

Fourth and Long

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"FOURTH AND LONG"

ACT I

SCENE I

FADE IN:

INT. STEVENS' HOME - OFFICE - DAY

LAPTOP SCREEN

As words emerge on the screen.

BACK OF MAN

As he busily types away on his laptop at his desk.

PICTURES ON OFFICE WALL

Display the life and times of the author. One such picture is that of the 1962 Willowbrook High School football team.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL (1962) - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

WIDE ANGLE - WILLOWBROOK HIGH FOOTBALL TEAM

Stands and poses for the team picture. The camera bulb flashes, as the picture has been taken. The entire team disperses onto the field for a few drills. RICHARD "HAWK" HAYWOOD, the Head Coach of the Willowbrook football team, stands on the sideline, giving his team the once over. He is soon accompanied by the Principal of Willowbrook High School, PRINCIPAL ALAN EDWARDS.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

(watches players)

So do you think, we'll be holding the state trophy by season's end?

COACH HAYWOOD

(watches players)

C'mon, Alan. You know how I hate to make predictions.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)
 The last two years, everyone said
 we'd win it all. We didn't even
 make the playoffs.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
 (watches players)
 Well, I think football should be
 the least of your players'
 concerns. Do you know that last
 year, half of your team's GPAs
 barely qualified them to play?
 (beat)
 Don't even get me started on the
 offensive line. Their biology
 grades were far from all-state.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (turns to Principal
 Edwards)
 Just give us time.

Some members of the team, walk off the field, as they are
 finished with their scrimmages. Two of those players are
 JACK STEVENS, the starting quarterback, and AARON FISHER, the
 starting halfback. They talk amongst each other.

JACK
 (slightly out of breath)
 You looked really good out there,
 Fish. Seems like your ankle's
 better.

AARON
 (slightly out of breath)
 Yeah, it's getting there. Your arm
 looks stronger than ever.

JACK
 I'm hoping it'll last through the
 season. This is our senior year.
 We've got to treat each game like
 it's the state championship. Then
 maybe we can actually win it.

AARON
 Yeah. The team looks improved.
 All those new transfer students are
 playing for the team this year.
 Especially the new wide receiver.

Back on the field, the backup quarterback throws passes to
 the newest wide receiver, ANDRE "FLASH" FERGUSON. Flash has
 just hauled in a pass, and makes it known.

FLASH
 (exuberant)
 Yes, first down!
 (turns to sidelines)
 You see, students, that's how you
 make a play. I do what I please
 with ease!

Flash encounters Coach Haywood, and decides to introduce himself.

FLASH
 (extends his hand)
 Pleased to meet you. The name's
 Andre Ferguson, but folks call me
 Flash. For obvious reasons.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (shakes his hand)
 Coach Haywood. You look pretty
 good out there.

FLASH
 Pretty good?! May I remind you
 that I scored two-hundred-forty-one
 touchdowns in Pop Warner, made All-
 City in each of my years in grammar
 school, and All-State every year of
 high school?
 (beat)
 Just remember to focus the playbook
 on number eighty.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (confounded)
 Number eighty?

FLASH
 Me! That's going to be my jersey
 number when I make starting wide
 receiver. Just make sure that I
 get at least ten catches a game.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (stern)
 Well, if I were you, I wouldn't put
 all my eggs in one basket. In case
 you didn't know, we happen to have
 great depth at the wide receiver
 position.
 (beat)
 You're gonna have to earn it just
 like everyone else.

Coach Haywood semi-hardly pats Flash on the shoulder and departs.

FLASH

That's what I meant.

(goes after Coach Haywood)

Coach!

Coach Haywood continues ambling down the sidelines, when he is met by his assistant coach, COACH HARVEY RADFORD.

COACH RADFORD

(sarcastic)

Hawk! Great to see ya. As always, you're looking your wonderful ashen gray self.

COACH HAYWOOD

You're too kind, Harv. So, I've seen what we can do on offense. How do we look on defense?

COACH RADFORD

Well, most of our starters from last year are now seniors. Our secondary is a bit of a question mark, now that Brooks and Hurst graduated. Our defensive line looks pretty solid.

(beat)

But I must say, the biggest change for us has been at linebacker. Did you this new kid?

COACH HAYWOOD

Who?

On the playing field, the offensive and defensive line are having a scrimmage. DOUG DOMBROWSKI, the new middle linebacker, is vigilantly watching the quarterback. The center hikes the ball, as the quarterback drops back to pass. Doug quickly penetrates his blocker, and sacks the quarterback. Doug rises and heads back to the huddle.

On the sideline, Coach Haywood and Coach Radford look on in awe.

COACH RADFORD

(watches players)

He runs a four point two forty, and is so strong is takes two lineman to block him. That leaves at least one other defender free to roam.

(MORE)

COACH RADFORD (cont'd)
 He's gonna be the key to the
 defense this season.

COACH HAYWOOD
 I think it's time we call it a day,
 Harv.

Coach Haywood BLOWS his WHISTLE, as both sides disband. Members of the team are walking off the field to the locker room. One of those players is JOE ASHBURN, an offensive lineman. He is soon met by Doug.

DOUG
 (slightly out of breath)
 Hey kid, you got a nickname?

JOE
 (curious; slightly out of
 breath)
 No. Why?

DOUG
 Well, I have one for you.
 Turnstile. You made it too easy
 for me today. Better work on your
 technique.

Doug semi-hardly pats Joe on the shoulder and departs. Joe looks on in slight anger.

FADE OUT.

SCENE II

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The players are getting showered, dressed, and chatting amongst themselves. Jack is getting dressed by his locker, when Coach Haywood beckons him.

COACH HAYWOOD (O.S.)
 Jack, can I see you for a minute?

JACK
 Sure. Be right there, Coach.

INT. COACH HAYWOOD'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jack quietly enters Coach Haywood's office and closes the door behind him.

JACK

You wanted to see me, Coach?

COACH HAYWOOD

Yes, Jack. Please, have a seat. Jack, I've called you in here to discuss some important issues.

(two full beats)

As you know, this is your senior year, and that means it will be your last season as this school's quarterback. Now, I know this may be a bit much to put on you, but I've decided to designate you as team captain.

JACK

(reluctant)

Ah, Coach. Can't you find somebody else? I mean, you know I love to play, but I don't like attention.

COACH HAYWOOD

Now, I figured that this would be your initial reaction. I did have other players in mind. Last year it was Todd, but he graduated.

(beat)

I was gonna ask Aaron, but you know how shy he is. Plus, there's a reason I chose you.

(two full beats)

You may not know this, but the guy look up to you, Jack. As the coach of this team, I've seen you develop from a third string quarterback into All-State the past two years. You embody everything this team and school is about. And I feel you have all the tools to bring this school a state championship.

JACK

Coach, I'm truly honored by your words, but--

COACH HAYWOOD

(softly intervenes)

I know what you're going to say. I realize that you went through a lot last year. Your mom losing her job at the factory.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)

Ben losing his fight with leukemia,
not to mention balancing academics
and athletics.

(beat)

But the reason I'm telling you this
is because I think you can be one
of the greats, Jack.

JACK

How can you tell?

COACH HAYWOOD

I can see it in you. I've been
coaching for twenty-five years
now, ten at Willowbrook. I've seen
my fair share of quarterbacks.
Those who could throw, read
defenses, throw on the run, pick up
the blitz, and overcome the two
minute drill.

(two full beats)

But up until I saw you, there's one
thing you had that the others
lacked. Leadership.

JACK

Coach, it's great that you--

COACH HAYWOOD

(softly intervenes)

Now, Jack. Before I let you leave,
I just want to tell you that you
don't have to take on the role of
team captain. But it's one that I
think you are quite capable of
doing, and I'd love to see you try.

(beat)

Greatness is a rarified air
breathed by a precious few. And I
really hope you take the time to
inhale.

Jack stares silently at Coach Haywood.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Aaron and LARRY LESTER, the team's starting center, are at
their lockers getting dressed. Larry is trying to catch his
breath, while treating his tender ankle with some ice.

AARON

Soaking the old paws, Lar?

LARRY
 (in slight pain)
 Yeah. I almost mashed my ankle
 underneath a pile up in the
 scrimmage. I'll be fine.

AARON
 You look like you lost some weight.

LARRY
 Yeah. I've started this new diet.
 I call it the half diet. I eat
 half of something I usually eat
 large portions of. Instead of
 eating a whole box of devil dogs, I
 eat half. Instead of eating six
 bowls of mom's pot roast, I eat
 three. You know, less is more.

Aaron looks perplexed at Larry, as he nods his head in
 confused comprehension.

EXT. STEVENS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - EARLY EVENING

The sun starts to set in the sky over the Stevens' house.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVENS' HOME - KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Jack is in the kitchen, helping his mother, AMY STEVENS, with
 dinner and setting the dinner table. The back door opens, as
 Jack's father, BRUCE STEVENS, has arrived home after another
 long day at work. He greets both his wife and son.

MISTER STEVENS
 I'm home.
 (kisses his wife)
 Hi, honey.
 (looks at Jack)
 How was school today?

JACK
 Good.

INT. STEVENS' HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack and his parents are seated at the dinner table, as they
 bow their heads in silence and say grace before dinner.

MISTER STEVENS

(says grace)

And we thank thee Lord, for this blessing of nourishment. May you bless those that are not as fortunate, and may you provide them with nourishment of the mind, heart, body, and soul.

WHOLE FAMILY

(aloud)

Amen.

The family is quietly eating dinner, when Mister Stevens decides to start a conversation with his son.

MISTER STEVENS

(mouth half full)

I got a call from Coach Haywood today. He told me that you want to assume the role of team captain. That's something.

JACK

I didn't say I wanted it. Coach Haywood wants it for me. I told him I'd sleep on it.

MISTER STEVENS

(incredulous)

Are you out of your mind, Jack? You're the quarterback. Do you know what kind of opportunities you're squandering? Your brother couldn't even get the--

JACK

(angrily interrupts)

Stop comparing me to Ben! I'm not Ben. Never was, never will be. Don't dare do that to me!

MISTER STEVENS

(stern)

You're right. You're nothing like your brother. Ben would've taken that role at the drop of a hat. Your grandfather was a safety, your brother was a quarterback, I played tight end, and you're a quarterback. So that means--

JACK
 (angrily interjects)
 So, that means I'm capable of
 making my own decisions, and some
 of them don't involve throwing a
 pigskin fifty yards.

MISTER STEVENS
 (angrily)
 Don't you raise your voice to me!

JACK
 (angrily)
 Then stop trying to dictate my life
 to me!

MISSUS STEVENS
 (raises her voice)
 Stop fighting! You're father and
 son!

JACK
 Try telling that to him.

Jack gets up from the table and runs quickly upstairs. His
 parents follow him.

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack arrives in his room, as he quickly closes and locks the
 door. The loud KNOCKS of his parents quickly resonate on
 Jack's bedroom DOOR.

MISTER STEVENS (O.S.)
 (from behind bedroom door)
 Jack, open this door right now!

MISSUS STEVENS (O.S.)
 (from behind bedroom door)
 Jack, please. Let's talk this
 through.

Jack sits pensively on his bed, oblivious to the clamors of
 his parents, as he starts to write in a small notebook.

FADE OUT.

SCENE III

FADE IN:

EXT. FISHERS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The moon luminesces in the night sky over the Fisher's house.

CUT TO:

INT. FISHERS' HOUSE - AARON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aaron is upstairs, diligently trying to study both his biology homework and his playbook. Aaron seems a bit flustered, and decides to take a break. Aaron, a diabetic, takes his insulin and a syringe, and injects himself in the stomach. A voice soon emerges.

MISSUS FISHER (O.S.)
(from downstairs)
Aaron, honey. You okay up there?

Aaron heads to the door to answer his mother.

AARON
(calls down to her)
I'm fine, Mom. Just doing some homework.

Aaron closes the door, as he closes the door. Aaron looks worried for a moment, but soon composes himself.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - MORNING

The hallway is rife with students, most of them at their lockers, gathering materials for their respective classes. Jack is at his locker. He gathers his books, as he SLAMS his LOCKER closed. Behind the locker door is Jack's girlfriend, CINDY HANSON.

CINDY
(happily)
Hey there, stud QB.

JACK
Cindy, are you a sight for sore eyes.

Jack embraces Cindy and kisses her.

CINDY
(looks concerned at him)
Are you okay?

JACK
I've had better days.

CINDY

Well, I hope you'll be in a better mood when you join us for dinner tonight.

JACK

Oh, Cindy, I'm sorry. The team has a mandatory meeting tonight. It's the first of the season.

CINDY

(disappointed)

Jack, I thought we had this discussion junior year. If we're ever going to have a solid relationship, we have to compromise.

JACK

I know Cindy. Believe me, if there was anyway that I could get out of this meeting, I would find it. Tell ya what. Save a place for me at the table tonight. I'll be there first thing after the meeting.

CINDY

(looks sternly at him)

You promise?

JACK

Pinky promise.

Jack extends his pinky, as Cindy suspiciously but agreeably extends hers, as their pinkies interlock. They both then join at the hip and proceed to walk down the hall.

Meanwhile, at another end of the hall, Doug is at his locker, getting ready for class. Doug is abruptly confronted by Joe Ashburn's brother, ROB, and a couple of his friends.

ROB (O.S.)

(stern)

Hey, Browski.

DOUG

(turns around)

It's Dombrowski, pal.

(looks curiously at Rob and his friends)

Do I know you?

ROB

Rob Ashburn. I'm Joe Ashburn's brother. My friends and I hear you've been givin' my brother some gibes on the gridiron.

DOUG

(strong)

Well, if your brother's blocking is any indication of how he can play, he better get a job stocking shelves at SafeWay.

ROB

(stern)

Listen, Dombrowski. Speaking on my brother's behalf--

DOUG

(strongly interjects)

And speaking as one man to another, why don't you let your brother fight his own battles?

(beat)

If you'll excuse me, I have to get to class.

ROB

(stern)

Just make sure to steer clear of my brother and me. Got that, meathead?

Rob proceeds to hardly shove Doug into his locker. An incensed Doug goes to charge Rob, when Jack appears and gets in between.

JACK

(calm)

Guys, guys! Let's leave our aggression for the field!

ROB

(strong)

Alright, Jack. But tell your new linebacker we'll be watching him.

Rob and his friends look sternly at Doug, and depart. Doug and Jack remain, as Jack decides to introduce himself.

JACK

(concerned)

You alright, man?

DOUG

(calm)

Yeah. Hey, aren't you the
quarterback?

JACK

(witty)

I'm afraid to say this in front of
you, but yes.

(extends his hand)

Jack Stevens.

DOUG

(shakes his hand)

Doug Dombrowski. I saw footage of
you while I was at East Haven. You
gotta helluva arm.

JACK

Thanks. Got the chance to see you
on some scrimmages yesterday.
Looking good out there.

(beat)

I hate to cut it short, but I've
got to get to algebra. Maybe I'll
see you at the team meeting
tonight.

DOUG

Look forward to it. Catch ya
later.

Jack departs, as Doug is left at his locker, as he picks up his books. At the far end of the corridor, Flash and Kenneth are walking toward their respective class. Flash swaggers through the hallway, while a wary Kenny watches.

KENNETH

(mock-complains)

Do you always have to showboat?

FLASH

Kenny, you have to understand
something. When I made All-State
at Washington High in Chicago, how
do you think I got there.

KENNETH

With your talent and work ethic.

FLASH

(hesitates)

Yeah, well that had something to do with it. But the main reason I am where I am is because of my image. Publicity, self-promotion, marketing myself. If things bode well, colleges from all over the country will be knocking down our door.

KENNETH

Just try and keep your feet on the ground as much as you do in the end zone

Flash and Kenneth are walking to their first period class, when they are met by a FELLOW CLASSMATE.

CLASSMATE

Hey, aren't you Flash Ferguson?

FLASH

The one and only.

CLASSMATE

I saw you at the scrimmage yesterday. Man, you were awesome.

(presents Flash with a piece of paper)

I was wondering if I could have your autograph.

FLASH

(gladly takes piece of paper from Classmate)

It would be my honor.

Flash signs for his Classmate, when he decides to strike up a conversation.

CLASSMATE

Hey, didn't you used to attend George Washington High in Chicago?

FLASH

Yes, indeed. Did you go there?

CLASSMATE

No, but my cousin Scott did.

FLASH

Scott Decker?

CLASSMATE

That's him. Do you know him?

FLASH

He was only the best cornerback I've ever seen. He was practically my shadow when we practiced together.

CLASSMATE

Man, you are something. Hey, some of the guys are going for a burger after school. Wanna come?

FLASH

Sounds great. Hey, I didn't catch your name.

CLASSMATE

I find it hard for you not to catch anything.

(extends his hand)

It's James.

FLASH

(shakes his hand)

Pleasure to meet you, James.

(introduces Kenneth)

James, I'd like for you to meet my brother, Kenny.

CLASSMATE

(warmly shakes Kenneth's hand)

Nice to meet you, Kenny. If you're as good a receiver as your brother is, we're sure to win the state title this year. I'll see you guys later.

Kenny gives a faint smile, as James departs. Flash and Kenny proceed to their class.

Further down the hallway, some of Flash and Kenny's teammates, closely watch them and talk amongst themselves. They are the key members of the offensive and defensive line: ZACHARY BARRETT, TRENT LOWERY, TROY SPENCER, and LESTER MONTVILLE.

TRENT

(watches; sotto voce)

Can you believe it?

(MORE)

TRENT (cont'd)

This school was at one time All-State and all white. Now we have two of them attending our school. Before you know it, two becomes ten, ten becomes a hundred, and so on.

(beat)

Pretty soon they'll be running the schools, local businesses, not to mention the whole world.

ZACHARY

(watches; sotto voce)

They already have a whole piece of land where they live. Shit, it's practically ten time the size of our land.

LESTER

(watches; sotto voce)

I bet they never heard about old Reggie Willis. Remember him?

TROY

(watches; sotto voce)

How could I forget? Shit, after the season was over, he was practically runnin' for the hills. Think we'll have to do the same for these two?

ZACHARY

(watches; sotto voce)

We'll play it by ear. The other one seems to be alright. I don't think he'll be a problem. But if he keeps it up, our new star receiver we'll be out quicker than a flash.

(beat)

C'mon fellas, we gotta get to class.

The boys take one last gaze at Flash and Kenny before departing.

FADE OUT.

SCENE IV

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The team has convened for the first team meeting of the season. Jack sits pensively, when Aaron meets up with him.

AARON

Hey, Jack. Man, I can't believe the season's already here. Whadya think Coach Haywood'll have to say to us?

JACK

I don't know, but whatever it is, it'll be far from complimentary.

At the other end of the locker room, Flash and Kenneth are quietly talking amongst themselves.

FLASH

(impatiently; sotto voce)
Man, let's get this class in session. I wanna get home and listen to my James Brown records.

KENNETH

(sternly; sotto voce)
You gotta stay focused, Andre. I heard Coach Haywood is going to name the starters for this season.

FLASH

(sotto voce)
Well, if my name isn't listed under wide receiver, you're gonna see the fastest exit ever.

KENNETH

(stern; sotto voce)
Don't get cocky now. Here comes Coach Haywood.

Coach Haywood slowly enters the locker room, as talking amongst the players ceases. Coach Haywood looks around the locker room at his players.

COACH HAYWOOD

Good evening, gentlemen. Before we begin our first meeting, I want you to look at each other and tell me what you see.

The players heed Coach Haywood, as they look at one another and turn back to Coach Haywood. Doug breaks the silence.

DOUG

(witty)

I see a bunch of pre-pubescent
teens that wanna kick the shit out
of the opposition.

The entire teams bursts into laughter, as Coach Haywood
retains his composure.

COACH HAYWOOD

Oh, it's you, Dombrowski. Well
yes, you've answered part of my
question. If you would like to
know the second part, you are all
individuals.

(beat)

Individuals of different skin
tones, backgrounds, likes,
dislikes, moods, fears, abilities,
and so on. However, as different
as you all are, you all have one
thing in common.

Coach Haywood hesitates, as he gives the players time to
think over the answer.

COACH HAYWOOD

The game of football, and your
passion for it. You study the
game, practice the game, work for
the game, but most importantly, you
experience the game.

(beat)

With every pass, catch, run, kick,
and tackle, you add your name to a
list of precious few who not only
played the game, but lived it.

(beat)

May I be the first to remind you
that playing for Willowbrook is a
privilege, not a right. A
privilege the coaching staff and I
will make sure you uphold with the
utmost respect and honor.

(two full beats)

And if you think we are all about
football, may I remind you that we
place the utmost importance on
education. You will be expected to
perform superbly in the classroom
as you do on the field.

(beat)

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)
 Before I go, I want to ask you all
 one more question to think about
 tonight. So many want to be a part
 of the game, but how many want the
 game to be a part of them? The
 list is on the wall outside.

Everyone quickly rises and heads outside.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - CORRIDOR - LATE AFTERNOON

The whole team crowds around the list on the wall, checking
 for their names. Jack fights through the crowd and looks at
 the list.

JACK'S POV

TEAM ROSTER

Lists Stevens, Jack under the quarterback position, and the
 words "TEAM CAPTAIN" next to it.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack looks at the roster and rolls his eyes, as he departs.

AARON
 (nervous)
 I can't look.

JACK
 You're starting, Aaron.

AARON
 (concerned)
 You okay?

JACK
 (disappointed)
 Yeah. Coach Haywood designated me
 as team captain. I really don't
 want it.

AARON
 (thrilled)
 Man, Jack, that's incredible.
 You'll be getting scholarship
 offers left and right.

JACK
 (reluctant)
 Ah!!

The rest of the team, Flash and Kenny among them, look for their names. Both boys are exultant as they are both starting wide receivers. Flash proceeds to do a dance, while a Kenneth looks on disapprovingly.

FLASH
(ebullient)
I'm like James Brown. I feel good,
uh!

KENNETH
(stern)
Relax, Andre. We haven't even
played a single down, and already
you're celebrating.

FLASH
Well, you better get used to it,
cause I'm gonna be celebratin' even
more every time I reach the end
zone.

Flash and Kenny depart. Doug slowly approaches the list, as he searches for his name. Doug finds his name, as he is the starting middle linebacker. He quietly pumps his fist, as he looks up at the ceiling and quietly whispers, "Thank you."

EXT. HANSON'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The Hanson porch light is on, as the entire house bathes in the moonlight.

CUT TO:

INT. HANSON'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Cindy and her PARENTS, are peacefully eating dinner, when the DOORBELL RINGS.

MISSUS HANSON
(gets up from table)
I'll get it.

Missus Hanson heads to the front door, as she unlocks and opens it.

JACK

Stands on the front porch, with a pie in his hands.

JACK
 (polite)
 Good evening, Missus Hanson. I
 hope I'm not disturbing dinner.

MISSUS HANSON
 (invites him in)
 Not at all. Please come in, Jack.

JACK
 Thank you.

At the dinner table, the Hansons and Jack eat supper. Cindy and Jack look amorously at each other. Jack quietly whispers, "It's delicious.", and smiles at Cindy. They are soon interrupted.

MISSUS HANSON
 So Jack, I hear you're the starting
 quarterback of the team this year.

JACK
 Yes. The starters were announced
 today.

MISTER HANSON
 I don't think there's anyone we'd
 rather have under center.

JACK
 Thank you, Sir. I'm hoping we can
 win it all this year.

MISTER HANSON
 Speaking of winning it all, what do
 you think of the team's chances
 this year?

JACK
 Well, we have two new receivers, a
 few upgrades on the defensive line,
 and some new cornerbacks. If we
 play hard and with a little lucky,
 maybe we'll go far.

MISSUS HANSON
 (serious)
 Jack, if you don't mind me asking,
 what do you plan to do in college,
 in case football doesn't work out?

JACK

Well Ma'am, for the past few years, I've been busily writing a book of short stories and anecdotes, which I hope to present to a few publishing companies, in hopes of landing a deal.

MISSUS HANSON

(impressed)

My Jack, you certainly have well-laid plans.

JACK

Well, despite what some people may think, I have aspirations that extend far beyond the field of play.

Jack slowly puts his hand on Cindy's hand, as the two smile at one another. Cindy then tells her parents some good news.

CINDY

Hey, did you know that Jack was named team captain?

MISTER HANSON

Are you kidding? That's great, Jack.

MISSUS HANSON

(happy)

How wonderful. Congratulations, Jack!

JACK

(modest)

Oh, you know, just something Coach gave to me. It's no big deal.

MISTER HANSON

Jack, if there's anyone who knows the qualities of a human being, it's Coach Haywood. I played free safety for three seasons at Willowbrook. I came out of it more of a man than I ever thought.

(beat)

Stick with the Hawk, and you'll learn a lot more than just X's and O's.

JACK

I just hope we can make the town proud.

MISTER HANSON

I'm sure you will. You sure have the bloodlines. Your grandfather was the best safety this town ever produced, your dad was a helluva tight end, and your brother Ben was a...

(hesitates; a little embarrassed)

Oh, I'm sorry.

JACK

That's alright, Sir.

MISTER HANSON

Your brother Ben was a fine quarterback, and an even finer young man. He would have made the family proud.

JACK

I just wish he could've held on a little longer. Every game I play will be for him.

Jack hesitates slightly and composes himself.

JACK

(looks at his watch)

Boy, look at the time. I really should get goin'. Thank you for the wonderful meal.

(looks at Cindy)

I'll see you tomorrow.

Cindy gives Jack a hug and a kiss, as Jack rises from the table and says goodbye to Mister and Missus Hanson.

FADE OUT.

SCENE V

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - MORNING

English class is still in session, as the students listen to their English teacher, MISS GIBBONS, give her lesson.

MISS GIBBONS
 (addresses class)
 So class, what was it that Poe wanted to illustrate in The Raven?

The entire class is unresponsive, as the BELL RINGS. Everyone rises from their seats, when they are halted by Miss Gibbons.

MISS GIBBONS
 (calls aloud)
 Wait, class!
 (presents essays)
 I have your essays from last week. Overall, I think they were very well, while some need improvement. Don't forget to read Lord Tennyson's Spring for our next lesson and we'll also go over The Raven. That is all.

The students finish giving back their papers and disperse. A classmate hands Jack his essay. Jack looks at his essay.

INSERT SHOT - JACK'S ENGLISH PAPER

Reads, "See me".

BACK TO SCENE

Jack looks disappointedly at his paper, as he goes to meet with Miss Gibbons.

JACK
 Miss Gibbons, you wanted to see me?

MISS GIBBONS
 Yes, Jack. I read your essay while I was grading papers yesterday. Forgive me for making this assumption, but I never realized how keen and insightful our star quarterback was.

JACK
 (modest)
 Thank you, Miss Gibbons. I try.

MISS GIBBONS

Well, it's one of the best papers I've read in quite some time. Have you ever considered a career in writing?

JACK

I've given it some thought. I like to write in my spare time, when I'm not practicing or playing. You know, poems and short stories.

MISS GIBBONS

If you ever need a recommendation, do not hesitate to ask me.

JACK

I appreciate that, Miss Gibbons. I hate to cut our conversation short, but I promised my friends I'd meet them at lunch.

MISS GIBBONS

Of course.

Jack heads toward the door, when Miss Gibbons intervenes once more.

MISS GIBBONS (O.S.)

Oh, and Jack...

Jack turns around and looks at Miss Gibbons.

MISS GIBBONS

In case I forgot to tell you, I'm sorry about your brother. He was a great student and a privilege to teach. I guess it runs in the family.

Jack slightly grins at Miss Gibbons and departs. Miss Gibbons remains at her desk, as a slight smile fissures from her lips.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Students are enjoying their lunches and chatting about. At one table, Jack, Aaron, and Doug are eating. Doug's tray is full, as he eats, while Jack and Aaron look on in amazement/disgust. Doug notices them.

DOUG
 (looks up at them)
 Well?

JACK
 What?

DOUG
 (testily)
 What are you numb nuts starin' at?

JACK
 Well, as the top defensive player
 on our team, isn't it a little
 unwise to be eating like one of our
 offensive linemen?

DOUG
 Relax, fellas. I'm trying to put
 some weight back on. I had a
 stomach virus last month and lost
 ten pounds. I gotta get in shape
 before the season opener. I'll be
 hitting the weights tonight.

AARON
 Speaking of offensive linemen, did
 anybody see Larry? He should have
 been here by now.

JACK
 He told me he was sneaking out to
 Mac's. He should keep 'em in
 business for another decade.

At the lunch counter, Flash and Kenneth get their lunch, as they look for a place to sit. They pass a table full of girls. One of the girls smiles and winks at Flash. Flash reciprocates, as he and Kenneth continue to look.

CLASSMATES AT TABLES

Stare uncomfortably at Flash and Kenneth.

Jack sees them both and raises his arm, indicating that they are welcome to sit with them. Flash and Kenneth proceed to their table and sit down. Doug, tired and needing to use the bathroom, decides to depart.

DOUG
 (gets up from table)
 Sorry, fellas.
 (MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
Nature's calling, and then I'm
gonna run a few laps before class.

JACK
(curious)
What about all this food?

DOUG
Oh, yeah.
(takes a piece of paper,
writes on it, and hands
it to Aaron)
Here.

AARON
(looks curiously at piece
of paper)
What's this?

DOUG
The combination to my locker. I
want you to put the rest of the
food in there. I'll be hungry
after school. See you guys at
practice.

Doug departs, as Jack and Aaron get to know Flash and
Kenneth.

JACK
So, how do you guys like
Willowbrook?

FLASH
(mock-complains)
It's okay, but what do you guys do
for fun around here? Bale hey?

Jack and Aaron smile sardonically.

JACK
Believe me. You guys will be
seeing plenty of action on the
field this season.

FLASH
(confident)
Well, if you ever need a big play,
all you have to do is throw the
ball my way.

KENNETH

What do you guys think Coach Haywood has in store for us in practice?

AARON

I don't know, but if you guys have never experienced an intense practice, you will this afternoon.

JACK

Knowing Coach the way we do, he'll probably start out by saying...

Jack opens his mouth to say something.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

COACH HAYWOOD'S MOUTH

Yells loudly.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells aloud)

Alright ladies, line up! In case you don't know who I am, my name is Richard Haywood, a.k.a. Coach, a.k.a. Coach Haywood, a.k.a. Hawk, and if you don't play hard and smart, a.k.a. Asshole!

(two full beats; paces around)

I'm hoping if we all work, play, and execute as a team, we might just do something right. Maybe even have some fun. Now that we have that out of the way, let's practice.

On the field, Jack practices his throws. Jack takes the ball from the center, drops back, and looks downfield. Flash runs a deep route. Jack sees Flash and tosses downfield. Flash gracefully hauls in the pass and plants both feet in the end zone.

COACH HAYWOOD

Nice catch, Ferguson. Alright, next play.

CLOSE-UP - KENNETH'S INTENSE AND FOCUSED GAZE

As he waits for the ball to be snapped.

Jack scans the defense, calls the play, takes the ball under center, and drops back. Kenneth, fists pumping, runs a precise route and gets downfield. Jack find Kenneth, as he throws deep. Kenneth catches the ball, before being pushed out of bounds by the defensive back.

COACH HAYWOOD

Nice route running, Kenneth. If you work on your speed and footwork, that could be a touchdown.

Kenneth looks on disappointedly, as he composes himself and heads back to the huddle.

COACH HAYWOOD

Okay, Harvey. We seem pretty solid through the air. Now let's see what we can do on the ground.

The offense and defense line up, as Jack calls out the play.

AARON

Stands still in the backfield, waiting for the ball to be hiked.

Jack takes the ball from under center and hands it off to Aaron. Aaron finds a hole, goes up the middle, knocks down a few would-be tacklers, and is finally brought down after a nice gain. Aaron is helped up by the safety, and walks back to the huddle.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells sternly)
Alright, everyone on offense take five. Defense, you're up.

The defense takes the field, as they start their drills. DENNIS MATTHEWS, the other defensive stalwart for Willowbrook, lines up on the right side.

DOUG

Intensely concentrates on the offensive line and the quarterback.

The backup quarterback calls the play. Doug swiftly bursts through the line, as he turns the corner and proceeds to sack the quarterback. Doug quickly gets up and goes back to the huddle.

On the sidelines, Jack, Aaron, and the rest of the offensive starters watch the defense make play after play.

JACK

(watches in awe)

My goodness, do you really think
Doug is that fast?

AARON

(watches in awe)

Either that, or he has a jet
propeller stuck up his ass.

It is the last play of practice, as the defense lines up and waits for the offense to call the play. Jack takes the ball from under center and drops back. Doug rushes up the middle, but not before a lineman thrusts him back. Doug persists, before breaking through and sacking Jack. Unfortunately, Doug falls awkwardly on his ankle. Doug remains on the ground, writhing in pain, as his teammates surround him and Coach Haywood goes to check on him.

COACH HAYWOOD

(kneels beside Doug;
concerned)

Doug, are you alright?
(motions to trainer)

Walt, we have an injury here!

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The team is showering and getting dressed. Doug sits despondently at his locker, soaking his tender ankle in a bucket of ice. TWO DEFENSIVE RESERVES pass by Doug's locker, as they talk to each other.

DEFENSIVE RESERVE #1

(sotto voce)

Do you think he'll teach me his
technique?

DEFENSIVE RESERVE #2

(slightly afraid; sotto
voce)

Now's not the time to ask!

INT. COACH HAYWOOD'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Coach Haywood sits pensively at his desk, when there is a KNOCK on his DOOR.

COACH HAYWOOD

Come in.

The door slowly opens, as it is Coach Radford.

COACH RADFORD

Hawk, I was wondering if I could talk to you.

COACH HAYWOOD

Sure, Harv. What can I do for ya?

COACH RADFORD

Well, I just spoke to Walt. He said Doug's ankle has a slight sprain. He should be ready for the season opener.

Coach Haywood is unresponsive.

COACH RADFORD

(concerned)

Everything okay, Hawk?

COACH HAYWOOD

Yeah, Harv. Thanks for the update. Hey Harvey, can I ask you something?

COACH RADFORD

Sure.

COACH HAYWOOD

Do you believe it? The first practice of the season, and our best defensive player is nearly lost for the year. Every year, every time, it's something, ain't it?

COACH RADFORD

Well, nobody said coaching would be a day at the beach. Knowing Doug like I'll do, he'll be up and kicking in no time. You gonna be alright, Hawk?

COACH HAYWOOD
I'll be fine, Harv. Thanks for
your concern.

COACH RADFORD
Anytime. Hawk, I'm sorry, but I
gotta get home for dinner. Paula's
making tuna casserole. You wanna
come?

COACH HAYWOOD
No thanks.

COACH RADFORD
Well, I'll see ya later, Hawk.

Coach Radford departs, as Coach Haywood remains seated at his
desk.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE VI

FADE IN:

EXT. DOMBROWSKI HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The full moon illuminates the humble Dombrowski abode.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMBROWSKI HOUSE - DOUG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doug sits on his bed, soaking his still tender ankle in a
bucket of ice. He then hobbles over to his dresser.

DRESSER DRAWER

Has a huge padlock on it.

Doug gently lifts up his bed mattress, and pulls out a key.
He then hobbles back over the dresser and proceeds to open
the lock.

INSIDE OF DRESSER DRAWER

Contains a plethora of syringes, pills, liquids, and other forms of steroids.

Doug takes a syringe and small vial with a clear liquid from out of the drawer, and then locks it. Doug hobbles back to his bed. He then fills the syringe with the liquid, carefully readies his ankle, and injects the syringe. Doug slightly winces in pain, as he bites on his shirt, when he hears his mother.

MISS DOMBROWSKI (O.S.)
(from outside hallway)
Douglas, what are you doing?

DOUG
(slightly nervous)
I'm doing some homework.

MISS DOMBROWSKI (O.S.)
(from outside hallway)
Can I come in?

DOUG
(hesitates)
Uh, uh... Not yet, Mom. I'm in my birthday suit!

Doug frantically takes the vial and syringe and hides them under his pillow. He then pulls out some school books and flips through them.

DOUG
Okay, you can come in, Mom.

Doug's bedroom door opens, as his mother, JANE DOMBROWSKI, enters to check on her son.

MISS DOMBROWSKI
(concerned)
Douglas, are you okay, honey.

DOUG
Yeah, Mom. I'm just soaking my foot. I just had to change my clothes. They were a little sweaty.

MISS DOMBROWSKI
How's school going?

DOUG

Great. I've already made friends
with some of my teammates.

(beat)

We even have a great coach.

MISS DOMBROWSKI

I'm so glad. Dinner's almost
ready. Just take your time coming
over.

DOUG

I will. I love you, Mom.

MISS DOMBROWSKI

I love you too, sweetie.

Miss Dombrowski goes over and kisses her son on the forehead
and departs from his room. Doug pensively watches his mother
leave.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - LATE AFTERNOON

It is Friday, as the students are at their lockers, gathering
their stuff and getting ready for the weekend. Jack is at
his locker, when he is met by Cindy.

CINDY

How's it going?

JACK

Pretty good.

(kisses Cindy)

I thought Algebra would never end.

CINDY

Well, I hope you have some energy
left for the art exhibit at Lincoln
tonight.

JACK

Oh Cindy, I'm sorry. We have the
final practice before tomorrow's
opener.

CINDY

(slightly upset)

Jack, I thought we agreed with each
other before school started that we
would--

JACK
 (softly intervenes)
 Try and keep a balance between our
 school and personal lives, I know.
 But now that the season's
 started...

CINDY
 (softly intervenes)
 I told you we were going. It's
 only here until tomorrow. You
 promised.
 (beat)
 Now I know where I stand on your
 list of priorities.

Cindy quickly dashes away from Jack's locker.

JACK
 (calls out)
 Cindy, wait!

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Jack sits despondently on the bench, as the defense is
 running practice drills for tomorrow's opener against
 Eastville High.

COACH HAYWOOD (O.S.)
 (yells out)
 Alright, take five, fellas.

The defense slowly disperses from the field. Doug is walking
 towards the bench, as Coach Haywood approaches him.

COACH HAYWOOD
 Dombrowski, you're playin' like a
 man possessed.

DOUG
 It's the only way I know how to
 play, Coach.

COACH HAYWOOD
 I guess that ankle healed just
 fine.

DOUG
 (modest)
 Oh, you know. Just soaked it and
 put some liniments on it.

MONTAGE - TEAM PRACTICING

Jack looks over the defense, shouts the audible, takes the snap from center, and throws a bullet.

Flash hauls in a deep pass, and easily walks into the end zone.

Kenneth runs a precise route, as he hauls in a pass, before being brought down by a defensive back.

The safeties and defensive backs make open field tackle after tackle.

Doug and Dennis make tackles behind the line of scrimmage, quickly getting to the ball carrier.

END MONTAGE

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The team has finished practicing, as they are at their lockers getting dressed and talking amongst themselves. Coach Haywood appears, as he gives them a final talk.

COACH HAYWOOD

(paces around and
addresses team)

Everyone gather 'round. Great way to practice, men. Now, before we forget, it is mandatory for all members of the team to take a urine test.

(points to cart with cups)

So before you head home, find your name, fill these up, and place them back on the cart. That is all.

Coach Haywood departs, as members of the team go to the cart with the cups. Doug looks on in shock but remains composed.

One of the team's strong safeties, FRANK GERSHON, is walking out of the locker room, when an arm appears and abruptly pulls him aside. It is Doug, who needs a favor from Frank.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Frankie, I need you to do me a favor.

(presents urine cup; sotto voce)

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
I need for you to piss in this for
me and don't tell anyone.

FRANK
(objects; sotto voce)
Doug, I can't d--

DOUG
(pleads; sotto voce)
Frankie, please. I really need
this. I'll give you anything.

FRANK
(concedes; sotto voce)
Okay. I already did mine, so I
have to go in something else, so
nobody gets suspicious.

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Fine.

Doug frantically looks around the locker room for something,
when he spots a nearby waste basket. Doug quickly rummages
through it, and finds an empty soda bottle.

DOUG
(hands bottle to Frank;
sotto voce)
How about this?

FRANK
(takes bottle from him;
sotto voce)
It'll do. Meet me at the far end
of the locker room.

Moments later, Frank, with bottle in hand, quietly but
quickly ambles down the locker room. He hands the bottle to
Doug, who takes it from him.

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Thank you so much, Frankie.

FRANK
(sternly; sotto voce)
This is the first and last time I
do this. Is that clear?

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Crystal.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Coach Haywood and Coach Radford are checking off the names of those who gave urine samples.

COACH HAYWOOD
Is that all of them, Harv?

COACH RADFORD
(looks closely at list)
Just about. We're only missing...
(looks and exclaims)
Oh, speak of the devil.

Doug walks down the hall towards Coach Haywood and Coach Radford, with his urine sample.

DOUG
(hands sample to Coach
Radford)
Sorry if I took long, Coach.
Nothing was coming out, so I took
a few sips from the water fountain.

COACH RADFORD
(takes cup from Doug)
Perfectly fine. Have a good one,
Doug.

COACH HAYWOOD
Just remember to be here at ten
sharp tomorrow, so get a good
night's sleep.

COACH RADFORD
You think you're ready for the
game, Doug?

DOUG
(confident)
The question is, is the game ready
for me?

MONTAGE - NIGHT BEFORE SEASON OPENER

Jack kneels beside his bed, saying his bedtime prayers. Jack rises and goes towards his bedroom window, where he looks pensively at the moon lit sky.

Aaron lies wide-awake in his bed, apparently preoccupied with tomorrow's season opener.

Flash and Kenneth lie fast asleep in their beds. Flash cradles a football like a teddy bear in his right hand.

Doug is still awake, diligently studying his playbook while lifting weights. Doug takes a brief respite, as he goes underneath his pillow and pulls out an old sock. He digs inside of the sock, and pulls out a key. Doug hobbles over to his dresser, where he unlocks the drawer. Doug takes a cocktail of pills, and pops them all in his mouth.

Cindy lies awake and despondent in her bed. She looks over at the night stand near her bed. A small picture frame, containing a picture of Cindy and Jack, sits on the night stand. Cindy takes the picture frame and looks disappointedly at the picture. Cindy places the picture frame on the night stand and goes to sleep.

END MONTAGE

FADE OUT.

SCENE VII

FADE IN:

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Fans continue to enter Willowbrook Field, as some hope to get a ticket for today's game.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Players are pacing around, sitting quietly, some even sleeping. Coach Haywood appears, as everyone quickly redirects their attention.

COACH HAYWOOD

Good morning, gentlemen. This marks the first step in a year-long journey that will test every aspect of your physical and mental being. Before we go out there, I want you to play hard, play smart, play together.

(two full beats)

And don't forget to have some fun too. Go get 'em, fellas!

The team goes roaring out of the locker room.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Players from both teams are doing pre-game warm ups. Doug is doing his mental aerobics, when one of the players from Eastville, MICHAEL RIDGELEY, approaches him.

MICHAEL

Hey, you're Doug Dombrowski.
(warmly extends his hand)
The name's Mike Ridgeley. My
brother played against you
sophomore year. He says you're the
best he's ever seen.

Doug, still entranced in his own world, completely ignores Michael.

On another side of the field, Aaron is taking some practice runs. He nervously looks around at the packed stadium. A few feet away from Aaron, Jack is taking some practice throws with the backup quarterback. Jack looks in the stands.

JACK'S POV

JACK'S PARENTS

Sit in the stands, reading and talking. They notice Jack, and smile and wave.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack, happy to see them, smiles warmly and waves back at them.

FOOTBALL

Lies still on a tee, when a foot appears and kicks it hardly.

The kick returner for Willowbrook catches it in deep territory and starts up the left side. He is taken down by a few Eastville players and fumbles the ball. An Eastville defender recovers the ball, as the referee signals a fumble and Eastville possession.

On the sidelines, Coach Haywood throws up his arms in disgust.

Eastville lines up on offense, as the quarterback gets the ball from center, and hands off to the halfback. The Eastville running back takes the ball and runs into the end zone for the score.

Willowbrook is now on offense, as Jack looks over the defense, calls the play, and hands the ball off to Aaron. Aaron breaks a few tackles, follows his blockers, and darts down the left sideline. He continues upfield, with a few Eastville defenders right on his tail. Aaron momentarily loses his balance, and is about to go out of bounds, when he regains himself, sticks his arm out and places it in the end zone before being pushed out of bounds.

REFEREE

Throws his arms up, signaling a touchdown.

On the sideline, the coaching staff and players exalt.

JACK
(yells happily)
Woo! Nice way to run, Fish!

Eastville now has the ball at midfield. Doug, now at outside linebacker, intensely focuses on the offense, when he starts to converse with the Eastville right guard.

DOUG
Hey, beautiful day, isn't it? I prefer playing at night. I think of myself as a prime time player. Say, if you're gonna block me, shouldn't you tie your shoelaces?

The Eastville right guard momentarily puts his head down, as the ball is snapped. Doug bursts through from the outside and quickly pursues the Eastville quarterback. The Eastville quarterback evades Doug, but is soon met with Dennis, as both boys sandwich the quarterback, loosening the ball. A Willowbrook defender recovers the ball, before a pile on ensues. The referee looks under the pile, and signals a fumble and Willowbrook ball. Doug and Dennis high five each other.

The EASTVILLE QUARTERBACK quickly goes over to his Right Guard.

EASTVILLE QUARTERBACK
(reprimands Right Guard)
Don't ever fall for that again, you stupid son of a bitch!

Willowbrook now has the ball on its own forty-five. Jack calls an audible, scans the defense, and gets the ball from center. Jack drops back and looks downfield. Flash has beaten his defender, and is going on a deep route. Jack throws deep.

Flash continues to run, as he closely watches the ball. However, another Eastville defensive back has come INTO VIEW. Flash leaps up, extends his arms, pulls in the ball, and falls with both defenders in the end zone. The referee throws up his arm, signaling a touchdown. The crowd cheers, as Flash spikes the ball and flexes his muscles.

SCOREBOARD

Reads WILLOWBROOK 14, VISITORS 10. Fourth quarter.

Willowbrook has the ball at the thirty-five. Jack looks over the defense. On the sideline, Coach Haywood watches in quiet anticipation.

COACH HAYWOOD

(intense; sotto voce)

C'mon, fellas. Let's put this one away.

Jack calls the play, gets the ball from under center, and drops back to pass. Jack sees no one, as an Eastville defender quickly pursues him. Aaron, who has managed to escape from the backfield, is open as a receiver. Jack quickly spots him and gets the ball off before being brought down by an Eastville defender. Aaron catches the ball, and goes into the end zone untouched for the score. Aaron hands the ball back to the referee, as his teammates congratulate him.

The game has ended, as players from both teams congratulate each other. Jack and Aaron, are headed for the locker room, as they talk with each other.

JACK

(slightly out of breath)

Thanks for getting open. I thought I was a goner.

The boys continue walking, when they are met with PHOTOGRAPHER from the local newspaper.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(points camera at boys)

Okay, boys, say cheese!

Jack and Aaron pose for the picture, as the camera bulb flashes. Aaron seems a bit shaken, as Jack quickly notices.

JACK

(concerned)

You okay, Fish?

AARON
(slightly nervous)
That guy just came out of nowhere.

JACK
Don't they all, man?

Jack and Aaron continue their way off the field.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The locker room is astir, as players undress and talk about. Coach Haywood enters the locker room, as the noise soon dies down.

COACH HAYWOOD
Alright, fellas. What a way to win. We looked strong on both sides of the ball. Special teams could use some help, but overall, a solid outing today.
(beat)
However, with all good news comes bad news. I'm sorry to inform you that a member of this team has been playing with an unfair advantage.

Doug looks worried but composed, as he awaits Coach Haywood's reply.

COACH HAYWOOD
(hesitates; looks at player)
Warren Carter, you are no longer a member of this team.

Warren, already dressed, slowly and despondently walks out of the locker room.

COACH HAYWOOD
(stern)
Since this development has come about, we will be administering random drug tests throughout the season.
(beat)
So, if any of you are on any kind of illegal substances and you know it, please start stepping towards that door now.

Everyone on the team remains still. Doug looks unfettered, as he remains.

COACH HAYWOOD

That is all.

Flash and Kenneth are getting dressed at their adjoining lockers. Flash is beaming, while Kenneth quietly enjoys the win.

FLASH

(ebullient)

First score of the season. And there's plenty more to come. I've heard that the defensive backs in this division are below average. Man, we're gonna own this season!

KENNETH

(stern)

Take it easy, Andre. We still have a full slate of games to play.

On the opposite end of the locker room, members of the offensive and defensive line eavesdrop on the boys' conversation.

FADE OUT.

SCENE VIII

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - MORNING

English class is in session, as Miss Gibbons is going over her lesson.

MISS GIBBONS

Now, does anyone know what F. Scott Fitzgerald was attempting to illustrate in *The Great Gatsby*?

Jack sits at his desk, apparently preoccupied with something else, is quickly jarred when Miss Gibbons calls on him.

MISS GIBBONS (O.S.)

(calls aloud)

Well, Mister Stevens?

JACK

(comes to; hesitates)
 Uh, Fitzgerald was trying to illustrate that regardless of a couple's backgrounds and wealth, the undying love which they share for one another will always prevail.

MISS GIBBONS

Very good.

The class BELL RINGS, as the class disperses. Jack rises from his desk, when he is halted by Miss Gibbons.

MISS GIBBONS

(calls out)
 Jack, may I see you, please?

Jack heads over to Miss Gibbons' desk, as she looks sternly at Jack.

MISS GIBBONS

(sternly)
 Jack, I understand that your plate is a little full right now. But just because you're the star quarterback, don't think for a second that you'll be treated any differently from your classmates.

JACK

Of course not.

MISS GIBBONS

That is all.

Jack departs from the classroom.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Jack enters the hallway, when he abruptly encounters Cindy.

JACK

(coy)
 Hi.

CINDY

(coy)
 Hi.

JACK

Can I give you something?

CINDY

If it's one of your game-used jerseys, no thanks. The last one you gave me almost grew legs.

JACK

No.
(hands Cindy a poster tube)
Here you go.

Cindy looks curiously at Jack, then opens the tube, which reveals some prints from the art exhibit they never made. Cindy looks in awe at the prints, then at Jack.

JACK

I went to the art exhibit right after the game. I got some prints from the artists. They were really neat.

CINDY

(looks closely at the prints)
These are so beautiful.
(looks curiously at one print)
Hey, this print isn't signed.

JACK

Oh, I drew that one. I really liked one of the artist's patterns and tried to do one of my own.

CINDY

Jack, this is wonderful. Thank you.

JACK

I just thought that since we couldn't go to the exhibit together, I thought I'd do my best to make it up to you.

CINDY

Thanks.
(witty)
C'mon, Da Vinci, we'll be late for lunch.

Cindy puts her arm around Jack, as the two depart.

Further down the corridor, Flash and Kenneth are at their lockers. They talk with each other.

KENNETH

Just remember we have to get home
right after school.

FLASH

(objects)
But I'm going out with the guys to
have a burger.

KENNETH

(incredulous)
I can't believe you. We promised
Mama we would rake the leaves in
the yard after school today.

FLASH

Kenny, I promised the guys.

KENNETH

(strong)
But you also promised Mama. You
know, you're the perfect fit for a
wide receiver. You're fast,
strong, and incredibly selfish.

Kenneth SLAMS his locker DOOR shut, takes the football on the floor, shoves it hardly into Flash's chest, and departs. Flash stands speechless at his locker.

EXT. MAC'S SNACK ATTACK - ESTABLISHING SHOT - AFTERNOON

Mac's Snack Attack, a popular local eatery, has students exiting and entering.

CUT TO:

INT. MAC'S SNACK ATTACK - AFTERNOON

Mac's is packed, as barely a seat or table is available, as students eat, talk, dance, and sit with each other. The front door opens, as Jack, Aaron, Doug, and Flash enter and look around for a place to sit.

DINERS

Look warily at the boys, particularly at Flash.

The boys remain composed, as they slink into a corner booth. A waitress arrives, as the boys give her their orders. The boys sit casually, as they chat idly.

JACK
 (exasperated)
 Man, I can't believe we've got
 practice tomorrow.

AARON
 I know. Since we're playing
 Marshall High this week, Coach
 Haywood'll sure have us working.

JACK
 We barely pulled out a win against
 them last year. They'll be looking
 for revenge Saturday.
 (turns to Flash)
 So Flash, how do you like
 Willowbrook?

FLASH
 It's alright. It can't be Chicago
 though. We had to move after my
 dad got transferred from the steel
 mills.

JACK
 (reassuring)
 I know it can feel a little awkward
 at first, but stick with us and
 you'll be fine.

AARON
 (inquisitive)
 Hey, where's your brother?

FLASH
 He wasn't feeling too well. He
 said it must have been the mashed
 potatoes at lunch.

DOUG
 (witty)
 I hear ya. After sampling some of
 the cafeteria food, I'll welcome a
 burger anytime. Speaking of
 burgers, where are ours?

JACK
 I know. The waitress said they'd
 be ten minutes, tops.

AARON
 (spots Mac)
 There's Mac now. Why don't you ask
 him, Jack?

JACK
 Okay. Be right back, fellas.

Jack gets up from the booth. GENE "MAC" MACAULEY, owner of Mac's Snack Attack, is at the counter putting money in the register when he sees Jack.

MAC
 Jack, what's the good word, pal?
 Helluva game ya had Saturday.

JACK
 Hey, Mac. Thanks. Mac, the fellas
 and I ordered some burgers. They
 haven't arrived yet.

MAC
 Jack, can I talk to you for a sec?

JACK
 Sure.

Mac takes Jack into a corner of the restaurant to talk.

JACK
 (sotto voce)
 What's up, Mac?

MAC
 (sotto voce)
 Jack, I was just wondering who your
 new friends are.

JACK
 Oh, well you know Aaron.
 (points to boys)
 That's Doug, and that's Andre.

MAC
 (sotto voce)
 Well yeah, Jack. That's what I've
 been meaning to tell ya. I'm
 sorry, Jack, but we don't serve
 coloreds here.

JACK
 (looks incredulously at
 him; sotto voce)
 (MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
 You gotta be kidding me, Mac.
 Since when?

MAC
 (sotto voce)
 Well, I don't mind them coming in
 here. It's just that some of the
 regulars are leaving. You
 understand, Jack?

JACK
 (strong; sotto voce)
 I do and I don't. Mac, what
 difference does our skin tone make
 if our money's all green?

Mac remains silent, as Jack looks admonishingly at him. Jack then returns to the table.

JACK
 Fellas, we gotta go.

DOUG
 (inquisitive)
 How come?

JACK
 Mac told me this table's on hold
 for somebody.

AARON
 That's okay. We can eat at the
 counter.

JACK
 Nah. That looks pretty full too.

FLASH
 (strongly offended)
 I think I know what this is all
 about, and it ain't got nothin' to
 do with a table.

The boys head toward the front door, when a voice calls out.

TRENT (O.S.)
 (calls out)
 There's a nice fried chicken joint
 about three blocks from here.

The boys turn around.

TRENT

Sits with the rest of his crew at a table.

Doug incensed, by Trent's comments, decides to confront him.

DOUG

(strong)

Well, we're in the mood for
burgers. How about a milkshake on
me, Trent?

Doug takes a milkshake from a nearby table and tosses it in
Trent's face.

DOUG

Or rather, on you.

Trent lividly rises from his table and goes to attack Doug.
Both boys grab each other by their shirts and raise their
fists, when Jack promptly intervenes.

JACK

(mediates)

Hey, fellas. Let's save our
aggression for this Saturday.
(looks at Doug)
C'mon, Doug. Let's go.

Doug calms down, but not before giving Trent and his boys a
stern glare.

DOUG

(takes some change from
his pocket and puts it on
the table)

Sorry about your milkshake.

The boys are about to egress, as everyone in the restaurant
remains still. Jack approaches Mac at the counter.

JACK

(hands Mac money)

This is for our burgers.

The boys depart. Everyone in Mac's remains silent.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT II

ACT IIISCENE IX

FADE IN:

INT. COACH HAYWOOD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Coach Haywood is diligently diagramming plays for Saturday's game against Marshall High. He is absorbed in the game plan, when there is a KNOCK at the DOOR.

COACH HAYWOOD
(slightly jarred)
Come in.

The door opens. It is Principal Edwards, who has come to pay Coach Haywood a late-night visit.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
Richard, you've been here all day.

COACH HAYWOOD
Well Alan, I have to prepare for Marshall High this Saturday.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
But it's only Wednesday. Has Harvey gone on break yet?

COACH HAYWOOD
Actually, he left at seven. He and his wife went to catch a movie.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
Well, doesn't that make you think, Richard? I mean, you're the only person I know who's spent more time on school grounds than I have.
(beat)
And that's saying something.

COACH HAYWOOD
(strong)
Well, we haven't won three state championships by me being a couch potato.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

Richard, we've known each other for nearly fifteen years, and in that time not once have I ever seen a lack of commitment from you to this school's athletic department.

COACH HAYWOOD

(strong)

Well, that's what I promised you when you brought me here ten years ago.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

Yet for all your triumphs, I have also been witness to some of your defeats, and not just the ones on the sidelines. Your divorce from Peggy, your past health problems with hypertension, your players' struggles with academics.

COACH HAYWOOD

(slightly testy)

Listen, Alan. What happens in my personal life has nothing to do with how I coach this team!

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

(contrite)

Please excuse me. I had no intention of airing out your dirty laundry. I would just like you to know there's a world out there that goes beyond X's and O's.

(beat)

You should take a look sometime. Have a good one, Richard.

Principal Edwards quietly departs. Coach Haywood looks on briefly, then returns to the game plan.

EXT. FRONT OF TEAM HOTEL - NIGHT

The team bus has arrived at the team hotel. Coach Haywood is first off the bus, as Coach Radford follows. Members of the team start to debark.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (gives instructions)
 Alright, I want you all to go
 straight to the lobby, where Coach
 Radford and I will hand you the
 keys to your rooms.

INT. TEAM HOTEL - JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Jack is quietly slumbering in his bed, when the Hotel PHONE starts to RING. Jack wriggles around in bed, as he reaches for the receiver. Jack picks up.

JACK
 (talks into receiver;
 groggy; sotto voce)
 Hello?

BARTENDER (V.O.)
 (over receiver)
 Hello, is this Jack Stevens?

JACK
 (talks into receiver;
 groggy; sotto voce)
 Yes.

BARTENDER (V.O.)
 (over receiver)
 Jack, this is the bartender at The
 Rose. Do you know a gentleman by
 the name of Doug Dombrowski?

JACK
 (groggy)
 Yes. Why?

BARTENDER (V.O.)
 (over receiver)
 Well, he gave me your number. We
 have a bit of a problem.

Jack listens closely.

EXT. THE ROSE BAR - ESTABLISHING SHOT - LATE NIGHT

Patrons stand outside of The Rose, smoking and talking idly above the luminescent neon sign.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ROSE BAR - CORNER TABLE - LATE NIGHT

Doug sits a table, drinking heavily and chatting it up with some local Marshall fans.

DOUG
 (yells loudly at fans)
 Yeah, whatever you say, peabrain.
 Hey, get me another pitcher of
 beer. And while you're at it,
 throw in a bowl of pretzels.
 Shithead!

Fans in the rose continue to heckle Doug, as he continues to fire back.

DOUG
 Do you know that you look like a
 wart on a frog's ass?! Just
 thought I'd tell ya. I saw your
 sister. Nice looking girl. After
 you've drank six pitchers!

The front door opens, as Jack, Larry, and Aaron enter, as they look for Doug. They are bombarded with jeers and some debris, as they try to dodge it and navigate the bar.

AARON
 (looks and exclaims)
 There he is!

The boys arrive at Doug's table, as he sees them.

DOUG
 (greet's them)
 Hey, fellas! Can you believe these
 yahoos? They've been ridin' me all
 night. But I've been givin' it
 back to 'em good.
 (beat)
 Have a seat. The night is young,
 and so are we.

JACK
 (looks incredulously at
 Doug)
 Doug, are you fucking nuts?! We
 have a game tomorrow!

DOUG
 C'mon, live a little. We'll have
 plenty of time to play. These
 douches are even buyin' me drinks!

JACK

(stern)

Consider this your last call!

Jack and Larry slowly but forcefully remove Doug from his seat, and carry him towards the exit. Aaron slaps some cash on the table, as he goes to help the boys. The boys are almost at the door, when they are confronted by a none-too-happy BAR PATRON, who resents Doug's lewd behavior.

BAR PATRON

(upset)

Hey, you! You got some nerve comin' in here and acting like you have. My girlfriend said you pinched her ass while she was passing by your table.

DOUG

(looks straight at Bar Patron)

Oh, yeah. Tell her it's flatter than a mesa.

BAR PATRON

(livid)

You son of a bitch! I'm gonna knock your block off!

The Bar Patron reaches back and throws a fist at Doug. Doug quickly grabs the patron's fist and angrily tosses him across the room.

BAR PATRON

Falls behind the bar and CRASHES into some BOTTLES of liquor and the mirror.

DOUG

(witty)

Hope you have a nice trip. Let's go fellas.

The boys and Doug are about to egress, when Doug hesitates.

DOUG

Wait a minute.

(bends down)

Here's a little something from me and Willowbrook.

Doug lets out a huge fart.

DOUG
 (waves his hand)
 A nice 'ole ripe one for ya, folks.
 Good night.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Larry's car travels down the barren road.

INT. LARRY'S CAR - LATE NIGHT

Jack sits behind the wheel, while Larry and Aaron are tending to Doug in the back seat.

AARON
 (curious)
 Are you sure you know where you're going, Jack?

JACK
 I hope so. All I can do is follow the signs. Thank God you missed the team bus and drove up instead, Larry.
 (looks at his watch)
 Holy shit, it's one a.m.

LARRY
 (slightly worried)
 We better hope Coach Haywood doesn't find out about this. He'll have our heads.

AARON
 (reassuring)
 I think we'll be okay. Our last bed check was at eleven.

JACK
 (concerned)
 How's Doug holding up back there?

LARRY
 He's okay. I can't say the same for his breath.
 (waves disgustedly)
 Whew!

DOUG
 (awakens and starts to ramble)
 Hey, fellas! Where are we?
 (MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

I know a good steak house about half a mile off Exit Six. T-Bones the size of Buicks!

AARON

Man, you're more bombed than Pearl Harbor.

DOUG

(drunkenly)

Speaking of Pearl Harbor, I have a feeling tomorrow's gonna be a day of infamy for Marshall High and their QB. After I'm through with him, his kids are gonna have grass burns!

JACK

He's making too much noise back there. I can't concentrate.

AARON

Why don't you turn on the radio?

JACK

Good thinking.

Jack turns the dial. Some party music comes on, as Doug starts to wriggle in back.

DOUG

(sings along)

Yeah baby, let the good times roll!

Doug's foot hits Jack in the back of the head. Jack momentarily loses control of the steering wheel, as the car starts to veer off. Jack regains control.

JACK

Let's get back to the hotel, and fast!

EXT. FRONT OF TEAM HOTEL - LATE NIGHT

Larry's car pulls into his original space, as the boys get out with Doug.

INT. TEAM HOTEL - COACH HAYWOOD'S HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Coach Haywood is looking over the game plan for tomorrow. HE lets out a huge yawn and decides to get a breath of fresh air.

EXT. FRONT OF TEAM HOTEL - LATE NIGHT

The boys are carrying Doug to the hotel lobby, when they stop in their tracks.

COACH HAYWOOD

Slowly walks past the hotel lobby, right in the direction of the boys.

The boys quickly make a break for it and go in back.

EXT. BACK OF TEAM HOTEL - LATE NIGHT

The boys are trying to devise a scheme to keep from getting caught by Coach Haywood.

LARRY

(worried; sotto voce)
We're toast, fellas. Man, that sounds great right about now.

AARON

(worried; sotto voce)
Larry's right, you guys. How are we gonna get past Coach?

JACK

(confident; sotto voce)
Just remember who you're talkin' to, boys. I'm the quarterback. We will find a way. Huddle up.

Everyone makes a huddle, as they start to brainstorm.

The boys are at Larry's car, as they start to execute their plan.

JACK

(sotto voce)
Okay, Larry, do you have the stuff?

LARRY

(sotto voce)
Yeah. What are we gonna do?

JACK

(sotto voce)
I'll tell you in a minute.
(looks at Aaron)
Aaron, you know what to do?

Aaron nods in agreement. Jack takes an empty cigarette, fills it with rock salt and rocks, and fastens it, while Larry looks on.

JACK
(sotto voce)
Man, I can't believe you had all
this stuff in your car.

LARRY
(sotto voce)
I guess I haven't gotten around to
cleaning the trunk.

Jack finishes tightening the device, ignites it with a lighter, and promptly tosses it into the air.

PROJECTILE

Flies through the air and BURSTS.

Coach Haywood, still standing out front, sees the blast and is taken with it. He goes to see where it came from. Aaron, secretly hiding behind a wall of the hotel, gives Jack the signal and scurries inside the hotel.

INT. TEAM HOTEL - HOTEL LOBBY - LATE NIGHT

Aaron passes the desk in the lobby, as he is greeted by the HOTEL CLERK.

HOTEL CLERK
(cordial)
Good evening. I hope you're
enjoying your stay here.

AARON
I wish I could.

Aaron heads upstairs, when the Hotel Clerk intervenes.

HOTEL CLERK
(halts Aaron)
Wait a minute. Is there something
a matter?

AARON
Well, I don't mean to cause a fuss,
but I've been having a problem with
the folks above me. I think they
have a dog in their room. Little
fucker's been yappin' all night
long.

HOTEL CLERK

(angrily)

Son of a bitch. We don't allow any
pets in or around the hotel. I'll
remove them right away.

AARON

If you wanna know, they're in room
Six K.

The Hotel Clerk quickly moves toward the elevator, when Aaron
intervenes.

AARON

(halts Hotel Clerk)

Hey, the elevator's running a
little slow. You may want to take
the stairs.

HOTEL CLERK

Thanks.

(angrily)

Man, I'm gonna skin these pricks
alive!

The Hotel Clerk dashes upstairs OUT OF VIEW. Aaron looks and
sees Jack and Larry have arrived, carrying Doug.

JACK

(sotto voce)

Did it work?

AARON

(sotto voce)

Like a charm. Is Coach still out
there?

JACK

I don't know.

(turns to Larry)

Larry, go see outside.

Larry goes to the entry way, gives a quick glance, and comes
dashing back.

LARRY

(slightly nervous)

He's coming! What do we do?

JACK

(calm)

Just relax, fellas. The elevator
should be here soon.

Coach Haywood slowly walks back to the hotel lobby. The boys anxiously wait for the elevator, as it opens and they quickly enter. Coach Haywood enters, just as the elevator door closes. Coach Haywood quickly turns around to the elevator, but sees nothing. He ascends the stairs.

MONTAGE - RACE TO GET UPSTAIRS

The boys are on the elevator, as they tend to Doug and watch each floor they pass.

Coach Haywood is already up three flights of stairs, as he takes a moment to catch his breath.

The boys have two more floors to go, as they anxiously await their arrival upstairs.

Coach Haywood continues his ascent, as he is one flight from making it back to his room.

The boys arrive at their floor, as the elevator door opens, and they quickly dash out.

INT. TEAM HOTEL - HOTEL CORRIDOR - LATE NIGHT

The boys are finally on their floor, as they are about to head back to their rooms, when they see Coach Haywood fast approaching. They quickly flee to a nearby corner of the hotel and hide. Coach Haywood is at his hotel room door. In the hidden corner, the boys remain silent, as they wait for Coach Haywood to go back inside.

JACK

(watches Coach Haywood;
sotto voce)

That's it, Coach. Go to your room.
That's... No!

Coach Haywood stops, and decides to analyze the hotel corridor's design.

The boys nervously wait behind the corner, when Jack gets an idea.

JACK

(looks at guys; sotto
voce)

One of you guys give me a quarter.

Aaron digs into his pocket, pulls out a quarter, and hands it to Jack. Jack gently tosses the quarter.

QUARTER

Travels gently down the corridor, and lands at the feet of Coach Haywood.

Coach Haywood spots the quarter and picks it up. He then notices a nearby soda machine a few feet down the hall. Coach Haywood decides to treat himself.

While Coach's back is turned, the boys quietly but quickly move back to their rooms, as they frantically open the doors and dash inside. Coach Haywood, turns around, soda in hand, looks to see if anyone is around. Seeing no one, he shrugs dismissive and heads back inside his room.

FADE OUT.

SCENE X

FADE IN:

EXT. MARSHALL FIELD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Fans enter the stadium, as other try to get last second tickets.

CUT TO:

INT. MARSHALL FIELD - VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Players are warming up and stretching before heading to the field. However, Doug is nowhere to be seen. Jack and Aaron are both at their lockers, as they talk about last night.

JACK
(tired)
Man, I am beat.

AARON
(tired)
You said it. It was as if I got no sleep at all.

JACK
Where the hell is Doug?

AARON
I don't know. I thought Larry would get him up for the game today.

JACK
 (sotto voce)
 Larry, where's Doug.

LARRY
 I thought he'd be here by now. He
 was sleeping like a log when I left
 him in his room last night.

JACK
 (sotto voce)
 Larry, I need for you to gather the
 team together.
 (turns to Aaron)
 Aaron, come with me.

EXT. OUTSIDE LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Jack and Aaron carry a still hung over Doug, as they hurry
 back to the locker room.

INT. MARSHALL FIELD - TRAINER'S ROOM - MORNING

WALTER HEMMINGS, the Willowbrook trainer is peacefully
 reading the newspaper, when the boys enter.

WALTER
 (astounded)
 What are you guys doing here?!
 It's almost game time.

JACK
 Walt, we need your help. Doug had
 a bit of a rough night.

WALTER
 (gets a waft of Doug's
 breath; repulsed)
 My heavens! You can say that
 again. Alright, here's what we do.
 (directs boys)
 Aaron, fill up some cups with
 coffee, Jack fill that bucket of
 cold water, get a couple of towels
 and bring 'em over here.

Suddenly there is a KNOCK on the DOOR. It is Coach Haywood.

COACH HAYWOOD (O.S.)
 (from behind door)
 Walt, you in there?

WALTER
 (sotto voce)
 Stay right there. I'll handle
 this.

Walter goes to the door, and opens it slightly, as he looks at Coach Haywood.

WALTER
 What can I do for ya, Hawk?

COACH HAYWOOD
 Walt, have you seen Jack, Aaron,
 and Doug?

WALTER
 There in here with me, Hawk. Jack
 and Aaron are going over a screen
 pass play, and Doug is doing his
 mental aerobics. You know how he
 gets.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (stern)
 Well, tell 'em to step on it. It's
 almost time to say the team prayer.

INT. MARSHALL FIELD - TUNNEL - DAY

The team walks through the tunnel that leads to the field. Coach Haywood walks in front, as he stops, as all of his players follow suit. Coach Haywood steps aside and frees the reigns.

COACH HAYWOOD
 Go get 'em, Tigers!

The team goes roaring out onto the field.

EXT. MARSHALL FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD

It is an unseasonably warm day for football. Players from both teams are warming up. Doug still feeling the effects of last night, tries to stretch, as he squints his eyes in the sun's bright glare.

Willowbrook has the ball on offense. Jack carefully scans the defense, and calls the play. Larry snaps the ball to him, as Jack drops back and looks downfield. Flash, already downfield, has a cornerback covering him. Jack then looks down the left side. Kenneth is wide open, as he has beaten his man. Jack tosses the ball deep. Kenneth catches the ball, jukes a defender, and goes in for the score.

Kenneth hands the ball back to the referee and is congratulated by his teammates, as a neglected and disappointed Flash looks on.

Marshall now has the ball on offense. Doug, now back at middle linebacker, starts up a conversation with the Marshall guard.

DOUG

How ya doin', Clayton?

(beat)

Can you believe the weather we're having? Though I must say, you look even more butt uglier in the daylight.

The ball is snapped, as Doug bursts through the line and is about to sack the Marshall quarterback. Suddenly, the Marshall halfback comes out of nowhere and chip blocks Doug, throwing off his momentum, and giving the Marshall quarterback more time to throw. The Marshall quarterback looks downfield, finds his receiver, and throws deep. The Marshall receiver beats his man, hauls in the pass, and goes in for the score.

The MARSHALL HALFBACK is going back to the sidelines, when he is encountered by a belligerent Doug.

DOUG

(grabs him by his jersey)

Don't you ever fuckin chip block me again, dickwad!

The Marshall Halfback nods in frightened agreement.

SCOREBOARD

Reads a tied score, 17-17, fourth quarter.

Marshall has the ball on the thirty yard line, as the Willowbrook defense prepares to make a stop. The Marshall quarterback takes the ball from center, fakes a handoff, and drops back. Seeing no one, he decides to do a screen pass play, as he tosses it off to his halfback. The Marshall Halfback catches the pass, avoids a few tacklers, follows his blockers, and heads downfield.

DOUG

Runs full tilt in close pursuit of the Marshall halfback.

DENNIS

Quickly dashes, also in pursuit of the Marshall halfback.

The Marshall halfback is still running, as a leaping Doug is about to hit him. Suddenly, Dennis leaps INTO VIEW, as both he and Doug collide. The Marshall halfback runs untouched, as he scores the go-ahead touchdown.

On the sidelines, Coach Haywood and the rest of team stand in silent shock.

INT. MARSHALL FIELD - VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The locker room is stock silent, as everyone showers and gets dressed. Coach Haywood enters, as he briefly goes over the game and tries to console his team.

COACH HAYWOOD

Okay, men. I just want to say you played a heckuva game out there. Unfortunately, the ball didn't bounce our way today. Hopefully, we'll get 'em next time.

DOUG

(speaks up)

If Dennis studied his playbook a little more, there wouldn't be a next time. The middle linebacker always has the right away on a screen pass.

DENNIS

Doug, I said I'm sorry.

DOUG

(strong)

An apology isn't going to erase this loss from our record, Denny.

COACH HAYWOOD

(stern)

That's enough, Dombrowski. Every game is a team effort. When we win, it's a team win. When we lose, it's a team loss. Everyone feels just the same about the game.

(beat)

We just have to put it behind us and get ready for Saint Bonaventure. That is all.

INT. VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - SHOWER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Some players are getting washed up. Among them is Dennis, who is still visibly upset about today's loss. Doug, draped in a towel, passes by Dennis in the shower, and decides to give him a "pep talk."

DOUG

(caustic)

To think you would know that the middle of the field is Doug's domain. Guess you had your head up your ass a little too long. If I were you, I'd seriously let Walt examine what's between your legs. I think you're missin' a few bits and pieces.

Doug semi-hardly pats Dennis on the shoulder and walks away. Dennis, incensed, attack Doug from behind, as a tussle ensues. Teammates surround the two, as they try to break it up. Some teammates get Doug, and are able to restrain him.

DOUG

(looks intensely at
Dennis)

That's how you should be attackin' your guard every game! Then maybe you'll get to the quarterback more. Pussy!

Jack comes INTO VIEW, as he tries to mediate.

JACK

(calm)

Guys, take it easy! Let's just get dressed and get on the bus.

The melee dies down, as Doug and Dennis look intensely at each other.

DOUG

(strong)

Just remember that this is man's game. If you ever decide to become one.

Dennis stands humbled and silent.

EXT. MARSHALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

The remaining Willowbrook Tigers board the team bus. Doug walks despondently toward the bus, when he passes a souvenir stand. A VENDOR is there, touting his ware.

VENDOR
(calls out to Doug)
Hey, tough loss out there.

DOUG
You said it, Mister.

VENDOR
(presents a program)
Hey, would you like a program?

DOUG
What?

VENDOR
(hands one to Doug)
A program. It has information on all the high school players in the state, from their positions to off-field activities.

DOUG
(concedes)
Alright, I'll take one.

DOUG
(pulls out a dollar and hands it to Vendor)
Here ya go. Keep the change.

VENDOR
Thanks, buddy.

Doug starts to peruse the program, as he boards the team bus.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Algebra class is in session, as Jack tries to listen closely to the lesson. Cindy is sitting two rows away, as she starts to write a note to Jack. Cindy then takes the note, asks a fellow classmate to pass it on. The classmate hands it to another classmate, who hands it to Jack. A puzzled Jack takes the note, opens it, and begins to read it. MISTER COLLINS, the Algebra teacher, quickly intervenes.

MISTER COLLINS (O.S.)
(calls aloud)
Mister Stevens, would you like to
answer the problem?

JACK
(redirects his attention)
I beg your pardon, sir.

MISTER COLLINS
(sarcastic)
Well, since you've been so keenly
attentive, I thought you might like
to solve the problem I've written
here on the board.

JACK
Okay.

Jack rises from his seat and heads to the blackboard, as his classmates let out a collective OOOHHHH! Jack takes the piece of chalk and carefully looks over the Algebra problem. Jack hesitates.

CINDY

Looks on worried from her desk.

MISTER COLLINS

Watches Jack, with a smug look on his face.

Jack regains his train of thought, as he starts to solve the problem step-by-step. Jack calmly places the chalk in its holder, as he turns to Mister Collins.

JACK
I hope this is okay.

MISTER COLLINS
(humbled)
Yes, that is correct.

Jack smiles faintly and returns to his seat.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Flash is at his locker, gathering his books for his next class, when the girl who he met eyes with in the cafeteria, JULIE ABRAMS, comes INTO VIEW.

JULIE
(friendly)
Hey there.

FLASH
(friendly)
Hello.

JULIE
I saw you in the cafeteria last
week.

FLASH
I'm sorry, but I don't remember.
(witty)
I get hit in the head a lot.

JULIE
(lightly caresses his
head)
Oh, you poor thing. I'm sorry to
hear that.

FLASH
But I'm feelin' fine now.

JULIE
I'm sorry, but I don't know your
name.

FLASH
Andre. Andre Ferguson. But
everyone calls me Flash.

JULIE
(seductive)
Well Andre, to tell you the truth,
I don't know much about football.
But I was hoping if you weren't too
busy making plays on the field, if
you'd like to make some more off
it.
(beat)
Maybe we could go to a movie.

FLASH
(witty)
Now that's one play call I have no
problem with.

JULIE
Great. How's Friday sound?

FLASH

Great.

JULIE

Fine. Friday at eight.

(seductive)

Don't be late. I hate to wait.

Julie departs, as an exuberant Flash heads to his next class.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The hallway is completely, empty except for a fellow student, DON LISTON, who is walking alone down the corridor to his next class. He is about to pass the door to the boy's bathroom, when the door flies open, and Don is flanked inside.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - BOYS' BATHROOM - DAY

Don looks around, as he sees Doug looming over him.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Listen, kid. I need you to do me a favor. What's your name?

Don is unresponsive.

DOUG

(angrily)

I said what's your name?

DON

(alarmed)

D-D-Don.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Well Don, I have to ask you a few questions. Do you smoke?

DON

No.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Do you do drugs?

DON

No.

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Do you drink?

DON
Maybe Ovaltine.

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Do you have diabetes or any other
disease?

DON
No.

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Okay.
(presents urine sample cup
to Don)
Don, I need you to piss in this for
me and don't tell anyone about it.
Can you do that for me?

DON
(daring)
What if I don't?

Doug goes over to the paper towel dispenser and tears it off
the bathroom wall.

DOUG
(points to wreckage)
That.

DON
(alarmed)
Okay, okay.

DOUG
Alright. Go in the stall while I
play lookout.

Don enters an empty stall, while Doug stands guard at the
door. Don exits the stall and hands the urine sample cup to
Doug. Doug starts up a conversation with Don.

DOUG
Thank you, Don. My name's Doug.
I'm sorry if I went a little hard
on you there. I want to ask you
something.
(beat)
(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

Whadya say that every time I get one of these bad boys, I'll give you five dollars to empty your tank into them for me? You'll be my personal water boy.

DON

Well, I was hoping if you could get me a date with Samantha Cooper.

DOUG

(skeptical)

"Say No" Samantha? I can't perform miracles, kid.

DON

(takes sample from Doug)

Then I guess I'll be taking my sample.

DOUG

(hesitates, then concedes)

Wait. Okay, I'll see what I can do.

DON

(strong)

Make it ten bucks and it's a deal.

DOUG

(flabbergasted)

Shit. You're playin' me like a cello. Alright, deal.

Doug and Don shake hands on their new partnership.

EXT. FRONT OF WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Jack and Cindy are enjoying a nice lunch out on the grass. Jack is still feeling the effects of last week's game, as Cindy looks on.

JACK

(painfully rubs his shoulder)

Man, I love football. But sometimes football doesn't love me.

CINDY

That's why I've never been to one of your games. I can't bear to see you get hurt.

JACK

Ah, Cindy, it's not that bad.
It'll go away by tonight. It would
really give my confidence a boost
to see you there.

(beat)

If you think I have it bad, you
should feel for Aaron. Poor guy
has diabetes and plays hard in
games and practice. I don't think
I could survive without soda pop
and milkshakes.

CINDY

Hey, I was wondering if we could see
a movie this weekend? I heard
the new Hitchcock movie is showing.

JACK

I don't know. After last week's
loss, Coach is going to be pushing
us real hard in practice this week.

CINDY

I understand. Hey, my mom really
liked your drawings. We both think
you should consider a career
change.

JACK

(witty)

Nah. I don't think I would look
good in a paint-covered smock.
I'll take a muddy football jersey
anytime.

CINDY

(witty)

Once a quarterback, always a
quarterback.

Cindy and Jack kiss each other tenderly.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

The team is practicing for their upcoming game with Saint
Bonaventure. Jack gives a couple of practice throws.
Meanwhile, the offensive and defensive lines both have an
intense scrimmage with one another. On the sidelines, Flash
and Kenneth are running sprints.

Flash runs lightly, as Kenneth is going all-out. They both decide to take a breather and start to converse

KENNETH

(slightly out of breath)
You weren't running hard, Andre.

FLASH

(slightly out of breath)
Give me a break, Kenny. I gotta conserve some of my energy. Anyway, this game's gonna be a cakewalk. Saint Bonaventure had the worst record in the conference last year.
(beat)
Add the fact that more than half of their starters graduated last year. Like taking candy from a baby.

KENNETH

(slightly out of breath)
And that's exactly the trap you're going to fall into. We have to play hard every game. Don't forget that.

FLASH

(slightly out of breath)
I have even better news. I'll tell you after practice.

On the sidelines, Coach Haywood is vigilantly watching his players, as he makes small talk with Coach Radford.

COACH HAYWOOD

I tell ya, Harv. We look pretty good, but we're still missin' something.

COACH RADFORD

(watches in awe)
I can't say that Dombrowski's missing anything. Man, he just swoops past the guards like they're air.

COACH HAYWOOD

That's a welcome sight. We're gonna need him to play big this week.

COACH RADFORD

Jack told me he's been having some stiffness in his shoulder. I told Walt to rub him down after practice.

COACH HAYWOOD

I tell ya, Harv. Where would I be without you?

On the far end of the field, Trent and his crew are taking a brief respite, as they talk amongst themselves.

TRENT

Did you hear the news? Apparently, our star wideout has decided to make some action off the field.

(beat)

Ronnie told me he saw him talking with Julie Abrams in the hallway. He heard something about a movie.

ZACHARY

You guys thinking what I'm thinking?

TROY

I think we'll pay a little visit to our teammate after the movie. This will be one date he won't soon forget.

At the opposition's end zone, Aaron is practicing some running plays, when he starts to feel light-headed. He calls time and heads over to the bench for some air. Aaron takes off his helmet, and looks around the field.

AARON'S BLURRY POV

Everything and everyone on the field is unrecognizable.

BACK TO SCENE

Aaron motions to Walt, as he comes INTO VIEW. Aaron whispers in Walt's ear, as the two head toward the locker room.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XI

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - TRAINER'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Practice has ended, as Jack is getting a massage from Walt. The two start to chat.

WALTER

If I'm hurting you, just let me know, Jack.

JACK

(witty)

Not to worry, Walt. After having guys twice my size pounding me around, I'll welcome your rubdowns any day.

WALTER

So, whadya think about this week's game?

JACK

Oh, you know. Saint Bonaventure may have lost most of its starters, but they had a couple of good sophomores out there.

(beat)

We just have to play hard and execute, and everything should be okay.

WALTER

I hear ya.

JACK

Hey, Walt. Can I ask you something?

WALTER

Sure.

JACK

Did you ever really want to become a trainer?

WALTER

Well, it wasn't my first choice. I always wanted to be a fireman, like my father. Just the color of the uniform, the truck, the fact that you can help people.

JACK

So, why didn't you?

WALTER

I was going to take the test, but I soon decided not to. I never thought I could follow in the footsteps of my father, though. That's when I started to take health and Phys Ed courses in high school and sports medicine in college.

(beat)

And I've been the trainer here ever since.

JACK

Any regrets?

WALTER

Well, the constant smell of ointment can be unpleasant, but other than that, not a one.

(concerned)

Is something the matter, Jack?

JACK

Well, it's just that I don't want football to be my only passion in life. That's all people seem to recognize me as. The quarterback.

WALTER

To tell you the truth, the one thing I have learned over the course of my life is that we have choices. Choice that enable us to be anything that we want to be.

(beat)

That's the great thing about this country and the life that it provides for us. We have opportunities offered to only a precious few.

(two full beats)

It's recognizing what we want to do, and fully pursuing it until we achieve it that makes our lives all the more rewarding. How's your shoulder?

JACK

Feels great, thanks. Uh, Walt?

WALTER

Yeah?

Jack gets up from the trainer's table, as he looks squarely at Walt.

JACK
I was hoping if we could keep this conversation between the two of us.

WALTER
Of course.

JACK
Thanks, Walt. I'll see ya around.

Jack is about to depart the trainer's room, when Walt beckons him.

WALTER (O.S.)
(calls out)
Hey, Jack?

Jack stops and turns around.

WALTER
Whatever life has in store, I hope ya find what you're looking for.

Jack smiles cordially at Walter and departs. Walter stands, as he watches Jack leave.

EXT. FERGUSON HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The half moon luminesces in the star lit sky over the Ferguson home.

CUT TO:

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Flash busily preens himself in the mirror, as he gets ready for his big date with Julie, while Kenneth looks on.

KENNETH
What are you doing?

FLASH
(looks in mirror)
Getting ready.

KENNETH
For what?

FLASH
(looks in mirror)
For my date with Julie.

KENNETH
Who's Julie?

FLASH
(looks in mirror)
Julie Abrams, from our Biology
class.

KENNETH
(incredulous)
Are you insane, Andre?! She's
white.

FLASH
(sarcastic; grooms in
mirror)
Thanks for the news flash.

KENNETH
Andre, if people see you with
Julie, do you realize what they're
going to...

FLASH
(turns to Kenneth; angrily
interjects)
What the hell are they gonna do,
Kenny? Put me on a plantation?

KENNETH
Andre, if I were you...

FLASH
(angrily interrupts)
But you're not me, Kenny! You may
like to always have your shirt
tucked in, but sometimes you gotta
loosen up your necktie.
(beat)
I'm going to a movie, I'm gonna
have a great time, and there's
nothing that you or anyone else in
this Podunk town can do!

Flash storms out of the bedroom, and SLAMS the bedroom DOOR.
Kenneth stands humbled and silent.

INT. LOCAL MOVIE THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

Julie and Flash, with popcorn bucket in hand, have just arrived at the theater. They hand their tickets to the clerk, as he rips their tickets and admits them. Julie and Flash walk to their theater, as the ticket clerk, looks curiously at them.

INT. LOCAL MOVIE THEATER - MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Julie and Flash are inside the theater, as they arrive at the steps, as they are set to ascend them. Julie makes the first move, when Flash halts her.

FLASH
(sotto voce)
Excuse me.

Julie stops, as she moves aside. Flash takes a deep breath, and starts to make a quick ascent up the stairs. Flash continues, until he is at the very top row of the theater. Julie arrives seconds later, as she looks curiously at Flash.

FLASH
The football season never takes a
day off.

Julie and Flash sit together, as they quietly watch the movie.

PEOPLE IN MOVIE THEATER

Look warily at Julie and Flash.

Julie and Flash, aware but oblivious to the on-lookers, continue to watch the movie, when Julie starts to converse.

JULIE
(sotto voce)
So, what do you like to do when
you're not playing football?

FLASH
(sotto voce)
Well, when I have time between
school and practice, I like to sing
and dance.

JULIE
(sotto voce)
You don't strike me as one who
sings and dances.

FLASH

(sotto voce)

Are you kidding me? Shoot, if I weren't making plays on the football field, I'd be cutting moves at the Apollo. Like James Brown or Chubby Checker.

JULIE

(seductively; sotto voce)

Well, if you're good, I'll show you my own version of *The Twist*.

Flash looks astounded at Julie, as she smiles coquettish at him. They continue to watch the movie, when Flash puts his arm around Julie. Julie, trying to act nonchalant, gives a contented smile. The two are doing just fine, when a MOVIE USHER arrives, putting his flashlight on them.

MOVIE USHER

(sotto voce)

Excuse me. I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

FLASH

(polite; incredulous;

sotto voce)

For what, sir?

MOVIE USHER

(sotto voce)

It's just that we cannot accommodate the presence of you both. Either one of you stays and one of you goes, or you both have to leave.

JULIE

(looks strongly at Usher;

sotto voce)

No need to worry. Let's go, Andre.

Julie and Flash rise from their seats, as they start to leave the theater.

EXT. FRONT OF LOCAL MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Julie and Flash stand silently in front of the theater.

JULIE

(concerned)

You okay?

FLASH
 (angrily paces)
 Oh, yeah. Never felt better!

JULIE
 (calm)
 Take it easy. We just have to remember that every time we go out, there will be some situations. It's gonna take some getting used to.

FLASH
 (uncertain)
 Julie, I don't want to make you the town outcast. Maybe we should call off the evening, not to mention us.

JULIE
 (looks at Flash in disbelief)
 Are you crazy? I love you, Andre. That may be hard for people to accept, but if I have to choose between having people look at me differently or us being together, I'll always take the latter.

FLASH
 You really mean that?

JULIE
 Every word. C'mon, I think the ice cream parlor's still open.

Julie and Flash start to walk away from the movie theater.

EXT. FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Flash escorts Julie home after a fun and eventful night.

FLASH
 (sotto voce)
 Well, here we are.

JULIE
 (sotto voce)
 Yeah. I had a wonderful time tonight.

FLASH
 (slightly disappointed;
 sotto voce)
 (MORE)

FLASH (cont'd)
I wish we could have stayed longer
for the movie.

JULIE
It's okay. It wasn't that good,
anyway.

FLASH
(sotto voce)
Can I ask you something?

JULIE
Sure.

FLASH
(serious)
Have you told your parents about
me?

JULIE
Not yet. I want to make sure it's
the right time and place. I hope
you understand.

FLASH
Sure. I don't think they would be
too eager to hear that their
daughter is dating one of the only
colored people in town.

JULIE
(reassuring)
Trust me, as long as you're a good
and civil person, everything will
be alright.

FLASH
It's getting late. I bet your
parents are starting to worry.

JULIE
It's okay. My curfew's eleven.
(concerned)
Are you sure you'll get home okay?

FLASH
(confident)
Do you know who you're talkin' to?
I didn't get the nickname Flash for
being a snail.

JULIE
So, I guess this means good night.

Flash and Julie look amorously at each other, and start to move their faces close, as they momentarily kiss. Julie caresses Flash's cheek, and heads into her house. Flash stands in amazement.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Flash is all-alone, as he walks home. Suddenly, he feels the bright flashes of lights on him. Flash turns around.

FLASH'S POV

CAR

Comes ROARING in Flash's direction.

BACK TO SCENE

Flash, startled, turns on the jets and starts to run from the car.

INT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT

Trent and his crew, disguised in black ski masks, closely watch and go after Flash.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELD - NIGHT

Flash, still running full tilt, turns the corner and goes into an abandoned field, with Trent and his crew not far behind. Flash quickly hides behind a dumpster.

INT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT

Trent and his crew, slowly drive around, as they vigilantly look for Flash.

ZACHARY

(looks around field)

He can't be very far, can he?

TRENT

(drives and looks around)

You saw how fast he was runnin'.
It's pretty large over here. I
don't think he got far.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELD - BEHIND DUMPSTER - NIGHT

Flash sits quietly and continues to hide, hoping to evade capture.

INT. TRENT'S CAR - NIGHT

Meanwhile, Trent and his boys are continuing their search for Flash.

LESTER

(looks around)

Do you any of you guys see him,
cause I sure as hell don't.

ZACHARY

(looks around)

Just keep lookin'. He'll make his
move when we least expect it.

TROY

(looks and exclaims)

There he is!

FLASH

In his letterman jacket, stands

TRENT

(excited)

C'mon, boys. Big dogs are gonna
eat tonight!

Trent REVS the ENGINE, and puts the headlights on full beam,
as the boys are set to run over Flash.

TROY

(derisive)

The tar baby can't even see or hear
us comin' right toward him!

Trent puts the car in drive, as he goes full tilt and runs
over Flash. However, the CAR CRASHES into something, as the
boys get avalanched in something. Trent comes to, as he
looks at Flash's body.

FLASH'S BODY

Lies listlessly on the ground. Only it isn't Flash, but an
old broom, stuffed with some fetid papers and draped by
Flash's letterman jacket.

Trent looks on in intense anger, as he breaks the news to his
boys.

TRENT
 (yells angrily)
 It wasn't him boys. Just a fuckin'
 decoy!

LESTER
 (disgusted)
 That's the least of our problems.
 This stuff in your car is really
 smells!

Trent scoops up some of the stuff with his hand, puts it close to his nose, and repulses.

TRENT
 (yells angrily)
 It's fertilizer. Shit!

LESTER
 (witty)
 You got that right. And plenty of
 it!

TRENT
 (angrily)
 Shut up, Lester!
 (beat)
 He may have won the battle, fellas,
 but he hasn't won the war.

Trent pulls his car out from the fertilizer truck, as he and his crew head home.

MYSTERY POV

In a far recess of the abandoned field, Flash watches in sheer delight, as he smiles and heads home, all the while doing a celebratory dance.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XII

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSIDE SAINT BONAVENTURE STADIUM - ESTABLISHING SHOT -
 DAY

Fans gather outside to get into the stadium for today's game, while others try to score some last minute tickets.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT BONAVENTURE STADIUM - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Players from both teams are warming up. Jack gets in some practice throws with the backup quarterback. Aaron is taking some practice runs on the sidelines. Doug does his usual mental aerobics, while Dennis looks on. On the far end of the field, Flash and Kenneth are doing some stretches. Flash also takes some practice throws and catches.

KENNETH

What time did you get home last night? I didn't even hear you come in.

FLASH

(catches, then throws football)
Not that late.

KENNETH

(curious)
Aren't you going to stretch?

FLASH

(catches, then throws football)
Believe me, Kenny. I had enough exercise from last night to last me the whole season.

KENNETH

(confounded)
What?

FLASH

I'll explain later.

MONTAGE - HIGHLIGHTS OF GAME

Jack gets the ball from under center, drops back to pass, but is sacked by two Saint Bonaventure defenders.

Aaron takes the handoff from Jack, but is stopped cold by a couple of Saint Bonaventure defenders.

Flash tries to catch a pass, but loses his handle on it, making it incomplete.

Doug tries to get by his blocker, but is quickly double-teamed and taken down.

Jack drops back to pass. The ball heads in Kenneth's direction, but is intercepted by a Saint Bonaventure defensive back.

On the sidelines, a visibly upset Coach Haywood throws down his clipboard in disgust.

Scoreboard reads Saint Bonaventure 42, Visitors 14.

END MONTAGE

INT. SAINT BONAVENTURE STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM -
AFTERNOON

The team sits despondently at their lockers, as they shower and get dressed. Coach Haywood comes storming into the locker room, and flips over a table with two coolers of water. He then decides to give his team a "pep talk."

COACH HAYWOOD

(stern; points to fallen
water coolers)

If you wanna know how you played today, this just about sums it up. I've been witness to a lot of stinkers in my time, but never have I witnessed a more blatant display of stupidity, ineptitude, and lack of effort than I did today.

(two full beats)

Not once, in all my years of coaching, has a team coached by Coach Radford and I started the season at one and two. I guess there's a first time for everything.

(beat)

Did you think Saint Bonaventure was gonna lie down today?

COACH RADFORD

Coach...

COACH HAYWOOD

(sternly intervenes)

Save it. If you think you're winning a state championship by playing the way you did today, you might as well jump off a bridge and think you'll live.

(two full beats)

I'll tell ya what.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)
 Since Coach Radford or I couldn't
 get you to play today, we're gonna
 trade places. I'm gonna leave you
 all in here. You are all going to
 figure out a way to get this season
 straightened out. Not one of you
 will leave this locker room until
 you give me a sensible solution.
 (looks at Coach Radford)
 C'mon, Harv. If we can't coach
 'em, they'll have to do it
 themselves.

Coach Haywood and Coach Radford depart the locker room, as
 the DOOR SLAMS behind them. The team stands around, as they
 start to converse.

DOUG
 (looks around at everyone)
 So, what do you guys think?

AARON
 I hate to put you on the spot,
 Jack, but you're team captain.

JACK
 (looks at everyone)
 Well, there's no denying we laid an
 egg out there today. But if
 there's one thing I do know, it's
 that we have the talent and smarts
 to get through this season on a
 high note.
 (two full beats)
 We just have to follow our basic
 fundamentals. Train hard, prepare
 well, and execute consistently.
 So, whadya say, fellas? Do you
 think we can do that?

WHOLE TEAM
 (yells loudly)
 Yeeeaahhhhh!!!

EXT. OUTSIDE BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

On the other side of the locker room, Coach Haywood and Coach
 Radford have their ears to the door, as they try to eavesdrop
 on the team's meeting.

COACH HAYWOOD
 (sotto voce)
 Do you hear anything?

COACH RADFORD

(sotto voce)

A little. They've been in there for a while now. They must really be developing a plan.

INT. SAINT BONAVENTURE STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM -
AFTERNOON

The team, now finished with their strategy, talk idly amongst each other.

DENNIS

(curious)

So, what do we do now?

JACK

Beats me. Do you wanna talk about anything?

DENNIS

Well, I'm going out with Susan tomorrow. Do you think we should go to Mac's or Antonio's?

JACK

Although I love a good burger from Mac's, I think you should play it safe and go to Antonio's.

DENNIS

That's what I was thinking.

JACK

(mischievous)

I don't know if our fine coaches know this, but there's another way out of this locker room. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

DOUG

(smiles wryly)

Make pretend we're deeply engrossed in the game plan, leave 'em waiting outside, and get on the bus and leave?

JACK

(sotto voce)

Bingo! Everyone just keep quiet.

The team quietly but swiftly exits the locker room.

MONTAGE - HIGHLIGHTS FROM WILLOWBROOK'S GAMES

Jack avoids tacklers and throws on the run, for a score, as he throws up his arms.

Aaron bursts through the middle avoids a few tacklers, and gets a big gain before being brought down.

Kenneth makes a catch, jukes two defenders, then goes in untouched for the score.

On a big fourth down play, the opposing quarterback takes the ball, drops back, but is sacked for a huge loss, as a gang of Willowbrook defenders brings him down.

Flash goes deep, as he catches a pass, and goes in untouched for the score. Flash encounters the Willowbrook mascot, Toby the Tiger, as the two dance celebratory.

On the sideline, Coach Haywood and Coach Radford both exultantly pump their fists, as they high five each other.

END MONTAGE

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The locker room DOOR BURSTS open, as the team comes ROARING in, exultant after their latest victory. Coach Haywood calmly calls his team to order.

CAL

Way to play, men. Now we're playing like contenders. I want you all to know that you're doing great.

(beat)

We're going in to face Brighton before Thanksgiving. So I want everyone to eat to your heart's content, avoid any leftovers, and try to work off some that weight. That is all.

The team gives a collective cheer, as they start to get showered and dressed. Flash and Kenneth are getting dressed, as they start to converse.

FLASH

(ebullient)

Man, Kenny, we are toasting the opposition.

KENNETH

(stern)

Relax, Andre. We have to play a very good Brighton team this weekend. I heard their pass rush and secondary are tops in the Midwest.

Just then, Walter comes INTO VIEW, with a package in hand, as he politely interrupts the boys' conversation.

WALTER

(hands package to Flash)

Andre, this package came for you in the mail.

FLASH

(takes package from Walt)

Thank you, Walt.

Walt goes OUT OF VIEW, as Flash looks at the package.

FLASH

(looks at Kenny)

Can you believe it? I'm only in high school, and already I'm getting fan mail.

(beat)

For all I know, there could be letters from colleges across the country in here. I'll open it when I get home. C'mon, let's get dressed.

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Flash is finishing up some homework, when he looks at the package. Flash's curiosity gets the best of him, when he decides to open up the parcel. Flash gently pulls the tape off, pulls off the flaps and looks inside.

ANDRE'S POV

PACKAGE

Contains a bunch of bananas and a note.

BACK TO SCENE

A puzzled Flash takes the note, unfolds it, and starts to read it.

INSERT SHOT - NOTE

Reads in bold black ink, "GO HOME."

BACK TO SCENE

A speechless Flash puts the letter down, takes the bananas, and puts them on his bed.

INT. DOMBROWSKI HOUSE - DOUG'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

It is the night before the game, as Doug is fast asleep. Suddenly, there is a KNOCK at the front DOOR. Doug wriggles around in bed, but stays put. The KNOCKING persists, as a groggy and grumpy dog rises from his slumber.

DOUG
(groggy)
These better not be autograph
seekers.

Doug goes over to the front door, unlocks and opens it, where he is met by a most pleasant sight.

TWO BRIGHTON CHEERLEADERS

In full uniform, stand at Doug's doorstep.

BRIGHTON CHEERLEADER #1
Hi, handsome. Are you Doug
Dombrowski?

DOUG
Why, yes I am.

BRIGHTON CHEERLEADER #2
(seductive)
Well, we got lost on our way home.
We were wondering if we could spend
the night with you in your room.

Doug stands speechless, as the Cheerleaders await his reply.

BRIGHTON CHEERLEADER #1
(concerned)
Are you okay?

DOUG
(comes to)
Oh, yeah. I was thinking to myself
how much I love this game.
(looks at Cheerleader)
(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
 Oh, by the way, you have a run in
 your stocking.

The Cheerleader goes to check her leg, when Doug quickly lifts her off the ground and brings the girls into the house, closing the front door behind them.

EXT. BRIGHTON FIELD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Fans enter the ball field, while others try to get last-minute tickets.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHTON FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Players from both teams are warming up. Doug is happily doing his stretches, while Aaron looks on.

AARON
 Gee, you're in a sunny mood today.

DOUG
 (mellow)
 Sometimes you have to remember it's
 a game, Fish.

MONTAGE - DOUG'S HIGHLIGHTS

The Brighton running back gets the ball, but is quickly pulled back by Doug.

A Brighton receiver quickly gets the ball, and is swiftly and hardly hit by Doug, as he fumbles the ball, as Willowbrook recovers.

The Brighton quarterback throws the pass, as it is quickly deflected by Doug.

The Brighton quarterback fakes a hand off to the halfback, and gives the ball to a receiver on a lateral. The receiver goes runs at full tilt, but is quickly stuffed by Doug for barely a gain.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BRIGHTON FIELD - BRIGHTON SIDELINES - DAY

Meanwhile, on the Brighton sidelines, two BRIGHTON PLAYERS watch in awe, as Doug and the defense make play after play.

BRIGHTON PLAYER #1

(watches in awe)

I thought you said you sent Holly
and Mandy to his house last night.

BRIGHTON PLAYER #2

(watches in awe)

Then why is he playing like there's
no tomorrow?

BRIGHTON PLAYER #1

(turns to his teammate)

You ask me one more question, and
I'm gonna punch your fucking lights
out!

On the field, Willowbrook has the ball on offense. Jack scans the defense, calls the play, and gets the ball from under center. Jack goes back to pass. Kenneth beats his defender, as he heads deep toward the end zone. Kenneth positions himself, and is ready to make the catch, when Flash leaps INTO VIEW, and pulls down the ball for the score. Flash places the ball down, as a devastated Kenneth looks on.

STADIUM SCOREBOARD

Reads, Brighton 10, Visitors 20. Fourth quarter.

Brighton has the ball on offense, as the Willowbrook defense tries to make a late game stop. The BRIGHTON QUARTERBACK scans the defense, as he asks a question.

BRIGHTON QUARTERBACK

(calls aloud)

Has anyone seen Doug?

Doug pops his head out and responds.

DOUG

(calls aloud)

I'm right here, Louis. I'll make
sure to whisper sweet nothings in
your ear once I get over the line.

Doug redirects his attention, as he starts to converse with the center.

DOUG

How ya doin', Sam? Hey, I heard
you like to build model cars in
your spare time. Your favorite is
the 1956 Ford Thunderbird.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

I guess that's the only way you'll
ever get close to one, since your
fat ass can't block.

The ball is snapped, as Doug bursts through the line and swiftly pursues the quarterback. The Brighton Quarterback runs for his life, with Doug hot on his trail. Doug gets the Quarterback and proceeds to SLAM him to the ground. The Quarterback remains on the ground, writhing in pain, as players from both sides surround him.

REFEREE

(makes call)

Penalty. Roughing the passer.
Number Seventy-Eight. Fifteen yard
penalty. First down.

Doug, incensed by the call, goes over to the Referee and gives him a piece of his mind.

DOUG

(yells incredulously)

Are you out of your tree?! That
was a perfectly legal hit. I don't
believe this bullshit!!

The Brighton Quarterback is helped off the field by a couple of teammates and the team trainer, as the backup quarterback comes into the game.

Brighton now has the ball, on the ten yard line. The backup quarterback for Brighton scans the defense, calls the play and drops back to pass. A Brighton receiver gets open and is all-alone in the end zone. The Brighton Quarterback throws a quick toss, as the receiver catches it for the score.

On the Willowbrook sideline, Coach Haywood watches in disgust.

On the forty yard line, Jack throws a pass, that hits Kenny deep for forty yards, as he is brought down by two defenders. Now at the twenty, Jack hands off to Aaron for a gain of four. On the next play, Jack takes the ball, and looks downfield. Seeing no one, he scrambles downfield for about four yards before going out of bounds. Now third down, Jack gets the ball under center, as he drops back and throws. Flash, in double coverage, is unable to bring down the ball, making it fourth down. Jack is ready to go for it, when Coach Haywood motions to him to get off the field, as the team goes for the field goal.

JACK

(looks incredulously at
Coach Haywood)

Why?

Coach Haywood angrily motions to Jack to come off the field. A livid Jack pulls off the chin strap from his helmet, as he heads back to the sidelines. The kicker for Willowbrook boots the ball through the uprights, adding to Willowbrook's slim lead. On the sidelines, Jack sits solemnly on the bench, when Coach Haywood comes into view.

COACH HAYWOOD

(calmly explains)

Jack, their defense made a solid stand. If we went for it and didn't make it, they would've gained momentum.

JACK

I can't believe you. You know I could've got the first down.

COACH HAYWOOD

(angrily retorts)

And you should know that I'm your coach, damn it! You will not overrule my play calling or I'll suspend you for the insubordination.

(beat)

Is that understood?!

Jack and Coach Haywood look intensely at one another.

SCOREBOARD

Reads BRIGHTON 17, VISITOR 23. Fourth quarter

Brighton has the ball on the ten yard line, as they are looking to get the go-ahead score. The defense for Willowbrook is trying to make a late fourth quarter stand. The Brighton quarterback scans the defense, calls the play, and takes the ball from under center. He drops back to pass and looks deep. A Brighton Receiver has managed to get open, as the Brighton Quarterback throws in his direction. The ball moves toward the receiver, when Doug comes INTO VIEW and gets in front of the Receiver, intercepting the pass.

Doug motors down the sideline untouched, as he approaches the end zone and walks in for the game-clinching score. Doug takes the ball, places it in the end zone, puts one foot atop the football, and flexes his arm muscles.

DOUG
 (yells to crowd)
 Ha, ha. Forget about turkey and
 sweet potatoes. I've been feasting
 on your sorry asses all day.

The game has ended, as players from both teams congratulate each other. Dennis and Doug are walking off the field to the locker room.

DENNIS
 You had a heckuva Saturday, Doug.

DOUG
 (witty)
 I had an even better Friday.

Meanwhile, Jack and Aaron are walking off the field, when they are besieged by a group of reporters, who start firing off questions.

REPORTER (O.S.)
 (aloud)
 Aaron, you scored two touchdowns
 and ran for two hundred and four
 yards. How would you describe your
 performance?

REPORTER (O.S.)
 Jack, do you think this team has a
 chance to go to state now that
 you're one win away from winning the
 division?

AARON
 (modest)
 I had great blocking.

REPORTER (O.S.)
 (aloud)
 Jack, how do you feel about Coach
 Haywood deciding to go for a field
 goal on that fourth and goal?

JACK
 No comment.

INT. BRIGHTON FIELD - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The players are showered and getting dressed. Jack and Aaron are at their lockers getting dressed, as they speak to each other.

AARON

(slightly nervous)

Did you see those reporters come out of nowhere? I didn't think we'd ever get out of there. Why did they even want to talk to us?

JACK

Face it, Fish. You were the offensive star of the game. You've been runnin' wild all season. If you think that's bad, just wait 'til you get to college, let alone the pros.

(beat)

Press from all over the country are gonna be watching you and wanting to ask you questions. You can run, but you can't hide.

Jack smiles and pats Aaron on the shoulder, before departing OUT OF VIEW. Aaron stands, quiet but visibly nervous.

At the other end of the locker room, Larry is wincing in pain, as he tends to his badly sprained knee. Doug walks by Larry and sees him.

DOUG

(looks painfully at
Larry's ankle)

Jesus Christmas, Lar. What happened to your ankle?

LARRY

(painfully)

I think I wrenched it under a pile up in the third quarter. I can barely move it.

DOUG

Just take it easy. I think I can help you.

LARRY

Thanks. By the way, you played a helluva game, Double D.

DOUG

(confounded)

What did you call me?

LARRY
 (apologetic)
 Double D. Your initials. Listen
 I'm sorry...

DOUG
 (interrupts and thinks it
 over)
 Wait a minute. I like the sound of
 that. Double D. Shit, I gotta
 whole new identity.

Doug pats Larry on the shoulder, as he continues to soak his
 ankle.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE XIII

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - PLAYERS' THANKSGIVINGS

At their home, Jack and his parents have a lavish
 Thanksgiving spread at their dinner table, as they give a
 prayer of Thanksgiving before digging in.

At their home, Aaron and his family are having a light meal,
 in order to accommodate Aaron's diabetes.

At their home, Miss Dombrowski starts to carve the turkey, as
 Doug enters into the dining room, warmly hugging and kissing
 his mother, as he takes a seat next to her.

At his home, Coach Radford and his wife, along with guest
 Coach Haywood, enjoy a nice Thanksgiving meal, as they watch
 the Thanksgiving Day game on television.

END MONTAGE

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The Fergusons are also having Thanksgiving day dinner. The
 boys are seated with their PARENTS. Flash is about to grab
 the last sweet potato with his fork.

However, Kenneth has also has his eye on it. The boys forks lock, as they look intensely at each other.

FLASH

So, you gonna let go?

KENNETH

(strong)

Not a chance. You've already taken half of my passes. Don't think I'm gonna let you take food from my belly.

FLASH

(strong)

You know the old adage, sucker. Only the strong survive.

KENNETH

(brave)

C'mon and bring it.

The boys start to scuffle wit each other, as their parents try to break it up.

MISTER FERGUSON

(gets in between them)

Alright you two, break it up!

MISSUS FERGUSON

(yells sternly)

Stop fighting! We're supposed to give thanks on this day!

KENNETH

How can I be thankful when my brother is always stealing my plays, not to mention all the attention, from me?

FLASH

(strong)

Not my problem, Kenny. Maybe if you had a little more personality, you'd be in my position.

KENNETH

(objects)

Don't you dare try to compare me to you. Why do you think they left those bananas in your package?

MISTER FERGUSON
(confounded)
Bananas? What are you talkin'
about?

The boys look intensely at each other.

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mister and Missus Ferguson, along with the boys, look at the evidence, as they try to explain.

MISTER FERGUSON
(looks at Flash)
Did you tell your coach about this?

FLASH
No. We didn't want to cause an
uproar.

MISSUS FERGUSON
(inquisitive)
Is there any reason that somebody
would do something like this?

FLASH
Well, maybe one. I'm dating a
white girl.

MISTER FERGUSON
(looks incredulously at
him)
Say what, boy? Are you out of your
mind?!

FLASH
I love her, Dad. And she loves me?

MISSUS FERGUSON
Are you that sure?

MISTER FERGUSON
(stern)
Andre, you know that your father
and I fully support you in anything
that you want to do. But we're
going to have to put our foot down
on this.
(beat)
Do you realize what can happen to
you if you're seen around town with
a white girl?

FLASH

(strong)

I do know and I'm willing to take that risk. I play football with no fear, and that's the way I'm gonna live.

MISTER FERGUSON

(calm)

Andre, I want you to us all a favor and please think about this before you do anything rash.

FLASH

(sober)

Dad, I've thought about it, and I am willing to go through with it, be it good or bad. If something happens to me, I know the cause will be worth dying for. The cause of love.

Flash looks at his family, as he slowly heads toward the bedroom door and exits. The family stands humbled and silenced.

INT. FERGUSON HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Mister and Missus Ferguson are in bed. Missus Ferguson is asleep, as Mister Ferguson lies wide awake. Missus Ferguson, turns, as she notices her husband's insomnia.

MISSUS FERGUSON

(sleepy; confounded)

Myron, you're still up?

MISTER FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

Yup. Just thinking.

MISSUS FERGUSON

(sleepy)

About what?

MISTER FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

Can you believe our sons? It seems like only yesterday they were learning to walk. Now they're in high school and already dating.

MISSUS FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

I always knew Andre had flair, but dating a white girl? Myron, we're already the only black family in the neighborhood. This will only put more unwanted attention on us.

(beat)

Do you think we can handle that?

MISTER FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

You know, Mattie. I've been thinking, and we should let him do it. I mean, look at our family history. My great great grandfather worked on a plantation in Virginia, half my great uncles were lynched, and even your great grandmother was on the Underground Railroad.

MISSUS FERGUSON

(confounded; sotto voce)

Yes, and your point is?

MISTER FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

If we continue to live in the present with fear, then how can we have the courage to face the future?

MISSUS FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

I just don't want our children to go through what we did.

MISTER FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

Then I guess we'll have to free the reigns on this one.

(charming)

There's also another thing I know. You just get better-looking every day.

MISSUS FERGUSON

(sotto voce)

Is that a fact?

MISTER FERGUSON
 (charming; sotto voce)
 You better believe it. Come on
 here.

Mister and Missus Ferguson kiss and start to cuddle under the bed sheets.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Larry sidles along down the hallway, as his knee is still nagging at him. He continues to walk along, when an arm comes INTO VIEW, and pulls him aside. Larry looks around and sees Doug.

LARRY
 (incredulous)
 Doug, what are you doing here?

DOUG
 (sotto voce)
 Keep it down. I'm supposed to be
 in the bathroom. C'mon, we're
 gonna go there now.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - BOYS' BATHROOM - DAY

Larry hobbles into the boys bathroom, as Doug follows him, closing and locking the bathroom door.

DOUG
 Okay, show me your ankle.

Larry slowly and painfully lifts his pants leg, revealing the sprained knee.

DOUG
 (looks closely at the
 knee)
 Judging by the outside, I think you
 might have strained a ligament or
 two.
 (looks up at Larry)
 Have you spoken to Walt?

LARRY
 Yeah, briefly this morning. He
 just said to practice light and not
 too put much pressure on it. He
 also said I'm probable for this
 Saturday's game.

DOUG

You're our starting center, so we need you in there. Tell ya what. I'm going to give you something. But you have to keep it between us.

Doug pulls out a syringe and a bottle of clear liquid. He starts to fill the syringe, as Larry looks on.

LARRY

Are those steroids, Doug?

DOUG

(sarcastic)

No, it's non-carbonated Seven Up. Yes, it's steroids, and I'm only givin' you a small dosage.

LARRY

Doug, steroids are illegal.

DOUG

(sarcastic)

Thanks for the news flash, Cronkite.

LARRY

(objects)

I can't do this, Doug.

DOUG

(strong)

And then what? Play harder on an already tender ankle, and ruin your chances of getting a scholarship at a top-flight college?

(beat; reassuring)

Trust me, I only take this stuff during the season. I work out regularly during the summer.

LARRY

But Doug, you're not playing fairly.

DOUG

(strong)

You think I'm the only one, Lar? Do you realize how many guys our age are using this stuff?

(beat)

Wait 'til you get to college. It's gonna be one big inject-a-thon.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
 I got licked in the hip by a
 blindsided hit. I gave myself a
 shot, and presto, I'm good as new.
 You have to take any edge you can
 get.

LARRY
 But how could you do something like
 this to yourself?

DOUG
 (ardent)
 It's love, Lar. You don't
 understand. I play football the
 same way I live: all out. If I get
 hurt, I just have to get up and
 play again.
 (beat)
 It's ingrained in me. When I'm
 out on the field, nothing else
 matters. I'm never in fear.

LARRY
 (inquisitive)
 How long have you been doing this?

DOUG
 Since my last year of junior high.
 And look, no damage. I'm always
 gonna be in charge, both on and off
 the field.
 (beat)
 So, are you ready?

LARRY
 (sheepish)
 Okay.

Doug takes the syringe and injects it into Larry's knee.
 Larry watches and winces in pain. Doug takes out the needle
 and gauzes Larry's ankle.

DOUG
 Do you have pain anywhere else?

LARRY
 Not at the moment.

DOUG
 (looks sternly at Larry)
 I want you to not tell anybody
 about this.
 (MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
 If you're asked to do a random drug
 test, find a classmate who isn't on
 the football team, and ask if you
 could use his urine.
 (beat)
 You got me?

LARRY
 Yeah.

DOUG
 Good.

Doug and Larry smile at each other, when there is a LOUD
 KNOCK on the BATHROOM DOOR. It is Principal Edwards

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (yells loudly)
 Why is this door locked? Who's in
 there? Open this door at once!

Doug and Larry leap up and they look on worried

LARRY
 (looks worried at Doug;
 sotto voce)
 What are we gonna do?

DOUG
 (calm; sotto voce)
 I got an idea. Let me smell your
 armpit.

LARRY
 (confounded; sotto voce)
 What?

DOUG
 (strong; sotto voce)
 Just do it! Come on, lift it up.

Larry concedes, as Doug places his nose underneath and
 smells. Doug starts to cough and gag, and then heads towards
 a bathroom stall. Larry goes to the bathroom door and opens
 it, where he is met with Principal Edwards.

PRINCIPAL RICHARDS
 (stern)
 Why is this door locked?

LARRY
 (calmly explains)
 Well, sir, I entered the bathroom
 and I saw Doug vomiting and I
 didn't want anyone to see him.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
 (looks worried at Doug)
 Oh my goodness! Are you okay,
 Douglas?

Principal Edwards attends to Doug in the bathroom stall.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
 (looks on in disgust)
 Jesus, Mary, and sweet Saint
 Joseph, what did you eat?

Larry comes INTO VIEW with some paper towels, as both he and
 Principal Edwards assist Doug.

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CLASS ROOM - AFTERNOON

Miss Gibbons is giving her lesson, as class is almost over.

MISS GIBBONS
 (addresses class)
 Okay, I want everyone to know that
 winter recess will be coming up
 soon, and I wanted you to know that
 all of you will be assigned a ten
 page essay/dissertation.
 (beat)
 It will count as thirty percent of
 your final grade, and you will be
 judged on your writing resources,
 and your oral speech. It will be
 due the day before winter recess.
 (beat; presents papers)
 I also have your papers from our
 last lesson.

Miss Gibbons hands back the papers to her class. Jack
 receives his paper and looks at it.

INSERT SHOT - JACK'S PAPER

Reads "SEE ME" in bold red ink.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack looks disappointedly, as the class BELL RINGS, as everyone disperses. Jack remains, as he goes to see Miss Gibbons.

JACK

Miss Gibbons, you wanted to see me?

MISS GIBBONS

(stern)

Yes, Jack. I heard you did excellent in last week's game. I wish I could say the same for your essay. It had a decent introduction, a substandard body, and a conclusion that made no sense whatsoever.

(beat)

Even though you're the star quarterback...

JACK

(interrupts)

Miss Gibbons, I know my paper was less than stellar. It's just that I've been busy with Coach and...

MISS GIBBONS

(intervenes)

Jack, I thought we had this discussion before. You agreed with me that you would try to keep a balance between academics and athletics.

JACK

Yes, Miss Gibbons, and I know...

MISS GIBBONS

(interjects)

I don't know what it's like to be you, Jack, but I--

JACK

(angrily interrupts)

Yes, you don't know what it's like to be me. So stop trying to act like you do. I have a lot on my plate right now, and I'm trying my best to attend to everything.

(two full beats)

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
 But instead of trying to understand my situation, you lecture me with a bunch of sarcastic and degrading comments. If you'll excuse me, I'm late for lunch.

Jack storms out of the classroom, as Miss Gibbons sits speechless at her desk.

INT. COACH HAYWOOD'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Coach Haywood sits at his desk, busily filling out some paperwork, when there is a KNOCK at his DOOR.

COACH HAYWOOD
 Come in.

The office door opens, Doug enters.

DOUG
 Coach Haywood. Coach Radford said you wanted to see me.

COACH HAYWOOD
 Yes, Doug. Please, have a seat.

DOUG
 (sits down)
 What's up, Coach?

COACH HAYWOOD
 Doug, I spoke with Coach Terlander of Brighton High. You broke Louis Hunter's jaw last week. So, I, along with the High School Board of Athletics, have decided to take disciplinary action and suspend you for next week's game.

DOUG
 (looks incredulously at him)
 Are you shitting me?

COACH HAYWOOD
 Now, before you go off the deep end, I want you to know th--

DOUG
 (angrily interrupts)
 Let me ask you, Coach. What sport are we playing here? This isn't yachting or croquet, this is football.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

(beat)

So he misses eating Thanksgiving turkey for one year. What's the sin here? Coach, I play my ass off every game...

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells sternly)

But that does not mean that you can play the game to intentionally hurt opponents. If you want to play for me, you're going to play with the utmost respect, dignity, and sportsmanship.

DOUG

(strong)

When Bednarik breaks a guy's jaw, do you think they suspend him for a game? No, he gets a pat on the back.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells sternly)

I don't appreciate your insensitivity, nor will I tolerate your attitude.

(beat)

You are going to serve your one-game suspension and apologize to Louis. Keep it up, and I will make it my life's duty to make sure that you never play a single down for any high school, college, or pro team.

(beat)

Do I make myself clear?

Doug looks intensely at Coach Haywood, as he gets up and walks slowly toward the office door and closes it. Coach Haywood sits, as he tries to compose himself.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XIV

FADE IN:

EXT. HANSON'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - EARLY EVENING

Cindy and Jack sit in the backyard. Jack sits despondently, as Cindy attempts to console him.

CINDY
 (concerned)
 You okay?

JACK
 (soft)
 I'll be fine.
 (looks admiringly around
 backyard)
 You know, I've always loved your
 backyard. It's always had this
 free, heaven-like feeling. Like
 you can just be yourself without
 anyone watching.
 (beat; looks at tree)
 I'd give anything to trade places
 with that tree.

CINDY
 (witty)
 Is this a bad time to tell you that
 my dad's been thinking of chopping
 it down?

JACK
 You've always had a way with words,
 Cind. I think from the time I was
 born, I've had my life mapped out
 for me.
 (two full beats)
 Grade school, practice with my dad,
 junior high, Pop Warner, junior
 high, more games and practice, high
 school, even more games and
 practice.
 (beat)
 I guess I've never taken the time
 to realize the great things that
 surround me.
 (looks at Cindy)
 I think you're the only good thing
 in my life now.

CINDY
 Don't be silly, Jack.

JACK
 No, I really mean it. Miss Gibbons
 has been coming down pretty hard on
 me, and Coach Haywood and I have
 had our differences.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

Plus, my parents are starting to bombard me with questions about my future. I'm facing pressure that makes the two-minute drill look like a breeze.

CINDY

(reassuring)

But, Jack, the great thing about your future is that you can control it. You are the master of your fate. And whatever that fate may be, I'm going to be here to face it with you.

JACK

Thanks, Cind.

Cindy and Jack look at the evening sky.

SKY

Lies still, when a shooting star flies across the sky.

Jack and Cindy watch in awe.

CINDY

(turns to Jack)

Aren't you going to make a wish?

JACK

It already came true.

Cindy and Jack smile at one another and kiss.

EXT. LOCAL ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

Flash and Julie are both on the sidewalk, enjoying a cone. They soon hop into Flash's father's car, as they drive away.

INT. FLASH'S CAR - NIGHT

Flash and Julie drive down the road, as they start to converse.

JULIE

This is a really neat car.

FLASH

(focuses on road)

Thank you. It's my dad's. He lent it to me for tonight.

JULIE

So, how do you like it here?

FLASH

(focuses on road)

It's okay. I sure miss Chicago pizza though. Ain't nothin' like deep dish.

JULIE

So, I know you love to sing and dance. Who do you listen to?

FLASH

(focuses on road)

I love all kinds of music, but I LOVE James Brown.

JULIE

Oh, my parents love James Brown.

FLASH

(turns serious)

Speaking of your parents, have you told them about us?

Julie looks sheepishly at Flash, who gives her an admonishing glare.

FLASH

(serious)

Julie, if you don't tell your parents about us, you'll just be setting us up for disaster.

JULIE

I just think it's a sensitive issue right now. I want to make sure it's the right place and right time.

FLASH

(inquisitive)

And when or where do you think that will be?

JULIE

(defensive)

Andre, I don't appreciate your pressing me on this.

FLASH
 (strongly retorts)
 And I don't appreciate you keeping
 us a secret.

JULIE
 (strong)
 And have you lynched?!

An incensed Andre steps hardly on the brakes, as the CAR SCREECHES to a halt right in front of Julie's house.

FLASH
 (stern)
 Here we are. Now get out.

JULIE
 (contrite)
 Andre...

FLASH
 (yells angrily)
 I said, "Get out!"

Julie disappointedly exits Flash's car, as he angrily drives away.

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - BOYS' BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

CLOCK ON WALL

Reads Three o'clock A.M.

Flash and Kenneth are fast asleep, when there is a sudden flicker of light. Andre slowly awakens, as he wakes up Kenneth.

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - PARENTS' BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Mister and Missus Ferguson are asleep, when the boys enter and wake them up.

INT. FERGUSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

The entire Ferguson family carefully goes to the living room window, pull away the curtain, and look outside.

FAMILY'S POV

FRONT LAWN

Is ablaze with lit crosses, as a bunch of members from the Ku Klux Klan continue to put fuel to the lit crosses.

BACK TO SCENE

The Fergusons look on in shock/stoicism, as the Klan members see them.

KLAN MEMBER

(out loud)

A word to the wise. Stop dating our women, and get off our fine land, or we'll be forced to take matters into our own hands. White power!

The Klan members hop into the back of their car, parked in front of the house, and drive off. The Fergusons continue to watch the crosses burn. Flash and Kenneth look at each other, and hold each other's hands firmly.

FLASH

(looks seriously at Andre)

Football may have a time limit, but brotherhood is eternal.

The boys turn and continue to watch the crosses burn.

INT. TEAM HOTEL - HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Some SPORTS REPORTERS, who cover the Tigers for the local paper, are walking through the hotel lobby, as they talk amongst each other.

REPORTER #1

I heard Dombrowski was suspended for today's game.

REPORTER #2

Yeah, I heard that kid's got a bad reputation. Somewhat of a wild one.

REPORTER #1

Dave, you know rumors are like rashes. First they start out small, then they spread. Believe me, it can't be that bad.

The Reporters arrive at the hotel elevator, as the door opens, and the they are met with a surprising sight.

DOUG

Lies sleeping on the elevator floor, completely incoherent.

INT. TAFT HIGH FIELD - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The locker room is completely still, as Willowbrook has lost to Taft High, twenty-seven to seven. Players shower and get dressed. Coach Haywood enters, as his players turn their attention to him.

COACH HAYWOOD

(stern)

Alright, everyone. That was a tough one out there today. We had a chance to clinch the division, and we flopped.

(beat)

But we can win next week at home. We're just gonna have to practice harder and be more prepared.

(beat)

Another thing I want to talk to you about is play calling. I don't care if you're Unitas. Under no circumstances, do you overrule something I send in. Is that understood? That is all.

Jack sits silent at his locker, as he know Coach Haywood is alluding to him.

INT. DOMBROWSKI HOUSE - DOUG'S ROOM - EVENING

Doug has arrived home after the game. He enters his room, where he is met by his mother.

DOUG

Mom, what are you doing in here?

MISS DOMBROWSKI

(shows Doug steroids)

I found this stuff in your drawer. What is this, Douglas?

DOUG

(looks incredulously at her)

Mom, why are you going through my stuff?

MISS DOMBROWSKI

(inquisitively)

How much of this are you taking, Douglas?

DOUG

(tries to explain)
 Mom, I only use it during the
 season. That's it. I swear.

MISS DOMBROWSKI

I found a whole bunch of pills and
 liquids in your drawer. I flushed
 them down the toilet.

DOUG

(yells loudly)
 You what? Mom, why did you do
 that?

MISS DOMBROWSKI

Douglas, this stuff is dangerous.

DOUG

Mom, I need it to play. It's my
 only chance of staying healthy. We
 can win state this year.

MISS DOMBROWSKI

(strongly)
 I don't care. I won't have you
 doing any more.

DOUG

(tries to explain)
 Mom, you don't understand. Without
 it I won't have chance at a
 scholarship. You'll never have to
 pay a dime for my education.
 (beat)
 I'm gonna be Double D, the most
 dominant defender in football.

MISS DOMBROWSKI

(strongly objects)
 No you're not. You're my son,
 Douglas Steven Dombrowski. And if
 you don't stop taking this, I'm
 calling your coach to tell him.

Doug angrily grabs his mother and slams her up against the
 bedroom wall.

DOUG

(looks intensely at his
 mother)
 Now you listen to me.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
 If you dare tell Coach Haywood or
 Coach Radford, so help me God I
 will pound the piss out of you!

Miss Dombrowski screams, as she pushes her son, and runs out of his bedroom. An enraged Doug is all-alone, as he looks around his room, and starts to go into a maniacal rage. He starts to scream, then throws stuff around his room. Doug continues ransacking his room, when he starts to wince in pain. He goes to the partially shattered mirror, and pulls down his pants.

DOUG'S SIDE

Which he injected with steroids, is swollen and starting to bleed profusely.

Doug then looks closely at his face, as terrible acne is starting to develop. He then looks at the veins in his arms, as they start to bulge. Doug then looks at the skin on his arms, as he gently pushes it with his finger.

SKIN ON DOUG'S ARM

Has an indentation, ripples, and then goes back to normal.

An incensed Doug takes the MIRROR and tosses it across the room, as it SHATTERS. Doug looks around his room, as he falls to the floor and starts to sob uncontrollably.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The locker room is still. Suddenly the doors BURST open, as an exultant Willowbrook team enters, yelling in exultation. They have just beaten Murrow High to capture the division title. Players are agog, as they get changed and banter amongst themselves. Coach Haywood comes INTO VIEW, as the team settles down.

COACH HAYWOOD
 Alright, alright. Settle down now.
 I am proud to say that I have
 spoken to all of your teachers, the
 majority of the team has maintained
 a B average throughout the season.
 (beat)
 You can still get A's if you try
 harder, but way to prioritize, men.

The entire team erupts into cheers, as Coach Haywood continues.

COACH HAYWOOD

Now, before we celebrate, we must remember that this is only the beginning. The playoffs start on Friday, so we have one less day to practice and prepare.

(beat)

I want you all to savor this, because we start all over again on Tuesday. Congratulations, men, you are the regional division champs for 1962. That is all.

The team ROARS even louder, as Coach Haywood gives a seldom-seen smile.

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - SHOWER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Aaron, wrapped in a towel, is finishing up his shower, as he sits on a linoleum block. Walter comes INTO VIEW, as he beckons Aaron.

WALTER

You there, Fish?

AARON

Yeah, Walt.

WALTER

Fish, some reporters wanna talk to you about today's game.

AARON

Can I talk to them some other time?

WALTER

Sorry, Fish. They said their deadlines are tomorrow.

AARON

(rescinded)

Fine. Tell them I'll be out in five minutes.

WALTER

No problem.

AARON

Thanks, Walt.

Aaron leans his head back in exasperation, as he takes out a bottle of insulin and a syringe.

He then slowly and partially unwraps the towel around his waist to reveal a massive black and blue mark on his stomach and pelvic area. Aaron shakes the bottle, as he readies the syringe and fills it with insulin. A nervous Aaron starts to shiver, as he slowly pierces the bruised region with the syringe.

CLOSEUP - AARON'S BRUISED RIGHT PELVIC REGION

As the syringe penetrates the skin.

Aaron starts to shiver uncomfortably, as he composes himself and is again beckoned by Walter.

WALTER (O.S.)
(calls out)
Aaron, you okay in there?

AARON
(nervous but composed)
Be right there.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

SCENE XV

FADE IN:

INT. MAC'S SNACK ATTACK - CORNER TABLE - AFTERNOON

Most of the team is celebrating their division championship with some burger and fries. Doug is sitting next to Jack, as the two start to converse.

DOUG
I thought you said we were never coming back here?

JACK
I had a talk with Mac. He decided to change his ways. Now Flash and Kenny, as well as all colored people, can eat here.

DOUG
A leader off the field as well as on. You are something else.

JACK
(dryly)
I'm glad you think so.

DOUG
You okay, Jack?

JACK
Yeah. Why do you ask?

DOUG
(witty)
Well, considering we just won the
division, you look like you just
came from a funeral.

JACK
(despondent)
That's kina how I feel right now.

DOUG
It's Coach, isn't it?

JACK
(witty)
Let's just say we won't be going
bowling anytime soon.

DOUG
Listen, I've had my differences
with Coach all season. As long as
you play hard, you won't have a
problem.
(beat)
Plus, this isn't the time to pout.
We need that golden arm of yours to
lead us to the state title.

JACK
(cheers up)
I guess you're right. I mean, here
we are, division champs with a shot
at state, and I'm acting like a
child. There are a lot of reasons
to be thankful.

DOUG
I can think of two already.

JACK
What?

DOUG
Look to your right.

Jack heeds Doug and looks. Two pretty girls, DENISE CAMDEN and LAURA PICKFORD, head in the direction of the team's table.

DOUG
(looks amorously at girls)
The fish are in the ocean. Now
it's time to get out the bait.

Denise and Laura arrive at the table and introduce themselves.

PAMELA
Hey, guys. Great game out there
today.

DOUG
Thanks. You girls go to
Willowbrook?

DENISE
Yeah. We're both juniors, though.

DOUG
My, what a shame.

PAMELA
(looks at Jack)
Hey, aren't you the quarterback?
That was a great game you had out
there.

JACK
Thanks.

DOUG
(charming)
So, can I treat you girls to
anything? A burger, a soda, a
night on the town?

Both girls giggle in slight embarrassment. Denise sidles down next to Jack, as she starts a conversation.

DENISE
Boy, you seem to have it all.
Smarts, athletic talent, striking
good looks. What I would give to
have that kind of package.

JACK
I'm sorry, but...

Before Jack can finish, Denise starts to kiss him. The front door opens, as Cindy and a friend of hers enter. Cindy spots Denise kissing Jack. Cindy looks on astounded, as she runs out the door. Jack sees Cindy and goes after her.

JACK
(yells)
Cindy, wait!

EXT. OUTSIDE MAC'S SNACK ATTACK - AFTERNOON

Jack catches up with Cindy, who goes inside her friend's car.

JACK
Cindy, I can explain.

CINDY
(turns to Jack; stern)
Then please do, Jack. Of all people to cheat on me with, you had to choose Denise Camden. She's easier than the alphabet.
(beat)
You know Jack, even though I don't like football, I decided to come and celebrate with you and the team. I guess you're doing just fine by yourself.

Cindy gets into her friends car, as she SLAMS the passenger side DOOR. Cindy and her friend depart, as Jack is left on the sidewalk.

MONTAGE - WEEK BEFORE PLAYOFF GAME

Jack is busy writing Cindy a letter, as he tries to study his playbook at the same time.

Flash is running miles along his block on a freezing day. He takes five, as he opens a small bag. The bag contains the bananas, which are now rotten, and the Go Home note. Flash looks at them momentarily, gets up, and continues to run.

Doug is in his room, busily lifting weights. He takes a breather, as he looks to see if his mom is around. Seeing no one, he pulls a piece of a loose floorboard up. Doug then pulls out a small shoebox. Doug gently lifts off the cover. The box contains a secret stash of pill and liquid steroids.

Doug takes a small cocktail of pills, pops them all in his mouth at once, and swallows them. He puts the box back underneath the floorboard, and goes back to lifting weights.

Coach Haywood is at his office, burning the midnight oil, preparing for Friday's game. Coach Haywood takes five, as he takes off his glasses and looks at the clock on his office wall, which reads a quarter past one. Coach Haywood hesitates momentarily, as he goes back to the game plan.

Larry is in the boys' bathroom, waiting beside one of the bathroom stalls. A classmate of Larry's steps out of the stall, with Larry's urine sample cup in hand. Larry hands the boy some money, takes the cup, and shakes his hand.

END MONTAGE

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is the night before the playoff game, as Jack is lying pensively on his bed, trying to work on his midterm essay. There is a KNOCK on the bedroom DOOR.

JACK

Come in.

The door opens, as Mister Stevens has come to check on his son.

MISTER STEVENS

How's it goin', champ?

JACK

(witty)

I think you should call me that in a few weeks.

Mister Stevens grins, as Jack follows.

MISTER STEVENS

(concerned)

Is everything alright, Son?

JACK

Yeah, I'm hangin' in there.

MISTER STEVENS

Did you hear? Mom got a new job at MidWestern Bell.

JACK

(happy)

Are you kidding? That's great dad. Why didn't she tell me?

MISTER STEVENS

Well, she figured you were so busy with school and football, she didn't want to disturb you.

JACK

(slightly frustrated)
You see, Dad.

MISTER STEVENS

(confounded)
What?

JACK

I miss all the special moments in the family.

MISTER STEVENS

Oh now, Jack. Don't be so hard on yourself. It's okay. We both know you're doing someth--

JACK

(softly intervenes)
No, it's not okay. You and mom sacrificed so much to give Ben and I the lives you never had. And I can't be there.

MISTER STEVENS

Jack, as a former high school football player, I know all too well the sacrifices you've made to be where you are.

(beat)

Your brother, Ben, God rest his soul, had to make the same ones, and if he were here today, would be in the same position you are in now.

JACK

You know, hearing that from you makes playing football a lot easier.

(witty)

Though not as less painful.

Jack and his dad both smile, as an awkward silence ensues.

MISTER STEVENS

You know, the only bad thing about these in depth father-son talks is the weird silence that foll...

Before he can finish, Mister Stevens gets a big embrace from Jack. Mister Stevens places a strong grip on his son.

MISTER STEVENS

(soft)

That's my boy.

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

It is game day, as Jack is still asleep in bed. Mister Stevens enters Jack's bedroom, as he attempts to awaken his son.

MISTER STEVENS

(gently nudges Jack)

Jack, it's time to get up. You have the divisional today.

Jack is unresponsive and continues to lie in bed.

MISTER STEVENS

(pulls the sheets off of him)

Jack, I'm not going to tell you twice.

JACK

(weary)

Dad, I don't feel so good.

MISTER STEVENS

(concerned)

Are you alright, Son?

MISTER STEVENS

(feels Jack's forehead and looks into his eyes)

My goodness, you're burning up. I'm gonna call Coach...

JACK

(wearily intervenes)

Don't you dare, dad. The team needs me. Just get my stuff ready and drive me to the field.

Mister Stevens lifts Jack out of bed.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - TRAINER'S ROOM - MORNING

Walt sits, peacefully reading a magazine, when the door flies open, as Mister Stevens enters, carrying Jack. Walt quickly rises, as he goes to them.

WALTER
(exclaims)
Bruce, long time no see.

MISTER STEVENS
Nice to see ya, Walt. Walt, Jack woke up this morning under the weather. Anything you can do?

WALTER
Sure. Jack, I'm gonna put two iv drips in both your arms.
(turns to Bruce)
Bruce, get a hot water bottle from the shelf there and fill it up.

JACK
(weary)
Walt?

WALTER
Yeah, Jack?

JACK
(weary)
Not a word of this to anyone.

WALTER
You got it, Jack.

Walter and Mister Stevens start to help Jack get ready for the game.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The stands are packed with fans, as they cheer loudly. Players from both teams are practicing. Doug comes out of the tunnel, as he is met with cheers of "Double D, Double D!" from the fans. Doug hesitates, as he looks around at the fans and smiles.

DOUG
(happy)
Oh, yeah. This is what it's all about.

At the far end of the field, Flash and Kenneth are warming up. Flash has his game face on, as he lightly stretches, while a concerned Kenneth looks on.

KENNETH

Andre, do you realize where we are?
This is the playoffs. You haven't
warmed up a bit.

FLASH

(strong)
And I have yet to cool down.

Willowbrook has the ball on the twenty yard line. Jack warily looks over the defense, calls the play, and gets the ball under center. Jack hands the ball off to Aaron, who fakes a hand off to Kenneth, does an option pass to the tight end, who is open in the right corner of the end zone for the score. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood and the team rejoice.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells ecstatically)
Ha! Harv, you son of a bitch, the
halfback option worked! Yeah!

Later in the second quarter, Willowbrook again has the ball on the thirty. Jack tries his best to scan the defense, gets the ball from under center, and looks downfield. Jack lobs a high pass. Flash leaps INTO VIEW, as he pulls down the ball with both feet in the end zone. Flash takes the ball, and gives it a light spike, as the crowd cheers loudly.

SCOREBOARD

Reads WILLOWBROOK 14, VISITORS 3, Second quarter.

It is almost halftime, as Jackson High has the ball at the forty with a few seconds left. The Jackson High quarterback looks over the defense, takes the ball under center, and drops back for a Hail Mary pass. The Jackson quarterback takes a quick look and throws with all his might. A Jackson receiver is running down the sidelines, as he stays with the pass, and hauls it in, as he falls into the end zone for the score. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood throws his hat down in indignation.

In the second half, after a solid drive, Willowbrook has the ball on their own twenty five. Jack looks over the defense, as gets the ball from under center. Jack gives a lateral pass to Flash who follows his blockers and runs full tilt down the sideline.

FLASH'S HELMET POV

JACKSON HIGH TACKLER

Tries to tackle Flash, but is blocked by a Willowbrook player, who comes INTO VIEW.

TWO JACKSON HIGH DEFENDERS

Try to tackle Flash, but are blocked hardly by Kenneth, who comes INTO VIEW.

BACK TO SCENE

Flash goes into the end zone untouched, as the crowd cheers wildly. Flash's teammates congratulate him, as he goes over to Kenny.

FLASH

Thanks for the block.

KENNETH

Anytime. Teammates for the season.

FLASH

Brothers for life.

Flash and Kenneth firmly grip each other's hands, as they go back to the sideline.

It is late in the third quarter, as Willowbrook has the ball on the sixty-yard line. Jack looks over the defense, and gets the ball from under center. Jack throws in the direction of his tight end. The pass is short, and is intercepted by a Jackson High defender. The Jackson High defender starts running downfield, as some Willowbrook linemen pursue him. They catch up with him, as they tackle him, forcing a fumble. The ball is loose, as Flash comes INTO VIEW and recovers. On the opposing sideline, the Jackson High Coach throws down his clipboard in disgust.

Midway through the fourth quarter, Willowbrook's defense is trying to stop a Jackson High drive. The Jackson High Quarterback takes the snap and drops back. Seeing no one, he does a screen pass to his halfback. The Jackson High halfback fights off a few tacklers, before following his linemen into the end zone. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood is livid.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells angrily)

What a horse shit job of tackling!

SCOREBOARD

Reads WILLOWBROOK 34, VISITORS 24, Fourth Quarter.

The game is almost over, as Jackson High is trying to make a late comeback. On the Jackson High sideline, the JACKSON HIGH COACH talks with his Quarterback about the game plan.

JACKSON HIGH COACH

Okay, Danny. I want you to try and hit Drew over the middle of the field. If we still have time, we'll have to get a run play or two, then go for a score. Okay, let's do it.

The Jackson High offense lines up, as Doug starts to converse with a Jackson High lineman.

DOUG

You know, it's a shame the weather isn't a little nicer. We could maybe dress down a little. But with a body like yours, that wouldn't be such a great idea.

(beat)

You look like an oversized bratwurst with legs.

The ball is snapped, as Doug bursts through the line and starts the pass rush. The Jackson High Quarterback evades Doug, but scrambles around and has nowhere to run. Dennis comes INTO VIEW, as he sacks the quarterback for a loss of yardage. On the opposing sideline, the Jackson High Coach sighs in consternation.

The final seconds are ticking down, as Jackson High is forced to throw a final Hail Mary pass. The Jackson High Quarterback gets the ball under center, takes a few steps back, and throws a huge lob in the air. The ball heads in the direction of a few Willowbrook defenders, when Flash, on special teams, leaps INTO VIEW, and intercepts the pass. The game has ended, as Willowbrook has won, 34-24. Flash, with ball in hand, heads over to the stands, and hands the ball to Julie, who is sitting in the stands. Julie smiles, as Flash winks at her and heads back to the field.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The boys are bantering about, as they are by their lockers, getting out of their uniforms. The press is surrounding Flash's locker, as they bombard him with questions.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Flash, you just had the game of your life today. A receiving touchdown, a running touchdown, a fumble recovery, and an interception. How do you feel?

FLASH

(modest)

Well, I'm just happy our that we won. We had a lot of great effort out there today. I had really great blocking.

(beat)

Regardless of what I did today, I couldn't have done it without my teammates.

Flash turns to Kenneth, who looks soberly at him, as a small smile fissures from beneath his lips.

FLASH

(polite)

Fellas, if you don't mind, I'm a little tired. I'll gladly answer your questions tomorrow. Thank you.

The throng of reporter slowly disperses from Flash's locker.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - TRAINER'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Jack, still feeling the effects of his bug, lies listlessly on the trainer's table, as Walt tends to him, when the two converse.

WALTER

(concerned)

You okay, Jack?

JACK

(weary)

Walt?

WALTER

Yeah?

JACK

(weary)

Did we win today?

WALTER

We sure did. Jack?

JACK
 (weary)
 Yeah, Walt?

WALTER
 If I ever questioned your will to win, I just want to apologize to you. Nobody could've pulled off what you did today.

JACK
 (weary)
 Thanks. Hey, Walt?

WALTER
 Yeah?

JACK
 (weary)
 Do you have a bucket?

WALTER
 Sure.
 (gets a bucket and hands it to Jack)
 Do you want me to put ice in it?

JACK
 No need.
 (vomits in bucket)
 Uuggghhhh!

Jack continues to vomit, as Walter attends to him.

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack is resting peacefully in his bed, working on his essay and sipping on some warm tea. There is a KNOCK on his bedroom DOOR.

JACK
 (soft)
 No thanks, Mom. I still have the tea you brought me.

The bedroom door opens, as Cindy appears, thermos in hands, and slowly walks into the room. Jack falls silent, as the two stare in silence at each other.

JACK
 (coy)
 Hi.

CINDY

(coy)
Hi. Your mom said you'd be here.
(concerned)
How are you feeling?

JACK

(soft)
All things considered, pretty good.

CINDY

(hands Jack thermos)
Here. It's my mom's homemade
chicken soup. Both of our moms met
at the supermarket and she told us
you were sick.

JACK

Thanks.

CINDY

(soft)
I heard about the win today. I
don't know how you did it.

JACK

The team needed me. Wild horses
couldn't drag me away from playing.
(beat)
Listen...

CINDY

(softly interrupts)
No, I want to say something. Doug
told me everything. Denise all but
took off your clothes. I want to
apologize for overreacting.

JACK

(strong)
It's okay. I would've reacted the
same way if I saw you with someone
else.
(beat)
Cindy, we've known each other ever
since second grade. I've never
wanted to be with anyone but you,
and I will always feel that way.
(beat)
Can I ask you something?

CINDY

Sure.

JACK

I know this might be asking much, but I was wondering if you could come to the championship game this week. I know you're not a fan, but it would mean a lot to me to have you there. It's my last game for Willowbrook.

(pulls out ticket and hands it to her)

I got you a ticket.

CINDY

(takes ticket, looks at it, and looks up at Jack)

I'll be there.

Cindy smiles and goes to kiss Jack, when he pulls away.

JACK

(cautious)

Don't kiss me. I don't want you to get sick.

CINDY

(witty)

I'll take the risk.

Cindy tenderly kisses Jack, as they hold each other.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XVI

FADE IN:

INT. WILLOWBROOK HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Gibbons is going over her lesson, as class is almost over. Miss Gibbons hands her class back their mid-term essays.

MISS GIBBONS

Okay, everyone, I was a bit mixed about your essays. Some of you did exemplary, while some of you will have to work real hard in the new year.

(beat)

Overall, I was very happy. Keep up the good work, and I'll see you tomorrow.

Every student receives their paper back, except for Jack, who looks curious. The BELL RINGS, as everyone departs. Jack remains in the classroom, as he goes over to Miss Gibbons.

JACK

Excuse me, Miss Gibbons. I didn't receive my essay back.

MISS GIBBONS

Yes, Jack. I wanted to discuss that with you. I read your essay, and I think...

JACK

(nervously interjects)

Before you say anything, I want you to know that I worked on it for weeks. I had a rough draft, an outline...

MISTER STEVENS

(calmly interrupts)

Jack, Jack, it's okay. You got an A. I really enjoyed it. Your use of metaphors, imagery, personification, alliteration, even your choice of vocabulary were clear and insightful.

(beat)

I'm very proud of you.

JACK

Thank you.

MISS GIBBONS

I heard about the game last Friday. You did great. I'll experience your athletic prowess on Sunday.

JACK

(confounded)

What do you mean?

MISS GIBBONS

(displays game ticket)

I got a ticket for this Sunday's game. I'm friends with the English teacher at Lincoln High. Knock 'em dead.

JACK

We'll try. See ya, Miss Gibbons.

Jack departs, as Miss Gibbons watches him leave and smiles faintly.

INT. COACH HAYWOOD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Coach Haywood is preparing for the Championship game on Sunday, as he reviews his playbook. A VOICE soon interrupts him.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS (O.S.)
Always preparing, are we?

COACH HAYWOOD
(strong)
Championships aren't won on idle time.

Principal Edwards comes INTO VIEW, as he arrives at Coach Haywood's desk.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
I don't know how you do it. I mean, your teams are always competitive, the graduation rate of your players is always among the highest percentile, and you still manage to teach physical education in your spare time.

COACH HAYWOOD
It's all about planning. Every day missed is one you can't make up.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
I must say, you really have the team playing well.

COACH HAYWOOD
(modest)
I can't take all the credit. Harv's been a big help as always, and with the team executing, it makes things a lot easier.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS
Well, I want you to know that of all the years that you've been the coach of this school, I have never realized your genius any more than I have this year.

COACH HAYWOOD

(witty)

I don't know what to say. You hand out compliments like manhole covers.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

What do you think you'll do when the season's over?

COACH HAYWOOD

(strong)

I'll worry about that when the time comes. Right now, I have to focus on Sunday.

PRINCIPAL EDWARDS

(witty)

Once a coach, always a coach, huh?

COACH HAYWOOD

Always.

Principal Edwards exits, as Coach Haywood continues to prepare.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Doug is with Larry and a couple of their teammates, JESSE PLOTTER and MATT TERRY. Doug is giving them some steroids to help them with their injuries.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Sorry about the small dosage. My mom threw away most of my stash.

LARRY

(sotto voce)

You mean she caught you.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

Yeah. Don't worry. I always have some lying around.

MATT

(sotto voce)

Does Coach know about this?

DOUG

(sternly; sotto voce)
No, and he won't because you
pinheads are going to keep your
mouths shut.

JESSE

(concerned; sotto voce)
Should we look for any side
effects?

DOUG

(sotto voce)
I'm giving you all small dosages,
so there shouldn't be any.

LARRY

(painfully; sotto voce)
Man, my leg has been killing me
since I forced that fumble last
week.

DOUG

(hands pills to them)
Here. Just remember to take them
on Saturday night. Keep them in a
safe place, where no one will find
them.

(beat)

Not a word of this to anyone.
C'mon, we gotta get to practice.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BEHIND BLEACHERS - AFTERNOON

Flash and Julie are having a secret meeting under behind the
bleachers.

JULIE

(sotto voce)
Thanks for the football. My dad
really likes it.

FLASH

(sotto voce)
I'll try to add more to his
collection this Sunday. Listen,
Julie...

JULIE

(softly interrupts)
No, I should be the one
apologizing.

(MORE)

JULIE (cont'd)

We shouldn't be keeping something like this a secret. At least not to our parents. That's why I've thought of something.

FLASH

What?

Julie pulls out an envelope from her coat pocket, and hands it to Flash. Flash opens it up to reveal three tickets to Sunday's championship game. Flash looks curiously at the tickets, then at Julie.

FLASH

These are tickets to Sunday's game.

JULIE

Yeah. I've decided to go with my parents. I was hoping I could introduce you after the game. Then my parents can see both the player and the person.

(beat)

I know they'll be far more impressed with the latter.

FLASH

Mmm, you think so?

JULIE

I know so.

Flash and Julie embrace and kiss. Little do they know they are being watched.

MYSTERY POV

Troy hiding near the rafters, closely and quietly watches the couple, looking on intensely.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Both the offense and defense are going through some practice drills, in preparation for Sunday's game. Jack scans the defense, gets the ball under center and goes back to pass. Flash goes over the middle, as Jack throws in his direction. Flash catches the ball and proceeds to turn around.

FLASH'S POV

TRENT

Comes charging full motion at Flash.

BACK TO SCENE

Flash, with no time to react, gets tackled hard by Trent. Flash lies still on the ground, as Trent, still looming over, looks at him threw his helmet and winks.

Trent gets up, and is met by an irate Doug.

DOUG
 (angrily hits Trent on his
 helmet)
 What are you trying to do, kill
 him?! Be careful!

TRENT
 (angrily)
 Don't you dare start with me, Doug!

DOUG
 (angrily retorts)
 Then take it easy, you phallus!

TRENT
 (incensed)
 That's it!

Doug and Trent start a melee with each other, as the rest of the team tries to get between them.

INT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Doug is at his locker getting dressed, when Trent and his crew come INTO VIEW.

DOUG
 Can I help you, fellas?

TRENT
 (stern)
 I have a lot of respect for you,
 Doug, and what you do for this
 team. But don't you ever dare
 challenge me like you did out there
 today.

DOUG
 (strongly)
 Then what's the big idea trying to
 take the head off our top wide
 receiver?

TRENT

(strong)

Don't you see, Doug? Look at him. Prancing around, thinking highly of himself.

(beat)

Ain't nothing but a distraction to this team, not to mention the entire town. C'mon Doug, you see where I'm comin' from?

DOUG

(strong)

Yeah, I see where you're coming from, and I don't like it one bit. What matter the color of a guy if he can pass, tackle, kick, catch, and run?

(looks sternly at boys)

If I were you guys, I'd stop watching in black and white and start to view things in Technicolor.

Doug walks OUT OF VIEW from his locker, as Trent and his boys stand still and silent.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XVII

FADE IN:

EXT. OPEN ROAD - LATE NIGHT

It is Friday night, as the roads, are barren, except for one vehicle, a Chevy Convertible, top down, races down the barren road. Its passengers are two TEENAGE BOYS, who are having the night of their lives, as they come to a stop in the road.

TEENAGE BOY #1

(yells exultantly)

Whoo!! Man, Dale, ain't it a hell of a night?!

TEENAGE BOY #2

(ebullient)

You said it, Jim. The open road, the young night, the car top down, the wind on our backs, and best of all, both of our parents are out of town!

TEENAGE BOY #1

(happily)

Boy, it's nights like these I'm
glad I'm young, fun, and growin' up
in the '60s.

The Teenage Boy takes a final drag of his cigarette, as the
throws it on the road.

TEENAGE BOY #2

(upset)

Dale, what's the matter with you?
I got an ashtray right here. Don't
you realize we're in a heavily-
forested area? You could cause a
fire!

TEENAGE BOY #1

(contrite)

I'm sorry.

The Boys speed off. Moments later, another Chevy
Convertible, top up, drives down the vacant road. However,
its passengers have something different in mind.

INT. CHEVY CONVERTIBLE - LATE NIGHT

Trent and his boys ride in his now-clean car. Trent is
behind the wheel, while Lester has shotgun. Troy and Zachary
are in the backseat, as they share a bottle of whiskey, and
are hollering.

TRENT

(focuses on road)

You boys okay back there?

ZACHARY

(enthusiastic)

Everything's gravy, Trent.

TROY

(enthusiastic)

Yeah, those boys are gonna think
twice about playing on our team,
and dating our women.

LESTER

(takes a sip of whiskey)

It's time we schooled them on the
less than finer aspects of livin'
on our land.

TRENT
 (focuses on road)
 How they lookin', boys?

TROY
 (unhearing)
 What's that, Trent?

TRENT
 (briefly turns around)
 You heard me. How are they back there?

ZACHARY
 They're doin' just fine.

Zachary pulls the cover off of a box, which contains a bunch of Molotov cocktails, which they plan to throw at Flash and Kenny's house.

TRENT
 (stern)
 Just don't put your feet down too hard. The floor's falling out.
 (beat)
 Did you make sure nothing's leaking out?

TROY
 Sure did, Trent. Nothing but smooth sailing.

TRENT
 Then let's get going, boys!

Trent accelerates, as the car goes faster and the boys yell loudly.

UNDERNEATH CAR FLOOR

As fluid from the cocktails, as well as spilled whiskey, slowly trickles from the floor onto the road.

Trent and his boys are traveling quickly down the road, as they are fast approaching Flash and Kenneth's house.

CIGARETTE

Lies motionless on the ground, still lit from before. Trent's car, goes over the cigarette, as the leaking contents from the floor meet with the smoke of the cigarette, as the car swiftly catches fire from underneath.

INT. TRENT'S CAR - LATE NIGHT

The inside of the car quickly bursts into flames, as the boys are yell in agony, as the burn alive.

TROY
(yells loudly)
Holy shit, what's happening?!

TRENT
(yells loudly)
Put it out!! Put it out!!

TRENT'S CAR

Now engulfed in flames, slows down, as it comes to a stop in the middle of the quiet, suburban street, right in front of the Ferguson home.

The CAR EXPLODES from within. Trent and his crew are dead. The lights of all the houses along the street slowly flicker on, as residents exit their houses to see the commotion. The entire Ferguson family exits their house, as they stand back and look at the incinerated car. Mister Ferguson tentatively approaches the car.

MISTER FERGUSON
(turns to his wife)
Mattie, call the police.
(turns to his sons)
Boys, do you know anyone in that car?

FLASH
(sober)
Yeah. They were our teammates.

MISTER FERGUSON
(looks concerned at neighbors)
Is everyone okay here?

The startled and speechless neighbors all nod their heads in agreement. Mister Ferguson continues to look at the flamed car from a distant, as everyone remains still on the sidewalk.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - MORNING

Members of the entire community have congregated to pay their last respects to Trent, Zachary, Lester, and Troy. The boys' caskets lie still at their places of eternal repose, readied to be lowered into the ground.

Jack, Cindy, their parents, Aaron, Flash, Kenneth, Doug, the rest of the football team, Coach Haywood, Coach Radford, Principal Edwards, among others listen to the PRIEST give the closing rites.

PRIEST

(reads from hymnal)

And we ask You, Dear Lord, to guide
these fine young men, taken far too
early, to your Heavenly Kingdom,
where they will rest in eternal
happiness. Amen.

The funeral has ended, as everyone starts to disperse. The Ferguson family heads towards their car, when they are halted by a voice. It is that of Trent's father, LYLE LOWERY.

MISTER LOWERY (O.S.)

(calls out)

Wait!

Mister Ferguson and his family stop and turn around.

MISTER LOWERY

Hi. Are you the Fergusons?

MISTER FERGUSON

(sternly)

Yes.

MISTER LOWERY

I'm Trent's father, Lyle Lowery.

MISTER FERGUSON

My family and I are sorry for your loss.

MISTER LOWERY

Thank you. I heard how my son and his friends died. My and I would just like to tell you that we had no idea that any of this was goin' on.

(beat)

We, along with the rest of the boys' families, would just like to offer our deepest apologies to you and your family, and if there's anything we can do to atone for that, please let us know.

Mister Lowery extends his hand. Mister Ferguson hesitates, then extends hand and shakes.

BOTH MEN'S HANDS

Firmly grip each other.

MISTER FERGUSON

(smiles faintly)

Thank you. The name's Franklin.

Mister Ferguson and Mister Lowery smile amiably at one another, as members the community gather around the Fergusons to introduce themselves.

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is the night before the big game, as Jack lies restless in his bed. He is looking at a scrapbook.

SCRAPBOOK

Contains photos and press clippings of Jack's older brother, Ben.

Jack smiles nostalgically at the contents of the scrapbook, when he gets an idea.

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

Jack quietly sneaks past his parents' bedroom.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - EARLY MORNING

Jack rides his bike down the empty road.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - SUNRISE

Jack stands at Ben's grave stone, as he looks silently at his grave stone and epitaph.

JACK

(speaks to Ben's grave
stone; sotto voce)

It's still hard to imagine you're gone. Everybody misses you. Mom and Dad are doing okay. School's going pretty good. I got an A on my English paper.

(two full beats)

You know, you're probably the first person I've told this to, but I don't think I want to play football anymore.

(beat)

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

I bet there were times you felt that way, too. But regardless, I'm gonna dedicate this game to you. Thanks for being there for me as much as you could. It's been a long season, and hopefully we can end it the right way.

(long pause)

Well, I hope to visit you again soon. Love ya, Benny.

Jack takes one final look at Ben's grave, before walking away with his bike.

EXT. LINCOLN STADIUM - ESTABLISHING SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Throngs of fans crowd the gates, as they try to enter into the stadium for the Championship game.

CUT TO:

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITING COACH'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

It is hours before game time, as Coach sits in a chair, giving a final review of today's game plan. He is engrossed in his play book, when a VOICE interrupts.

COACH RADFORD (O.S.)

Filling up all the loose ends?

COACH HAYWOOD

(looks up from playbook)

If only there weren't so many.

Coach Radford comes INTO VIEW, as he has a pre-game talk with Coach Haywood.

COACH RADFORD

Hawk, it's not even game time yet. Why don't you come and have some lunch with me? I know this diner that makes the best chicken picata.

COACH HAYWOOD

I'm fine, Harv. Can I ask you something?

COACH RADFORD

Sure.

COACH HAYWOOD

How do you like our chances today?

COACH RADFORD

Well, considering everything that's happened this past week, I think we'll be okay.

COACH HAYWOOD

(in slight disbelief)

Can you believe we're here, Harv? This is the fourth time around. I remember the first time I coached in one of these.

(beat)

1952. We won on a last second touchdown. Quarterback sneak. I thought my heart would never stop pounding. All those feelings have resurfaced.

COACH RADFORD

If there's anyone that can handle the pressure, it's you, Hawk.

(presents papers)

I got the special teams' plays all set for you. I'm gonna grab a soda and nap before game time. Try not to work too hard, Hawk.

Coach Radford hands the papers over to Coach Haywood, pats him on the back, and departs OUT OF VIEW. Coach Radford remains seated, as he looks at his desk.

PICTURE FRAME

Contains a picture of Coach Haywood and his ex-wife, in happier times.

Coach Haywood looks tenderly and nostalgically at the picture, as he lies back in his chair.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

It is moments before game time, as players sit at their locker, pace back and forth around the room, bang the walls, even sleep. The door opens, as a stoic Coach Haywood comes through the door, as his players quickly come to.

COACH HAYWOOD

Alright, everyone. Well, here we are. We've practiced and played hard all year long for this, and at long last here it is. Before I let you go out there, I want to talk to you about greatness.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)

(beat)

Greatness is demanding, greatness is lonely, greatness is sacrifice. But greatness is also rewarding, greatness is triumphant, and most importantly, greatness is memorable.

(two full beats)

All of you have a chance to embed yourselves in the annals of school history, in the minds and words of everyone assembled here today, and to become a part of greatness. The path to greatness starts the minute you walk out this door.

(long pause)

So, do you want greatness?

The team hesitates, then lets out a roaring "YES". Jack rises from his seat, and goes to Coach Haywood.

JACK

Coach?

COACH HAYWOOD

Yes, Jack?

JACK

I'm ready to inhale.

Jack smiles at Coach Haywood, who reciprocates.

COACH HAYWOOD

(looks at team; ardently)

Alright, then what are we waiting for? Go get 'em, tigers!

The team goes yelling out of the locker room.

EXT. LINCOLN STADIUM - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Players from both teams are warming up. Jack takes some practice throws, as he looks in the stands.

JACK'S POV

CINDY'S SEAT

Remains empty, when Cindy comes INTO VIEW, and sits down. Cindy notices Jack, as she smiles warmly and gives him a thumbs-up.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack smiles warmly, and continues to practice.

The Championship game is about to start, as the Lincoln High punter awaits the snap, receives the ball, and positions himself. The punter is about to boot it, when it is suddenly blocked by a Willowbrook defender, who comes INTO VIEW. The Willowbrook defender recovers the ball, before being piled on the ten yard line. The referee signals a fumble recovery by Willowbrook, as they now have the ball. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood, Coach Radford, and the entire team exalt.

Willowbrook now has the ball on the ten yard line, as Jack scans the defense, calls an audible, and takes the ball under center. He hands off to Aaron, who runs into one defender, bounces off, and goes into the end zone for the first score of the game.

Late in the second quarter, Lincoln High has the ball on the thirty. The Lincoln High Quarterback takes the ball under center, does a play action fake, and drops back. Doug breaks through the line, as he sacks the Lincoln Quarterback. Doug is slow to get up, as he wearily heads back to the huddle. On the next play, the Lincoln Quarterback takes the ball under center, does another play action fake, and drops back to pass. A Lincoln Receiver gets open, as another runs a short route. The Willowbrook defensive back falls for the play, as the Lincoln Receiver hauls in the pass and goes in untouched for the score. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood is none too pleased.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells angrily)

Damn it! The perfect fake and we
bit the bait.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - EARLY EVENING

It is now halftime, as Willowbrook has a slim lead over Lincoln, ten to three. Players sit at their lockers taking a breather, and getting ready for the second half. Coach Haywood enters, as he tries to motivate his team.

COACH HAYWOOD

Alright, men. We got beat on the
last few plays of the half. We
didn't finish strong, but we still
have the lead.

(beat)

The defense is playing strong off
the line.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)

The offense is managing the clock and moving well, but we have to get the passing game more involved. We also have a few other things we should be doing out there...

Coach Haywood starts to prepare his team for the second half.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - BATHROOM - EARLY EVENING

Meanwhile, Doug is in the bathroom, taking a breather, and getting prepared to play the second half. He sits wearily on the toilet. Doug places his hand in his left sock, as he pulls out a syringe. He then takes apart the paper towel dispenser, where he pulls out a small vial of liquid steroids. Doug starts to inject himself in his legs, stomach, neck, and various other areas. Doug then goes into his helmet, as he pulls out a cocktail of pills and a can of shoe polish. Doug swallows the pills whole, as he looks at the can of shoe polish.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Meanwhile, Coach Haywood is finished talking to his team, as they are set to go back out.

COACH HAYWOOD

Alright, I want everyone to play smart, play hard, and have some fun out there.

The bathroom DOOR BURSTS open, as Doug, his eyes covered in shoe polish, is ready to play.

DOUG

(intense)

Whadya say, fellas? Let's rock and roll.

EXT. LINCOLN STADIUM - FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

Willowbrook has the ball on offense. Jack takes the ball under center, and hands off to Aaron, who is hit hard and fumbles the ball. A Lincoln defender recovers, as Lincoln now has the ball. On the next play, the Lincoln Halfback follows his blockers, and goes in untouched for the score.

Willowbrook has the ball, as Jack takes the ball under center, drops back, and looks downfield. Kenneth has beaten his man, and is open. Jack tosses it downfield, as Kenneth catches the pass, before being brought down at the twenty.

Jack then gives a handoff to Aaron, who churns up field, and heads for the end zone. Some Lincoln defenders are fast approaching, as they grab Aaron, who pulls them with him into the end zone for the score. Aaron is brought down, when his diabetes takes effect. Aaron goes into hypoglycemic shock. Further down the field, Jack notices Aaron.

JACK
(yells and runs)
Aaron!!

Jack arrives in the end zone, as he comes to the aid of Aaron. Coach Haywood, Coach Radford, and Walter come INTO VIEW, as they check on Aaron. The crowd of spectators watch in complete silence.

WALTER
(calls out)
I need an ambulance here, STAT!

A medical team comes INTO VIEW, as they place an iv into Aaron's arm, place him on a gurney, and start to take him off the field. Aaron gives a thumbs up, indicating he is okay. The entire crowd gives him a standing ovation, as the game commences.

SCOREBOARD

Reads LINCOLN 17, VISITORS 17. Third quarter.

Willowbrook is now on defense, as they are trying to make a stop. Lincoln opts for a field goal, as they boot it threw the uprights, giving them the lead.

Now on offense, Jack looks over the defense, as he takes the ball under center and drops back. However, a Lincoln Defender comes INTO VIEW, and proceeds to sack Jack. Jack gets up and shakes his head in disdain.

Lincoln has the ball on the five yard line, as the Lincoln Quarterback looks over the defense, takes the ball under center. The Lincoln Quarterback drops back into the end zone, looking for his receivers. Dennis bursts through the middle, and sacks the quarterback in the end zone for a safety. Dennis is congratulated by his teammates. Lincoln High later scores again.

SCOREBOARD

Reads LINCOLN 27, VISITOR 19. Fourth quarter.

Willowbrook now has the ball, as the Lincoln defense tries to defend. Jack scans the defense, takes the ball under center, and looks downfield.

Flash runs a pattern, fakes his defender, and gets open. Jack throws downfield. Flash hauls in the pass, and goes untouched in the end zone. Flash heads over to the equipment manager.

FLASH

(hands the ball to him)

There's a girl in Section one zero eight with her family. Make sure she gets this. And tell her that I love her.

Flash walks back to the sidelines, where he is congratulated by his teammates. Lincoln has failed to score on their next position, as they opt for another field goal and make it, putting them up by four.

SCOREBOARD

Reads LINCOLN 30, VISITORS 26. Fourth quarter.

Willowbrook has fumbled, as Lincoln has recovered, and looks to put the game away. It is second down, as the Lincoln Quarterback looks over the defense, and takes the ball under center. He drops back to pass, and throws down the left sideline. The pass is overthrown, making it third down. The Lincoln Quarterback scans the defense, calls an audible, takes the ball under center, and looks downfield. Seeing no one, he runs for the first down before being forced out of bounds. The referees measure the distance of the ball, as they rule it fourth down and one. This is the play of the game, as Lincoln takes a time out and decides what it will do. The Lincoln Quarterback confers with the HEAD COACH and ASSISTANT COACH.

LINCOLN HEAD COACH

(looks at Assistant Coach)

Whadya say, Bud? Should we go for it?

LINCOLN ASSISTANT COACH

I think we should settle for a field goal.

LINCOLN HEAD COACH

(objects)

But then we'd only be up by seven. And there's still two fifteen left on the clock. Let's go for it.

The Lincoln High Coach signals to his Quarterback to go for it. The offense and defense line up, as they get set for the play of the game. The Lincoln Quarterback quickly scans the defense, as he takes the ball under center.

He hands off to the halfback, goes airborne over the pile, trying to gain one yard. Suddenly, Doug leaps INTO VIEW, also going airborne, wraps up the halfback, and brings him down. Doug begins to writhe and wriggle after the tackle. On the sidelines, Coach Haywood watches in disdain.

COACH HAYWOOD

(livid)

Doug, you stupid sonuva bitch, this ain't no time to be celebratin'!

JACK

(looks on concerned)

I don't think he's celebrating, Coach.

Doug continue to writhe and wriggle on the ground, as players from both teams, Walter, Coach Haywood, and Coach Radford come to his aid. The entire crowd watches in complete silence.

COACH HAYWOOD

(kneels down next to Doug)

Doug, what's the matter?

CLOSE-UP - DOUG'S FLUSHED FACE

As he looks up from his helmet, his eyes bulging, as blood starts to trickle from his nose and mouth.

DOUG

(yells)

First down!!!

Doug coughs up blood, and closes his eyes.

COACH HAYWOOD

(yells and motions)

I need an ambulance here, now!

The ambulance, along with Walter, places Doug on a gurney and in an ambulance, as they drive off the field. Doug is met with a standing ovation. The Referees closely measure the ball, and signal that Lincoln did not make it. Willowbrook has the ball, with two minutes remaining.

The Willowbrook offense huddles up, as they talk out the play, and break up. The offense lines up, as Jack looks over the defense calls an audible, and takes the ball from under center. Larry snaps the ball and starts to block for Jack, as he takes on two defenders at once. They are strongly pushing Larry back, as he tries to maintain his balance. Larry falls to the ground, as a SNAPPING NOISE follows.

Seeing no one, Jack tucks the ball under his arm and runs down the right sideline before being forced out of bounds. The Referee's WHISTLE BLOWS.

LARRY

Remains on the ground, writing in pain.

Coach Haywood, Coach Radford, and Walter come INTO VIEW, as they check on Larry.

LARRY'S LEGS

Lay listlessly, as they are both broken. Larry's legs have also burst through the skin, as blood and puss trickle out.

The medical team again comes INTO VIEW, as they lift Larry onto a gurney, and wheel him off, as the entire crowd gives Larry a standing ovation.

The Referees measure the ball and rule that Jack is one yard short.

GAME CLOCK

Reads exactly one minute.

Jack, with no time outs to work with, lines up, as he tries to get the team downfield. Jack takes the ball under center, finds Kenneth open, and hits him with a pass, a couple of yards short of the first down. The offense scurries down the field, as they line up. Jack lines up, scans the defense, and throws. The pass is out of Flash's reach, making it third down. The offense lines up again, as Jack hands off to his Fullback. The Fullback is quickly brought down for only a few yards. It is now fourth down, as Jack looks at the sidelines at Coach Haywood.

COACH HAYWOOD

Signals to Jack to go for it.

GAME CLOCK

Reads ten seconds.

Jack nods his head, as he goes back to the offense to give them the play. The offense briefly meets, as they break the scrum and line up for the most important play of the game. Jack lines up, scans the defense, calls an audible, takes the ball under center, and drops back to pass. Flash has broken downfield, as he beats his man. Jack quickly notices, as he throws deep. Flash arrives in the end zone, as he waits for the ball to come his way.

Flash extends his arms, ready to haul in the pass, when a Lincoln defender leaps INTO VIEW, in front of Flash, and intercepts the ball to clinch the game.

JACK

Looks on, as he throws his head down in disappointment. Lincoln has won the State Championship. On the Lincoln sideline, coaches and players exult. On the Willowbrook sidelines, everyone watches despondently.

COACH HAYWOOD

(sotto voce)

Fell a little short.

Players from both teams congratulate each other, as they shake hands. Flash heads towards the stands, where Julie and her PARENTS are sitting.

JULIE

You played great out there.

FLASH

(soft)

Thanks. I'd much rather have the win, though.

JULIE

(introduces her parents)

Andre, I'd like for you to meet my parents.

MISTER ABRAMS

(extends his hand)

It's a pleasure to meet you, Andre. Thanks for the football.

FLASH

(politely shakes his hand)

The pleasure is mine, Sir.

MISSUS ABRAMS

Julie's told us all about you.

FLASH

(witty)

Hopefully not too much, Ma'am.

Flash smiles at Julie and her family, as they start to converse.

Meanwhile, Jack walks slowly toward the locker room, as he looks in the stands.

JACK'S POV

MISTER AND MISSUS STEVENS

Look proudly but sympathetically at their son. Mister Stevens gives his son a thumbs-up.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack smiles faintly at his parents, as he looks into the stands.

JACK'S POV

CINDY

Looks sympathetically at Jack.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack looks at Cindy, and whispers, "I love you", under his breath.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is silent, as they shower and get dressed. Coach Haywood enters, as he looks at his team, and gives them a conciliatory speech.

COACH HAYWOOD

(soft)

Alright, everyone. I want you all to raise your heads. I know this isn't the result you all had hoped for, but there isn't a single team or player that I would have wanted playing out there tonight than everyone in this room.

(beat)

You all became men tonight, and I want you to know what an honor it's been to watch you develop and grow. I wish the ball could've bounced our way tonight, but you all played hard out there and for that you should be proud.

(beat)

If I ever experienced something close to greatness, it was watching this team play all year.

(MORE)

COACH HAYWOOD (cont'd)

Wherever you go in life, I hope you remember this experience and use it to take you places above and beyond the field of play. I'll be in my office. That is all.

The players applaud, as Coach Haywood departs OUT OF VIEW to his office.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITING COACH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Coach Haywood sits serenely in a chair by his desk, when there is a KNOCK at his door.

COACH HAYWOOD

Come in.

The door opens, as it is Coach Radford.

COACH RADFORD

The press is waiting for you, Hawk. What do you want me to tell them?

COACH HAYWOOD

Tell them I'll be there in five. Thanks, Harv.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - VISITORS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The locker room is completely vacant, except for Coach Haywood and a couple of members from the press, who bombard him with questions.

COACH HAYWOOD

(calm)

Okay, settle down. One question at a time, please.

The Reporters tranquilize, as the media session begins.

REPORTER (O.S.)

How would you describe today's game?

COACH HAYWOOD

Well it's always hard to be on the losing end of one of these, but sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you.

(beat)

Unfortunately, we were covered in honey tonight.

REPORTER

Coach, what would you say was the difference in today's game?

COACH HAYWOOD

Well, we turned the ball over three times. That resulted in two scores for Lincoln, which ultimately won them the game.

(beat)

Overall, I couldn't be happier with our team's play tonight. The reserve filled in capably under such short notice. I'm just really proud of everyone.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Hawk, I just got off the phone with the local hospital. They say center Larry Camden's leg injuries were the result of steroid usage.

(beat)

Are there some things in the locker room that you're hiding from us?

COACH HAYWOOD

(snappishly retorts)

You know, you're one of a kind, Clyde. You've been after me since day one. It's bad enough to discover one of my players is on steroids, but it's even worse to get the news from someone like you. I don't think anyone hear under--

Coach Haywood hesitates and composes himself.

COACH HAYWOOD

(calm)

Excuse me. It's just that losing can make you less of a man and more of a monster. In response to your question, I can honestly say I had no knowledge of any of my players taking performance enhancers.

(beat)

Steroids, off-the-field frolicking, disagreements with my players, deaths of my players due to steroid use and senseless acts of violence, have made this more than a game for everyone involved.

REPORTER (O.S.)

So, what are you saying, Coach?

COACH HAYWOOD

Well, during the season I've done a lot of contemplating, and I've finally arrived at the conclusion that I might not be the guy for this job anymore.

(braces himself)

This is something I never thought would come from my lips as long as I here. But as of now, I will no longer be coaching the Willowbrook Tigers.

Members of the press are speechless, as they let out a collective OH.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Coach, what made you make this decision?

COACH HAYWOOD

Well, let's just say I've seen that there's a lot more to life than X's and O's. I've got a lot of living to do, and I intend to do it now.

Coach Haywood looks to his right, as Principal Edwards stands near a wall, quietly watching and listening. Principal Edwards nods and gives a faint smile to Coach Haywood.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Coach, who do you think will succeed you as coach of the Tigers.

COACH HAYWOOD

(witty)

Well, if there's anyone who is capable of leading this program, it's my right hand man, Harv. We've practically been around each other so much you'd think we were married.

Everyone laughs, as Coach Haywood decides to call it a day.

COACH HAYWOOD

I hate to cut it short, fellas, but I have a bus to catch. Thank you.

Coach Haywood departs OUT OF VIEW, as the press watches him leave.

INT. LINCOLN STADIUM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Coach Haywood heads toward the team bus, when he runs into Jack.

COACH HAYWOOD

Jack, aren't you coming on the bus?

JACK

Nah, I have a ride. I just wanted to soak up the atmosphere before I go.

COACH HAYWOOD

(tender)

I hear ya. I wish the outcome would've been different. I just wanted to tell you that despite some of the differences we've had this year, I am so proud of you.

(beat)

You're destined for great things, but on and off the field.

JACK

Thanks, Coach. One day, if I ever have grandkids, I'm gonna tell 'em I played for the great Hawk Haywood.

COACH HAYWOOD

Just remember to treat this for what it is. A game. A straining and painful game, but a game. Always try to have some fun out there.

JACK

Will do.

COACH HAYWOOD

It's been a pleasure, Jack.

JACK

Yeah, always a pleasure.

Jack and Coach Haywood look admirably at one another, as they have a warm embrace. Coach Haywood smiles admirably at Jack and departs for the team bus. Jack, with football in hand, goes out of the tunnel that leads to the field.

EXT. LINCOLN FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Jack emerges from the tunnel out onto the field, where he looks one last time around the field and empty stand. A VOICE soon intervenes.

CINDY (O.S.)
 (calls out)
 Great game, stud QB.

Jack turns around, and sees Cindy and Jack's parents, still in the stands, as they look happily at him.

CINDY
 You know, for my first football game, it was pretty good.

JAC
 I wish you could've seen a different outcome.

MISTER STEVENS
 Sorry about the tough loss, Son.

MISSUS STEVENS
 We're so very proud of you, Jack.

MISTER STEVENS
 Jack, it's getting a little nippy. Do you mind if your mother and I go to the car?

JACK
 Not at all.

Jack's parents depart OUT OF VIEW, as Cindy and Jack are left alone.

CINDY
 You did great out there. I am so proud of you. Plus, how many girls in this town can say their dating the quarterback?

Jack gives a slight smile, as he and Cindy kiss. Miss Gibbons and her friend, Miss Ingram, soon COME INTO VIEW, as Cindy and Jack stop kissing.

JACK
 (a little embarrassed)
 Miss Gibbons, hi.

MISS GIBBONS

Jack, Cindy.
 (introduces Miss Ingram)
 I would like you to meet a friend
 of mine, Molly Ingram.

JACK

(extends his hand)
 Hello. It's a pleasure to meet
 you.

MISS INGRAM

(warmly shakes his hand)
 Hello, Jack. Nora's told me all
 about you. I even had the chance
 to read your midterm essay. You
 have a lot of potential.
 (beat)
 Have you decided what you'd like to
 do with your future?

JACK

To tell you the truth, I have a lot
 of decisions to make over the next
 few months.

MISS INGRAM

Well, I know the head of the
 University of Omaha's English
 Department. And with material like
 this, your SATS impending, I could
 see a prime scholarship opportunity
 for you.
 (takes piece of paper,
 writes down her
 information and hands it
 to Jack)
 Here's my number.

JACK

That would be great. Thank you.

Jack is soon approached by a man, JASON DEPAOLA.

MISTER DEPAOLA

Excuse me, are you Jack Stevens?

JACK

Yes.

MISTER DEPAOLA

Hello. My name is Jason DePaola,
and I represent the University of
Nebraska's athletic department.
Tough loss out there.

JACK

You said it. Can I help you?

MISTER DEPAOLA

I saw you out there tonight. You
have a heckuva arm, and our
football program hasn't had a
winning season in eight years. I
was hoping you could change that.

(pulls out application
form)

I have here with me a...

JACK

(politely intervenes)

Mister DePaola, I'm honored that
you would consider me to play ball
at your fine school, but as of
tonight, I've played my last game
of football.

MISTER DEPAOLA

Are you sure?

JACK

Yes. I've learned that you have to
follow your hear and do what makes
you happy.

Jack turns at Cindy, Miss Gibbons, and Miss Ingram and
smiles.

MISTER DEPAOLA

(awkward)

Well, I think I'll be leaving...
now.

Mister DePaola departs OUT OF VIEW.

MISS GIBBONS

You really mean that?

JACK

You bet. As of now, I've traded in
my playbook for Tolstoy. I hope
Tolstoy's easier than picking up
the blitz.

Jack smiles sardonically, as Miss Gibbons and Miss Ingram decide to leave.

MISS GIBBONS
Well, I'll see you guys tomorrow.

MISS INGRAM
It was a pleasure meeting you.

JACK
(polite)
Likewise. Thank you.

Miss Gibbons and Miss Ingram depart OUT OF VIEW, as Jack and Cindy are again all-alone.

JACK
(looks around field)
I'm sure gonna miss it.

CINDY
And it's sure gonna miss you.

Cindy and Jack look admiringly at each other and kiss.

CINDY
I'm going to the car.

JACK
Okay. I'll only be a few more minutes.

Cindy departs OUT OF VIEW, as Jack stands alone on the field, as he looks at it for the final time.

GAME BALL

Rests firmly in the grasps of Jack's hands.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. STEVENS' HOUSE - PRESENT DAY

GAME BALL

From forty years ago, rests comfortably in Jack's hands.

ADULT JACK, seated at his desk in his study, looks admirably at the football, as he looks up around at the pictures mounted on the walls of his study. A VOICE soon beckons him.

ADULT CINDY (O.S.)
Jack, you okay, honey?

ADULT JACK
Just fine, dear.

GROWN UP CINDY

Stands in the doorway of Jack's study, as she looks at him.

ADULT CINDY
It's almost time to go. Are you
ready?

ADULT JACK
All set.

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The crowd is getting ready for the season opener, as a new season is underway. Students past and present are in attendance. Jack and Cindy approach their seats, and gently sit down. Jack watches closely from his seat.

JACK

(enter caption)
Jack decided to pursue a full-time writing career, and received his Master's Degree in English and French Literature. He also married Cindy, who also received her Master's, right after they both graduated college. They had two children, who are now aspiring writers. He is an English professor at the University of Nebraska, the same school where he turned down a football scholarship. Jack and Cindy have written several books, most of them mystery and historical anthologies. Jack is now working on a historical retrospective of Willowbrook High football, called *A History In Stripes: The Story of the Willowbrook Tigers.*

Jack looks and points to someone.

AARON

Sits a few rows in front of Jack, as he waves at him from his seat.

(enter caption)
Aaron recovered just fine after his episode in the Championship game.
(MORE)

ADULT JACK (cont'd)

Unfortunately, he football career was curtailed due to diabetes. However, Aaron has used his post-football career to good use, starting his own food distribution company, which caters to the needs of both those with regular diets and diabetics. He also tours schools all over the country, speaking to kids about diabetes and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. He lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with his wife and two children, who graduated college last year.

Aaron points to someone from his seat and waves.

FLASH AND KENNETH

Both stand on the sidelines, as they wave to Aaron and the fans. Flash does a break-dancing move for the fans, who clap and applaud loudly, while Kenneth looks on in mock-disdain.

(enter caption)

Flash and Kenneth, as well as their family, were eventually embraced by the community. Flash and Julie broke up after high school, but remain good friends to this day. Flash would go on to play college ball and eventually made the pros. His career was short-lived, however, as injuries forced him to retire. Fortunately, Flash has been quick in the business field, earning his Bachelor's in Business Administration and wisely investing his football earnings in real estate projects and opening car dealerships. He even has one in the area, called Flash's end zone Automobiles. He lives happily with his wife and three children in Chicago.

(enter caption)

Like his brother, Kenneth played college football and would also make the pros. However, his career was also curtailed due to injuries. However, Kenneth hit the books harder than a would-be tackler, and earned his Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering.

(MORE)

ADULT JACK (cont'd)

He now works for a company that develops projects all over the country, from restaurants to mini-malls. He lives happily with his wife and four children in Atlanta.

Flash and Kenny turn to the field, as they see someone, and point and wave.

LARRY

Stands on the far end of the sidelines, in a wheelchair.

(enter caption)

Unfortunately, Larry lost both of his legs due to his brief steroid use. He has been confined to a wheelchair ever since. Like all offensive linemen, Larry toughed it out and used his handicap to succeed and help others. He makes numerous trips to elementary and high schools all over the country, preaching to kids about the dangers of steroid use, the school experience, and the importance of making good life decisions. He owns his own trucking company, that sends convoys throughout the nation. He lives with his wife and their son in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Larry pivots his wheelchair, as he looks at the Willowbrook Wall of Fame.

DOUG'S JERSEY NUMBER

Displayed on the Willowbrook Wall of Fame.

(enter caption)

Doug Dombrowski died of a brain hemorrhage, as a result of steroid usage. Doctors also found severe blood clots in his legs, hips, stomach, intestines, and neck. He was only seventeen years old. Stella Dombrowski used her son's death to educate young student athletes on the dangers of steroid usage, the demands of peer pressure, and the importance of maintaining proper physical and mental health.

(MORE)

ADULT JACK (cont'd)

She also testified before Congress, underscoring the importance of stricter monitoring methods on student athletes for any illegal substances and performance enhancers. Just before her death, Miss Dombrowski established the Douglas S. Dombrowski Education Fund, which offers student athletes with stellar grades college scholarships.

COACH HAYWOOD'S JACKET

Emblazoned with the word "HAWK", is also on display on the Willowbrook Wall of Fame.

(enter caption)

Coach Haywood finally did some living after resigning. He reconciled with his ex-wife, planted a beautiful garden, and even purchased a boat, Hawk Two. The couple would go off to see the world, and Coach even competed in some regattas from time to time. Coach died peacefully in his sleep while watching (what else?), a football game. Peggy would join him three years later. Willowbrook hasn't appeared in or won a state championship game since his departure. But all that will hopefully change with a new quarterback...

EXT. WILLOWBROOK FIELD - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The Willowbrook quarterback is taking some practice throws. He is ANDY STEVENS, Jack's grandson. Andy takes a few more throws, when he looks into the stands and sees his grandpa.

ANDY

(waves happily)

Hey, Grandpa!

Jack, seated, smiles at Andy and gives him a thumbs-up.

FADE OUT.

THE END

