

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Paul is sleeping slumped over a table, his head cradled on crossed arms. The Celestine Prophecy is open face down next to him.

PAUL (VO CONT'D)

Sometimes you can search everywhere for answers. Then one day destiny just taps you on the shoulder. I know, because it happened to me.

A FINGER reaches down and taps Paul's shoulder. Paul comes to and looks -- it's Mr. McAllister.

JIM

Paul, could I talk to you for a minute?

MILLARD HALLWAY - DAY

His arm on Paul's shoulder, JIM walks Paul down a deserted hall and into Jim's classroom. JIM picks up some scrap paper off the floor and puts it in the proper place.

PAUL (VO)

Mr. McAllister changed my life. And no matter what they say he did or did not do, I believe he is a good man.

JIM'S CLASSROOM - DAY Paul sits in a chair, while JIM stands

JIM

Paul, I know you've been pretty down since your accident.

PAUL

I wanted to play next year so bad I could taste it. And maybe go on to...

JIM

I know. I understand disappointment. I really do.

PAUL

Yeah.

JIM

But you've got a big choice right now. You can choose to be depressed about it for the rest of your life. Or you can choose to see it for what it really is: an opportunity. I personally think you have a big future ahead of you, and I don't mean the fleeting glory of sports.

PAUL

What do you mean?

JIM

Let me give you a clue. You're a born leader. You're one of the most popular

students at Millard. You're honest and straightforward. You don't choke under pressure, as we all saw in that amazing fourth quarter against Westside. The other kids look up to you. What does that spell?

Paul furrows his brow and looks around, searching for an answer. His lower lip is wet.

JIM

Student... council... president.

It takes a moment for this to sink in. Finally

PAUL

Who, me? Nooo. I never... I don't know anything about that stuff, Mr. M. Besides, that's Tracy Flick's thing. She's always working so hard and --

JIM

Yeah, no, she's a go-getter, all right.

PAUL

And she's super-nice

JIM

Yeah. But one person assured of victory kind of undermines the whole idea of a democracy, doesn't it? That's more like a... well, like a dictatorship, like we studied.

JIM

Paul, what's your favorite fruit?

PAUL

Huh? Oh. Uh... pears

JIM

takes a piece of chalk from the lip of the blackboard.

JIM

Okay, let's say

PAUL

No, wait -- apples. Apples.

JIM draws illustrative circles on the board as he speaks.

JIM

Fine. Let's say all you ever knew was apples. Apples, apples and more apples. You might think apples were pretty good, even if you occasionally got a rotten one. Then one day there's an orange. And now you can make a decision. Do you want an apple, or do you want an orange? That's democracy.

PAUL

I also like bananas.

JIM

Exactly. So what do you say? Maybe it's time to give a little something back.

INT. STUDENT COMMON AREA DAY

Tracy directs her friend ERIC OVERHOLDT on a ladder as he hangs a large POSTER high on a wall.

TRACY

The right side is too high. The right side. Just a smidge.

Suddenly she notices a small COMMOTION in the adjacent cafeteria and goes to investigate.

INT. CAFETERIA DAY

A small crowd of students compete to sign Paul's nomination petition taped to the wall.

GUY

(signing)

Hey Paul, you going over to Anthony's on Friday, or what did you decide?

PAUL

I gotta talk to him first.

Tracy watches the hubbub, none too pleased, and pushes her way to the front of the group.

TRACY

Who put you up to this?

PAUL

Huh? Oh, hi, Tracy

Tracy stares at him.

TRACY

Who put you up to this?

PAUL

What do you mean?

TRACY

You just woke up this morning and suddenly decided to run for president?

PAUL

No. Uh... I just... you know, I just thought --

TRACY

Thought what?