

After eighteen years as a starving artist, Alex Ward is giving up on his art career. His socially charged themes, disdain for art bought solely as investment and naturally shy nature all seem to conspire against him.

As Alex mulls over his future, or lack thereof, Ryan suddenly appears in a doorway on a dirty, vacant street in SoHo. He has returned from a different plane of existence for a single purpose, and that purpose is Alex. Ryan's plan is simple: to talk with Alex and steer him away from a course that will lead to Alex's suicide. To paraphrase Robert Burns, 'The best laid plans of mice and men often go astray,' and Ryan's plan fails no better.

Mugged, arrested and institutionalized, Ryan - now suffering from amnesia - no longer remembers who or what he is, much less why he is here. A random encounter with a crack addict in prison dramatically illustrates that, though his memory is gone, he retains the ability to see auras and the past events of those he encounters. Meanwhile Alex is troubled by 'dreams' of Ryan's experiences. Back home, Alex resumes his depressing routine as a part-time busboy and maintenance man. He has a conversation with a tenant who has recently been diagnosed with AIDS. During the conversation the tenant, Jeff, discloses that he will not go for treatment; accepting his death. This leads Alex to wonder what he would leave behind if he died suddenly. At a dinner with his older brother Rick and Rick's fiancée Carol, Alex and Carol argue over race and other social issues. The event reinforces for Alex how different he and Carol are and that it is no longer just him and Rick.

Clayton March, Ryan's psychiatrist, is skeptical of what Ryan claims to be until Ryan gives him a glimpse of his existence. Eventually, Ryan regains his memory and his purpose, and realizes that he is running out of time. Ryan leaves the hospital, following Alex's psychic trail to Kansas City. Resigned to his decision, Alex gives away paintings to his close friends and begins his suicide attempt with alcohol and sleeping pills. As Alex fades, Ryan knocking on his door rouses him. Finally face-to-face, Ryan sees that Alex is

in no condition to talk and 'purges' him so that he is lucid and aware. Ryan explains why he has come and from where but Alex's response is angry and bitter, asking why - with all his power - Ryan didn't do more to help him. Ryan tries to explain, stating that their purposes and goals are the same. He pleads with Alex saying that he owes it to himself not to turn away.