

Nebraska

FADE IN:

INT. AUSTIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

AUSTIN, (12), dark hair, sleeps in bed.

On the nightstand, a Batman talking alarm clock activates.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Batman, The Joker is getting away.

BATMAN (V.O.)

Yes, Robin. But first we must brush
our teeth and clean up our cave.

Austin's hand falls on the alarm clock, deactivates it. He sits up, grabs his glasses from the table, puts them on. Walks across the room to the wall where a huge map of the United States hangs next to a Batman calendar.

All the blocks in February are crossed out except for the last three. The number 28 is circled.

Austin stares at the calendar and sighs.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Austin sits in the rear of the bus with JIMMY (12), freckles.

JIMMY

What did you get for number eight?

Austin's eyes fixate on MELISSA (12), blonde, pretty, who sits at the front with a group of GIRLS. They talk.

Jimmy notices Austin's trance, waves his hand at Austin's face. Austin doesn't blink.

AUSTIN

X equals forty-two.

JIMMY

Yeah, that's what I got.

Jimmy erases something in his notebook, jots down a number.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Melissa stands at the front of the class, calmly recites.

MELISSA

Pennsylvania is home to great
Americans like Benjamin Franklin,
William Penn, and Will Smith. I am
proud to live in the Keystone State.

Melissa looks up. APPLAUSE.

MR. FINCH (40), shirt and tie, sits at his desk.

MR. FINCH
Very good, Melissa.

Melissa smiles, takes her seat next to Austin. Austin leans over and whispers to her.

AUSTIN
That was good.

MELISSA
Thanks.

MR. FINCH
Okay, next victim, Rhode Island.
Jimmy.

Jimmy looks up from doodling, shocked.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Austin sits at the table, his homework laid out. Daydreams.

DAD (40), dark hair, glasses, sits across from him, reads a newspaper. He notices Austin's gaze, puts down the paper.

DAD
Can I help you with something?

AUSTIN
Do you know how many miles it is
from Pennsylvania to Nebraska?

DAD
Yes, I do. But me telling you the
answers won't help you learn.

AUSTIN
How did you know you liked Mom?

DAD
Wow, that came out of nowhere.

AUSTIN
Nevermind. It really doesn't matter.

DAD
Sure, it matters. One day I was
this nerdy kid sitting alone at the
lunch table. Your Mom sits next to
me, says hi, and my whole life
changes. I almost had a seizure.

AUSTIN

What did you do?

DAD

There was only one thing I could do.

AUSTIN

Were you really a nerdy kid?

DAD

Doesn't matter. I got your mom.

INT. AUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Austin stands at the map, draws a line from Pennsylvania to Nebraska with a marker, writes 1,145 on the line. He looks at the calendar, crosses out the number 26. Sighs.

INT. AUSTIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The Batman talking alarm clock switches on.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Batman, time is running out.

BATMAN (V.O.)

Right, old chum. No time to snooze.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Austin folds a piece of paper into a tiny cube, looks over at Jimmy. Jimmy nods, motions with his eyes.

Austin coughs. Melissa looks up from her book. Austin yawns, stretches, sticks his hand out towards Melissa. Melissa extends her hand out to his. Austin drops the note.

Mr. Finch intercepts the paper. Austin, Melissa, and Jimmy bury their noses in their books. Mr. Finch unfolds the note, reads. Austin's eyes widen, horrified.

MR. FINCH

How is your report on Nebraska coming along, Austin?

AUSTIN

Good. I guess.

MR. FINCH

You guess? I'm expecting a big finish tomorrow. My advice to you is to go for it. You know what I mean?

Mr. Finch hands the note back to Austin who tucks it away.

AUSTIN

Yes, sir.

Austin looks up at him. Mr. Finch winks.

MR. FINCH

You misspelled seizure. Okay, ladies and gentlemen, don't forget tomorrow is quiz day on all fifty states. After Austin dazzles us with his report on Nebraska.

Austin's face slowly unfreezes. Melissa looks up, smiles.

INT. AUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Austin stares at the number 27 on his calendar, crosses it out. Draws another circle around the number 28. Sighs.

INT. AUSTIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Austin lies in bed wide awake. Stares at the ceiling.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Batman, this is our last chance.

BATMAN (V.O.)

Yes, Robin. First a good breakfast.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Austin stands before the class, nervously recites. Jimmy sits and yawns. Melissa stares at Austin attentively.

AUSTIN

Nebraska is home to famous Americans President Gerald Ford. And Johnny Carson. And Marlon Brando.

Austin clears his throat.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Also, Melissa will be moving there soon. Maybe forever.

Mr. Finch looks up over his glasses. Melissa's eyes widen.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Um, I mean, so everybody make sure you say goodbye.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mr. Finch shivers, watches the students board the school busses.

Austin and Jimmy exit the school. Jimmy boards the school bus. Austin looks over, sees --

MELISSA at the bus stop. Austin walks to her, taps her shoulder. She turns and smiles.

MELISSA

There you are. I thought I missed you. My mom's picking me up.

Austin stands silent. A car pulls up and HONKS.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Well, I guess this is it.

Austin freezes. Melissa waits.

Jimmy sticks his head out the bus window.

JIMMY

Come on, Austin, the bus is leaving.

Austin stares at the ground. Melissa takes a card and envelope from her pocket, hands it to him. He looks up.

MELISSA

Here. Don't read this until you get home. Okay?

Austin nods. The car horn HONKS.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I gotta go. We can talk on Facebook. I'll see you. Whenever.

Melissa walks away. Austin walks to the bus, his head down. The bus doors open. He places one foot on the bus step.

Someone taps Austin's shoulder, he turns.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

This is your very last chance.

Austin slowly moves closer to Melissa, kisses her lips.

Melissa slowly backs away, runs off, smiling. Austin stands still, amazed.

The car pulls away. Austin waves. Smiles ear to ear.

Mr. Finch walks up behind Austin.

MR. FINCH

Nice moves.

Austin looks up, smiles.

MR. FINCH (CONT'D)
Betty Fenstermacher.

AUSTIN
Who?

MR. FINCH
She was a girl I knew a long time ago. She moved away, too. You know, I'm around you guys all day but I keep forgetting how hard it is to be twelve.

Austin exhales a cloud of cold air.

AUSTIN
It's not that bad.

FADE OUT: