

**Neil Sides**- once a handsome, strapping young man, he's now a shadow of his former self; though he still has a winning, easy-going nature. Seven years into a life sentence for the murder of his high school girlfriend, he swears that he's innocent of the crime. Despite being eligible for parole, he no longer applies...because that means expressing regret for a crime he didn't commit

INT. PRISON - VISITING ROOM – DAY

Neil sits across from Trish, who is working on Neil's case. His spirits are high.

**NEIL**

I didn't kill Emma.

(then)

My mom and I, we've written over 150 letters, trying to get someone to take another look at my case. The Court of Appeals denied my petition for a rehearing, which means I'm down to my last shot.

(a big, winning smile)

It means a ton, you joining the team.

Trish

I'm not on your team. The CIU isn't the Innocence Project. I'm not committed to exonerating you.

**NEIL**

Then why'd you come see me?

TRISH

To look at both sides of the case, figure out if your conviction has merit.

**NEIL**

Then apologies for contradicting you, Ma'am, but you are on my team. Because I don't belong in here. I didn't kill Emma. I loved her. That's the truth.

TRISH

(all business)

Walk me through what you did on the day she died.

**NEIL**

I went to school, left at 3:20, went home to get ready for the game. Came back for warm-ups at 5:00 PM.

TRISH

Did you see anyone, even talk to them on the phone in between?

**NEIL**

(no)

Usually Emma and I would hang out before games. But a recruiter was coming that night. Emma didn't want to distract me. We were supposed to meet after.

(then, sorrow welling up)

Played the game of my life that night: 3 sacks, 10 tackles, an interception. I played for her; the whole time, thinking, "Emma is gonna be so proud of me." When she wasn't there at the end, I knew something was wrong.

Neil reigns in his emotion a bit, continues on –

**NEIL (CONT'D)**

I've made good use of my time in here: earned my Associate's degree. I get out, I'm gonna finish college and graduate.

TRISH

(impressed, re: his file)

You should be eligible for parole.

**NEIL**

I don't go before the board anymore. What's their first question?

TRISH

..."Do you regret your crime?"

**NEIL**

I can't say I regret something I didn't do, can't walk out of here with people thinking I killed the girl I loved. That I still love.

TRISH

Good for you, man.

Neil appreciates the support, but, with some desperation—

**NEIL**

My mom's getting older; my niece, she's 3 -- I've only seen her in pictures. Life is slipping through my fingers in here... Please, you gotta get me out.