

National Champions

A play by

Adam Mervis

SCENE 1

In a well appointed, but small hotel room.

TWO MEN sit across from each other.

One, JAVARUS JAMES (21), tall, slender, but a strength that emanates from somewhere else, somewhere deep.

Two, EMMETT SUNDAY (21), country big with thick forearms, a simple essence, but the buried wisdom of a mystic.

Emmett extends his elbow and flexes it back and fourth for a moment.

EMMETT

Hear it?

(no)

You don't hear that poppin'?

(no)

Ain't normal. Been that way since sophomore year. When I bashed it on that Michigan State linebacker.

(beat)

Sixty-eight blast, I-right, simple.

Silence.

JAVARUS

Lead.

(what?)

It was 141 lead.

EMMETT

No, it was 68 blast.

JAVARUS

141 lead, I-right, simple.

EMMETT

No, positive it was 68 blast. How would you even know? You can't hear the poppin'. You got no idea when I did it.

JAVARUS

I don't, but if you were at the second level then you were lead blocking. On blast you would have been double teaming the tackle, and Michigan State ran a Chicago Fifty-Three with a fifth robber on the line. No way you would have got to the linebacker on a blast.

Emmett thinks for a beat. He wiggles his finger violently in his ear as if trying to lodge something free...Then...

EMMETT

Huh, could be, could'a been a lead.

A beat passes between the two men as Javarus checks his phone.

EMMETT

(phone)
Ain't gettin' no prettier.

Heavy Silence, again.

JAVARUS

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men...

EMMETT

Blessed is he who in the name of charity and good will shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children...

JAVARUS

...And I will strike down upon them with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers...

They stand and both point 'finger guns' at each other.

JAVARUS

...And you will know my name is the lord
for I lay my fingers upon thy...

EMMETT

...And you will know my name is the lord
for I lay my fingers upon thy

They fire at each other both falling over dead in the chairs as they reenact a scene from Pulp Fiction.

As they pick themselves up.

EMMETT

Old Q.T. sure did know how to write'em.

JAVARUS

He's not dead.

EMMETT

Have you seen *Hateful Eight*?

JAVARUS

That's cold.

*They then both take their seats across from each other.
The heavy silence returns.*

EMMETT

Ain't no going back once it's sent.

(beat)

This could just be our little research project.

(beat)

Maybe I can get some graduate credits out of it.

Heavy silence.

JAVARUS

Pray with me.

They both bow their heads.

JAVARUS

Dear God...

(beat)

Give us the wisdom to see the path, and the courage to take it.

Heavy Silence.

EMMETT

Amen.

Javarus looks up, gathers himself, and grabs his cell. He hits a few buttons then places the phone down.

Emmet stands and begins to pace.

Javarus watches the phone for a long beat and then looks up...

JAVARUS

It's up.

The two just stare.

No going back now.

SCENE 2

In a suite at the same hotel.

Coach JAMES LAZOR (50) in a maroon team polo shirt sits at the head of a large table with Assistant Coach REGGIE DUNN (48), and a graduate assistant LUKE (22).

They are watching video from a large monitor that Luke is running.

COACH LAZOR

Stop.

Luke hits the space bar.

COACH LAZOR

Right here, Coach. This is what I wanted you to see...Stretch sweep to number six...

COACH DUNN

The center is takin' the nose tackle head-on so they can pull the guard in a G-crack...

COACH LAZOR

Yeah...Yeah...Zoom In on Six, Lukie.

Luke does.

BRITNAY LAZOR (43), enters with an ugly checkered maroon and white jacket. She hangs it over the chair very carefully. She puts a set of note cards in the breast pocket.

She exits.

COACH LAZOR

Look...

(what?)

Right ankle dominate cut around the corner. Six, the best back in the country, is turning the corner with an inside ankle lead.

(so?)

He's showin' us exactly how to stop him. That left ankle isn't right. Hasn't been since the Notre Dame game week two.

COACH DUNN

He score on this play?

LUKE

An eighty yard sprint where he out runs the free safety.

COACH LAZOR

He wasn't playin' us. Cause no back with a bum left ankle is taken off eighty yards on my defense. I want the entire defense to see this. I want'em to know Six's left ankle isn't right. Lean on this coach. I want your boys to understand what they gotta do to stop him.

COACH DUNN

Coach, we got solid gold game plan. We gonna flood their zones with Cornillus and Kiki and...

COACH LAZOR

Did I say a fuckin' word about my game plan? I said Six's ankle ain't right.

Britney brings in a pair of loafers. Coach Lazor notices her now...

COACH LAZOR

What's this, Biscuit?

BRITNEY

Booster Club dinner starts in thirty minutes downstairs.

COACH LAZOR

Oh, heck...I'm not goin'...

BRITNEY

You're the guest speaker, and it's literally at the bottom of this hotel. Luke can sit here and baby sit your precious game film, and you two can watch this thing long into the night.

She hurries off stage.

COACH LAZOR

It's the national-god-damn-championship, and I got to parade around like a monkey complete with my suit and cap.

Coach Dunn gets up to leave.

COACH DUNN

I'll leave you to it, Coach.

COACH LAZOR

Reggie...

(beat)

Six's left ankle is weak. You make sure Cornillus knows. This is the God damn national title.

Coach Dunn looks as if he wants to say something, but doesn't. He just nods and heads out...

COACH DUNN

Yes, coach.

Coach Lazor turns to Luke.

COACH LAZOR

Lukie, I want those Auburn game defensive splits again when I get back.

LUKE

Yes, coach.

COACH LAZOR

(putting on jacket)

Also, get all-staff set for 8am.

I want full reports on bed check tonight and can you go find me some rocky road ice cream some place. Not Hagen Das though I hate the nuts they use. Get something local, hell there must be some fancy ice cream shop on St. Pete Beach.

LUKE

Yes, coach.

(phone)

Um, coach...

Coach is done dressing...Britney enters, ready in a tight fighting Maroon dress.

BRITNEY

You look very handsome.

COACH LAZOR

I look like a monkey.

BRITNEY

A very handsome monkey.

COACH LAZOR

Let's get this over with.

BRITNEY

Relax, James. Maybe have yourself a martini. I'm going to....

COACH LAZOR

This is a business event. Don't...get...

She shoots him a withering stare.

BRITNEY

Don't get...What?

COACH LAZOR

Just....It's not a party...

She marches off stage.

COACH LAZOR

Fuck.

He follows her off stage.

Luke is just staring at his phone.

LUKE

Fuck.

SCENE 3

In a dark hotel room.

Knock...

No one stirs.

Knock...Knock...Knock...

Nothing

Finally, someone stirs, but instead of going for the door a cell phone illuminates a large man...CORNILLUS (21)

Knock...Knock...Knock...

Cornillus reaches for his wrap and ties it around his head. He saunters to the door in his football girdle. Bottles clink. He opens the door and a burst of light shines through. We see another man passed out in a bed next to Cornillus...This is PAYTON (21).

Coach Dunn steps in and surveys the wreckage.

DUNN

The fuck is that smell?

CORNILLUS

Payton's asshole after Cicie's pizza.

Dunn turns on a light switch next to the door.

Payton doesn't stir.

Cornillus pops five Advil.

This convo happens in low light.

CORNILLUS

What's the news? There some shit happen' ? Javarus is all over twitter.

DUNN

You know I don't fuck with that shit.

(beat)

You gonna be ready to practice in two hours?

CORNILLUS

In two hours I'm gonna be superman.

DUNN

Gonna catch up to you.

(no response)

At the next level everybody as big and as fast as you. You ain't gonna be able to just walk out there and dominate.

CORNILLUS

But are they as mean?

Silence.

CORNILLUS

What's the news, coach?

Silence.

DUNN

Coach Lazor...

He stops himself.

Cornillus just stares.

DUNN

Cecil's got a bad left ankle. We're going to switch to flooding the A gap with you and Kiki. Don't think he's gonna be quick enough to the corner. They are going to try to keep him inside.

Cornillus just stares.

DUNN

That's the news. I'll see you in two hours.

Dunn kicks a pizza box out of his way as he goes to leave.

CORNILLUS

Coach...Don't worry...Tell Lazor and Javarus they gonna get that shiny trophy they want so bad...

DUNN

And what about you?

CORNILLUS

I'm gonna get mine either way.

Cornillus just lets out a cackle. He's tickled by the whole thing.

SCENE 4

In the ballroom. Coach Lazor is at a lectern reading from prepared remarks on note cards.

COACH LAZOR

...With the undeniable support of boosters like you we have built this program in to a juggernaut with five Big Fifteen championships, two playoff births, and finally this year a trip to the National Championship game.

The unseen crowd erupts, hoozzzzzaaaaaahhhhhh!

COACH LAZOR

(next card)

And when we take the field in a little less than seventy-two hours we in this room will have in some ways already won. Having seen the culmination of a five year rebuild from a program that was quite frankly left for dead to perhaps the best in the country.

(new card)

What a great honor to have presided over this. To create champions is one of the highest callings in life.

And I hope I can bring this program and university to many more championships in the years to come...

(new card)

Go Big Red!

Hozaahhhhh...Hozahhhhhh....

SCENE 5

At the bar.

Coach Lazor with Britney at his side are sandwiched by RODGER CUMMINGS (55), and TAYLOR SHERIDIAN (27), both are wearing matching maroon and white checkered blazers.

Everyone has a drink, even Coach.

RODGER

...Coach, how you planning on stoppin' Burgess? Faster than anybody I've seen since Walker.

COACH LAZOR

Well, we're gonna have to play disciplined defense, stay in our lanes, contain him where we can.

TAYLOR

I say we break into his hotel room, and give'em the Tonya Harding.

BRITNEY

Oh, aren't you fun.

Everyone is uncomfortable for a beat.

RODGER

It don't really matter what they do as long as Javarus is back there we'll be fine. Right, Coach? Ain't seen anybody throw like him since maybe Montana. One of the most accurate passers I've ever seen.

COACH LAZOR

He is one heck of a player. Came in raw and our coaches worked with him. We really made him into something.

TAYLOR

Think he goes number one to Miami?

COACH LAZOR

Wish he'd stay one more year, and continue his development. Everything happens ten times faster at the next level not sure he's ready for that yet.

RODGER

Wish he'd stay so I'm standin' at the bar in Pasadena next year waitin' for us to win that Rose Bowl National title game.

BRITNEY

(Bar)

Another, please sugar.

TAYLOR

Don't you worry, Coach. Got recruits bangin' down the door to get in here. This quarterback I got locked up outta Colorado gonna be the next Javarus.

RODGER

Hell, remember the bad old days when we was scrappin' the bottom of the barrel.

TAYLOR

All changed with Javarus. We got him and it all changed.

RODGER

All changed with Coach, here. Man is a saint. A saint dipped in Garnett and Alabaster!

BRITNEY

Gentleman, a toast. To you, two pillars of our university. So large in stature that may not even the mightiest wind...blow them asunder...

*Coach just stares at her, tipsy and dripping with sarcasm.
They don't get it...*

RODGER

Hozzaahhhh...

TAYLOR

Hozzaahhhh...

RODGER

Miss Lazor, I don't know a smarter woman than you.

BRITNEY

I'm sure that's true...

COACH LAZOR

Britney, can I have a word with you, darling...Would you excuse us, gentleman...

Before he can get away...

KEVIN MCDONALD (45), approaches in a bright green blazer and khaki pants.

RODGER

Keve, let me introduce you to the man, the myth, the legend...Coach James Lazor.

KEVIN

Coach, it's an honor. I'm Kevin McDonald with the Outback Bowl.

COACH LAZOR

Of course. Thank you for having us all the way down here.

KEVIN

Yes, a great moment for the Outback Bowl to be finally hosting a National Championship game.

RODGER

Kevin, is being modest. He's the reason this rink-a-dink bowl is having a moment. The Outback bowl is host of the god-damn National Championship game...

TAYLOR

Hooozzaahhhh!

KEVIN

Coach...We have a slight, very slight, I'm sure there's um...been some kind of...mistake.

COACH LAZOR

The NCAA rolled over on the new turf demand didn't they?

KEVIN

No, sir. That was handled. Twenty-two hundred yards of brand new Bermuda sod ready to be run all over. No, sir...um...It's Javarus Jackson, Coach.

Everyone freezes.

What?
COACH LAZOR

Kevin hands his phone to Coach Lazor. Everyone leans in as he reads.

What is this?
COACH LAZOR

RODGER
What's happened? Javarus is alright? He isn't hurt is he?

KEVIN
It...um...Appeared on Twitter about forty-five minutes ago. The press is starting to ask questions. Sports Center is going live from the stadium in a hour, and they want an interview.

TAYLOR
Coach, what is it?

COACH LAZOR
It's nothing. Javarus is fine. I'm not giving any interviews until after the game.

KEVIN
Um...They want to talk to Javarus, Coach.

COACH LAZOR
My players do not speak to the media, period.

(phone)
This isn't a thing. Give me twenty minutes, and it will be handled.

Coach storms off with Kevin's cell phone. Everyone stands for a beat.

RODGER
Have a drink, Kev and wipe that worry off your face...Coach runs this ship like Patton. He is going to sort this thing out if fifteen minutes tops.

KEVIN
Right...Great.

The three men then scurry off to the corner of the bar. Britney is alone at her corner.

BRITNEY

(bartender)

Another, *Gar 'son*.*AARON SCHMIDT (38), full beard, the aura of a poet, approaches.*

AARON

Gin and tonic, please.

(beat)

Miss Lazor, right?

BRITNEY

(beat)

Who's asking?

AARON

(beat)

Aaron Schmidt, I teach philosophy at the university.

BRITNEY

A poet? At a football boosters party?

AARON

A philosopher.

BRITNEY

What's the difference?

AARON

Stanzas and paragraphs.

BRITNEY

Oh...You're quick aren't you...

AARON

(beat)

I just wanted to introduce myself, and let you know...

(beat for effect)

You are one great piece of ass.

The two survey each other for a long beat.

SCENE 6

Coach Lazor moves through the hallways of the hotel...As he does he starts picking up reporters...

REPORTERS

Coach...Coach...Coach!!!

Finally, after Coach Lazor has acquired more than a handful of Reporters he stops, spins, facing the Reporters head-on...

For the first time we reveal a large screen at the back of the stage that broadcasts coaches impromptu presser...There is a scroll and polish that belies the actual setting. This is the media's lens, and the image it creates should differ greatly from the actual world.

REPORTER 1 (OFF STAGE)

Coach, can you tell us your initial thoughts on the protest?

COACH LAZOR

There is no protest. I have no comment otherwise.

REPORTER 2 (OFF STAGE)

Coach, have you...

COACH LAZOR

...But let me just say that...

(beat)

Boys will be boys. This is in no way going to affect this game. I am sure of it.

REPORTER 3 (OFF STAGE)

How can you be sure?

COACH LAZOR

Because it's my job.

The screen all the sudden changes and a large projection looms over Coach Lazor...It's Javarus, in a suit and tie.

We can tell he is in his hotel room. The ESPN scroll moves across the bottom of the screen. Again, there is a polish that creates an alternate universe.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF STAGE)

You have a statement you'd like to read?

JAVARUS

Yes, thank you. I have some brief remarks and then three demands which we ask the NCAA to meet before Emmett Sunday and I commit to playing in the National Championship Game.

(reads)

I am personally asking all players in Monday's National Championship Game to join me in this protest, and resulting boycott in order to demand that the NCAA end its practice of un-paid labor for the majority of its work force. A practice that results in an extremely lucrative oligarchy. The president of the NCAA Mark Titus receives a base salary of 1.8 million dollars. The commissioners of the top five power conferences receive an average salary of 2.5 million dollars. The commissioner of the Outback Bowl, Kevin McDonald, makes 1.2 million dollars a year for a one day bowl game. Coach James Lazor, my coach, receives a base salary of five million dollars a year. The latest ESPN contract for the rights to the college football national playoff is 7.3 billion dollars over the course of the next decade. All this money is predicated on one underlying principal...Free Labor. This is un-American, exploitative, and speaks to the darkest spots on the national soul, namely the original sin of...

(beat for effect)

Slavery.

(beat for effect)

Our demands are as follows - The creation of non-revocable player controlled trusts for every division one varsity player to the sum of ten thousand dollars. Bonuses will be negotiated by a representative of the players choosing to further compensate players for conference championship appearances, bowl games, and playoff appearances. Two, the NCAA will form, and contribute to a players disability pension for division one athletics who are permanently injured from college athletics. This pension will be retro-active to any living former NCAA division one athlete. Three, The NCAA will officially recognize and collectively bargain with a players union. Submitting to all federally mandated laws and guidelines of a unionized work force.

Javarus stares directly into the camera.

JAVARUS
Thank you.

(beat)
And go Big Red.

Coach hurries off stage.

SCENE 7

Javarus steps on stage in his suit.

Emmett follows.

They are in their hotel room.

EMMETT
Coach Lazor came by, like we thought. I thought he was going to stay here just staring at me. You know how his eyes get...Like he's going to burn a hole in my chest with laser beams.

JAVARUS
But?

EMMETT
His phone rings and he disappears. Must have been someone big, because he snapped too.

JAVARUS
(phone)
We're up everywhere. That Senator from Vermont is already tweeting support. House rep from the Bronx as well.

EMMETT
Look at this.

Emmett goes to the mini-fridge, and unwraps a cell phone from a piece of tin foil.

He clicks it on and it just begins to vibrate.

EMMETT

Hasn't stopped since you sent your first tweet.

(beat)

My momma has called twice already, probably gonna yell at me.

(sigh)

I gotta call her back...

(beat)

Feels good, don't it? All this planning, all this prep. Now we're flying.

(beat)

At least I hope we are.

JAVARUS

Meaning?

EMMETT

Well, got this loneliness in my gut. Like we now on this island, and the sharks are circling.

JAVARUS

It's got to be this way. If it looks like we're getting outside help it undercuts the argument. It looks like we're two kids being manipulated by some outside group.

Emmett takes both phones and wraps them in tin foil and puts them in the mini-fridge.

EMMETT

I know. I know. It's smart. Too smart for me. But can't seem to shake this idea...

(what?)

Sometimes fallin' at first...it seems like flyin'.

SCENE 8

In the penthouse suite of the hotel.

The cabal meets.

The head of the NCAA MARK TITUS (55), sits in a collard blue shirt and khaki pants.

Around him is JAMES EVERLY (45), head of the Big Fifteen Conference... MIKE SMITH (48), head of the SEC... GROVER THOMPSON (38), VP of operations for the NCAA.

Four white men sitting around a coffee table in a well appointed living room when Coach Lazor enters.

James Everly, stands and shakes Coach's hand.

JAMES

Coach...Thanks for coming...You know Mike with the SEC, and Grover VP of ops at N-C-two-A, and I'm not sure if you two have actually met...

Coach shakes Mark Titus' hand...

MARK

Hi Jim, Mark Titus.

COACH LAZOR

A pleasure, sir.

MARK

Pleasures mine, Coach. Pull up a chair, please. Real mess we got on our hands.

COACH LAZOR

It won't be. I just need to sit down with him and explain what this actually means.

MARK

A coach and his quarterback...No closer bond.

JAMES

Coach what do you make of this? What's your sense of Jackson?

COACH LAZOR

He's a good kid, but sometimes too smart for his own good. He's currently got his skis out ahead of him, and now he's gonna need me to get him off the mountain.

JAMES

I told you...Coach was going to be able to handle this.

MARK

You've spoken with him? Does he need help?

COACH LAZOR

Not yet, but I'm sure I will in the hour.

MIKE SMITH

You ski, coach?

COACH LAZOR

Been a hundred years, but yes.

MIKE SMITH

I have a cabin in Aspen. Some of the best runs in the world.

JAMES EVERLY

Coach's wife was a champion skier. Colorado, right?

COACH LAZOR

Colorado State. Big difference.

MARK

Both in the Pac-ten.

COACH LAZOR

That's right.

A beat.

MIKE SMITH

Coach, do you think that somebody got to him?

COACH LAZOR

Somebody?

JAMES

Organized labor, some liberal lawyer...Maybe a foreign national...

COACH LAZOR

A foreign national?

MIKE SMITH

Russians.

COACH LAZOR

(laughs)

What?

(beat)

Are you serious?

MIKE SMITH

Someone's got to them.

COACH LAZOR

Gentleman, these are kids who think they are still big men on campus in St. Louis...They don't know they are on the world stage. They made a mistake.

JAMES

He issued some pretty complicated terms.

COACH LAZOR

So they read some article on the internet. I'll give him this he's well spoken and looks the part. He might have a career as a...

MIKE SMITH

They asked to collectively bargain.

(so?)

Not the demand of some kids spitting in the wind.

COACH LAZOR

What are you saying?

MARK

Jim, what they're asking for it's bigger than football, or one game. It's the entire NCAA. Amateur athletics in this country. That's twenty-four sports for young men and women that could be gone. That is thousands of young athletes deprived of a college athletics experience.

JAMES EVERLY

Like your wife.

MIKE SMITH

You could see how a foreign power...A malicious actor, may want to harm this country.

COACH LAZOR

You think Javarus Jackson is working with the Russians?

MIKE SMITH

No stone un-turned.

JAMES EVERLY

Coach, we need you to hold a team meeting and let it be known that anybody joining Javarus will be kicked off the team, and further lose their scholarship.

MIKE SMITH

Lean on the sophomores and freshman who have something to lose. They won't want to risk their eligibility over this.

COACH LAZOR

Sophomores and freshman? I can't win a football game with sophomores and freshman. I'd rather just not field a team.

MARK

I'm afraid that's not an option, Coach.

MIKE SMITH

We haven't had one defection from our camp. It's your team that's falling apart. CBS is broadcasting this in fifty languages.

JAMES EVERLY

Hold on a second here. This ain't Coach's fault. This man has been blind sided the same as us in this room. Ain't no reason to take that tone...

(beat)

Coach, unfortunately, you are gonna have to walk out of that tunnel even if it means you put helmets on the cheerleading team.

MARK

This is bigger than just one football game, Coach. This is about the future of the NCAA, and the freedom of amateur athletics in this country.

(Beat for effect)

We got no choice but to win.

Everyone just stares.

SCENE 9

CEICIL BURGGESS (20), a solid, young man is sitting on the bed of his hotel room playing Madden with...ROC (22), a large rock of a young man. They silently click away on their controllers.

CIECIL

God damn. The fuck you eat?

ROC

It's the protein shake.

CIECIL

Sure somethin' didn't die up there?

...Knock...Knock...

They ignore it.

...Knock...Knock...

They ignore it.

...Knock...Knock...Knock...Knock...Knock...KNOCK...

Roc gets up and bull rushes the door.

ROC

Man, what I tell you idiots about...

Roc flings the door open to find...Emmett, tears streaming down his face.

EMMETT

(through sobs)

Hello Roc, mind if I...

Emmett just walks in without a formal invite.

EMMETT

Emmett Sunday. You may recognize me from your film. I'm number fifty-eight.

ROC

You're the center.

EMMETT

The one and only. I'm sorry for my...

(tears)

Ah...I'll just be a second...My momma just called...We had to put down, Pumpkin.

Cecil and Roc share a look, Pumpkin?

EMMETT

The family cat. She was a wild thing, missin' her tail, half her stomach....

Cecil and Roc share another look, What?

EMMETT

(really crying)

...Know what really gets me...Is that this tiny little thing...This half eaten, run over, gimpy little cat had more heart than anything I knew. Isn't that the way we supposed to live? Let'em try and take all they can, but half eaten, rotten and smelly we gonna keep comin' like some kinda zombie-cat...

Emmitt stares at the ceiling trying to get his bearings back. Then he stares at the floor.

EMMETT

Little piss ant.

Roc's heard enough.

ROC

Man, get the fuck outta...

EMMETT

Do you all mind if we have a word?

ROC

We had enough words...Nobody give a'fuck about Pumpkin the dead cat...

EMMETT

Javarus wants to talk...to Cecil.

(this stops Roc)

You all been watchin' the news, I trust?

CEICIL

I seen the Tweets. You two are out. What he want to speak on?

EMMETT

I think it best he do it. I am just the looks of this operation.

ROC

We here. The fuck is he? And what the fuck he need you for? Announce him, like the fuckin' prince of Wakanda?

EMMETT

I am going to need to ask you gentleman to unplug the X-box, the TV, and I would respectfully ask that we place your cell phones in this aluminum and then in the mini fridge.

Emmett unfurls a fresh piece of aluminum foil.

ROC

What?

EMMETT

Anything connected to the internet with a microphone is a listening device.

ROC

Man, get the fuck outta our room.

EMMETT

I recommend a documentary called, *Citizen Four*. It's about...

CEICIL

I seen it. 'Bout Snowden.

EMMETT

Yeah! You think he was workin' for the Russians, or a true patriot?

Silence.

CEICIL

Man, go ahead.

Emmett begins unplugging electric devices. The two just stare. Finally, once everything is unplugged...Emmett extends the piece of foil.

EMMETT

Your phones if you would, gents...

ROC

Come on...

Cecil hands over his phone. Roc reluctantly follows.

Emmett wraps them up and folds them into the tin foil and tosses them in the mini bar fridge. He then knocks on the inside of the door.

After a beat Javarus enters.

ROC

Wakanda Forever.

Javarus plays along and gives him the crossed arms.

Everyone stares for a beat.

JAVARUS

(Cecil)

You seen?

CEICIL

Yeah.

JAVARUS

I'd like to ask you to join us.

ROC

You outta your god damn mind?

JAVARUS

Probably. But no one sane every did anything interesting.

ROC

He's the number one back on Kiper's board. He's goin' number three to Baltimore, guaranteed.

JAVARUS

I think Buffalo should take you at two.

ROC

They goin' tackle.

EMMETT

Nobody ever goes center.

JAVARUS

Maybe Miami will get smart and take you at one.

CEICIL

Then where you gonna go?

JAVARUS

After this...probably the CFL.

(smiles)

You came up in Miami, right?

CEICIL

Goulds.

EMMETT

Nice?

ROC

It's the fuckin' hood.

EMMETT

They got hoods in Miami?

JAVARUS

Got hoods everywhere.

(beat)

We don't get you, they are going to play this game without Emmett, and I. They got you they can still sell this thing.

EMMETT

Number six running wild all over us.

JAVARUS

They still got a face to put on those billboards.

ROC

Maybe then he goes number one to Miami.

JAVARUS

Hometown boy comes home. Great story.

ROC

And he sits maybe slides all the way to Green Bay at twenty. Everybody now thinks they can get a back fourth, fifth round, pay'em shit, and do it all over again in four years when his contract is up. You know how much money he losses?

JAVARUS

We all sit he ain't slidin'. That's the power of collective action.

ROC

Bullshit. You don't think these NFL owners gonna take a look at you militant fucks and say...Nah...We good. You think the same motherfuckers that run this here don't run that there.

EMMETT

And what about you, Mr. Roc? We win this we talkin' a full pension and trust for you tomorrow. That's more money than you gonna get paid to be an assistant running backs coach at Miami High.

Roc steps to him. Emmett is unafraid.

ROC

I'm goin' to The League, ya cryin country faggot.

EMMETT

You're goin to someone's camp, but you and I know you're too slow to play special teams, and ain't no slow fullbacks with bricks for hands in today's League. There's honor in teaching, just no money.

ROC

You gonna watch your god damn...

Javarus steps in between them.

JAVARUS

That's enough. Last thing we need is you two idiots knocking heads in this hotel room.

(Ceicil)

You don't have to come along. This here's our wild ride. Just thought I'd put a bug in your ear. Take some time with it. We got twelve hours before we got to make a move.

CEICIL

Why twelve?

EMMETT

End of ad sales.

JAVARUS

ESPN holds some advertising space to sell at the end to the highest bidder. The ticking clock and all the hype really bids up the price...

EMMETT

And here we thought all those SportsCenters were for the fans...

JAVARUS

But if we got a full on strike, and it looks like this game is done...

EMMETT

Prices gonna plummet...Gonna put a lot of pressure to make a deal.

CEICIL

You all thought this out. This ain't no wild hair. You got a plan.

JAVARUS

(beat)

Long season.

(beat)

And Emmett is a criminal mastermind.

EMMETT

Fuckin' Stringer Bell in this bitch.

Everyone stares.

JAVARUS

Have a think on it. We work together now, maybe we get to bash heads in two days.

SCENE 10

It's night.

Aaron Schmidt, the professor, stands at the window of his hotel room, naked.

Britney is in the bed smoking from a pack of American Spirits.

AARON

I came out of the darkness and saw the stars.

BRITNEY

(beat)

Henry James.

AARON

The last line of Dante.

BRITNEY

Obviously.

(smokes)

Just a tip with the ladies...The sad poet thing...cute for the undergrads, but for us more sophisticated women...A little too pathetic.

AARON

It's a metaphor for depression. How it just lifts. How the darkness all the sudden seems to mysteriously fade. What was once crippling, eight circles of darkness, is now...Done, gone. There are stars in the sky.

BRITNEY

(long beat)

What the fuck does that have to do with the price of tea in China?

AARON

(smiles)

I want to go to Rome...And I want you to come.

She studies him for a long slow drag.

BRITNEY

Rome?

AARON

Rome.

Another long slow drag.

BRITNEY

And do what exactly?

AARON

Eat. Fuck. Spend days in the Vatican contemplating at once its godlessness, and its holy grander.

BRITNEY

You know I'm a football coach's wife from the state of Missouri. I have seen enough of God for one lifetime, thank you.

AARON

Then maybe you should stop...

(beat)

Being a football coach's wife.

BRITNEY

Too far, professor. I agreed to let you come because, I thought you could behave yourself, and you're showing yourself to be the immature ass I always knew you to be.

AARON

You're too smart to live with a bunch of idiots who have men ram into each other for sport. You should be traveling the world. You should finish your PHD.

BRITNEY

(leaving)

I thought more of you. I really did. You're a fucking child.

AARON

It doesn't just lift.

She stops, what?

AARON

Dante descended eight rings. He took action and through that he manifested his own recovery. You've got to ask yourself if you want to be happy.

(beat)

I'm going to Rome for the spring. I already got a teaching fellowship. Come with me, and don't look back.

She storms out.

AARON

Go big red.

SCENE 11

Taylor and Rodger are drunk at the hotel bar.

TAYLOR
It was Costa...

RODGER
It was Dunn...

TAYLOR
It was Costa...

RODGER
It was Dunn...

TAYLOR
It was Costa...

RODGER
Dunn...

TAYLOR
Costa...

RODGER
Dunn...

TAYLOR
Costa...

RODGER
Dunn...

The two square up.

TAYLOR
It was Costa who scored the go ahead touchdown in the ninety-three Peach Bowl on a kick return with fifty-three seconds left.

RODGER
It was Dunn on a punt return with forty-nine seconds left. I was sitting in the back right corner of rink-a-dink Fulton County Stadium as Dunn scampered into the end zone on a punt return. Wearing white and red cleats, a white towel hanging from his waist, and he spiked the ball upon entrance into the end zone.

Taylor thinks for a second on this very specific memory, and then...

TAYLOR

Fuck me...It was Dunn.

RODGER

Go Big Red!

TAYLOR

Go Big Red!

They toast for a beat.

RODGER

That's the fuckin' problem. It was about honor. We played for something. Now it's everyman for himself. Everybody might as well wear his own god-damn uniform. Twenty-two different uniforms, we can just play keep away. Ain't football no more. Man ball. Every man for himself ball.

TAYLOR

Ain't no respect. The power structures been turned sideways. You elect someone like Barak Obama and that has consequences. Like what they call ripples in a pond. Ripples we're still dealing with.

RODGER

More. More. More. Everybody now wants more. Here's the thing...He's gonna get more. He's just got to do his time.

TAYLOR

Gonna be the number one pick. Gonna get paid more than any of us ever dreamed.

RODGER

Everybody wants it all right now.

TAYLOR

Got to earn it. Got to prove it.

RODGER

Know what I wish I could tell him...Express to him. That we love him. That there is this great sea of love for him and he just gotta step on that field and he gonna be washed ...

TAYLOR

Bathed.

RODGER

...In love. Ain't that worth something? You gonna make money all your life. But what about love? How often you gonna have this big love? Cause as you get older that kind of love, it disappears. Fuck money. Money is shit. Love. We got to feel love.

They break into the school song.

RODGER & TAYLOR

Beneath the golden sun still shining / See our banners waving high / May you live and always prosper through the years as they pass by / With the memories of our big red family / RED and WHITE ! / Forever by your side / RED and WHITE !

CUT TO BLACK

SCENE 12

Javarus and Emmett's room.

It's pitch black.

Bang...Bang...Bang...

Emmett stirs from his bed in practice shorts.

Finally, a light flicks on.

Bang...Bang...Bang...

Javarus stirs in sweat pants and white tank top.

The two stand for a second at the door, readying themselves as if they've already got a plan of action. They assume fighting positions and just before they spring the door open...

RODGER (OFF STAGE)

Javarus! I fuckin' love youuu...Javarus.

The two of them look at each other.

What?

RODGER (OFF STAGE)

J, it's RC...J, it's RC...

Javarus opens the door and in spills...

Rodger and Taylor, drunk, falling over each other.

They gather themselves.

RODGER

Gents...

Emmett steps up on the defensive.

RODGER

Easy now. Easy now, big daddy. We're just here to talk.

TAYLOR

Yeah.

EMMETT

About?

RODGER

Well, uh...You see...uh...

TAYLOR

You owe us.

JAVARUS

What?

TAYLOR

We're owed.

JAVARUS

Man, get the fuck out...

RODGER

Now...Now...Uh...I think what my associate is trying to communicate is that...We're hurting. We feel like we've invested here...With what we all been through together.

(beat)

WE feel some ownership.

JAVARUS

You all feel like you have ownership...Over us...Because you...loaned me a car.

TAYLOR

Because I gave your uncle thirty grand to fix his roof and God knows what else, Because we refinanced your mother's mortgage, Because every month we stuffed five thousand dollars under your door...Where did you think those envelopes came from? The fucking sky...?

JAVARUS

And now what? I've got to play in your game.

TAYLOR

Yes.

RODGER

Javarus what is this? We are pals. You love playin' football. You love bein' part of this university. Hell, forty thousand kids think you're Jesus Christ come back to Missouri.

JAVARUS

You ever read The Jungle?

TAYLOR

A book?

JAVARUS

About food processing in Chicago. About this guy Jurgis who is big and strong and young and they use this guy till his fingers don't bend and his knees got no flex. And all those years he loved to work, all those years he was bigger, stronger, tougher than everyone, those years don't help him in the end. Cause those guys that own that meat plant they ain't taken care of no broke old Polack. No matter how much soup he canned twenty years ago.

RODGER

You're gonna be the number one pick. Miami's gonna pay you twenty million dollars.

TAYLOR

That's a lot of soup.

EMMETT

And what about the guy on special teams who's knocking his head into concrete walls for four years, and then gets kicked to the curb. What kind of soup does he get?

TAYLOR

(Emmett)

This is about you?

EMMETT

Not me. I got a bass fishin' boat and an offensive line coach position waitin' for me at Perrysburg High School. Finished my teaching degree. Gonna be makin' that sweet teachin' cash. Pension. Health Care. And teachin' Spanish.

Everyone just stares.

TAYLOR

What the fuck is happen' here? What the fuck is this all about? You two gonna go toe-to-toe with the NCAA? For what? Ain't no way in hell they let you unionize.

EMMETT

Ain't two.

RODGER

What?

EMMETT

Ain't two of us, anymore.

TAYLOR

Meaning?

EMMETT

I mean...There's more than two of us.

SCENE 13

Earlier that night.

In a crowded hotel room.

Javarus delivers a speech to a room full of players.

Emmett stands off to the side.

JAVARUS

...You all want to hate me you can...But it ain't me stuffing cash in my pockets while you get none...It ain't me selling your jerseys while you can't put gas in your whip, or worse got no ride. It's a bitch that for the past fifty years men in our positions drank, and fucked, and played ball. And they were happy with the occasional free suit, or envelope of cash. Must have been nice. We've done that. But the time has come to make a stand. How can we be happy when Coach Lazor is making five mill' a year, and we're makin' zero. Imagine if he took just four mill'. And they split a million dollars between fifty of us who dress. That's twenty-k a man, a year. Don't let them tell you there isn't enough money. There is more than enough. There is in fact so much they don't know what to do with it.

A player calls out.

PLAYER (OFF STAGE)

Yo, thought we was eatin'!

Javarus has lost the room.

JAVARUS

Look, let me put it this way...Three of you sophomores might make The League, maybe two more freshman, maybe four juniors. That's maybe twelve of you, maybe, if you don't get hurt playin for free. You men can go your own way, and I understand that. But for the rest of you...The question is do you have the balls to take what's yours. Because it's right here for you. We should never need health insurance again. We should have twenty thousand dollars waiting for us when we graduate for playing in a billion dollar game. That should happen now. And I am going to manifest that. I am going to drag it here to this moment even if it means the end of me, and over my dead body you twelve pros can point to me and go... 'Hey, I got caught up with that crazy motherfucker. It ain't my fault. It was Javarus Jackson and his dreams of glory.' You other forty men if I can do this. If we can do this...You've set yourselves up. What do you have to lose? Nothing. There is nothing to fear. There is nothing to fear.

(beat)

Now, Emmett is going to hand out cards, if you are in write your name on one. If you ain't, that's okay, just write your favorite movie or something and enjoy the Burger King.

SCENE 14

The Penthouse. Morning.

Grover Thompson, VP of operations is sitting on the couch shuffling through an i-pad.

*He pops a tab of Nicorette gum and sips from a coffee.
Almost as good as the real thing.*

*Mark Titus, head of NCAA, storms in in matching
pajamas, and robe with NY Times in hand.*

MARK

Have you...

Grover holds up his i-pad.

MARK

How the fuck...How the fuck...The front page of the New York fuckin' Times...? In large font like we just indicted the god damn President. Forty players join National Championship game boycott.

GROVER

It's the right move. An announcement in the press that this thing is growing, forty-eight hours from kick-off. He's building the pressure. Force us to the table.

Silence.

MARK

We offer talks. Hear the demands. Promise a commission to explore it in the off-season.

GROVER

No.

MARK

What?

GROVER

It won't work. They think they can win. You offer talks and it only serves to raise the bar. The expectations get too high and they will never leave empty handed. If they believe they can win they will never play. They're kids, they haven't lost enough in their lives to believe that's the most likely outcome. That life is about losing. They believe they can win.

MARK

Cave? That's your advice?

GROVER

You pay me for options. And I see two options. Give them what they want...

MARK

Not going to happen.

GROVER

Then...

(beat for effect)

Savage him.

(beat for effect)

You destroy him. Slowly and publicly. You find everything you can on him, his mother, his uncle, and you build him in to a monster. Someone you could never deal with, someone forty teammates could never stand behind. The game goes on, and Javarus Jackson is destroyed.

Mark sits with this.

MARK

He's twenty.

GROVER

From a single mother who works nights as a home health aide in Northern Virginia.

MARK

Jesus.

GROVER

Loses.

(what?)

Jesus loses in the end.

(beat)

Look, he waded into your waters. He decided to do this, not you, and now you've got to react. This is the world. He doesn't know that, but he's about to find out about the real fucking world.

MARK

(long beat)

What does it look like?

GROVER

I go to work. And the water begins to boil. Eventually, he cooks.

(beat)

The longer we wait. The faster I've got to move, and the messier it gets.

A long beat as Mark thinks.

Finally...

Mark just nods.

Do it.

SCENE 15

In Coach Lazor's suite.

Coach walks in trailed by Britney.

COACH LAZOR

...Now? Now? You want to have this conversation...

BRITNEY

Yes. You busy?

COACH LAZOR

(beat)

I've got a players revolt forty eight hours before the biggest game of my life. The president of the NCAA has his foot so far up my ass my colon probably has Ferragoma imprinted on it. And my wife wants to talk about having an open relationship. Are you out of your fucking mind?

BRITNEY

Apparently. Nice one by the way.

(what?)

Ferragoma on my colon.

COACH LAZOR

Where is this even coming from?

BRITNEY

This has been a long time coming and we both know it.

COACH LAZOR

I read that book. I thought we were just reading books to you know...read.

BRITNEY

I'm open to negotiation. Think about it it could work in your favor. Could be a boon for you.

COACH LAZOR

What does that mean?

BRITNEY

The Coach, big man on campus. Heads turn. Don't tell me you haven't thought about it. All those young co-eds in their sexual primes. You know what a twenty year old vagina tastes like...?

COACH LAZOR

Jesus.

BRITNEY

I'd be willing to find out.

This stops Coach dead in his tracks.

BRITNEY

You see what I'm saying? This could be a net positive for you.

COACH LAZOR

You would...

BRITNEY

I would want to be open. We'd have to figure it out as we go.

COACH LAZOR

You would want to...Sleep with...

BRITNEY

(matter of fact)

Other men?

(beat)

Maybe...

She can see this takes everything out of Coach.

BRITNEY

Jim, you're on the road half the year. The other half you're locked in your office. I still love you. I still really love you I want you to hear that, but...FUCK...I'm alive too.

COACH LAZOR

We live in Missouri, Brit! What...What...You're proposing...It doesn't happen in Missouri.

BRITNEY

It could. And it does.

(beat)

There's another thing.

(please God)

I need to travel more. Alone.

COACH LAZOR

What does that mean? Jesus, I feel like I need a definition for everything you say.

BRITNEY

(soft)

You know...Me walking through Paris. Spending a day with the water lily's. Maybe I'll write a book called the Coach's Wife about a college football coach's wife who escapes to Paris and...paints.

COACH LAZOR

Have you met someone?

BRITNEY

(beat)

Yes.

(beat)

A therapist.

COACH LAZOR

What?

BRITNEY

I've been seeing a shrink. Do you need another definition?

COACH LAZOR

In Missouri?

BRITNEY

And I've come to the startling fact that I had lost myself. I had wanted for you and made for you for so long that I forgot myself. I forgot to bring myself along. The brassy girl from Denver who was gonna change the world. See Paris, Tokyo, Rome...

COACH LAZOR

We went to Mexico.

BRITNEY

Five years in a row with your staff...At the Four Seasons Cabo.

(beat)

I'm not saying I need to date some Roman architect tomorrow. I still love you. It's complicated, but I need more adventure. I need more action. I need more than...football.

Grover enters without a knock.

He clears his throat and they realize they aren't alone.

GROVER

Sorry, the kid let me in. Is this a bad time?

BRITNEY

No. No. I was just going to find a flight. He's all yours...as usual.

Britney exits.

GROVER

How are you?

COACH LAZOR

Peachy.

GROVER

Anything I can do to help?

COACH LAZOR

No, definitely not.

GROVER

You sure?

COACH LAZOR

Yes.

GROVER

Helping is what I do. Nothing too small. A flight to Rome, intro to a life style “coach” ...

COACH LAZOR

(long beat)

Who are you?

GROVER

Grover Thompson, V.P. Ops for the association.

COACH LAZOR

Right. What is it you want?

Grover sits.

GROVER

You’ve got a rebellion on your hands.

COACH LAZOR

I’ve got my coordinators pulling together the entire team. I’ll have most of them back for the noon walk through.

GROVER

Yeah...Let’s for a second assume that doesn’t, for what ever reason, happen. You don’t have a team to field. At my count you’ve got ten players and three graduate assistants.

COACH LAZOR

Do me a favor...Grover...Do not assume to know my team. I built a career by convincing kids to run through walls for me. I am going to get them back.

GROVER

And I’m going to help you.

COACH LAZOR

What does that mean?

Grover passes a folder across the desk.

GROVER

The results of Javarus Jackson’s private physical.

(flipping page)

With an additional MRI.

It takes Coach a beat to come to as he's still dazed from his previous conversation.

COACH LAZOR

We don't give MRI's.

GROVER

It was private. He ordered it himself.

COACH LAZOR

How did you...

GROVER

An Israeli firm specializing in medical data acquisitions.

COACH LAZOR

What?

GROVER

We've decided to take...A more aggressive posture.

COACH LAZOR

We?

GROVER

The question you should be asking coach is why did Javarus order a private MRI?

COACH LAZOR

Was he hurt?

GROVER

Nothing more than maybe some mild discomfort.

COACH LAZOR

I don't understand. I haven't seen anything that would suggest...

GROVER

That's because he's twenty years old. A degenerative knee can take years to finally take you out.

COACH LAZOR

I'm sorry.

GROVER

Javarus has no cartilage in his left knee. He's been hiding it for eight months now and I'm pretty sure you can make the case that he's committed fraud.

COACH LAZOR

Fraud?

GROVER

We feel it will be best coming from his coach that you've noticed a limp during practice, and how disappointed you are he chose to hide it. Then we'll follow with media op-eds on how Javarus with no NFL future is trying to cash in on the backs of his witless teammates.

COACH LAZOR

Hold on...Hold on...You're saying...

GROVER

Eight months ago Javarus figured out he'd never be the first pick in the draft, and now he's trying to re-coup his loses.

COACH LAZOR

There's no way Javarus would pull other people in to...

GROVER

Coach, grow the fuck up. This is a shake down by a professional con artist. Javarus Jackson has no NFL career. He's trying to cash in now, and take everything your team and you have worked for. He's treating you and your players like casino chips that his going to cash the fuck in. We're not going to let that happen.

(beat)

How does a D-3 quarterback with a noodle for an arm become the head coach of a division one power house?

(beat)

Because he's a fucking winner.

COACH LAZOR

When?

GROVER

Bleacher Report already has it. The Ringer will have it in thirty minutes. It's only a matter of time before more mainstream sites pick it up. I've prepared some remarks for the media and then you'll address the team.

COACH LAZOR

What do you need me for? You've already leaked it. Nobody asked me. I'm just a pawn in your game.

GROVER

Coach, I'm the pawn here. I'm just trying to break the log jam so you can get back to your job. You're the master communicator. It's you they pay to lead fifty men on that field every Saturday. Help me, here. Help me...help you win.

COACH LAZOR

(beat)

I want to speak to my team first. If I can peel off enough to start we won't need this. I won't address this before I speak to my team. They'll play for me, and then this will all be done.

Coach steps down stage. The lights shift. Grover watches from the shadows of the stage as he addresses the team.

SCENE 16

COACH LAZOR

Men.

(beat)

What I want to say men...Is we are born into an imperfect world. We are born into an ever changing world. I was born into a different world than you. I am from a different time. What I care about and you care about is different. The way I express myself and you express yourselves is different, God knows. The thought of putting a picture of myself on Instagram is terrifying, and Terrell, over here, has pictures of his belly button on there this morning.

(laughs)

But...We are the same men, we express ourselves differently, but we are the same. I want the best for you. I want you to get paid for this, it's fucked up that you don't, but that can't change over night. It's literally impossible. Nothing happens like that. You've made your point. You've more than made your point. Hell, we are thirty-six hours from throwing away our season, for what? Somebody else's payday? Somebody else's vanity project? Javarus, God bless him, is his own man, and maybe he's led some of you down the wrong path. It's alright to be on the wrong path, only on the wrong path can you see the right one. Asking you not to continue on a fools mission.

(beat)

How many times in your life will you get to truly touch greatness?

I know right now you think it's always going to be there for you. But look at me. I'm fifty-five years old. I got a wife that hates me. I got a cock that barely works. My buddy Clint just died of blood cancer. Just like that. I was you men thirty years ago, full head of blonde hair, quarterback of a small school in Idaho. I had dreams, and the energy to chase them. And...BAM...Now I've got a limp dick and dead friends. Nobody knocking on my door with a great adventure. Nobody crashing through the gates looking for an old man. Sure, I make money, but that's shit. Money is shit. It's a numbers game invented by somebody out there. It's the only game left for me, but there's no glory in money. No life altering challenge in money. No deep confrontation with your fears and therefore your greatness, no there is nothing in money. They're fucking numbers. I have to use numbers to get a whiff of greatness. I have to use numbers to feel anything. It's shit. What I wouldn't give to be you men. Thirty-six hours from battle in front of a hundred million people. Glory. The greatest glory your ever going to feel. And to give that up? For what? A number.

(beat)

You've made your point. They are going to have to change. They are scared shitless. This off-season money is going to come, trust me on that. Don't rob yourselves of your destiny. Don't give yourselves to fear. Glory is yours. Glory is yours! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah....!

Coach basks in the spotlight for a moment.

Grover stands and comes beside him.

They are alone.

GROVER

I heard it was a great speech coach.

(nods)

What is the final count?

COACH LAZOR

(dazed)

Uh...I Don't...My D.C. Dunn is putting the final head count together. Maybe twenty.

GROVER

It's a great start. Let me help you grease the skids. A couple more and you can play this game.

COACH LAZOR

(resigned beat)

Yeah.

(beat)

Point me in the direction.

GROVER

You sure you don't want a beat? To gather yourself...

(no)

Heavy is the head, Coach. Heavy is the head.

Grover leads Coach to the corner of the stage. On the large screen we see he's at an impromptu presser in a hotel hallway with the Bleacher Report crawl.

COACH LAZOR

...Yes...Yeah...I had noticed a limp during parts of the season, but he hadn't reported any injury nor had our training staff brought it to my attention. I just thought it was one of those bumps and bruises that you accumulate over the course of a season. So, I'm pretty disappointed to hear that it is something more serious.

REPORTER 1 (OFF STAGE)

Do you think he concealed this injury to elevate his draft status?

Javarus and Emmet appear off to the side, watching the large screen.

COACH LAZOR

I don't know. You know he would have to pass a pretty extensive physical at the pre-draft combine.

REPORTER 2 (OFF STAGE)

Then wouldn't his draft stock plummet, anyway?

COACH LAZOR

I can't say for certain.

REPORTER 3 (OFF STAGE)

Do you feel he is manipulating his teammates in order to cash in on this national title game?

COACH LAZOR

You'll have to ask his teammates that.

REPORTER 4 (OFF STAGE)

Coach, do you feel this a further example of the NCAA as a form of a slave trade?

COACH LAZOR

(caught off guard)

In what way?

REPORTER 4

The physical. Like inspecting a slave's teeth to determine their price. Only now it's knees.

COACH LAZOR

Well, these players get first class accommodations, first class education, a sizable living stipend. Not to mention the experience of a life time, playing in a national title game. If this is the slave trade then I'd love to be a slave.

Silence.

Coach, hesitates, registering what he just said.

COACH LAZOR

Thank you.

Coach walks off.

SCENE 17

Javarus and Emmett watch for a beat.

EMMETT

They found that MRI quick.

JAVARUS

We knew they would.

EMMETT

But that quick...There guy is good. Probably some kind of outside firm. Straight Michael Clayton moves. What you think?

JAVARUS

Hit back. Hard.

Emmett unwraps a piece of tin foil and hands Julius one of two cell phones.

EMMETT

Give her a beat to warm up.

Javarus takes his corner of the stage. The gaggle of cameras are now with him as he's projected on the screen with the ESPN crawl.

JAVARUS

Did I lie? No. Did I knowingly mislead? NO. I have no cartilage in my left knee which will degenerate over time, maybe five years, maybe ten, maybe twenty. Ask any NFL team who wouldn't take eight years of elite quarterback play. My guess is I might still go number one overall. This is not about my future. This is about my present. This is about the present of so many of my teammates, and my fellow athletes.

Javarus holds up a picture on his cell phone. The image appears on the large screen behind him.

PICTURE - A living room with plastic covered furniture in a double wide trailer. If we notice carefully an orange cat sits on the couch.

JAVARUS

This is the living room of my teammate Emmett Sunday. His father is an auto-mechanic in Perrysburg, Ohio, and his mother a teacher's assistant. I had a lovely Thanksgiving with them this year in Ohio. The Sunday's save a little bit for retirement, but besides that they live month to month. One swollen appendix, or turned ankle from insolvency. And their son has been a four year starter on one of the best teams in the country, and he'll play in a game tomorrow night that will gross about five hundred million dollars. Five hundred million dollars for a single game, and Emmett Sunday won't see a dime. He is one torn knee ligament away from ruin.

Julius turns to the next photo on his phone to reveal...

PICTURE - A Lake House being completely remodeled.

JAVARUS

This is the lake house of Coach Lazor. He bought it with money from his new contract which was twenty-five million dollars over five years, or five million dollars a year. This remodel alone cost upwards of five hundred thousand dollars. He is profiting greatly from a system that profits exorbitantly from free labor. The system is broken. It resembles a relic of the plantation system.

Julius turns to the next photo.

PICTURE - A Chicago Penthouse appears high above Lake Michigan.

JAVARUS

This is Coach Lazor's Chicago penthouse...

SCENE 18

In the hotel's penthouse.

The cabal meets.

JAMES EVERLY

...You been out god damn flanked by two kids. You know what that fat one did while the other one was on TV?

GROVER

Sunday.

MIKE SMITH

What?

GROVER

Emmett Sunday is his name.

JAMES EVERLY

Thank God we cleared that up. Emmett-fucking-Sunday leaks our Nike contract. Now I got questions comin' at me from every fuckin' zig-zag as to where the fuck thirty million dollars a year goes. How the fuck do I know where thirty million dollars a year goes?

GROVER

Because you're the head of the conference.

JAMES EVERLY

What you just say to me?

GROVER

You are the head of the Big Fifteen. You should have an answer to where your sneaker money goes.

JAMES EVERLY

A new band field. Women's softball uniforms. You know how much Bermuda grass costs?

MARK (NCAA)

That's enough! We're thirty hours from kick off and Coach Lazor has twenty four committed players. We'll look like a god damn circus if we let him field that team.

MIKE SMITH (SEC)

Coach Kroll assures me we're holding strong with our entire team. We haven't had one defection. I say we play the game and move on. If you cave to these terrorists now then next year we'll be in even worse shape.

JAMES EVERLY

We can't play with twenty freshman and sophomores. We've got to find a way to peel off another ten players, at least. How the fuck are these two doing this?

GROVER

They have help.

MIKE SMITH

Help?

JAMES EVERLY

It's like I said in the beginning...Unions, an agent, some San Fransisco labor lawyer, maybe a NACCP strategist who got in their ear.

GROVER

'How' doesn't matter. What we need to know is 'why.' Because 'why' is going to take us to his vulnerabilities. 'Why' is going to give us the blue print to end this, because I guarantee Javarus Jackson isn't Martin Luther King.

MARK

We've got to move forward. James tell Coach Lazor he's fielding a team, and playing this game. Where is Coach Lazor?

JAMES EVERLY

He uhhhh...He's not feeling so great.

GROVER

He's tanking?

JAMES EVERLY

He's gonna be okay, but you know these guys they're like fine watches some times they ain't made to take this kind of beatin'.

MARK

What does he need?

JAMES EVERLY

He'll be fine, just havin' a rough time at home, and now this?

MARK

Who's next in line...? If Coach can't go...

GROVER

Defensive coordinator named Dunn. Played at LSU thirty years ago, and then worked his way through the Missouri high school coaching ranks.

MARK

You trust him?

JAMES

Dunn's a company man. He'll take marching orders.

GROVER

I don't trust anyone with a vested pension and Medicare.

JAMES

Fuck does that mean?

GROVER

If you can't buy him you can't control him.

JAMES

(sigh)

Socialists are ruining this god damn country.

MARK

Tell Lazor to buck-up. This is his team and they need him...We all do.

MIKE

The fuck does MLK have to do with this?

(what?)

You said MLK. Where did that come from ?

GROVER

King had no 'why.' He couldn't be got to. The 'why' was a higher plain of existence.

JAMES EVERLY

A higher plain of existence? What the fuck kind of hippie dippy shit are you...

GROVER

God. Not some Pagan power system you mouth-breathing-fucks instill in the South, but something that allows you to die rather than break. That which understands that death could in fact be the immortalizing victory. That is not Javarus Jackson. He's got an agenda, an anger, this is personal...I can smell it. And I'm going to find out why, and abuse it.

Grover gets up and leaves.

Everyone stares.

MIKE

What the fuck's got into him?

MARK

He gets paid five hundred grand a year to fix things, and currently...He can't.

SCENE 19

Emmett and Javarus are in their hotel room.

EMMETT

Harrison Ford.

JAVARUS

Force Awakens.

(beat)

Glenn Close.

EMMETT

Cookie's Fortune.

JAVARUS

What?

EMMETT

Robert Altman B movie. Want me to unwrap a phone?

(no)

Adam Driver.

JAVARUS

Ahhhhh...

(stews)

Got nothing.

EMMETT

Ha! Don't think he has been in a D movie. *I just drank your milk shake.*

JAVARUS

He's been on TV forever.

EMMETT

Why it was a brilliant move on my part. Two - Zero.

JAVARUS

Tom Sellick.

EMMETT

Christopher Columbus.

JAVARUS

What?

EMMETT

Don't stall.

JAVARUS

Tom Sellick is S not C.

EMMETT

Really?

(thinks)

Who knew.

I did. JAVARUS

(beat)
Two-one.

Wait, Wait, I got it. EMMETT

You stalled out. Two - one. JAVARUS

Knock...Knock...

They look at each other.

Yeah? JAVARUS

It's Dunn. DUNN (OFF STAGE)

They share another look.

Emmet gets up and shakes out his leg which has fallen asleep. He opens the door to reveal...Defensive Coordinator Dunn.

Dunn comes in and surveys the room.

Coach. JAVARUS

To what do we owe the honor? EMMETT

Got balls, I'll give ya that. DUNN

(beat)
You got trouble in paradise.

Emmett holds up his meaty hands.

Wait.

EMMETT

He scurries to the mini-fridge, and pulls two cell phones wrapped in tin foil. He motions for Dunn to hand him his. Dunn reluctantly does. Emmett wraps it up.

You were saying...

EMMETT

DUNN

Coach Lazor just swung twenty guys. They gonna make him field a team.

JAVARUS

The NCAA is gonna make you play with nineteen freshman and Cornillus?

DUNN

They'd make us dress the video assistant if it meant they put a championship game on TV.

EMMETT

The shit bowl sponsored by Dr. Pepper.

JAVARUS

And how do you come about this information.

DUNN

NCAA's got a guy...Came sniffing around to see if I'd run outta that tunnel if Lazor wouldn't.

EMMETT

Coach Lazor is gonna sit it out?

DUNN

Nobody knows. Get the impression he's taken this pretty hard.

JAVARUS

What'd you tell'em...The guy.

DUNN

Told him I'd think about it.

(beat)

DUNN

I'll give you all credit, you really took 'em to the mat. However you thought to put this together...It was good work.

JAVARUS

Was?

DUNN

You're twenty-four hours from kick off, and everyone's got a team. They're going to run someone out that tunnel even if it ain't me. You ain't got a boycott.

EMMETT

Ain't nobody coming for us. We aren't playing.

DUNN

Some real martyer-mother-fuckers, huh.

JAVARUS

(opens door)

We've got your news. Thank you.

A beat. There's something else.

Emmett goes for his phone in the fridge, but stops with...

DUNN

Ham Lawson.

(Who?)

To the state of Arkansas he's a prisoner with a bullet lodged in the side of his skull who shits himself three times a day in a low grade warehouse with two under paid nurses. To me, Hannibal Lawson is the best defensive tackle ever in Louisiana High School history, and a monster at LSU, before he shredded his knee in practice.

(beat)

When he got depressed and started showing up late, high, sittin' out, and suckin down water. They took away his scholarship, and let Ham loose....And know what old Ham did?

EMMETT

Rob a liquor store?

DUNN

Got a lawyer with a cheap suit and a night school degree and sued the NCAA for workman's comp. Was smart. They went all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court.

EMMETT

And?

JAVARUS

Student-Athlete.

DUNN

Hannibal Lawson was a student-athlete. Not an employee, not an athlete, playing for a program that routinely sells a hundred thousand tickets on a Saturday, but a Student-Athlete who's getting a fine education. You're on your own Ham bone.

JAVARUS

Survival of the fittest.

DUNN

America.

JAVARUS

Doesn't have to be that. America is the people who live in it. Not the past. Not the system. The system is an artificial concept based on past values and intolerances. The system will change if enough force is put on it.

DUNN

(smiles)

You two...You all really drank some kind of kool-aid.

Dunn pulls a file from his waist band.

DUNN

The defensive game plan. Based on breaking Ceecil Burggess' already injured ankle the first time he touches the ball. You gonna keep this going you're gonna need him.

JAVARUS

Lazor would have never put that in writing.

DUNN

No, he just told me. I put it in writing just now.

JAVARUS

If the media gets this with your name on it.

DUNN

So be it. Been coaching in Missouri for 20 years. Got my state pension. Time somebody else got there.

EMMETT

How do we know this isn't a set-up?

DUNN

A set-up?

EMMETT

We're caught in a lie. We look like idiots, and we waste what little time we got left trying to recruit Ceicil. Send us a distraction with a good story to spin our wheels...Like *Oceans Twelve*.

DUNN

Boy...You watch too many god damn movies.

Dunn opens the freezer, unwraps his phone, and leaves.

SCENE 20

Britney is in Aaron's hotel room reading about Rome on her cell phone. Aaron is just off stage.

BRITNEY

...Ciao, Mi piacho...

(beat)

I think I just said bye peanut, or pistachio...What are you doing?

AARON

What?

BRITNEY

What...Are...You doing, my pistachio?

AARON

I shall be daring and acquire grace, or die in combat and acquire glory.

BRITNEY

What is that?

AARON

A Roman soldiers last cry.

BRITNEY

Are you going off to battle?

(no response)

Have you seen my cell phone, yours sucks. It's cracked and a Samsung, whatever that is.

AARON

It's in here.

BRITNEY

Can you grab it. It's Jims. I always grab his by accident.

(no response)

What are you doing in there?

AARON

Watching the news.

BRITNEY

Did something happen?

AARON

They're going to play the national title game.

BRITNEY

Oh, and here I thought maybe we were talking about world events. I miss the good old days of Middle East strife...

Aaron appears, cell phone in hand.

He doesn't hand it to her.

AARON

Systems of labor are crumbling, systems of patriarchy that were the basis for old western European aristocracy, white supremacy...

BRITNEY

Down with the man!

AARON

A more equitable world.

BRITNEY
For who?

AARON
The disenfranchised.

BRITNEY
You ever work at a hi-end restaurant in New York City?

AARON
No. Have you?

BRITNEY
The Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center for three years.

AARON
Really?

BRITNEY
What you thought I was always the coach's wife? The Rainbow Room is union run, front and back of the house. There's a shop steward, and once he is elected two nice men from New Jersey pay a visit and explain how they will vote and where their dues really go.

AARON
You're equating players seeking their own agency to mobbed-up New York City restaurants?

BRITNEY
All systems are flawed.

AARON
Anarchy!

BRITNEY
Perhaps.

AARON
It's a natural human reaction...To be scared of change.

BRITNEY
I could give a fuck about college football.

AARON
And what about your penthouse? The lake house?

BRITNEY
Take'em.

AARON
You going back to the Rainbow Room?

BRITNEY
Maybe. What's got into you?

A beat.

AARON
We aren't going to Rome.

BRITNEY
Ohhhh...Where are we going?

AARON
I don't know.

BRITNEY
Very exciting. Wherever the wind blows us so to speak.

AARON
To be rootless and do nothing is to court the God's misfortune.

BRITNEY
Ancient Greeks?

AARON
I gave them the pictures of your penthouse.

BRITNEY
Who?

AARON
Javarus and Emmett.

BRITNEY
The...Why?

AARON
Because I strategized with them how best to execute this boycott.

BRITNEY
What?

AARON

And then I began sleeping with you in order to steal everything I needed, and disorient Lazor. So when this all happened he'd never have all his footing.

She begins to laugh. He follows suit.

She stops. So does he.

BRITNEY

You're a fucking monster.

AARON

Violence begets violence. You made your choice and your violence has now come back to you. What? A woman with a masters, who's lived in New York City is blind to the systems she used to fatten herself?

BRITNEY

Get out!

AARON

You knew we were coming, you only hoped that the wall you built to keep us out was tall enough.

BRITNEY

(fighting stance)

Get out! Or I'll fucking kill you!

Aaron backs away, hands in the air.

AARON

Funny thing about walls, you can't see out of them, but there are a hundred ways around them.

She reaches for the bedside clock and hurls it at him.

CRACK...

It smashes against the wall.

AARON

(long beat)

Bye Britney, I can't be your escape hatch from the good life.

With that he walks out on her with her cell phone in hand.

SCENE 21

Coach is in his hotel room with Rodger and Taylor.

They've got a half empty bottle of Kentucky Bourbon between them.

COACH LAZOR

...Bimington was looking for a quarterbacks coach, and I stopped through New York City. And here was this brassy, smart ass waitress who bought me a drink in some fancy restaurant. We went to the Amsterdam Inn after her shift, I'll always remember the name of the place...The Amsterdam Inn...She had read every book under the sun and drank gin like a sailor. Three days with her and I was cooked.

RODGER

It was young love, Coach.

TAYLOR

It was a hook up that went on for twelve years.

RODGER

(beat)

Listen, I know you don't want to hear this, but I've been married three times. The hurt goes away. Maybe you jump this hurtle with her, but if you don't. The hurt just...

(evaporates)

Poof...

COACH LAZOR

She's leaving me for some Italian architect...

TAYLOR

Coach, if I may be blunt ?

(sure)

Fuck her.

(beat)

You're the god damn coach of a Division One juggernaut. You make five million dollars a year. How many times you get a national title shot?

You can get married again, tomorrow. We got to figure out how to get your team all the way back. We got to figure out how to break Javarus-fuckin-James...

RODGER

T.S. maybe Coach needs a beat here...

(bourbon)

Coach, maybe you can settle a bet for us. You ever come across the Peach Bowl footage from ninety-three...There was a kick return touchdown...

TAYLOR

That girl...

RODGER

(drop it)

T.S...

TAYLOR

That girl...That girl's uncle you paid....

(who?)

The one who went crying to the cops and then we bought her uncle a new tractor or something, and she disappeared. James...He was...He was pissed...He had a thing for her...

RODGER

What about her?

TAYLOR

If she told her story...How did we pay her?

RODGER

T.S. I don't think...

TAYLOR

Remember how he fought us on that? He was heart broken. She had his number...

RODGER

We're talkin' about some pretty heavy shit with a ton of moving parts...Things could get turned around on us pretty quick...

TAYLOR

Grow a fucking set...This is the bottom of the fucking ninth...We've got to make a move. She won't even have to testify we just use her as our stalking horse to get James back in the game. Now, how did we pay her?

RODGER

(beat)

I think through the shell company.

TAYLOR

Right. Coach, who is the point person for the NCAA? Are they using an outside firm?

(no response)

Coach?

COACH LAZOR

Yeah. Do what you think is best.

SCENE 22

Grover sits in a hotel room by himself. He pops a tab of Nicorette gum.

Knock...Knock...Knock...

He swings the door open to reveal...

Julius and Emmett.

All three stare for a beat.

GROVER

Want my cell phone?

EMMETT

Dunn...

GROVER

Dunn is a good man, but simple. Not schooled in spy craft like us. Right, Emmett?

JAVARUS

Where's Ceecil?

GROVER

Dead.

(beat)

Got them a suite two floors up, and Forte night. You ever play? To me one shooter game is all shooter games...

JAVARUS

Good bye.

GROVER

I came baring gifts. I have an offer.

They stop.

GROVER

You play in this game and get drafted number one overall by Miami.

JAVARUS

And the NCAA?

GROVER

Forms an exploratory committee to monetize amateur athletics.

EMMETT

Exploratory committee?

JAVARUS

Pass.

GROVER

And...And...And...You don't go to jail.

EMMETT

For boycotting a football game?

GROVER

Not you.

(Javarus)

You don't go to jail for the rape of Kristen Kelly.

Javarus freezes.

GROVER

Now have I got your attention?

(beat)

I admire you, kid. You fought better than most pros I know. And tough. A lot of guys are smart, but the execution eludes them because, they aren't tough enough. They lack the courage. But you. You got it. If football doesn't work out, I'll hire you.

JAVARUS

You talked to Kristen?

GROVER

At her uncles' in North Carolina. Poor girl. You know funny thing about rape...no statue of limitations.

(beat)

Funny right?

JAVARUS

She'd never...

Grover pulls a folder from the couch and slides it across the table.

GROVER

Here's her statement to St. Louis police. Take a look, some pretty nasty stuff. Eye witness testimony to corroborate her story.

JAVARUS

How did you find her?

GROVER

It's what I do. I gotta say...Not many people can rape a woman, and still stay friends with her.

JAVARUS

(long beat)

I didn't rape her.

Silence.

GROVER

That was good. But I don't know...It wasn't quite...It was lacking a certain...

JAVARUS

I...didn't...rape her.

GROVER

Better. You're getting there. It's not twelve-white-men-on-a-Missouri-jury ready, but...

EMMETT

Is there no common goodness in you? Are you just....just pure evil incarnate. For the love of what? Money? Power? You would rather ruin a man. Literally, kill a man than do what is the bare minimum of right.

GROVER

Right? Good? We took this fucking country from the savages. We carved this thing with our bare fucking hands. You live in the most technologically advanced, prosperous, secure society in human history. A society that is about to generate generational wealth for your best friend. There is no decency in that. There's money. There's freedom. But fuck right. Fuck good.

Silence.

JAVARUS

How did you find her?

GROVER

A booster paid her off, and had her cell phone number.

(cell phone)

The amount of data these things generate...You can piece together whatever you want. You can find whoever you want.

(beat)

We're eighteen hours away. I suggest you gather yourself, and we hold a joint presser in two hours. You take the victory you earned with all those head honchoes, heads bowed agreeing to a problem and a committee. You win. And you play. And I guarantee Miami takes you at one.

JAVARUS

You guarantee it?

GROVER

It's already done.

(beat)

I'll see you in two hours in the penthouse.

EMMETT

He hasn't agreed to anything.

GROVER

Hasn't he?

JAVARUS

I need some time...to think.

GROVER

There is such a thing as too smart. You think too much can get yourself all turned around. Simple. The answer is always simple. Take a beat. But time is not on your side.

SCENE 23

Rodger is singing Clint Black's 'Like the Rain'. The music blasts.

Coach is on the couch bobbing along.

RODGER

*...Never liked the rain till I walked through it with you...
Every thunder cloud that came was one more I may not get through...*

Britney enters.

They don't hear her.

RODGER

...On the darkest day there's always light and now I see it too...

COACH LAZOR

...But I never liked the rain until I walked through it with you...

She tries to shut off the blue tooth speaker playing the song, but can't find the button until....

SMASH...

She slams it over and over again on the cabinet...Now they know she's here...

Rodger grabs his phone and stops the music.

BRITNEY

(sweet)
May I speak with Coach, please.

RODGER

Is everything...

BRITNEY

OUT! You sycophantic-succubus...OUT! Now!

He hurries out.

After a beat.

COACH LAZOR

I lost my phone. Have you seen it?

BRITNEY

Get up.

(what?)
Stand up.

After a long thought.

Coach wobbles to his feet. She walks up and hugs him.

It's a long beat and then...

BRITNEY

It's hard...

(beat)
It's hard to love somebody this long. But I still do.

(beat)

They're trying to destroy us. They are trying to destroy us. Do whatever you have to do. Say whatever you have to say.

Win. (beat)

They stand in a long silent beat.

SCENE 24

Cornillus and Payton, shirtless, mill about, vodka bottles abound. Room service orange juice carafes are half filled.

Payton poses as Cornillus takes shots on his i-phone.

PAYTON

...get my abs in it. I'm gonna DM these UCF bitches and see who wants to jingle my dingle later...

Knock...

COACH LAZOR

Open this door!

Cornillus saunters over, and with a drunken grace opens the door.

Coach just seethes for a beat as he surveys the situation.

Cornillus just stares back unmoved to speak.

Payton unsure what the fuck is happening.

Coach enters.

Coach and Cornillus just stare neither speaking until...

COACH LAZOR

How well do you know Javarus?

CORNILLUS

We ain't friends.

PAYTON

Yeah.

COACH LAZOR

I need...Something...

(beat)

I am going to need you to testify against Javarus.

CORNILLUS

About what?

(you know)

We weren't there.

PAYTON

Yeah.

Coach surveys them for a long beat.

COACH LAZOR

You know what happens to you if I start talking? If I decide to open my email to the press. You won't be worried about not making a training camp roster you'll be worried about how to stay outta that new super max they just built in Kansas City.

CORNILLUS

Coach...You got it all wrong...I don't need the switch just that carrot.

COACH LAZOR

Name your price.

Cornillus and Payton share a look.

Payton hands Cornillus his phone.

CORNILLUS

Twenty grand a man. Even you don't need us.

Cornillus hands Coach Payton's phone.

A picture appears on the large screen behind them of Javarus funneling a massive funnel that Cornillus is holding.

CORNILLUS

Swipe...Left...

The picture changes to...

Cornillus, Payton and Javarus arm and arm at a keg party. Javarus is cock-eyed with drink.

CORNILLUS

Was that night.

COACH LAZOR

It's a keg party. Doesn't mean he...

CORNILLUS

Swipe again.

A picture of Javarus on the edge of a bed. He's full clothed, glass-eyed, it's unclear if he's conscious, or completely black out. Behind him is the back of a naked sleeping woman.

COACH LAZOR

Jesus...

Coach Lazor begins typing on the phone.

CORNILLUS

What you doing?

COACH LAZOR

Texting this to my assistant, Luke.

Cornillus walks up to him and swipes the phone out of his hand. For the first time in perhaps their relationship Coach realizes that Cornillus could take he head off, and serve it to him.

CORNILLUS

We'll be expecting two envelopes in an hour...

COACH LAZOR

(beat)

Yeah.

(beat)

You have Luke's cell?

CORNILLUS

(looking at phone)

Missing last two digits.

COACH LAZOR

One-nine.

CORNILLUS

I'll just press send here when you're deposit arrives.

Coach goes to leave.

CORNILLUS

You ever watch a dog die, Coach?

(no)

Seen mine go four years ago. Couldn't bare to put her down so just watched her struggle. She was my girl, and at the end bitch bit me. Serves me right though lettin' her die like that. Should have had the stomach to just kill her.

(beat)

You and Javarus, close like me and my girl.

(beat)

You get the chance, Coach... You take that kill shot, and don't think nothin' about it.

SCENE 25

Julius and Emmet sit quietly across from each other in their hotel room. There is a sadness to them. A reassignment. They can't utter the words, but defeat is in the air.

Emmett begins to pray.

EMMETT

Lord... Show us the path through this thicket. I don't know which way to go now...

His head hangs bowed for a long silent beat.

AARON (OFF STAGE)

Amen.

Aaron enters from off stage with a glass of water and a pill. He pops the pill and washes it down.

We notice a set of travel bags at his side.

AARON

With all your ailments Emmett bet you never took Lithium.

EMMETT

No. What's it do?

AARON

Makes the heart breaking pain of existence just a dull tone in the background.

EMMETT

Could use one now.

AARON

Don't be such a drama queen.

(sits)

Take me through it.

JAVARUS

No.

AARON

No?

JAVARUS

It's over.

AARON

Just like that? It's over because you think, what? You got out maneuvered?

They just stare.

AARON

Did you rape her?

JAVARUS

Kristen.

AARON
Did you rape, Kristen?

Julius just shoots him a stare. You know I didn't.

AARON
Then don't cave.

Silence.

AARON
Oh, the great, noble, and honorable, Javarus James. Saves the damsel in distress from despair by gallantly falling on his sword. Ends a boycott that almost crippled a fucking empire in the name of justice and righteousness, creating income and lively hood for generations of oppressed peoples because... Why the fuck are you backing down? I'm still confused.

EMMETT
They're going to put him in jail.

AARON
The fuck they are. And even if they did, jail strengthens your case. Let them try to put you in jail. You become a martyr. Let them put on a show trial. Let them let you testify in open court for days of round the clock press. Let them try...

Aaron produces coach's cell phone.

AARON
Emmett hasn't even got this thing open yet. God only knows the treasure trove in it.

He chucks it to Javarus.

JAVARUS
I was there.

Silence.

JAVARUS
I was there.

Silence.

JAVARUS
I was at the party at Cornillus' that night.

Silence.

AARON

What happened?

JAVARUS

(long beat)

I was supposed to meet Kristen at the party, but by the time she got there...I was already drunk...And she got there and was pissed... She went off with her friends.

AARON

She was your girlfriend?

JAVARUS

No. It was more of a...

EMMETT

He was courting her. She hated him, but liked him, sort of.

Silence.

AARON

Then what happened?

JAVARUS

Then I drank more.

(beat)

Until...I...blacked out...

AARON

And Kristen?

Julius can't.

EMMETT

They drugged her and...

Silence

AARON

They?

EMMETT
Cornillus, and Payton...

AARON
There was talk? In the locker room?

EMMETT
Yeah.

AARON
She go to the police?

JAVARUS
Three days later.

AARON
And they covered it up.

(yes)
The team?

(yes)
The school?

EMMETT
I suppose even the state. The governor likes to bump chests in the locker room pre-game.

AARON
For a linebacker and a kicker?

JAVARUS
And me.

(you?)
'Sir, can you accurately guarantee you weren't the third man in the room?' No. 'Why not?' I blacked out.

AARON
Payton and Cornelius said you were there.

(yes)
And you believe them?

JAVARUS
I blacked out.

AARON
Kristen has no memory?

JAVARUS
I don't know... We haven't spoken since...

AARON
When did this happen?

JAVARUS
Fourth of July.

AARON
August you approach me.

(yes)
Seek revenge dig two graves.

JAVARUS
My grave is made out of money.

AARON
Most are.

Everyone sits in silence for a beat.

EMMETT
So we just, what? Say thank you very much for the committee. It was nice fighting with you, and play in the game?

Silence.

EMMETT
What kind of happy ending is that?

AARON
Life.

JAVARUS
I've got to go.

EMMETT

I'll go with you...

JAVARUS

No. I'll do it alone.

(bags)

Where are you going?

AARON

Rome.

EMMETT

You don't want to watch the game?

AARON

(no)

Football is a brutal and savage game played by the poor and deprived for the screaming violent hoard.

JAVARUS

Did you love her?

AARON

(beat)

Nothing Rome can't cure.

(beat)

No one weeps for the honey pot, right Emmett?

EMMETT

Usually she's a Russian bomb shell not a jewish philosophy professor.

AARON

(beat)

I'm proud of you two. You did this. No one else.

(Javarus)

Trust yourself.

SCENE 26

In the penthouse. The cabal waits.

Coach Lazor stands freshly showered and caffeinated.

Everyone is looking at an i-Pad that Coach has brought them.

COACH LAZOR

...This is the smoking gun...Look at him he's black out drunk next to the naked girl...

JAMES EVERLY

How come he's wearin' all his clothes?

COACH LAZOR

I don't know...Don't over think this...Cornillus and Payton will testify...This is a slam dunk...He's boxed in...He's got to play...

MARK (NCAA)

Coach, maybe it would be best if we just talked to Javarus first, see if we can't make peace without having to resort to...

COACH LAZOR

This is my team. You're asking me to run out of that tunnel.

GROVER

(dagger)

And if that man snaps his fingers the only job you'll ever have in football is runnin' the snow blower at your alma mater in buttfuck North Dakota...

MARK

Everyone relax...Coach...I understand you're used to being the man in charge, but do me a favor...Let me guide this. If we can settle this amicably then that's best for everyone. There's a lot of...passion here, and that can mess things up. I got no dog in this fight. I just want everyone happy. I want you to play with your entire team, including Javarus.

(beat)

Okay?

COACH LAZOR

Okay. But I'm staying right here. I want to be here when the bastard waves the white flag. I want to look him in the eye.

Mark motions to Grover who goes to the door.

Javarus enters.

MARK (NCAA)

Javarus, it's great to see you. Can I get you anything? Water? Dr. Pepper?

JAVARUS

No. Thank you.

MARK

Well, have a seat. Let me just say that I was just telling Coach Lazor how impressed I was with the way you two men conducted yourselves. Very honorable.

MIKE SMITH (SEC)

I agree. I am a Christian man as well, and your boys adherence to the word has been refreshing. You're what, Baptist?

JAVARUS

Jesuit.

JAMES EVERLY

(laughs)

Jesuit.

JAVARUS

Yes.

MARK

Listen, it's been a long ordeal and I just wanted to meet you face-to-face before the press announcement and tell you we are going to put together a bang-up committee, and...

JAMES EVERLY

How the heck is a black man from the south a Jesuit?

The room freezes.

JAMES EVERLY

A Baptist that makes sense. Hell, maybe a whack-job revivalist evangelical. But Jesuit...?

JAVARUS

(beat)

In the seventh grade I was recruited to Loyola high school.

MARK

Makes a lot of sense...

MIKE SMITH

Jesuits play football?

JAVARUS

We didn't have a football team. I was recruited to play basketball.

MARK

Why don't we...

JAMES EVERLY

Then how the heck are you standing here?

JAVARUS

They took away my scholarship.

(beat)

I broke my wrist playing pick-up during the summer. I was fifteen.

(beat)

So, I became the best football player in Virginia the next year at Robert E. Lee High School.

MARK

That's a great story.

COACH LAZOR

Let's cut the shit shall we. Because I've got a football game in twelve hours. They're gonna give you a committee, and you and Emmett are going to play. It's time to end this boycott and put on a helmet.

Julius stews for a beat. He can't bring himself to say, yes.

COACH LAZOR

You're cornered.

Silence.

MARK

Julius, I want to assure you this isn't a ceremonial committee. We are going to dig down into this issue and figure out what the best course of action is.

JAMES EVERLY

I'm sorry...How the heck did that make you a Jesuit?

MARK

James...

JAMES EVERLY

I'm just curious... You spent a year at a Jesuit boys school...Why take up wit'em fancy frocks...?

JAVARUS

A priest who taught philosophy. He barely knew me, and quit when they took away my scholarship. The Jesuits were formed in protest by the most educated priests against the excesses of Rome. They were smarter than everyone, but they also had the courage to say fuck you, usually brains and courage don't go hand and hand.

(for Grover)

You can imagine something, but you can't execute it.

(beat)

I've been a Jesuit ever since.

Everyone sits for a beat.

MARK

Well, I don't want to take anymore of your time.

JAVARUS

What about Kristen?

Silence.

They seem confused...who?

Grover leans in to whisper to Mark.

MARK

Right.

Mark motions to Grover, speak.

GROVER

We'll take care of her.

JAVARUS

Meaning? Specifically.

GROVER

Scholarship if she decides she wants to go back to school. Living stipend. Interest free loans. She'll be taken care of.

JAVARUS

Money.

GROVER

A lot of it.

JAVARUS

Why?

GROVER

Sorry?

JAVARUS

Why are you paying her off if she isn't going to testify?

MIKE SMITH

Poor girl has been through enough.

JAMES EVERLY

It's the least we can do.

Something about all this is sitting wrong with Javarus.

He still hasn't said yes.

COACH LAZOR

Fuck this grab ass. We got a National Championship to win and after, when you're everyone's hero...Send her a million dollars off your signing bonus if you can't stomach...

JAVARUS

It's a good deal for you. Disappear a gang rape and a slave rebellion all in one day. Only cost you what? Eighty-k? What's that? A second of ad time?

GROVER

What number did you have in mind?

Mark stands to leave.

MARK

I think I should head to the bathroom before our press conference.

JAVARUS

No, you should stay.

MARK

Excuse me?

JAVARUS

I want something else. The prosecution of Cornelius and Payton.

(long beat)

The case was already put together, right? You have it tee-ed up at one of your politically connected lawyers.

JAMES EVERLY

The Missouri A.G. is prepared to make the case against you. Kristen would only testify against you. She was sure you were there.

Silence.

Coach can't help himself.

COACH LAZOR

And now so are we...

He flips the I-pad towards Julius.

The picture of Julius with Kristen appears on the large screen.

Grover pulls a statement from a file and reads.

GROVER

It was his eyes I saw, blank like he was dead just looking at me while...While someone was on top of me. 'Who was on top of you?' I don't know. 'But you are one hundred percent sure that Javarus James was there?' Yes. One hundred percent.

Silence.

Finally...

Javarus pulls a cell phone and sits it on the table.

COACH LAZOR

Is that...

JAVARUS

Your cell phone.

COACH LAZOR

How did...

JAVARUS

Your wife. She's been fucking my Philosophy professor for months...

MIKE SMITH

Christ...

Coach lunges for him...

COACH LAZOR

I'll fuckin' kill you...!

Mike Smith gets a hold of him before he gets to Javarus and everyone tries to hold him back. It's a cluster-fuck as Coach comes unglued.

COACH LAZOR

I'll kill you...I'll fucking murder you...I'll slit your god damn throat...You dirty-fuckin...

MARK

Coach!

They finally get him pinned to the ground.

MARK

Get him out of here! Get him out of here!

Mike Smith and James Everly, bear hug him and carry him out of the room.

It is just Javarus, Mark Titus, and Grover.

Finally...

MARK

What is on that phone?

JAVARUS

A dead man's switch.

MARK

A what?

GROVER

A piece of damning information that's released if anything happens to him.

JAVARUS

Like Daniel Ellsberg's nuclear memo.

MARK

Who are you working with?

JAVARUS

Alone. Is that so hard to believe?

MARK

Yes.

JAVARUS

All the information is out there you just need the courage to use it.

GROVER

What's on the phone?

JAVARUS

(beat)

Coach's cover up of the rape. Emails to detectives. Prosecutors... The *coup de gras* is two lines from the Governor in which he assures coach that he'll take care of it. This doesn't just take down the program it takes down the city of St. Louis, and the state of Missouri.

(beat)

I want pensions for all Division One athletes, game checks in trusts for any player in the Bowl Championship Series, and I want the NCAA to recognize the rights of players to collectively bargain.

(beat)

And the prosecution of Cornillus and Payton.

Silence.

Finally...

MARK

Or what? You'll martyr yourself on the courthouse steps? Public emulation?

JAVARUS

I'll become the most famous political prisoner in the country as details of this massive cover up slowly leak out. I'll be front page news for months.

MARK

The headlines won't just be yours. They'll be hers too.

(beat)

I know you're willing to martyr your ass. Hell, I don't even think you hurt this woman, and more importantly I know you don't believe it even with that picture. But can you watch her get ripped apart slowly, limb by limb, because that's what we'll do. One op-ed and cable news segment at a time until there's nothing left of her. And you'll have to watch. We're gonna fight for you, Javarus, and the harder you fight this rape charge. The harder we'll fight for you. Javarus James is completely innocent. Kristen Kelly is a liar and cashing in on his good name. Here are the checks the boosters paid her, here is her uncle's new pick-up truck, here is a toxicology report that shows cocaine not Ketamine in her blood stream that night...This is a trumped up charge, and it's this woman, and her lies, and transgressions, and flaws that have brought them. We'll get you off just in time for the draft, but not before we completely destroy her.

(long beat)

Do that math.

(beat)

And then ask yourself if you have the stomach for it.

Javarus just stares.

MARK

You are standing toe-to-toe with a behemoth and we haven't even begun to fight. The state of Missouri can fall into the sea for all I care. Play, don't play. Game, or no game. They'll be one next year, and the year after. We are inevitable. Like the fucking rain.

A smile creeps on Javarus' face.

It unsettles Mark.

Grover just watches it all happen.

Until...

Mark feels the urge to counter himself

MARK

What are their names...Cornillus and...

GROVER

Payton Mills.

MARK

We'll look in to them. I promise you.

Javarus just continues to smile.

They fade.

Lights up on...

SCENE 27

Javarus and Emmet, alone in their hotel room. We've come full circle.

SILENCE.

Finally...

EMMETT

Inevitable?

(yep)

Like the what?

JAVARUS

The...Fucking...Rain.

EMMETT

(Hitler)

I am inevitable like the rain, *mein countryman*.

(beat)

Feels powerful.

Emmet starts to jiggle his elbow.

JAVARUS

Poppin' again?

EMMETT

Fluid on my elbow. Just gotta get it movin'.

SILENCE.

Emmett flicks on the TV.

The game comes on behind them on the screen.

ANNOUNCER (OFF STAGE)

An intriguing match up tonight, Al...

Emmett mutes it as it plays behind them.

The Dr. Pepper BCS logo overlays the stadium.

EMMETT

Stadium looks full.

They watch for a second.

EMMETT

Sure would've liked to play one more time.

Silence

EMMETT

You just smiled at him?

(what?)

I mean I may have tried to take his limbs with me.

The game begins.

It plays silently behind Javarus.

JAVARUS

We already won.

(beat)

Someone else is already coming, more than one, many.

He turns directly to the audience.

JAVARUS

And now they know that it can be done, and they can see clearly where to strike.

EMMETT

We're like the rebels in Rogue One. We die on the beach, but the plans for the Death Star have been sent out.

(beat)

Our deaths have meaning.

JAVARUS

Nothing is inevitable except the truth. And they are coming. Many are coming.

The roar of the sold out crowd consumes them until...

BLACKOUT.