Sixteen Candles" 'll make even more.

MOLLY

What makes you say that?

HUGHES

How could it not? For one thing, it stars Molly Ringwald.

Molly grins at that.

HUGHES

And I'll tell you... the way Hollywood works... after this, after "Sixteen Candles"... no one will be able to say no to us again.

(looks toward the horizon)

No, from here on out-- it's smiles and open doors-- as far as the eye can see.

MOLLY

(laughs)
 Yeah? Where do they lead?

As John approaches the surf...

HUGHES

"Detention." That's what we're gonna do next. It's called "Detention," it's about these kids who, they have Saturday detention at Shermer High. And Michael, you'll play Brian-- he's this sort of-- this lonely kid. Smart. A little nerdy, but-- nothing like the Geek. And Molly, you'll play Claire, she's-- "well off" as they say, although-- she's really about the worst off of 'em all...

(then)

And what they start to see, all these kids, is that the adults-- that they like to tell us we're different species, you know? Like, a Brain and a Princess, how could they ever connect? But it's not true. It's just something they put in our heads. It's not real.

A wave CRASHES at John's feet.

MOLLY

Hey. Can I ask you something? What's this thing you have with, like, Shermer, Illinois?

For a moment, John says nothing. Then...

HUGHES

Not a "thing." Just a place I've had in my head since I was in high school. And I could tell you all about it, if you want, I could draw you a map.

Molly knits her brow, registering that. Then--

MICHAEL

Wait, so is this like... are you *offering* me this part?

HUGHES

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

Like... I don't have to audition?

HUGHES

Audition?

John prickles. Turning to Michael--

HUGHES

Are you serious? Are you really asking me that-- do you have to *audition*?

Michael tenses, unclear as to how exactly he's transgressed.

HUGHES

What do you think I'm--? You're like, one of the better friends I've ever had in my life. I mean... you may be about the best friend I've ever had. You think I'm gonna make my best friend audition for a movie? C'mon.

For a moment, the only sounds are the LAKE and the FIRE... the WHOOSH and the ROAR...

Michael is pale, frozen, uncomfortable in the role in which he now realizes he's been cast... But he considers that he's only 15, that he doesn't know much about the world, and that this may, in fact, be more normal than he'd supposed.

HUGHES

I guess, Molly and me, we'd talked about this before, how we're gonna do movies forever. Haven't we?

John looks at Molly, who says nothing. To Michael--

HUGHES

So yeah, I guess I'd just assumed... you were part of the club too. Unless, of course, you don't want to be.

MICHAEL

...What? No, I mean... I mean, yes. I mean-- of course I want to be.

HUGHES

(smiles)

Good. Should we drink to it?

John reaches for a COOLER and grabs a trio of Cokes. The happy mood seems to return a bit-- the kids like this part. John passes around the pops-- and three SWISS ARMY KNIVES.

MOLLY

What are we drinking to?

MICHAEL

What do you think? To eight-and-a-half mil.

HUGHES

(definitely)

To friendship.

So it's to friendship that they lift their cans-- and to which they proceed to...

HUGHES

3-- 2-- 1--

...shotgun their Cokes. To be clear: they're bad at this, and they spill all over themselves... which makes them laugh, which makes them spill even more. Finally, they're done/give up, and John gets to his feet.

HUGHES

Alright. What're we doing now?

MOLLY

(smiles)

Don't you ever get tired?

HUGHES

My mind is going a million miles an hour.

(to Molly)

There's a place I think you'd like. A music club, I used to help 'em find their bands.

MOLLY

I'm 15, remember?

HUGHES

Right. Yeah.

(thinks)

Wanna see the original Shermer High?

EXT. GLENBROOK NORTH HIGH SCHOOL -- NIGHT [ESTABLISHING]

THE FOOTBALL STADIUM

The stands are empty tonight... but we hear the ROARS OF THE CROWD... the crowd of 1966, ever-present in John's mind...

The crowd CHEERS and CHEERS for a game long complete, for players decades from the field. As their roar fades...

...we find our trio amidst the bleachers.

HUGHES

As far as we were concerned, this was the center of the universe.

MICHAEL

You like football?

HUGHES

(shrugs)

I liked hanging out with my friends. Met the love of my life at a game, as a matter of fact.

MICHAEL

You met your wife in high school?

On John, who met the love of his life at a game, and who met his wife in high school, but who, of course, knows that these were two different events...

HUGHES

I did indeed.

MOLLY

That must've been cool. Being in high school in the 60s.

HUGHES

(laughs)

Well out here, it wasn't the 60s, not exactly.

Molly frowns, as if disappointed by that.

MOLLY

Well you had good music, didn't you?

HUGHES

Well, I did. Most of these jokers...

Hearing this, Molly suspects she's just had a revelation:

MOLLY

Wait, so is *that* who you were in high school? The kid who knew all the trendiest stuff?

HUGHES

...something like that.

MOLLY

Oh my god! You were *popular*!

HUGHES

Well I wouldn't--

MOLLY

Oh my god! I mean, it makes *sense*. I mean, you're funny, you were probably fun at parties...

Noting the different eyes through which Molly is now viewing him, John shrugs, (dishonestly) conceding the point.

MOLLY

Ha! I can't believe this! How did we not *know* this? Hey-- how did you party back then? Back in the olden days?

HUGHES

Ya know. Square dances and honey mead.

MOLLY

I'm *serious*. You gotta tell us all about hippy John.

HUGHES

Oh, who can remember?

MOLLY

Bull. Shit.

Hughes laughs. But as he looks out over the field, the school, the lot... recollections begin to come rushing back... and his smile begins to fade...

And, when he finally speaks, it's with a different voice, a distant voice, a voice that sounds like the echo of things past...

HUGHES

Well... There is one occasion I seem to recall... Happened just a few miles from here, as a matter of fact. Waverly Road.

MOLLY

Waverly Road? Like where we're shooting? The Jake Ryan location?

HUGHES

The very same.

FLASHCUT: the house at which John tried attend a party in his youth...

MATCH FLASHCUT: the same house in 1983, now overrun with a film crew, John its master...

When we **RETURN TO THE SCENE**, we're TIGHT on John's face, on his pained, probing eyes, as they seem to gaze off toward some infinity point...

HUGHES

You see, after a football game, we'd party at somebody's house. A Jake Ryan type. Richie. Absent parents. You know the drill. And-- everyone would show up. And spin-the-bottle was all the rage. Our one nod to the culture of 'free love.' We thought we were pretty 'groovy,' I guess.
(smiles)

Anyway, this one night... there was this girl there, and-- well let's just say, I wanted the bottle to point her way.

(MORE)

HUGHES (CONT'D)

But then-- then this kid showed up, this total geek, no friends, zero status-- I mean, this guy, he showed up at a house party with a bottle of French wine!

(laughs too much at that)

And he wasn't well-off-- from the wrongest side of the tracks-- so I mean, he must've dropped some money on that-- it had to hurt. But anyway, this girl I had my eye on, she left... I dunno how this happened, but somehow, she left the party with this geek! And I guess the gods must've smiled on him that night, because-- according to what I heard-- he somehow managed to kiss her. Only thing was-- it was a kiss that couldn't've lasted more than five or ten seconds, cuz then-- then he went out like a light.

The kids stare at John, unsure what to make of this...

HUGHES

I mean, they were kissing, and all of a sudden, he passes out, like the gods struck him down cuz she was a Richie and he was a Zoid and ne'er the twain shall meet. But these two had tried to bridge the gap, y'know, and, well-- you know what they say about the gods... they deplore hubris.

(then)

'Course, it turned out, this guy, he had a disorder-- something called an 'overactive sympathetic nervous system.' Which basically means, he had a tendency to pass out during-- well-- during the most important events in his life... Anyway, after that, this girl-- I guess she was kind've spooked-- I mean like, what was she doing with this guy anyway? Then, she got in her car and drove away-- she ditched the geek-- and she showed back up at the party later that night.

Bit by bit, Hughes finds his way back to reality, making an effort to keep the floodgates closed, the levees secure.

HUGHES

But anyway. I guess that's not the kind of story you're looking for probably. I'm sorry.

Molly, of course, can't decipher the story's significance-- but it's hard to miss the tsunamis of pain behind John's eyes...

and so, for the first time, she initiates physical contact: she places her thin, young, porcelain arm around John's aching back.

John feels the touch before he sees it. Then, he looks at Molly the way you'd expect a man lost at sea to look at the first sign of land.

A few bleachers behind them, Michael observes every step of this dance... and he doesn't like it one bit. In an angrier tone than we've heard from him...

MICHAEL

I thought I reminded you of you.

HUGHES

Hm?

MICHAEL

That's what you keep saying. That I remind you of you at my age.

HUGHES

You do.

MICHAEL

Well how could I remind you of you if you were a popular kid in high school?

MOLLY

You dork, you just admitted to being unpopular.

MICHAEL

Well he cast me as the Geek. I mean, it doesn't make sense.

MOLLY

(to John)

I think it's past somebody's bed time.

HUGHES

Michael? Are you okay, man?

Michael silently fumes. Then--

MICHAEL

Yeah. Fine. Whatever.

And then, letting off steam, Michael clangs down the bleachers... and proceeds to climb over a railing... and onto the FIELD--

And *that*, for some imponderable reason, after all the time they've spent in here, is what trips a motion sensor that SETS OFF THE MOTHER OF ALL ALARMS:

SPEAKERS BEGIN TO SHRIEK! Lights blink ON and OFF and ON, as if screaming in Morse code, "You're 100% fucked!"

So our three cabelleros exchange glances... looking panicked at first... then breaking into grins... and then *GOING HELL-BENT FOR LEATHER--*

The three haul ass toward the perimeter fence-- and Michael scales the fence easily-- and Molly scales it easily--

But John, with a few extra pounds and a few extra years, is having a pretty rough go of it.

From the "safe" side of the fence, Molly CHEERS ON her director-- as Michael bounces around, antsy-- as--

POLICE SIRENS begin to be heard in the distance--

Then *CLOSER--*

John struggles to get a leg atop of the fence-- he gets a foot to graze the top-- he's almost there-- but he slips--

And now, the cops are TWO BLOCKS away, and--

Now, they're ONE BLOCK away, and--

Success! John makes it over the top and leaps to terra firma! And not a moment too soon, either, as at just that moment--

A COP CAR pulls into the fucking lot--

The trio panics-- then heads the opposite direction--

Michael hustles, putting a good forty or fifty yards between him and the girl and the out-of-shape 30something...

As for John and Molly, they're having a fine time now, adrenaline fulfilling its highest, most pleasurable calling.

Then suddenly-- John looks woozy-- and stops-- and says--

HUGHES

Wait, sorry I just...

(realizes something)

On shit. Not now.

And those are the last words he says before he gets to his knees... before HE HITS THE GROUND, OUT COLD.

Molly, who's since left him behind, now scrambles back to his side. But it's only another moment until he recovers...

HUGHES

Please don't go.

As John speaks, his eyes wobble with fear, with vulnerability.

MOLLY

I won't.

For reasons we may not yet understand, those two words reach a place John's been trying to get to his whole life. His eyes shine with unexpected joy, with gratitude. Overcome with emotion, he reaches up to the girl hovering over him...

...and draws her closer...

And behind Molly and John, an OFFICER approaches, flashlight in hand, casting the pair in an icy-white silhouette...

But John doesn't see the cop or the light, the danger or the future. He sees only Molly, the girl who didn't abandon him. The Tiffany who stayed. *As he draws her closer still--*

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR OF A HOTEL SUITE [2001]

KNOCKING comes from the other side. Furious. Incessant. Then--

Elliot Gibbs appears at the door and opens it, revealing...

John Hughes, standing out in the HALLWAY, looking rather worse for the wear, the offending manuscript tucked under his arm.

HUGHES

For the past 20 years, it's been an a singular obsession of mine to shield my wife and children from the underside of this business. I commuted from Chicago to L.A.-- I did that for eight years-- I stayed out of the... the "Spago circuit"-- out of the gossip pages. And I gave up my career-- right at the height, if you'll recall-- to spare my family the poison and the corruption of this industry. Now if I'd do all *that* to protect them-- maybe it's worth it to ask yourself-- what *wouldn't* I do?

A beat.

GIBBS

You look like a man who could use a drink.

Off John--

CUT TO:

LAKE MICHIGAN

As seen from the **BALCONY** of the magnificent Author Suite. John stands on the terrace, watching the water thrash about below, while **INSIDE**, Gibbs mixes old fashioned.

HUGHES

So what is this, HarperCollins' money?

GIBBS

(from inside)

I've always depended on the kindness of multinationals.

HUGHES

Well if it's a question of cash, I can double whatever they're paying you.

GIBBS

(laughs)

You really think I'm parasite, don't you?

HUGHES

Aren't you?

GIBBS

(appears at the door)

On the contrary-- I'm a fan.

INT. AUTHOR SUITE -- FOUR SEASONS CHICAGO -- DAY [2001]

Hughes takes a seat on a sofa as Gibbs distributes drinks.

GIBBS

My son Auggie-- when "The Breakfast Club" came out, he was 15. His mother said, "He may have been made by God, but the Devil slipped Him the recipe." We'd taken him to psychiatrists, got the sheriff to scare his pants off, but... Nothing made any difference. Not for long.

(cleaning up)

Well he wrote a preface for the book, where he says he felt seen for the first time while he sat in the chilled dark, watching a Hughes film.

(MORE)

GIBBS (CONT'D)

You seem to have helped him and his eventual group of friends give a shape to their-- well, their "amorphous teen concerns."

(throwing away orange rinds)

Are you a brain, an athlete, or a basket case; a princess, or a criminal? All of 'em could've told you which they were. Which, of course, seemed rather reductive to me, but then-- "what it seemed to me" wasn't really the point, was it?

(then, sitting opposite John)

In any case: you gave my son what his mother and I could not... And that-- well, I suppose it's how I got interested in your work... And it's something for which you'll forever have my gratitude.

John lights a cigarette.

HUGHES

You have a unique way of showing it.

Gibbs smiles gently at that.

GIBBS

I went where the facts led me, that's all. And of course, you haven't denied anything I wrote.

HUGHES

Fine. I deny it.

GIBBS

On the record?

HUGHES

(scoffs)

And what record would that be?

GIBBS

(re: the manuscript)

The written record, John. The only durable record of history.

John stares at Gibbs, his expression hard.

HUGHES

Let's cut the shit. No one allegedly at these events has ever talked to you. This is all just muck you dredged out of the gossip swamp.

GIBBS

Now I am a lot of things, but I don't peddle in idle gossip.

HUGHES

So who's your source? It isn't Molly, it isn't Michael.

GIBBS

Oh, so you've spoken with them then?

John goes silent.

GIBBS

No. I suppose that would be unlikely. Sixteen years without a word to either one of 'em. But then again, surely they haven't changed. They wouldn't dare-- would they?-- your "best friends." Not again. Not without your permission.

Deciding that's as much as he can stand, John rises.

HUGHES

Alright, I was never involved with a teenager, Mr. Gibbs. Unfortunate though the fact may be for the sales of your-- "record of history." She was an actor in a couple of movies I did, and that's *it*.

Gibbs just sits there, cool as a cucumber...

GIBBS

And that's it.

HUGHES

And the next step is, you're gonna hear from my lawyer-- and I'm not gonna sue; I'm gonna make a complaint of criminal harassment. You have a good day.

And with that, John heads for the door--

GIBBS

She was an actor in a couple of movies, and that's it-- okay-- let's try that on-- so why the blowup on the set of "The Breakfast Club"?

HUGHES

(stops)

What are you talking about?

GIBBS

"What am"-- I beg your pardon. I'd assumed you'd bothered to *read my book* before charging in here and threatening me with the law.

HUGHES

I've read enough.

GIBBS

Well you haven't read Chapter Five. And that's the key to the whole thing.

But by now, John has resumed his retreat...

GIBBS

Starts on one-twenty-five. The pages practically turn themselves, John.

But now, John is half-way out the door...

GIBBS

Well I do hope you'll see fit to give it the benefit of your study...

SLAM.

GIBBS

Before we inevitably speak again.

NANCY (PRE-LAP)

Don't you think you're being a little doom-and-gloom?

INT. FARMHOUSE -- DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- DAY [2001]

Nancy heads toward the kitchen, a cordless phone to her ear.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

I mean, if the movie's not the success you wanted, you can always write another.

I./E. BUILDING LOBBY / HANCOCK PARK -- DAY

Jamie is just leaving Premiere's L.A. offices... and it's clear from his demeanor that whatever pleas he's made have fallen on deaf ears...

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

I can't just "write another," Mom. I'm not Dad, okay, I can't write 30 movies in 90 days, sell twenty and make a dozen.

INTERCUT.

Nancy appears confused by that, having only ever known John.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

Well I'm sure if you applied yourself--

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

It's not that easy for me, okay? It's not that easy for *anyone* except Dad, and, I dunno, Noel Coward.

(then)

This script-- it didn't take me a long weekend; alright?; it took me *years*; it took me all of my early 20s. And *all* of that is a *waste* if this movie doesn't hit. Which is why... which is why I need this article... which is why I need you to talk to Dad.

Nancy crumples a bit, desperate to help... but she says...

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

...Jamie...

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

No, c'mon, don't do that, don't say "Jamie" like that, not in that voice.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

If I thought it would help at all...

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

I know.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

It's just--

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

Hey. I get it. I know what's it like to-- to try and talk to him. Especially for you.

As Jamie turns into the **HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY**...

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

Well. Your father's complicated.

Jamie slumps on the first bench he sees... stares up at the cloudless SKY... and takes a deep breath of the grassy air.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

Y'know, I don't know if I ever told you this, but... you know one of my earliest memories? I guess I was four or five-- it seems like this can't be right, but-- I mean, you know how Dad was-- all quiet and kinda dark-- and I remember-- and like, I know how this sounds-- it sounds like it can't be right, but-- I swear to God, I was four years old the first time I heard him laugh...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- NIGHT [1984]

The CAST of what is, at this moment, known as *Detention*, sits in an UPSTAIRS LIVING AREA with recliners, a record collection, a few guitars-- John's lair.

When we cut into the scene, the assembled parties are LAUGHING at something-- a happy group, an expanded Hughes work family that's already finding its chemistry...

JAMIE (O.S.)

There was some kind of a meeting-- a rehearsal or something-- in the house-- I guess it must've been-- this was the house back in North Field. And I heard Dad with the cast-- cracking up-- and I mean-- he sounded like somebody else. Someone I didn't know. And I guess I must've decided to check it out...

ON TODDLER JAMIE, at the edge of the room, unseen--

END FLASHBACK.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

And sometimes I think-- and maybe I'm full of shit, but you gotta admit-- it makes a certain kind of sense... Sometimes I think, it was-- sometimes I think it was that night-- that *that* was when I decided to come to Hollywood.

Nancy is, for some reason, close to tears. Oblivious--

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

What were they working on that night? Do you remember?

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

(lying)

I'm not sure I know which night you're referring to.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)

Really? You don't remember that?

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

(evasive)

...There's a call on the other line. I should take it, it might be your father.

JAMIE (INTO THE PHONE)
 ...Okay.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)
 I love you, Bug.

With that, she hangs up. Jamie frowns, concerned for his mom.

Back at the Redwing Farmhouse, Nancy accepts her waiting call... gathers herself for a moment... then says...

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)
 Hello?

FARMHOUSE -- TOM'S OFFICE -- SAME

Tom sits at his desk, at work on a laptop, when he hears...

NANCY (O.S.)
 Tom! It's John for you!

He grabs the phone.

TOM (INTO THE PHONE)
 John?

HUGHES (ON THE PHONE)
 Hey. I need to reach out to Michael and Molly. I'll need you to get their contacts.

TOM (ON THE PHONE)
 (not sure he heard that right)
 I'm... sorry? "Michael and Molly...?"

HUGHES (ON THE PHONE)
 Molly Ringwald, yeah. And Anthony Michael Hall.

On Tom, who looks as if he's experiencing some kind of epochal shift...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY -- DAY

Jamie sits on a gravestone, a flask now in his hand. He stares at the HOLLYWOOD SIGN, romanticizing it. From his 20something eyes to...

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- NIGHT [1984]

...FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE's eyes, as they watch-- and indeed, as they romanticize-- another, more personal image of Hollywood:

This is the scene from the flashback: John sits in a circle alongside Michael, Molly, EMILIO ESTEVEZ, ALLY SHEEDY, and JUDD NELSON. The Brat Pack.

The group is having a grand old time, laughing, cracking jokes, ribbing each other, one-upping each other. At present, Emilio is holding a script entitled **Detention**, to which he makes reference as he asks John...

EMILIO

So what you're saying... You want us to rewrite your script?

HUGHES

Well-- don't alert the Writers Guild of America.

The group chuckles. (They're punchy.)

HUGHES

No, the fact that we're working overtime, that was Molly's bright idea. I'll let the accused speak in her own defense.

And now, all eyes now shift toward...

Molly, who is noticeably different now-- more confident, more assured of her own power-- than she was when last we saw her.

MOLLY

I don't know, I just thought the script had changed from the draft I read.

(flipping through)

I mean, all this crap with like the "hot swimming teacher" and the "girls' exercise class"--

HUGHES

For the record, that "crap" came straight from the studio's bowels. They didn't like the idea of kids just dishing about their problems for two hours. They wanted-- "more to look at"-- which is teen-movie code for "naked girls."

JUDD NELSON

So you added one.

HUGHES

Certainly not. I'm a professional.

(then)

I added four.

The Brat Packers crack up at that.

It's here that we enter **FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE'S P.O.V.**: we're approaching the group, though nobody sees "us," not yet...

MOLLY

So yeah, when I found out there were all these old drafts of the script...

HUGHES

She commanded that they should appear.

MOLLY

I asked nicely if I could see them.

John smiles, as if agreeing to disagree.

HUGHES

Well in any case-- what choice did I really have? After all, who am I to say "no" to a major movie star?

Molly, from her perch on the back of the sofa, smiling and rolling her eyes, puts her hand on John's shoulder-- and he takes her hand in his. This is possibly a fatherly gesture, conceivably platonic-- though that's perhaps not the description that best fits the totality of the evidence.

Suddenly, "we"-- that is, Four-Year-Old Jamie-- express special interest in this interaction-- watching our father be so unlike our father. As we MOVE IN for a closer look...

MOLLY

So what I want, you've all got eight drafts of "Detention," going back to when?

HUGHES

To 1982.

MOLLY

And we've got enough scissors so everyone can cut up the various drafts so we can--

And just then, "we" run into a coffee pot-- which begins to spill. Where we were invisible before, Dad sure as hell sees us now. Leaping up--

HUGHES

God damn it. Fuck! NANCY!
(to "us")

What the *hell* is the matter with you?

He *yanks* us by the arm and takes us to the **TOP OF THE STAIRS.**

END P.O.V.

Jamie begins to cry. Appearing below, **ON THE GROUND FLOOR--**

NANCY

John? Did you need something?

HUGHES

Well Jamie's traipsing around up here and he spilled a pot of coffee and now it looks like Three Mile Island.

NANCY

Is he okay?

HUGHES

Wh--?

John hadn't considered that. He looks at Jamie, who says...

FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

I'm sorry...

...at which point John looks back at his wife, as if waiting for her to explain herself.

NANCY

I'll send Superfund right up, just let me dry my hands.

Now, John leaves his son to attempt the stairs alone, as he (Hughes) **TURNS THE CORNER** and rejoins his cast. Suddenly "Fun John" again--

HUGHES

So where were we? Right: find what you like in any draft, cut it out...

MOLLY

And once we work up a rhythm, we can start to put it together, we can add whatever we need, find the movie we want to make.

Off the cast, which can hardly believe the level of trust with which it's been endowed--

HUGHES

With me, you're never just cast or crew. You're part of a club.

Off Judd, who makes note of that distinction--

KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Nancy has her (tearful) son up on the counter. She's cleaning him off, inspecting him for damage.

NANCY

There you go, Bug. You're alright. Y'see?

FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

I'm sorry.

Nancy smiles at her kiddo.

NANCY

Hey. Just give me a minute. After I've cleaned up, I've got the stuff to make hot fudge sundaes. Won't that be good?

Off Jamie, smiling--

THE UPSTAIRS LIVING AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Nancy wipes down the COFFEE TABLE... blots a stain out of the CARPET... though she might as well be invisible to...

...the Detention Crew, which is now hard at work-- they're TALKING amongst themselves, comparing various drafts of the script, making notes. Amidst the DIN of creative activity--

Molly puts her hand on John's shoulder, as before, but--

In the presence of his wife, John crosses the room, putting a little distance between himself and his "movie star."

But Molly dislikes the idea of John walking away from her. She looks up at Nancy (who's seen nothing) and scowls, feeling a twinge of competition... which continues to balloon until it manifests in this request:

MOLLY

Hey Nancy? When you're done, I think everyone would love a little more food.

Nancy looks up. When she does, Molly looks back at her script.

MOLLY

And some sodas?

NANCY

...Oh... Sure. Okay.

Judd, seeing this interaction, tries to ease the tension...

JUDD NELSON

Thanks, Mrs. H.

MOLLY

Oh, and the ashtray's full.

Again without looking up, Molly slides the ashtray about two inches toward Nancy, spilling a little ash in the process.

A beat. Nancy stops what she's doing. She looks at Molly-- then glances at John, who shifts uncomfortably, laboring diligently to avoid eye contact. Then, not knowing what else to do, Nancy picks up the ashtray. Flashing a big, fake grin--

MOLLY

Thanks so much!

As Nancy heads out of the room, she hears from behind--

MOLLY

Hey Johnny, I love what you did here in Draft Three.

Molly giggles. It's a giggle we haven't heard before. It's a voice we haven't heard before. Nancy frowns... "Johnny?"

And Nancy isn't the only one upset by this development: Michael seems soured too; Judd, disturbed. John, aware of the growing tension, applies teen first aid--

HUGHES

You wanna put on some music?

EXT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- NIGHT

From inside, the vitalizing sounds of muffled ROCK...

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- JOHN'S CLOSET -- SAME

(The MUSIC continues as--)

Nancy is putting away laundry, when her eyes fall on the top shelf, on an object she's seen a hundred times but never thought much about:

John's Crown Dogs crown.

She takes it down... She clearly knows its provenance... And thinking of what she saw tonight, she puts two and two together.

UPSTAIRS LIVING AREA -- LATER

The Detention Crew cuts and pastes, everyone talking over each other, everyone auditioning choice lines. We CUT BETWEEN them:

JUDD NELSON

(from Draft Four, as Bender)

Over the panties, no bra, blouse unbuttoned, Calvins in a ball on the front seat, past eleven on a school night?

EMILIO

(from Draft One, as Andy)

Everyone's home lives are unsatisfying.
If it wasn't, people would live with
their parents forever.

ALLY SHEEDY

(from Draft Two, as Allison)

You know what I did to get in here?
Nothing. I just didn't have anything
better to do.

JUDD NELSON

(from Draft Six, as Bender)

Sweets? You couldn't ignore me if you
tried.

JOHN'S OFFICE -- SAME

(Muffled ROCK MUSIC continues, as--)

Nancy looks around. She's not supposed to be in here. But she takes a breath, opens John's scrapbook, and begins to flip through its cellophane-shielded pages...

Amongst its contents: 5x4 photos of her husband with Molly... in L.A... in Chicago... Nancy analyzes the body language... and the color begins to drain, quickly and steadily, from her face.

JAMIE'S BEDROOM -- LATER

(Music continues--)

Jamie is lying awake in bed when his mother appears at his door...

NANCY

Hey, kiddo.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

I'm sorry.

NANCY

No, you don't have be sorry anymore.
That's not why I'm here.

He looks at her with his saucer-like eyes.

NANCY

I guess I was just wondering... if it
would be okay with you... if I slept in
your bed tonight.

He cocks his head, curious.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD JAMIE

...Why?

NANCY

I dunno. I guess I was just a little scared. I thought maybe you'd keep me safe. You think you can do that for Mom?

Jamie stares at his whey-faced mother... and then, he scooches over. Sitting beside him...

NANCY

Hey, Bug. You know how much I love you?

He nods-- *Yup*. And that at least gives Nancy reason to smile.

But as soon as he looks away, Nancy's gaze drifts involuntarily toward the door... and, gradually, her features rearrange themselves into a mask of confusion and fear.

EXT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- DAWN

...dyed blue by the early morning light...

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- LIVING AREA -- DAWN

The Detention Crew sits around the lumpy, cut-and-paste monstrosity that, at 210 pages, now constitutes the "script."

They're passing it around, reading through it. They're coming to the end. The damn thing looks like magnet poetry-- words, phrases smushed together to form sentences like...

MICHAEL

(reading, as Brian)

"We think you're crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. What do you care? You see us as you want to see us, in the simplest terms, the most convenient definitions. You see us as a brain, and an athlete, and a basketcase. A princess and a criminal. Correct? That's the way we saw each other at seven o'clock this morning. We were brainwashed. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain..."

EMILIO

"And an athlete."

ALLY SHEEDY

"And a basketcase."

MOLLY

"A princess."

JUDD NELSON

"And a criminal."

MICHAEL

"Does that answer your question?
Sincerely yours, The Detention Crew."

For a moment, everyone sits in silence, feeling the weight of the story they've just wrought.

Then, recalling something John said last night-- and clocking the cereal boxes littering their workspace-- Judd grabs his script, cuts up a few words, and pastes them atop the last words of the Franken-script. Reading the change--

MICHAEL

"Does that answer your question?
Sincerely yours, The Breakfast Club."

A beat. Then, the silence is broken by happy LAUGHTER, exhausted CHEERS, SIGHS of relief, and WHOOPS of exhilaration. The newly-minted Breakfast Club grins earnestly, feeling like damn champs, settling into a furious group hug. John addresses them from amid the huddle...

HUGHES

So maybe it's just me, but I feel like-- like we did something tonight that, if we don't fuck it up, has the potential to really last. And if we do fuck it up-- and I mean this-- I really do-- there is no one else on earth who I'd rather fuck it up with.

The breakfast club laughs happily at that.

HUGHES

No-- that's not a joke, that's 100% serious, cuz I know-- after the last, however long it's been, 13 hours, I know this for *sure*-- That there's nobody else on earth who'd fuck it up with half as much passion... or half as much heart.

That inspires a group *aww*. But while everyone else is feeling the feels...

Anthony Michael Hall is standing next to Molly-- and he's moving his hugging hand down to where it's on Molly's outer thigh.

She doesn't object to it-- on the contrary, she seems used to it, leans into it. Something is plainly afoot with these two.

HUGHES

So that's what I wanted to say. I think we've got a movie. We've got The Breakfast Club. And I need you all to believe I'm sincere when I say this...

(a deep, emotional breath)

The last one to tag the wall has to tell Michelle Manning we changed every damn word.

For a few seconds, no one moves... and then *all at the same time*--

The Breakfast Club MAKES A MAD DASH toward the opposite wall-- everyone pushing and shoving, holding each other back, nobody fighting fair-- laughter and youth and camaraderie and vitality unleashed--

Amidst the happy tumult, we cut to--

MICHELLE MANNING, now 41

She occupies a spacious office within **BUILDING 217** (today, the Redstone Building), as she's President of Production at...

TITLE: **Paramount Pictures**
 2001

Her assistant DALE (25) pokes his head in...

DALE

Hey.

...and Michelle looks up from what she's doing.

MICHELLE

Hey, did those *Zoolander* numbers come in?

DALE

It shouldn't be long. But-- I actually have-- John Hughes on the line?

MICHELLE

(furrows her brow)

John Hughes? That can't be right.

DALE

Should I tell him you'll return?

Michelle thinks.

MICHELLE

You're sure he said 'John Hughes'?

Dale shrugs-- *That's what he said.* So Michelle grabs the receiver, takes a breath, and says, skeptically...

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Hello?

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S STUDY -- DAY [2001]

John sits, a phone to his ear, Gibbs' book in his lap.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

Hi, Michelle.

INTERCUT.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

(like she's seen a ghost)

John? It's... it's good to hear your voice.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

I very much doubt that, but it's polite of you to say. Listen, I'm sure you're busy, so I'll cut to the chase: the reason I'm calling-- what do you know about Elliot Gibbs?

Michelle knits her brow. *Elliot Gibbs?*

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Elliot Gibbs. Was he the brother too untalented for the BeeGees?

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

You're actually not too far off. He's an entertainment journalist.

Michelle laughs.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

So I'll venture a guess you're not Mr. Gibbs' source.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

For what?

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

For...

(picks it up)

...the unauthorized biography of John Hughes.

That knocks the wind out of Michelle. Empathetically...

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Oh, John. Are you okay?

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

Now why would you ask me that? I've lived a life that's above reproach; why *shouldn't* I want it shared with the entire human race?

Michelle smiles sadly for her old-- friend? colleague? sparring partner?

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

John, I would never-- I can't imagine anyone ever talking to some bottom-feeding reporter--

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

Well somebody did. And I need to figure out who. It's hard to explain, but-- it's the only way to protect my family.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Well. If I hear anything...

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

I appreciate that.

The conversational thread seems to have run its course... but neither of them is ready to end the call yet. So, flipping through the m.s...

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

Hey-- can I ask you something? Was I really that hard to work with?

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Is that what he said in the book?

John nods.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)

Well. Then I'm sorry to tell you this, but... you're pretty screwed, cuz he has a damn reliable source.

John laughs at that. Hearing him laugh makes Michelle laugh too.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)

Hey, you know, I'm-- there's a lot that I'm not proud of. I know I could be a real-- piece of work, in those days.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
Oh come on. We had some good times.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
Did we?

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
Sure. I read all about 'em in the press releases I wrote.

John grins at that, remembering.

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
"The Breakfast Club, a pure expression of love by a loving artistic family."

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
What-- is that not how you remember us?

Now it's Michelle's turn to guffaw. When she settles...

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
Honestly, though, when I look back... when I look back, despite the bumps, I don't regret anything we did.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
Really?

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
Really.

A beat.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
Can I ask you something?

MICHELLE (INTO THE PHONE)
...Okay.

HUGHES (INTO THE PHONE)
What is that like?

Off John, as whatever holds him together begins to slacken, to yield to a tsunami of contrition and self-reproach...

HUGHES (PRE-LAP)
You're fired!

INT. MAIN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL -- LIBRARY SET -- DAY [1984]

Hughes, 34 again, stands amidst the (empty) *Breakfast Club* set, screaming bloody murder at a terrified Judd Nelson. Michelle, meanwhile, tries to position herself between the two men, tries to mediate.

MICHELLE

You can't *fire* him, John. You're seven days into production-- You would have to start over--

JUDD NELSON

I-- I wasn't being myself.

MICHELLE

(to Judd)

Will you shut up?

(to John)

Look, he wasn't being himself, it wasn't *Judd* saying that crap; it was *Bender*. Do you understand? He's a *method* actor--

HUGHES

Fine-- and I'm a method director! You want to know what my method is? My method is, if a 16-year-old girl is bawling her eyes out cuz of something somebody said to her, *they get fired!* 'cuz my set is fun! And that's what matters to me! And if "Bender" here doesn't like it, he can do the next movie directed by Konstantin Stanislavsky!

What John is referring to: in an enclosed office within the library set-- a.k.a. the LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE-- Molly Ringwald is struggling to pull herself together.

The pile of tissues in front of her attests to her misery's durability... and she's not done crying yet. Not even close.

JUDD NELSON

I'm sorry.

HUGHES

You're gonna answer the damn question: what did you say to her?

MICHELLE

I don't think it bears repeating.

HUGHES

In case this has never been clear, I don't especially care what you think.

Michelle is stung by that, but John doesn't notice. To Judd--

HUGHES

What did you say?

JUDD NELSON

I... well-- I could've implied... that is, *Bender* could've implied-- or, the implication was--

HUGHES

Christ, you sound less like John Bender than Dick Nixon. Spit it out. What did you say to her?

JUDD NELSON

Just-- that Molly was being... unfaithful.

A terrible silence takes hold.

HUGHES

"Unfaithful."

Michelle, from behind John, tries to get Judd's attention--

JUDD NELSON

I said, cuz of her thing with--

MICHELLE

Judd--

MICHELLE

Don't.

JUDD NELSON

With Michael--

The blood drains from John's face.

HUGHES

"Her thing with Michael." What are you talking about?

But Michelle is frantically shakes her head at Judd, so--

JUDD NELSON

I dunno. Probably nothing. I'm full of shit.

HUGHES

There's a "thing"?

JUDD NELSON

Probably not. What do I know?

MICHELLE

Just let it go.

John whips around, staring daggers at Michelle: *You. Knew.*

But then... he seems to gather himself... seems to cover his boiling pot of rage... and, taking a breath, he starts to go. But just as Judd and Michelle begin to relax-- John stops dead in his tracks. There's something that seems to be sticking in his craw:

HUGHES

Wait-- So if there's some kind of *thing* with Michael-- You said Molly was being "unfaithful"; that's what you said.

MICHELLE

Let it go.

HUGHES

So then, if Molly's going with Michael, you mind telling me-- "Bender"-- just who it is you said she was being unfaithful to?

Off Judd--

INT. MAIN NORTH -- HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

John storms toward the exits, his face a reference image of rage... but along the way, he spots Anthony Michael Hall, sitting, awaiting whatever eruptions are still to come.

As he walks, John locks eyes with Michael, with "the best friend [he's] ever had." It's a staring contest without winners, only losers.

HUGHES (O.S.)

Somebody call my wife. Tell her I won't be home tonight.

[NOTE: The cuts begin to get faster now and the music, constant-- in other words, it begins to assume the character of a montage.]

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- DUSK

Nancy is in the kitchen, working on dinner, a phone to her ear. What she hears on the other end arouses her suspicions--

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

All night? And where did he say he'd be?
(grabs a pen and paper)
"Post-production facility." Alright.
Wait, I'm sorry-- can I get a number for that? Just in case?

EXT. BEHIND MAIN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL -- DUSK

Michael leans against a wall, holding Molly, who puts her head against his chest. It's magic hour, and they're young, and their love seems pressing and tragic and real.

MICHAEL

It's like... there *has* to be a way. You know?

But Molly just shakes her head at that... She *doesn't* know...

MICHAEL

I mean, what's he expect? He's 35. He has a wife and kids. And a mortgage. And the wardrobe of the Thompson Twins.

She laughs at that... and kisses him...

EXT. RED-BRICK BUILDING -- NIGHT

TITLE: **"Breakfast Club" Post-Production Facility**

JUDD NELSON (PRE-LAP)

(as Bender)

What'd you do to get in here? Forget to wash your jock?

MOLLY (PRE-LAP)

(as Claire)

Ignore him. Maybe he'll go away.

INT. POST FACILITY -- SCREENING ROOM -- NIGHT

John sits, all alone, watching dailies. UP ON THE SCREEN, Bender harasses Andy, until, off-screen, somebody yells, *CUT*.

To the PROJECTIONIST--

HUGHES

Just keep it rolling. Let's see everything-- the footage between the takes-- whatever we haven't screened.

The Projectionist nods. At the back of the room, a RUNNER *knocks*--

RUNNER

Mr. Hughes? Your wife is on the phone?

HUGHES

My wife?

For a moment, he wonders what that could be about. Then--

HUGHES

Never mind. Just tell her I'm not here.

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Nancy once again has a phone pressed to her ear. What she hears on the other end seems to make her sick to her stomach.

NANCY (INTO THE PHONE)

I see. Thank you.

She hangs up. As she does, her eyes fall on a framed wedding photo... and her defenses begin to give way... and she starts to sob...

INT. WESTIN O'HARE -- JUDD'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Emilio, Ally, Molly, Michael, and Judd confer about the latter's firing, their voices low, their expressions bleak.

EMILIO

The important thing is, we have to maintain a united front.

ALLY SHEEDY

I agree.

EMILIO

Without Judd, there isn't a movie. I mean-- This is it. This is the breakfast club.

MICHAEL

But what do we say to John?

JUDD NELSON

I could apologize again.

MOLLY

(sighs)

No. The apology's gotta come from me.

INT. POST FACILITY -- SCREENING ROOM -- NIGHT

John is now watching footage from between takes (he's kept the camera rolling on set-- when filming is done, he'll have shot [and printed] over a million feet of film).

He finally finds what's he after:

ON SCREEN: In the b.g., Michael slips his hand around Molly's waist and gives her a squeeze. She giggles.

HUGHES

There! Can you play that again?

The Projectionist rolls the film back. Plays it again.

As John watches the replay, tears begin to form in his eyes.

HUGHES

Can we mark that?

PROJECTIONIST

Sure. You want me to keep going?

On John-- desperate/terrified to see more.

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- JAMIE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Nancy, curled up, once again, with her youngest son, hears the DOORBELL... and, when it rings a SECOND TIME, she begins to stir...

ENTRYWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Now be-robed, Nancy answers the door. On her doorstep stands an obscenely perky FLOWER DELIVERY GUY:

FLOWER DELIVERY GUY

Top of the mornin'! I got a delivery for John?

NANCY

That's my husband.

FLOWER DELIVERY GUY

(hands her a clipboard)

Just need a John Hancock from you-- or a Jane Hancock, as the case may be.

He chuckles at his little joke. Nancy decidedly does not. She just signs on the X, takes the BOUQUET, and shuts the door. She fishes around, finds the card. This is what it says:

From: Molly

For John, The only guy I truly adore!

Nancy crumples the note, distraught. She calls upstairs--

NANCY

Jack! Jamie!

EXT. MAIN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL -- NIGHT

John pulls into the lot, still wearing yesterday's clothes.

INT. MAIN NORTH -- JOHN'S OFFICE -- PRE-DAWN

John sits at his typewriter, clacking away. On his desk is a growing stack of fresh (screenplay) pages.

INT. HUGHES' NORTH FIELD HOUSE -- JAMIE'S ROOM -- PRE-DAWN

Nancy is dressing Jamie (very much against his will) in his Sunday best.

JAMIE

Why do I need a sweater?

NANCY

Well we haven't seen much of Daddy lately, so I thought we'd surprise him at work. Won't that be fun?

INT. MAIN NORTH -- HALLWAY -- DAWN

This is the "dressing room hallway." John KNOCKS on a door marked MICHAEL.

HUGHES

Hey. You and Molly, Librarian's Office, five minutes.

INT. NANCY'S CAR -- DAWN

Nancy, now in her sexiest dress, her every hair in place, drives her two sons, looking Christmas-Card-perfect, toward the Main North lot.

EXT. MAIN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL -- DAWN

Nancy climbs out of the car. She takes a deep breath--determined to show her husband what he has that he stands to lose.

[And with that, the montage comes to end.]

INT. MAIN NORTH -- LIBRARY SET -- LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE -- DAY

John Hughes sits, absently drumming his pen once again, gazing into some endless void, when, suddenly...

There's a KNOCK at the door. John motions for Michael and Molly to *entrez si'l vous plait*. With sudden brightness--

HUGHES

Well, if it isn't my favorite movie stars. Come in! Have a seat!

But they shuffle in like wayward students who've been sent to the principal's office. Observing their demeanors--

HUGHES

You guys alright?

MOLLY

...Oh. Yeah. Fine.

MICHAEL

...Sure. Yeah.

HUGHES

Well I hope so. It's a big day.

(to Michael)

We're shooting your dance break after lunch.

Hughes grins. Michael forces a smile. A beat. "Perplexed"--

HUGHES

Well-- maybe this'll perk you up. I was saving them for the wrap party, but...

He sends a pair of Swiss Army Knives sliding across the desk. Molly and Michael take them... and notice, with a pang, that they've been lovingly engraved with their names.

HUGHES

For old times' sake.

MOLLY

Oh. Wow.

MICHAEL

Hey, thanks, John.

Now, John passes around three Cokes.

HUGHES

What should we drink to?

But the teenagers remain silent... With faint menace--

HUGHES

How about... to friendship?

With that, John punches a hole in his can and proceeds to shotgun the Coke, just as the trio once did on the beach.

But-- the sight of Hughes's expressionless face coldly chugging to "friendship" somehow disturbs Michael and Molly, even terrifies them.

HUGHES

You didn't drink.

MICHAEL

I'm... I'm not really that thirsty.

HUGHES

We're drinking to friendship, Michael.

It's clear that that's not a request. So Michael and Molly obediently, joylessly pierce their cans and begin to chug, feeling something akin to physical distress. Then--

HUGHES

Well. I guess that's it. I just wanted to check in. See if my good friends had anything on their minds...

(when his 'friends' remain silent)

But if there's nothing...

(shrugs)

Well okay then. I guess I'll see you out there.

He leans back in his chair-- *The conversation is over.*

Uncertain as to whether this is some sort of a test, the teens stay glued to their seats for a moment. But then, not sure what else to do, Molly stands. The second she's on her feet--

HUGHES

Oh-- and before you go-- I just thought I should pass this along: Judd wants you to know, he's sorry for what he said to you.

Molly nods grimly. To Michael--

HUGHES

Did you hear what Judd said? To Molly?

MICHAEL

Um, yeah, I mean, I think everyone at this point--

HUGHES

He *said*-- It was a really good Bender improv-- What he said-- He said to Molly-- He said, that she was being "unfaithful."
(then)

Or at least, that's the word he used when he talked to me; I have to imagine it was somewhat more-- colorful in the original French. Am I right?

John grins like that's a hilarious joke.

HUGHES

He said, if you can believe this, Michael-- my understanding is-- he implied-- he implied that she had *betrayed me*. He implied that she had betrayed me for no reason at all except of course the fact that she's having a secret relationship. With you.

An awful stillness fills the space.

HUGHES

He'd apparently gotten it into his head that the three of us-- that we were friends-- close friends-- and we wouldn't keep secrets like that from each other. I explained, of course, that we used to be close friends, but that now, we're just employees and a boss.

Molly's eyes are beginning to fill with tears.

MOLLY

John, it wasn't--

MICHAEL

We didn't mean to--

But John holds up his hands to stop them. He has more:

HUGHES

So what I should mention-- boss to employees-- I watched the rushes last night, all the footage from the week, and I found a number of places where your-- obvious-- *affection* for each other had... well, let's just say it had *colored* the performances. Now, of course, if your characters were romantically involved-- especially if they were *sexually* involved--
(he gauges their reactions to that)

Well of course, that would upset the entire balance of the movie; the characters; the group; the story; *everything*. So, what I'm saying-- if you want to continue your relationship-- well of course that's up to you, and it's perfectly fine-- it's just, in that event, I will need to be informed so I can replace you with other actors.

MOLLY

What?

MICHAEL

Wait, *what?*

HUGHES

The issue is, you haven't mastered your acting craft enough to conceal your obvious attraction to each other on the screen. It's very clear in the rushes. In six places. So if you don't break this off, I'll have to let you go. Strictly due to job performance issues.

Molly nods vaguely... but Michael is starting to get angry.

HUGHES

So just let me know: do I need to do any recasting?

MOLLY

No.

Michael looks at Molly, surprised and upset at how quickly she answered that. But then, he realizes that John is looking his way... and, reluctantly, he, too, shakes his head, *no*.

HUGHES

Good.

(then)

Oh-- and one other thing-- as long as I've got you both here...

He grabs the pages he wrote this morning and slides them across to Michael.

HUGHES

I put this together last night; it's the first act of your new movie.

Michael checks it out: it's a script entitled **Weird Science**.

HUGHES

The female lead's a model you're *s'posed* to have the the hots for, so any extracurricular activities won't interfere. Molly: for you:

He slides a smaller stack to her-- a treatment.

MOLLY

This is-- it's the movie I asked you to write. Based on that Psychedelic Furs' song.

For a moment, John softens-- but he recovers--

HUGHES

It was a title I liked, that's all.

Now, we see the title: **Pretty in Pink.**

MOLLY

...Will Michael be in--?

HUGHES

No.

(then)

Any other questions?

(but as there are no other
questions...)

Fine... then I'll see you out there.

Having nothing more to say, the teens rise from their chairs. They head for the door. Michael manages to get all the way out-- but Molly turns at the last minute...

MOLLY

John? I just... I want you to know... It wasn't like... We weren't *trying* to go behind your back, or...

(wipes a tear from her cheek)

And I didn't mean to betray you. I didn't think I was betraying you. I just...

She breaks down. But John just sits there, expressionless, motionless.

MOLLY

I mean, it's *hard*, you know? I'm so much younger than you. I'm at a different place in my life!

But John remains even.

MOLLY

Why is that so hard to understand? Can't you see it from my perspective?

And now, the levees burst, and she collapses into tears.

ON THE LIBRARY SET

Nancy is just arriving, 4-Year-Old Jamie and John III in tow.

The first thing that catches her eye is Molly-- inside the Librarian's Office-- pleading with her husband--

IN THE LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE

MOLLY

What do you want from me, John? What is it you want? You want to screw me?

HUGHES
I think we're done.

MOLLY
(grabbing her chest)
You want my breasts in your mouth? Is
that what you want?

HUGHES
You are embarrassing yourself.

MOLLY
(kneeling)
You want me down on my knees?

HUGHES
THAT'S ENOUGH.

MOLLY
YES! IT'S ENOUGH! SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST
TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT?!

ON THE LIBRARY SET

What Nancy sees, in the Librarian's Office: Molly, clutching her breasts.... descending to her knees...

Nancy is shocked-- whatever is happening, it's worse than anything she'd imagined. In a single, swift move, she takes hold of her children's slender wrists and pulls them, with awful force, out into...

MAIN NORTH HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Nancy is practically sprinting down the hall, her children struggling to keep up with her... when she hears from behind--

JUDD NELSON
Mrs. Hughes?

Now, Nancy turns to see Judd-- who's apparently rushed after her, and whose dark eyes regard her with a deep, visceral sympathy.

JUDD NELSON
I just... I think, whatever happened, I think it's over now. I just... I thought you should know.

She wipes the pooling tears from her eyes.

NANCY

Can I ask you something?

(then)

Can any movie be worth this? What this has cost?

Judd considers that a moment. Then, he looks at Nancy and says, very simply...

JUDD NELSON

Yes.

SERIES OF SHOTS: THE BREAKFAST CLUB'S RECEPTION [1985]

INTERWEAVE punchy, effusive HEADLINES-- "'The Little Chill' Delivers", "Breakfast of Champions"-- with audio/video of morning show ANCHORS, DJs, and CRITICS...

CHRISTINE FERRAR

(on *AM Los Angeles*)

It's the movie that's everyone's buzzing about, in carpools, at the water cooler--

JOEL SIEGEL

(on *Good Morning America*)

One of the most big-hearted movies I've ever seen. Yearning, aching...

STEVE DALE

(on *WLS-AM Chicago*)

If you've got a teen in your home or just a teen in your heart, there's really just one question: how many times have you seen "The Breakfast Club"?

Begin "MAN ON THE STREET" FOOTAGE-- shots of TEENS, TWEENS, and ALLIES as they emerge from theaters around the country...

REPORTER

What did you think of the movie?

QUICK CUTS:

TEEN GIRL #1

I loved it.

TEEN BOY #1

It was awesome.

TEEN GIRL #2

It was-- my life. You know? Like, somebody saw my life and made a movie.

Then: TEEN after TEEN... just *crying*... just *in tears*...

TEEN BOY #2

I just hope... that things at school...
that they'll be different after this. You
know? I mean, I don't *think* so, but...

(shrugs)

I *hope* so.

Now, enter the "RINGLETS"-- Molly fans, many of whom wear her
signature lipstick style, her thrift-store-chic aesthetic...

RINGLET #1

I just love Molly.

RINGLET #2

I'm here for Molly.

RINGLET #3

Molly is like, my idol?

Then, a GROUP OF GIRLS in Molly wigs exclaim in cheery unison--

GROUP OF GIRLS

Ringlets Forever!

INT. TV INTERVIEW SHOW SET -- DAY [1985]

A smarmy TV host-- let's call him ROD SMOOTHMAN-- is
ecstatic to have John as a guest on his show this afternoon!

ROD

Some have called him the Pied Piper of
Cinema, and indeed, wherever he goes,
teen viewers seem to follow. I'm sitting
down with writer-director John Hughes,
whose movies include "Sixteen Candles,"
"The Breakfast Club," and the upcoming
"Weird Science." Thanks for being here,
John, and congrats on all your success.
How does it feel?

HUGHES

(somewhat less eager to be here
than Rod Smoothman)

Um. Well. Of course, I'm glad when people
connect with my movies, but-- I don't
think about-- "success" much-- whatever
that means.

ROD

Yeah, I hear you're a real midwestern guy.

HUGHES

Well, I live in L.A. at the moment, but--
I don't think you'd ever *take* me for L.A.

ROD
How do you mean?

HUGHES
Oh, you know. I don't know the right car to drive. The right "hotspots." I don't care about that; what I care about is my family.

REVEAL THAT WE'RE
SEEING THIS ON A TV IN:

INT. HUGHES LOS ANGELES HOME -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY [1985]

Nancy sits with her sons, watching her husband tell an ecstatic Rob Smoothman just how dearly he loves his family.

HUGHES (ON T.V.)
I'm pretty much just a normal suburban guy who likes to write. That's it.

ROD (ON T.V.)
Well we hope you keep it up.
(then)
Now a lot of our viewers may know you above all as the guy who discovered Molly Ringwald.

Nancy tightens at that. John III watches his mom, concerned-- he's nine at this point and perhaps not totally oblivious.

Nancy clocks her son's concern, and she smiles for his benefit. She tousles his hair reassuringly.

ROD (ON T.V.)
What is it like, working with Molly?

HUGHES (ON T.V.)
...Well, she's a very capable actress.

ROD (ON T.V.)
(an awkward beat; then)
Well are there any Molly stories you might like to share with our viewers?

On T.V., John shakes his head.

Seeing how dark he gets, how reticent he becomes at the mention of Molly-- that makes Nancy relax a bit. There's even the hint of a smile on her face.

ROD (ON T.V.)
Well... I hear you're working together again?

HUGHES (ON T.V.)

Um, well, yes, I'm writing and producing a movie called "Pretty in Pink." And Molly Ringwald will appear in that.

(feels compelled to add)

Alongside Andrew McCarthy and Jon Cryer and a few others.

And that is all John is going to say about that.

EXT. PARAMOUNT STUDIOS -- GATE 2 -- DAY

Hughes drives onto the lot... in a black '85 Porsche. He's dressing differently now-- what Molly will describe to Time's Richard Corliss as "very GQ."

(Evidently, his protests that he "[doesn't] care about Hollywood" are as difficult to unravel as his insistence that he cares only "about [his] family.")

TIME CUTS: John pulls into his assigned space... He makes his way to SOUNDSTAGE 16 (whose door is labeled "**Pretty in Pink**")... He heads onto the set and takes stock of the production, as...

PRE-LAP: the sound of gentle KNOCKING...

HUGHES (PRE-LAP)

Come in.

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S STUDY -- DAY [2001]

John lies on his sofa, just now closing Gibbs's manuscript-- which he places face-down in the presence of...

...Nancy, who's just poked her head in the door.

HUGHES

Hey.

NANCY

Hey.

HUGHES

You've been quiet.

NANCY

(re: the broken awards)
You've been loud.

HUGHES

(sighs)

...Yeah. I'm sorry about that. It's nothing, just-- work frustrations.

Nancy nods-- but she knows not to pry.

NANCY

Well if this is a bad time--

HUGHES

No, I welcome the interruption, as a matter of fact.

(sitting up)

What's on your mind?

Nancy sits, perched on the edge of a chair.

NANCY

Well... while you were out, Jamie called--

HUGHES

He--?

(shakes his head)

Of course he called you. I don't know why I'm surprised.

NANCY

It was-- something about an article--

HUGHES

Yeah, it's something-- It doesn't matter. He shouldn't be bothering you with that.

NANCY

...Well-- I think he's just worried that his movie won't do well.

HUGHES

Then he should write another movie.

Re: a BOOKCASE overflowing with scripts, bound and un--

HUGHES

I've written five dozen scripts since I retired, he can take one of those, put his name on it for all I care.

NANCY

I don't think that's what he wants.

HUGHES

He's gotten everything he's ever--

(convincing himself?)

The kid is spoiled, Nancy. Something like this, it could be good for him.

Just then, Tom enters; not seeing Nancy--

TOM

John? I've got the contacts for Michael and Molly--

John nods to the corner as if to say, *We're not alone*-- And, seeing that Nancy is present, Tom very abruptly shuts up.

As for Nancy, she turns white as a sheet. She looks at John, feeling something akin to betrayal... *Michael and Molly?*

HUGHES

Sixteen Candles is having its 20th anniversary, the studio wants to round up the old cast. That's all.

NANCY

(not quite buying it)
I thought you hated that sort of thing.

To that, John can only lamely shrug. But, sensing that that's all she's going to get, Nancy nods. Standing--

NANCY

Alright. Well. I guess I've said my piece. I'll leave you gentlemen to it.

With that, she heads out of the study. As John watches her go, he feels a pang... But then, shaking it off, he motions for Tom to shut the door, and he leans in, ready for his briefing.

TOM

Well: apparently, Molly is moving within France, so she doesn't have a direct line, but-- she's checking messages with an assistant. Michael should be reachable and available; I can set a call, if you want.

HUGHES

(thinks; then, nodding)
That'd be fine.

So Tom, having his orders, turns to go. But--

HUGHES

No, wait, just-- You can leave Michael a message too. Just ask if he's ever spoken to that reporter, Elliot Gibbs.

TOM

(making a mental note)
Elliot Gibbs. Okay, I'm on it.

HUGHES

Oh, and Tom? No interruptions for a while.

Tom nods, then starts to go... but John feels the need to proffer some explanation:

HUGHES

It's just-- that I'm working on something at the moment. And I think it's maybe best if I power through.

TOM

...Sure.

(then, feeling he's supposed to ask)

How's it going? The-- the thing you're working on?

John considers the question.

HUGHES

I think I'm about to get to the hard part.

PRE-LAP: the sounds of a working film set--

INT. PARAMOUNT -- STAGE 16 -- DAY [1985]

A major studio production is underway. At present, the stage is set for an expansive residential interior.

WE'RE WITH JOHN, as he walks through the set in his mogul-standard attire, as GRIPS and P.A.s and ART GUYS part for him like the Red Sea...

Finally, on the far side of the stage, John comes to a DRESSING ROOM DOOR painted pink. He KNOCKS. From inside--

MOLLY (O.S.)

Who is it?

HUGHES

It's Hughes.

Now, the door is opened for John-- not by Molly, but by a tall, 50something REPORTER. John seems a bit surprised by the man's presence...

HUGHES

Hell-o?

MOLLY

John, this is Steve. Steve, John.

STEVE

(offers his hand)

Nice to meet you. Steve Galey, LIFE magazine.

MOLLY

He's doing a feature on me.

STEVE
The fans demand it.

Molly giggles at that. A note about Molly: she seems to have undergone something of a change since we last saw her; she seems to have blown past "confident" and to have landed in the vicinity of "prima donna"...

HUGHES
Okay, well...
(to Steve)
If you could give us the room a minute...

MOLLY
Oh, it's okay. Steve won't write anything I'm unhappy with. Will you, Steve?

STEVE
That's the deal.

MOLLY
(to John; cheery)
See? So there's nothing to worry about.
(re: a chair)
Here. Have a seat.

John doesn't like this one bit-- but unsure of what else to do, he takes a seat. As he does, Molly retrieves a screenplay from her makeup counter. Sitting opposite John--

MOLLY
So the reason I asked to see you: I read the script you sent.

HUGHES
"Some Kind of Wonderful." I just got word, we can shoot in the late fall.

MOLLY
Right, well the thing is, I just...
(she sighs; "gently"--)
...I don't know about this one.

HUGHES
(beat)
You don't know... .. what.

MOLLY
Well, it's just...
(flipping through)
It seems to me like a retread: the right girl, the wrong girl, the Richies and the Zoids, blah blah.

HUGHES
A "retread."

MOLLY

I'm just saying, haven't we *done* all of this already? I mean, isn't it, like, time to put high school behind us?

Those words strike at John's deepest, most sensitive place.

MOLLY

(more to Steve than to John)

The thing is, if I agree to a part at this point, it needs to be something that will let me expand my range as an actress. It needs some sort of *originality*. And as you know, I'm weighing that offer from Warren Beatty, and of course I can only do so much.

STEVE

Right, that makes sense.

Steve is, of course, taking copious notes-- until he observes that he is the object of John Hughes's death stare. Realizing this, he lowers his pen, almost against his will, as if John is controlling his arm via telekinetic force.

HUGHES

This is very much off the record.

STEVE

(hesitates)

...Hm, well, Mr. Hughes, you really should have said that at the beginn--

HUGHES

Let me put this another way: if you publish so much as a word of this, I'll have it written into every actor's contract from now 'til the end of time that they can speak to any reporter they want to about anything they want to except any reporter affiliated in any way with LIFE magazine.

STEVE

(gulp)

It's off the record.

HUGHES

Good. Now that thing to your left, it's called a door. It's sort of a "retread" of other doors, but against all odds, it still works. I suggest you use it.

Getting the picture, Steve promptly uses the door. When he's gone, when director and star are alone, Molly seems to grow very quiet, very still...

MOLLY

What did you do that for?

HUGHES

"Some Kind of Wonderful" shoots in the fall. And I expect you to mark your calendar.

MOLLY

And why would I do that?

HUGHES

You made a *promise* to me--!

MOLLY

Are you serious?

[NOTE: "/" means an overlap.]

HUGHES

To do my movies / until--

MOLLY

I was 15, we were bullshitting / on a beach--

HUGHES

You made a promise, and where I come from, *that still matters!*

SLAM-- John puts his fist against the wall. Molly is instantly cowed. She's never seen him violent before. A beat. Calmer--

HUGHES

Now look: this is probably my fault. I should never have let them shoot "Pretty in Pink" in L.A. I knew something like this would happen.

MOLLY

What "happened"?

HUGHES

I knew you'd get taken in. I mean, what else was gonna happen, you're just a kid.

MOLLY

What are you talking about? What am I "getting taken in" by?

HUGHES

By... L.A.! By reporters! By Warren Beatty! All the parasites trying to bore their way into your head.

MOLLY

There's nobody "in my head," John, I'm just trying to build a career for myself--

HUGHES

You already *have* a career, Molly! I should know, I'M THE SUCKER WHO BUILT IT!

Suddenly on the verge of despair...

MOLLY

I-- I don't know what you want from me. Am I supposed to stay at Shermer High forever?

HUGHES

Not forever. I didn't say, 'forever.'

MOLLY

How long then? Two more movies? Five? Ten? Tell me, John. How many?

But of course, John has no answer to that.

MOLLY

I'm just trying to grow up is all. That's it. It's *natural*. It's what I'm *supposed* to be doing at my age! It's what everyone does...

(shakes her head sadly)

...Everyone except you.

A beat. Then, quietly...

HUGHES

"Everyone," huh? Let me tell you about "everyone." Everyone *not* in this room would *kill* to be in a Hughes production.

Molly slumps.

MOLLY

Maybe, John. But how many people would kill to be in a second one?

HUGHES

(beat; then, definite)

All of them.

EXT. L.A. ROOFTOP RESTAURANT -- DUSK [1985]

We join John and Michael amidst an al fresco dinner meeting.

[Note that we'll cut freely between the restaurant scene and the scene in Molly's dressing room.]

HUGHES

I-- I don't understand.

MICHAEL

(re: a screenplay)

I'm sorry, John, it just... wasn't for me.

HUGHES

But it is for you. Ferris Bueller was literally written for you!

(beat)

Jesus. You talked to Molly. Didn't you? The two of you, you planned this, decided that *this* was the week to cut me loose.

IN MOLLY'S DRESSING ROOM

MOLLY

I'm not doing anything to you!

Both Molly and John are now in danger of falling apart.

MOLLY

Why's this about you? I just want to work with other people in addition to you.

But that only engenders a look of hatred from John.

HUGHES

I don't think so.

MOLLY

W-what's that supposed to mean? What? It's all or nothing?

John shrugs like a sullen teenager: *Maybe*. Then, distraught--

MOLLY

I don't know why you're being like this. It's a business, John. Why do I have to say that to you? I'm 17, you're 35!

John says nothing. He just grows more and more distant... he begins to drift toward the window, as if compelled there by some invisible force. When he finally speaks, it's hard to say if he's talking to Molly, or to himself, or to no one at all...

HUGHES

It isn't a business. People say that. "It's a business." Well, no, I've *been* in business: *advertising's* a business. But Hollywood-- what that is-- well-- that is a goddam high school. A subject on which I believe I'm considered a bit of an expert...

AT THE ROOFTOP RESTAURANT

HUGHES

Cuz there's the popular kids and the losers. Right? And the losers, in high school or Hollywood, they can't even get a decent table at lunch. It's like they carry a stench...

IN MOLLY'S DRESSING ROOM

HUGHES

...And if anyone gets a whiff of it, boy, they drop you fast, and they're out of sight before you even hit the ground.

MOLLY

I don't... I don't know what you're *talking* about. A "loser"? John, you're one of the biggest directors in *town!*

But John doesn't seem to hear that. He just floats toward the door...

MOLLY

Please don't go. Not like this.

...and he gives her a last, mournful look... and he says...

HUGHES

Goodbye, Molly.

AT THE ROOFTOP RESTAURANT

Hughes is on his feet. He throws down some cash to cover the check and says...

HUGHES

Goodbye, Michael.

...and he walks out of Anthony Michael Hall's life forever.

CUT TO:

INT. SKOKIE HILTON -- LOBBY -- DAY [1985]

HUGHES

Hello, Matthew! Hello, Mia!

John is once again in the Skokie Hilton-- the very place he met Michael and Molly before the *Sixteen Candles* shoot.

When we find him, he's waving cheerily to MATTHEW BRODERICK (23) and MIA SARA (17), who are headed into the Hilton, dragging rollerbags behind them.

TITLE: One week before production on *Ferris Bueller*

MATTHEW BRODERICK

Hey, man. Are you the welcoming committee?

HUGHES

Something like that! Looks like you both made it in okay?

MATTHEW BRODERICK

Yeah, no problems here. Say, you're not staying in the hotel?

HUGHES

Yeah I am, I like for us all just to be *together* for this part. You know?

MATTHEW BRODERICK

...Sure. Okay. Well-- so I never got like a call sheet for tomorrow-- and neither did Mia-- so we weren't... completely sure how to prepare?

HUGHES

No preparations required. The most important thing is just that we really spend time together, get to *know* each other. Get *comfortable*. Ya know?

MATTHEW BRODERICK

(he doesn't "know")

...Yeah. Okay.

HUGHES

Now Mia, you are gonna love this guy, guaranteed. Cuz he reminds me of me, and you're gonna love me. Okay?

Now, John gives Mia an ebullient smile, almost psychotically bright. It makes her uncomfortable, and she instinctively turns away. But John proceeds as if they've made a great connection and signals the "kids" to follow him, as he makes for the Front Desk...

HUGHES

Well. I guess we should get checked in,
get to our rooms, huh? Tomorrow, it all
begins.

Matthew and Mia, trailing John, exchange a Look.

MATTHEW BRODERICK

So, *what's* beginning exactly?

Hughes turns. Like it's obvious--

HUGHES

Spending time with my new friends!

Off Mia and Matthew, straining to keep their poker faces--

INT. SKOKIE HILTON -- JOHN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

John stands by a wardrobe, mechanically unpacking, when he
hears from the next room...

MATTHEW BRODERICK (O.S.)

..."new friends"?

He knits his brow.

MIA (O.S.)

I mean, this is only my second movie, I
didn't know if this was--

MATTHEW BRODERICK (O.S.)

Yeah, no. It's not.

Now, John puts his ear to the wall... strains to hear...

MIA (O.S.)

You think it's bad if I go and stay with
my godmother in the city?

MATTHEW BRODERICK (O.S.)

Well-- I'd say it kind of depends.

MIA (O.S.)

On what?

MATTHEW BRODERICK (O.S.)

(tiny beat)

On whether she has enough room for me too.

And now, the actors descend into conspiratorial LAUGHTER.

On Hughes, his expression turning cold, turning dark, as if the
fires that turn his pistons have been suddenly snuffed out.

He notices his reflection in the window: he looks old, 10 years older than when he was last here. But before he can plumb the implications of that, something catches his eyes-- something outside, something just beyond the window...

It's the Sherwin Williams whose sign he'd managed to turn into "Shermer" just a few short years ago. But in 1985, the storefront is slung with a banner: "**Going Out of Business.**" For some reason, that strikes John as grimly funny. As he begins to smile... to chuckle... to laugh...

[BEGIN MONTAGE:]

GIBBS (V.O.)

Ferris Bueller's Day Off would prove to be the last of the high school films that had made John Hughes a household name in the 1980s.

INT. FARMHOUSE -- JOHN'S STUDY -- DAY [2001]

John sits at his desk, reading Gibbs's final page...

GIBBS (V.O.)

After *Ferris*, he turned his attention to safer subjects for family fare-- mischievous kids... adorable babies... slobbery dogs...

John spots a shadow moving outside his door.

HUGHES

Tom?

Tom, thus beckoned, looks into the Study and shakes his head.

HUGHES

Nobody spoke with Mr. Gibbs?
(when Tom again shakes his head)
...Thank you, Tom.

GIBBS (V.O.)

The question... is *why*.

EXT. GLENBROOK NORTH FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT [1966]

16-Year-Old John stands amidst the packed stadium, soaking up the energy of its innocent, happy CROWD...

GIBBS (V.O.)

Why did the man who'd defied the adage, 'You can never go home again' fail to defy it twice?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GLENBROOK NORTH FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT [1983]

Michael and Molly and John, making mischief...

GIBBS (V.O.)

Why did he retreat into formulaic comedies, before, in his later years... simply retreating into silence?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GLENBROOK NORTH FOOTBALL STADIUM -- NIGHT [1994]

John, now in middle age, sits alone amidst the empty stands.

GIBBS (V.O.)

Some maintained that his heart had simply closed after the films he made with Molly Ringwald and Anthony Michael Hall... That he made it a point, after that, to avoid any subject that might require that he reveal any part of himself... ever again.

John rises, taking a last look around...

GIBBS (V.O.)

They suggest that in the end, Hollywood proved too harsh a place, too filled with the broken and the damaged and the weak and the sick, to provide the stable shoulder upon which John yearned to lean-- upon which he might have eased the weight of his difficult, fragile soul...

As John leaves the stadium...

GIBBS (V.O.)

Whatever the reason he left, many of John's fans, the children of Reagan's America, await his return like zealots awaiting their prophet's rebirth.

- Begin **FOOTAGE** of Molly, of Michael, of Emilio, of Judd, of Ally in the 21st century... in their 30s... their 40s...

GIBBS (V.O.)

They wait for him to observe them... to teach them about themselves... about the middle-aged men and women they have long-since become...

- **THE ENDING KISS** from *Sixteen Candles*...

GIBBS (V.O.)

They wait for John to tell them in his own, singular way that, yes, their dreams can still come true...

- **THE FINAL GROUP SHOT** of *The Breakfast Club*...

GIBBS (V.O.)

...or, at the least, that tomorrow can still be different than today.

- In 2001, John **DRIVES**. He's just coming into CHICAGO...

GIBBS (V.O.)

And what are his fans to make of his silence?

- John crosses the lobby of the **FOUR SEASONS CHICAGO**...

GIBBS (V.O.)

Has their prophet lost his faith? Or is he simply biding his time?

- John makes haste down a **HALLWAY**... KNOCKS on a door...

GIBBS (V.O.)

Or, irony of ironies, in his life's later chapters, did John Hughes simply... forget about them?

The door opens, revealing Elliot Gibbs. Amiably--

GIBBS

Why, John!

HUGHES

Listen you sonofabitch, I've heard from Molly, I've heard from Michael, I've talked to Michelle, and not a single one of them has talked to you-- which means I'm the only person with intimate knowledge of these events, and I can tell you, you light it on fire, your book is too full of shit to burn. And what's more, whoever your source is, if they even exist at all, they're a self-serving, bottom-feeding, duplicitous--

NANCY (O.S.)

John?

Hearing that-- John peers into the Author Suite... to see that Elliot Gibbs is indeed playing host to Nancy. As John pales, as his balance begins to fail him...

GIBBS

Oh right. John: meet my bottom-feeding source. Bottom-feeding source: the singular John Hughes.

(then; observing the couple)

From the looks of things, I'd say it's about time the two of you met.

In response, John lowers himself to his knees... and falls to the ground, as he and the film cut to--

BLACK.

STAY IN BLACK

Quiet... stillness... then, VOICES emerge from the silence... DOZENS of them... a JUMBLE... growing louder and clearer and cleaner and more urgent--

P.O.V.: JOHN WAKES UP

Hovering above "us": a GROUP of 20- and 30somethings, dressed as if they're out on the town in the mid-1960s.

One of these people we've seen before: an African-American club manager in his 40s, who earlier thanked John for procuring a hip band for his venue. His name is Scoop.

SCOOP

Well look who's back from the dead.

It's now that we notice: Tiffany is here. We're on the floor of the **MUSIC CLUB** we took her to-- but its lights are now on, its band quiet, its party over.

TIFFANY

John? I'm sorry, I, I-- have to go, they called an ambulance. If my mom finds out I was here...

She winces-- *I'm dead meat*. Genuinely...

TIFFANY

I'm sorry.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

What? No. Don't go. I'm okay. I don't need an ambulance.

SCOOP

Johnny, you ain't okay.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)
 This just happens to me sometimes. I have
 an overactive--

As "we" try to sit up, we GROAN in pain.

END P.O.V.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 (grabbing his head)
 God damn it.

SCOOP
 That's what I'm trying to tell you: you
 hit your head when you went down. And you
 don't look so good-- I'm saying, even for
 you.

TIFFANY
 I'm sorry, John. You seem like a really
 nice guy.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN
 Wait-- I'll see you again, won't I?

TIFFANY
 (hesitates)
 ...Sure. I'll see you in next-to-home-
 room... Right?

On John: stricken. On Tiffany: who gives this strange,
 sensitive boy a last, affectionate look... before she turns
 decisively away... before she flees as fast as she can, away
 from this adventure and back to the comforting normality of
 staid suburban wealth.

NANCY (PRE-LAP)
 Hey.

INT. AUTHOR SUITE -- FOUR SEASONS CHICAGO -- DAY [2001]

As in the flashback, John is sitting up, his head throbbing--

NANCY
 You're alright. You're back.
 (takes his hand)
 It's okay. I'm here. And I'm not going
 anywhere.

For a moment, nobody moves.

Then, John turns to his wife, his brow beginning to furrow,
 as he recalls the curious circumstances that brought them
 here...

But he decides that now is not the right moment for questions and focuses instead on "coming back": he concentrates on his breathing... inhale... exhale... and he closes his eyes...

PRE-LAP: a CAR pulls up to a curb--

I./E. SCOOP'S CAR / JOHN'S PARENTS' HOUSE -- NIGHT [1966]

Scoop has just pulled up in front of the Hughes house. Teen Nancy is taking the liberty of ushering a still-woozy John out of the passenger seat. Scoop gets out of his car, crosses around to help with John, but--

TEEN NANCY

It's okay. I got him.

Scoop looks from Nancy to John, skeptical.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

It's okay. Thanks, Scoop.

SCOOP

(nods)

'kay. Well. You take care of yourself.
Try to stay up on both of them left feet.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I will.

John attempts a reassuring smile-- a middling effort. Scoop doesn't exactly buy it-- but of course, what can he really do?

So, with a resigned nod, he climbs back into his car, starts his engine, and shifts into gear. John watches him go. Once his taillights have disappeared around a bend...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I'm-- I'm really okay. I've just-- I've got kind of a headache.

Nancy clocks the Hughes house, where John's parents are, once again, engaged in a SCREAMING MATCH.

TEEN NANCY

Well that's no good for a headache. Why don't you stay with us tonight?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

...With you, you mean.

Nancy shrugs, smiles a bit.

TEEN NANCY

Come on.

She takes John's arm. He puts up a little resistances... but she tugs at him gently... and after a moment, he relents.

As she helps him across the yard, up the steps, and into her house... As the two teens, the two Zoids, recede gradually into the background...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

You sure about this? I don't wanna be any trouble.

TEEN NANCY

Hey, for all you know, Trouble's my middle name.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Uh-oh.

TEEN NANCY

(laughs)

No, but really, it's okay. I don't mind. I'll take care you, John Hughes... I'll always take care of you...

INT. AUTHOR SUITE -- BALCONY -- DAY [2001]

John can once again stand... and can once again radiate fury: at present, he leans on a balustrade, gazing out at a choppy Lake Michigan.

Nancy looks where her husband looks, as if hoping to read his mind that way. From a few feet sway, Gibbs observes the couple...

NANCY

I guess... you must be pretty angry.

HUGHES

(even)

I think I'd have to get through shock and denial first.

GIBBS

Shock isn't a stage of grief, John. It's a stage of war.

(off the Hugheses' icy glares)

But why don't I see if I can brew us up a pot of coffee?

Getting no response, Gibbs simply nods and moseys off. Beat.

NANCY

...It-- it isn't easy to explain this.

HUGHES

What could you possibly say that could make any sense out of why you've done what you've done?

NANCY

(beat; then)

I don't know. Probably nothing. But... I'm gonna say a couple of things, in any case.

Hughes lowers his eyes, silently fuming.

NANCY

The thing is, John-- You never talked about your work, not to me.

HUGHES

That's / not--

NANCY

We talked about other things. The house. The boys. The *weather*... But never about your writing. Never about your films--

HUGHES

'cause they didn't *matter*. You're what mattered to me; *family* mattered--

NANCY

(holds up her hand)

And-- I believe-- that you believe-- that you believe that. And I'm not gonna-- "argue the point" with you... But-- if you're gonna keep interrupting me, we're gonna be here the rest of the day.

The thought of that is enough to drive John **INTO THE SUITE**, toward the wet bar, where he fixes himself a rather generous drink. Nancy follows, a step behind but determined to say her piece. She takes a breath, then patiently soldiers on...

NANCY

The thing is-- since you didn't ever talk about your work with / me--

HUGHES

Please--

NANCY

You assumed that, whatever you didn't tell me, I didn't know. I was just... the innocent little wife. Living her little domestic life. That's what you thought.

HUGHES

I--

NANCY

And in a sense, you were right. But... I did know some things. Things you didn't tell me. Things I didn't even want to know.

HUGHES

Things that weren't even true!

NANCY

Well it was true that you started to change around 1985. That was true. Don't stand there and try to say that it's not. You started to change, and... well let's just say, I had a pretty clear picture as to why.

To that, John has no retort.

NANCY

And I guess I should have been happy when it happened. To finally have that-- that *girl* out of our lives. I knew how you felt about her--

HUGHES

I--

NANCY

I'm not saying you ever *acted* on it, but-- I knew how you *felt*. And I should-- I should've been glad having her gone, but...

(darkening)

What I started to learn was... that I couldn't complete you. With her gone, you were just... incomplete. An incomplete who would barely even talk about the house anymore. Or the boys. Or the weather.

HUGHES

Nancy--

NANCY

Who'd barely look at his own wife.

HUGHES

That isn't true.

NANCY

I'm not saying I blame you, John. I don't. I mean, you didn't do anything wrong. Not really. In my accounting, the only sin you really committed was-- you married the wrong woman.

HUGHES

Nancy--

NANCY

You did.

(off John)

And I'm not even angry about it. Mostly,
I just feel sorry for you because...

(a beat)

'cause I did marry the right man.

Now, John has to sit. Nancy goes to him...

NANCY

Oh John... I knew on my wedding day that
your heart wasn't crying out my name. But
I thought that was okay, I thought "that
happens all the time." People marry and
then they grow together and *then* they
learn to love, they...

(sighing a deep sigh)

They don't build fictional towns where
they love the right girl and the right
girl loves them back and everything's
right as rain-- or I dunno, maybe they
do, maybe they build those places deep
down in their hearts, but they don't
build them on *Earth*. They don't make them
real. They don't make Shermer.

That changes the temperature in the room.

HUGHES

So is that why you did this? You were
jealous of my work? Or of... what you
imagined between me and a teenage girl?

Nancy takes a deep breath.

NANCY

When you met Molly--

HUGHES

Answer / me--

NANCY

You moved away from the world. You moved
away from me. And Jamie. And Jack.

HUGHES

That's / a lie.

NANCY

You moved into Shermer full-time.

HUGHES

No.

NANCY

And everything that mattered to you, you took it with you. And anything that you couldn't take with you, didn't matter. So when Molly left... you were all alone. And I wanted to help you, but I couldn't, my love didn't seem to matter, because you thought you'd kept Shermer a secret from me. You thought I didn't know the John in Shermer, didn't love him, *couldn't* love him. But I *did*. I love every John there is!

HUGHES

Why did you do this?

NANCY

How else could I make you see-- that I know everything, the *worst* things, and I love you still? That you don't have to be alone? You never listened.

HUGHES

Well. You have my attention now.

NANCY

Yes. I have your attention now.

HUGHES

Are you happy?

NANCY

...That's not a condition I expect.

Now, Gibbs re-enters, bearing a French press on a tray--

GIBBS

This is from my personal stash; the beans are aged in Bourbon, so it doesn't need any sugar, and I recommend it black. Mrs. Hughes? Can I interest you in some light sweet crude?

(when Nancy says nothing)

John?

But John, too, says nothing... until his does, until he rises to his feet and says...

HUGHES

Mr. Gibbs, my wife had neither the visibility nor the expertise to report on the events described in your very colorful manuscript. If you publish--

GIBBS

What? You'll sue me? Put your wife on the stand? So you can expose her as a liar and a fake? I very much doubt that.

NANCY

He won't have to.

The men turn to look at Nancy, who's standing, and who, for the first time, has drawn herself up to her full height.

NANCY

I lied, Mr. Gibbs. Everything I said, I take it back. All of it. I retract it categorically. So if you publish now, you'll be engaged in the commission of knowing, malicious slander.

On John: in utter shock. He gapes at his wife, at this woman whose preferred pastime is tatting doilies.

As the totality of her plan comes into focus, he looks on her with a new respect. A long-lost light begins to reappear in his eyes...

GIBBS

Mrs. Hughes, I'm afraid it's not quite that simple--

NANCY

Oh? 'Cuz the lawyer I spoke with seemed to think it's exactly that simple.

GIBBS

But-- but you don't-- that can't-- I mean, HarperCollins...

HUGHES

Mr. Gibbs, you seem lost for words. It's a condition that becomes you.

For a moment, Elliot Gibbs just stands there, sweating. Then, he removes his pocket square and blots his reddening brow. Finally, Nancy approaches the panicking reporter, taking the coffee he didn't know he was still holding, and setting it safely down...

NANCY

Now look: we're prepared to match the advance you were paid on the book--

HUGHES

What?!

NANCY

I led him to what he wrote, not the other way around.

(to Gibbs)

We'll match the advance, in exchange for an agreement from you not to publish or publicly discuss the subject of our family.

Gibbs considers that for a moment. Sensing his contracting range of options, he decides that those are indeed terms he can accept.

With a bit of a dazed look, he offers his hand-- which Nancy shakes. Then, he turns to John-- who, after a moment's hesitation, shakes his hand as well.

HUGHES

Well.

Then, their business settled, the Hugheses head to the door, John with his hand in the small of his wife's back-- and then, suddenly, he stops.

HUGHES

Wait, what about Jamie? The article for Premiere?

NANCY

(to John)

No, you see, that's what I came to see Mr. Gibbs about, and it turns out--

GIBBS

You dawdled a bit too long, I'm afraid. The April edition has already gone to bed.

John nods, processing that...

NANCY

It's alright-- if Jamie's really a writer, he'll write something else. You can't keep a writer from writing, that's one thing I have learned. It's the one thing that's never changed about you in all the years I've known you.

HUGHES

(taking her hand)

Not the only thing.

And suddenly, Nancy has tears in her eyes... and she's not the only one.

INT. TEEN NANCY'S BEDROOM -- DAWN [1966]

16-Year-Old John is up before the sun. He's sitting upright in bed, composing a few lines in a moleskin notebook.

Nancy, just waking up, watches the neighbor boy write for a beat or two before letting him know she's conscious.

TEEN NANCY

Whatcha writin'?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

(hiding the notebook)

Oh, it's-- it's nothing.

TEEN NANCY

(but she's already seen it)

What is "Shermer, Illinois?"

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I already told you, it's nothing.

TEEN NANCY

C'mon. I wanna know.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Why?

TEEN NANCY

Cuz I do.

John sighs, but she gives him a sweet smile-- the smile unique to female persistence-- to which John now yields:

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

I dunno, it's just-- it's a place I made up. It's like here. North of Chicago.

TEEN NANCY

(sits up; encouragingly)

Uh-huh...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN

Population 14k, give or take. And part of the town is Richies and part of it's Zoids. It's like-- You really wanna hear this?

(when she nods)

Well the only place where the Richies and the Zoids, where they overlap-- it's at school, you see-- it's at Shermer High. So Shermer High School-- well I guess it sort've becomes-- I mean-- it kind of becomes the center of pretty much everything.

INT. JOHN'S CAR -- DUSK [2001] [MOVING]

John and Nancy drive home together, through quiet, leafy neighborhoods, through Northbrook, Skokie, Glencoe-- the stages upon which they've lived their lives...

TEEN NANCY (O.S.)

The high school's the center of everything?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

For the kids. I mean, the adults don't really matter all that much. They're not really part of the town. I mean, they are, but-- they work, they sleep. But they don't really notice stuff.

TEEN NANCY (O.S.)

(getting that)

Right, sure.

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

It's the kids who really matter.

TEEN NANCY (O.S.)

(as if tasting the idea on her tongue)

...The kids...

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

Yeah.

TEEN NANCY (O.S.)

But... but don't... I mean, one day, don't the kids... don't they grow up... Don't the kids become the adults?

16-YEAR-OLD JOHN (O.S.)

No, not really. Not in Shermer. You see, that's kind of the thing. In Shermer...

(a beat)

In Shermer, you stay young.

Outside the car, the ghosts of John's characters play out their stories in the north shore suburbs of Chicago...

KEVIN MCCALISTER carries home his groceries in sagging bags...

FERRIS BUELLER drives Mr. Frye's car, as the trio of teens inside screams with undiluted joy...

BENDER cuts across the football field, his fist raised high in the air, his declaration of freedom, his declaration of pride...

And in front of the Glencoe Union Church stands JAKE RYAN, with his red Porsche 944, waiting for SAM BAKER, who rushes into his arms...

John comes to a light. He watches as Sam kisses Jake... and kisses him... suspended in time... forever joyous, forever young.

But John blinks hard, and the ghosts disappear like so much smoke... just as hazy and ephemeral as a half-remembered dream...

Then, John turns to his wife, who is still there, whose love for him is as real and lasting as the ancient, orange-red SUN that burns in the sky.

THE END.