

**Air Jordan**

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1. Our business is change.
2. We're on offense. All the time.
3. Perfect results count -- not a perfect process.  
Break the rules: fight the law.
4. This is as much about battle as about business.
5. Assume nothing.  
Make sure people keep their promises.  
Push yourselves push others.  
Stretch the possible.
6. Live off the land.
7. Your job isn't done until the job is done.
8. Dangers  
Bureaucracy  
Personal ambition  
Energy takers vs. energy givers  
Knowing our weaknesses  
Don't get too many things on the platter
9. It won't be pretty.
10. If we do the right things we'll make money damn  
near automatic.

**CREDITS - 1984 MONTAGE, ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OVER MUSIC**

"Dirty Water" by Don Henley. Images of Politics, culture, sports, setting us in the period.

END IN:

1

**INSERT - TV COMMERCIAL**

1

The unmistakable smile of MAGIC JOHNSON - he's holding a CONVERSE SNEAKER and rapping along to a cheesy jingle.

MAGIC JOHNSON

The Converse Weapon - that's the shoe that let Magic do what he was born to do!

ISIAH THOMAS.

ISIAH THOMAS

That may be so, but that's not all... they let Isiah play like he's ten feet tall!

LARRY BIRD. *This could be a commercial for the NBA Hall of Fame.*

LARRY BIRD

You already know what they did for me. I walked away with the MVP!

"Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!"

**BLACK**

2

**EXT. NIKE HQ, NIKE 1 - DAY**

2

"Nobody Told Me" John Lennon.

BEAVERTON, OREGON

Even if you don't know what the modern Nike headquarters looks like, you can imagine it. A sprawling green campus. Lots of glass. Lots of money.

An "employee first mentality". Great benefits. Unlimited vacation (unless you take too much). They match the fuck out of your 401k.

Now... imagine the exact opposite of that.

**TITLE CARD READS: 1984, NIKE WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS**

Two buildings. Nike 1 and Nike 2. They look more like IRS offices in Iowa than the headquarters of a sneaker company.

3 OMITTED

3

4 **INT. NIKE HQ, BASKETBALL DIVISION, HALLWAY - DAY**

4

Two men walk the unimpressive mess of cubicles and offices that make up the small division at Nike devoted to basketball.

JOHN PAUL VINCENT VACCARO. We'll call him what everyone else does: SONNY. 45. A determinism in his eyes, the bags under which tell us how much sleep he gets (none). Sonny is talking to HOWARD WHITE (30s-40s) AFRICAN AMERICAN, EX-ATHLETE.

SONNY

When you signed Moses, what got him there?

WHITE

Aight, when we signed Moses. Mary Malone, she thought a lot of me, and the big fella, that's who I called Moe, he loved his Mama. Now if the Mama thinks the world of you, then they won't be too far behind. You see, I go through the mamas because the mamas run everything. And sometimes, I gotta call the mama to keep them in line. See cause I'm a Mama's boy, and I know Mama's run everything. I told them we would do a rebound campaign with him.

SONNY

So how did you know they would go for that?

WHITE

I didn't, but nobody was telling Moses that. We did the first basketball TV commercial for Nike. If you listen, you'll hear my voice at the end of the commercial.

(imitation)

Good work. Good work.

SONNY

You were a player. You tell me why a kid would want a German soccer shoe to play basketball in?

WHITE

Because they wanna look good when they play basketball. All the break dancers and rappers are wearing them all over the country. They're cool man. I got two Adidas tracksuits myself, I'm not wearing them here though. Nike ain't hip like that. Them Germans are killing it. You seen that new Mercedes 380 SL? Don't nobody know what Nike means. Did you know, Run-DMC is doing a song for Adidas.

SONNY

Who?

WHITE

Run-DMC. They're doing a whole Adidas song for free. On their next album.

SONNY

No, I mean who's doing the song?

WHITE

That tells me something right there.

SONNY

Hold on. I haven't heard you play anything but Motown since I met you.

WHITE

But I know who Run-DMC is.

SONNY

We're talking about business. I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe it was a good company.

WHITE

You believing is one thing. You got to get other people to believe.

SONNY

What's wrong with Nike?

WHITE

Nike is a jogging company. Black people don't jog. Jogging is something you can do if you can waste energy.

SONNY

You really think that's true?

WHITE

Sonny, we're old friends. But I ain't from Pittsburgh, where I'm from when you get to the white part of town, there was a sign for black people that said, "if you're here when the sun goes down, you won't be when it comes up."

This lands on Sonny.

WHITE (CONT'D)

And I went to high school in the white part of town. I couldn't *make* the basketball team at the black school. At the white school I was All-American. But when my mama said to make sure your home by dark, it wasn't about losing my TV time. You need to be real. No black people. Messing around, running 26 miles for *no reason*. How many brothers do you see running a marathon?

SONNY

There are the Kenyans.

WHITE

You want to sell shoes in Kenya or Newark? Cause these kids are talking about Isaiah and Magic, not worrying about Bruce Jenner throwing a frisbee with some shorts hugging up on his nuts.

SONNY

We got Moses.

WHITE

I know that. I was up at 3 in the morning trying to get Moses out of the club, because he had early practice. I keep telling Moses that you can't hoot with the owls at night and fly with the eagles in the morning.

Sonny checks his watch. Gets up.

SONNY

I couldn't do what you do.

WHITE

I know, you can hardly do what you're supposed to do. Since Moses, we ain't had one player besides Sid the Squid. And we're doing nothing with him. These guys need the company to sell them. Not the shoes.

SONNY

I like the new slogan they're talking about for the whole company.

WHITE

I don't know?

SONNY

Why?

WHITE

You know where that came from? They asked a convict on death row if he had any last words. And that's what he said before they fried him.

SONNY

"Just do it?"

WHITE

Yup?

SONNY

That's where that comes from?

WHITE

Yup.

SONNY

Bullshit.

WHITE

Dan Wieden told me.

SONNY

It's actually a good metaphor for the way basketball is viewed at this company.

WHITE

"Nike. Let's get it over with."

SONNY

What does it say about me that I like it?

WHITE

It says you're the target demographic. Middle aged white guy who needs to exercise.

SONNY

You have a point.

WHITE

Well, as long as you're signing mediocre players, maybe you get me a Mormon so I can get some sleep.

White starts to peel off.

WHITE (CONT'D)

Maybe Danny Ainge got a little brother.

5

**INT. NIKE HQ - BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

5

STRASSER (V.O.)

Orwell was right. 1984's been a tough year.

ROB STRASSER, VP of Marketing. Not an athlete, Strasser's a lifer. A native Oregonian. The type of guy who knows that what he's doing can be bullshit, but does it anyway. He's giving a presentation to... SONNY, STAN, BILL, and TIM.

STRASSER

Sales down. Growth down. But this company is about showing who you really are, when you're down for the count. Am I right? When you're on the canvas...

...the board group that makes up Nike's Basketball Division. Pencil pushers. Collared shirts. Note pads. Coffee mugs. *Yawns.*

STRASSER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Bang! You get up. Like Balboa. We're the eye of tiger. We're not going down to Mr. T.

He turns on a SLIDE PROJECTOR that starts showing images of the picks in the recent NBA draft.

1. Olajuwon 2. Sam Bowie 3. Michael Jordan 4. Sam Perkins 5. Charles Barkley 6. Mel Turpin 7. Alvin Robertson 8. Lancaster Gordon 9. Otis Thorpe 10. Leon Wood 11. Kevin Willis 12. Tim McCormick 13. Jay Humphries 14.

Michael Cage 15, Terrence Stansbury 16. John Stockton 17.  
Jeff Turner 18, Vern Fleming... and so on.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Alright. Olajuwon is off the table.  
#1 pick isn't coming here. Sam  
Bowie drafted by our local pro  
franchise at 2 is converse for  
sure. Jordan is going to Adidas.  
Let's zone in on three players  
between picks five and twenty.

Nothing from the room.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Great. So... Let me say...  
Lancaster Gordon... Anyone?

BILL

Louisville.

STRASSER

Yes. He went to Louisville. How  
about Barkley. Round mound of  
rebound. Fifth pick might be a  
stretch but...

BILL

Clubhouse issues.

SONNY

What does that mean?

BILL

Too much trash talk. No one wants  
to see that on tv.  
(no one wants that in  
their living room)

Sonny is accustomed to stupidity but sometimes it's a lot to  
bear.

STRASSER

Otis Thorpe I think is a  
possibility. Who else do we like?

Pencils TAP. TAP. TAP.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Does anyone hear me if I'm down in  
the valley singing the song of a  
man they call Terrence T Bone  
Stansbury?

STAN

I don't think they call him that.

STRASSER

But they could. If he had on Nikes...

Strasser, half joking but trying to fire up the room.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Does the name 'Vern Fleming' call out to any of you?

BILL

I like Melvin Turpin.

STRASSER

Great. Let's get him on the board.

Strasser writes TURPIN across the board.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

(off dead air)

Anyone else?

TIM

What about John Stockton?

STRASSER

From Gonzaga?

TIM

Yeah.

Silence.

STRASSER

That's a vocational school?

STAN

Community college.

SONNY (O.S.)

Why do you like Melvin Turpin?

Everyone at the table turns. Their gazes drifting to the very back of the room, where we find...

SONNY (CONT'D)

Melvin Turpin. What do you like about him?

BILL

He made the Final Four last year.

SONNY

So did forty other players.

BILL

I mean, he was the fifth pick...

SONNY

Have you watched him?

BILL

Of course, I...

SONNY

So what do you like about his game?

BILL

He's got a good feel for the court.

SONNY

He only had 33 assists all season.

BILL

Well, I like his play. He has flash. It's... He has good vision.

SONNY

No, actually I agree with you. Mel Turpin is going to be good.

(wait for it)

In Europe, when he's out of the league in four years. You like Mel Turpin because he was the sixth pick in the draft. You like him because no one is going to give you shit for saying you like the sixth pick in the draft.

STRASSER

Alright, alright. Any other ideas?

*Silence.*

Strasser looks to Sonny, who sticks two fingers up to his temple. BANG.

Kool and the Gang, "Joanna."

6

**INT. NIKE HQ - MEN'S ROOM - DAY**

6

STRASSER (O.S.)

Honestly, what the fuck is wrong with you?

Strasser is in the stall. Sonny stands before a urinal.

SONNY

Who are we gonna get?

STRASSER

You're supposed to be the grassroots high school basketball wizard. You didn't get hired to lecture people. Do you have an idea or not?

SONNY

I like Barkley some. Fucking clubhouse issues is the dumbest thing I've heard in there. Which is saying something.

STRASSER

Barkley, I mentioned him. You didn't think chiming in to support my idea was relevant to the two hours of sitting in there we did?

SONNY

I didn't want to discuss it in the meeting, what happens in there is bullshit. I'm telling you now.

STRASSER

That's because people are scared to speak.

SONNY

Why?

STRASSER

Because you berate them for a half hour no matter what they say.

SONNY

No. I just have no tolerance for people who do no work, have no insight and then act like they have a place at the table. *Mel Turpin?* We'd be better off signing my mom.

STRASSER

Well, unfortunately your mother isn't available.

SONNY

It's not that she's dead. If she were alive we couldn't afford her.

A silent beat. The toilet flushes.

STRASSER  
We could afford my mom.

SONNY  
Clubhouse issues.

Strasser comes out and washes his hands. Sonny joins him.

STRASSER  
We have 250k for three players.  
This is where you come up with the  
brilliant idea no one else can see.

SONNY  
We need more money.

STRASSER  
Not brilliant. That happens when  
you're successful. What's happening  
now is called failure. If that  
continues, Nike is out of the  
basketball business and we're out  
of a job.

SONNY  
We just need good players.

STRASSER  
Barkley. Stockton. And Bowie. I  
like Stockton.

SONNY  
Do you even know where Gonzaga is?

STRASSER  
I'm not saying it's ideal...

SONNY  
What about Jordan?

STRASSER  
(frustrated)  
We can't get fucking Jordan.  
That's it. I listened to Falk for  
three hours. He's too expensive.

They are interrupted at the men's room door by RICHARD, who  
screams middle management. Beige green button up with khakis.

RICHARD  
Mr. Strasser...

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Richard.

Strasser has no idea who this is.

STRASSER

Right. Richard.

RICHARD

I'd love to get some time on your calendar.

STRASSER

Great, let Doreen know.

RICHARD

Roger that. Will do.

STRASSER

Okay.

Awkward exchange of smiles. Strasser and Sonny emerge into the hallway and cross through a courtyard that passed for "people friendly break space" in 1984--populated now by overweight employees smoking cigarettes.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

You know there was a time I could name everyone who worked here?

SONNY

Things change. Places grow.

STRASSER

I guess so.

They come into a hallway with a small eatery on one side and a stairway on the other. Strasser indicates the mini-cafeteria.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

You want dessert? Sundae bar today.

SONNY

Have a meeting.

Sonny heads toward the stairs.

STRASSER

With who?

SONNY

The shoe dog.

Off Strasser's raised eyebrows. *Shit.*

George Clinton, "Atomic Dog".

7

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

7

PHIL KNIGHT, CEO and FOUNDER of Nike. Orange-red beard and long hair. He doesn't look like a CEO - he looks like a long distance runner. A bohemian capitalist.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny.

Sonny makes the long walk from the door to Phil's massive oak desk. Picks up a plastic basketball resting on it. Tosses it up and down.

There's an OREGON DUCKS mini-hoop on the wall. Right next to the infamous WAFFLE IRON - the one that produced the first Nike shoe.

SONNY

I'm missing the sundae bar, Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT

Why is this guy skateboarding to work? We're a public company. He doesn't have a car?

SONNY

Probably just a kid.

PHIL KNIGHT

He looks fifty years old.

They both look out the window, where there is indeed a MAN SKATEBOARDING around the parked cars.

SONNY

Is that Pete?

PHIL KNIGHT

What is Pete doing skateboarding in the parking lot.

SONNY

Maybe he's having a mid-life crisis.

The SKATEBOARDER jumps OVER the back of a car.

The skateboarder narrowly avoids a purple Porsche with a "NIKEMN" vanity plate.

Stare alt

PHIL KNIGHT

I hope his mid life crisis doesn't scratch my Porsche. It takes seventeen coats of paint to achieve that precise color of purple?

(beat)

They call it grape.

(beat)

Looks eggplant to me.

(back to business)

How was the strategy meeting?

SONNY

Disaster.

PHIL KNIGHT

Wonderful. What's the plan?

SONNY

Piss away our tiny allocation on three mediocre players.

PHIL KNIGHT

Hey, Sonny. We had an annual *loss*. I just had to lay off a quarter of the fucking company.

SONNY

I know Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT

Basketball narrowly avoided the chopping block in its entirety and without some improvement, I can't promise that won't be the case at the next meeting.

SONNY

We need to increase spending.

PHIL KNIGHT

I brought you in to grow our basketball business. It's smaller now.

SONNY

Is Strasser's number right? 250k?

PHIL KNIGHT

Yes.

SONNY

What about five?

PHIL KNIGHT

No. You're lucky to have 250 because your balance sheet is a debacle.

SONNY

Half the running shoes sold in this country are Nikes. 900 million in revenue and you only want to spend 250k on basketball?

PHIL KNIGHT

The board is telling me about one million people at most buy basketball shoes to wear, exclusively when they play basketball. In fact, they're wondering if any investment is worth the upside...

SONNY

Well, if a board member said it...  
(look)  
Basketball is the future.

PHIL KNIGHT

The NBA finals are on tape delay. It's literally the past.

SONNY

People watch basketball.

PHIL KNIGHT

We took four golds at the Olympics.

SONNY

Nobody gives a fuck.

PHIL KNIGHT

We dominate the running shoe market. That's what people do, they run.

(beat)

People are asking me what you do here.

SONNY

You know what I do here.

PHIL KNIGHT

I know you expense a lot of travel to high school basketball games. I know almost always there happens to be a layover in Vegas.

SONNY

I understand the game. I make bets.

PHIL KNIGHT

You're losing.

SONNY

Just because you lose doesn't mean it wasn't a good bet. This perfect results bullshit--

PHIL KNIGHT

It's not bullshit. It's the guiding principle that made this a billion dollar business.

SONNY

But I can't win if you don't give me the bankroll--

PHIL KNIGHT

All of us have to be accountable. I'm accountable to the board--

SONNY

I told you not to go public. I told you it would change you and you would get tight. Happens to every company...

PHIL KNIGHT

Is that what happens?

SONNY

Every company that only cares about the P and L statement and the board being happy.

PHIL KNIGHT

Do you run?

SONNY

Is this going to lead to some Buddhist aphorism I don't want to hear?

PHIL KNIGHT

Do you run?

SONNY

Run or jog?  
(an absurd notion)  
No Phil. I don't.

PHIL KNIGHT

The illusion is that the finish  
line is the destination. But the  
act itself is the destination.

SONNY

I need five hundred thousand  
dollars.

They're interrupted by PHIL'S SECRETARY, who peeks her head  
through the large doors.

SECRETARY

Mr. Knight? Your lpm...

PHIL KNIGHT

Should you find a wise critic to  
point out your faults, follow him  
as you would a guide to hidden  
treasure.

As Sonny exits...

SONNY

And...there it is.

8        **EXT. NIKE HQ - NIGHT**

8

One light on in the office.

9        **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

9

You can hardly see Sonny among the MOUNTAINS OF VHS TAPES  
stacked all around the office.

Each has a strip of masking tape across it with a player's  
name written in **sharpie**.

He's chewing through tape. Watching **STOCKTON**. Watching **BOWIE**.  
Watching **BARKLEY**.

Old standard definition highlights. Sonny replays Stockton  
going to the hoop. Forward and backward. Examines his jump  
shot. Forward and backward.

Yawns. Leans back in his chair. Looks up at his wall, where Nike's MISSION STATEMENT is neatly framed. Ten rules. The commandments.

*#1. Our business is change.*

*#3. Perfect results count - not a perfect process. Break the rules: fight the law.*

Sonny piles a few of the tapes up. Puts them in his bag and heads out.

A9           **EXT. BEAVERTON STREETS, DRIVING, SONNY'S POV - NIGHT**           A9

Sonny in the car, watching the streets go by.

10           **INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT**           10

Sonny approaches the counter.

He sees a magazine rack. On the cover of SI is - LARRY BIRD. \*

The kid behind the counter is reading STREET AND SMITH \*  
MAGAZINE from 1984. Magic is on the cover. \*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK

Welcome to 7-Eleven. Can I help  
you? \*

SONNY \*

(re: magazine) \*  
You like basketball? \*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK \*

You want to buy it? \*

SONNY \*

No I read that one already. \*

Sonny puts down his cereal and milk and sundry items. \*

SONNY (CONT'D) \*

What do you think about the \*  
Blazer's pick? \*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK \*

Bowie? He's not Hakeem but I like \*  
him. \*

SONNY \*

What about Jordan? \*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK  
A guard? He's six three. Seventeen  
points a game in college. That's  
maybe ten or eleven in the league.  
Even the Bulls GM said he wouldn't  
change the team.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Sonny nods, he knows the quote.

\*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK (CONT'D)  
He'd contribute but--

\*  
\*

SONNY  
--not be a dominate offensive  
player. Yeah, I heard that.

\*  
\*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK  
If he hadn't hit that shot he might  
not have gone that high in the  
draft. Too small to do in the NBA  
what he did in college.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Sonny nods. The clerk rings up his items.

\*

SONNY  
You know where Gonzaga is?

\*  
\*

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK  
Spokane, Washington. Stockton's  
too short, too.

\*  
\*  
\*

Sonny smiles.

\*

SONNY  
Thanks.

\*  
\*

He heads out the door.

\*

\*

A10 OMITTED

A10

\*

B10 **EXT. LAS VEGAS, AERIAL - NIGHT**

B10

An AIR VEGAS Jet descends into a much humbler version of the lights of Las Vegas.

C10 **INT./EXT. - TOWNCAR - VEGAS - NIGHT**

C10

Sonny rides in the backseat.



12           **INT. VACCARO HOUSEHOLD - SONNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**           12

Sonny sits in his armchair, his two TV's the only light in the room.

He's watching tape on one. ESPN on in the background of the other one.

Close on Sonny's face, bathed in the blue light of the television. Flickering as we hear the sound of a crowd CHEERING.

Something on the other TV catches his attention...

A TENNIS COMMERCIAL, featuring ARTHUR ASHE. Sonny turns up the volume.

                          ARTHUR ASHE  
                          (holding up a racket)  
                          This is the racket I won Wimbledon  
                          with. And you could've bought it.  
                          *Really.*

Sonny digests what he's watching. He turns back to the other screen.

We can see his wheels spinning as he watches the tape. He leans in closer.

It's almost otherworldly. A moment of transcendence that only comes a few times in one's life. When everything seems to click together, if only for a second. It all makes sense. When you finally see what you've been missing this whole time.

We see the empty VHS case. The tape he's watching. It reads:

**JORDAN**

CUT TO:

LATER

13           **INT. VACCARO HOUSE - NIGHT**           13

Sonny is watching the National Championship game where Jordan hits the winning shot.

Push on the game.

Push on Sonny.

ECU Jordan's face.

Sonny's face.

14

**INT. STRASSER'S OFFICE - DAY**

14

Framed pictures of him with NBA players, standing with his son at the Finals, the Olympics, etc.

Strasser sits across from RICHARD, the guy from the men's room.

STRASSER

You could look at it as shrinkage,  
in the budgetary sense. But I think  
Phil would say it's an opportunity  
to expand---

The door opens. Sonny pokes his head through.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

I'll be done in five.

SONNY

I need you done now.

STRASSER

Sonny.

RICHARD

(getting up)

No worries at all. I understand.  
It's the busiest time of year.

STRASSER

Sorry about this. Thanks for  
coming, Richard. We'll follow up.

SONNY

(almost shooing him out)  
Yeah, we'll follow up.

STRASSER

Sonny, no.

SONNY

I found him.

STRASSER

In business there's a way we  
conduct ourselves, maybe even just  
as human beings...

He clicks on the TV. Delivers the following while setting up a VHS tape to play.

SONNY

Curtis Hunter. You hear of him?

No.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Hunter was a great guard out of high school, one of the best I'd seen. Everyone chased him. UNC got him. The next year Dean recruited Michael as his backup, but over the summer during practice Jordan took his spot. Hunter was never the same.

The video comes on. Michael Jordan's game winning shot against Georgetown.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Watch.

STRASSER

Jordan hits the shot. I've seen it. We've all seen it.

SONNY

No. Stop. Don't watch the shot. Don't watch Jordan.

STRASSER

You *don't* want me to watch Jordan?

SONNY

Correct. In fact, watch everything *except* Jordan.

(as he lets the tape  
continue)

STRASSER

Did you sleep last night?

SONNY

Look at Dean in the huddle. Look at -- how he draws up the play.

(he lets a little more  
play before *pausing* the  
tape again)

That's James Worthy. First overall pick. Another player we had no chance at signing.

STRASSER

Correct.

SONNY

So why isn't he taking the shot?  
Why is this skinny freshman from  
Wilmington, North Carolina taking  
the shot?

STRASSER

They drew the play for Worthy,  
Jordan was the option if he wasn't  
open.

SONNY

The play was drawn up *for Jordan*.  
No one else was taking that shot.  
It's because they know the same  
thing I know.

He lets the tape play out. Jordan catches the pass. Seventeen  
seconds left. Seventeen feet from the basket. Pulls up for  
the jumper. *It's good.*

Sonny pauses the screen. Close on Jordan's face.

SONNY (CONT'D)

The same thing that Curtis Hunter  
knew when Michael Jordan showed up  
and took his spot-- He saw  
greatness. *I don't want to sign  
three players. I want to sign one.*

STRASSER

As in *only* one?

SONNY

We can build a shoe line around  
*Just him*. We can tap into something  
deeper... the player's identity.

STRASSER

What does that mean.

SONNY

He is the shoe. He doesn't wear the  
shoe. The shoe is *him*.

STRASSER

(dumbfounded)

You want to anthropomorphize... A  
shoe?

SONNY

Have you seen that Arthur Ashe commercial?

(switching to Arthur Ashe voice)

"This is the racket I won Wimbledon with. And you could've bought it." We do that with a shoe.

STRASSER

Even if Jordan *wanted* to come here, it would cost too much.

SONNY

Not if we bet it all on one guy.

STRASSER

The whole budget?

SONNY

Why not?

STRASSER

No. We're going to distribute it to three or four players.

SONNY

We have 250k. We can get him for 250k.

STRASSER

Adidas has 250k, too. Even if we did offer him that, Adidas could match, all our other prospects would be signed and since Michael made it clear he doesn't want to come here, you would have to have an extremely compelling pitch. Do you have that?

SONNY

Yes. By telling him the one thing the other companies can't compete with.

STRASSER

Which is?

SONNY

*Our basketball division is fucking terrible.*

STRASSER

I don't love it.

SONNY

Yes, Converse has Magic, Bird, Dr. J. But they can't put one at the top. *We can.*-- And at Converse every player wears the same shoe... there's only one Jordan.

STRASSER

Phil will never go for that.

SONNY

Let me handle that.

STRASSER

Please don't do this. This is too important...

(off Sonny)

Have you even talked to--

He's cut off by a RINGING PHONE.

SONNY

Jordan's agent?

STRASSER

Yes.

Stan pokes his head in the door.

STAN

Sonny, David Falk's on your phone.

Strasser shakes his head.

SONNY

Coming.

Stan is pissed. To Sonny:

STAN

Get a fucking secretary.

Sonny smiles at Strasser on the way out.

15

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

15

Sonny sprints into his office, some disheveled papers falling off his desk as he does. He picks up the phone.

Waiting on the other line, as promised, is...

16

**INT. PROSERV AGENCY - DAVID FALK'S OFFICE - DAY**

16

DAVID FALK, Jordan's agent. Shiny bald head, five figure pressed suit. The prototype power agent. He came out of the womb negotiating commission structures.

FALK

Sonny, Sonny, Sonny. Here comes the Sonny.

SONNY

Good morning, Falk.

FALK

It's afternoon for those of us in the real world. What's new in the wilds of Oregon? I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY

Who told you that?

FALK

You know I have clients in other sports. I just signed Boomer Esiason. Great looking kid. Really going places.

SONNY

David. I don't give a fuck. I'm calling about Michael Jordan.

FALK

(laughs)

I told Strasser months ago, it's never gonna happen

SONNY

Well, you never talked to me.

FALK

I'm doing you a favor. Michael's not even taking a meeting with you.

SONNY

What do you mean?

FALK

A meeting? A group of two, maybe four to five, executives in a room? They hear a pitch from a company? It's common business practice.

(MORE)

FALK (CONT'D)

Michael's not going to be doing that at Nike.

SONNY

Falk, don't fuck with me here. What are the bids looking like?

FALK

It's not about the money.

SONNY

When someone tells me its not about the money, the one thing I know for sure is it's about money.

FALK

We've decided to stretch the envelope.. We want to hear what each company can do to promote Michael.

SONNY

OK, we're thinking along the same lines then. All I'm asking for is a meeting.

FALK

Sonny. World class players don't wear third rate shoes.

SONNY

Just get us in the room.

FALK

I have one directive from Michael:  
*do whatever it takes to get me with Adidas.*

(beat)

And get me a Mercedes.

SONNY

That's two.

FALK

Sonny, as a friend, this is a waste of time. Off the record - even though UNC's a Converse school, Michael wore Adidas during practice. He would put on Converse just before the game started. The second the final buzzer sounded? Adidas' back on.

SONNY

Bullshit.

FALK

Ask Dean.

SONNY

I thought that was off the record.

FALK

I didn't say you had to tell him where you heard it. And trust me, Converse knows it, too. I've already seen a mockup of their presentation. Three words. *State of the art.*

SONNY

That's four.

FALK

Even if you make an offer, I'll only use it to drive up what Adidas pays. You're a stalking horse. At best. And a slow, fat stalking horse. So you're not even credible.

SONNY

What are they offering?

FALK

I don't see a world where it's south of 250.

Sonny holds his hand over the receiver. Silently mouths *FUCK*.

SONNY

I understand.

FALK

Annually...

SONNY

He'll be miserable at Adidas. It's a shit show since Adolf died.

FALK

Adi, Sonny. He went by Adi.

SONNY

His name was Adolf. The guy's name was literally Adolf.

FALK

He was a good man.

SONNY

He kept the name.

FALK

It's Adi. Adi Dassler, Adi-Das.

SONNY

The man was in the Hitler youth.

FALK

No he wasn't, don't say that.

SONNY

I've seen pictures of him wearing a swastika. Personally. He even had the haircut.

FALK

We all have our pasts.

SONNY

Some of us have our pasts and some of us were Nazis, there's a line...

FALK

(point taken)

Well, he's dead. We're meeting with the whole family.

SONNY

She's rich, and isn't long for this earth. Do you think her kids are thinking about shoe endorsements?

(off silence)

When's his Adidas meeting?

FALK

The Jordan's goes to Boston Thursday. That's Converse. Then Nuremberg for Adidas on Saturday and then we're gonna close.

SONNY

Nuremberg?

FALK

Sonny, no, close to... near there. They want to close, is the point.

SONNY

OK. Let me get back to you.

Sonny hangs up. Bites his lip. Paces back to...

17

**INT. NIKE HQ - WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY**

17

Sonny slips in. WHITE is watching Jordan tape.

WHITE

Phil won't do it.

SONNY

But you like the idea, right?

WHITE

The idea? Of Michael Jordan? I'd like to sign Jordan, I'd like to sign Jesus too, but I don't know what his agent will ask for.

SONNY

Falk was open.

WHITE

What are you gonna offer?

SONNY

The whole budget.

WHITE

As in no money for anybody else? I've known Phil longer than you and I can tell you he won't go for that.

SONNY

I can bring Phil around.

WHITE

Even if you do, how will you bring Mike around? Mike an Adidas guy. He's wearing everything Adidas got.

(MORE)

WHITE (CONT'D)

Bad warm ups, shell toes, he don't want to come to Nike bad as the guy sitting in that damn briar patch.

SONNY

I'll deal with that after I deal with Phil. Like climbing Everest. One step at a time.

WHITE

Talking about Mount Everest. You would get tired on the plane over there. And Phil don't want to do that. He still has the first dollar he ever made up in his office.

SONNY

The secret to Phil is to make him afraid.

WHITE

Phil has a hundred million dollars and free jogging shoes. What's he afraid of?

SONNY

Of being the guy I'm about to have lunch with.

WHITE

Who?

SONNY

The man who passed on Michael Jordan.

The Clash, "Rock the Casbah".

18

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

18

Some upscale bullshit restaurant that was the hardest reservation in Portland for two years before going out of business. Sonny sits across from...

STU INMAN, General Manager of the Portland Trailblazers. Sleight, the frame of a former power-forward, which he was. A pressed collar lapping over a well-fitting sweater.

SONNY

Thanks for meeting last minute.

STU INMAN

No problem. I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY

Why is everyo...  
(catches himself)

STU INMAN

It makes sense. You can't compete with the big boys. Not enough capital.

SONNY

We have capital.

STU INMAN

Yes. Just not enough. You should go for Stockton.

SONNY

Why's that?

STU INMAN

Because Gonzaga is risky and you like rolling the dice.

SONNY

He's a hell of a player. I would have taken him ten picks sooner, for sure.

STU INMAN

But...?

SONNY

Why'd you pass on Jordan?

STU INMAN

You're not signing Jordan.

SONNY

But what do you think of him?

STU INMAN

I think he's a good player.

SONNY

But you didn't draft him.

STU INMAN

No.

SONNY

Why?

STU INMAN

That's confidential.

SONNY

Come on, Stu.

STU INMAN

We had other needs.

SONNY

What needs? A less talented guy?

STU INMAN

There's a lot you don't see from the bench.

SONNY

The Bulls are a pro franchise. Apparently they saw something.

STU INMAN

The Bulls are a mess. He's not going to be in the playoffs for years. He's one guy.

SONNY

All the great teams have been changed by one guy. Chamberlain. Russell. Magic. Larry.

STU INMAN

The Bulls aren't a team. They're a fucking disaster. And the playoffs are where the money is. You want to pay top dollar for a player that's going to be on national television once a year?

SONNY

You watched the tape?

STU INMAN

Of course we did. What do you think I do for a living? We knew he'd be there at #2.

(MORE)

STU INMAN (CONT'D)

We have Drexler and Paxson. We didn't need another guard - we *needed* a center.

SONNY

I don't think you can draft based on need that high... no offense, you have to draft on talent.

Stu loses his patience, insulted.

STU INMAN

Well, that's what you think. That's why I'm a GM and you're a fucking shoe salesman, Sonny. No offense.

SONNY

You made a mistake. You're afraid that's what you'll be remembered for.

STU INMAN

You have that little thing you stand on, with the slider, that measures your shoe size? You keep that handy just in case or is it in the trunk?

SONNY

I don't need it. I can see your shoes are a small from here.

Stu nods. There is a jousting energy, half-joking, but only half.

STU INMAN

I'm very good at my job Sonny. There's a skill to what I do. That's why we finished second in the league. And you'll be remembered as a guy who was decent with Shinola and a brush.

SONNY

Congratulations on second place.

STU INMAN

I like you, Sonny but you're embarrassing yourself. You think I'm going to be remembered as the man who passed on Michael Jordan?

19

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

19

Sonny sits across the desk from Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT

Let me just say this: no.

SONNY

Let me explain.

PHIL KNIGHT

No.

SONNY

Michael Jordan is the guy we've been waiting for.

PHIL KNIGHT

You said the exact same thing about Bobby Jones and Artis Gilmore.

SONNY

If perfection is the goal than we were doomed from the start. No one hits every shot.

PHIL KNIGHT

How about *some* of the shots. A shot. One shot?

SONNY

That's part of gambling, Phil. You don't win every hand.

PHIL KNIGHT

This is not a craps table and we don't have unlimited checks to write.

SONNY

I'm not asking for unlimited, I'm asking for what you already have budgeted.

PHIL KNIGHT

All of it? Don't confuse recklessness with vision.

SONNY

I actually think we might need more.

PHIL KNIGHT

For a rookie who hasn't set foot on an NBA court?

SONNY

That's the literal definition of a rookie, yes.

PHIL KNIGHT

Magic Johnson doesn't even have a shoe line.

SONNY

*Exactly.*

PHIL KNIGHT

(thinking it over)

No. Even if I wanted to I couldn't justify it to the board. So it's out of the question...

SONNY

Let me put it like this: I'm willing to bet my career on Michael Jordan.

PHIL KNIGHT

*Why?*

SONNY

Because you asked me what I do here... *and this is what I do here.* I find players. And I feel it right now. When you were selling sneakers out of the trunk of your Plymouth you had balls and ambition and you took risks-- that's why it worked. Don't play it safe now. Don't change what got you here. Not now. If you really look at Jordan you'll see the same thing I do.

PHIL KNIGHT

Which is?

SONNY

The most competitive person I've ever seen. He's a fucking killer.

PHIL KNIGHT  
(begrudgingly)  
What's the competition?

**CUT TO:**

20

**EXT. ADIDAS HQ - DAY**

20

RUN DMC, "MY ADIDAS."

Even if you don't know what the modern Adidas headquarters looks like, you can imagine it.

But you don't need to. Because in 1984, *this place already looks like it will in 2022.*

A monolithic building, an almost cartoonish Soviet-style fortress, topped by a neon blue trefoil spinning in the fog. The finest German glass reflecting shimmering water.

21

**INT. ADIDAS MUSEUM - DAY**

21

Paraphernalia befitting a storied German athletic company rest in trophy cases in the hall including the pair of soccer cleats that would become known as the Copa Mundial. It's a shrine to the 1936 Olympics, Germany, excellence, and physical perfection. There still lingers a whiff of Leni Riefenstahl.

The Adidas braintrust walk through the grand room, some holding folders and leafing through them.

KATHE DASSLER - the matriarch. She's not in good health, but is running the company anyway.

HORST DASSLER - her son, controlling everything behind the scenes (or trying to), round face anchored by a square jaw.

FOUR DAUGHTERS - they all look vaguely similar, only twelve years between the youngest and the oldest. Almost like each one was cloned three years apart and now they're growing up in order.

JOHN FISHER - Adidas' Head of Operations in the States, leads the pack.

JOHN FISHER  
I know the last thing we want to be  
discussing is business.

They all turn to a giant portrait of ADOLF "ADI" DASSLER. Founder of the company, recently deceased, his presence still looming from the grave.

JOHN FISHER (CONT'D)

I can only imagine the grief.

KATHE DASSLER

As Adi would say... We must go on.

JOHN FISHER

He did say that. And we have an incredible opportunity for Adidas America.

Fisher opens the first page of his file to reveal:

JORDAN.

HORST DASSLER

Very good.

22

**EXT. CONVERSE HQ - DAY**

22

NORTH READING, MASSACHUSETTS. A towering brick edifice. A refurbished factory. CONVERSE HQ. Their STAR logo imprinted on the building.

"CONVERSE ALL STAR" in big letters. Coincidentally, or perhaps not, it describes the type of players they endorse.

23

**INT. CONVERSE HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

23

JOHN O'NEIL - PRESIDENT and JOE DEAN - VP of Basketball. Converse's top execs. The guys who signed Bird and Magic.

Their big board. OLAJUWON is already circled. The top name on the list. They don't fuck around.

Continue down the list. BOWIE is already crossed out. The next name is unavoidable: JORDAN.

They look at each other. A YES MAN nods...

YES MAN

Scoreboard.

24

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

24

PHIL KNIGHT

Can we get a meeting?

STRASSER

You're signing off on this?

PHIL KNIGHT

No. It's a stupid fucking idea. I said can we get a meeting?

**CUT TO:**

FALK

No.

25

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

25

Sonny's on with Falk. The twisted phone cord wrapped around his clenched his fist. Trying to play it cool.

INTERCUT with Falk in his office. It's late.

SONNY

That's not responsible to your client.

FALK

Submit an offer and then we can talk meeting.

SONNY

I can't do that.

FALK

Then I have no responsibility to inform my client.

SONNY

250 thousand. Is what you can expect...

FALK

I can expect? Why not a million? Right? If we're talking expectations. I can't account for opinions. I need it in writing.

SONNY

When the offer comes it will be in writing.

FALK

I look forward to seeing it. I can't wait to waste six hours flying out there.

(MORE)

FALK (CONT'D)

Why can't you get a base on the east coast like a normal company?

SONNY

They love it here.

FALK

Well, great, I'm glad they're happy.

SONNY

How're the parents?

FALK

Smart as hell. Don't pull any bullshit on them. They don't want to be sold to.

SONNY

Are they home now? In Carolina?

FALK

Why?

SONNY

I'm just asking.

FALK

Don't call them. I'm not kidding. That would be inappropriate and unprofessional.

SONNY

So is outright refusing a meeting.

FALK

That's just business.

SONNY

Why does Michael want Adidas?

FALK

Because he likes their tracksuits.

SONNY

We will give him every tracksuit he's ever wanted.

FALK

He's a kid. You know what he really wants? A car. Red Mercedes 380SL. But fortunately he has an extremely savvy adviser who thinks long term.

SONNY

It's your humility that is really impressive.

FALK

That's the thing Sonny, I'm not even talking about myself.

(beat)

Unless I see an offer in writing, I'm not going to bother my client.

26

**INT. TONY ROMA'S, LOS ANGELES - DAY**

26

Sonny is having lunch with George Raveling, 40s, coach of the Olympic team that year. They are old friends.

GEORGE RAVELING

Michael won't come to Nike. I tried putting in the word for you all during the Olympics.

SONNY

I know, man. I appreciate that. Is there another play?

GEORGE RAVELING

He doesn't even want to meet. Believe me, I made it clear to him I believed Nike was the best opportunity. I told him multiple times. And we got along. He just doesn't like the shoes.

SONNY

He's never worn them.

GEORGE RAVELING

He doesn't want to.

SONNY

Why?

GEORGE RAVELING

When you're a twenty one year old man you can count on two things. Thinking you know better than everybody and finding out later you didn't know a damn thing.

SONNY

Was he open to it at all?

GEORGE RAVELING

He told me if he got a red Mercedes 380SL he would sign a shoe contract for life with anybody.

SONNY

Really?

GEORGE RAVELING

Anybody except Nike.

SONNY

Christ.

(beat)

You know the parents?

GEORGE RAVELING

Good people.

SONNY

How's the dad?

GEORGE RAVELING

Great guy. Good personality.

SONNY

How's the mom?

GEORGE RAVELING

Incredible. She runs shit.

SONNY

Really? Should I call her?

GEORGE RAVELING

Why? You want to find out first hand how she really does run shit?

SONNY

She's that good?

GEORGE RAVELING

Smarter than you.

Off Sonny's look.

GEORGE RAVELING (CONT'D)

Don't take it personally. She's smarter than me too.

SONNY

Might be my only shot.

GEORGE RAVELING

Go around the agent to the family  
and you might lose your job, too.

SONNY

I don't know. Maybe I'm losing  
it... but I've been doing this  
twenty years. I've never had a  
feeling like this.

GEORGE RAVELING

That right?

SONNY

I know I'm right.

GEORGE RAVELING

How strong?

SONNY

Strong. This little fucking voice I  
keep trying to ignore but, you know  
when you get a feeling?

GEORGE RAVELING

Yeah.

(beat)

Don't let it go.

SONNY

You just told me it's a bad idea.

GEORGE RAVELING

It is a bad idea.

SONNY

So?

GEORGE RAVELING

Sometimes you have to answer that  
call.

SONNY

Even if it gets me fired?

GEORGE RAVELING

Summer of 1963, I was a kid in  
Maryland. Friend of my father's  
asked me and his son to come to a  
march in town. But I had a  
scholarship to Villanova, and I  
didn't want to risk my future.

SONNY

Okay.

GEORGE RAVELING

But I had this feeling I should go. Don't know why. So I went. We got there and one of the organizers saw two 6'4" kids and asked us to help with security. We get down there and they put us up on the podium. Now I'm in harm's way, might be on TV, but that voice was telling me stay. So I stayed. I was up on stage for five hours thinking why am I up here? Then the last speaker comes on. And then I knew.

Sonny nods. He's never heard his friend tell this story.

GEORGE RAVELING (CONT'D)

We walk off stage, I said to him "that was the best speech I ever heard" and he looks at me, says "thank you, young man," folds up the speech, puts it in my pocket, and walked away.

SONNY

When was this?

GEORGE RAVELING

I went to read it after, but my favorite line wasn't in there. Then, I noticed the whole second half of the speech was different. The first half the crowd hadn't responded as much, and *he changed the whole thing, halfway through*. He felt the crowd wasn't with him, got a feeling made the whole speech up on the spot.

SONNY

What was the line you were looking for?

GEORGE RAVELING

Where he said he had a dream.

Sonny is stunned.

SONNY

The I have a dream speech? That was the-- you have that??

GEORGE RAVELING

I have a copy of the speech he was going to give.

SONNY

Are you breaking my balls?  
Bullshit.

George just looks at him. This is a true story.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Jesus, where is it?

GEORGE RAVELING

What?

SONNY

The speech.

GEORGE RAVELING

In my desk, at home.

Sonny shakes his head, marvels.

SONNY

That should be in a fucking museum,  
George.

GEORGE RAVELING

It will be. When I check out. But none of that would have happened if I hadn't listened to that voice.

SONNY

So you think I should go see the parents and let it all ride on Jordan?

GEORGE RAVELING

Fuck no. I think that's crazy. That's your voice. My voice doesn't say to do stupid shit. My voice made me a part of history.

SONNY

Say the voice in my head tells me to talk to Michael's mother anyway. Any advice?

He considers this.

GEORGE RAVELING

She's used to people like you underestimating her.

SONNY

So...

GEORGE RAVELING

Don't underestimate her.

A26 **INT. HOWARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

A26

Sonny sticks his head in looking for Howard. Howard isn't there.

27 **INT. NIKE HQ -- NIGHT**

27

White is getting Coffee. Sonny approaches.

SONNY

I'm thinking of reaching out to the parents.

WHITE

That's not some shit to take lightly. You go around Falk, you better close them, and you need a plan for that. You need to make them believe. You created the Dapper Dan Tournament! I was a little kid from Hampton, VA that someone told me that you could play in this game that the gym's roof opened up and you played under the stars! I got a letter that I was invited to play in the Dapper Dan. A dream come true. Then I tear my knee up and can't go. But, I learned something far bigger than my dream of playing under the stars! I learned that if you believe something enough, it only takes one spark to burn down an entire forest! My belief made all of these people believe! The question is not what Phil will do, but how much do you believe? Because it only takes that one spark of belief to burn down an entire forest! You've made me a believer!

28

**INT. STRASSER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

28

Sonny talking to Strasser.

SONNY

You run at all?

STRASSER

What?

SONNY

Do you run?

STRASSER

Run? God no. Why?

SONNY

Phil asked me if I did.

STRASSER

Everything between you and him is a fucking game of code.

SONNY

So, I'm asking you the same thing.

STRASSER

Do I run?

(beat)

No, I don't run.

SONNY

That was my answer. But you don't think it's funny? We work at a running company and we don't run.

STRASSER

Doctors are most likely to smoke. Therapists have the highest rates of divorce. No, I think its obvious. We're not here because we're athletes. We work here because we worship athletes.

SONNY

Fuck it, maybe I'll just go for a run. The answer will come to me.

STRASSER

Just don't call the parents.

Sonny exits as the door clicks shut.

A28      **INT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT**      A28      \*

Sonny drives home from Nike HQ.

29      OMITTED      29

A29      **EXT. NIKE HQ - NIGHT**      A29

The moon shines bright over the only car in the parking lot.  
His.

30      **TIME LAPSE**      30

Sun rises over Beaverton.

31      **INT. NIKE HQ - SONNY'S OFFICE - MORNING**      31

We're angled on the door to Sonny's office. It OPENS.  
STRASSER pokes his head in. Raises his eyebrow. We see why...

Sonny's not in the office. Strasser looks back to the secretary.

STRASSER

Where is he?

SECRETARY

He didn't come in.

STRASSER

Is he sick?

SECRETARY

I'm not actually his secretary. He doesn't have a secretary. But personally I think that's a rhetorical question.

STRASSER

(looking out the window)  
Where is he?

SECRETARY

When I'm speaking, do you hear the  
words that come out of my mouth?

Strasser is frazzled from stress.

STRASSER

I'm... I'm not a strong listener.

A faint RING from down the hall. Strasser looks back. It's his office phone.

He hustles back. From his form, it's quite clear why he hasn't taken up running.

32

**INT. NIKE HQ - STRASSER'S OFFICE - MORNING**

32

RING. RIN---

He grabs the phone off the cradle. Just in time.

STRASSER

Hello?

SONNY

Strass.

STRASSER

Where the hell are you?

Great question. We're tight on Sonny, so we know as little as Strasser.

SONNY

North Carolina.

REVEAL Sonny in a rental car, talking on a 1985 giant CAR PHONE.

33

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, NORTH CAROLINA - SAME**

33

STRASSER

Sonny, no... this is... What happened to a phone call?

SONNY

I'm calling you now. I'm in the car. The rental has one of those phones in it.

STRASSER

The fucking parents, Sonny.

SONNY

You were right. Calling out of the blue would have been unprofessional.

STRASSER

So you're going to show up at their door??

SONNY

If anyone asks I'm sick.

STRASSER

You are sick. Sick in the head.

SONNY

I'll be back for your birthday, don't worry.

The line clicks dead. Strasser looks like he's seen a ghost.

"Little Pink Houses" plays on the radio.

34 **INT./EXT. - SONNY'S RENTAL CAR - DAY**

34

Mellencamp, "Pink Houses."

THE rental car, NOW ON THE HIGHWAY. Cruising down the wooded freeways of North Carolina. U.S. Highway 117. The Blue Ridge Mountains off in the distant horizon.

Sonny has a MAP folded out across the entire dashboard. He looks at the highway exit signs. Examines the map closer.

Continues down the highway....

A34 **EXT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

A34

Sonny drives by. A big blue sign hangs: CONGRATS SENIORS 84 - GO BUCS spelled out crookedly.

35 **INT./EXT. - SONNY'S RENTAL CAR - DAY**

35

He pulls up to a gravel driveway. The low hum of cicadas in the air.

And gazes upon...

36

**EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - DAY**

36

4647 Gordon Road.

A middle-class, split-level house. It's surrounded by woods on all sides. Patches of shade provide the only respite from the unforgiving summer sun.

A CAR sits in the front lawn, its hood propped up. As Sonny approaches, he sees...

JAMES JORDAN, 48, thin mustache, wrench in hand, twisting a part on the engine.

He sticks his tongue out as he concentrates on the inner-workings of the machine, a habit passed on from his grandfather.

He finally hears Sonny's footsteps on the gravel. Looks up and sees the CAR.

JAMES JORDAN

Can I help you?

SONNY

Sorry to bother you... I'm looking for the Jordans.

JAMES JORDAN

Well, you're in the right place.

SONNY

You must be Mister Jordan?

JAMES JORDAN

James.

SONNY

(reaching out his hand)  
Sonny Vaccaro. I'm with Nike.

JAMES JORDAN

Oh, here we go.

DELORIS JORDAN (O.S.)

Who is it?

They both turn to see...

DELORIS JORDAN, 43, bobbed hair, thin frame, small intelligent eyes.

SONNY

Mrs. Jordan. My name's Sonny Vaccaro. I'm here with Nike.

DELORIS JORDAN

I believe that Mr. Falk made it clear that we weren't interested.

SONNY

Well, yes, I was told not to call you.

DELORIS JORDAN

Do you typically make a habit of showing up at people's front doors unannounced?

SONNY

Ma'am, it may be the worst of all my faults, and, trust me, there are many, but... I don't like to take no for an answer. And I believe Michael should be endorsed by someone with that same mindset.

A long beat as both Jordans consider. Sonny looks back and forth between James and Deloris. *Does he have a chance?*

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, come back and take a seat Mr. Vaccaro.

Yes. He smiles.

SONNY

Please... call me Sonny.

37

**EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAY**

37

Sonny sits alone at a table in the forested backyard. Waiting. He stares deep into the trees.

Deloris emerges from the back door. Notices Sonny looking at the trees.

DELORIS JORDAN

Five generations of Jordans have lived and died in this forest by the highway. Been here since the Civil War. Some of these trees are 800-years-old.

SONNY

This place, it seems... personal.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, every history is deeply personal, Mr. Vaccaro.

(takes a breath and looks at him)

It's quite presumptuous of you to show up at our door.

(but....)

But I believe that saying you want something is fine and well, a good start, but *doing something* about it is what really counts.

SONNY

Is he... here?

DELORIS JORDAN

He is. But you don't need to see him. It's not the time for that.

Sonny accepts this. Sonny looks to the house. *Michael Jordan is in there*. Like a ghost. You can't see them, but you can always feel them.

DELORIS JORDAN (CONT'D)

How'd you get that name? *Sonny*.

SONNY

My mother had trouble bearing children. Went through two miscarriages. Bad ones. And when it finally happened... I wasn't easy either. Delivery took almost a day. She said all she saw looking up into that hot bright light in the hospital room was the sun. She said it was the first thing that came to mind when she saw my face. *The sun. Sonny*.

DELORIS JORDAN

And is she still with us?

SONNY

She's not.

DELORIS JORDAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

SONNY

It's OK. It was... a long time ago.

DELORIS JORDAN

And your father?

SONNY

Worked in the steel mills. Long days. Long *nights* sometimes. Hard life. But he raised us the best he could.

DELORIS JORDAN

I find it honorable. To give your life for your family's. You give and you give until you have nothing left to give. Then you give some more. But it's worth it.

SONNY

You're good at this. Somehow we're talking about my parents instead of you.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, I've had practice. There's no doubt about that. You do understand, Mr. Vaccaro, that Michael's intention is to sign with Adidas. With Converse as a second option.

SONNY

I do. And, respectfully, I think that would be a mistake. I'd like to make you a bet. I'll tell you exactly what Converse and Adidas meetings are going to do. I'll tell you exactly what they're going to say to you. What they're going to sell you. And if I'm wrong... then don't take the Nike meeting. *But*, if I'm right... you and Michael come.

\*

Deloris smiles. Not explicitly agreeing.

SONNY (CONT'D)

(businessman voice)

Mrs. Jordan, it's a pleasure to meet you.

(back to Sonny voice)

This is Converse by the way. He'll have his hair gelled up like an asshole, excuse my French. I'm guessing a red tie, for the Bulls. Rolex for sure.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

(back to mock voice)

You look beautiful today, Mrs. Jordan. I've seen a lot of basketball, and the feeling I get when I see Michael play... there are only a few other players that gave me that feeling. And those players are here at Converse... they're the best of the best. It's that simple. Magic Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael Jordan. Those names all belong in the same sentence. And they belong at Converse.

(back to Sonny voice)

Now, here's the important part. I want you to ask them a question. Will you do that for me?

DELORIS JORDAN

It depends on what the question is, Mr. Vaccaro.

SONNY

How will Michael stand out when he's next to the best players in the world? How will he be different?

DELORIS JORDAN

And what will they say?

SONNY

That he'll be amongst hall of famers and that's enough.

DELORIS JORDAN

And is it?

SONNY

You tell me what you think your son is capable of.

DELORIS JORDAN

And what about the Adidas meeting? Michael's top choice is Adidas.

Sonny thinks about it for a moment.

SONNY

(bad German accent)

Mrs. Jordan, welcome to...

DELORIS JORDAN

You can just tell me.

SONNY

Sorry, yeah, I can't do a German accent. We have the best shoes. Plain and simple. You're not going to see another style like this. All leather. Converse isn't cool. Michael, you're the next generation.

(takes a breath)

Just to clarify - this is now me talking not Adidas. They're not wrong. I get why Michael is interested in them.

DELORIS JORDAN

And what should I ask them?

SONNY

Ask them who's in charge of the company. Who has the final say?

DELORIS JORDAN

And what will *they* say?

SONNY

Well, I think four different people in that room will give you four different answers. And that's a big problem for Michael.

DELORIS JORDAN

Very well.

(she takes a sip of her drink)

And, finally... the most important question.

(off Sonny, who's unsure)

*What should I ask you?*

Sonny takes a breath. Thinks about. Looks her in the eye.

SONNY

Ask me why I'm in Wilmington, North Carolina.

DELORIS JORDAN

Why are you in Wilmington, North Carolina?

SONNY

Because I believe in greatness. I'd travel anywhere for it. New York, Beaverton, the moon... or Wilmington, North Carolina.

Deloris doesn't tip her hand. Her poker face could take her far in Vegas. Close on Sonny. *Did he get her?*

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, Mr. Vaccaro, thank you for coming.

SONNY

Of course.

They get up from the table.

Sonny SWATS away a WASP.

DELORIS JORDAN

They're everywhere here. Michael and his brother shot up a nest just over there when they were young. Hundreds of these wasps flew out - stingers at the ready. The boys had about a thousand welts. Everywhere. It took weeks to heal. Thought they might miss some of the season.

SONNY

But they healed.

DELORIS JORDAN

That's the truth. I believe that, you know... life is all about what we do with our pain. Goodbye, Mr. Vaccaro. And good luck.

38

**EXT. CAROLINA HIGHWAY - DAY**

38

Pointer Sisters, "Jump For My Love."

Sonny's back on the 117. He gazes out the window. Cemeteries and industrial parks. Spanish moss hangs from the trees.

The afternoon sun hangs high, just beginning it's long descent into night.

FALK (O.S.)

You go to his mother's house? You have a lot of balls you piece of shit.

39

OMITTED

39

40	OMITTED	40
41	OMITTED	41
42	OMITTED	42
43	OMITTED	43
44	<b>INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - MORNING</b>	44

Sonny at his desk on the phone.

FALK

You fat, fuck. Who do you think you are? Is everyone from Pennsylvania this stupid? Are you *trying* to ruin your fucking career? You show up at the house?

SONNY

You said it would be unprofessional to call.

FALK

My job is to protect Michael and his family from people like you. When you go around me, you make me look ineffectual, and if you end up signing him, it makes me look irrelevant. That's the worst thing you can do to an agent.

SONNY

If you're irrelevance is becoming self-evident to your client, I don't see how that's my fault. That's something you should address with your therapist.

FALK

You don't want to talk to my therapist. You don't want to have a life half as fucking miserable as my therapist. But you're giving me no choice.

(MORE)

FALK (CONT'D)

Because now, after what you did,  
unless you make some fucking  
miracle dream deal with the  
Jordans, unless you give him your  
entire company and start  
exclusively making a fucking shoe  
called whatever your fucking...  
Air... Jordan... unless you bestow  
the riches of Croesus on my client  
and close him, I will bury you  
alive and light you on fire and  
dance and piss on your grave and  
fuck the eyehole of your skull with  
a delicate slow humping motion--

SONNY

You're right. I don't want to be  
your therapist.

FALK

You want to fuck with me? You  
herpetic simplex 2 eruption on the  
sphincter of humanity--

SONNY

The fact that you know there is a  
second simplex of herpes makes me  
think you have it, David.

FALK

Of course I do. Everyone has  
herpes. You know why you don't?  
Because no one will fuck you,  
Sonny.

SONNY

I never thought of it that way.

FALK

I am a fucking monster. You fuck  
with a beast like me and I will  
break you in half.

SONNY

Why do agents make these  
negotiations into fantasy metaphors  
about physical strength? Is it  
because you feel weak, physically?  
I'm baffled. We're two out of shape  
middle aged men having a  
conversation on the phone three  
thousand miles apart.

FALK

Okay. I will personally ensure that no client of this agency ever signs a contract with Nike, and Nike will be out of the Basketball business permanently. And so will you.

SONNY

What if we do make the deal.

FALK

You and I will be best friends.

Falk makes some internal calculations. Switching gears, suddenly totally calm.

FALK (CONT'D)

It's Tuesday.

SONNY

I'm still lost.

FALK

They're coming to Beaverton, Colombo. Don't make me say it twice.

Sonny covers the receiver. PUMPS HIS FIST.

FALK (CONT'D)

And don't get ahead of yourself. Michael's not going to be excited to be there. His mother is making him go.

A44 **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

A44 \*

Sonny hangs up on Falk and smiles. In walks PHIL'S SECRETARY, it's unusual to see her down here. She spots Sonny.

PHIL'S SECRETARY

Phil wants you in his office.

SONNY

I'll be right up, give me five minutes.

PHIL'S SECRETARY

He said now.

Off Sonny's look, he rises...



STRASSER

Is there anything else you'd like to risk on this hand, sir? The deed to your house?

SONNY

Pack some pajamas tomorrow. We're not leaving the office.

STRASSER

Tomorrow's Saturday.

SONNY

Michael Jordan's coming to Beaverton.

STRASSER

Holy shit.

SONNY

Time to see Pete

Strasser shakes his head. Can't help but to smile. *Good luck.*

Run DMC, "It's Like That."

47 **INT. NIKE HQ - ELEVATOR - DAY**

47

Sonny is in the elevator. Sonny presses the "B" below "1" and "G". The elevator churns to life and heads...

Down.

Down.

*Further* down.

DING. The doors open to...

48 **INT. NIKE SHOE LAB - DAY**

48

Sonny enters THE LAB. A shoe head's dream. Computers everywhere. State of the art (for 1984).

PETER MOORE, CREATIVE DIRECTOR. Peter, 49, is a wizard. A mad scientist. His laboratory just happens to be in a basement in Beaverton.

He's balding, a thin ring of hair all that's left above his sharp jaunt cheeks. He turns in his swivel chair. Skateboarder from the parking lot. Same designer jacket. Different designer hat.

PETER MOORE

To what do I owe the honor?

SONNY

I need a shoe, Pete.

PETER MOORE

I would assume as much.

SONNY

Ideally the most beautiful shoes  
you've ever seen.

PETER MOORE

How long do we have?

SONNY

Tuesday.

PETER MOORE

Anything else?

SONNY

We're going up against Converse and  
Adidas.

PETER MOORE

Step into my office.

They turn toward the lab, on their backs:

SONNY

Was that you in the parking lot, on  
a skateboard?

PETER MOORE

Yes.

SONNY

What's that all about?

PETER MOORE

I'm having a mid life crisis.

49

**INT. NIKE HQ - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY**

49

Sonny trails behind Pete as he sits at the end of a long  
table. Shoe designs pinned all over the walls.

SONNY

It has to be individual. Think of  
it like this - Converse are  
ordinary, plain shoes.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Every player wears the same shoe. The difference with this one is that instead of having the athlete wear one of our shoes, we're going to create the shoe around the athlete.

PETER MOORE

So the shoe is a physical manifestation of the individual rather than the individual as emblem of the corporate entity.

SONNY

Something like that.

PETER MOORE

The requirements are, speak as an individual, market to a mass audience and be the most beautiful shoe known to mankind. And be ready in three days.

SONNY

Monday would be nice, to be honest.

PETER MOORE

Form or function?

SONNY

Uh...

PETER MOORE

Something can be beautiful or it can be pragmatic. Rarely both.

SONNY

Come up with something new.

PETER MOORE

Humans have been wearing shoes for thousands of years. And the design has substantively changed once - when they differentiated between right and left shoes.

(beat)

That was six hundred years ago.

SONNY

Let's go for form.

PETER MOORE

Beauty. Not function? You know what they say - poetry only makes the world bearable, it's engineering that got us to the moon.

Sonny's BEEPER starts to sound.

SONNY

Fuck, I'm late.  
(looking to Pete)  
Take the day to start.

PETER MOORE

Tomorrow's Saturday...

SONNY

If you don't come in Saturday,  
don't bother coming in on Sunday.

PETER MOORE

We're of like minds. Who's the player? For the shoe?

SONNY

Michael Jordan.

A49 **EXT. NIKE HQ - DAY**

A49

Phil's purple Porsche is sitting out front, tilt up to the office.

50 **INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

50

Sonny sits across from Phil, who preemptively reaches for the PLASTIC BASKETBALL on his desk. He moves it away from Sonny, placing it on the windowsill behind him.

PHIL KNIGHT

I'm told you circumvented virtually everyone who warned you against doing so, and set a meeting here Tuesday with the Jordan family.

SONNY

We need a firm offer.

PHIL KNIGHT

Without having authorization to make a firm offer.

SONNY

Yes. And I have been given the  
impression from the representation  
that we need to commit our entire  
budget. 250 a year.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

(beat)  
For five years.  
(beat)  
Guaranteed.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Sonny, that's just irresponsible.

SONNY  
It's not. Converse will offer 100  
at least. The Germans could match  
250 easily.

PHIL KNIGHT  
If you try to buy someone, you need  
to be sure they can be bought.

SONNY  
If we want to be a company that  
means something in the basketball  
world, we have to spend. There's  
nothing free in this life, Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Tell that to the college kids you  
give our shoes away to.

SONNY  
That's working! That was a good  
idea.

PHIL KNIGHT  
It's theoretical value that can't  
actually be measured.

SONNY  
What was my first idea? A high  
school all-star game. Pretty soon,  
every shoe company in the world is  
holding their own branded all-star  
game. I'm giving away my ideas for  
free. This place used to value  
ideas.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Stop seeking attention for  
yourself. Self is a mirage. There  
is only the non-self.

SONNY  
Does the Dalia Lama have a grape  
Porsche, Phil? You worked hard. And  
you got lucky. Half these kids,  
probably more, don't pan out.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

There are a thousand reasons why.  
Some people succeed, others fail.  
All I can fucking do is give you my  
recommendation. And this is the  
strongest one I've ever had.

PHIL KNIGHT

We're breaking too many rules.

SONNY

How the fuck do you think you got  
here? Rules are just made up to  
keep people in their lane. Just  
like the difference between you and  
the guys who didn't do what you  
did. They're still at home now  
thinking about what might have been  
and you're standing here with a  
billion dollar business because  
they followed the rules and you  
didn't.

PHIL KNIGHT

Give me the weekend to think about  
it. You don't need a firm offer to  
prep the rest of the meeting.

SONNY

I don't know how much more  
emphatically I can say this. If we  
don't make this deal, I don't know  
what my place is at this company.

Sonny walks out.

PHIL KNIGHT

Neither do I.

Close on Phil. *Thinking.*

Chaka Khan, "Ain't Nobody."

51

**EXT. CONVERSE HQ - DAY**

51

A LIMOUSINE pulls up right in front of the gaping glass doors  
of Converse HQ.

Falk steps out first. He looks up at the big CONVERSE logo.  
Smiles a shark's smile.

FALK

Here we are.

The Jordan family gets out of the car. Deloris followed by James. They turn and wait for Michael to step out. Two long legs emerge from the car... but we don't see Michael's face.

Waiting for them is... JOHN O'NEIL. He has his hair gelled up like an asshole. Red tie (for the Bulls). Rolex heavy on his wrist. Next to him is JOE DEAN.

JOHN O'NEIL  
(extending his hand)  
Mrs. Jordan, it's a pleasure to meet you. We sure do appreciate you making the long trip out here.

52

**INT. CONVERSE HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

52

The lights dimmed in a conference room. Everyone sitting around the table.

Even though everyone in the room is looking at him. We still can't see Michael Jordan.

The same CONVERSE COMMERCIAL we saw at the beginning is just finishing.

LARRY BIRD  
You already know what they did for me. I walked away with the MVP!

"Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!"

The lights go up...

JOHN O'NEIL  
I get when I see Michael play... there are only a few other players that gave me that feeling. And those players are here at Converse... It's that simple. Magic Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael Jordan. Those names all belong in the same sentence. And they belong at Converse.

JOE DEAN  
Michael, we're going to treat you like our superstars. Before you even step onto an NBA court.

FALK  
We're looking for a shoe that holds appeal beyond the basketball court.

JOHN O'NEIL

What could hold more appeal than  
the shoe worn by the best players  
in the game?

Head nods. Fair point.

JAMES JORDAN

What's coming down the pipeline?  
What's the new shoe for Michael  
going to be?

JOHN O'NEIL

If I may... tradition and history  
are paramount at Converse. How does  
the saying go? Don't fix something  
that's not broken.

DELORIS JORDAN

You have an impressive roster. The  
best three players in the league in  
Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and  
Julius Erving. But the other way to  
look at that is... the best Michael  
will be with you is number four. No  
matter what he does. How do we know  
that you're going to put Michael  
above them?

Looks around the room. *Above them?*

JOHN O'NEIL

Well... frankly, ma'am... we're  
talking about Magic Johnson and  
Larry Bird here.

JAMES JORDAN

Right, so how is he going to stand  
out when you have Bird and Magic?

JOE DEAN

He's going to play like them. He's  
going to be mentioned in the same  
sentence as them. *What could be  
better than that?*

Off Deloris and James... searching for an answer. Posters of  
Magic and Bird behind them. Almost towering.

Thomas Dolby, "She Blinded Me With Science."

53

**INT. NIKE HQ - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY**

53

Sonny flips through designs. Nods of approval. Setting certain ones aside. Strasser looks on.

Pete watches them carefully. Waiting for any indication on his work. *Does he get it?*

Sonny finally sets the papers down. Looks up.

SONNY

They're too bland. There's too much white - not enough color. The Bulls are Red and Black. Can we get more red in there?

PETER MOORE

They literally are not permitted to be one additional percentage point of red.

SONNY

Is that true? What's the actual rule?

PETER MOORE

51 percent of the shoe has to be white. NBA is extremely strict about it. They'll fine him.

SONNY

The NBA will fine him...

PETER MOORE

Five thousand dollars a day.

SONNY

(we're fucked)  
God damn it.

Strasser speaks from across the room.

STRASSER

What about *more* red?

PETER MOORE

That would incur the fine.

STRASSER

Exactly.

PETER MOORE

Do we want to be fined?

STRASSER

What if we just pay the fines? We can make a commercial out of it. It will make headlines. They're going to fine us for being too colorful.

PETER MOORE

(the moment between  
bewilderment and clarity)

Yes. More red. That's right.  
Subversive. Individualistic. That's  
it.

Sonny regards, Strasser with respect.

SONNY

That's brilliant, Rob.

PETER MOORE

Do you men think about basketball  
shoes often?

Strasser and Sonny share a look.

SONNY

I mostly think about  
basketball.

STRASSER

More marketing, really.

PETER MOORE

Basketball shoes are the central  
preoccupation of my life. I've had  
one persistent obsession that I  
harbored, and nurtured, in the hope  
of creating the perfect basketball  
shoe. I've been trying to apply  
that to the 'Sole' line. I thought  
it should be called Air Sole. But  
that isn't it. This is it.

SONNY

What is it?

PETER MOORE

Air Jordan.

He says it aloud. Looks around. There it was. His moment of  
immortality. Not with a bang but a whimper. Sees Sonny not  
thrilled.

PETER MOORE (CONT'D)

Don't you see it?

STRASSER

It's perfect.

SONNY

Yeah...

PETER MOORE

(to Sonny)

What's wrong?

SONNY

I think David Falk said the same name.

Peter is crushed. Strasser and Sonny simultaneously.

STRASSER

Fuck that guy.

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'll tell everybody you came up with it.

54 **EXT. PHIL'S GATED DRIVEWAY AND ROAD - SUNSET**

54

Phil Knight walks out from his gate. Dressed in running clothes - Nike shirt, shorts, and shoes. 80's fashion.

Stretching. Fingers to toes. Rotating his ankles. Clockwise and counter.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Go.

A54 **EXT. NIKE HQ - MORNING**

A54

Drone onto headquarters. Three cars in the lot.

55 **INT. NIKE HQ - BULLPEN - DAY**

55

Sonny and Strasser wander the empty office. It's the weekend. The entire building seemingly empty.

SONNY

I like this place better when it's empty. What does that say about me?

They come to the cubicles encircled by the modest ring of offices that make up the Basketball Division. It seems even bigger when empty.

STRASSER

If this doesn't work... Our jobs are gone. Our checks are gone.

SONNY

You can get another job. What I do  
can't be put on a resume.

STRASSER

You're very convincing Sonny.

SONNY

That's my job.

STRASSER

But it's dangerous because I listen  
to you and it makes me feel like,  
"yeah that really sounds right."  
But I also know sometimes people  
are just completely and totally  
wrong. I mean, someone really sold  
the emperor on "let's attack Pearl  
Harbor."

SONNY

Are you likening yourself to  
Hirohito?

STRASSER

In a way.

Rob heads toward the working conference bunker.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Have you heard the new Springsteen  
song, Born In the USA?

SONNY

Everyone's heard that song, Rob.

They wander in to the conference room.

56

**INT. NIKE HQ - BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

56

Sonny sits down. Strasser paces to the window. There are  
bushes out the window. Someone's dog on a leash takes a LEAK  
against the window.

STRASSER

Yeah. I play it on the tape deck in  
the car every morning to get  
psyched up. I sing it. Really loud.  
And I feel so good about America  
and all the... freedom.

SONNY

I can imagine.

STRASSER

But this morning I listened to the words. It turns out it's not about being proud at all. Like not in any way. It's about how a guy comes back from Vietnam and can't get a job. But I was really singing it, enthusiastically. With completely the wrong idea.

SONNY

It happens.

STRASSER

We now make eighty percent of our shoes in South Korea and Taiwan. I think I should be ambivalent about that.

SONNY

Maybe.

STRASSER

To be honest, I'm really not. In the divorce the judge only gave me Sunday afternoons. Just, you'll be a father at the park for four hours every Sunday. That's the only time I see Avery now, Sonny.

SONNY

I know.

STRASSER

She's getting so she's not used to me. She's only seven so... I started bringing her a free pair of Nikes on Sunday. And, uh, that's kind of what she looks forward to about seeing me, to be honest. So I bring her shoes so she will love me. She probably has sixty pairs by now-- but those shoes make me mean something to my daughter. If Phil shuts this division down, I am ashamed to say I would still pay for her Nikes, even if Phil made money and they were made in Korea. I don't want to do that. I want my daughter to love me. I want this job. And you've been a little cavalier about this risk. And taking us all with you.

Sonny sees this.

SONNY

This is the best chance we have. If we want to be successful we have to take risks.

STRASSER

Spoken like a man without a seven year old on Sunday afternoon.

SONNY

Yeah. I... I'm sorry.

STRASSER

It's okay. That's why I brought up Avery. I think I see what you're doing with this.

SONNY

It's just a shoe, Rob.

STRASSER

A shoe is always just a shoe until someone steps into it.

Sonny removes a small square BOX. It's bright pink. He slides it across the table to Strasser, who opens it to reveal...

A CUPCAKE. A single candle in the top.

SONNY

Happy birthday, Strass.

Sonny reaches into his pocket for a LIGHTER. Snaps a flame to life.

Strasser shakes his head. Smiles. Blows out the candle.

PETER MOORE (O.S.)

Hey... Sonny?

Peter leans against the door.

PETER MOORE (CONT'D)

We're ready.

Springsteen, "Glory Days."

Sonny and Strasser follow Moore into the lab, Strasser still carrying his cupcake.

PETER MOORE  
It's your birthday?

STRASSER  
Yes. And don't ask the next question.

PETER MOORE  
Well... Here it is, this is the mock up but the shoe will look like this.

The guy's see the shoes and react. They're really impressed. We don't see the shoes.

SONNY  
Wow.

STRASSER  
I have to say. It is actually beautiful.

PETER MOORE  
Life is short, art is long. It has the logic of water. It's natural. Like the shoe was always here. Before any of us. Like it always existed.

SONNY  
Right, let's get prototypes processed immediately.

58 OMITTED 58

A58 **EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT, VFX, ADIDAS HQ - DAY** A58

A giant monolith temple dedicated to purity and sporting excellence.

Scorpions, "Rock You Like A Hurricane."

59 **INT. ADIDAS HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY** 59

The ADIDAS meeting is in full swing. Deloris, James, and Michael sitting at the end of the table from the Adidas execs.

And there's a lot of them. John Fisher and his team along with the entire Dassler family. A small army.

We still don't see Michael's face.

HORST DASSLER

Michael, you're the next generation. You don't want to be grouped in with Magic and Bird. You belong in our stable of athletes.

They show Michael SHOE PROTOTYPES.

JOHN FISHER

You're not going to see another style like this. All leather. Converse aren't cool any more.

DELORIS JORDAN

What color could the shoes be?

JOHN FISHER

Well, the NBA has rules on that. But there are always alternate versions we could create.

DELORIS JORDAN

The Bulls colors are black and red.

JOHN FISHER

Well, Mrs. Jordan, we're a family company. Black shoes or colored shoes... could send the wrong idea. Not to mention... black is banned in the NBA. You'd get fined every game.

DELORIS JORDAN

Who makes the final decision?

Everyone at the table looks around. And in that split-second... we already know...

JOHN FISHER

Well, unfortunately, the family is dealing with a great loss. Not only a father, but a founder. Kathe is calling the shots.

KATHE DASSLER

Yes, that's right.

HORST DASSLER

It is collaborative though.

DELORIS JORDAN

Collaborative?

JOHN FISHER

Well, hang on there...  
*collaborative* may not be the right  
description.

HORST DASSLER

No, that's what it is. A group  
decision.

AA59 **EXT. NIKE HQ - NIGHT**

AA59

Phil's car pulls into a close up of the license plate that  
reads "NIKEMN".

A59 **EXT. NIKE HQ - OFFICE WINDOW - SUNDAY NIGHT**

A59

We see Mount Hood hovering in the distance and lower down,  
rotating and panning to reveal the window into PHIL'S OFFICE.  
The light is on. Drapes closed.

B59 **INT. C SUITE HALLWAY - COUCHES - SUNDAY NIGHT**

B59

Phil walks into the C suite hallway. Finds Sonny sitting on  
the couch.

PHIL KNIGHT

Like it up here?

SONNY

These are the only comfortable  
couches in the building.

PHIL KNIGHT

Where's Rob?

SONNY

Getting something to eat. It's not  
stealing if the cashier is gone.

PHIL KNIGHT

You've been here all weekend?

SONNY

Yeah. To be honest with you, we  
were the only ones.

PHIL KNIGHT

Well, it's a big company, Sonny.  
We're far past the days of needing  
everyone to work through the  
weekend.

SONNY

It was like the old Nike days.

PHIL KNIGHT

What would you name it?

SONNY

Name what?

PHIL KNIGHT

Our Michael Jordan Line.

Sonny looks at him, "does this mean we're doing it?"

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)

If we're going to make him the offer we're planning to make him then we damn well better have a Michael Jordan Line.

SONNY

Well, there's an idea that--Pete thinks it should be called Air Jordan.

Phil doesn't look thrilled.

PHIL KNIGHT

Eh. I don't know. Maybe it will grow on me.

SONNY

Seriously?

PHIL KNIGHT

Yeah.

SONNY

Full budget?

PHIL KNIGHT

Full budget.

SONNY

How'd you come to that solution?

PHIL KNIGHT

*I went for a run.*

60

**INT. NIKE HQ - BREAK ROOM AREA - NIGHT**

60

Sonny sits with Strasser, Howard, Phil and Peter. Meeting prep. The night before. Eating popcorn and chips and junk food raided from the company store.

SONNY

So I'll meet the Jordans out front. I'll bring them up.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Howard then you want me to pass them off to you to talk about--

WHITE

Yeah probably best to let me talk about my role down the road and then we'll go to Rob with his thing.

SONNY

Phil, you're going to come in seven minutes after the meeting starts.

PHIL KNIGHT

Shouldn't I be there from the beginning...?

SONNY

No. That looks desperate. Phil has a million things going on. But that's not apparent unless he has to step in late. Then it really seems like he's taking time out of his day.

STRASSER

Might seem like he's not a priority for the CEO of the company...

Everyone looks towards Phil. Waiting for his opinion. Phil takes a breath. Sighs.

PHIL KNIGHT

He's right.

STRASSER

Sure, no. I mean it's not that I don't see his point...

SONNY

Let's print and bind the shoe designs.

PETER MOORE

How many?

SONNY

One.

PETER MOORE

Really?

SONNY

Yup. Just one. You diminish the value the second you have multiples.

Strasser nods. He's right. Again.

Phil gives a thin smile. He's not denying it.

PHIL KNIGHT

(looking around)

I like it. I hear we have a video?

SONNY

Do we have to show it?

STRASSER

Marketing put good time into it.

Phil looks at his team.

PHIL KNIGHT

You ready?

SONNY

I think so.

HOWARD

Hell yeah.

PHIL KNIGHT

I'll see you in seven hours and twenty five minutes.

61

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

61

Sonny still at his desk late. Moonlight visible through the half-drawn blinds. Strasser passes by the doorway, peeks in.

SONNY

What's up?

STRASSER

You should go home. Get some sleep. There's nothing more you can do at this point.

SONNY

How are you feeling?

STRASSER

Same way I did seventy-two hours ago. I think you're fucking crazy. And I'm now 45 instead of 44.

SONNY

Other than that?

STRASSER

Other than that, I think we're good.

Hold on Strasser. Waiting to say something. Searching.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Sometimes the most you can do is all you can do.

(beat)

You're not in this alone, you know. Howard is key. And... I'm a marketing guy. I have a few moves.

Sonny looks at him.

SONNY

Oh you have a few moves?

STRASSER

You'll see. Little hook shot off the glass.

SONNY

Now I'm looking forward to that.

A61	<b>INT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT</b>	A61	*
	Sonny drives home from Nike HQ.		
62	<b>TIME LAPSE</b>	62	
	The Weather Girls, "It's Raining Men."		
	The sun rises over Nike.		
63	<b>EXT. NIKE HQ - DAY</b>	63	
	Sonny waits outside in the parking lot.		
	He stares up into the sky. The bright sun shining. He watches a plane high in the sky. Just a dot from where he's standing.		

It floats through the air in a straight line, as if it was being pulled by a string.

He breathes in. Breathes out.

A WHITE LIMO PULLS UP.

FALK steps out first. Gives Sonny a smile and a nod. Like he can't even believe they're here.

Deloris and James next.

SONNY

You made it.

JAMES JORDAN

Long time no see. You still got that phone in the car?

SONNY

Had to return that whole operation.

JAMES JORDAN

Damn shame.

Sonny goes to give Deloris a hug. She takes a step back. Reaches out her hand. Sonny nods. OK, not an ideal start.

DELORIS JORDAN

(leaning closer to Sonny)

He doesn't want to be here. But he's going to listen. He promised me that. So... you have our attention.

We see Sonny, Deloris, and James looking at MICHAEL JORDAN (but from OTS so Jordan is in soft focus foreground only. High speed angle on Sonny, looking at Michael. He's here.

A63 **INT. NIKE HQ - LOBBY - DAY**

A63

Sonny escorts the Jordans through the lobby.

64 **INT. NIKE HQ - BOARDROOM - DAY**

64

A banner hangs across the entrance: "THE NIKE FAMILY WELCOMES THE JORDAN FAMILY." Sonny and Strasser exchange greetings somewhat awkwardly.

SONNY

(to Strasser, sotto voce)

Where the fuck is H?

Strasser has no idea. No one panic.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Hi. Welcome. This is a big day. The beginning of something big. I hope.

The family looks at him expectantly. He seems unsure.

SONNY (CONT'D)

So, Michael, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan, how was your flight?

JAMES JORDAN

Fine. We had Arby's at the airport.

STRASSER

You didn't fly them here yourself, Mike?

Horrible lame joke. Strasser knows it. He points to the sign.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Not gonna ask if your wings are tired... We made a sign....

Sonny looks at him. He's kind of blowing it already. WHITE enters in a hurry.

WHITE

Sorry I'm late. I had these guys from legal that told me the best hamburgers were close by. But a Portland close by is longer than you think...

The Jordans smile.

SONNY

Ma'am this is Howard White.

He isn't who she expected.

DELORIS JORDAN

Mr. White.

\*

White smiles.

WHITE

Mrs. Jordan.

DELORIS JORDAN

How do you like it here?

Howard greets Michael and his father.

WHITE

First time I came out here I didn't know what a Nike was. Couldn't find Oregon on a map for a million dollars.

DELORIS JORDAN

Do you like it here?

\*

WHITE

I'm getting used to it. First day I came out. It's pouring down rain, I'm searching in the car for a umbrella. I look up, its people going out there running in the rain. And they know its raining. I had my suit on, it was pouring rain, white folks going for a run! For real, man. And they don't have Arby's close by. But I found a church I like and some good people. I even took up cycling. I know. Crazy for a black man. You better watch out before we send your son home playing badminton.

She smiles at him.

DELORIS JORDAN

I'm sure there are worse things.

\*

WHITE

Well, I help out with that too. Help our young men make wise choices. Tiny says "Howard White is the angel on your shoulder when the devil is telling you all the stuff you shouldn't be doing." They may not do what I say, but I guarantee you they gonna listen. Or we gonna find out the hard way.

They share a look. This is not at all lost on her.

DELORIS JORDAN

That can't be easy.

\*

HOWARD

You know men, we foolish without someone to help see things right. I work with big Mo Malone now, so whatever trouble Michael tries to get in won't be anything that I can't handle.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(looks at Jordan)  
But we have fun too.

JAMES JORDAN

A young man needs both.

HOWARD

(low)  
And you need someone to complain  
to. That's me.

He smiles at them. We see why Howard is so important to the company.

DELORIS JORDAN

This is my son, Michael.

\*

We see White over Jordan's back, he greets him. They hug. They take their seats.

Throughout the scene we never see Michael's face. Just out of focus raking shots across the front or overs that feature the group pitching him. But here is no mistaking he is the focus of everyone's attention.

SONNY

Take a look....

The AJ1's. They look even better in person. High cut leather. Pristine condition. The red and black almost radiating. The color blocking giving the appearance that its made of individual pieces.

The Nike swoosh is displayed prominently, and toward the top sits the Air Jordan logo. The shoes look at once timeless and like they've been sent from the future.

On the bottom: AIR SOLES - made up of concentric circles, like ripples in a pond.

There is a beat while they all look toward Jordan for his reaction.

MICHAEL JORDAN

Bulls colors.

STRASSER

(handing the shoes to  
Jordan)  
Go ahead, take a look.

PETER MOORE

I know you like the shoes low to  
the ground.

(MORE)

PETER MOORE (CONT'D)

We skived the cushioning down so you'll be as close to the floor as possible. We can tailor them however you like.

(off Jordan, nodding)

The shoe will be designed specifically for you. We'll build it off a cast of your foot.

STRASSER

What do you think?

JAMES JORDAN

That shoe is red and black.

STRASSER

Yeah.

DELORIS

You have to wear white in the NBA.

STRASSER

Says who? Adidas?

JAMES JORDAN

I thought the NBA had a rule on color?

SONNY

They do. We're going to pay the fines. They want it all white. And fuck 'em. Excuse me. We'll pay the fines. Every game.

PHIL gives a knock at the door and walks in.

PHIL KNIGHT

Hello. I'm sorry I'm running a bit behind. Phil Knight.

SONNY

Phil, I was just telling Michael that we're also willing to pay whatever fines he incurs as a result of our shoe's design.

Phil looks at Sonny. Not happy but sticks with the plan.

PHIL KNIGHT

Great. We have a video?

STRASSER

We do. I just thought the Jordan's might be interested in how we see the future at Nike, how we would market Michael as a person, not just another guy wearing someone's shoes.

He hands out MAGAZINES. He has MOCKED UP **Time Magazine, Newsweek Magazine, Sports Illustrated**, all with Michael on the cover and headlines like "MVP" and "Jordan flies on Air" as well as sports illustrated player of the year.

The family looks them over with interest.

White passes his own magazine, Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue with Jordan on the cover...

WHITE

(kidding)

There ain't no limit over here at Nike. You can do anything..

(more serious)

We believe Michael can represent more than just a basketball player. Hell, you can find them anywhere. They cheap. You looking at a busted up one right here.. But Rob wants to really market our players. That hasn't been done before.

Deloris smiles. White smiles at her and Mr. Jordan.

PHIL KNIGHT

Okay, let's roll the tape.

The lights dim. The projector boots up. And on the screen...

A highlight tape of Jordan's UNC highlights set to the Pointer Sisters "JUMP".

Sonny watches the Jordan family closely. Examining their faces for any sign or hint.

And it's clear to him. *They look bored.* They don't look impressed.

Sonny looks around. He *looks to White who subtly shakes his head, "This ain't it."*

From behind we see Jordan lean back and yawn.

White looks at Sonny. They share a look. It's not working.

SONNY

I'm sorry...

Sonny gets it. He stands up. Hits the lights.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Hold on. Forget all this. Forget where we are. Forget Nike.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny...

SONNY

Let's stop with the bullshit.

Sonny looks right at Jordan.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Forget about the shoes. Forget about the money. You're going to make so much money that it's not going to matter. You'll never want again. Money can buy you almost anything... but it can't buy you immortality. That... you have to earn.

Sonny stares Michael Jordan right in the eye. *He's not scared.*

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'm going to look you in the eyes and tell you the future.

**INTERCUT FOOTAGE OF MICHAEL PLAYING - HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE**

SONNY (CONT'D)

You were cut from your high school basketball team. You willed your way to the NBA. You're going to win championships. It's an American story. And that's why American's will love it.

**INTERCUT FLASHES OF THE FUTURE:**

The Michael Jordan we all know. Skinny as a rookie, streaking down the court in iconic Bulls red.

SONNY (CONT'D)

People are going to build you up, god are they going to. Because when you're *great, and new...* We love you.

(MORE)



SONNY (CONT'D)

It's the most predictable pattern  
with fame, we build you into  
something that doesn't exist and it  
makes us feel small so we find your  
flaws and try to rip you to shreds.

The death of his father. Found murdered in a car.

His retirement from Basketball. Taking hacks in the minors  
with the White Sox. Jordan rides the bus.

SONNY (CONT'D)

This person that we built into a  
God isn't a God, and that makes us  
feel better about ourselves,  
because we're not Gods. That's how  
it works. We do it again and again  
and again.

Coming out of retirement. The "I'm back" press release.

The second three-peat. The celebrations. The trials. The  
champagne.

Hitting the final shot of his Bulls career. The leap. The  
fist pump.

SONNY (CONT'D)

A shoe is just a shoe until  
somebody steps into it, then it has  
meaning.

(MORE)

## SONNY (CONT'D)

We all want to touch greatness and we all need you in these shoes, not so your life has meaning, but so that ours do.

Sonny looks around the room.

## SONNY (CONT'D)

That's all it is. Everyone at this table will be forgotten as soon as our time on this earth is over. Except for you. You are going to be remembered forever. Because some things are eternal. You're Michael Jordan... and your story is going to make us want to fly.

The lights come up. Strasser looks to Phil and Pete. *Holy shit.*

Sonny places the shoe on the table.

## PHIL KNIGHT

We've shared our offer with Mr. Falk. But if you'd like to take a look...

(he slides stapled paper  
across the table)

This would be the largest endorsement the company has ever made.

## FALK

We're expecting others to bid in a similar range.

PHIL KNIGHT

Yes, thank you, Mr. Falk. My point stands: Nike has been in search of a basketball star, and we believe you are that star, Michael.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well... thank you, Mr. Vaccaro.  
(she looks around the room)  
Mr. Knight. Mr. Strasser. Mr. White.  
(smiles)  
Thank you.

WHITE

Call me any time.

He hands her his card. Sonny does the same.

FALK

We'll be assessing everything tomorrow. And we should have an answer for you shortly after that.

Sonny catches their eyes on the way out. Nods.

Everyone waits until the Jordan party is out the door. They look around.

Sonny is just standing there. Almost in a daze.

STRASSER

Where did that come from?

SONNY

I don't know.

PHIL KNIGHT

I think we got him.

STRASSER

I do too.

PHIL KNIGHT

All we can do is wait for the call.

AA64 INT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT

AA64 \*

Sonny drives home after the Jordan meeting.

A64           **EXT. CONVENIENT STORE - ADJACENT STREET - NIGHT**           A64

Sonny walks down the street, away from the store, holding a bag of groceries. His beeper goes off and he grabs it, runs back up to the payphone in front of the store, hurriedly puts in a quarter. \*

                  SONNY

          Hello. It's me.

                  (beat, it's about  
                  something else)

          Oh, okay. That's fine. Any word  
          from the Jordan's?

                  (beat)

          Call me as soon as you hear  
          anything. You have the home number  
          too?

                  (they have the home  
                  number)

          Okay great. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone. Looks out for a beat, walks back down the street towards home.

B64           **INT. SONNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**           B64

Sonny sits pensively by the phone. No more tapes to watch. Nothing to do but wait.

C64           **INT. SONNY'S APARTMENT - LATER, NIGHT**           C64

The phone is in the foreground. Sonny is asleep.

D64           **INT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT**           D64

Sonny drives, waiting for a call.

E64           **EXT. NIKE - DAY**           E64

Sonny enters Nike HQ, gets out of his car and walks in.

65           **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**           65

Those same eyes, now startled awake by...

THE RINGING PHONE.

Sonny picks it up.

SONNY

Hello?

It's Howard calling from a pay phone.

WHITE

Sonny.

SONNY

Howard? What's going on?

WHITE

Yeah I just heard... Adidas matched the offer.

SONNY

The 250?

WHITE

And a car.

Sonny sags.

SONNY

You're kidding me.

WHITE

Nah, man. I'm sorry. I was talking to James today and that's what he said, I don't know that Michael has accepted it yet.

SONNY

Uh huh.

WHITE

..I wanted to give you the heads up in case you need to make some moves. Move the spend around.

SONNY

No. I mean, this was the move...

Sonny trailing off... disappointment sinking in. It's over.

WHITE

Look, I'm sure you'll hear from Falk soon.

SONNY

I'm sure he can't wait.

WHITE

I'm sorry, man.

SONNY

Right.

They hang up. Sonny's sits back and it sinks in. It's over.

He stands up and looks around. All the people in the basketball division doing their jobs, oblivious that they are about to lose them. He looks through the glass in his office window and can see into Strasser's office. His heart sinks for his friend. He fucked this up. Strasser looks over at him and smiles.

The phone rings at his desk. He sits down, readies himself.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Yeah, David. I heard.

DELORIS

Mr. Vaccaro?

Sonny sits up, he knows it's real, *it's his mother. She's calling to tell him no herself.*

66

**INT. JORDAN HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

66

Intercut with her at home on the wall phone in the kitchen.

SONNY

Mrs. Jordan.

DELORIS

I have some news for you.

SONNY

Just do it.

DELORIS

You didn't expect me to call?

SONNY

Typically I would hear from Mr. Falk, but it's a pleasant surprise, I promise.

DELORIS

I told Mr. Falk I would take it from here.

SONNY

I have a lot of respect for that.  
Thank you very much.

DELORIS

We're going to accept your offer.  
The 250 in salary guaranteed  
    (eyes roll, her son got  
      what he wanted)  
and the shoe is going to be named  
for Michael and our family.

Sonny stands up. What??!!

SONNY

What?

DELORIS

Yes.

SONNY

Really?

DELORIS

Yes, Mr. Vaccaro... Don't sound so  
surprised.

SONNY

This is a very good choice, Mrs.  
Jordan, you won't regret this--and  
let me give you my personal  
commitment--

DELORIS

I'm not finished,

Sonny's heart in his throat.

SONNY

Excuse me. Go ahead.

DELORIS

We're willing to accept your deal  
and commit right now with one minor  
provision.

SONNY

Name it.

DELORIS

It's nothing really, I mean, it's  
so obvious I assume it's omission  
from the term sheet was a clerical  
error.

SONNY

I'm sure it was.

DELORIS

Michael will also earn a percentage of the revenue from the sale of each shoe that is sold.

SONNY

I'm sorry?

DELORIS

Oh no, not all Nike shoes. Just the ones with his name and likeness on them.

Sonny is stunned, floored. It's impossible.

SONNY

Oh, Mrs. Jordan, it doesn't, uh, these deals don't work that way. I understand your assumption but the athletes earn a licensing fee, in this case obviously a groundbreaking fee. But they don't participate in the gross sales of the actual shoe.

(Sonny going into rambling and panic)

Nike Is a public company. Just the precedent alone they can't afford to disrupt the entire industry. That wouldn't--that's not possible. That's not how its done. They don't do it that way. There are a whole other set of economics around how shoes are manufactured and relationships with retailers who set their own pricing... It's very complicated.It's not realistic.

DELORIS

Yes, I'm sure it's quite complicated.

SONNY

This is cleaner for you and your family. This way he knows exactly what he makes every year, and he doesn't have to worry if Nike never sells a single shoe.

DELORIS

That's not his concern.

SONNY

Uh, huh...

DELORIS

His concern is that in order for the shoe to be meaningful, in order for young people, many of them not of real means, to want to go out and spend the money they worked all week, or two weeks, at the mall for, Michael is the one who has to create the meaning in that shoe. His name is on that shoe.

SONNY

We think that will actually be a benefit to him, his likeness gets marketed by Nike--

DELORIS

No. It won't. His likeness. His name, are not meaningful in any way to Nike unless he scores forty points a night. Every night. Unless he beats Hakeem for rookie of the year, makes the all-star AND all-NBA team

SONNY

That would be quite exceptional, Mrs. Jordan. But this is the NBA. These are the best of the best.

Sonny's head shakes. This lady is enamored by her son and blinded to reality. She's going to blow this.

DELORIS

And he needs to be better. He needs to lead the whole league in scoring...and steals...

SONNY

That's never happened.

Sonny's face. That's never happened...

DELORIS

It will happen. He will win championships. Multiple championships. I know my son. all star selections, all Star MVP, defensive player of the year--

This is getting into fantasyland. Sonny dies inside, she's too far gone. This won't work.

SONNY

Ma'am, with respect, the defensive player of the year is *Sidney Moncrief*. You can't be Magic and Michael Cooper.

DELORIS

But if he does he deserves to be compensated for that. And if he doesn't you don't pay a dime. Isn't that what you people are betting on. One athlete will become so special everyone wears his shoes. You eat, we eat. That's all he's asking.

SONNY

It'd a fair point. But it's not how business works. They invest the capital, they see the reward. That's how it is.

DELORIS

Maybe that needs to change. And if he does what I think he's going to do, what you think he's going to do and what he knows he's going to do. It won't be the Nike shoe company promoting my son. I promise you. It will be the other way around. And if that's the case, he deserves a piece.

She makes the kind of sense people make, in Sonny's mind, that people make who understand life but not the business they're dealing with.

SONNY

Mrs. Jordan, I understand what you're saying. I actually agree with it. But that just isn't how it goes in this life. People like your son...people like you and me...people who work for a living. We don't 'participate' in anything. They don't let us own anything. We take the best we can get. This is a great deal. The biggest we've ever offered anyone by far. He could blow out his knee next week.

DELORIS

I agree this business is unfair. It's unfair to my son. It's unfair to people like you. But sometimes a person comes along who is not only so extraordinary that they might force those reluctant to part with some of that wealth to do so--not out of charity--out of greed, because he is so very special. Even more rarely, that person demands to be treated according to their worth because they *understand* what they are worth.

SONNY

Or their mother does.

DELORIS

My son is going to change the way people see your shoes. If they have appeal in the parks and on the streets, then the rest of the country will want to wear them too. Which might make your job easier, too. So you aren't trying to sell jogging shoes to people for whom the very notion of running out of choice is absurd and offensive. This is North Carolina. This is America. Black people have to save their energy. Because if we need to get somewhere in a hurry, we don't have the luxury to jog.

67

**INT. NIKE HQ - C SUITE - LATE AFTERNOON**

67

Sonny comes walking down the long hall toward Phil who waits on the couch by his office. He sees Sonny, rises and heads to meet him.

PHIL KNIGHT

What happened?

SONNY

We didn't get him.

PHIL KNIGHT

Why not? I heard you were closing the mother.

SONNY

Adidas matched. We have to do better.

PHIL KNIGHT

More money?

SONNY

No. I'm sorry, Phil. I thought...

PHIL KNIGHT

He wants a piece of the shoe.

Sonny shakes his head.

SONNY

The gross revenue, everything with his name on it.

PHIL KNIGHT

Correct me if I'm wrong Sonny, but I've gotten the sense you really believe in this guy.

SONNY

Of course I do.

PHIL KNIGHT

Well, what's the point of hiring a basketball guru if you don't listen to what he has to say?

SONNY

The board would never go for that. It's never been done. You'd be putting yourself in a bad spot. The board could remove you.

PHIL KNIGHT

If he is who you think he is, he'll be worth every penny. Let me worry about the board.

Sonny has never heard this from Phil.

SONNY

It's a big risk for you.

PHIL KNIGHT

You're remembered for the rules you break. Go close the deal.

Sonny regards Phil and turns to go.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)

Hey Sonny.

He turns back.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)

I'm the guy who built this company.

SONNY

I get it, Phil.

68

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

68

Sonny on his phone. Waiting as it rings. Until...

DELORIS JORDAN

(from the phone)

Hello?

**INTERCUT**

SONNY

Mrs. Jordan. Is Michael there?

A68

**INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY**

A68

DELORIS JORDAN

Yes.

SONNY

I've spoken with our CEO.

DELORIS JORDAN

And.

SONNY

The Nike corporation is going to accept your terms and offer Michael Jordan a direct revenue share from the sale of every single shoe with his name or likeness on it. Anywhere they are sold in the world.

DELORIS JORDAN

Congratulations.

SONNY

Thank you.  
(beat)  
Can I speak to Michael.

DELORIS JORDAN

Yes. I think it's time.

B68

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

B68

\*

Sonny finishing his call with Deloris.

\*

SONNY

\*

Can I speak with Michael?

\*

Beat. He smiles.

\*

SONNY (CONT'D)

\*

I'll hold.

\*

He waits a long beat. We hear a voice on the other end. A familiar voice, if younger...

\*

\*

VOICE

\*

Hello?

\*

SONNY

\*

Hello, Michael. Welcome to Nike.

\*

CUT TO:

\*

C68

**EXT. GARDEN AREA, SEEING SONNY THROUGH THE GLASS - SAME**

C68

\*

Sonny is talking animatedly to Michael. We don't hear what they say.

\*

\*

69

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

69

Sonny has his feet up.

FALK

At the buzzer Sonny. At the buzzer.

SONNY

What can I say. I love the  
suspense.

FALK

Percentage of sales?

SONNY

I wouldn't lie to you, David. I  
hear your lawyers are on six figure  
retainers.

FALK

They're on a cap. And just so you  
know, Adidas was never gonna match  
a percentage. No one was. Thought  
you were the kind of guy who liked  
to know when he got a move put on  
him. Growth mindset.

SONNY

I think it might work out well for  
everyone. What is Adidas doing now?

FALK

Pivoting. Going to Mel Turpin.

SONNY

Quite the pivot.

FALK

He's not a client.

SONNY

I see.

FALK

How's Phil doing? It's a big step.

SONNY

He's good. Big steps is how he  
built this company.

(beat)

You better get me on speed dial for  
the next five years?

FALK

Please, Howard will take over with Mike and you'll be gone in a year. No more rabbits to chase.

SONNY

You never know. That's the thing about rabbits. They make more.  
(beat)  
Well, I would say it's been a pleasure doing business with you, David but it never really is.

FALK

As it should be. I don't do this to make friends, Sonny. I don't have friends. I have clients.  
(alt:)  
That's what makes me a great agent. I don't have friends. I have clients. When I sell this business, I'll be a rich man. I'll eat alone, but I'll be rich and so will my clients-- then I'll worry about friends.

SONNY

Call me the next time you have a once in a generation talent.

FALK

I'm looking at signing Ewing, you like him?

SONNY

Patrick Aloysius Ewing. Immigrated from Jamaica at 13, in 1975, moved to Auburn street in Cambridge Massachusetts. Never played basketball until Mike Jarvis recruited him at Rindge and Latin and they won three straight D1 titles. That's the kind of player who should be wearing Nikes. And after the deal we just made you can sign anyone you want. You're welcome.

FALK

You're welcome, Sonny. You should be thanking me for coming up with the name for the shoe.

SONNY  
Air Jordan?

\*  
\*

FALK  
Yeah.

\*  
\*

SONNY  
No. Pete came up with that.

\*  
\*

FALK  
What??

\*  
\*

Sonny hangs up. Smiles.

\*

70

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

70

Phil lies prone on the couch beneath his framed rules poster. Sonny enters. He looks at Phil.

SONNY

We're closed.

Sonny places the contract on Phil's desk.

PHIL KNIGHT

Congratulations.

SONNY

You okay?

PHIL KNIGHT

Yeah. I'm focusing on my breath.

SONNY

Why?

PHIL KNIGHT

I had a panic attack. I'm doing a forgiveness mediation for myself.

SONNY

What did you do?

PHIL KNIGHT

I think we may have set a precedent that will make sports marketing ten times more expensive.

SONNY

It's also possible it might pan out.

PHIL KNIGHT

Yeah.

(beat)

Fuck it. Too many cows. If we ruin the business, at least we had fun doing it. Felt like the old Nike days.

SONNY

You know I thought it was pronounced "Nicky" the first time I saw the word.

PHIL KNIGHT

I really had a strong feeling we should call the company Dimension Six. Think that would have been successful?

SONNY

Naming it after the God of Victory probably has more appeal to athletes than sci-fi.

PHIL KNIGHT

We only did that because the consultants told us people like four-letter words.

SONNY

I like four letter words.

(beat)

What was the swoosh supposed to be?

PHIL KNIGHT

I have no idea.

(beat)

I paid Carolyn Davidson thirty five dollars for it in 1971.

SONNY

I heard you didn't like it?

PHIL KNIGHT

I said it would grow on me.

SONNY

Phil, no one else would have hired me. That's the truth. I appreciate it.

PHIL KNIGHT

You're a brilliant guy, Sonny. And you have courage. That's what you do here. We need that. I think.

SONNY

Thank you.

Sonny smiles a little, starts to walk out.

PHIL KNIGHT

It'll be fine. We've never sold more than three million on a shoe. He's one guy. How much can it be?

Sonny leaves the room. Phil sits alone, reflecting.

TITLE CARD:

**THE AIR JORDAN SHOE SOLD \$162 MILLION IT'S FIRST YEAR**

Phil takes a shot with the nerf basketball. Bricks.



E72        **INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

E72

David Falk eats dinner alone at a table for two.

73        **TITLE CARDS CONTINUE:**

73

*Phil Knight retired in 2015 after 51 years serving as CEO and Chairman of Nike. Nike acquired Converse in 2003.*

*Rob Strasser left Nike in 1987 to serve as CEO of Adidas America. Phil called it a great betrayal. He died on October 30, 1993 at 46 years old. The funeral was attended by thousands, including his daughter. Phil Knight didn't show.*

*Howard White now serves as the Vice President of Sports Marketing for the Jordan Brand, and is one of the most respected and well-liked individuals at Nike.*

WE SEE THE AIR JORDAN MUSEUM, IN CONTRAST TO ADIDAS

*Sonny was fired from Nike in 1991. He went on to work at Adidas with Strasser, where he helped court another once-in-a-generation talent... Kobe Bryant.*

*Michael Jordan is believed to have earned more than half a billion dollars annually in passive income from the sale of Air Jordan Nikes.*

And he's worth every penny.

**END**