

"Danny Is Going To Die"

by

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SCENE 1

Exam Room #4 of the Masonic Cancer Clinic at the University of Minnesota. DANIEL MURPHY is having his blood pressure taken by NURSE WRIGHT. It is silent.

The nurse squeezes the blood pressure gauge, looks. Squeezes again, looks. Squeezes again. Daniel squirms. Another squeeze. Finally, Nurse Wright let's our a quiet, "Hmmm..."

DANIEL: "Hmm?" What's "Hmm?"

NURSE WRIGHT: Oh, nothing. Just acknowledging your blood pressure.

DANIEL: It's bad?

NURSE WRIGHT: No, it's fine.

DANIEL: It's fine?

NURSE WRIGHT: Perfectly fine.

Pause.

DANIEL: Then why, "Hmm?"

NURSE WRIGHT: Just acknowledging.

DANIEL: Why would you need to acknowledge something that's fine?

NURSE WRIGHT: Because it's fine. That's what I was acknowledging.

DANIEL: It just seems like if something was fine, you wouldn't need to acknowledge it.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Opening a file folder.) Can you confirm your full name and date of birth for me, please?

DANIEL: Daniel Ashton Murphy, August 12th, 1979.

NURSE WRIGHT: Someone has the big three-oh coming up in a couple of weeks. Do you prefer to be called Dan? Danny?

DANIEL: Daniel, please.

NURSE WRIGHT: And what do you do for a living, Daniel?

DANIEL: I'm a writer.

NURSE WRIGHT: Oh, how interesting. Anything I've read?

DANIEL: Not unless you enjoy obscure magazines or reading the obituaries of small town newspapers. I'm freelance, working mostly on the stuff that's beneath real writers.

NURSE WRIGHT: All right. Well, Daniel, I just need to ask a few routine questions before you see Dr. Burrows. (She makes notes on his paperwork as she does this.) Are you in any pain today, Daniel?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Any fatigue?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Sore muscles, aching joints?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Any constipation?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Diarrhea?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Difficulty urinating?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Do you smoke?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Drink?

DANIEL: Occasionally.

NURSE WRIGHT: What is "occasionally?"

DANIEL: Three or four drinks a week, maybe?

NURSE WRIGHT: (Writing.) Hmm.

DANIEL: What? What is--

NURSE WRIGHT: Are you currently on any prescription medication?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Are you now or have you ever been addicted to heroin?

DANIEL: (Taken aback.) No!

NURSE WRIGHT: Ecstasy?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: LSD? Methamphetamine? OxyContin? Steroids?

DANIEL: No!

NURSE WRIGHT: Are you sexually active?

DANIEL: (Uncomfortable pause. Then, trying to make a lame joke.) How active?
(Nurse Wright gives him a stern look.) No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Have you suffered from any of these conditions: heart attack, stroke, liver failure, diabetes, Crohn's Disease, or rectal prolapse?

DANIEL: Rectal prolapse? What's that?

NURSE WRIGHT: It's difficult to describe.

DANIEL: Well how do I know if I've had it if you can't tell me what it is?

NURSE WRIGHT: Trust me, you'd know.

DANIEL: Okay. Well then, no.

NURSE WRIGHT: Do you suffer from any unusual substances coming from your penis?

DANIEL: I wouldn't say I suffer from it.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Still writing in the file.) You can make all the jokes you like, Mr. Murphy, but these questions are here so that we are better able to treat you. (She jots down some more notes.) Finally, can you give me a brief description of the symptoms that brought you here?

DANIEL: Uh, yeah. I went to my doctor...um, Dr. Merigold...after I had an unusual cough and shortness of breath. He referred me here.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Nodding and writing.) I see. (For the first time, she seems very sincere and caring.) Well, Daniel, we're going to do our very best to take care of you here.

DANIEL: Thank you.

NURSE WRIGHT: Dr. Burrows will be in shortly to see you. (She stands up to leave, but notices something she missed in the file.) Oh, one more thing, Daniel. What church are you affiliated with?

DANIEL: What?

NURSE WRIGHT: Your church. Do you go to church?

DANIEL: I was raised Catholic. Why do you need to know this?

NURSE WRIGHT: (Writing.) No reason. Just something we ask all incoming patients. We like to have it for our records.

DANIEL: Why?

NURSE WRIGHT: Again, just a formality for our records.

DANIEL: It's for in case I die, right? You need to know so that if I die, you know what type of priest, or rabbi, or whatever, to send in?

NURSE WRIGHT: Mr. Murphy, that's not it at all--

DANIEL: (Becoming increasingly panicked.) I'm dying, aren't I? That's what's going on here? You wouldn't ask me about my church unless it was something serious, right? Like, super super serious?

NURSE WRIGHT: Mr. Murphy...Daniel, you're overreacting. This is something we ask all our patients, I assure you.

DANIEL: Just....just don't lie to me. Tell me the truth. Please.

NURSE WRIGHT: Hmm.

Nurse Wright exits. Daniel bangs his head against the wall in frustration. DOCTOR BURROWS enters.

DR BURROWS: (Looking at Daniel's file.) Okay, Daniel...Murphy? How are we doing today?

DANIEL: There are no unusual substances shooting from my penis, if that is what you're asking.

DR BURROWS: (Confused.) Um...good, good. Do you prefer Daniel or Danny?

DANIEL: Daniel, please.

DR BURROWS: Okay. (Sitting.) Well, Daniel, I'm just going to get right to it. I've looked over your PET scan, and I was hoping to have better news, but...

DANIEL: (Pause.) Okay?

DR BURROWS: I'm afraid you have lung cancer.

DANIEL: (Pause.) Okay.

DR BURROWS: It's a small tumor, less than two centimeters, but it's there.

DANIEL: (Pause.) Okay.

DR BURROWS: (Pause.) I know this is difficult.

DANIEL: It's fine. So...what do I do?

DR BURROWS: Well, I'd like to run a few more tests, first off. An MRI, to make sure nothing has spread to your brain, and a chest X-ray. But I'd like to get you started on chemotherapy as quickly as possible.

DANIEL: Okay.

Long pause.

DR BURROWS: Daniel, I've just informed you that you have a very serious illness. Don't you have anything else to say?

DANIEL: (Shrugs.) I can't really...I don't have anything to say.

DR BURROWS: You don't have any questions?

DANIEL: Not off the top of my head. I think it's just...I'd like to just get started. You said I need an MRI--

DR BURROWS: Daniel, I don't know if you are understanding me. I am telling you that you have cancer. Cancer! This is unbelievably serious.

DANIEL: No, no, I get that--

DR BURROWS: (Becoming slightly panicked.) I mean, this is deadly, deadly serious. Life threatening, Daniel.

DANIEL: Yes, well, it's--

DR BURROWS: You could die from this, Danny. Die!

DANIEL: Daniel.

DR BURROWS: Die! Die! DIE! (Pause. Daniel and Dr. Burrows stare at each other a moment. Then, in a very matter of fact tone.) Die. (Suddenly, Dr. Burrows buries his head in his hands. Quietly he says:) I'm sorry.

DANIEL: Are you...are you all right?

DR BURROWS: (Straightening up. Starting to cry.) Yes. No. I'm sorry. It's just-- (He sobs.) I'm at this damn place every day, and patients come through my door...these wonderful, wonderful, beautiful creatures...like you...like, I feel so emotionally connected to you right now...

DANIEL: Uh...

DR BURROWS: ...and they all come in here, and I have to be the one to tell them they have cancer. Me! I am a carrier of death, infecting those around me. Why, Danny? Why must all my patients have cancer?

DANIEL: You're an oncologist.

DR BURROWS: Yes, yes, you're right, of course. It's just the burden I must carry. The burden I was born with. (Sob.) I can see you're having a hard time dealing with this emotionally.

DANIEL: (Who has actually remained relatively stoic during this.) Yeah, it's...you know. It's pretty crazy.

DR BURROWS: Do you want to hug?

DANIEL: I very much don't.

DR BURROWS: (Grabbing Daniel in an extremely awkward hug.) It's fine, Danny. You're going to be fine. (Pause.) I mean, you might be fine. Probably you're going to die, but you might be fine.

DANIEL: That's great.

DR BURROWS: (Still hugging.) You're such a strong young man. (Whispering.) I love you.

DANIEL: (Literally jumping out of the hug.) Okay, that's...yeah. I think that's probably enough hugging.

DR BURROWS: (Still sniffing, but resuming a more professional attitude.) Do you have any questions for me, Daniel, before I set up your appointment?

DANIEL: I...uh...I don't know. To be honest I'm a little overwhelmed. I don't even know what to ask. Do you have something I can look at? A booklet or something, with some information?

DR BURROWS: Ah, yes. As a matter of fact, I have just the thing. (Calling offstage.) Nurse Wright, could you bring a copy of your booklet in here for Mr. Murphy, please. (To Daniel.) Nurse Wright has used her years of experience working for the University to write a little booklet that should help you.

Nurse Wright enters and hands Daniel a small pamphlet.

DANIEL: (Reading.) "Danny Is Going To Die."

DR BURROWS: "Danny Is Going To--?" Hey! That's your name! (Notices Daniel's expression.) That's an unfortunate coincidence.

NURSE WRIGHT: Don't mind the title. The booklet is actually designed to help you develop a positive attitude about your new condition.

DANIEL: And yet you have the word "die" right in the title. Put a lot of thought into this, did you?

DR BURROWS: It was a great help to my Grandmother with leukemia, right before she... (He trails off.)

DANIEL: Died of cancer?

DR BURROWS: No. Got hit by a bus.

DANIEL: That's tragic.

DR BURROWS: Isn't it? Oh, the melancholy symphony that is life.

Dr. Burrows and Nurse Wright exit.

DANIEL: (Reading.) "Congratulations! You have cancer!" (Dumfounded look. Continues reading.) "Section One: Starting the Journey."

A spot comes on Nurse Wright, who takes over reciting for Daniel as we switch to the next scene.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section One: Starting the Journey. This is Danny. Danny has just learned that he has cancer. Finding out you are dealing with a serious medical issue can be devastating news, and Danny is going to need the help of his relatives and close friends in order to cope. Like Danny, it is important that you too develop a strong support system. As you begin this new, unexpected phase of your life journey, it is important that you find other people who will fill you with positive energy and supportive karma, to fill your soul-ship with fuel for the turbulent waters ahead. Find a close friend or relative who will be your 'First Mate' on this journey. This person will be your go to person in times of emotional or physical crisis. (Spot out on Nurse Wright.)

SCENE 2

Bobby Baron's Bar and Grill. Daniel sits between NICK GOODWIN, a man about this age but of more athletic appearance, and a slightly younger woman, JAMIE MURPHY, his sister. Each is working on a drink.

Daniel looks over at Nick.

NICK: Hey, don't look at me. I'm not being another guy's "First Mate." I mean, I like you and all, but...

JAMIE: Whatever. Cancer's such a bullshit disease, anyway. You want to talk about a real scary disease? Take a look at someone with ebola.

NICK: Don't worry about it. Remember little Johnny Foster, from high school? He had cancer, and he ended up being fine. Owns a bookstore now, last I heard.

DANIEL: Johnny Foster never had cancer.

NICK: Sure he did. He had, like...face cancer.

DANIEL: Johnny Foster did not have cancer.

NICK: Then what the hell was all over his face?

DANIEL: That was acne.

NICK: Jesus. That poor bastard.

JAMIE: Or the monkey pox. Have you ever seen someone with monkey pox? They end up with sores all over their body and vomiting up everything. It's disgusting.

NICK: Your sister is absolutely right. Don't think of yourself as having cancer. Think of yourself as not having monkey pox.

JAMIE: Cancer is so 1999. Ebola, AIDS, SARS...those are the scary diseases now days. I mean, do people even die of cancer anymore?

DANIEL: I haven't done a ton of research into this, but...yeah, I think it still manages to pick a couple people off a year.

JAMIE: (Waving him off.) Eh, whatever. As far as I'm concerned, if you're not barfing up blood, you're not sick.

NICK: Damn straight. (Raises his glass in a toast.) Here's to not barfing up blood.

DANIEL: Okay stop. I appreciate you guys trying to cheer me up, or whatever it is you think you're doing right now. But could we just talk about something else for awhile? Please?

Pause as they all try to think of something else to talk about.

JAMIE: Are you going to lose your hair? Because, no offense, but you would look terrible bald.

A WAITER arrives at their table.

WAITER: (Bored monotone.) Welcome to Bobby Baron's Bar and Grill, Home of the Greatest Chicken Wings in the Upper Midwest. What do you want?

NICK: (Holding a menu, with mock seriousness.) Yes, good sir, I believe I shall sample your roasted duck with cranberry sauce...ah, what the hell, a round of your vintage 1937 Chardonnay to cleanse our pallets.

WAITER: (Pause.) So...a plate of chicken wings and another round of beers?

Nick, Daniel, and Jamie let out a simultaneous "Bingo!"

WAITER: (Annoyed monotone.) Fantastic. Your crazy hijinks amuse and delight me.

NICK: Hey, one more thing, buddy. My friend here (he indicates Daniel) just found out he had cancer today. Could you bring a little something that might cheer him up?

WAITER: Wow. A person I've never met, and will probably never see again, has a life-threatening disease. Excuse me while I attempt to hide my grief. I'll be back in a few minutes with your beers. If you need anything in the meantime, just remember that I hate you.

Waiter leaves.

DANIEL: What the hell are you doing?

NICK: Relax. As an actor, I've learned--

DANIEL: An actor? Is that what they're calling the amusement park workers at Mall of America now?

NICK: Whoa, I'm not just a worker. I'm fucking Sponge Bob Square Pants. I'm part of the entertainment facet of the Mall's industry. AKA...an actor.

JAMIE: You dance around in a fifty pound foam suit and have your picture taken with eight year olds. How is that acting?

NICK: Because I have to act like I don't want to strangle the little shits! And anyway...look, as an actor, I've learned that sometimes the worst, most tragic events in our life, can actually be the stepping stones to greatness. For example, I had an audition recently where my character had to cry. Well, obviously crying is hard for me, being that years of alcohol and reality television have made me so dead inside, but...I just thought of my favorite grandmother, who died a couple of years ago, and boom, here comes the waterworks.

JAMIE: Did you get cast?

NICK: No. But the assistant director was this sort of hot little number, and she was so moved by my performance, she invited me back to her place, and we engaged in a little "Not Suitable for All Audience Members" action, if you know what I mean. (Pause. Daniel and Jamie stare.) We had sex.

JAMIE: That's disgusting.

NICK: You two are missing the point. The point is: My dead grandmother got me laid. And cancer could be your dead grandmother.

DANIEL: Huh. I hadn't really thought about it like that. Probably because I'm not insane.

The waiter reenters.

NICK: Allow me to demonstrate.

WAITER: Here's your beers. (He sets them on the table. Then, to Daniel:) And here's a free drink for you, on the house. You know, to make up for the fact that you're probably going to die.

The waiter sets a drink in front of Daniel, and turns to leave. Nick stops him.

NICK: Whoa, whoa, whoa. What about me?

WAITER: You don't have cancer.

NICK: Well, okay, I may not be suffering from the actual, physical disease, per say. But I (he puts his arm around Daniel) am an important part of this young man's support team. In fact, you might even say I am the "First Mate" of his soul-ship. (The waiter rolls his eyes and exits. Nick yells after him:) FIRST MATE! (He sees Daniel about to take a sip from his free drink, and takes it from him.) Well, that didn't work. (He begins to drink Daniel's free drink.)

JAMIE: Look, could you just do me a little favor, and not tell Mom about this until tomorrow?

DANIEL: Oh, I'm not telling Mom.

JAMIE: What? What do you mean you're not telling Mom? You can't just not tell Mom you have cancer.

DANIEL: Can't I? Watch me.

JAMIE: Why aren't you telling Mom?

DANIEL: Are you kidding? Our mom? The Queen of Over-Reactions? After Missing Person-Gate '96?

NICK: What's that?

DANIEL: Junior year of high school. I'm at the movies with some friends, my car ends up breaking down. No payphones in sight, whatever, I start walking the hour and half home. No biggie, except my mom had already called the cops, the FBI, and in the brief 90 minutes I was missing, to call the people that put the missing children information on the side of milk cartons. To this day, if I step foot in the grocery store in my hometown, all the employees point and go, "Hey, I found him!"

JAMIE: That was a long time ago.

DANIEL: Has it gotten better? Since dad died, she's a hundred times worse. A cough means a trip to the E.R., a weird skin rash means Mass three times a week to pray for health. No, Mom isn't finding out about this. Period. She'll never leave me alone. (To Jamie.) And anyway, why do you care when and if I tell her?

JAMIE: Oh, well...you know how I sort of, kind of, accidentally flunked out of the University?

DANIEL: Yes, I seem to recall hearing something about that when you showed up at my house with nowhere to live.

JAMIE: Right. Well, the notice's have been sent out to parents, and it should be reaching her place in Duluth tomorrow, and I just figured maybe she'd be so upset about your cancer thing, she'd completely forget about the whole me failing college thing.

DANIEL: So, you want to use my terrible news as a way to shield yourself from Mom's justifiable wraith towards you for wasting her money?

JAMIE: (Thinking a moment.) Yeah...yeah, that sounds about right.

DANIEL: (Looking back and forth at both Nick and Jamie.) Just out of curiosity, do either of you two even have a soul, or are you both basically pitiless automotrons, motivated only by greed and your own self-absorbed problems?

NICK: Whoa, hold on. That isn't fair. You're forgetting sex. I'm also motivated by sex.

DANIEL: Listen, I really just...want to not make a big deal out of this, as much as possible. So that means (To Nick.) no using my cancer as leverage to get drinks, women, or a job, and (To Jamie.) do not tell Mom. Agreed?

NICK: Yeah, whatever. That's fine.

JAMIE: Yeah, jeez, Daniel, settle down. What, you think just because you have cancer, everything's about you now? Selfish.

DANIEL: (Sighs.) This thing is already annoying the hell out of me.

Spot up on Nurse Wright

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Two: Cancer and Your Career. Due to his recent cancer diagnosis, Danny is experiencing an increase in stress about his job. Will he miss a lot of work? What happens if he runs out of sick days? Does he need to put the fact that he has cancer on his resume? Like Danny, you too might have questions about how your new condition will affect your career. Talk to your boss and co-workers. Explain to them that despite your recent medical prognosis, you remain dedicated and focused on your job. You may find that their compassion, composure, and inner strength will a huge asset for you on your journey.

SCENE 3

The office of GLORIA CUMBERBATCH, Daniel's literary agent. Daniel sits in a chair, reading the "Danny" brochure. Gloria is talking on the phone.

GLORIA: (The phone is to her ear, but she is mumbling to herself.) I can't deal with this, I can't deal with this, I can't deal with this-- (Then, back into the phone as someone comes on the line.) Yes? Yes, I'm still here. So your offer is--? (Pause.) Oh, no, I understand that, it's just that I felt-- (Pause.) Well, I'm afraid one hundred is as low as I'm-- (Pause.) Fifty? No, that's much too low, I'm afraid-- (Pause.) Okay. Fifty it is. Good doing business with you. Good-bye. (She hangs up.)

DANIEL: Was that a deal for another client?

GLORIA: (Embarrassed.) No, I was selling a couch on Craigslist. (Pause.) It's been a bad month.

DANIEL: I'm sorry.

GLORIA: Oh, but here I am complaining when you-- (She comes around the desk to hug Daniel.) I talked to your sister this morning. The "C" word...oh, Daniel, I'm so sorry.

DANIEL: (Gently trying to break from the hug.) Gloria, please, I've had about all the hugging I can handle for the past twenty-four hours. Listen, I came here today about business.

GLORIA: (Understanding.) Ah, yes, of course. You want me to do some agent stuff for you, yes?

DANIEL: Well, since I was paying you anyway...

GLORIA: Daniel, you know you're my absolute favorite client. What can I do for you?

DANIEL: Okay, you know the novel I've been working on for the past few years?

GLORIA: You've mentioned it.

DANIEL: I need you to get me a published for it. Like, soon.

GLORIA: Daniel, I've told you before, no publisher is going to give an advance to a first time novelist. I need a complete manuscript to show them.

DANIEL: No, what you need is to be a tougher negotiator. You're a push-over, Gloria. That's why I'm thirty years old and still writing for the "Bumfuck Times."

GLORIA: (Hurt.) I'm not a push-over.

DANIEL: Gloria...I'm sorry, I'm not trying to hurt your feelings, but...I mean, come on, you just got out negotiated by someone you're trying to sell your couch to on Craigslist.

GLORIA: I prefer to think of myself as principled.

DANIEL: You're a wimp. Look, let's practice with some role-playing. You be you, and I will be the head of a publishing company. Try to sell me a book.

GLORIA: Okay. (Clearing her throat.) Good evening, I was wondering if I could interest you in--

DANIEL: No.

GLORIA: (Without missing a beat.) --thank you for your time, have a nice day.

DANIEL: No, no, no...Gloria! How the hell do you expect to sell anything when you roll over so easily.

GLORIA: You said you weren't interested. Who am I to try and tell you otherwise?

DANIEL: An agent! Okay, you're too nice. We have to work on your image. This is what I want you to do: when someone tells you no, I want you to say, "Listen here, fucker..." You say that, and these people will know that you don't take no for an answer. From now on, that's our new motto: We don't take no for an answer. Okay, I'm the head of a big publishing company...tell me off, Gloria Cumberbatch. Get mean. Let me know you aren't here to screw around.

GLORIA: Okay. Listen here... (She stops. She can't get the word out.) Do I have to use the "F" word? Couldn't I just call him...uh...a "dirty rat", or something? "Dirty rat" is pretty harsh.

DANIEL: No, for Christ's sake, Gloria, you can't call someone a dirty rat.

GLORIA: Why not?

DANIEL: Because you're not James Cagney! Now come on, Gloria! Swear at me. Swear like you've got a pair.

GLORIA: (Taking a deep breath.) All right. Um...listen here, f...

DANIEL: Yes, come on.

GLORIA: Listen here, f-f-f- (With great difficulty.) fucker.

As soon as the word is out, Gloria reacts as if a switch has been flipped in her head.

DANIEL: Good. Again.

GLORIA: (A little easier this time.) Listen here, fucker!

DANIEL: Good, again!

GLORIA: (Very forceful and confident this time.) Listen here, fucker!

DANIEL: That's it!

GLORIA: Oh my. Fuck is, like, the greatest word ever. I've never felt so emotionally liberated in my life.

DANIEL: It's satisfying, right?

GLORIA: Satisfying? It's as if every bit of anger, disgust, and frustration I've ever felt in my life are summarized in one little syllable that perfectly expresses what I want to say at any given moment! It's the most cathartic thing I've ever said. It's better than therapy. It's better than sex!

DANIEL: It's a good word.

GLORIA: It's the greatest word.

DANIEL: Okay, okay, I'm glad you like it. Now, if you can take this new, tougher attitude and-- (Daniel has turned his back on Gloria, who is now at her phone, dialing frantically. Daniel turns and sees her.) Gloria, what are you doing?

GLORIA: Calling my ex-husband. After fifteen years, I finally have the words to express what I've always wanted to say to him. (Into the phone.) Hello, Frank? This is Gloria. I just called to tell you that you are a fucker!

DANIEL: Gloria--

GLORIA: And your mother? She's a fucker, too!

DANIEL: Gloria--

GLORIA: And your friends? Don't even get me started on those fuckers!

Daniel grabs the phone from Gloria and hangs it up. Gloria slumps down into her chair in satisfied exhaustion.

DANIEL: Okay. Well. That was...kind of awesome.

GLORIA: Whew! Oh Lord, do I wish I hadn't quit smoking.

DANIEL: Right then. Well, I think you're ready. Can you do this for me, Gloria?
Can you sell my book?

GLORIA: Oh, Daniel, you know I'll try for you. But there's one other little problem.

DANIEL: Okay?

GLORIA: Well, I don't know exactly how to say this, but... (She struggles for the right words.) What if you, you know, "pass" before the book is done?

DANIEL: Pass? Pass what? Gas? Go? What?

GLORIA: You know. "Pass on..."

DANIEL: Die? You're worried I'll die before the book is done?

GLORIA: Of course not. But...yes, basically. It's just with your new...condition...and all--

DANIEL: Gloria, I'm not going to die.

GLORIA: No, of course not. (Pause.) But if you did--

DANIEL: I'm not.

GLORIA: You're not. (Pause.) Only, if you do--

DANIEL: Gloria...I. Am. Not. Going. To die. Say it.

GLORIA: You're not going to die.

DANIEL: Good. And besides, my new "condition" as you call it could help us. If the publisher doesn't go for your first pitch, just tell them I have cancer, maybe we'll get a pity contract.

GLORIA: You mean, use cancer as some sort of leverage in negotiations?

DANIEL: I guess. Apparently cancer is my dead grandmother.

GLORIA: (Pause.) What?

DANIEL: Nevermind. Remember: We don't take no for an answer.

Gloria mouths "We don't take no for an answer" continuously as lights fade.

Spot on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Three: Cancer and Your Family. Danny's cancer diagnosis is now the cause for a great deal of concern from his family and friends. Like Danny's family, your own family may go through a wide range of reactions at the news, including, but not limited to: crying, yelling, shock, binge drinking, withdrawal, depression, more binge drinking, and, in the case of German families, stoic acceptance. As your family struggles to find it's emotional center during this difficult time, it is important that you don't allow the chaos around you to distract from your continuing your journey with a positive attitude.

Light out on Nurse Wright.

SCENE 4

Bobby Baron's Bar and Grill. Daniel and Jamie sit at a table, both working on a beer. There is a moment of silence, then:

JAMIE: Do you think there's something wrong with having chicken wings three times a week?

DANIEL: No. I'm pretty comfortable with that number.

The waiter enters.

WAITER: Welcome to Bobby Baron's Bar and Grill, Home of the Greatest Chicken Wings in the Upper Midwest, what do you want?

DANIEL: Only to see you find happiness.

WAITER: Please don't make me whiz in your food. Chicken wings and beer?

DANIEL: And a smile?

WAITER: I'm very serious when I tell you I haven't had a chance to piss for about seven hours. So, please test me.

JAMIE: Hey, be nice to him! He's going into the hospital for treatment tomorrow.

WAITER: Oh. I'm sorry. I think I left my tiny violin in the car. Let me get it for you.

Waiter exits.

JAMIE: I want you to know that I canceled all my appointments for tomorrow to go with you.

DANIEL: Jamie, you're a college dropout who lives in my attic, what appointments could you possibly have?

JAMIE: Um, All day "Project Runway" marathon on Bravo tomorrow. Duh.

DANIEL: You don't need to come with me.

JAMIE: I want to. Plus, Mom wants me to be there, too, so-- (She catches herself.)

DANIEL: Mom? What are saying, "Mom?"

JAMIE: I didn't say mom. I said... (She struggles to think of something that sounds like "mom.") ...Jesus. Jesus wants me to be there.

DANIEL: The word mom doesn't sound anything like Jesus.

JAMIE: I said Jesus.

DANIEL: It doesn't even have the same number of syllables.

JAMIE: Maybe the cancer is screwing with your hearing.

DANIEL: Jamie, you clearly said "mom." Mom doesn't know about this, does she?

JAMIE: I didn't tell her that much. Only that you're sick. (Pause.) With cancer. (Pause.) And that you're starting treatment tomorrow. (Pause.) In room 507 at the University Hospital at 9 a.m. (Pause.) Also, she now knows that it was you that dented the car back in high school.

DANIEL: Jamie! What the hell!

JAMIE: I'm sorry, she found out that I flunked school and was threatening to make me move back home! I had to distract her with something!

DANIEL: She's not coming here, is she?

JAMIE: She's driving down today.

In fact, CATHERINE MURPHY has just entered out of Daniel's eyesight, and is now standing right behind him.

DANIEL: Well, when is she going to be here?

JAMIE: (Looking over Daniel's shoulder at Catherine.) Oh, I'd say pretty soon. (She grabs the still half full basket of popcorn.) I'm going to see if they have any more popcorn. Bye!

Daniel turns and is startled to see his mom there.

DANIEL: Mom! Mom, what are you--

Catherine bursts into tears and buries herself into Daniel, grabbing him in a tight hug.

CATHERINE: (Sobbing.) My baby boy has cancer! I can't believe my baby boy has cancer!

DANIEL: (Talking either to himself or the Heavens, we aren't really sure.) With the hugging, again? Way, way too much hugging. (To his mom.) Mom, are you--

Catherine instantly stops crying, breaks the hug, and slaps Daniel hard across the face.

DANIEL: Oh, okay...um...ouch?

CATHERINE: Who the hell do you think you are? Can you answer me that? Just who the hell do you think you are?

DANIEL: (Weakly.) Um...your favorite son?

CATHERINE: Son! Humph! You find out you have cancer, and you're not going to tell me about it? This is my son? God save me from my inconsiderate offspring.

DANIEL: Mom, I'm sorry. I didn't want you to worry.

CATHERINE: Oh, so you were trying to protect me? How about you let me worry about my worry, and you just worry about being an ungrateful, unfeeling brute of a son, and we'll all stick to what we're good at.

DANIEL: Mom, I'm sorry. I was wrong to not tell you. All right?

CATHERINE: Oh, Danny, I'm sorry. I've just been sick since Jamie told me. But I'm here now, and I promise I'm going to take care of you, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

DANIEL: No. No, Mom, I really don't need someone to--

CATHERINE: I went on the Google last night, and printed up all the stuff it had about cancer. Let me see... (She digs through her gigantic purse, pulling out various feminine objects: make-up, hairbrush, etc., and finally pulling out a very large taser.) Ah, here we are. (She pulls out a large stack of papers.) Now, according to this article I read on--

DANIEL: (Picking up the taser.) Mom, what the hell is this?

CATHERINE: Oh, that. Well, my next door neighbors, the Gundersons, their daughter passed away recently, and they moved back to the cities to help take care of their grandkids, and you know who moves in after them? A couple of sex perverts! I'm just a little old single woman living by myself, I'm not going to let myself get violated by a heard of sex perverts. So, I bought a taser for protection.

DANIEL: Mom, I don't think I'm comfortable with you carrying this around. You'll hurt yourself. (Pause.) What did the Gunderson's daughter die from?

CATHERINE: I believe it was, um, cancer.

DANIEL: Of course.

Jamie enters with a fresh basket of popcorn and sits at the table.

CATHERINE: Danny, you're going to be fine. I've read all these articles, and I know how to cure you.

DANIEL: Really? You managed to cure cancer? In two days? You realize doctors have been working on this for, like, decades and haven't found a cure?

CATHERINE: Did they look on the Google?

DANIEL: Obviously not.

Waiter enters with a tray of chicken wings.

WAITER: Here's your chicken wings.

Waiter exits.

CATHERINE: Chicken wings? Oh no! (She pushes the tray out of Daniel's reach.) One of the articles I read on the Google said that most cancer is caused by the preservatives we put in our food. It's all natural, organic food for you from now on. In fact, I picked a little something up for you on my way here. (Digs in her purse again, finally pulling out a rather grotesque looking salad.) Here you are. Fresh, natural, garden salad.

DANIEL: Mom, I appreciate what you're doing, but...this looks disgusting.

JAMIE: (Who has started eating the wings.) Yeah it does.

DANIEL: Why does Jamie get to eat wings?

CATHERINE: Because Jamie doesn't have cancer.

JAMIE: (Mocking.) Yeah, Daniel. I don't have cancer.

CATHERINE: Also, I'm taking you to Sunday Mass this week.

DANIEL: No, no, no.

CATHERINE: Oh yes. Danny, you are facing a very serious, very real threat to your health right now, and the only way to fight it is to give yourself up to the tender mercy of the Lord.

DANIEL: I'm not going to church.

CATHERINE: Danny, when will you accept that Jesus loves you, no matter how much you may not deserve it, and that if you accept him into your heart, he can cure you?

DANIEL: Why do you always assume only good things come from Jesus? I mean, he's all powerful, right? Did it ever occur to you that maybe Jesus is the one that gave me cancer in the first place?

CATHERINE: Daniel Ashton Murphy! That's a terrible thing to say. Jesus does not give people cancer! He leaves that to cigarettes and cell phones. Now where is the ladies room in this dump? I had four cups of coffee on the drive down here and I have to pee like a jackrabbit.

Jamie points towards the bathrooms. Catherine heads toward them.

DANIEL: Mom--

CATHERINE: You're going to church this Sunday, young man. That's final.

Catherine exits.

DANIEL: (Yelling after her in a sing-song voice, like a child throwing a temper tantrum.) But mom, I don't wanna go to chur-ur-urch! (Suddenly hears himself.) Son of a bitch. I'm twelve years old again.

JAMIE: (Still eating chicken wings.) Mom's right about one thing, you know. I majored in dietary sciences for a semester at the University, and we learned all about how the additives and preservatives that most Western cultures insist on putting into their foods are major carcinogens, and contribute heavily to the growing cancer rates in our society. Eating only organic foods is a good way to protect yourself from cancer and other serious illnesses.

DANIEL: So you'll be eating it, then?

JAMIE: Oh, hell no. That shit's nasty.

Nick enters and sits at the table.

NICK: Daniel, Daniel, Daniel. Good news, my friend.

DANIEL: I could use some.

NICK: I'm coming with you to your treatment tomorrow.

DANIEL: How is that good news?

NICK: Because, I'm going to be there for you, lending you my kind, thoughtful, selfless encouragement in your time of need.

DANIEL: (Pause.) Who are we talking about again?

NICK: Me. I want to be there for you. In your, you know, tough emotional hour, or whatever. I'm your First Mate.

DANIEL: Nick Goodwin, you're a lot of things, but kind, thoughtful, or selfless you are not. What the hell's going on?

NICK: Okay, fine. Listen. I got a huge audition for this play, where I'd be playing a doctor, and I want to come with you to, you know, study them...learn what makes them tick, and all that good shit.

DANIEL: No. No, my medical appointments are not a God damn acting class for you. It's bad enough I have to deal with my mom at this thing--

NICK: Your mom's here?

DANIEL: She drove down today.

Catherine enters, but Nick doesn't see her.

NICK: Oh man. So is your mom still crazy-- (Sees Catherine.) --good looking? Hey there, beautiful.

CATHERINE: Nick Goodwin, how are you, sweetheart?

NICK: Good. I was just telling Daniel here that I'm coming to his treatment tomorrow.

CATHERINE: Oh, wonderful. It's so great Daniel has such a dependable friend to be there for him during this trying time.

DANIEL: Hey, maybe we could call Aunt Helen and the rest of the family, put some burgers on the grill, and have a big old family reunion right in my doctors office.

CATHERINE: I already talked to Aunt Helen. She's busy tomorrow but she'll be down for your next PET scan.

DANIEL: Okay, enough! I want everyone to just listen to me for a moment. (They all stop and pay attention. Daniel takes a moment to figure how to proceed.) Look, you know I love all of you to death. Nick, you and I have been friends since high school. And Jamie, you're like the little brother I always wanted, only a girl. And Mom... (crossing to Catherine) ...Mom, you know that you and I are so incredibly close, that even if we hardly ever saw each other, and you lived really, really, really far away...say, Duluth...our relationship would still be just as strong.

CATHERINE: But I do live in Duluth, and we do hardly see each other.

DANIEL: Exactly! And that's why we work so well. And I would never want to do anything to make any of you feel unwanted, but...

CATHERINE: But?

DANIEL: (Pause.) But I don't want you. You all annoy the shit out of me. Seriously. Like, there's cancer stress, and then there's family stress, and though I can handle one or the other, by itself, just fine, I don't think I can handle both at the same time. You see.

Pause.

CATHERINE: Well. All right. I understand.

DANIEL: Do you?

CATHERINE: Of course. You don't want your mother to be there while you are fighting for your health. The woman who fed you...clothed you...wiped poo poo from your bottom. The woman who endured ten hours of searing agony as she thrust you from her loins!

DANIEL: Oh, jeez, Mom...too much...

CATHERINE: I stress you out. (She picks up her bags.) I'll just drive back home. To Duluth. (She doesn't go anywhere.) Wait there to hear about the health of my only son. Maybe one of you can shoot me a text or e-mail, when you have a second.

JAMIE: (Upset.) Daniel!

CATHERINE: Hopefully I'm around for a little longer. Haven't been feeling well lately. (She lets out a half hearted cough.)

NICK: Daniel...

DANIEL: Okay, okay, okay. Fine. (Sighs.) Mom, please come with tomorrow. (To Jamie and Nick.) You guys too. (Catherine, Nick, and Jamie celebrate.) But, please, just let me handle everything.

CATHERINE: (As she collects her bags and prepares to leave.) Of course, Daniel. Although, I did already call the hospital to let them know you are Catholic, and that you'd be wanting to talk to the chaplain at least twice a day while you are there. (She exits, with Jamie and Nick following her.)

DANIEL: (As he follows her off.) What!?!? Tell me you're kidding, Mom! Please tell me you're kidding!

Spot up on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Four: Your First Day of Treatment. Often cancer survivors find that their treatments are more difficult to deal with than the actual disease. The first day of treatment can sometimes be a stressful experience, full of new and strange procedures, technical jargon, and tubes and needles being shoved into orifices unaccustomed to having tubes and needles inside them. It is at this time when it's most important to have stable, calm, rational people with you aboard your soul ship.

Lights out on Nurse Wright.

SCENE 5

Exam Room #4. Daniel, now dressed in a hospital gown, is waiting with Catherine at his side. Nick and Jamie are sticking tongue depressors into their mouth and nose (or doing something similarly obnoxious).

DANIEL: You guys really didn't need to come.

CATHERINE: Nonsense, Danny. This is going to be difficult, and you need balanced and emotionally stable people with you right now.

DANIEL: Great. (Looks over at Nick and Jamie.) And, when will those people be arriving?

Dr. Burrows enters.

DR BURROWS: Good afternoon, Mr. Murphy. Ah, I see you've brought your family with you.

DANIEL: Yeah, about that. (Pulls Dr. Burrows to the side.) If you feel like my family will get in the way, or be any sort of distraction, I can ask them to leave. It's not a problem.

DR BURROWS: Not at all. This is going to be difficult on you, Daniel, and you need balanced and emotionally stable people with you right now.

CATHERINE: Amazing! I was just saying that exact thing.

DANIEL: Damn it.

DR BURROWS: I've always felt that a positive support team is one of a patient's greatest assets while battling cancer. And you all are...?

DANIEL: Oh, right. Dr. Burrows, this is my mother, Catherine.

CATHERINE: (Pushing Daniel aside.) And this is my daughter, Jamie.

JAMIE: (Her mouth still filled with tongue depressors.) Hi.

DR BURROWS: Yes, of course. (Referring to Nick.) And this young man is--?

NICK: (Putting an arm around Daniel.) I'm Daniel's "First Mate."

DR BURROWS: (Confused.) First Mate? (Suddenly, understanding.) Oh. First Mate. Yes, of course. Well, you two are a lovely couple.

DANIEL: No. No. We are not a lovely couple. I mean, we aren't any sort of couple.

NICK: Don't deny our love, baby.

Daniel flops into a chair, defeated.

DR BURROWS: Well, thank you all for coming today. As you know, the chemo treatment Daniel is about to undergo is very difficult. However, I've brought in our leading specialist on this particular treatment, Dr. Rogers. I think he's going to be a great asset to us, however... (Pause.) I do need to warn you all, Dr. Rogers suffers from a very peculiar form of Aspergers Syndrome, and sometimes has an awkward time dealing with patients in a social situation.

NICK: Heh heh. "Aspergers?" (Everyone stares at him.) What? (Pause.) It sounds like "ass burgers."

DR BURROWS: Due to his condition, Dr. Rogers can appear...peculiar to those who aren't used to him. But I assure you he is a fantastic doctor and, in his own way, a very sweet and well meaning man.

Dr. Rogers enters.

DR ROGERS: Okay, which one of you butt-ugly cock chompers is dying of cancer?

A moment of stunned silence.

DANIEL: Well. I guess that would be me.

DR ROGERS: You're Mr. Murphy?

DANIEL: Oh, please, no need to be formal. I'm not wearing any pants. You can call me Daniel.

DR ROGERS: Yeah, I'm not really so much about learning people's names. From now on I'm just gonna call you...Skinny McNoChest.

CATHERINE: That seems somewhat rude.

DR ROGERS: Really? I'm sorry. Please forgive me, it appears I made a little mistake in giving you the impression that I give a rat's ass about what you think.

CATHERINE: Now look here--

DANIEL: Mom! Let it go. (To Dr. Rogers.) I'm sorry, Doctor, go ahead.

DR ROGERS: Oh, do I have your permission now? Can I go ahead and do my job? (With a sarcastic bow.) Thank you, your Highness. All right, ass-faces, here's what's going to happen. (As Dr. Rogers talks, Nick comes up behind him, studying the way he moves and mimicking his gestures.) First, we're going to have Skinny here taken down to have a pick line put into one of those wet noodles he calls an arm. After that we'll move him up to the ICU and assign him to a-- (Suddenly notices Nick behind him.) Son, can I ask just what in the sam hill hell you're doing?

NICK: Oh. Sorry. Okay, check it out, I'm an actor, and--

DR ROGERS: Shut up. Are you trying to fuck my wife?

NICK: Huh?

DR ROGERS: You heard me. Are you trying to fuck my wife?

NICK: Am I...? Um, no, I mean...are you married?

DR ROGERS: Whoa! Listen to fucking Marlon Brando over here! Am I married? What are you saying? You trying to say I can't get a wife? Is that what you're telling me?

NICK: No, I just--

DR ROGERS: Listen close, Thimble-Dick, I'm a mother fucking doctor! A doctor! I make more money in a week than you will see in your entire miserable lifetime. I drive a brand new Porsche. (Pulling up his shirt.) See these abs? Washboard, baby! Touch 'em!

NICK: I don't really--

DR ROGERS: Touch my fucking abs right now, or I will break you in half!

Nick quickly touches his abs.

DR ROGERS: Firm, right?

NICK: (Terrified.) Yeah, they're...nice.

DR ROGERS: Damn right. Now, you think you got a shot with my wife without a cool as shit car and a body that would make the Greek Gods weep? Do you?

NICK: Probably not.

DR ROGERS: Damn right you don't. Sit down, piss-ant, while I finish my doctoring. (Nick sulks away.) Now the main component of this treatment is a high dosage of temozolomide administered every eight hours. Obviously this drug carries with it a few side effects...Dr Burrows, can you go over the side effects for Mr. McNoChest here?

DR BURROWS: Of course. (Reading from a paper.) Some of the likely side effects of this treatment include: nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, constipation, diarrhea--

DANIEL: Wait. It could give me constipation or diarrhea?

DR BURROWS: No. Both at the same time.

DANIEL: How the hell does that work?

DR BURROWS: Not as well as you'd think. (Continues reading.) Weakness, dizziness, depression, memory loss, shortness of breath, increased need to urinate, convulsions, paralysis, and dry skin.

CATHERINE: Oh my. Daniel, are you sure you want to go through with this?

DANIEL: I am pretty worried about that dry skin, but I think I'd better.

JAMIE: (Raising her hand.) Excuse me, Dr. Rogers? I have a question.

DR ROGERS: Fine, go.

JAMIE: Are you looking at incorporating any alternative medicine options in your overall treatment plan? I was watching a show on The Learning Channel last night that said--

DR ROGERS: Oh, you saw something on the TV, and now you'd like to tell me how to do my job? Yes, please do. I only went to eight years of college and four more of medical school, for the sole purpose of learning how to treat people with this disease, so I desperately desperately need some doe eyed college coed to advise me. So, go ahead, Dr. Sugar Tits, tell me how you would treat this patient.

Pause, as Dr. Rogers waits for Jamie's response.

JAMIE: Okay. Well, if I was his doctor, I think I would look at--

DR ROGERS: Stop! Since apparently you were too busy slamming beer bong and banging the back-up quarterback to learn how to detect sarcasm while you were in school, let me be more direct with you: I don't care what you think. Your opinion on medical issues is of less relevance to me than my gardeners opinion on how to spell hydrochlorine. (Pause as everyone looks confused.) My gardener doesn't speak English. That analogy makes more sense if you know that.

CATHERINE: That's it! Now look here, Mister Rogers, I don't care what sort of mental disorder you may have, you are not talking to my children like that!

DANIEL: Mom--

DR ROGERS: Excuse me?

CATHERINE: You heard me, you limp dicked, bad haircut having, ass munch! Unless it involves treating my son, I don't want to hear another damn word out of your tiny, foul-smelling cake hole.

Pause. Catherine and Dr. Rogers stare at each other.

DR ROGERS: God damn you are sexy. I am going to bang the crows feet right off of your face. (He starts writing on a pad.) Here's the number for a little apartment I keep in the suburbs. Meet me there at eight tonight.

CATHERINE: (Stunned.) What?!

DR BURROWS: Okay, I think we might be getting a little off task here--

Catherine takes the taser from her purse.

CATHERINE: Sex perverts, everywhere...

DANIEL: Mom, just relax, please--

DR ROGERS: (Who has turned his back on Catherine.) By God, nothing gets me more pumped to fight cancer than the prospect of a little hot cougar action. Just thinking about it gets me all--

Catherine has come up behind Dr. Rogers with the taser and proceeds to use it on him.

DR ROGERS: AAAHHHHHEEECK!

Dr. Rogers crumples to the ground and starts twitching wildly. General shock and pandemonium from the others.

NICK: Holy shit!

DANIEL: Mom, what did you just do?

JAMIE: Oh my God!

CATHERINE: Damn sex perverts!

DR BURROWS: (Shouting off.) Nurse Wright! Could you come in here please!

Nurse Wright enters, sees Dr. Rogers gyrating on the floor.

NURSE WRIGHT: Oh, not again. (To Dr. Rogers.) All right, Doctor, you know the drill. (She removes a leather strap or some other object from her pocket.) Bite down on this, let's get you to the ER.

Nurse Wright exits, helping the still twitching Dr. Rogers off.

DANIEL: Mom! What the hell are you doing?

CATHERINE: I wanted to be there for you, Danny. I wanted to support you.

DANIEL: By tazing my doctor?

CATHERINE: Okay, admittedly, that wasn't a proud moment for anyone involved--

DANIEL: Leave.

CATHERINE: What?

DANIEL: You heard me. Get out! (To Nick and Jamie.) All of you. Just go. I don't want your help. I don't want your support. Between the cancer and you guys, I don't know which is stressing me out more. At least the cancer is just trying to kill me. You people are driving me out of my fucking mind!

CATHERINE: Daniel--

DANIEL: Go!

Nick, Jamie, and Catherine start toward the exit.

DANIEL: Doctor, I am so sorry--

DR BURROWS: It's fine, Daniel. But I better go check on Dr. Rogers. (He starts to go, turns back.) Daniel, if you don't mind me saying so, it seems like you might be getting a little stressed. Would it help you to have a little alone time with your "First Mate" before starting today?

DANIEL: I... (Giving up.) Yeah. Sure, that'd be great.

Dr. Burrows gives a knowing nod, and exits. Daniel slumps into a chair. Nurse Wright enters carrying a clipboard.

NURSE WRIGHT: Daniel--

DANIEL: Nurse Wright, I apologize for my mom. I don't know what she was thinking. Is Dr. Rogers going to be all right?

NURSE WRIGHT: Oh, he'll be fine. I'd say he gets tazed by an angry family member at least two or three times a month.

DANIEL: Really? That's so unfortunate, with his Aspergers and all--

NURSE WRIGHT: Daniel, that man does not have Aspergers. We just tell patients that to cover up the fact that he's a huge dick.

DANIEL: Oh.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Looking at clipboard.) Daniel, before Dr. Burrows came back in, I wanted to talk to you about something. It appears there's a slight issue with your medical insurance.

DANIEL: What's that?

NURSE WRIGHT: You don't have any.

DANIEL: Look, truth is, I don't go to the doctor very often, and I sort of let it expire.

NURSE WRIGHT: Daniel, if you don't have insurance, we can't treat you here.

DANIEL: (Thinking.) Um, look. I'm, like, this close to getting myself a big book deal. As soon as that comes through, I promise I'll get my insurance reinstated.

NURSE WRIGHT: All right, I can just bill your appointments for now. But get it taken care of. Soon.

DANIEL: I will.

Nurse Wright exits. Daniel slumps into a chair, defeated.

Spot up on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Five: Maintaining a Balanced Life. In the weeks following his cancer diagnosis, Danny is finding it difficult to focus on other aspects of his life. Constant medical appointments and phone calls are taking up a great deal of his free time. His family and friends are constantly asking for updates regarding his prognosis. TV news specials on cancer seem to be on almost every night. Angelina Jolie names her new baby "Cancer Pitt." Cancer is quickly becoming on the focal point of Danny's life. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle is one of the most important aspects of your journey. Read a trashy book. Paint a picture. Go camping. Continue to follow your dreams. If all you ever do is think and talk about cancer, your life will quickly become very empty.

SCENE 6

Gloria's office. Daniel is again sitting in a chair, reading, while Gloria is talking on the phone. However, this is a very different Gloria than we saw in the previous scene. Confident, stern, aggressive...somewhat scary, actually.

GLORIA: (On the phone.) What the fuck do you mean you need another day? You told me Thursday. You fucking told me you'd have the son-of-a-bitch to me by Thursday! (Pause.) Okay, listen here fucker, you have that book on my desk by Friday, or I swear to all that is holy I will skin you and make myself a new suit. Do you hear what I'm saying? I will fucking wear you like a mother-fucking suit! (Pause.) Fine. I'll talk to you later, Father O'Malley. (She hangs up the phone. To Daniel, in explanation:) He borrowed my copy of "Twilight" two weeks ago and still hasn't given it back.

DANIEL: Well...it was nice of you to go easy on him.

GLORIA: I have some good news for you.

DANIEL: I could use some.

GLORIA: I got a certain writer a book deal from a very big publisher.

DANIEL: What? Jesus, Gloria, if this certain writer isn't me, this is a horribly cruel way to start a story.

GLORIA: It's you.

DANIEL: This isn't funny, Gloria. If this is a joke, it isn't funny.

GLORIA: \$5,000 up front, 15% residuals. You, my friend, are done writing shit articles for fishing magazines, and are about to be a published novelist.

DANIEL: Oh my God. 5,000 dollars? Jesus, I'm...I'm a thousand-air! This is fantastic! I've never been so happy in my life! (He does a little dance in celebration.) Booze. We need booze to celebrate. (He starts rummaging through Gloria's desk.) I know you have to have something around here Gloria. Ah ha! (He finds a bottle and some glasses in her desk. He starts pouring himself and Gloria a drink.) So they must have really liked what they read?

GLORIA: (Hesitant.) Um, yes. They liked it. Most of it. Actually, I'm glad you brought this up. There were a few changes they wanted to make to your manuscript.

DANIEL: (Taking a drink.) Oh. Okay. Like what?

GLORIA: Well. Uh, for example... (Thinking.) The dog. The main characters dog. They hate the dog. They don't want the main character to have a dog. They want the dog out of there.

DANIEL: Huh. Okay. Hey, that's fine. They want the dog gone, the dog's gone. I can do that.

GLORIA: Yes. Well, there were a couple other things they hated as well.

DANIEL: Okay? Like what?

GLORIA: Well, like... (Pause.) The rest of it.

DANIEL: What?

GLORIA: The whole thing. They hated the whole book. I'm sorry, Daniel.

DANIEL: (Stunned.) They...I don't...did they actually say they hated it?

GLORIA: Well, let me see. I wrote down what they said word for word so I would remember. (Get's a piece of paper from her desk that she now reads from:) "Daniel Murphy's manuscript is crap. I loathe everything about the plot, the characters are ridiculous, and nothing that occurs on these pages causes a single emotion in me other than complete and total agony. I would burn my copy, but I'm afraid the toxic fumes from this turd would poison the air and kill anyone within five city blocks. So instead I ordered an intern to bury the manuscript ten feet deep in a remote field. Then I fired the intern." (Brightly.) My mistake. He didn't use the word hate at all.

DANIEL: Um. Okay. I'm confused. You sold a manuscript to a publisher for fifty grand that they despised?

GLORIA: No.

DANIEL: You said you got me a book deal.

GLORIA: I did. Just, a different book.

DANIEL: What?

GLORIA: Daniel, I did exactly what you told me. When he said he didn't like your book, I said, "Listen here, fucker!"

DANIEL: And then?

GLORIA: He hung up on me. So, I called him back, and went to Plan B, like you told me.

DANIEL: Plan B? What did I tell you was Plan B?

GLORIA: I told the publisher you have cancer. Remember? I was supposed to use your condition and try to get a pity deal.

DANIEL: Oh no. Gloria, I was joking--

GLORIA: As soon as I told him you had cancer, he got very excited. He said that their company was looking for someone to write, as he put it, "inspirational, heart warming, pansy assed, Oprah Book Club thing," and that a book about the difficulties of living with cancer would be just the type of thing they were looking for.

DANIEL: No! I don't want to write a book about cancer! I don't even like talking about cancer. I don't like thinking about it, or hearing about it. Do you understand that? I'm sick of discussing it with my family, and sick of my friends asking about it, I'm sick of going to endless doctor appointments to deal with it. (He picks a magazine off Gloria's desk.) I'm sick of opening up the newest "Entertainment Weekly" and reading story after story about the latest celebrity I grew up idolizing has passed away after their "long and courageous battle with cancer." (Yelling at the magazine.) Why can't you assholes just die of drug overdoses like you did back in the 80s?! (He collapses into a chair. Quietly:) I'm sorry.

GLORIA: I did bad, didn't I?

DANIEL: No, Gloria, you did fine. I just... (Pause.) The last thing I want to do is spend hours and hours writing about it. I want to write about something I like, like...ninjas. I want to write a book about ninjas, Gloria. They can kill you without using their hands. Did you know that?

GLORIA: I did not.

DANIEL: This sucks.

GLORIA: Daniel, I know this isn't the book you wanted to write, but...it's a book. It's a lot of money. And it's a foot in the door. This is the way the literary business works. You write the book they want, so that later you can write the books you want. (Pause.) Also, I can't help but wonder...maybe writing this book would be good for you.

DANIEL: Excuse me?

GLORIA: Well, it's just...I mean, I never hear you talk about this thing, Daniel. You joke about it, you complain about it, but...I've never heard you actually talk about it. Like, are you scared? Are you angry? You don't seem to have any emotions other than this vague, put-on annoyance. Maybe writing about it will--

DANIEL: Listen, I'm fine. I don't need to start using my writing as some sort of self-help therapy session. (Standing.) Thanks, but no thanks, Gloria. I don't want to write this book.

GLORIA: At least consider it.

DANIEL: (Heading to the door.) No.

GLORIA: (Just as Daniel is about to leave.) Listen here, fucker! (Pause. Daniel turns.) I don't take no for an answer.

DANIEL: What, you think you can use this fake, hard-assed technique on me? I taught you this.

GLORIA: You're a coward.

DANIEL: (Surprised.) Excuse me?

GLORIA: It's not that you don't want to write a book about cancer. It's that you don't want to write a book. The fact is, as much as you complain, you're comfortable. You won't admit this, even to yourself, but you love turning in a few pointless articles about airline food, or what trees are currently in bloom, or the new cow barn they are building down on Miller's road, because you don't care about those things. So there's no pressure. You're a scared, neurotic, wannabe, hack of a writer. Now I worked my ass off to get you this one chance to prove you're a real writer to the world, so I suggest you take all those smart-ass quips you think are so God-damn funny, write them down on a piece of paper, and show the world how much talent you really have.

Long pause. Daniel and Gloria stare each other down. Then:

DANIEL: Oh, you're good.

GLORIA: Thank you.

DANIEL: Really, really good.

GLORIA: I owe it all to you.

DANIEL: I'll think about it. I'm not promising anything, mind you. I'll think.

GLORIA: Thinking's good.

Daniel starts to leave, but turns back.

DANIEL: Oh, and Gloria... "scared, neurotic, wannabe, hack of a writer?" Too mean.

GLORIA: Sorry about that.

Daniel leaves.

Spot up on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Six: Overcoming Setbacks. During your journey, it is quite likely you will encounter many difficult moments, times when it feels everything around you is crumbling to pieces. A loss of employment, an unexpected medical expense, or a lack of progress against your disease can all leave you feeling trapped, alone, or scared. It is at these defining moments that your "First Mate" will become especially important. Look to this person to be a calming influence in troubles times: often an outside perspective will show that things aren't as dire as they may appear.

SCENE 7

Exam room #4. Daniel and Nick are waiting. Daniel is slumped over, obviously depressed.

NICK: Look, so you write the stupid fucking cancer book. Once you make a name for yourself, you can get anything you want published. I mean, look at Stephen King. Dude writes like ten books a year, they're all about haunted toasters and killer clowns and shit, and no one is turning him down. Why? Because his name's Stephen King.

DANIEL: I guess.

NICK: You do the shit jobs to pay the bills until you can get the work you want. Do you think I wake up with a giant erection every day because I get to dress up as a cartoon character and have five year olds rub themselves all over me?

DANIEL: The fact that you even just asked that question means I'm probably going to have to start distancing myself from you.

NICK: You know, when I first started acting, every one of my teachers went on and on about using your personal experiences to bring emotion to your part. And I started using my Grandmother to make myself sad when I needed to be, and...honestly, it felt cheap. Like, that woman was my world when I was younger, you know? She took care of me for a decade while my parents were too busy worrying about their careers to notice I existed. And at first I felt like I was, like, pissing on her grave, using her memory like that. But then I realized, my Grandmother's dead, and it sucks, but it's not changing. And the shitty things in our life, we can either use them, or they use us.

DANIEL: You're not going to try and hug me now, are you?

NICK: Nah. (Pause.) You nervous?

DANIEL: No. Should I be?

NICK: No. (Pause.) I mean, you're finding out if the treatment is working so far. I guess I'd be a little nervous.

DANIEL: I'm not nervous.

NICK: Good. (Pause.) You want me to hold your hand, or anything?

DANIEL: No.

NICK: Cool. (Stands up.) I'm gonna take off, then. There's a doctor on the 3rd floor said I could watch him do a colonoscopy.

DANIEL: Have fun.

Nurse Wright enters just as Nick is leaving.

NURSE WRIGHT: (To Nick.) And where are you off to in such a hurry?

NICK: (Excited.) I get to watch someone get a rod shoved up their butt.

Silence. Nurse Wright and Nick stare at each other, then back away from each other slowly. Nick exits.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Referring to Nick.) He is--

DANIEL: Insane, yes.

NURSE WRIGHT: Fair enough. (She takes out Daniel's file folder.) All right, Daniel, are we in any pain today?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Any fatigue?

DANIEL: No.

NURSE WRIGHT: Sore--

DANIEL: No and no.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Writing.) Okay. How about--

DANIEL: No skin rashes, no difficulty urinating, I've been taking Kytril for nausea, Loperamide for diarrhea, and, shockingly, I am still not sexually active.

NURSE WRIGHT: (Writing quickly.) Okay. You're getting good at this. (Closes folder.) Well then, there was just one other thing, Daniel. You still don't have any insurance, and I can't hold our financial people off any longer until I know you are going to get it reinstated. Otherwise...I'm sorry, but we're going to have to stop treating you.

DANIEL: (He considers a moment, comes to a decision.) It's fine, Nurse Wright. I just came into some money, and I'll get myself some insurance before my next appointment. I promise.

NURSE WRIGHT: Good. Thank you, Daniel, that will make my job much easier. What is this money, if you don't mind me asking?

DANIEL: I sold a book. I got a big publishing contract.

NURSE WRIGHT: Congratulations! I'm happy for you, Daniel. (She gets up to leave.) What is it about?

DANIEL: I'm sorry?

NURSE WRIGHT: Your book. What is it about?

DANIEL: (Pause.) Ninjas.

NURSE WRIGHT: Ninjas?

DANIEL: Ninjas. They can kill you without using their hands.

NURSE WRIGHT: Interesting.

Nurse Wright leaves. Dr. Burrows enters.

DR BURROWS: Good afternoon, Daniel. How are you feeling today?

DANIEL: Very well, thank you, doctor.

DR BURROWS: Good, good. (He sits.) Well, I've looked over the results of your latest PET scan, and...um...

DANIEL: (Pause.) Okay?

DR BURROWS: Well, I'm afraid...so far anyway...it appears the tumor has actually grown in size since we've started the treatment.

DANIEL: (Pause.) Okay. (Pause.) You aren't going to cry, are you?

DR BURROWS: (Obviously holding back tears.) No. I know that makes you uncomfortable, so I'm going to hold strong. However, I do need to take a second to look extremely closely at your file right now. (He takes Daniel's file, opens it, and holds it almost right up to his face.)

DANIEL: (Pause.) Dr. Burrows? You're crying, aren't you?

DR BURROWS: (Obviously crying.) No.

DANIEL: It's fine. I suppose one of us should act like a human being about this.

DR BURROWS: (Putting down the file.) I'm sorry, Daniel, please ignore me. I don't know if you've noticed, but I tend to be slightly over emotional at times.

DANIEL: No!

DR BURROWS: But this isn't as bad as I'm making it out to be. It's very common for cancer cells to not react to the first round of treatments. We'll try a couple more rounds of the chemo, and if we still don't see any improvement, we still have several more treatment options to discuss.

DANIEL: Okay.

DR BURROWS: I have a lot of faith in you, Daniel. I'm still confident we are going to get a positive outcome from this.

DANIEL: Thank you, doctor.

DR BURROWS: I'm going to send Nurse Wright back in so that you can schedule your next round of treatment. (He goes to leave.)

DANIEL: (Suddenly.) Why do you do this?

DR BURROWS: Excuse me?

DANIEL: I mean, being a doctor in your...specific area. You spend a lot of your time giving people bad news, don't you?

DR BURROWS: I do.

DANIEL: So why do it? I mean, why not be a baby doctor, or specialize in some disease we've completely cured, like polio or something? If you don't mind me saying, you obviously get pretty worked up over this stuff, so why specialize in a disease where you constantly have to give people bad news?

DR BURROWS: (Thinking.) I don't know. I guess it's because once in a while, I get to give people good news. And when I do, it's probably the best news they are ever going to hear.

Dr. Burrows exits.

Spot up on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: Section Seven: Living in the Now. Like most people facing a serious medical condition, Danny's diagnosis has left him confused and frightened about what the future may hold for him. Like Danny, you too may have questions about what life has in store for you, such as: How long will I be sick? What will I do about money? Will my family be okay? Will I die? These types of questions are natural to be asking when faced with a serious health crisis, but the most important thing to remember--

SCENE 8

The front porch of Daniel Murphy's home. Daniel is sitting on a small patio bench, reading the "Danny" brochure, when Jamie enters.

JAMIE: There you are.

Spot out on Nurse Wright.

DANIEL: Here I am.

JAMIE: I go to all the trouble to throw you a kick ass 30th birthday party, and you spend it outside?

DANIEL: Jamie, I bought all the food, booze, invited all the people, and the parties in my house. What did you do?

JAMIE: I got you a clown.

DANIEL: What? You mean that guy passed out in the bathroom with the flaming red fro wig?

JAMIE: That's the one.

DANIEL: I thought that was Uncle Barry. Anyway, I just felt like I could use some fresh air. What are you doing?

JAMIE: Hiding from Mom. She's trying to get me to go back to college. Can you believe that? College!

Nick enters, unsteadily.

NICK: Daniel. (Sees Daniel.) Daniel. Hey Daniel. Daniel.

DANIEL: Yeah?

NICK: Daniel. Hey Daniel, what are you doing out here?

DANIEL: Fresh air. What are you doing out here?

NICK: What am I doing out here? I'm fucking drunk, Daniel! Daniel, you are thirty years old today...and I am fucking drunk. (He climbs into Daniels lap.) Hey Daniel.

DANIEL: What the hell?

NICK: Hey Daniel. I have to tell you something. I don't want this to come off as gay--

DANIEL: No, we wouldn't want anything about this moment to become gay.

NICK: --but I just really want to tell you: I really hope you don't die from cancer, man.

DANIEL: Thanks, Nick.

NICK: No, no, no. I mean it. I really don't want you to die.

DANIEL: Thank you. That's...sweet? (Pause.) Now get off me! (He pushes Nick off.)

NICK: I think I should slow down. My auditions tomorrow.

DANIEL: Oh yeah, the big doctor audition. So what the hell is the show, anyway?

NICK: Neil Simon's "The Good Doctor."

DANIEL: "The Good Doctor?" Nick, "The Good Doctor" is Neil Simon's comic tribute to Anton Chekhov. There aren't any doctors in it.

NICK: No doctors?

DANIEL: None.

NICK: But, I've been following all those doctors around...I helped with a colonoscopy...Jamie made me watch all of season three of "Grey's Anatomy" last night.

JAMIE: Yeah, because that show's awesome.

NICK: You're dead!

Jamie springs to her feet, and Nick chases her back into the house just as Catherine enters, holding a styrofoam container with a bright red bow on it. She sits next to Daniel.

CATHERINE: (Handing him the container.) Happy Birthday.

DANIEL: (Opens it.) Chicken wings. Thank you.

CATHERINE: And, I apologize for any added stress I may have caused you this past week. But I just want you to realize that everything I do, though you may not always like it, is because I love and support you.

DANIEL: Mom. (Pause.) You tazed my doctor.

CATHERINE: Oh, fine, let's just dwell on that, why don't we? This is so like you, Daniel, always focused on the negative. You never even mention all the times I've gone with you to the doctors and haven't tazed anybody. (Pause.) So I'm a little paranoid. The day your father died, we had a huge argument about...I don't even remember, now. Something stupid...it was always something stupid. One car accident and a phone call later, and he was gone. So you'll forgive me if I have a slightly obsessive need to control the ones I love.

DANIEL: I know. And if you want to know the truth, I think part of my problem with having you down here is...this is dumb, but in a way I feel guilty. I hate having people worry about me. So...I feel bad.

CATHERINE: (Pause.) God, you are a pussy.

DANIEL: What?

CATHERINE: You feel guilty? For having cancer. You are so dumb.

DANIEL: (Pause.) Did you just call me a pussy? Are Catholics even allowed to say that?

CATHERINE: The Lord doesn't say anything against calling them like you see them.

They both laugh.

DANIEL: Fine, I'm a pussy. I can't believe I'm saying this, but...it's actually been nice having you here the past week. I mean, I could do with, like, 99% less Church going and doctor tasing, but...thank you.

CATHERINE: Oh, Daniel, you don't know how happy that makes me. I was going to wait to tell you, but now I know you'll be so happy, I have to let you know... (Pause.) I'm moving here.

DANIEL: What?

CATHERINE: I'm moving here, to the cities. To be closer to you. I already sold the place in Duluth, I figure I can stay with you and Jamie until I find my own place.

DANIEL: (In shock.) Wait...what? You're moving down here?

CATHERINE: Now I can take care of you everyday...I can come over, cook you meals, make sure you are getting to your doctors appointments, find you a girlfriend...

DANIEL: (Devastated.) Mom, I can't believe you are doing this to me! (Suddenly seeing how excited she is, he forces cheerfulness.) I mean, for me! For me. Your moving down here for me, so you can help out and just be around...constantly...all the time. (Really having to force it out.) That's so wonderful.

Catherine jumps up and gives him a big, excited hug.

CATHERINE: I'm so excited about this, Danny. Now I need to get back in...I promised a group of your friends I'd show them the old home movie where you dressed as Raggedy Anne and sang "I'm Walking on Sunshine."

Catherine exits as Daniel slumps onto the bench and sobs. He open up the "Danny" brochure and reads from the spot he was interrupted from earlier.

Spot up on Nurse Wright.

NURSE WRIGHT: "These types of questions are natural to be asking when faced with a serious health crisis, but the most important thing to remember: Live for today. Yes, it's a cliché. But whether your nine or ninety, healthy or sick, now is the only thing promised to any of us. Don't forget to enjoy it."

Spot out on Nurse Wright.

DANIEL: (Pause. He looks at the brochure.) God, this thing is dumb. (He crumples it up, and cocks his arm back as if to throw it away. He stops, pulls back, uncrumples it, and puts it in his pocket. We hear a voice from offstage yell: "Hey, Daniel, come sing 'I'm Walking on Sunshine' for us" followed by group laughter. Daniel sighs, slowly stands and heads into the house.)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY