

"THE PROGRAM"

by

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REVISED BLUE 10/26/92

REVISED PINK 11/2/92

REVISED YELLOW 11/5/92

REVISED GREEN 11/6/92

REVISED GOLDEN ROD 11/11/92

REVISED TAN 11/23/92

SHOOTING DRAFT

FADE IN

ON BLACK SCREEN

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE (V.O.)

Allright, bowl bid ridin' here for
E.S.U. Fourth down on the Georgia
Tech 18. 4 ticks left. Kane sets 'em
down.

INSTANT CUT TO:

LINE OF TAPED KNUCKLES - NIGHT

smashing into the mud, as a football OFFENSIVE LINE comes set, frosted breath steaming across to:

The DEFENSIVE LINE digging in, ready to explode.

CLOSE ON JOE KANE

E.S.U. quarterback, barking signals. The ball is snapped, and we go to SLOW MOTION as the lines crash together in the slop.

Joe rolls to the right, looking downfield. A huge DEFENSIVE END bears down on him. Joe jukes. The end whips on by, grabbing for jersey, slipping off. But big NUMBER 75 is closing the gap. On the run, Joe releases a desperation pass toward the end zone, just as 75 catches him and buries him face-down in the swamp.

We FOLLOW THE BALL, spiraling through the slanting rain. RAY GRIFFEN, black running back, glances back for it, two DEFENSIVE BACKS with him. All three leap in unison, climbing as high as they can, clutching, clawing for the ball. The ball floats down, kisses off the tangle of fingers, splashes to the ground, and rolls to a stop in the mud. Incomplete. The BANG of the final gun snaps us back to LIVE ACTION.

Joe on his knees in the muck, stares at the goal line, then drops his head in defeat.

ANGLE ON SAM WINTERS

Betraying little emotion, Coach SAM WINTERS, wiry, intense, early 50's, takes off his headset, lets it drop, heads across the field.

REPORTER #1 (V.O.)

Coach, this is the second year in a row you've failed to go to a bowl game. Do you feel your program's in decline?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Coach Winters stands outside his office surrounded by reporters, a bouquet of microphones stuck in his face.

WINTERS

(keeping his cool)

No, we're just a young team on the verge. We'll be back in a major bowl next year.

Elsewhere in the locker room, we pick up a weary, mud-splattered Joe Kane taking off his pads in front of his locker. ALVIN MACK, black linebacker, comes by. Alvin exudes danger; big, fast and hostile on the field, slightly surly, a sense of repressed anger off it.

ALVIN

Good throw, Joe. It was there.

JOE

So was half their team.

(trailing off)

Shit, another Christmas at home.

ALVIN

Next year, man. Next year we sell out. Next year we dominate.

ON COACH WINTERS AGAIN

still fielding questions.

REPORTER #2

You still need a deep threat or a breakaway back to go with Joe Kane. What are you gonna do to address this need?

COACH WINTERS

(a little edgy)

Stop wastin' my time talkin' to you guys for a start.

As Winters gets up to go, we hear:

WILSON (V.O.)

I'm not gonna lead you into the fog
here, Sam...

INT. CHANCELLOR WILSON'S OFFICE - DAY

CHANCELLOR GRANT WILSON, 60, grey-haired eminence, sits behind his desk. Seated across from him are Coach Winters and GALEN HOWARD, 50, the Athletic Director.

CHANCELLOR WILSON

I'm concerned about our Program.
It's always been a source of pride
to our students and alumni, but two
straight so-so seasons are having a
damaging effect on our fund-raising,
both public and private.

WINTERS

(half-joking)

Then stop raising the entrance
requirements on me. We never could
have gotten Alvin Mack in here under
the new guidelines.

CHANCELLOR WILSON

As Chancellor, my first responsibility
is to the academic interests of this
University.

Wilson points to a representation of a football field affixed to the wall. A football rests on the 40 yard line, which is marked 160 million. The end zone (60 yards away) is \$400,000,000.

WILSON

At a time when we're committed to a
400 million dollar building program,
alumni donations are down 15% the
last two years. Because they've also
voiced their displeasure to their
legislators, we can expect a
corresponding drop in state funds.

HOWARD

The Athletic Fund is suffering too.
Season tickets sales are off,
merchandising's slow...

WINTERS

You layin' all this at my door?
There's been a recession on.

CHANCELLOR WILSON

Yes, but the heaviest drop has been
from the big donors, the 100,000
dollar club. These people are
recession proof. They sit in my box
every game, and they're much more
generous when we're ranked and going
to bowl games. Two of them, as you
know, are on the Board of Regents,
including the Chairman.

WINTERS

What are you trying to say to me,
Grant? After 12 years, my job's in
jeopardy?

CHANCELLOR WILSON

I'm not prepared to discuss your job
right now; I just want you to be
aware of the situation. The alumni
and the legislature are unhappy and
they vote with their checkbooks. I
don't pretend to be an expert on
football, Sam, and I'll deny that
this conversation ever took place,
but I do know we need to win next
year.

INT. STADIUM TUNNEL - LATE AFTERNOON

Coach Winters flanked by two assistant coaches, HUMES and
CLAYTON, walks down a cavernous tunnel beneath the stands to
a waiting car. At the end of the tunnel, a scarecrow EFFIGY
of Coach Winters hangs from an overhead pipe.

CLAYTON

(ignoring the effigy)

Tickets are in your coat. Itinerary
and player profiles are in your
briefcase. We got a 9:00am tomorrow
in Philly with this kid Darnell
Jefferson.

Coach Winters stops, looks up at the effigy. Humes and Clayton
fear an outburst, a display of rage.

WINTERS

Looks like I've lost weight.

That's it. He strides on. Humes and Clayton race to catch
up.

CLAYTON

This kid's the gamebreaker we've
been lookin' for.

MUSIC STARTS. TITLES BEGIN.

EXT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - EVENING

A Boeing 737 roars into the night sky.

COACH CLAYTON (V.O.)

Had a 108 yard kickoff return against
Taft. Michigan's been down to see
him twice.

INT. ST. LUKE'S HOME FOR BOYS - MORNING

Winters, Humes, Clayton and Joe Kane sit across from DARNELL
JEFFERSON and REVEREND WALLACE in a tattered parlor room.
Other boys of various ages and color look in from the
adjoining door. Darnell is black, good-looking, street-hip,
the letters D.J. shaved in block letters into his fade.

WINTERS

Darnell, you have the potential to
start for us as a freshman. That 108
yard kickoff return you made against

Taft? One of the greatest runs I've ever seen a high school player make. Now, Michigan is set at tailback for two years. You won't play till you're a junior. With Joe here gettin' you the ball, runnin' 28 Thunder right, you'll be All-American with us as a Sophomore.

REVEREND WALLACE

Yes, but I'm really more concerned with Darnell's education. He came here late. He's got some catching up to do.

WINTERS

Believe me, education is the first priority in our program. That's why all the players are smarter than me. After all, a football coach is smart enough to understand the game, but dumb enough to think it's important.

This gets a little chuckle from the Reverend. It was intended to.

EXT. RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA TENANT FARM - DAY

We see a run-down tenant SHACK on the edge of a large cotton field.

INT. TENANT SHACK - DAY

Two rooms. Dirt floor. Two-foot Christmas tree on an apple cart. Alvin Mack's MOTHER opens a Christmas present as Alvin and his TWO SISTERS look on. It's an ENGRAVED LIONSHEAD DOORKNOCKER, the kind you'd find on the door of an affluent home. The inscription reads THE MACK'S. Alvin's mother thinks it's beautiful, but isn't sure what to do with it.

ALVIN'S MOTHER

It's real pretty, Alvin.

ALVIN

When I turn pro, I'll get you the house to go with it.

INT. COACH WINTERS' HOUSE - DAY

Winters' daughter LOUANNE, 20, is on the phone with her father. Louanne is sexy, clothes too tight, but good-natured, somewhat needy and loyal as a labrador. She holds a hopelessly out-of-style sweater her dad's given her for Christmas.

LOUANNE

(lying)

It's real nice, Dad.

INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - DAY

Winters sits on the bed, eating Chinese take-out, the phone cradled in his neck, talking to Louanne.

WINTERS

I knew you'd like it, Lou. Merry Christmas. Put some fresh flowers on your Mom's grave for me. I'll be home in a couple days.

EXT. SMALL BRICK HOUSE - DAY

Battered and old, in a declining Pennsylvania neighborhood, hard by a STEEL WORKS.

INT. SMALL BRICK HOUSE - DAY

Joe sits on the couch with his older brother, FRANK, watching the bowl game he would have been in, had E.S.U. won their last game. His FATHER, a grizzled man in his fifties, nods in and out in a tattered armchair. All three have been drinking beer, their empties scattered around. Frank tosses Joe an Iron City beer.

FRANK

Have another Vitamin I, Joey. Didn't think we'd see you here this Christmas, little brother.

JOE

You won't next year.

JOE'S FATHER

(getting up)

Yeh, well we won't rent your place
on the couch.

As Joe's father heads for the kitchen, he hangs his empty
beer can, by the pull tab, on a branch of the Christmas tree.
We see that the whole tree is covered with cans.

INT. PHILADELPHIA BOY'S HOME - NIGHT

Darnell talks on a pay phone in the hall.

DARNELL

You're from E.S.U?

GIRL'S VOICE

Yeh. I was just sittin' here by the
fire doin' my homework, and decided
to give you a call. See how you're
doin'.

INT. OFFICE IN E.S.U. ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

We see who Darnell is talking to: AUTUMN HALEY, beautiful
black girl, stylish, long straight hair, definitely not
street.

AUTUMN

Coach Winters has been telling me
about you. I'm looking forward to
seeing you when you come to visit.
I'll be your guide. You are coming
to visit aren't you?

We PULL BACK and REVEAL Autumn in an office with 15 other
telephones, a coed on every one. ASST. COACH MYERS supervises
with a clipboard of names and numbers.

EXT. TUNNEL OF WOLFDEN STADIUM - DAY

Joe leads Darnell down to the end of the tunnel, where Autumn is waiting. He introduces them. She's even more attractive than Darnell thought she'd be.

She takes Darnell's hand and leads him out onto the field where he's greeted by the E.S.U. BAND playing the school fight song. The CHEERLEADERS whip into action, legs kicking, pom-poms whirling.

The band parts and Darnell walks out into the 90,000 seat stadium, an awesome sight for any young man. Autumn points to the giant DIAMOND VISION SCOREBOARD. Darnell's name and picture appear. The stadium P.A. ANNOUNCER cuts in.

P.A. ANNOUNCER

Now for the starting line-up for the E.S.U. Timber Wolves. At tailback, number 20, Darnell Jefferson!!

DARNELL

You got that right.

Darnell, in his excitement, does a little end-zone dance. Slaps hands with Joe.

EXT. PICTURESQUE CAMPUS WALK - NIGHT

Romantic, Ivy-League look, lit by soft-glo footlights. Darnell and Autumn walk, side by side, stopping outside Autumn's dorm.

DARNELL

Thanks for showin' me around, Autumn. I don't meet too many females like you. You got a lotta class. Real efficacious. Maybe I'll check you out in the fall.

AUTUMN

I hope so, Darnell.

He leans down to kiss her. She hesitates, not sure about this, then comes forward, kisses him on the lips, starts to let it deepen, then breaks it off.

AUTUMN

Good night.

As he watches her go up the steps, we go to:

EXT. THE BOYS HOME - DAY

Early February: It's National Decision Day and Darnell's home is under seige. Reporters. Microphones. Television cameras. Darnell steps out onto the porch wearing an ESU jersey with #1 emblazoned on it.

DARNELL

Now you know where I'm going and what we're indubitably going to be.

MUSIC and TITLES END.

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS - DAY

A hot, late summer day. Over the deserted Quad, we see the title: 6 MONTHS LATER.

It fades and we MOVE TO REVEAL a city BUS pulling up at a curb adjacent to the Quad. Off steps Darnell, carrying one battered suitcase. Joe Kane and BUD LITE KAMINSKY, offensive line tackle, are there to greet him.

JOE

Hey, Darnell, Welcome to E.S.U.

DARNELL

(shaking hands)

Yeh, good to see you guys. What happened to the band and the dancin' honies?

JOE

Regular students don't come back for two weeks yet. Not that they woulda been here. Now that you've enrolled, you're just another wormshit freshman.

INT. BROWNING ATHLETIC DORM - DAY

A dorm devoted exclusively to football players. Luxurious lounges, study halls, saunas, recreation and media rooms. Spacious living quarters. A world unto itself.

Joe and Bud usher Darnell into his room.

JOE

Here's your room. If you need anything call the hall manager.

Darnell looks around, taking it all in. He tries to be cool, but this is easily the nicest room he's ever had.

JOE

See ya later. Freshman Placement test tomorrow at nine. McKinnley Hall.

Joe and Bud start down the hall. Darnell turns back into his room, then starts to pace off it's dimensions, heel to toe.

EXT. THE 911 - NIGHT

College hang-out, bar, catering to athletes and their admirers. A black HARLEY DAVIDSON, driven by Joe Kane with Darnell on the back, pulls up at the curb. They get off, head inside.

INT. THE 911 - NIGHT

Joe and Darnell pass a table of three girls, conspicuous among them is Louanne Winters. Joe and Darnell give her a nod and proceed on to a table where three fellow players wait: Bud Lite, BOBBY COLLINS, good-looking, silver-tongued ladies man and 2nd string quarterback, and STEVE LATTIMER, heavily muscled, surf-punk defensive end. Between them is a large pitcher of beer.

BOBBY

Uh, oh, the Lead Dog is back. There goes my cover of the media guide.

JOE

Hey, Bobby, Lats, how ya doin? This is Darnell Jefferson, freshman tailback.

DARNELL

How ya' doin'?

BOBBY

I was hopin' you'de have rolled your bike or somethin'. Nothin' serious, just enough to keep you out for the season.

JOE

(pouring himself some beer)

No such luck, Backup Man. But I'll try to engineer a few blowouts. Get you get some mop-up time.

(studying Lattimer)

Shit, Lats, you look buffed, man. You put on some weight?

LATTIMER

35 lbs. Spent the summer in the gym. I'm tired of watchin' you guys play. I intend to start this year.

BUD

You get any bigger, you can play offense.

LATTIMER

Yeh, but don't I have to get dumber too?

Bud takes a good-natured swipe at him. Lattimer deflects it.

Joe notices Bobby looking over at Louanne. She gives Bobby a surreptitious little wave to come over and sit with her. He gives her the "just a minute" sign.

BUD

You still seein' Louanne?

BOBBY

Yeh. Now and then, when the tide rises. Don't want her to think this is some kind've exclusive deal.

JOE

Coach finds out you're nailin' his daughter, you'll be playin' dorm ball.

BOBBY

I'll bail before that. Besides, this is what he gets for not startin' me.

Bobby laughs and heads over to Louanne's table, as Joe pours himself another beer.

Alvin enters the bar, goes to Joe's table, plops a copy of Sports Illustrated down in front of Joe.

ALVIN

Hey, man, you seen this?

On the cover is a picture of Joe and ONE OTHER QUARTERBACK, TIM WAYMEN. The coverline reads, HEISMAN HOPEFULS: THE YEAR OF THE QUARTERBACK.

ALVIN

(ribbing Joe)

You must be some very bad-ass motherfucker.

Joe stares at the cover. He's more stunned than elated.

JOE

Jesus...

LATTIMER

What? You didn't know?

JOE

I knew there was gonna be an article.

I didn't know it was gonna be on the cover.

ALVIN

Shit, we do all the work. You get all the pub. Too bad we're not allowed to hit you in practice. Be fun to kick the shit out of a Heisman Trophy Candidate.

JOE

I guess you'll have to wait till we get to the pros.

ALVIN

(to Darnell)

Beer boy, get me some.

DARNELL

Are you serious?

ALVIN

Does it look like I'm serious?

Joe drains his beer, pours another. Lattimer starts to read from the article.

LATTIMER

Listen to this. "E.S.U. has a solid nucleus returning, but the Timberwolves, coming off two disappointing seasons, will only go as far as the strong right arm of Heisman Candidate Joe Kane will take them." That right, Joe? You gonna lead us to the promised land?

JOE

I'm gonna lead... but can you follow?

Muted chuckles, but set faces. The challenge accepted. Joe chugs his beer, pours another.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The crowd from the 911 (Bud, Alvin, Lattimer, Darnell, Bobby and Louanne) follow Joe down the hill behind the bar toward a busy two-lane highway. Joe, a little drunker than the others, starts HOWLING at the moon like a Timber Wolf. The others join in.

BUD

What are we doin', Joe?

JOE

(slightly slurred)

There's something I wanta try. Gotta wake up our Mojo. Start settin' the tone for the season.

BUD

This is not a good time to be settin' anything. You're in no shape...

Suddenly Joe makes a dash out onto the highway.

BUD

Joe, c'mon Joe, don't be an asshole. Joe! God-damnit, why's he always doin' shit like this? Coach'll fuckin' kill me. Alvin, go get him, will ya?

ALVIN

Hell no, you go get his ass. Crazy motherfucker.

Joe stands on the white line, cars and trucks whizzing by, then lies down on his back, arms at his side.

JOE'S POINT OF VIEW

Cars and trucks blast toward us, roar on by, right on top of us, honking, spraying grime, shaking the asphalt.

Bud and the others on the side of the road are increasingly worried now.

BUD

Fuck this shit.

Pissed off, Bud sprints out to the white line. The draft-wake of a passing truck almost blows him over.

BUD

C'mon, Joe, that's enough. Let's get the hell outa here. What if somebody drifts or crosses the line to pass?

JOE

What's the matter, Bud? Can't you follow?

Bud hesitates a second, scared, but stung by this dare.

BUD

(torn)

God-damnit, god-damnit. Shit.

Bud can't fight it. He lies down on the line, his head touching Joe's feet. Joe begins to HOWL again. Bud joins in. Alvin and the others can't believe it.

ALVIN

Startin' to look like a loaf of Wonder bread out there.

BOBBY

They're makin' us look like pussies, ya know. Standin' here suckin' our thumbs.

LATTIMER

(to Alvin)

Yeh, and there's nobody from the Defense out there.

Bobby and Lattimer look at each other a beat. Time to ante up. Both turn to Alvin.

ALVIN

What are you lookin' at? You think you're bad?

Alvin snorts in disgust and starts out onto the blacktop. Bobby and Lattimer smile, go to follow. Louanne grabs Bobby, holds him back.

LOUANNE

(vaguely sexual)

Bobby, be careful, o.k? Please, be careful.

Bobby smiles, grabs her ass, pulls her to him, gives her a long, passionate kiss, then sprints out to the white line, leaving her breathless.

Alvin, Bobby and Lattimer lie down in front of Bud. Now there's a line of five, a human highway median. Everybody scared shitless, howling their lungs out.

Louanne and Darnell watch from the side of the road.

DARNELL

This guy do this kinda shit a lot?
They never mentioned this in recruiting.

Finally, Joe laughing wildly, jumps up and they all scramble back to safety. Out of breath, but pumped up, they exchange exhilarated high fives. Alvin just shakes his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MORNING

Twenty freshman football players, including Darnell, are scattered at tables around the room, writing furiously in test booklets, as a PROCTOR paces the room. Darnell starts to write an answer, stops, stumped. Worried, he looks at the clock, goes on to the next page.

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS - MORNING

Darnell and Joe walk across campus. Darnell carries a gleaming, chromed TROPHY with a football player on top. He's still thinking about the test.

DARNELL

I don't know... I left a lot of 'em blank.

JOE

Don't worry, you'll do all right.
Lotta people don't finish.

DARNELL

(not convinced)
Yeh.

JOE

What are you doin' with the trophy?

DARNELL

Coach Winters asked me to bring it to the meeting. I don't know what for.

Suddenly Darnell sees Autumn walking across the Quad.

DARNELL

I'll see ya at the meeting.
(handing him the trophy)
Take this for me, will ya?

Joe starts to protest, but Darnell is already off, racing across the Quad, quickly catching up with Autumn.

DARNELL

Hey, Autumn, hold up! What're you doing here? I thought students didn't come back for two weeks.

AUTUMN

(rather coolly)
I came back early to see a friend.

DARNEL

You're looking fresh, Autumn. A package of pulchritudiness. What about getting together later tonight?

Maybe get a pizza? They got pizza in this town don't they?

AUTUMN
I can't tonight.

DARNELL
How about tomorrow night?

AUTUMN
I don't think it's a real good idea for us to see each other, Darnell.

DARNELL
What's the matter? I'm not good enough for you all of a sudden? Too young, is that it? I'm not, ya know. They held me back a year.

AUTUMN
No, it's not that... I've got a boyfriend.

DARNELL
Did you have this boyfriend when you showed me around?

AUTUMN
(reluctant to admit it)
Yes.

DARNELL
Yeah, well, it didn't seem to bother you then. I'm willing to overlook it now.

AUTUMN
I was mad at him.

DARNELL
For what?

AUTUMN

I caught him with another girl. A white girl.

DARNELL

And you're still with this nigger?

She nods, slightly embarrassed.

AUTUMN

Look, I got to get going, Darnell. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to lead you on. I'm glad you came here.

She starts walking away.

DARNELL

Wait a minute. I can at least walk with you, can't I? Nothin' wrong with that.

She speeds up. He speeds up.

AUTUMN

I'm in a hurry.

DARNELL

I can keep up. I run the forty in four-four.

She's just about to say something when RAY GRIFFEN arrives. Ray's the starting tailback, black, handsome, clean-cut, well-spoken, middle class.

RAY

Hey, Autumn --

This is exactly what Autumn didn't want to happen. Ray and Darnell eye each other like a couple of roosters.

AUTUMN

Hi, Ray. This is...

DARNELL

(cutting in, offering

his hand)
Darnell Jefferson.
(pointedly)
Tailback.

RAY
(shaking Darnell's
hand)
Ray Griffen.
(just as pointedly)
Starting tailback.

DARNELL
I know. That's why they recruited
me.

Autumn can't believe he said this. She starts to interject
something to break the tension, but never gets the chance.

RAY
The two guys they recruited before
you are handing out Gatorade now.
(making the jerkoff
motion)
Better start strengthening your wrist.

DARNELL
We'll see.
(departing, to Ray)
Give my best to Miss Lilly.

Autumn's mortification is complete.

RAY
(to himself)
What the hell is that supposed to
mean?

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS - DAY

Establish the new, modern KELLER CENTER, home of the E.S.U.
Athletic Department.

INT. KELLER CENTER - DAY

The football meeting room. A quarter amphitheatre. The Freshman, including Darnell, down in front. Nervous, talking very little, eyes playing over the pictures of former E.S.U. greats arranged on the Wall of Honor.

Behind them, the Upperclassmen, bantering, conversation punctuated with laughter.

A door opens. The Assistant Coaches file in. The room hushes immediately. Coach Winters walks in. The Upperclassmen break into applause; the Freshmen quickly take their cue and join in.

WINTERS

Good to see you again, gentlemen.

(catching sight of
Darnell)

Jefferson, either take off the earring
or put on a dress.

The upperclassmen hoot, as Darnell, embarrassed, takes off his earring.

WINTERS

I wanna talk a little about what
we're trying to do here. There are
many highly respected people who
feel football is about preparation
for life.

The players nod reverentially at this established axiom of the football cannon.

WINTERS

These people are full of shit. You
see, football is not like life.

(pause)

It's better. More exciting, more
intense, more fun. In life, people
are always wondering how they measure
up; whether they're getting ahead or
fallin' behind. In football, you
know. Every week you get a chance to

show what you're made of, a chance to demonstrate the physical and personal qualities that all those poor bastards who can't play this game are left to agonize about.

Spreading smiles all around. It's good to be a football player.

WINTERS

Last year we didn't make enough of those chances. Last year everyone felt we let the school down. Fuck the school. We let ourselves down.

(pointing to the Wall of Honor)

We let down a great tradition, a 120-year-old Line of Champions.

The smiles are gone. Lots of set faces now. Shame. anger, retribution.

WINTERS

Any football program worth the name is a special brotherhood, an elite corps of warriors, a select group of knights. That first time our starting unit takes the field, the first time we huddle up; that's our inner circle, that's our Round Table. If I were an upperclassman, I'd be real nervous about my seat, cause we got some very talented new-comers this year. Guys who want a place at the Table.

(producing Darnell's trophy from behind the podium)

This is the trophy one of our freshman, Darnell Jefferson, won as a Pennsylvania State High School First Team All-American. You know what this says to me?

The freshmen are hanging on every word.

WINTERS

Not a god-damn thing.

He smashes the trophy on the podium, breaking it in half, shattering the base. Darnell and the other freshmen are agog. The upperclassmen stifle laughs, particularly Ray Griffen.

WINTERS

(to the freshmen)

Everybody here was a high school All-American.

(to all the players)

Whatever any of you have done before is out the window. We're startin' over. Ground zero. The Table is empty.

Are you ready?

The upperclassmen nod, steely, purposeful. We go to the freshmen. They're not so sure.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. E.S.U. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Passing drills. Joe Kane takes a snap, fakes to pass, throws an out. The ball sails two feet over the receiver's head. Joe's angry with himself.

COACH CLAYTON

(to Winters)

He's too pumped up. Tryin' to win the damn Heisman on every throw. I'm not sure he's ready for all this hype.

COACH HUMES

Little late to be worryin' about that. If we don't follow up the Sports Illustrated cover with something, it'll look like we didn't believe in our own player.

WINTERS

Don't worry, Joe's a tough kid. He'll be alright.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Scrimmage. Joe hands off to Darnell. He sweeps right, cuts it up, blows past the end. In a spectacular display of broken field running, Darnell breaks to the sideline, cuts back, eluding the corner back, and stiffarms the safety. Alvin, pursuing the play, finally tackles him from behind, stripping the ball at the same time. There's a wild scramble for the fumble. Darnell is crushed under the pile, as the defense recovers it, ruining an otherwise brilliant run.

The players unpile to reveal Darnell, writhing on the ground, the wind knocked out of him. Ray Griffen runs by to take his place.

GRIFFEN

Hey, nice writhing, Jefferson. You got all the moves.

WINTERS

(shouting to the team)

Allright, move it up. Let's go, 15 yards, run the next play.

The scrimmage moves up 15 yards leaving Darnell behind. Winters sprints over to Lattimer, grabs him by the face mask.

WINTERS

Cut the necktie tackle horseshit. You think you're in some kinda highlight reel? He left you huggin' air. Target his guts. Drive right through his abdomen. I wanta see snot bubbles in his nose. I wanta see shit in his underwear.

Lattimer nods chastised. Winters moves over to check on Darnell.

WINTERS

You injured, Jefferson, or just hurt?

DARNELL

(gasping)

What do you mean?

WINTERS

If you're hurt, you can still play.

If you're injured you can't. Are you hurt or are you injured?

DARNELL

I think I'm just hurt.

WINTERS

O.k., then get up.

Winters extends a hand. Darnell grabs it, struggles shakily to his feet

WINTERS

Nice run. Think what it coulda done for us if we still had the ball.

(handing him the ball)

This is a football. I want you to carry it with you wherever you go.

Never let it out of your sight.

(to the rest of the team)

Any of you see him on campus, take a swipe at the ball. Try to knock it out of his hands. Recover it.

(to Darnell again)

If anybody, but you, returns this ball to me, you'll wish you'de never been born.

Winters wheels off leaving a wobbly Darnell alone with his football.

WINTERS (V.O.)

This isn't gonna get it, goddamnit.

INT. WINTER'S OFFICE, LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Winters, mad as hell, is berating his assistant coaches who are sitting, cowed in his office.

WINTERS

I see tackling, but I don't see hitting. I see effort, but I don't see ferocity. What do you think, they're gonna motivate themselves? Football's just a game to most of these kids. This is our program, our livelihood. It's our job to make them care as much about it as we do. Make them hate me if you have to. It'll bring them together, give them a focus. So get off your butts and put the fear of God in these guys.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER AFTERNOON

Dead tired players toweling off, dressing. The trainer's room is crowded with aching, cramped-up, contused players. Across the way, Lattimer lifts weights, alone in the weight room. Clayton and Humes consider this from outside Winters' office.

CLAYTON

Shit, Lattimer's an animal all of a sudden. Benchin' 450. He's gotta be on somethin'.

HUMES

What, steroids? Why do you always think my guys are juicin'?

CLAYTON

I don't know... he's on the punt team for three years, then gains 35 pounds of rip in one summer and an attitude to go with it.

Winters, who's heard all this, comes by.

WINTERS

We're not doctors, gentlemen. The

NCAA has testing programs for this.

Let's let them worry about it.

(to Clayton)

Besides, it's not that hard to put
on 35 pounds in a summer, if you
really hit the gym.

Winters walks on into his office. Clayton nods, realizing
this subject is now closed.

INT. DARNELL'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Darnell walks in, wrung out from the day's practice, stumbles
to the bed where he sees something that stops him - lying
there is his PENNSYLVANIA STATE ALL AMERICAN TROPHY. Coach
Winters actually smashed a replica. A smile appears on
Darnell's tired face.

INT. TRAINING TABLE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

For football players only. Bud Lite moves through the
cafeteria line.

BUD

What you got tonight?

CAFETERIA WORKER

Choice of three entrees. Shrimp,
lasagna, T-bone steak.

BUD

Tough choice. I'll take all three.

CAFETERIA WORKER

What a surprise.

ANGLE ON DARNELL

at another table with Alvin and several other black players.
Lattimer is the only white.

DARNELL

When do they give ya the scores on
that Placement Test?

LATTIMER

Who cares? I flunked it three times,
before I got in.

ALVIN

Long as you're in the program, they'll
get you through. Maybe not with a
degree, but they'll keep you eligible.
Just don't do nothin' embarrassing
they can't cover you for.

LATTIMER

Hell, they even give Alvin copies of
his tests in advance. He sells 'em
for a hundred bucks a pop to people
in his class. 'Course he's gotta
have somebody read 'em to him.

ALVIN

Fuck you, doughboy. I can read. See
that shoe?
(points to his shoes)
That says Nike.

DARNELL

I still don't wanna flunk that test.
I wanta get a degree.

ALVIN

What do you think, nigger? You're
gonna be on the Supreme Court? All
you need to know is how to sign an
N.F.L. contract.

Darnell's stung by this. He'd like to think of himself as
capable of more.

Suddenly, Coach Winters appears at the door, a surprise
visitor to the training table. All the players wearing
baseball caps, quickly doff them. Winters is angry.

WINTERS

What's the matter with you guys?

You're supposed to be a team. Winning depends on thinking and acting and going to war together. But you don't even eat like a team. You eat like two teams. A white one and a black one. What do I have to do? Make out a seating chart? Now get up. Move around. Mix it up. Now!

The players all look at each other, then reluctantly get up and change tables. Darnell sits next to Joe.

DARNELL

(mock introduction)

Hi there. Darnell Jefferson. I'm a young black man.

JOE

Hey, glad to meet ya. Joe Kane, Caucasian. So what doya think a that new Garth Brooks album?

DARNELL

I love that motherfucker.

Coach Winters surveys the scene, sees that all the tables are integrated now.

WINTERS

That's more like it.

He turns and walks on out. Immediately, the players begin to drift back to their old tables.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - NIGHT

Joe, Bud Lite and Bobby Collins, all suffering from various aches and pains are getting Naperson and analgesic balm out of the non-prescription drug cabinet. Joe pops a Nap and looks across to the weight room where a stunning co-ed CAMILLE SCHAEFFER works a knee lift. Camille's the perfect marriage of Southern patrician beauty and athletic confirmation. Joe leaves the others, heads over, pokes his head in.

JOE
How ya' doin'?

CAMILLE
Fine.

JOE
Little late to be workin' out, isn't
it?

CAMILLE
(with a little edge)
Only time I could get in here when
the football team wasn't usin' it.

JOE
(trying to get a rise
out of her)
Well, if it wasn't for the football
team, might not be a weight room to
use. You tryin' to firm up a little,
or what?

CAMILLE
(unfazed)
Don't need to firm up. I'm
strengthening my knee. Had
arthroscopic surgery.

JOE
Had my knee scoped once too. When
you're finished here, maybe we could
get a yogurt, compare scars.

CAMILLE
Sorry, I don't date football players.
They're all full of themselves. I
saw you on the cover of Sports
Illustrated, so you're probably worse
than most.

JOE
That's real open minded of you. So
you won't consider doin' anything

with me?

CAMILLE

No.

JOE

Well at least tell me what happened to your knee. What'd you do? Fall outa your convertible?

Camille stops her knee lift, turns to Joe. We think she's going to fire on him. Wrong.

CAMILLE

You know, there's maybe one thing I'd do with you.

JOE

What's that?

CAMILLE

Tennis. I'll play tennis with you.

Camille starts to walk away.

JOE

Tennis. You mean now? It's raining.

SMASH CUT TO:

CAMILLE - TENNIS COURTS - NIGHT

smashing a two-fisted forehand right at us, grunting with the exertion. Joe scrambles to get it back, but Camille's a world-class player. She attacks with a vengeance, blasting every shot ala Jimmy Connors, as Bud Lite and Bobby Collins watch, amazed.

We begin a SERIES OF CUTS detailing Camille's relentless dismantling of Joe: Camille drilling a backhand down the line, Joe barely getting it back to the net. Camille hitting a powerhouse service ace, Joe lunging and whiffing the return. Camille crushing another forehand. Joe crushes it back, sends it over the fence and into the parking lot. Camille serving

again at match point. Joe pops up a weak return. Camille puts it away with a powerhouse overhead, the ball almost knocking Joe down. He flings his racket against the fence. Camille comes to the net to shake hands, but Joe hangs back.

CAMILLE

Thanks for the game, Heisman. You took it really well.

And she walks away along to the net. Joe goes after her, pissed.

JOE

What's this Heisman crap?

Camille's taken aback, not realizing she'd struck a nerve.

JOE

I didn't say anything about being a Heisman candidate. I don't go around strokin' myself about it. So what's this shit you're givin' me?

CAMILLE

I... I'm sorry... I just figured you were probably kissin' yourself in the mirror every morning.

JOE

You figured wrong.

Now Joe walks away and Camille goes after him.

CAMILLE

So what do you want, an apology? I just gave you one.

JOE

I want a rematch.

CAMILLE

A rematch?

JOE

Some other sport. I took my beating.
You owe me one. Either that or we go
out.

Camille considers, tries to figure out what she'd dislike
least, knowing it'd be cheap to choose neither.

CAMILLE
I'll think about it.

Camille walks off, disappearing through the gate. Joe walks
off in the other direction. Bud Lite and Bobby follow.

BOBBY
Real good date, Joe. Remind me to
take her out.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS - MORNING

Opening day of school. We take CUTS of students arriving,
football players checking out the new girls from atop the
wall of the athletic dorm, Louanne and Autumn greeting
returning sisters at the sorority, students registering for
classes etc.

INT. ACADEMIC ADVISOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Darnell sits across from WILLIAM SMITH, Academic Advisor.

ADVISOR SMITH
Darnell, I've reviewed your placement
test and I'm afraid you failed to
meet our entrance requirements in
two areas.

DARNELL
What does that mean? I can't play
football?

ADVISOR SMITH

No. It means you're going to have to take some remedial classes, what we call "zero level" courses. Specifically Math 0 and English 0.

Darnell is clearly deflated by this painful indication of his academic standing.

ADVISOR SMITH

You won't get college credit for them, but they will help you prepare to take the Placement Test again at the end of the quarter. If you pass at that time you'll be able to officially enter the university and take college level courses. You'll still be able to take an American History survey course, but it won't count on your record until you pass the Placement Test. But first things first. To start, I'm approving a tutor for you.

DARNELL

A tutor? I don't need no tutor.

ADVISOR SMITH

Any tutor. And yes you do.

INT. ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A meeting of the football brain trust; Coach Winters, Athletic Director, GALEN HOWARD, a publicist, SHARON BRAVER, and the Sports Information Director (S.I.D.) LARRY NICHOLS. Also present is Joe Kane, somewhat discomfited at being the center of all this attention.

HOWARD

I think both Joe and the university are best served by a straightforward Heisman campaign. Nothing too gimmicky.

BRAVER

We've compiled a mailing list of around 1300 opinion makers; newspapers, football writers, and sports anchors. First we send them a packet on Joe and his achievements. Bio, stats, plus human interest stuff; commitment to academics, charity work, etc. Then we update it each week with a postcard. Heisman voters hate opening envelopes.

Joe is increasingly uneasy with all this.

JOE

I haven't really done any charity work...

BRAVER

You're gonna start. We've got some things lined up.

NICHOLS

Unfortunately, because we weren't in the top 20 last year, we only have one network T.V. game to give Joe national exposure. Although it's a good one; Michigan. But we'll also be taping all our other games and buying satellite time. That way we can produce our own highlight package and interview pieces and send them out to T.V. stations all over the country for their sportscasts.

WINTERS

Any questions, Joe?

If Joe was uneasy before, he's overwhelmed now. He tries not to show it. After all, who could turn down a Heisman campaign? Still it's a megaton of pressure.

JOE

Ah, no... I just... you really think I got a shot to win this?

WINTERS

Hell, yes. Plus it's a good thing for the program. Publicizes the school, gives a boost to recruiting, and it's a great thing for you. Jumps up your draft position, the size of your first contract, everything. It's a hell of an opportunity.

NICHOLS

All you gotta do is back it up on the field, and we have no doubts about that, cause we know "Kane is Able."

Nichols holds up a black CAMPAIGN BUTTON with the phrase "Kane is Able" emblazoned on it in gold letters. This gets a rise out of everyone except Joe, who's still not sure about all this.

INT. JOE KANE'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Joe lies on his bed, staring up at the ceiling, unable to get to sleep.

INT. CAMILLE'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

The phone rings. Camille, who's been asleep, rolls over and answers it.

CAMILLE

Hello...

ON JOE

JOE

This is Joe Kane. What did you decide?

CAMILLE

(still drowsy)

What?

(looking at the clock)

It's 3:00 in the morning.

JOE

I wanta know what you decided.

CAMILLE

I don't know... I couldn't think of any other sports I could beat you at.

JOE

Then I'll pick you up tonight at 6:00.

He hangs up.

CAMILLE

What?

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

Autumn sits at a tutorial table, looking at her notes. She becomes aware of someone approaching. She looks up to see Darnell.

DARNELL

Hey, Autumn.

AUTUMN

Hi, Darnell. What are you doin here?

DARNELL

My advisor says I need a tutor. Ya know, just to get me over a couple rough spots.

(showing her a paper)

I saw your name on this list. I figured if you couldn't keep my attention, nobody could.

AUTUMN

I'm sorry, Darnell, but I've already been assigned. You're gonna have to find somebody else. I'm tutoring Scott Sherman.

DARNELL

Not anymore. I asked Coach Winters to switch us.

AUTUMN

Coach Winters wouldn't do that.

DARNELL

Yeh he would. I'm a bigger prospect than Sherman.

(pointing across the way)

He's a lineman on the scout team.

Autumn looks back to where Darnell is pointing. Sure enough, SCOTT SHERMAN is hard at work with another Tutor. Autumn can't believe it. She tries to compose herself.

Darnell sits down across the table from her.

DARNELL

C'mon Autumn, you could teach me some real erudition.

AUTUMN

(trying to whisper, pissed)

Will you stop using those big words. It sounds ridiculous.

DARNELL

(serious about this)

What doya mean? I'm improvin' myself. I learn a new word out of the dictionary every day. Mendacious, pejorative, antithetical, commensurate...

AUTUMN

And you don't ever use them right. Pretending to be smart is not the same as being educated. Or erudite. It's just a con. And it makes you

sound stupid, no matter how big a prospect you are.

Darnell is genuinely hurt by this dose of reality. His customary bravado melts away.

DARNELL

O.K... even more reason for you to be my tutor. You already taught me something.

Autumn, disarmed by his sudden humility, has no real rebuttal. She would have had to tutor him anyway, but now she's having trouble being angry about it.

ALVIN MACK

At another table, looking distracted and bored as his TUTOR reads his history assignment to him. Alvin takes out a walkman and puts the headphones on. WE HEAR A HORN BEEP.

EXT. CAMILLE'S DORM - LATE AFTERNOON

Camille comes out the front door, summoned by the horn. She stops at the sight of something. We REVERSE TO REVEAL Joe on his Harley.

CAMILLE

We goin' on that?

JOE

Yeh. I thought we might take a ride.

CAMILLE

I promised my dad I'd never get on one of those.

JOE

What are you, one of these trust-fund princesses? It's fine for me to play a game I don't know, but I ask you to try somethin' different and you hide behind your daddy.

He holds out a motorcycle helmet toward her, daring her. She burns, but her competitiveness makes it impossible for her to decline this challenge.

CAMILLE

(snatching the helmet)

All right. But we go slow. No cowboy stuff.

Joe smiles and kicks the starter. Camille climbs on and they roar off.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Just outside town. Joe and Camille come down the highway at moderate speed. Camille's hanging on for dear life, but we can tell she's enjoying it.

JOE

This speed, o.k.?

CAMILLE

Yeh, fine.

JOE

Good.

Joe immediately accelerates, throwing Camille's head back. Her SHRIEK is lost in the whine of the engine, as they speed away from camera.

CAMILLE

Slow down, damnit. Joe... Joe!

They approach a high-banked turn, beyond which appears to be a long, sheer dropoff. Joe looks back at Camille, smiles devilishly, not looking where he's going. Camille sees they're heading straight for the edge.

CAMILLE

(freaked)

Joe, look out!!!

Too late. Joe brakes, fishtails, but goes over the top of

the bank, off the edge, flying out into oblivion, Camille screaming.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON HARLEY

As it plops down onto a wide LEDGE not visible from the road, three feet below the top of the bank. Joe lands it, skids to a professional stop, breaks into raucous laughter. Camille jumps off the bike, scared stiff and livid with anger.

CAMILLE

How could you do that, you stupid punk? It isn't funny, god-dammit, you coulda killed us! You're crazy, you know that...

JOE

Take it easy. I've done that a hundred times. No big deal.

CAMILLE

Oh, yeh? Then why are you shaking?

JOE

(embarrassed)

I don't know... I guess cause I've never done it with someone else on the bike.

CAMILLE

You just wanted to scare me. Are you happy now?

JOE

Yeh, pretty much. And the scream was even better than I thought it'd be. Every dog within hearing distance wants to mate with you now.

Camille's ready to throttle him, then something catches her ear. Sure enough, there are SEVERAL DOGS BARKING in the distance. Joe smiles at her. She looks away, still angry,

but amused in spite of herself.

INT. ROADSIDE BAR - NIGHT

Working class, sawdust floor, George Thoroughgood's "Who Do You Love" on the jukebox. Camille and Joe are sitting in a booth. Joe putting away the beers.

CAMILLE

You come here a lot?

JOE

Now and then. Why?

CAMILLE

It's not exactly a campus favorite.

This is almost like hidin' out.

JOE

I like places where nobody knows me.

This too low-rent for you?

CAMILLE

No, my dad owned a place like this.

JOE

Your dad? You mean he owned a chain of these?

CAMILLE

Not everybody with a Southern accent has their own plantation. My dad could never afford to send me here.

I learned to play tennis on public courts. Mighta been able to play pro someday, if I hadn't hurt my knee.

JOE

So you're just a scholarship jock like me.

CAMILLE

Yeh. You disappointed?

JOE

No, I've just never been out with a jock before.

CAMILLE

Is that what we're doin' here? Goin' out?

JOE

I don't know. What doya think?

Joe gets up, takes Camille's hand and pulls her to her feet. They dance to a slow song.

CAMILLE

I think you're crazy for jeopardizing your scholarship and a pro future by jumping motorcycles off of highways.

JOE

Just tryin' to keep my edge, Camille. The other guys look to me cause they think I'll do anything. I lose that, I'm just another guy, and we all get our ass kicked.

CAMILLE

I don't know, Joe. You scare me.

INT. ATHLETIC DORM GARAGE - NIGHT

Joe roars in on his motorcycle. Parks. Starts inside. Finds himself face to face with a very unhappy Coach Winters. Winters holds out his hand.

WINTERS

The keys.

Joe hesitates a second, then reluctantly hands over his motorcycle keys.

WINTERS

I told you, as long as you're in this program, you don't take

unnecessary risks off the field. A man in contention for the Heisman Trophy should be able to remember that.

Joe nods, contrite. Winters just walks on off.

INT. STUDY HALL - CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

Autumn is tutoring Darnell, checking her lesson notes.

AUTUMN

O.K., using the things we worked on yesterday, I want you to write a two or three page essay on some aspect of your life. Something other than football.

DARNELL

Like what?

AUTUMN

Your father, maybe. You could write about your dad.

DARNELL

Don't know that much about him. He was off in Detroit workin' in a car plant when I was born. Got laid off, tried to rob a jewelry store to get us some money. He died in prison. Some kinda heart problem.

Autumn wasn't ready for this level of hardship. She tries to press on gamely.

AUTUMN

How about your mother?

DARNELL

She was always workin'. Usually two jobs. Comin' home one night she stopped to get us some root beer. Got caught in a gang crossfire. Shot

three times... died on the way to
the hospital. You want me to write
about that?

AUTUMN
(blown away)
No...

DARNELL
Good, 'cause none of it's true.

Autumn jumps up.

AUTUMN
(raising her voice)
Jesus Christ, Darnell what a terrible
thing to do to somebody. That's not
funny. That's sick.

Autumn realizes she's in the library and sits back down.

DARNELL
Had ya goin', didn't I?

AUTUMN
(soft library voice)
No you didn't. You just... How could
you make up somethin' like that?

DARNELL
(contrite now)
Sounded more interesting than the
truth. My mom took a vacation to
Chicago when I was 12. Never came
back. Don't know who my dad was.

Autumn's anger melts away in the face of this painful truth.

AUTUMN
Who took care of you?

DARNELL
I started hangin' with the J.B.M.,
gang-bangin'... Did some time in the

Hall. Reverend Wallace saw me playin' football on a juvenile probation team. Took me in, got me into high school. Only reason they accepted me was 'cause I could play football. Sorta like here. Football saved my life. I'd be nowhere without football.

Autumn just nods, still trying to take this all in.

AUTUMN

Well, then... maybe you could write about football this once.

DARNELL

Yeh, o.k... thanks.

(pause)

I've seen a lotta shitty things in my life, Autumn. That's why I know when I see somethin' good.

Autumn knows this is no line. He means it. She's seeing him with new eyes. Moved by his pain, engaged by his sincerity, and more than a little taken by his regard for her.

ON ALVIN

across the room with his tutor.

TUTOR

Let's review the chapter I read you yesterday. Which two city states fought in the Punic Wars?

ALVIN

I dunno. Detroit and Buffalo.

TUTOR

C'mon, Alvin. You're gonna be tested on this.

INT. FOOTBALL MEETING - AFTERNOON

A video projector projects various football formations on

the wall.

WINTERS

Okay, Alvin, this is Mississippi State's offensive set. 2nd and 2 on our 24. What defense are you in?

ALVIN

Eagle. Zipper. Hero. Unless the set back shifts into the I.

WINTERS

Good.

(slide changes)

How about here? 3rd and 7.

ALVIN

Okie. Thunder. Lion.

WINTERS

What's your assignment?

ALVIN

Kill the Quarterback.

(slide changes)

Hit the tight end so hard his girlfriend dies.

(slide changes)

Kill everybody.

MUSIC UP - MONTAGE SEQUENCE BEGINS

EXT. JOE'S ROOM - EVENING

Joe watches Bud Lite, Darnell, Alvin and Lattimer file in and unveil a life-size CARDBOARD STAND-UP of Joe's Sports Illustrated cover pose. They whoop it up, as Joe tries to muster some enthusiasm.

INT. STUDY HALL - NIGHT

Autumn's pointing out a figure on a graph in Darnell's math book. As she explains, Darnell leans close to kiss her. Autumn quickly leans away, glances around to see if anyone saw

Darnell's attempt. Darnell laughs.

INT. AMERICAN HISTORY CLASSROOM - DAY

A group of football players sits in the back of the class. As the HISTORY PROFESSOR lectures at the board, Darnell furiously takes notes. Scott Sherman, seizing the opportunity, leans forward from the desk behind him and pokes the football out of Darnell's left hand. Darnell, Scott and two other FRESHMAN FOOTBALL PLAYERS spring out of their seats, scrambling after the loose ball. The prof and the other students watch appalled as Darnell and the others dive under chairs and overturn desks in pursuit of the elusive ball. Finally, Darnell, winded and disheveled, comes up with it. He and the others quickly return to their seats. The prof looks at Darnell aghast.

DARNELL

Sorry... I lost my football.

INT. RAQUETBALL COURT - DAY

Joe and Camille are locked up in a furious game of raquetball. Joe makes a wicked kill shot on the last point, and pumps a fist in triumph. Camille, pissed at losing, throws her racket and stomps around.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Darnell and Autumn are having a daytime tutoring session on a secluded patch of lawn. Darnell holds his football. As he begins to read aloud from East of Eden, Autumn pokes the ball out of his hand. They both scramble for it, Darnell winding up slightly on top of her. They eye each other a beat. Darnell bends down to kiss her. She lets herself kiss him for a second, then gets up and starts to collect her books.

INT. ATHLETIC CENTER - DAY

Several of the players are gathered around a bulletin board in the hall. The starting lineup for the first game has been posted. Darnell traces his finger from the designation TAILBACK over to the name RAY GRIFFEN. He drops his eyes,

obviously disappointed.

Lattimer, meanwhile, is checking the defensive board. He finds his name posted as a starting defensive end. Punching the air, he dashes out of the building.

LATTIMER

Yes!! Starting defense. Place at the table. Whooo!! Yes!!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Lattimer, in his euphoria, races out into the lot, and begins head-butting car windows. He breaks out three in a row, and yells in triumph, his forehead dripping blood.

Winters, walking with the TEAM TRAINER, has seen this from across the street. He knows there's something dark at work here.

WINTERS

N.C.A.A. is gonna test half the team before the game Saturday. Make sure Lattimer knows about it.

MUSIC AND MONTAGE END

INT. FOOTBALL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The chairs are arranged in several circles, ten players to a circle, like a bunch of formalized huddles. Coach Winters addresses the assembly.

WINTERS

As the veteran players know, we have Pride Night every year before our opening game. It's a chance to get to know each other better, share some thoughts, and bring us closer together as a team. So to start off, I'd like each player to tell the others in his group what he likes best about football and then what he's most proud of off the field.

I've asked some of the seniors to lead it off. Gentlemen.

ANGLE ON LATTIMER IN HIS CIRCLE

LATTIMER

I don't know... It's the battle. The goin' to war with the other guys. Hangin' together.

INT. CAMPUS BALLROOM - GAME DAY

The team walks through several plays. They wear coats and ties, but no socks. Their ankles are taped.

LATTIMER (V.O.)

Bein' different from everybody else. Havin' our own dorm, stayin' in hotels the night before games. Settin' ourselves apart.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - GAME DAY

Before the game. An NCAA OFFICIAL gives Lattimer a little test tube to urinate in for his drug test. Lattimer goes into one of the restroom stalls, reaches around to the back of the tank, where a VIAL OF CLEAN URINE is taped. He pours it in the test vial.

LATTIMER (V.O.)

Havin' a chance to be somebody. To do somethin' that people look up to you for. Your strength and your courage. Not everybody can play football. We're the lucky ones.

INT. FOOTBALL MEETING ROOM - THE NIGHT BEFORE AGAIN

DARNELL

The thing I'm most proud of myself for?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - GAME DAY

Darnell listening to a Walkman, is going through a pregame ritual by his locker; pivoting from leg to leg, switching the ball from arm to arm.

DARNELL (V.O.)

Just that I'm here. That I'm not dead or in jail.

INT. FOOTBALL MEETING ROOM - THE NIGHT BEFORE AGAIN

JOE

The great thing about football is you can lose yourself in it.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - GAME DAY

Joe sits off in a corner by himself, his head back against the wall, staring out into space, the only movement the rhythmic tapping of his feet.

JOE (V.O.)

There's no time to think, to worry, to have doubts. Everything else fades away. You just move and react.

INT. FOOTBALL MEETING ROOM - THE NIGHT BEFORE

ALVIN

The best thing is when you dominate. That feeling when you hit a guy real good, really stick him, and you hear that little moan.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - GAME DAY

Alvin, his ass-kicking game face on, walks over to where Lattimer is finishing decorating his face with Indian war paint. They chuck each other's pads, then Lattimer opens his mouth. Alvin spits into it. Then Lattimer spits into Alvin's. Darnell can't believe this shit.

ALVIN (V.O.)

You know it's killin' him, but you feel great. It's just him and you,

and he's the one that's hurtin'.

We move in on the burning ferocity of Alvin's eyes and

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STADIUM TUNNEL - GAME DAY

The Players are bunched together in the tunnel, slapping pads, yelling encouragement. Winters waves them forward. They start to run down the tunnel.

PLAYERS P.O.V.

CAMERA runs with the players as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes larger and brighter. Crowd NOISE becomes louder until finally the camera emerges into the stadium and the light and 95,000 VOICES ROAR. AND ROAR! AND ROAR! This is Big Time College Football.

INT. RADIO BROADCAST BOOTH

E.S.U. announcer BRAD HARVEY and colorman, HARMON SLOAN are holding forth.

HARVEY

Welcome everybody to the Wolf Den where the E.S.U. Timberwolves, led by Heisman candidate Joe Kane, open their season against the tough Mississippi State Bulldogs under head coach Jackie Sherrill.

EXT. THE FIELD - DAY

The crowd stands, waving banners, as the E.S.U. kicker comes forward and kicks the ball high into the fall sky. The MISSISSIPPI STATE RETURN MAN fields the ball at the four yard line and returns it to the 22 where he's buried. The defense trots out and huddles up.

ALVIN

All right, let's get evil. 60 minutes, balls out. Let's open a can of kick-

ass. Kill 'em all. Let the paramedics sort 'em out.

The Mississippi State offense breaks it's huddle, comes to the line of scrimmage. Alvin, prowling behind the line, locks eyes with the tailback, No.23.

ALVIN

Hey, 23, don't think I don't recognize you, you little fuck.

The tailback looks away.

ALVIN

Hey, pay attention when I'm talkin' to you, nigger. You're the guy that shot my mother aren't you?

TAILBACK

What?

ALVIN

You were tryin' to steal her fuckin' car weren't you, cocksucker.

TAILBACK

Shut up. I never heard of your mother.

On the sidelines, Darnell is watching this exchange.

DARNELL

(to Joe)

What's Alvin saying to that guy?

JOE

Just gettin' himself pumped up.

DARNELL

He wasn't pumped up already?

ANGLE ON ALVIN AGAIN

ALVIN

(to tailback)

Thought I'd never find you didn't
ya? But I got you now nigger, and
I'm gonna kill you motherfucker. I'm
gonna bust your guts open and watch
you die.

The ball is snapped. The quarterback pitches to the tailback
as Alvin charges into the hole, screaming at the top of his
lungs. The tailback, eyes wide with fear, cuts back, away
from Alvin, where he's promptly crunched by Lattimer. The
ball flies loose, there's a scramble, Alvin comes up with
it. E.S.U. ball.

ANGLE ON

The bench and stands erupt as Lattimer and Alvin but heads
and trot off the field.

WINTERS

Atta baby, Alvin, heads up. Big pop,
Steve, way to stick 'em.
(turning to Joe)
O.K. Joe, let's go up top. Take it
to 'em right away.

Joe leads the offense on. A disappointed Darnell stands on
the sidelines.

JOE

(in huddle)
O.K. let's put the women and children
to bed, and go lookin' for dinner.
Don't let em up. 51 Strike, Orange
left. On 4.

Joe begins to howl like a wolf. The others join in. A pack
of Timberwolves. They break the huddle, come to the line of
scrimmage. Bud Lite begins to sing.

BUD LITE

Bali Hi, will call you, anytime, any
day. Here am I, your special island...

Bud lines up opposite a big, black DEFENSIVE TACKLE.

BLACK TACKLE

Shut up, snowflake. You think you're
in the school play?

BUD LITE

No, Bali Hi, the endzone is calling.
And the highway runs right over your
ass.

BLACK TACKLE

Bullshit, you're gonna be my bitch,
baby. You gonna be my punk bitch.

BUD LITE

(singing again)

So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen,
good night, I hate to go and leave
this pretty sight.

Joe hits the 4 count, and the ball is snapped. Bud Lite and the Big Tackle fire out. Bud drives a forearm into the stomach of the Black Tackle, doubling him over. The Black Tackle comes back, slamming a forearm up under Bud's chin, snapping his neck back.

Joe, meanwhile, fades to pass, pump fakes, steps up. Bud Lite, chicken fighting the Black Tackle, sticks his fingers in the Tackle's eyes, then cut-blocks him to the ground. The Tackle falls on Bud, and smashes a fist into his ribs. Bud rolls him over.

Joe spots his flanker back, MAURICE WARD, on a flag pattern. Lofts a perfect spiral to him in the corner of the endzone. Touchdown.

The crowd goes wild, as Bud Lite pushes off the Black Tackle's throat getting up from the pile. Joe pumps a fist in the air, hugs Ward, as the team celebrates. MUSIC BEGINS.

FADE THROUGH TO:

ANGLE ON SCOREBOARD

It reads E.S.U. 28, Mississippi State 20. 4th Quarter.

WINTERS

Jefferson! In for Griffen.

Darnell jazzed at his first chance to see action, buttons his chinstrap, races onto the field.

HARVEY (V.O.)

2:05 left. Kane hands to Jefferson...

ANGLE ON DARNELL

He takes a handoff, runs a trap up the middle, is hit by THREE TACKLERS, clawing at the ball. They bring him down, but Darnell doesn't fumble. He gets up, still clutching the ball, and starts back to the huddle with it. The REFEREE hustles after him.

REFEREE

Excuse me, son, but we're gonna need that football for another couple minutes.

Darnell, suddenly realizing, gives it up. Even Winters has to laugh. We go to:

ANGLE ON LATTIMER

Lattimer, sacking the quarterback, tackling him high, ripping his helmet off. Lattimer runs off the field, holding it up like a trophy.

The gun sounds, the game is over.

ANGLE ON COACH WINTERS

Accepting congratulations from his staff.

WINTERS

Guess we'll be on the payroll for another week.

ANGLE ON BUD LITE AND THE BLACK TACKLE

walking off the field together, both their jerseys blood-stained.

BUD LITE

Good game, man. Really enjoyed it.

BLACK TACKLE

Yeh, you're a strong motherfucker.

Shitty singer though.

INT. PENTHOUSE HOTEL SUITE - AFTERNOON

A reception of some sort for the players is in progress. Darnell, looking a little lost, fills his cup from a punch bowl. A FAT CAT ALUMNUS approaches him.

ALUMNUS

Good to see ya in there, Darnell.

Way to hold on to that pigskin.

As he walks by, he slips an ENVELOPE into Darnell's coat pocket. Darnell opens it to find a 50 dollar bill. Surprised, he goes over to Alvin.

DARNELL

Hey, some guy just gave me a 50 dollar bill.

ALVIN

Don't worry, you'll get 5 or 6 hundred once you're startin', depending on how you play.

DARNELL

But we're not supposed to get any are we?

ALVIN

Hey, man, you can't live on \$500 a month scholarship money. And the NC double assholes won't let us have jobs, so you take your money where you can get it.

(taking Darnell's envelope)
 I'll keep it for you, till you see the light. Shit, they oughta be payin' us anyway. Athletic Department gets 3 million just for goin' to a bowl game.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - EVENING

Joe sits alone on his bed watching T.V. He's being interviewed in the locker room, a bouquet of microphones in his face.

REPORTER (V.O.)
 This performance today -- two touchdown passes, another you ran in. Where do you think this puts you in the Heisman race?

Joe hates this question. We go to the screen.

JOE
 (uncomfortable)
 I really have no idea. That's up to you guys.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

The image changes to ESPN anchor CHRIS BERMAN in the studio.

BERMAN
 Now let's turn to our Heisman watch. (does the pose while remaining seated)
 We begin with Sports Illustrated cover boy Joe Kane of E.S.U. who led his team to an impressive victory this afternoon. Well, if Joe continues to raise Kane, he may well be Able to dust off a large space on his trophy shelf. Although the real test will come in four weeks against Michigan and their Heisman hopeful, Tim Waymen.

EXT. CAMPUS - EVENING

Joe walks across campus, headed for Camille's dorm.

BERMAN (V.O.)

Michigan also won big today. Timothy,
"He Could Go All The Way Men", will
be looking to do so against the
Timberwolves. And of course the able
Kane will be looking to also. I can't
wait.

INT. CAMILLE'S DORM - NIGHT

Joe comes down the hall, knocks on Camille's door. No answer.
Knocks again. Nothing. Disappointed, he turns and walks away.

INT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - NIGHT

The post-game victory party is in full swing. All the players,
their girls and various groupies, dancing, drinking,
celebrating. Bud Lite and Joe stand drinking beer, watching
the action.

BUD LITE

I don't know, I never seem to make
out at things like this.

Bobby, who's overheard this, walks by with Louanne.

BOBBY

You don't make out anywhere. Or did
you finally break the snatch barrier
this summer?

BUD LITE

Fuck you, Bobby.
(realizing Louanne's
there)
Excuse me, Louanne.

ANGLE ON DARNELL

sitting across the room with Alvin but his attention is on Autumn and Ray out on the dance floor. Alvin notices.

ALVIN

Forget it, nigger. No chance for you there.

DARNELL

Why not?

ALVIN

Griffin's goin' to medical school. She likes that light-skinned respectable shit. You're just her ghetto toy.

Darnell challenged by this, gets up and goes over to where Ray and Autumn are standing. A slow tune plays.

DARNELL

(to Autumn)

Can I have this one?

RAY

I don't think so.

DARNELL

What are you so worried about? You haven't lost your starting job yet.

Autumn realizes this could quickly get out of hand.

AUTUMN

(turning to Ray)

Just one.

Ray reluctantly backs off. Darnell and Autumn start to dance. Several players who've picked up on the tension, watch them as they move around the floor. They try to pretend they're just having a nice little chat.

AUTUMN

(whispering)

Take it easy, Darnell. This isn't a

good time to push things. You're putting me in an awkward position.

DARNELL

Yeh, well, I got a little encouragement along the way.

AUTUMN

That kiss... it was just... a kiss.

DARNELL

Bullshit. You meant it. I wouldn't be standing here now, everybody thinkin' I'm a stupid asshole, if I didn't know you meant it. I wanna see you, Autumn. Not in study hall. Not like your student. Like somebody to be taken seriously.

AUTUMN

I do take you seriously, Darnell, but I'm still with Ray. I can't just go paradin' around town.

DARNELL

I don't need to go paradin'. We'll go someplace different. Someplace nobody'll see us.

She looks at him a long beat. She doesn't need this complication, this conflict, but she can't say no.

AUTUMN

God, why am I even considering this?

The song ends. Ray moves in to reclaim her.

RAY

(to Darnell)

All caught up on your arithmetic?

Darnell, pissed, gives Ray a shove.

DARNELL

Yeh, you only gained 37 yards on 12 carries.

Ray lunges back at him, but quickly several players, led by Joe and Bud Lite, step between them. Darnell shrugs them off and leaves the party.

JOE

(to Bud Lite)

Just what we need, a little team unity.

Ray takes Autumn's arm, pulls her out onto the patio.

RAY

I'm gettin' a little sick of this asshole, Autumn. I don't like you hangin' out with him. It's embarrassing.

AUTUMN

I don't hang out with him. I tutor him.

RAY

Then have him get another tutor.

AUTUMN

I can't do that. I made a commitment to help him pass his qualifying exam. I can't bail out on him now.

RAY

What the hell difference does it makes? They'll grease him through no matter what he does. Nobody's ever gonna see his graduation. Don't tell me you're falling for this guy. He's just another gang-banger with speed.

AUTUMN

I just said I wanted to help him. What are you more afraid of, losing your girl or your position?

RAY

Maybe you oughta think about what you're in danger of losing.

AUTUMN

Maybe I will.

Autumn rips free of his grip, and walks out of the party too.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Darnell sits alone on a bench under an old Willow, just staring out at the night. He hears a voice behind him.

VOICE (V.O.)

So where you wanna go?

He turns. It's Autumn.

INT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - NIGHT

The party's still in full gear. Ray is now chatting up a few of the groupies. Joe and Bud Lite sit off in a corner. Joe's knocked back several beers. He's a little tipsy, and lost in thought.

JOE

Maybe she's out with some guy.

BUD

Who? Camille? I don't think she's the type to screw around on ya. Shoot ya, maybe...

JOE

It wouldn't be screwing around. It's not like we're going together.

Joe's gaze falls on a sultry brunette, SHERI, at a table across the way. She's eyeing Joe big time. She wants him. He stares back at her. She doesn't blink.

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - NIGHT

Camille, carrying an armload of books, comes down the library steps, having been studying late. As she heads for her dorm, she sees Joe and Sheri going across the Quad; Sheri draped around Joe, nuzzling him.

Joe looks over, spots Camille, stops; surprised, embarrassed to see her. They exchange a look. Camille, upset, turns and wheels off. Joe wants to say something to her, but can't get it out.

ON DARNELL AND AUTUMN

We don't know where yet, but they seem to be slipping and sliding, clutching on to each other.

AUTUMN

You're right, nobody would ever see us here.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - NIGHT

Near closing time. Darnell and Autumn lurch and stumble around the ice, collapsing against the boards now and then. There are few other skaters at this hour.

DARNELL

Yes, I figure the key is to go places only white people go. Next time we'll go bowling.

Autumn laughs, as the house lights start to blink, indicating it's closing time.

DARNELL

Plus I saw this in Rocky. I never believed a guy who was supposed to be an athlete would skate that bad, but now I know.

They make their way to an opening in the boards, stumble

over to a bench, begin to unlace.

AUTUMN

Thanks, that was fun, sort of.

DARNELL

You were pretty good for the first time.

AUTUMN

Well, it's not really my first time. My dad took me skating once.

DARNELL

He used to play ball for E.S.U., didn't he?

AUTUMN

Yeah, how'd you know that?

DARNELL

I saw his picture on the Wall of Fame. You got his eyes. Luckily, you didn't get his thighs.

She laughs, looks at him a beat, starts to come forward to kiss him. He puts a finger to her lips.

DARNELL

Make sure you mean it this time.

She hesitates a beat, then comes forward again. They fall into a deep kiss. We PULL BACK to LONGSHOT. Two people alone in the expanse of the ice rink. The lights flicker and go out.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Camille, unable to sleep, enters in her workout clothes. Languid, melancholy, she goes to the treadmill, as Joe comes out of the steam room with nothing but a towel around his waist. Both are surprised to see the other.

JOE

What are you doin' here?

CAMILLE

Couldn't sleep.

JOE

I was just sweatin' out some of the beer.

Camille just nods. Long, silent pause.

JOE

I didn't go home with her. I thought about it... but I didn't.

CAMILLE

You drink too much.

JOE

Yeh.

He turns, starts toward the door.

CAMILLE

Why didn't you?

JOE

Why didn't I what?

CAMILLE

Go home with her?

JOE

I don't know... I guess I figured maybe there was somethin' goin' on between you and me.

Camille hesitates, not sure whether to believe him, then gets off the bike and walks toward him.

CAMILLE

Then why'd you pick her up in the first place?

JOE

I was drunk... I needed some company.

CAMILLE

(angry)

Company? Yeh, I can see you havin' a real far-ranging discussion with Sheri.

JOE

I mean, ya know, physical company...

I was... I just needed to pounce on somebody I guess.

Camille, really steamed now, snatches the towel from around Joe's waist, leaving him naked.

CAMILLE

Why can't you pounce on me? Aren't I good enough to pounce on?

Camille snaps the towel at him, driving him back. Joe's totally thrown by this reaction in her.

JOE

Well, you're more conservative...

classier... you're not that kinda girl...

She snaps the towel again, backing him against the training table.

CAMILLE

(insulted)

How do you know? You've never slept with me.

She pounds on his chest, pushing him back on the table.

CAMILLE

What makes you think she's such a great ride?

(climbing up on top of him)

I'm prettier, my legs are longer...
(pulling down her
leotard)
I've got better tits.
(exasperated)
Why would you go to her, when you
have me?

JOE
I didn't know I had you.

CAMILLE
(softer, leaning close)
Well you do.

He looks at her a beat, then pulls her mouth down to his.
They fall into a long, white-hot kiss.

INT. THE TRAINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joe and Camille are making love passionately, energetically.
Camille, still worked up, rolls up on top.

CAMILLE
(between kisses)
You shoulda looked for me at the
library, or don't you ever go there?

JOE
(rolling back on top)
I go there. I got a 3.2 in Political
Science. I just don't go there on
Saturday nights.

CAMILLE
(rolling back on top
again)
I have a paper due Monday. What'de
she do? Sit on your lap or just give
you the nail-me stare?

JOE
Shut up, Camille.

Joe rolls back on top, the momentum carrying both of them off the table and out of sight.

INT. HUGE LECTURE HALL - MORNING

Some 100 students are taking a history test in blue books. A T.A., checking attendance, walks up to Louanne. She's uneasy as the T.A. checks his chart.

T.A.
What's your name?

LOUANNE
Bobby Collins.

T.A.
Can I see your I.D.?

Louanne knows she's in deep trouble.

INT. COACH'S VIDEO ROOM - DAY

A high-tech room full of video machines and monitors used to run simultaneous views of different positions during the same play. A grim-looking group of assistant coaches approaches Winters as he runs through and reprograms the images on the screen.

CLAYTON
Coach, we, ah... got a problem with Bobby Collins.

WINTERS
Yeh...

CLAYTON
He talked... a friend... into taking a test for him and got caught. They had a new T.A. in there...

WINTERS
What's the penalty?

CLAYTON

Well, the rules say automatic expulsion for both of them.

WINTERS

Fortunately, we've got friends on the Board of Regents. I think we can beat this if we really go to bat for him. We got Mack off when he turned in that other guys term paper.

(shaking his head)

But what kinda idiot would do something like that?

CLAYTON

Well, I guess Bobby figured he was gonna flunk...

WINTERS

I don't mean Bobby. I mean what kinda guy would be dumb enough to take a test for him?

CLAYTON

Uh, well... it wasn't a guy.

WINTERS

A girl? Typical Collins. He must have banged her until she couldn't think straight. Who was it?

CLAYTON

(barely able to get it out)

It was... Louanne.

Winters' face goes dead.

INT. COACH WINTERS' DEN - DAY

Winters, enraged, is venting his spleen at Louanne.

WINTERS

Jesus, Louanne, how could you be so stupid?

LOUANNE

I... he was behind, he needed help.
I'm sorry. I just...

WINTERS

Sorry! You're sorry! You've destroyed
my credibility at the University, my
authority with the players... Christ,
it looks like I'm running a dirty
program. And Collins of all people!
What the hell's the matter with you,
Louanne?

LOUANNE

(crying)
I don't know... I thought he... loved
me...

WINTERS

Loved you? He loves anything that
winks back, the little rat bastard.
And what are you gonna do for school
now? I use my influence to get you
back in, it'll stink to high hell.
The press'll crucify me.

LOUANNE

I'll get in someplace.

WINTERS

God, Louanne, I told you to stay
away from my players. That was my
cardinal rule, stay away from the
damn players...

LOUANNE

They've always been good enough for
you. Good enough to devote your life
to. Why aren't they good enough for
me? Or are they too good?

WINTERS

You're changing the subject, Louanne.

We're talkin' about you breakin' the rules.

LOUANNE

Didn't you ever break the rules just a little? Didn't you tell me once that 90 per cent of the schools obey the NCAA rules, and the other 10 per cent go to bowl games? Was that just a joke?

She gets up and walks out of the room. Winters closes his eyes and slumps down on the couch.

INT. STUDY HALL - NIGHT

Darnell sits at his table waiting for Autumn. Autumn storms in, obviously upset about something. She slaps a corrected test down in front of him.

AUTUMN

You seen this? You got a D on your math test.

DARNELL

Yeh, I kinda figured that. I had some trouble on this last part...

AUTUMN

We went over that last week, Darnell. What is this time we spend in here? Just a joke to you? I don't even think you've been listening to me.

DARNELL

I've been listening to you, baby...

AUTUMN

Don't call me baby. I thought you wanted to learn. But if all you wanta do is fake your way through, then get another tutor to waste time with.

DARNELL

C'mon, Autumn, we just had a good time, and now you're gettin' all nuts behind this. It's just one test.

AUTUMN

So far, it's the only test. I want you to study this whole chapter. By yourself, without me here. When I come back, we'll discuss it. Be ready to do problems based on it.

DARNELL

Whatever you say, Teach.

(big grin)

I don't wish to be cast in a pejorative light, so I'm dedicating myself to achieving on a level more commensurate with my abilities.

She shakes her head and walks away. Darnell's grin fades. He looks at his test, a hint of tears in his eyes. He's embarrassed and deeply worried.

INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The players are dressing for Monday practice, but it's strangely subdued. Bobby Collins opens his locker to find a BULLET-RIDDLED PRACTICE JERSEY hanging inside. Immediately the rest of the players burst into raucous laughter.

BUD LITE

Coach'd probably shoot ya lower.

Suddenly the room goes silent. Standing in the doorway is Coach Winters.

He says nothing, looks around the room, the players avoiding his gaze. His eyes come to rest on Bobby. Bobby tries to hide the shirt, but Winters has seen. Winters just stares at Bobby a beat, then.

WINTERS

You all played a fine game on Saturday. Take the day off.

With that, he turns and walks out the door. The players remain silent. Bobby throws the shirt in the trash.

INT. LOUANNE'S SORORITY HOUSE - DAY

Winters walks in the front door, past the desk, up the stairs and down the hall to his daughter's room. She's packing her things. He goes over to her, takes her in his arms and hugs her tight. Neither speak. A tear rolls down Louanne's cheek. Hits the floor.

EXT. HALL OF ATHLETIC BUILDING - DAY

A very nervous Bobby Collins comes down the hall and knocks on Coach Winter's door.

WINTERS

C'mon in, Collins.

INT. COACH WINTER'S OFFICE

Bobby enters and stands across from Winters' desk. Winters doesn't invite him to sit.

BOBBY

Listen, Coach, I just want you to know I'm really sorry about this whole thing with Louanne. I was real glad to hear she's gonna be goin' to junior college here...

WINTERS

(cutting him off)

Shut up.

Bobby does. Instantly.

WINTERS

I could easily take your case to the Board of Regents. You've had no prior infractions and I could argue that you were under abnormal pressure.

(pause)

But I won't. You embarrassed me, you embarrassed my family, you embarrassed the program. As of now, you are no longer a member of this university or it's football team. Clean out your locker.

Bobby just stands there a beat, in confusion and disbelief. There is no wavering, no sympathy in Winters' eyes. Finally, dazed and disoriented, Bobby turns and walks out.

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

Joe is posed in front of the school library, one of it's more photogenic buildings. T.V. sportscaster LYNN SWANN and his video crew wait to interview him as a MAKEUP GIRL finishes applying makeup to Joe's face. Publicist Sharon Braver watches like a hawk.

SWANN

(to his cameraman)

We ready, Jerry? O.K., let's mark it.

An assistant marks the take, and Swann turns to Joe.

SWANN

Joe, this game is being billed as a potential "Heisman Shootout". Did you feel any added pressure this week...

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

A phalanx of photographers crowd around, snapping away as Joe goes through passing drills.

SWANN (V.O.)

...knowing that you're going head to head with Heisman rival, Tim Waymen?

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY, THE PRESENT AGAIN

JOE

Well, ya know, you try to block it out, but it's basically impossible... Everybody seems to be talkin' about it, all the newspapers, the interviews...

INT. T.V. STUDIO - NIGHT

Joe is being interviewed by DALLAS PERRY on a local television show.

JOE (V.O.)

The hype on T.V., tryin' to get somethin' goin'...

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - THE PRESENT AGAIN

Sharon Braver steps directly in front of the video camera, waves off the take.

BRAVER

Hold it! Hold it!

SWANN

What?! What's the problem?

Braver takes Joe aside, talks to him confidentially.

BRAVER

What you're saying is true, of course, but I don't think it's the message you want to send.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NIGHT

Joe and Camille are sharing a pizza, but not alone. A video spotlight shines on them, as yet another crew rolls tape.

BRAVER (V.O.)

It makes you seem a little nervous. Like the pressure might be getting to you.

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - THE PRESENT AGAIN

BRAVER

This game is nationally televised, so most Heisman voters will be watching. I think a more casual approach is better. Modest, controlled, casual.

Joe nods and heads back in front of the camera.

SWANN

(to Braver, irritated)

We all set now?

(gets a nod)

Let's mark it.

(the take is marked)

Joe, this game is being billed as a potential "Heisman Shootout."

EXT. E.S.U. QUAD - NIGHT

A huge bonfire burns, as a large segment of the student body has gathered in front of the Timberwolf statue. The cheerleaders, all wearing "KANE IS ABLE" buttons, whip the crowd up, as Joe is introduced on the podium.

SWANN (V.O.)

Did you feel any added pressure this week, knowing that you're going head to head with Heisman rival, Tim Waymen?

The cheerleaders begin to chant, "Let's go, Joe." On "Joe", they assume the Heisman trophy pose. Joe seems slightly embarrassed by it all.

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - THE PRESENT AGAIN

JOE

No, I don't really think too much about that kinda thing.

Swann shoots Braver a poisonous look.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Joe and Camille sit on a bank looking down at the railroad tracks below. Neither says anything. Joe seems strangely preoccupied. Camille decides to break the silence.

CAMILLE

Your parents comin' to the game tomorrow?

JOE

My mom's dead. My dad has never seen me play.

CAMILLE

Why not?

JOE

Guess he's not that interested in football.

CAMILLE

But you're one of the best players in the country.

JOE

(snapping)
He's just not into it, o.k.?

CAMILLE

(chastised)
O.k.
(silence)
What's goin' on, Joe? You ask me out here, like you wanta talk about somethin', then you don't say anything. You worried about tomorrow?

JOE

No... I'm worried about the days after that. I just. I don't know... I feel like tomorrow's gonna be my last game. I want to stay up, make the time go slow.

CAMILLE

Why would it be your last game? You afraid of getting hurt?

JOE

No, that'd be a relief. Then, at least, I wouldn't be a failure.

CAMILLE

Joe, why are you thinking like this? Why would you be a failure? You're having a great year, you're a Heisman Trophy candidate, you got millions of dollars waiting for you in the pros.

JOE

(testy)

How do you know what's waiting for me? You don't know me at all.

CAMILLE

(hurt)

I don't know you? How can you say that?

JOE

Because you wouldn't be here now if you did. You only know the guy that's supposed to make millions in the pros.

CAMILLE

Is that what you think? That I'm with you for the money?

JOE

Why else?

Infuriated, she slaps him across the face.

CAMILLE

Fuck you, Joe.

(starting to cry)

I don't give a shit about your money.
I don't even give a shit about
football. And you know what? Maybe
you're right, maybe I don't know
you.

She turns and storms away up the hill, as we hear a TRAIN WHISTLE. Joe watches her go, then starts down the hill toward the tracks as the train comes into view.

Camille stops, turns back, sees Joe headed for the tracks, starts to worry.

Joe reaches the grade and steps into the middle of the tracks facing the oncoming train. Horrified, Camille runs down the embankment toward him.

CAMILLE

Joe! Joe! My god, Joe, what are you
doing? No! No!

As the train approaches, it's horn blaring, Joe lies face down on the tracks, his hands gripping the railroad ties. Camille arrives at the bottom of the hill in time to see the train race over him. She falls to her knees screaming.

Under the train, we see Joe desperately hugging the ground, head down, toes dug in, hands clutching the ties. It's like a tornado under there, dirt debris flying everywhere, his clothes flapping wildly.

The train passes. Camille looks up, afraid to breath as Joe lies motionless on the tracks. Suddenly he stirs, pushes himself up to his knees. She lets out a scream of joy, races toward him, as he gets to his feet, stumbles off the grade. She hugs him to her, tears streaming down her face, helps him over to the embankment.

CAMILLE

God Joe, oh god, are you allright?

JOE

(drained)

Yeh, just got some dirt in my teeth.
Guess you've really seen the dark
side now, huh? You should've gotten
out while you had the chance. Before
it all goes to hell.

CAMILLE

I don't wanta get out, damnit. What's
wrong Joe? Why would it all go to
hell?

JOE

I'm a Kane, Camille. That's all it
takes. We're cut out to be drunks
and fuck-ups. We never live up to
expectations. It's in our blood. My
dad, brothers, uncles -- we all drink
and sooner or later we all fuck up.
My dad went the longest. Waited till
he was playin' triple A ball, before
he hit the wall. Sometimes I feel
like I'm just waiting for my turn.
The better I do, the closer it gets.

CAMILLE

You're not like them, you can beat
all that. You can stop drinking, you
can break the chain.

JOE

If I gave up that, I wouldn't be
much of a football player. And if I
wasn't a football player, what would
I be?

The question hangs in the air.

CAMILLE

You'de still be Joe. And I'd still
love you.

He pulls her to him, kisses her hair, they slump against
each other.

JOE

Just don't say I never warned you.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - DAY

STEVE ZABRISKIE and BO SCHEMBECKLER in the foreground, the jammed to capacity stadium in the background. This shot is going out on nationwide T.V., the college Game of the Week.

ZABRISKIE

4:29 to go and it's been a great one. Two undefeated teams goin' after each other. Michigan up by four, 24-20, but the lead has changed hands three times, and you get the feeling that whoever has the ball last is gonna win it.

ANGLE ON FIELD

Joe brings the offense to the line of scrimmage. Yells signals.

SCHEMBECKLER (V.O.)

Well, it was billed as a Heisman shootout, and it's been all of that. Both Waymen and Kane moving their teams up and down the field, having big days.

Joe fades to pass, looks right, looks left, can't find a receiver, decides to run for it. He sprints up the middle, 15, 10; a SAFETY comes at him at the 5. We see

Joe's P.O.V. through HELMETCAM. He pushes the lunging safety away, turns back just in time to be blasted by the OTHER SAFETY he never saw. Joe is knocked down, over the goal line and out cold. The crowd goes wild.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Kane back to pass, can't find anybody, gonna run it himself, ten, five, hit at the goal-line... Touchdown E.S.U.!! Great run by Kane!

Joe lies motionless as his teammates run over to him.

SCHEMBECKLER (V.O.)

He's still down. Looks like he's hurt.

We go to Winters, worried on the sideline, as the celebration around him begins to die down.

ANGLE ON JOE

As he's carried off the field, his arms around two linemen's shoulders, and lowered onto the bench. We go to a BLURRY IMAGE of a man's face waving something. We REVERSE to REVEAL a DOCTOR waving smelling salts under Joe's nose. Joe begins to come around. The doctor holds up two fingers.

DOCTOR

How many fingers am I holding up?

JOE

Four.

EXT. THE FIELD - DAY

Michigan comes to the line of scrimmage. As Tim Waymen gets under center, Alvin begins to yell at him.

ALVIN

Hey, powderpuff. You're the white boy that ratted my brother out. Sent him to jail, cocksucker. Ran off with the fuckin' money. Left the blood to do the time, huh?

Waymen begins to call signals.

ALVIN

Yeh, you're the little bastard. Account of you, my bros' datin' his cell mate. You hear me, powderpuff? Gonna make you pay. You gonna be my cellmate now. You gonna have 250

lbs. of pissed-off nigger up your
ass.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

E.S.U. in an eight-man line looking
for the run on third and short.

The ball is snapped. Waymen fakes a handoff to his fullback,
hides the ball on his hip, fades to pass. On the sideline,
Coach Winters yells, "Pass! Pass!"

Alvin's not fooled by the run, he shakes his blocker and
takes dead aim on Waymen. Just as Waymen releases the ball,
Alvin blasts him, driving him into the turf.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Waymen fakes to Simms, Mack on the
blitz, Waymen is goin for it all!
Hit as he throws.

The ball, however, flies through the air, a perfect spiral.
The E.S.U. secondary has been fooled by the play fake and is
a step behind. The ball comes down in the hands of the
Michigan tight end, JERRY HUNT.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Hunt has got a step. He's got it!
Touchdown!

Winters slams his headphones to the ground.

SCHEMBECKLER (V.O.)

Great clutch throw under pressure.
Can't do it much better than that.

ANGLE ON JOE

The Doctor examines Joe, shines a light in his eyes, makes
him track his finger, etc.

DOCTOR

You're vision's back to normal.

WINTERS

You think you can go?

JOE

Yeh, I'm fine. Just a little headache.

(getting up, shouting

to his teammates)

O.K. Offense, let's get it back.

Alvin, meanwhile, plops down on the bench in disgust.

ALVIN

Damn tough to scare that little white boy. Either his momma dropped him on his head, or the motherfucker is deaf.

Coach Winters goes to Darnell.

WINTERS

Jefferson, in for Griffen.

Griffen slams his helmet to the ground.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Joe breaks the huddle as the E.S.U. offense comes to the line.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Ball on the Michigan 47, 1:02 to go, Kane brings 'em to the line of scrimmage.

Joe fades to pass once again, lets the rush come, then flares out a screen pass to Darnell. Darnell grabs it and takes off, slipping tackles, cutting back, juking. Darnell finally runs out of bounds at the twenty.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Great run by Jefferson, the highly-touted Freshman, the longest of the day for the Wolves. And this one is turning out to be everything we thought it would be.

ANGLE ON DARNELL

coming back to the huddle, pumped up. Joe kneels in the center.

JOE

O.K., time to put the women and children to bed, and go looking for dinner.

He begins to howl, as do all the others. The Call of the Wild.

JOE

82 Strike, Eagle, Crown, on 2.

They clap hands, come to the line. Joe looks over the defense, bends under center and barks signals, The ball is snapped. Action goes to SLOW MOTION.

Joe fakes to Darnell, fakes to pass. The Michigan cornerback comes on a blitz, locked on Joe. Joe starts to roll, but knows the corner will catch him. On the run, he launches the ball toward Darnell. Darnell opens his hands to receive it, but at the last second, the Michigan SAFETY steps in front and intercepts it.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

Kane looking for Jefferson. It's...

Intercepted! Intercepted by Freeman!

And that should do it.

Joe sinks to his knees in frustration. The blitzing cornerback does a quick pit-pat on Joe's helmet. Winters looks like he's been punched.

As Michigan and Tim Waymen celebrate on the sideline, we go to:

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - AFTERNOON

Steve Zabriskie is doing the wrap-up, the emptying stadium behind him.

ZABRISKIE

Well, it was everything we expected it to be. Fine performances on both sides of the field.

INT. E.S.U. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Players undress and shower in relative silence. No joy here.

ZABRISKIE (V.O.)

The edge in the much ballyhooed battle of the quarterbacks would probably have to go to Michigan's Tim Waymen who threw for 2 touchdowns, and ran for another. Joe Kane accounted for three E.S.U. touchdowns, but had that crucial interception in the waning moments. And that proved to be the difference.

The door of the locker room opens, and a flood of reporters enter. Joe hides back in the showers, leaning his forehead against the wall, the water coursing over him.

EXT. TUNNEL BENEATH STADIUM - LATE AFTERNOON

Darnell comes out of the locker room, having showered and dressed. He's surprised to see Autumn and her father talking to Coach Humes.

DARNELL

Hey, Autumn.

AUTUMN

Hi, Darnell.

DARNELL

Is this your dad?

AUTUMN

Yes...

DARNELL

How do you do, Mr. Haley. I'm Darnell Jefferson.

MR. HALEY
Jefferson? Nice run you made on that screen pass. Another block and you might have scored.

DARNELL
Thank you. We'll get 'em next year.

MR. HALEY
How do you and Autumn know each other?
You a friend of Ray's?

Darnell is jolted by this question. It's obvious that Autumn has never told her dad about him.

AUTUMN
(filling the void)
Ah, I tutor him...

MR. HALEY
Oh really? In what?

Darnell would like to crawl under a rock.

DARNELL
Math and English.

MR. HALEY
Ah.

There's a slight tone of condescension in Mr. Haley's voice. He realizes Darnell hasn't passed his entrance exam. This is not lost on Darnell.

MR. HALEY
Well, stay on top of that, Darnell.
I'd have been in real trouble if I hadn't gotten my degree. I played ball once. Hurt my knee.

DARNELL

Yeh, I know...

MR. HALEY

I used to put a copy of my report card inside the webbing of my helmet to remind me that college was more important than football.

DARNELL

(forcing enthusiasm)

Good idea. Well, I gotta get goin'.

Nice to meet you Mr. Haley.

MR. HALEY

Nice to meet you, Darnell.

DARNELL

See you around, Autumn.

Before Autumn can respond, Ray Griffen approaches from the other direction.

RAY

Hey, Mr. Haley. Good to see you.

MR. HALEY

Hey, Ray. You still havin' dinner with us tonight?

Darnell embarrassed and humiliated, hears all this as he walks away. Autumn wants to go explain, but can't in front of her father.

INT. FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

The post-game party. Not as raucous as after the opening game victory. A few players are dancing, but most are sitting, drinking, commiserating.

BUD LITE

(to Alvin)

Anybody seen Joe?

ALVIN

Not yet. Probably out with Camille.
Haven't seen Darnell either.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lattimer's sitting on the bed with a coed named LESLIE.
They're kissing softly, light necking. Lattimer starts to
unbutton her blouse. She begins to demur.

LESLIE
I think we better get back downstairs.

LATTIMER
No, Leslie, we're just getting to
know each other.

LESLIE
(starting to get up)
No, I think...

Lattimer grabs her arm roughly, pulls her back to the bed.
She's starting to get a little scared.

LATTIMER
C'mon Leslie, you didn't come up
here to stop now.

He tries to kiss her again, she pushes him away, starts for
the door. Angered, that steroid pump in his eyes, he grabs
her again, throws her violently on the bed. She screams.

LATTIMER
What were you doin'? Leadin' me on?

He gets on the bed, kneels above her. She starts to struggle.
He slaps her across the face, rips her blouse open. Freaked,
she begins to scream and kick. Enraged, Lattimer slaps her
around, picks her up, shakes her like a rag doll, slaps her
some more, throws her to the floor. Picks her up again, when
suddenly the door BURSTS OPEN and Bud Lite and Alvin race
in.

LATTIMER
(throwing Leslie on

the bed again)
Get outa here!

Bud Lite and Alvin charge Lattimer, try to wrestle him down, but his hormone level is so high, he fights like a bull. Two other players charge in and finally all four are able to shackle Lattimer. He continues to struggle a bit, then gives up, a panting, sweating, shaking hulk.

BUD
This is it, man. No more 'roids.
This shit has gotta stop.

Lattimer breaks down and cries.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe lies on his bed, a bottle of vodka next to his coca-cola. He stares at the larger than life cardboard stand-up of himself. He takes a drink, then gets up and grabs his jacket. The phone rings. He looks at it a beat, then walks out of the room.

INT. CAMILLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Camille's on the phone, waiting, the one calling Joe. She listens a few more rings, hangs up, concerned.

INT. WINTERS HIGH-TECH VIDEO ROOM - NIGHT

Winters sits at the main console replaying the game-ending interception over and over. The phone rings.

WINTERS
Hello, yeh... What?!

INT. WINTERS ATHLETIC OFFICE - NIGHT

The rest of the locker room is dark except for the light on in Winters' office. All the assistant coaches are there.

CLAYTON
It looks like this will blow over.
The girl's father is a big booster,

contributed a lotta money. So he said they won't go to the press.

WINTERS

He said that? The father?

CLAYTON

Yeh, he's not exactly happy about all this, but he doesn't wanta hurt the program.

WINTERS

We're still gonna have to suspend Lattimer.

HUMES

What for? There aren't any charges. Nobody outside the program knows about this.

WINTERS

He's outa control, Lyle. We can't ignore this anymore. I don't know what pisses me off more -- that he's juicin' or that he's doin' such a shitty job of hidin' it.

HUMES

He's never tested positive. If we suspend him without proof, he could sue us for jeopardizing his draft status, his pro career.

WINTERS

Yeh, but we can't sit and wait till he kills somebody. I hate to lose him as much as you do, but we gotta clean him up before he does somethin' that lands the whole program on probation. Plus, we have to take some action or the girl's dad is gonna start havin' second thoughts. I don't care how many checks he's written.

CLAYTON

So what do we do?

All eyes go to Winters.

WINTERS

Bring him down here.

INT. COACH WINTERS LOCKER ROOM OFFICE - 20 MINUTES LATER

Close on a contrite, but shaken Steve Lattimer.

LATTIMER

Three games? Why so many?

WINTERS

You oughta be grateful I didn't
suspend you for the whole year.

Lattimer nods, he knows it's true.

LATTIMER

What are you gonna give as the reason?

WINTERS

We'll say you've got a hamstring
pull.

LATTIMER

(relieved)

Thank you, Coach.

WINTERS

Don't thank me. During those three
weeks, you better kick the roids,
cause when you come back I'm gonna
personally test you before every
game. No N.C.A.A. shit either. I'm
gonna watch the piss go into the
bottle. You got that?

LATTIMER

(barely audible, shamed)

Yes, sir.

WINTERS

Start practicing your limp.

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

Not the 911 we saw earlier. Joe sits at a table in the back, with Darnell, drinking tequila with a beer chaser. Both are down in the dumps. At a nearby table there's a group of TOWNIES and their GIRLFRIENDS.

JOE

Coupla real college heroes, huh?

Tearin' up the town.

DARNELL

First time I ever lost a girl and a game on the same day. Guess I never really had the girl.

Joe looks up to see one of the townies' girls, DEBBIE, giving him the once over and a little smile. Joe smiles back, not really interested. Debbie's BOYFRIEND notices.

BOYFRIEND

You know that guy?

DEBBI

Not really...

BOYFRIEND

Then why you smilin' at him?

DEBBI

I don't know... he looks like that E.S.U. quarterback guy. Joe, what's his name?

BOYFRIEND

So what? So you go and smile at him?

The boyfriend, drunk and looking for trouble, goes over to Joe's table.

BOYFRIEND

You been lookin' at my girlfriend?

JOE

(a little drunk himself)

I don't know. Which one is she?

BOYFRIEND

Wise guy, huh? Mr. bigtime
quarterback. The one who choked his
ass off today. You got nothin' better
to do then look at my girlfriend?

Joe says nothing.

BOYFRIEND

Hey, Heisman, I'm talkin' to you.
You too good to talk to me?

JOE

I'm not even interested in talkin'
to you.

BOYFRIEND

You think you're a bad ass? You think
my girl's hot for you? Take your
pads off, you're just another pussy.

Joe gets up to go. The boyfriend grabs him, Joe pushes him
away. The guy charges Joe. The bar owner rushes to the phone
as a full scale brawl begins. Joe takes a blow, knocks the
boyfriend back into a table, knocking beer bottles to the
floor. The boyfriend falls on one, opening a deep gash in
his shoulder.

DARNELL

(grabbing him)

C'mon we gotta get outa here.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A speeding car goes by us, weaving, crossing the yellow line
on the curves.

INT. SPEEDING CAR - NIGHT

Joe's driving, Darnell's holding on. Suddenly we hear SIRENS.
Joe sees flashing lights in the rear-view mirror.

JOE
Oh shit...

INT. COACH WINTERS' HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Winters is asleep. The phone rings. He picks it up.

WINTERS
What is it now?... Oh Jesus...

INT. COACH WINTERS' STADIUM OFFICE - DAY

Joe sits across the desk from Winters, just the two of them.

JOE
The guy went for me first. What was
I supposed to do?

WINTERS
Doesn't make any difference. It made
the papers, all the wire services.
The guy had to go to the hospital.
Worst of all they got you on drunk
driving. You had a blood alcohol
level .50 above the legal limit. We
can't smooth that over, Joe. It'd
look like we were sprayin' Pledge on
bird shit. We had to agree to send
you to Rehab.

JOE
Rehab? I'll be a god-damn joke. You
can't do this to me.

WINTERS
It was the only way we could get
them to drop the assault and D.W.I.
You go to trial on those, we lose

you for a year, and risk NCAA investigation. C'mon, lotsa athletes have been through Rehab.

JOE

Not in the middle of the season. Not in the middle of a Heisman campaign.

WINTERS

You'll only miss four games. You'll be back in time for the last one, Georgia Tech, and a Bowl if we get there. Plus, you've still got your senior year.

JOE

Yeh, but what will I come back as? What kinda player?

WINTERS

Don't worry, you'll still be the Man. You'll still be the leader of this team.

Joe doesn't believe it, but he manages a nod, as he gets up to leave.

JOE

I'm sorry, Coach.

WINTERS

These things happen.

Joe walks on out, Winters watches him go, then slams the desk in anger. Drained, he sinks back in his chair.

WINTERS

Fuckin' kids.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Darnell's walking across campus toward class. Autumn sees him, calls out to him.

AUTUMN

Darnell, wait. C'mon Darnell, I wanta talk to you.

Darnell doesn't slow up. Autumn has to run to catch up.

AUTUMN

Where you been, I been callin' you?

DARNELL

Been busy.

AUTUMN

Darnell, I'm sorry about Saturday.
It was an awkward situation.

DARNELL

It wasn't awkward. It was educational.
I realized how you see me. I'm good
enough to tutor, to go places with,
but not to tell your father about.

AUTUMN

That's not it. It's just that my
father expects me to be with somebody
like Ray. He wouldn't understand us.

DARNELL

(stopping)
Why not?

AUTUMN

I don't know... he likes Ray cause...

DARNELL

He's a good student, he acts right...
he doesn't need football. He's class
and I'm not, right?

AUTUMN

I didn't say that.

DARNELL

You don't have to, Autumn. I'm

everything your dad used to be and
don't want you fallin' back into.

AUTUMN
Darnell...

DARNELL
You were right before, Autumn. I
should have another tutor. Thanks
for everything you did for me.

Darnell walks away. Autumn can only watch him go.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - DAY

Joe finishes packing his bags. He sees a picture of Camille on the dresser. Picks it up, looks at it a beat, drops it in the trash. He carries his Heisman cardboard standup into the shower, pulls out a match and lights it. He watches it catch fire, then grabs his suitcase and walks out of the room. We hold on the burning standup, as flames lick at Joe's smile.

INT. REHAB CENTER - AFTERNOON

Joe is shown into his room. Bare. One cot. One dresser. He drops his bag, sags onto the bed.

ALVIN (V.O.)
Four fuckin' weeks?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A tired and depressed group of E.S.U. football players undress after practice. Bud and Alvin sit in their pads, Lattimer standing in street clothes. Bud softly sings "Don't Cry For Me Argentina."

ALVIN
Shit, the defense is gonna have to
pitch shutouts now...
(to Lattimer)
and you're gone for 3. What the hell
did you take that shit for?

LATTIMER

Nobody seemed to mind when I was knockin' people's dicks in the dirt.

ALVIN

I bust chops too. I don't have to get all fucked up.

LATTIMER

Not everybody has the ability you do, Alvin. You do what you have to do to play.

ALVIN

Well, you're not playin' much now are you? Shit, whole fuckin' season down the drain.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - DAY

Winters and Galen Howard are walking across the field after practice. The stadium is deserted.

HOWARD

I been talkin' to Chancellor Wilson...

WINTERS

What's he wanta do now, cut practice down to once a week?

HOWARD

No, he's happy with the way the season's gone so far. The Alumni have pretty much stayed off his back, but with Joe out now, it could all be up for grabs again.

WINTERS

He thinks he's gonna have trouble marchin' the ball down the old fund-raisin' board, huh?

HOWARD

The facts are, all we have left are

freshman quarterbacks, and nothin' I saw at practice today, convinced me that any of them are ready to step in.

WINTERS

What are you sayin'?

HOWARD

We gotta get Bobby Collins back.

WINTERS

Wilson say that?

HOWARD

He didn't have to.

WINTERS

Forget it, Galen, Collins is no All-Star either.

HOWARD

Yeh, but he's good enough to get us a split of the next four games.

WINTERS

Look, just because you're Wilson's boy all of a sudden, doesn't mean I'm gonna let him make me look like a fuckin' whore.

HOWARD

Don't give me that high and mighty shit. There's a lotta people on the bubble here. Four straight loses and we're out of bowl contention. How's that gonna make you look? If you're too stupid to consider your own situation, then maybe you oughta think about your assistant coaches. They've got families to feed too.

Howard walks away, pissed off, leaving Winters alone in the middle of the field.

INT. BOARD OF REGENTS HEARING ROOM - DAY

The seven members of the BOARD OF REGENTS sit on one side of a long rectangular table, the Chairman in the middle. On the other side are coach Winters, Bobby Collins, the President of the Faculty Senate, EDWARD LEARNIHAN, Academic Advisor, ARTHUR SHANE, President of the Student Body, RICHARD FOWLER, and Galen Howard. Fowler is addressing the board.

FOWLER

Therefore, I respectfully submit that Bobby Collins should not be given special treatment just because he's a football player. Would a regular student get a reinstatement hearing if they'd been caught cheating? Nobody's talking about letting the girl who took the test back in.

Winters could kill this kid.

LEARNIHAN

I think it's also instructive to look at some of the courses this young man has taken. Beginning Golf, Voice and Speech Improvement...

SHANE

I'd like to point out that Mr. Collins was still on schedule to get his degree.

LEARNIHAN

(pointing to Collin's transcript)
In what, Swimming Pool Management?

CHAIRMAN

Would you like to respond, Coach Winters?

Winters rises, sweating, less from nervousness than from the

odious nature of what he has to do.

WINTERS

I don't know much about all this other stuff, but I do know the punishment should fit the crime. Cheating's bad, but I don't think it deserves a life sentence. Here's one of those athletes who takes college level courses, who wants to graduate. I think Bobby Collins made a big mistake, but he's already been suspended for several weeks. He's served his time. I think he deserves a second chance.

LEARNIHAN

Like Alvin Mack? We gave him a second chance and since he's had 5 incompletes, 4 withdrawals and still reads at a fourth grade level. You're using his body to make money for the Athletic Department -- you, yourself, are making three times what the Chancellor is -- but obviously no one is making an effort to see that this kid gets an education.

WINTERS

He's helpin' to pay for your physics lab too. If you're willin' to go without a new office, maybe I could hold him out a few games. Save his body.

CHAIRMAN

Gentlemen...

SHANE

Alvin was way behind in school when he got here. You can't make up for, in four years, what it took 18 to create.

LEARNIHAN

Then he should never have been admitted in the first place. It's not fair to other students who worked hard to get here.

HOWARD

Is it fair to exclude kids who come from inferior schools? You hold everybody to the same standards, you're discriminating against the poor kids.

WINTERS

Most of my players are farm boys, inner-city kids. Football is their deliverance.

LEARNIHAN

Deliverance from what? A valid education?

WINTERS

You throw Bobby Collins and Alvin out, you take away their futures. In Alvin's case you probably cost him a couple million dollars in the pros.

LEARNIHAN

But this is not a football vocational school. It's an Institute of Higher Learning.

WINTERS

Yeh, but when was the last time 80,000 people showed up to watch a kid do a chemistry experiment?

CHAIRMAN

Gentlemen, please, let's get back to the business at hand, Bobby Collins. As you know, I played football here. And I remember how hard it was to practice and then study when you're

dead tired. So I have some sympathy for this young man. But I never cheated, so the real question is his character. Since you know him better than anyone else in this room; and having talked to him and observed him over the last several weeks, do you feel he's learned his lesson? In other words, can you vouch for his character?

Winters would rather cut off his own head with a razor blade.

WINTERS
(it's killing him)
Yes, sir, I can.

Bobby Collins breaks into a wide, triumphant smile.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Learnihan and Winters come down the steps, their faces set.
As they split off:

LEARNIHAN
Another case like this, I'll take it all the way up to the Governor.

WINTERS
Don't mess with me, Learnihan. I'll have you teachin' Study Hall.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Bobby Collins walks in prior to practice. His teammates gather round, slap him on the back, high five etc. Winters watches from his office, disgusted.

INT. COACH WINTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Coach Winters is in his video alcove watching footage of his upcoming opponent -- it's like he's looking through it though, his mind elsewhere, something boiling up inside him. Suddenly, he smashes his fist into the screen, breaking it into pieces.

His hand bleeds. He doesn't care. He just sits there and seethes.

INT. CAMILLE'S ROOM - DAY

Camille's on the phone.

CAMILLE

Hello, my name is Camille Schaeffer.
I'd like to speak to Joe Kane.

INT. JOE'S ROOM IN REHAB CENTER - DAY

Joe is aimlessly flipping cards toward a wastebasket. A NURSE knocks on his door.

NURSE

You've got a phone call. A Camille Schaeffer.

Joe says nothing, not wanting to deal with this.

NURSE

She says she's your girlfriend

JOE

I don't want to talk to her.

NURSE

You sure?

JOE

Yeh.

The nurse leaves. Joe gets up, goes to the wall, and starts pounding it with his right hand.

INT. CAMILLE'S ROOM - DAY

NURSE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, he doesn't wish to speak to you right now.

Crushed and angry, Camille hangs up.

INT. ATHLETIC DORM HALL - DAY

Bud Lite is watching television. Louanne enters on her way to Bobby Collins' room, carrying an armload of neatly-pressed laundry. But Lite gets up to bar her way.

BUD

Hey, Louanne, how ya' doin'?

LOUANNE

Fine, Bud, ya know. Goin to J.C., hopin' to get back in here next year. Just came by to give Bobby some laundry I did for him.

BUD

You two seein' each other again?

LOUANNE

Yeh, he was even talking about us gettin' a place off campus together, until he got reinstated. I don't know how I woulda told my dad.

Bud just nods blankly. Louanne starts to head for Bobby's room.

BUD

Ah, Louanne...

(pained to say it)

I wouldn't go in there right now.

LOUANNE

Why not?

Bud doesn't have the heart to tell her. She finally realizes Bobby's with another girl.

LOUANNE

Ah. Guess I'm pretty stupid when it comes to men. I never learn, do I?

BUD

I think maybe men are just stupid when it comes to you. If you ever feel like, ya know, just talkin' sometime, gettin' a beer -- let me know. My schedule's pretty open.

LOUANNE

Thanks, Bud
(handing him the
clothes)
Give him these, will ya?

Bud nods. Louanne, fighting back tears, walks back down the hall with as much dignity as she can muster.

INT. JOE'S REHAB CENTER - DAY

Winters comes to the door, hesitates, walks in and finds Joe huddled on his bed. Shivering.

WINTERS

Get up. I wanta talk to you.

Joe looks resentful but makes an effort and sits up.

WINTERS

Don't sit up. Stand up. If you can.

Joe gets unsteadily to his feet. He feels sick. Winters reaches out to shake hands. Joe does not reciprocate. Hides his right hand behind his body.

WINTERS

What's the matter, Joe? You won't shake hands with me.

(Joe is silent)

You don't want me to see your hand, do you?

(more silence)

So I guess what I heard was true, huh? You been poundin' the walls with your passin' hand, right?

(silence)

I tell you what, Joe, you want to

hit somethin', hit me.

Joe doesn't move.

WINTERS

I said hit me. I'm the one who put
you in here. Don't hit the damn wall.
It ain't the wall's fault. Hit me!
Go on, hit me right now!

Joe is angry but he doesn't want to do anything about it.

WINTERS

Who else you wanta hit, huh? you're
daddy maybe? Cause he's a no-show
prick? Well, I'm a daddy, too, and
not a very good one at that. So just
hit me instead! I'll take your daddy's
beatin' for him. Go on, you want to.
Hit me, damnit!

Joe shakes his head.

WINTERS

(pushes Joe in the
chest)

Hit me! I'm not gonna leave you alone
until you hit me.

(shakes Joe by
shoulders)

The guys'll thank you. They've always
wanted to do it. So do it now, damnit!
Do it!

Joe sinks to his knees. Winters stares down at him, then
kneels also, his own anger and frustration draining away.

WINTERS

O.K., Joe, it's o.k. I guess I need
it more than you do.

(pause)

You gotta quit beatin' up on yourself.
Let me see that hand.

Joe reveals his hand. It's barked and cut, but not badly swollen.

WINTERS

It's o.k.

(playfully)

You can still throw with it, you fuckin' mook.

(pause)

Look, the nurses say this is the toughest time for you right now. I thought I'd stick around a little, case you wanta play some cards, pick a fight with the wall again, whatever...

JOE

You don't have to.

WINTERS

Yes I do.

INT. STEVE LATTIMER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lattimer fills a bag with all his steroid paraphernalia. He carries it to his bathroom where he slowly empties it into his toilet. Syringes, vials and bottles of pills all tumble into the water. He flushes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOE'S ROOM IN REHAB CENTER - MORNING

The sun shines through the window. Joe wakes up, raises up, looks over at Winters who is asleep in a chair. Winters rouses. Joe gives him a little smile, he's alright. Winters gives him a nod of approval.

MUSIC UP. BEGIN A SERIES OF SHOTS

detailing the Timberwolves progress over the next four games.

ON FIELD

1) Players shaking hands at midfield after the game. The scoreboard reads E.S.U. 14 Boston College 10.

INT. STUDY HALL

2) Darnell in study hall, with his new tutor concentrating on her explanation, applying himself.

ON SIDELINE - DAY

3) Steve Lattimer, in street clothes, paces the sidelines, jumping up and down in frustration, his hamstring bandaged to sell the injury ruse. He catches himself, gets back on his crutches. A newspaper fades up through the shot. It reads "Wolves Offense Fires Blanks in 13-0 Loss to Texas."

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

4) Darnell sits in a cafe, drinking coffee and studying. Ray comes in, his arm around a co-ed, MONICA. They buy a pastry and leave, not having seen Darnell. Darnell ponders this a second, goes back to studying.

INT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

5) A group of patients is gathered around a T.V. set in the Rehab Center, watching a pre-game show. One goes to Joe's room, where Joe's lying on his cot.

PATIENT

Hey, Joe, don't you wanta watch the game? It's on cable.

JOE

No thanks.

Joe leans back, staring at the ceiling.

ON T.V. SCREEN

6) Sportscaster DALLAS PERRY is holding forth on the local evening news.

PERRY

E.S.U. on the strength of a 62 yard touchdown run by freshman Darnell Jefferson, squeaked by the North Carolina Tarheels today, 14 to 13, keeping their bowl hopes alive.

EXT. CAMPUS NIGHT

7) Darnell, with his books, on the way to the library, passes the frat house where the victory party is in progress. He sees Ray and Autumn walking together. Autumn sees him, her face lights up. He gives her a slight smile, keeps walking. She watches him with a certain longing.

INT. LIBRARY - LATE NIGHT

8) Darnell, alone in the library, late at night, studying.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

9) Lattimer, carrying his gear bag, walks into the locker room. His teammates come over to shake his hand, slap him on the back, welcome him back to the team.

MUSIC ENDS

INT. JOE'S REHAB CENTER ROOM - NIGHT

Joe sits on his bed listening to the E.S.U. broadcast.

HARVEY (V.O.)

E.S.U. hoping to get past a tough Iowa Hawkeyes team in their last game before the return of star quarterback, Joe Kane.

EXT. KINNICK STADIUM - NIGHT

The E.S.U. defense is on the field. Alvin moves up opposite the OFFENSIVE GUARD.

ALVIN

I know you, motherfucker. You're the prick who got my little sister

pregnant. We ain't seen you around lately. Where you been, huh? Answer me, motherfucker, or I'm gonna peel your cap.

The ball is hiked. Iowa runs a sweep left. Lattimer tries to get outside to contain, but is blocked by the fullback, who goes low and cuts his legs out from under him.

WINTERS

Shit, Lattimer...

Alvin pursues the play as the ballcarrier heads for the corner, then suddenly cuts back. Alvin has overrun the play slightly. We go to SLOW MOTION as he turns and is hit with a wicked CRACK-BACK BLOCK by the guard he taunted. Alvin's leg flexes at a horrifying angle. We HEAR THE SNAP of bone and tendon, as Alvin plummets to the ground, writhing in pain, grabbing his left leg.

WINTERS

Oh, no...

The doctor and trainers sprint out to the field.

INT. JOE'S REHAB CENTER ROOM - NIGHT

We move in on Joe's face, as Harvey is heard on the radio in the b.g.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Oh, boy, this does not look good, Harmon. They're bringing the stretchers out...

Joe's eyes close. He knows what this means.

EXT. THE FIELD - NIGHT

Alvin is being strapped on the stretcher.

ALVIN

(wailing in pain)

Oh, shit, oh shit, I'll kill that

motherfucker. I'll... Oh shit...

EXT. KINNICK STADIUM - NIGHT

An ambulance carrying Alvin emerges from the stadium. We hear CHEERING inside, the SIREN outside.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Twelve seconds left, Iowa driving for the winning touchdown. Fourth and goal at the one. E.S.U. trying to hold on without their star middle linebacker, Alvin Mack.

EXT. THE FIELD AGAIN - NIGHT

The E.S.U. defensive line digs in. Lattimer tries to suck up his remaining strength.

Iowa runs a blast to Lattimer's side. He fights through one block, the ballcarrier coming right toward him. They meet in a titanic collision at the goal line. The back keeps driving, twisting. Lattimer tries to hold him, but weaker than he was on steroids, is unable to. The back falls over the goal line. Touchdown. IOWA 13 E.S.U. 10.

As the Iowa players celebrate all around him, Lattimer sits where he fell, a beaten and humiliated young man.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Coach, you've lost two of your last four.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM UNDER STADIUM - NIGHT

Coach Winters faces the press.

REPORTER

Why do your teams seem to nose dive at the end of the last couple seasons?

COACH WINTERS

This was a tough loss, but this ain't any nose dive. We've had some key

players out, but if we win next week, we'll still win the conference and go to a major bowl on New Year's Day. I mean, I know you guys can't write, but I thought you could at least count.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Alvin lies on a bed, his leg bandaged and elevated. He's still a little groggy from anesthetic. Coach Winters stands beside him.

WINTERS

You look good, Alvin.

ALVIN

Yeh, I feel o.k.

WINTERS

Any of the guys been down yet?

ALVIN

They called.

WINTERS

Hell, you know how football players are about hospitals and injuries.

ALVIN

Yeh.

Several beats of silence. Then:

ALVIN

I'm never gonna play again, am I?

WINTERS

Doctors aren't always right, Alvin... but I just want you to know... you're the best defensive football player I ever coached.

Alvin nods. Winters comes forward, hugs him around the head,

gives him a smile, walks out. Tears brim in Winters eyes as he leaves. Alvin's head goes back against the pillow. Tears aren't brimming here. They're rolling down his cheeks.

MUSIC BEGINS

EXT. REHAB CENTER - MORNING

Joe walks out with his suitcase. Coach Winters waits for him. Shakes his hand. They get in the car.

WINTERS (V.O.)

Congratulations. I'm proud of you, Joe.

INT. CAR - DAY

WINTERS

I know you had a difficult time.
Michigan is easy, right? Bourbon is tough.

JOE

Scotch.

They share a laugh. Winters pulls out two sets of round trip airline tickets.

WINTERS

I got somethin' for ya. Coupla round trip tickets. Go see your dad. Get it cleaned up.

Joe takes the tickets, just looks at him.

INT. STEVE LATTIMER'S ROOM - NIGHT

LATTIMER

(on the phone)

I'm gonna have to take a test with the coach right there. You sure you got somethin' better than blockers?

DEALER (V.O.)

Much better. This guy is foolproof.
See ya Saturday.

Lattimer hangs up, picks up a HYPODERMIC. Stares at it a second, sweat beading on his forehead. Then plunges it an inch deep into his thigh. Pulls it out, sits on the bed a beat, then picks up a barbell and begins to pump it furiously, biceps bulging.

MUSIC ENDS

INT. COACH WINTER'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The coach is facing Ray and Darnell across his desk.

WINTERS

I wanta do something different for this game. Try to maximize our speed, but keep you both in the lineup at the same time. Ray, I'm moving you to fullback. Darnell, you're startin' at tail.

Ray is stunned, Darnell elated, but neither says a word.

WINTERS

Ray, you'll be carrying the ball less and blocking more, but they'll still have to respect your running and pass-catching ability. Not everybody can make a transition like this. You think you can handle it?

RAY

(tight lipped)
Yes, sir.

WINTERS

Good. We can't afford any hang dogs.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Camille comes off the court, after tennis practice. She's surprised to find Joe waiting for her.

JOE
Hello, Camille.

CAMILLE
(cool)
Hello, Joe. You alright now?

JOE
Yeh... yeh, I think so.

CAMILLE
Good, I'm happy for you.

She starts to walk away, heading for the bike racks.

JOE
Camille, hold on, O.K.? I'm sorry
that I didn't want... that I couldn't
see you.

CAMILLE
You couldn't even talk to me. What
happened to "there's somethin' goin'
on between you and me"?

Camille gets on her bike...

JOE
C'mon, Camille, I was embarrassed. I
couldn't...

and pedals off.

JOE
(shouting after her)
I couldn't understand why anybody
would wanta talk to me. Camille!

She just keeps on going.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA STEEL TOWN - DAY

A bus comes up the hill toward us, on the main street of

Joe's sooty, little home town, the huge stacks of moribund steel works filling the sky in the background. The bus stops at a corner. Joe steps off. No bag. He's not planning on staying long.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe goes to the front door. Knocks, gets no answer, pushes the door open, walks through the messy, cluttered house to the back porch. Seated in a metal folding chair, smoking a cigarette, looking out at the yard is Joe's DAD. He's got a couple days growth of beard, and although not drunk now, he has the look of one.

JOE
How ya doin', Dad?

DAD
(surprised to see him)
Joe! What's this? They throw you out?

JOE
No.

JOE'S DAD
I heard about your little set-to.
They had it on the news here.

JOE
Yeh, they sent me to rehab.

JOE'S DAD
We know what that's worth. Your brother's been through it three times.

Joe nods sadly.

JOE'S DAD
So what are you doin' here?

JOE
I've been thinking about some things,
Dad.

JOE'S DAD

That's what that damn rehab'll do.
Make you think about a lotta things
you can't do nothing' about.

JOE

I kinda been wonderin' why you never
came to any of my games. All those
years.

JOE'S DAD

Oh, I don't know. I guess I didn't
wanta make you nervous. You mighta
tried too hard and screwed up.

JOE

Or I mighta done real well. Which
woulda been harder on you, Dad?

JOE'S DAD

(sensing the anger)
What do you mean?

JOE

Mighta made you feel bad. Like maybe
it wasn't written someplace that we
all gotta go on our ass. Like maybe
you coulda done somethin' more, if
you'de tried a little harder.

JOE'S DAD

Or maybe I didn't wanta see you
gettin' all excited, all pumped up
with pride, when I knew one day it
would all come crashin' down. Just
like it did.

JOE

I think I spent the last couple years
hopin' I'd die before that day. But
you know what Dad? That day came and
I'm still here. And I got one more
game this year. I don't know how

well I'll play or even how much, but
I want you there.

JOE'S DAD

How would you feel introducing your
drunk dad to all your friends? You
think about that?

JOE

I could live with it, if you could.

(handing him a ticket)

Here's a ticket. Section 2, Row 6.

Fifty yard line. If you don't come,
I'll never ask you again.

JOE'S DAD

O.K., Joey. And good luck.

They give each other a short, quick hug. Nothing sentimental.
Joe walks back through the house. His dad stares out at the
yard.

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Darnell is up late again, studying at one of the tables. He
hears footsteps, becomes aware of the presence of another
person. He looks up to see Autumn.

DARNELL

Hey, Autumn. How's Ray?

AUTUMN

Don't know. Haven't seen him since
the night I saw you. He'd been goin'
out.

DARNELL

Monica Lambert.

AUTUMN

You knew? Why didn't you tell me?

DARNELL

Didn't wanta win you over that way.

Silence. Darnell looks back at his books.

AUTUMN

I just wondered how your studying
was comin'. You ready for tomorrow?

DARNELL

The test? I hope so. I been workin'
pretty hard.

AUTUMN

Good...
(sitting down)
I talked to my dad last night.

DARNELL

Oh, yeah? How's he doin'?

AUTUMN

Fine. We talked about you.

DARNELL

What did you say?

AUTUMN

(eyes brimming)
I told him I'd gone out with you...
I told him I wished I could still go
bowling.

Darnell gets up and pulls her to her feet. He hugs her.

MUSIC BEGINS

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Darnell is bent over his test booklet. He writes furiously,
stops to think, starts writing again.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Joe takes a snap, fades to pass, throws an out. The ball
flutters badly, falling short.

CLAYTON

He's rusty. I doubt if we can start him.

WINTERS

(simmering)

He's worse than that. He's outa shape.

(blowing his whistle)

All right, that's enough for today.

Practice is cancelled. Everybody off the field, but Kane.

(the players hesitate)

C'mon what the hell are you standin' around lookin' at? Get outa here.

The players, surprised at this turn of events, begin to file off. Even the coaches are baffled. Winters walks over to Joe, who has no idea what this is about.

WINTERS

Didn't do much while you were in there, did ya?

JOE

Well, we didn't exactly have a team...

WINTERS

You could've worked out on your own.

JOE

I had some other things to worry about...

WINTERS

Well, we're gonna make up for lost time. We'll start by hoppin' the steps.

JOE

Hoppin' the steps?! What, you're gonna punish me now.

WINTERS

Don't talk back to me, Joe. I'll
kick your ass. I went easy on you,
'cause you had to get through detox,
but that's out to sea now. You let
this team down; you let this program
down. Start those steps. Right leg.

ANGLE ON JOE - STADIUM

Hopping up the stadium steps on his right foot, laboring as
he passes Winters, halfway up.

WINTERS

Now the left.

Joe switches to his left foot and continues hopping up the
steps, his quadriceps bursting with pain.

DISSOLVE TO:

JOE - LATER - STADIUM

hanging by his arms, moving hand over hand along the crossbar
of the goalpost, panting with fatigue, Winters watching from
below.

DISSOLVE TO:

JOE - AT SUNSET - STADIUM

Bone weary now. Winters has him run 20 yards, get down and
do 10 pushups, run another 20 yards, do 10 more pushups etc.

Joe staggers the 20 yards, drops to do his pushups, can only
do 4. Winters yanks him to his feet, pushes him forward to
run again.

WINTERS

70 guys. 70 guys who busted their
butts all year. Because of you they
might not win the conference. Because
of you they might not go to a bowl.

JOE

(barely able to stand)
I didn't wanna leave... I just screwed
up...

WINTERS
You dogged on them.

JOE
(stopping, exhausted)
No, no I never dogged. I worked my
ass off. I played hard...

WINTERS
(pushing him forward)
Then you shoulda stayed in shape.
Keep runnin', dammit.

JOE
(wobbling, starting
to break down)
I always played hard. I gave my
everything for you. When you came to
the Center, I thought you were really
worried about me. But you don't give
a shit. We're all just a buncha sled
dogs. If you had another guy who
could throw, you'da left me in the
fuckin' hospital.
(falling to his knees,
sobbing)
The only thing that matters is the
program, the god-damn program.

Winters pushes Joe down to do his pushups. Joe has to strain
mightily to do two.

WINTERS
Nobody forced you to play football,
Joe. Not me, not the program, nobody.
But when you sign on, you commit
yourself to pay the price, to do
whatever it takes. Well, you haven't
paid the price yet. You still owe
this team. You owe this team big-

time.
(walking away)
Get a shower.

Joe tries to get up, but collapses face down on the turf, as Winters continues to walk away.

INT. LOW RENT DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Lattimer lies on a table, a CATHETER TUBE going into his side. A DOCTOR'S AIDE supervises. Lattimer's dealer is there.

LATTIMER
What's this doin'?

DEALER
Takin' doped urine outa your bladder
and puttin clean back in. Call it an
oil change.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - BEFORE THE GAME

Coach Winters watches unknowingly as Lattimer pees the catheterized urine into a cup.

MUSIC ENDS

INT. LOCKER ROOM - JUST BEFORE THE GAME

The team is gathered around. Conspicuous among them is Lattimer, who's painted his face like a skeleton. Coach Winters is whipping them up with a pre-game rant.

WINTERS
Gotta get it done today, boys. Gotta
ring that bell. 60 minutes. 60 minutes
of mean. No prisoners. No mercy.
Nothin' but snot bubbles. Gotta ring
that bell, gotta ring that
Championship bell.

LATTIMER
(shouting)
Ding Motherfucking Dong!!

Pumped to the gills, the E.S.U. team explodes in yells and races out into the tunnel. The YELLING continues OVER and mixes with the CHEERING OF THE CROWD as:

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

HARVEY (V.O.)

Wolves movin' left to right on your radio dial. Looking to generate some offense. They've been up and down the last few weeks.

ANGLE ON BOBBY COLLINS in the huddle.

COLLINS

28 Thunder right. On go.

They break and the E.S.U. offense comes to the line. Collins calls signals. We go to SLOW MOTION as he fades to pass. Darnell fakes a block, then rolls out for a screen pass. Georgia Tech's defensive line comes hard. Bobby flips the ball over the charging defenders. Darnell catches it, gets a good block from Bud Lite, then tucks in behind Ray who is out ahead blocking.

There's only one linebacker to beat and Darnell will be into the secondary. Figuring Ray will block the guy, Darnell begins to look for the safeties. Ray, however, barely brushes the linebacker, who doesn't even break stride. He lowers his head, and drives into Darnell, his helmet hitting the football. Fumble! There's a scramble. The Yellow Jackets free safety comes up with it.

REGULAR SPEED

The crowd and the E.S.U. bench, quickly deflated, sit back down. Darnell gets to his feet, glares at Ray, but says nothing. He knows Ray tanked the block.

INT. ALVIN MACK'S SHACK - DAY

Alvin sits alone in the "living room", listening to the E.S.U. game on the radio, his leg propped up on an apple crate. His

mother mends a pair of jeans in the b.g.

HARVEY (V.O.)

So the Wolves defense has held after the fumble, and the Yellow Jackets will opt for the field goal. Around a 34 yarder. Ball is down, it's away, it's long enough. And good! Georgia Tech jumps out on top 3-0.

Alvin's mother looks to see if there's any reaction from Alvin. There's none.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Bobby Collins fades back to pass, is rushed, throws a quick sideline, but it's a little short. The Yellow Jackets' CORNERBACK sprints up, intercepts it and runs 30 yards down the sideline for a touchdown.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Collins back to pass, rushed, now fires out in the flat. It's picked off by Hill. Down the sideline. He's gonna go in untouched. Touchdown, Georgia Tech.

INT. E.S.U. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

A discouraged bunch of E.S.U. players drag into the locker room. Some swear, some bang their lockers.

LATTIMER

C'mon guys, we're only down ten. Let's get our fuckin' shit together.

Darnell marches over to Ray's locker.

DARNELL

You missed that block on purpose, didn't you, asshole.

RAY

You're full of shit. You fumble, you

try to blame me.

DARNELL

It's Autumn isn't it? That's what this is all about.

RAY

The hell with Autumn. You just can't take a hit.

Infuriated, Darnell goes for Ray, and they start swinging. Darnell tackles Ray, they roll on the floor, still swinging, trying to beat the shit out of each other. Finally, several players manage to pull them apart. Coach Winters charges over.

WINTERS

Don't tell me who started it. I don't care. All I care about is this football team. We win together. We lose together. So whatever your problem is, get over it. I don't want any more of this shit. Understand?

DARNELL AND RAY

Yes, sir.

WINTERS

As for the rest of you guys. Here's what I think of the way you played.

Winters walks over to a table set up with 75 cups of Orange Juice and Gatorade. He swipes the cups off the table creating a small flood on the floor. Then turns the table over. The players are shocked. They've seldom seen him like this.

WINTERS

(pointing toward the Yellow Jackets' locker room)

They're laughin' at you over there. Makin' plans for the evening. They never dreamed it'd be this easy. You

guys are nothin' but bugs splattered
on their windshield. You better stock
up on potato chips, 'cause you're
gonna be watching a lotta T.V. on
New Years Day.

Winters walks away, as the players are left to contemplate
their mistakes. Winters goes over to Joe.

WINTERS

Get warm, Joe. You're startin' the
second half.

Joe nods, excited but uncertain. Winters moves on to Ray
Griffen.

WINTERS

By the way... don't let me see you
miss anymore blocks.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

The E.S.U. players return to their bench for the start of
the second half, gather in a circle. Joe looks up in the
stands to the seat he reserved for his father. It's empty.

BEGIN A SERIES OF SHOTS:

1) Joe takes the snap from center, fumbles it, falls on it.

2) Joe looks to throw over the middle, waits too long, is
sacked.

3) Joe underthrows Darnell coming out of the backfield.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Clayton approaches Winters on the sideline.

CLAYTON

Joe's too tentative, too cautious
out there. He seems flat. Maybe we
oughta give Collins another shot.

WINTERS

Joe just needs to get the feel back.
He'll be alright.

CLAYTON

Sam, we can't afford to wait...

WINTERS

(snapping)
I said he'll be alright.

ANGLE ON JOE

HARVEY (V.O.)

5:51 to go. Georgia Tech up 10 to
nothing. The Wolves are gonna have
to find some offense in a hurry here.
Their defense has been keepin' them
in it.

As he starts off the bench for the field, Coach Winters comes
up to him.

WINTERS

Joe, I know that Rehab was good for
you. Got rid of a lotta bad habits.
But what about the rest of you? What
happened to the Joe Kane that used
to take command of this team, the
Joe Kane these guys i'd run through
a bulldozer for? They put him out
with the trash? What are you waitin'
for, somebody to feel sorry for you
cause you've had some problems? Nobody
in this stadium gives a shit. It's
time to step up, Joe. Time to sit at
the head of the Table.

ANGLE ON THE E.S.U. OFFENSIVE HUDDLE

As Joe comes into the huddle. He's all business now.

JOE

All right, we've held these guys up

long enough. Give me time back here,
and I'll rip 'em apart. 16 shift,
green, bolt. First sound.

Joe brings the offense to the line of scrimmage, yells "Go!"
The ball is snapped, Joe drops back, hits Darnell on the
sideline. First down. In quick succession, we see Joe:

- 1) Complete a 15 yarder to Ray over the middle.
- 2) Fades to pass, is rushed. Forced out of the pocket,
scrambles for his life, manages to get down to the 4 yard
line. He gets up, surveys the distance to pay dirt.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Nice bit of scrambling by Kane to
get it to the four, but it's gonna
bring up fourth and goal. No doubt
about it, with 3:45 they've gotta go
for it here, if they're gonna get
back in this game.

ANGLE ON THE SIDELINE

Winters puts his arm around Ray who will take the play into
the huddle.

RAY

Give it to me up the gut, Coach.
They've been ignoring me. I know I
can score.

WINTERS

No, we're gonna go with the sweep.

Winters gives Ray a shove and he runs onto the field. Ray is
upset, angry. He swears to himself.

ANGLE ON FIELD

Ray enters the huddle, whispers in Joe's ear.

JOE

28 Thunder right. On 2.

The team breaks out, comes to the line. Joe looks over the defense, screams signals as the CROWD NOISE is building.

We go to SLOW MOTION as the ball is snapped. Ray takes one step forward then turns right, leading the play. Joe pitches to Darnell who follows Ray. Georgia Tech's outside linebacker comes up to stop the play. Ray stumbles before he can make the block. He drops out of our picture.

DARNELL
Shit!

Darnell is forced to go wider toward the sideline. The linebacker and cornerback are closing, both have the angle on him. Darnell starts to cut back. He lowers his shoulder to take the linebacker's blow. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Ray reappears and throws a devastating block on the linebacker, knocking him back into the cornerback, taking them both out. Darnell cuts it up and blasts over the safety at the goal line. Touchdown, E.S.U.

The stands erupt. It's the first thing they've had to cheer about all day. Winters just looks at the clock, goes over to talk to his defense.

Darnell foregoes his touchdown dance. He runs over to Ray, grabs him by the helmet.

DARNELL
Monster block, man. Monster
motherfuckin' block.

Ray smiles. They butt heads and run off the field

INT. ALVIN'S SHACK

ALVIN
(softly to himself)
All right, defense. Let's get evil.
Kill 'em all, let the paramedics
sort 'em out.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Georgia Tech has the ball. They break their huddle.

HARVEY (V.O.)

1:11 and counting. Third and one.

The Wolves have got to stop them on this play if they're gonna get the ball back. A first down here and it's all she wrote. E.S.U. is out of timeouts.

The Georgia Tech quarterback fakes to his fullback, hands off to his TAILBACK on the countertrap. The tailback runs behind his big, pulling tackle, both right at Lattimer. Lattimer takes on the tackle, sheds his block. The back lowers his head, starts to power into Lattimer. Lattimer lets out a fierce yell.

Smash! Lattimer explodes into the tailback, the collision lifting the back off the ground, whiplashing his neck, vibrating his helmet. Lattimer's legs churn, driving the tailback back and into the ground. We see the back's face. There are snot bubbles in his nose. No first down. No way.

Lattimer jabs both arms in the air. The crowd goes nuts, as the defense slaps helmets, and runs off the field, windmilling their arms, whipping up the crowd.

ANGLE ON SIDELINE

Winters congratulates the defense as it comes off the field. He meets Lattimer, looks into his eyes. Sees the steroids there. He knows it's the only way the kid could have done it. Decides not to bust him. Lattimer knows it. Winters gives his helmet a little slap, more in sympathy than praise.

ANGLE ON THE YELLOW JACKET PUNTER

He catches the snap, boots the ball away.

Darnell fields it at his 12, starts toward the right sideline, where hemmed in, he looks like dead meat. Suddenly, he reverses his field, racing for the opposite sideline, where a picket line of blockers awaits him, if he can get there.

He turns on the jets, barely beating two tacklers to the corner, and then turns it up the left sideline, picking up a wicked series of crack-back blocks, until he's finally run out of bounds at the Yellow Jacket 35 yard line.

ON STANDS

The E.S.U. fans are on their feet. Winters races over to Joe.

WINTERS

Time for 2 plays. If it's not open in the end zone, take the sideline. As the offense runs onto the field, Winters checks the scoreboard. 17 seconds left. Georgia Tech 10. E.S.U. 7.

INT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

Joe brings the Wolves up.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Ball on the Yellow Jacket 35. 17 seconds left. Kane barking signals.

Joe takes the snap, drops to pass, finds no one, rolls away from the rush. Just as he's about to go out of bounds, he fires a bullet down the sideline. Ray Griffen catches it and goes out of bounds at the twelve.

ANGLE ON SIDELINE

Joe runs over to Coach Winters, knowing they have no more time outs, as the refs move the chains.

HARVEY (V.O.)

Field goal here ties it, but a tie may not get the Wolves into a bowl. Tough decision for Winters.

WINTERS

(to Joe)

You want me to send in the kicking

team or you think you can handle it?

JOE

Give me the ball.

WINTERS

O.K., let's do 24 inside slot, left
blue lightning.

ON FIELD

Joe races back out onto the field and into the huddle, as
the crowd's roar goes off the charts.

JOE

(in huddle)

O.K., 24 inside slot, left blue
lightning. Let's put the women and
children to bed, and go lookin' for
fuckin' dinner. On 2.

He starts the wolf howl. The others join in, howling for all
they're worth, eleven jacked-up warriors. They clap and break
the huddle.

The crowd is standing, waving fists in unison toward the
Georgia Tech end zone. Joe looks up in the stands again at
the seat he left for his father. It's still empty.

JOE

This one's for you, Dad.

Joe starts to call signals as Bud Lite sings "Bali Hi." We
go to SLOW MOTION as the ball is snapped.

The Georgia Tech defense fires off the line, throwing
everything at Joe. Joe drops back five steps. Bud Lite picks
up a blitzing linebacker, knocks him over a fallen player.
Joe looks for Darnell in the corner, but another pass rusher
breaks through, forcing Joe out of the pocket. It's wartime
as tackles and blockers collide, hand-fight, go down, scramble
up, collide again, all in pursuit of Joe.

Darnell, realizing Joe's in trouble, breaks off his pattern

and heads to the center of the end zone. Joe dodges one tackler, shakes free of another's ankle tackle, heads back for the center of the field. He spots Darnell breaking between defensive backs. Just as he's buried by two massive linemen, Joe fires a rocket down the middle toward the sliver of open space that Darnell is heading for.

The ball barely clears the hands of a lunging linebacker. Darnell and two defensive backs, one from each side, close on the ball as it cuts through the air, a perfect spiral. Darnell dives. The two defensive backs dive. The ball passes between their outstretched hands by a fraction of an inch, landing in Darnell's. He clutches it to his chest, rolls over, holds the ball up for the ref to see. Touchdown! This time Darnell does go into his touchdown dance.

ANGLE ON STANDS

Pandemonium. The crowd including Autumn and her dad goes crazy. Winters just gives a few quick nods, watching almost wistfully as the players and coaches hug each other, knowing none of them will hug him. Joe, Bud and the others mob Darnell.

INT. ALVIN'S SHACK - DAY

Alvin listens to the celebration a few beats, then switches off the radio, knowing this is an experience he'll never be a part of again. We leave him staring off into an uncertain future.

INT. CHANCELLOR'S SKY-BOX - DAY

The Chancellor and his guests are celebrating the victory, congratulating each other. Conspicuous among them are the Fat Cat Alumnus who gave Darnell the money, and the Chairman of the Board of Regents.

CHAIRMAN

Looks like the Timberwolves are back.
Probably brought the library with them.

CHANCELLOR

Hope so.
(turning to Galen
Howard)
Give my sincere congratulations to
Coach Winters.

HOWARD
He'll be delighted.

The Fat Cat Alumnus goes to a replica of the Building Fund
football field and starts advancing the ball.

FAT CAT ALUMNUS
15,10, touchdown!

This brings applause all around.

EXT. WOLF DEN STADIUM - AFTERNOON

As Darnell comes off the field, Autumn runs out and hugs
him, leads him to her dad.

AUTUMN
Daddy, you remember Darnell.

MR. HALEY
Yes, I do. Great catch, Darnell.

DARNELL
Thank you, sir. I got somethin' for
you.

Darnell reaches into his helmet and takes out a sweat-stained
piece of paper.

DARNELL
My entrance exam. Got a 92. Coach
Winters said you got an 87. He looked
it up.

MR. HALEY
(laughing)
I'll kill him.

ANGLE ON JOE KANE

walking toward the tunnel, acknowledging the plaudits of the fans. He looks for Camille, doesn't see her. Coach Winters comes up next to him.

WINTERS

Hell of a throw, Joe. Good to see you back.

Winters gives him a quick, but firm hug.

WINTERS

And don't worry about the Heisman. We'll gear up for it next year.

Joe manages a weary smile.

ANGLE ON BUD LITE

coming down the tunnel, Bobby Collins next to him. Both stop as Louanne walks toward them. Bobby smiles to himself in anticipation of her fawning over him. She walks right by him and up to Bud.

LOUANNE

You still feel like gettin' a beer?

Bud smiles. Bobby quickly looks around for someone else to hit on, hails a cheerleader. Bud and Louanne walk off together. Louanne stops when she sees her father, fearful of his reaction.

LOUANNE

He's not a football player any more. He's graduating this year.

WINTERS

He's still got a bowl game.

Louanne waits, not sure whether her father's angry or not.

WINTERS

So make sure he doesn't violate

curfew.

Louanne smiles. Winters returns it, and walks away.

ANGLE ON STEVE LATTIMER

Sitting on the bench, his head in his hands, weeping.

HARVEY (V.O.)

An amazing conclusion to a great season. We can see Steve Lattimer down on the bench weeping tears of joy as E.S.U. goes back to a bowl for the first time in three years.

These are not tears of joy, but a man/boy who knows he'll never be able to play pro football without steroids.

EXT. E.S.U. CAMPUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Joe sits on a bench at the intersection of four converging Quad paths. Camille approaches from the opposite direction, stops when she sees Joe.

CAMILLE

What are you doin' here?

JOE

Waitin' for you. I figured you'd have to come through here on your way to dinner.

This softens, relaxes her a bit.

CAMILLE

Shouldn't you be out celebrating?
You played real well.

JOE

I need your help with somethin'. I know I'm not your favorite guy right now, but it's all startin' again. The expectations, the pressure, the talk about the Heisman next year. I

was wonderin' if you'de like to go
somewhere, maybe share a six-pack
with me?

Camille's shocked that he might be drinking again. He pulls
a six pack of 7-Up out from behind his back. She laughs in
spite of herself. They settle again.

JOE

I miss you, Camille. I don't like
bein' without you.

CAMILLE

I'll think about it.

They look at each other a beat, come forward into a long
kiss and embrace as we pull up and back.

CREDITS BEGIN TO ROLL AS

EXT. STADIUM TUNNEL - DAY

Coach Winters, flanked by Humes and Clayton, walks down the
tunnel to a waiting car. No effigy this time.

HUMES

Tickets are in your coat. Itinerary
and player profiles in the briefcase.
We got a 9:00am tomorrow in Baltimore
with the kid from Park. Then we're
on to...

They continue down the tunnel toward a new recruiting season,
another year in the annals of The Program.

FADE OUT

THE END