

BLUE CHIPS

By

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SECOND DRAFT

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FADE IN:

PRE-TITLE SEQUENCE.

INT. A ROOM WITH BLUE WALLS - NIGHT

Our man, PETE "PETEY" BELL, moves around the room slowly. He has the looks and nervous mannerisms of the athlete he was. His rough edged good looks are of the city, as are his speech patterns. He's a talker, and he orchestrates his speeches carefully -- he knows they are inspiring. He wears a blue plaid blazer in marvelously bad taste, with a blue shirt and gold tie.

When he speaks, it appears that he is addressing us, the audience.

PETE

Jesus Christ never saw a basketball game.

(beat)

Think about that. Gautama Buddha never saw a basketball game. Mohammed never saw a basketball game. Unbelievable.

(beat)

But...they knew that when you are integrated spiritually and physically, when your muscles are hard and your mind is open, when your discipline sets you free--YOU FREE--

(evangelistically)

Then when you hit the 20' "J" from the base line, when you dish off a "no-look" feed on the break, or when you jam with authority--

(beat)

Then--the sense of fulfillment and inner peace is so great that you are liberated from earth-body restrictions, you have conquered time and gravity, you are in heaven, nirvana, the magic place...

(beat)

Are you hearing me? There is no reincarnation. You don't come back as a cow or a dog. You stop breathing, that's it. Earth to earth, dust to dust. Heaven is here. Hell is here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOW PULLBACK reveals TWELVE LARGE YOUNG ATHLETES sitting solemnly, listening and concentrating. Seven are black. They all wear blue and gold shiny warm-up basketball suits. TWO STUDENT TRAINERS are also in the room. Pete has the absolute attention of all. Though Pete is the assistant coach, he is the charismatic presence, the real power behind the throne.

VIC ROKER, 55, THE HEAD COACH, stands to the side taking it all in routinely.

PETE

Winning will bring heaven to
you right now, tonight--

(his attention is diverted)

Tony, you're not thinking about
the game. I can tell from the
way your pupils are dilating.
You got your head in your girlfriend's
sweater. I can send you home, Tony...

TONY, a 20-year-old black, feels guilty and squirms.

PETE

...You wanta go knocking on your
momma's door? You wanta tell your
momma you couldn't cut it in college?

Tony shakes his head 'no'. Pete addresses everybody.

PETE

Or you wanta win tonight? You win,
you're in heaven. Birds sing. Cool
breezes. The world makes sense.
Life is worth living. Food tastes
better. Flowers smell sweeter. Girls
are prettier.

(beat)

You lose tonight? Ice cream tastes
like manure and a rose smells like a
wet dog. And your girl? Well, you guess.

(beat)

When you lose, some small part of you,
some piece of your soul...dies.
And when hope disappears, the chance
to thrive and grow and breathe, disappears.

(beat)

How do you want your food to taste? Your
girlfriend to look? Do you want to
be in Heaven? Or hell?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PLAYERS (in unison)

Heaven!

PETE

Right answer! You wanna win?

(builds to
a fever)

You say you wanna win, you wanna
win?! Or...you wanna win? I
wanna win, you wanna win, we wanna
win!

(beat)

Eh?! Eh?! Eh?!

A ROAR -- the players go crazy and charge onto the court.

As the locker room door to the arena is opened by a
Trainer, and the players charge out, the sounds of the
band hitting the BLUE AND GOLD FIGHT SONG fill the arena.

Pete and Vic exchange smiles and follow their players
out to the court.

VIC

Little hard on Tony?

PETE

He loves it. I got a surprise
for ya, Vic.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WESTERN UNIVERSITY SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Screaming, intense noise level -- more electrical energy
than a rock concert -- the arena shakes and we are
shaken with it. Pete points upward, and:

Thousands of blue and gold streamers fall from the
rafters and fill the arena as the Fight Song drives
home its beat, and the Western University Dolphins
take the court.

A DOLPHIN MASCOT runs around, the music grows even
more intense, the players slam home dunk after dunk,
and as Vic and Pete stand by the home bench, the
arena filling with streamers:

ROLL TITLES OVER PRE-GAME WILDNESS

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA - LATER

The game in progress. Everything about the Western University Dolphins is BLUE and GOLD. Cheerleaders, banners, towels, etc.

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF THE GAME

- 1) Players crash after a rebound--the crowd responds.
- 2) Vic stands and sits as Pete berates an official.
- 3) The referee warns Pete to sit down--Pete flares.
- 4) Arizona hits a shot--the Dolphin Mascot waves a fist.

THE REFEREE blows his whistle on a Western player, it's a close call, and immediately--

A WOMAN IN THE STANDS leaps to her feet, shouting invectives at the ref. This is JENNY BELL, Pete's wife, a pretty woman full of fire. Also, she's holding a one year old baby girl, VICKI. The child is held with the routine posture of a woman who drags the baby everywhere. The child doesn't even scream. It's routine.

JENNY

Horrible call! Horrible! Hey,
ref, you're missing a good game!
The guy had position!

Jenny turns to a FAN sitting next to her.

JENNY (cont'd)

The guy definitely had position!

FAN

Sit down, Mrs. Bell...

Jenny sits back down, barely placated. While on the floor--

Vic, the head coach, signals for a time-out. As the band strikes up and the players gather around Vic, Pete taunts an official.

PETE

(to referee)
Call 'em both ways.

REFEREE

Sit down or I gotta ring you up!

Coolly, the REFEREE points to the bench. Pete knows how far to go and whirls, bursting into the huddle--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Four starting players are black, one is white. Most of the bench is black. Vic speaks reasonably and positively to his players, but firmly.

VIC

Movement, movement, movement...

Pete bursts out automatically.

PETE

(to Tony, a black)
You're quitting on me, Tony
goddamnit! Guy's been in your
jock all night.

(to MICHAEL, a
huge black)
You're playing like a girl, Alice,
you will hit the boards, will you?!

(to JAMES,
a black)
It's called a basketball. It's
the round thing out there. It
bounces. Got it?...

(to CHUCK, a white)
I don't have a clue what you're
doing on the paint in there!
Run the plays! Will you run
the plays??!

Pete's chastising borderline tactics suddenly do a magical switch -- as the buzzer sounds signaling the end of the time out -- to a tone of a wholehearted, positive reinforcement. The effect is magical.

PETE

We're okay -- everything's
terrific -- now, c'mere--stack...

Everybody sticks their hands into the huddle.

PETE (cont'd)

Right here, right here!

(they stack hands)

We're gonna get 'em right now,
right! Gonna beat 'em on the
glass, beat 'em at both ends
of the court and we're gonna win
this thing!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With an emotionally charged grunt of conviction, the players break out of the huddle and the game resumes. Vic again takes over with his coolness now that Pete has given the team its charge.

Our team inbounds the ball -- A player brings it upcourt, a play unfolds. Michael fakes outside, tries to back-door his man -- but the pass goes out of bounds.

ON THE BENCH - Vic winces as if he's been shot, the players on the bench shrug with disappointment, and Pete seems to screw himself a notch tighter.

BACK ON THE COURT - Arizona's Ace brings the ball downcourt -- he cuts and drives toward the key. Tony cuts in front of him -- there is a collision -- we think the foul is on them. Pete leaps to his feet.

PETE

Charging!

The Referee blows his whistle and points to Tony lying on his back -- the foul is on us. Tony winces, and:

PETE CHARGES onto the court -- a restricted area for a coach, and the Referee points him back to the bench.

PETE (cont'd)

You're an ape, Tommy!

The Referee blows his whistle and points at Pete.

REFEREE

Technical foul on Bell.

The Referee walks to the bench, the game stops, and Arizona's team is awarded a free throw.

PETE

Heat of the battle, Tommy, you ain't no ape.

REFEREE

Sit down, Pete, or I'll run you off the floor.

VIC

Pete, sit down!

Pete does, reluctantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Arizona makes a free throw, gets the ball out of bounds, and quickly scores again.

Tony brings the ball downcourt -- and, in a reversal of the earlier play, he cuts toward the basket.

There is a collision with an opposing player, both players go down. The Referee blows his whistle and points at Tony -- a charging foul.

Everyone in the arena is on their feet -- even the implacable Vic. Pete, as usual, is the loudest and most expressive.

Pete walks onto the court and begins mimicking the Referee, and though the crowd loves it, the Referee clearly does not.

REFEREE

Technical foul on Pete Bell from Western...second technical, automatic ejection...

He turns to Pete and is not so cool.

REFEREE (cont'd)

Gotta lock you up, you maniac.

The Referee orders Pete to leave the court.

PETE

You're an embarrassment to your uniform.

Pete, through hooting fans and chaos, leaves the court.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WESTERN UNIVERSITY LOCKER ROOM

Pete sits on a training table, the game winds down on the radio. Student trainers prepare the locker room. We hear the game end on the radio -- we lose, and soon:

The doors open, and the players enter -- Pete mills among "his boys," confronting them. Tired and sweaty and upset about the loss--Pete knows just how far he can go.

Pete approaches Michael, the 6'10" black giant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Did you want it bad enough?

MICHAEL
I wanted it.

PETE
Bad?

MICHAEL
Bad.

PETE
Okay, okay...

He moves to another player, Tony.

PETE (cont'd)
Where'd you go wrong, Tony?

TONY
I dunno...no flow out
there, no vibes...it happens...

PETE
I don't wanta hear about 'vibes.'
Did you want it bad?

TONY
I wanted it bad.

Vic's voice rises above the murmuring.

VIC
Listen up...Now I'm keeping the
press out for five minutes, and
when they get here I don't want
to see any idiotic excuses in the
paper tomorrow -- we are gentlemen.
That's all.

The locker room slowly comes to life and as Pete
continues making the rounds, Vic cuts him off.

VIC (cont'd)
Pete, could I see ya a second--

VIC'S OFFICE -- as they enter. It is attached to the
locker room, painted in the school's colors -- blue and
gold -- the walls are covered with pictures, plaques, etc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vic takes a flask from his desk and takes a quick shot, then sticks some gum into his mouth. In private, Vic appears more nervous than in public where he is calm. Pete is somewhat the opposite.

PETE

Tough loss.

VIC

They were better than us.

PETE

They played over their heads.
We got good kids.

VIC

"Good" don't cut it. How many
blue chip athletes do we have?

Silence. Several beats.

PETE

We'll make some adjustments.

VIC

Adjust, my ass! You know who
else is starting to notice we
ain't got the players?

PETE

The press.

VIC

The hell with the press. The Athletic
Director knows. Frank is all over
my case. The Chancellor knows--

PETE

Yeah.

VIC

I don't think you do. We haven't
had a legitimate blue chip athlete
in four years!

Silence. They both know he's right.

VIC (cont'd)

You like your job?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

You threatening me?

VIC

All kinds of people are threatening me.

Pete is surprised. Though the tone is nasty for the moment -- they've just lost a game after all -- the two men are old friends and professional colleagues. Pete is concerned.

PETE

You own this town, Vic...six national titles, eleven league championships...what? They're gonna get rid of you? Don't be ridiculous...you're the best.

VIC

They'll just give me a gold plated whistle and a lifetime supply of chalk and send me off to the Old Coaches' Home to diagram plays for the nurses...

PETE

Ain't gonna happen.

VIC

Only one way it's not gonna happen.
(beat)

Petey, you've got to get me the best high school basketball players in the country.

PETE

I been trying', Vic, it's not as simple as it used to be.

VIC

You can sell sand to the Arabs, Petey, you oughta be able to still sell our tradition to some Blue Chip athletes looking for an education.

PETE

I'll get some players.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vic is very serious, and Pete doesn't take it lightly.

VIC
Not just 'players,' Petey, the
best players.
(beat)
Is the kid outta D.C. still available?

PETE
Butch McRae? Yeah, Butch's still
unsigned. So's Ricky Fox--the kid
from Indiana.

VIC
(a smile)
He's blond, right?

PETE
He's blond, alright, but they say
he doesn't have "white man's disease"--
they say he can actually jump.

They share a smile. Then dead seriousness.

VIC
We gotta get 'em both.

PETE
I'll check 'em out but first I'm
going to New York--nobody's got
white legs in Harlem....

VIC
That's for damn sure.
(cynically self-mocking)
Now let's meet these jerks from the
papers and be, as always, magnanimous
and gracious in the jaws of defeat.

PETE
You're a class act, Vic--

Pete opens the door to the locker room and lets the
press inside. One reporter, ED, 40, will become a
recognizable symbol of the press.

VIC (cont'd)
(faking magnanimousness)
My congratulations to Arizona
and its coaching staff...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the b.g., Pete moves quickly through the locker room. He tries to slip past the press, but they see him and, if nothing else, Pete makes great copy.

ED

Pete, just a minute, can you tell us something about your technical fouls?

PETE

We had Ray Charles and Helen Keller for referees -- what can I tell ya?

VIC

Don't quote him on that.

ED

Can you give us a quote?

Pete is an inexhaustive source of strange quotes.

PETE

Sure... 'When it's time to harvest the corn, somebody's got to load the wagon.'

The Dolphin Mascot is in tears, head in hands, outside the locker room. Pete cheers it up as he passes.

PETE

(to Dolphin)

Hold your head up.

CUT TO:

EXT. PETE'S HOME - NIGHT

As Pete arrives, she opens the door, a brief, warm embrace.

PETE

We stunk up the gym.

JENNY

No rebounding.

They head into:

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

JENNY

--and I thought you went to the
1-3-1 zone a little early, other
than that the kids played okay...

JENNY BELL watches and knows just what to say -- or not
say -- after a loss. She is a charmingly resilient
blend of mild cynic and sincere cheerleader (which she
once was). She easily glides back and forth between
roles as keeper of the home and don't-take-any-shit
sex pot. Few women could have survived Pete this long.
She does easily, and they make a great team.

He pours himself some Wheaties and sits down.

JENNY

...it's not your fault.

PETE

We ain't got the horses, baby...
it's my fault.

JENNY

It only takes a couple players
to turn the program around.

PETE

...or we end up in Fargo...
How'd you like to be married
to the assistant coach of the
North Dakota State Bisons?

JENNY

North Dakota might be nice.

PETE

It's a farm league. They play
in overalls and black socks.

JENNY

But you'd be head coach and I
could find another teaching job--

PETE

(incredulous at her disloyalty)
We're not Bisons. We're Dolphins.

Pete tries to pour himself another bowl of Wheaties,
but only crumbs come from the box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)
Fuck. No Wheaties.

Jenny patiently rises and goes to the cupboard, opening it. Numerous boxes of cereal fill the cupboard. She removes one and places it on the table in front of Pete, as if serving a child.

PETE (cont'd)
They are giving me
ultimatums. You believe that?

JENNY
Well, they're right about one
thing. We need better players.
(beat)
You can't make chicken salad
out of chicken shit.

PETE
Don't talk like that about the
kids.

JENNY
I'm quoting you, for Crissakes...

PETE
(smiles, self mocking)
How can I respect anyone who
quotes me, of all people.
(beat)
We need better players.

JENNY
You're not going to talk to
Happy, are you?

PETE
Hell no...but I gotta go to
New York tomorrow to look at a
couple blue chippers.

JENNY
Good. So tonight you'll forget
about the game.

She lets her bathrobe fall to the floor--revealing a
classy, lengthy, sexy nightgown. She smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

God, what a move.

Pete rises but the doorbell RINGS. They both stop.

PETE

Shit. It's probably the alumni
lynch mob with torches and
pitchforks.

JENNY

If it's an All-American, just
send him on in.

Jenny disappears into the bedroom; Pete answers the
front door.

Tony is standing there.

TONY

Could I see ya a minute, Coach?

PETE

Sure, sure...come in.

TONY

It's kinda late.

PETE

No, no...what's up?

They enter the living room and sit down.

TONY

I think I'm flunking a class.

PETE

Which one?

TONY

TV.

PETE

How can you flunk TV?

TONY

It's a tough class. We don't
just watch the tube, y'know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Christ, who's the prof?

TONY
Hathaway.

PETE
The guy's a jock, we're okay.
Jenny'll play racquetball with him.

Tony and Pete rise to leave; Tony seems to relax.

TONY
I appreciate it.

PETE
Tony -- you are going to class,
aren't you?

TONY
Yeah, I'm getting on down there.

PETE
You're 'getting on down there'
or you're going to class?

TONY
I'm going to class. I promise.

PETE
Anthony, listen to me! If I put
my butt in the wringer for you,
you can't embarrass me.

TONY
Right. I'll go to class.
(beat)
Thanks a lot, Coach.

Tony turns to leave.

PETE
Tony...don't flunk TV.

Tony gives him a clenched fist as he leaves, and Pete
returns to the bedroom.

CUT TO:

BACK IN THE BEDROOM - Pete stands there, shaking his head.

PETE

He's flunking T.V.?

JENNY

Hey, it's a tough class. I nearly flunked the damn thing.

PETE

You never flunked anything. I was the guy living on the brink of eligibility for four years.

JENNY

I remember when I was a senior and the department chairman called me in to see if I wanted to pick up a few extra bucks tutoring a struggling athlete.

(beat)

The guy said the starting point guard on the basketball team was clinging to a C minus with a deathgrip.

Pete climbs back into bed.

PETE

I like to feel I invented the C minus.

JENNY

Plus as the head cheerleader I'd been sizing you up anyway-- smart women like dumb jocks, y'know--

PETE

You raised my grade from an C minus to a solid C...I stayed eligible, we won the league title--

JENNY

It was my small contribution--

PETE

Hell, it was hard to study in that cheap off campus motel--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

The hourly rate and all...

Jenny reaches over to punch on a tape cassette.

The Western University Fight Song plays. Though she intends it to be funny, and he smiles, they both know it works.

THEY EMBRACE and start to kiss--when.

JENNY SITS UP quickly in bed.

PETE

What?

A baby's crying. Their daughter in the next room.

JENNY

Vicki. You wanta get her?

PETE GETS OUT of bed and goes into the next room, returning with the crying baby.

They all settle into bed together.

CUT TO:

EXT. A JET LANDING AT KENNEDY AIRPORT - NEW YORK - DAY

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOUSING PROJECTS OF BLACK NEW YORK - DAY

FOLLOW taxi to Bedford-Stuyvesant playground -- asphalt court amid projects, several basketball hoops, high energy games.

A WHITE MAN WATCHES the games--it is MARTY RAPPA, late 40's, chain smoking, un-hip.

Taxi pulls up to the playground -- Pete gets out -- Pete walks over to, and stands next to Marty, who is watching the game. Nothing is said, no great greetings. The game continues, until:

MARTY

Kid in the green's got a chance in a couple years if he can stay outta jail. How was the trip?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Didn't crash.

The game continues at its previous intense level.

CUT TO:

INT. CHOCK FULL O'NUTS COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Marty's hangout -- 90% Black clientele, and he knows them all.

MARTY

I'm big here...got my own table.

Pete is all business and opens his notebook at once.

PETE

I've got a list of five kids who everyone says can play.

MARTY

Petey, y'gotta understand something...we go back a long ways, but things are tougher now... there's some players I can connect you with for nothin'... a favor, 'cause we're friends.

(beat)

But others...well...there's some Blue Chippers who aren't so easy...

PETE

How 'bout Leroy Willis?

MARTY

He's committed to a college.

PETE

Already?! Why?

MARTY

There's about 20 thousand dollars worth of reasons. Rumor, of course.

PETE

I don't buy high school kids, Marty...I don't have to. How 'bout a kid named Isaac Cutter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

Too slow for big college ball.

PETE

Malcolm X. Outterbridge.

MARTY

Malcolm's been made an offer already.

PETE

I heard a pair of sneakers showed up on his doorstep with ten grand in 'em.

MARTY

I can't talk about other people's business, you understand...it's not professional.

PETE

We wouldn't wanta be unprofessional, would we, Marty...

MARTY

Don't worry, Pete, I personally think some of these other guys are over-rated. The best forward in the East ain't even on your list -- I've got the kid you want.

PETE

Who do we want?

MARTY

You want the U.S.S. Enterprise. A complete, full-featured aircraft carrier with the feet of Baryshnikov. He's a monster in the classic sense of the word.

PETE

Does he go to his left?

MARTY

He goes any way he wants.

PETE

What's his name?

MARTY

Neon Bodeaux.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

How come I never heard of him
last year?

MARTY

Late bloomer, Petey. He went to
bed one night as a six-foot, ten
inch awkward kid, and he woke up the
next morning as a franchise.

PETE

Is he humungous on the glass?

MARTY

On the glass or in the paint...
humungous.

PETE

Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. A SMALL INNER CITY GYM - LATER - DAY

NEON BODEAUX leaps out of a crowd of players and rejects
a shot so monumentally that the ball is driven against
a wall resoundingly. Lots of shouting.

Pete and Marty are watching. They look at each other,
sharing the moment, and smile.

Neon's father -- LEON BODEAUX, enters through a doorway.
He is equally large. Marty informs Pete.

MARTY

The kid's old man. Leon.

Marty introduces Leon Bodeaux to Pete.

MARTY (cont'd)

Mr. Bodeaux, this is Petey Bell
from Western University.

PETE

How do you do...I'd like to
talk to your son.

LEON

Whatever Marty says.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

It's okay.

Neon crashes the boards in the b.g., and Pete walks over by himself. The game stops for the moment -- it's just a pick-up game -- and Pete shakes hands with Neon.

PETE

My pleasure, Neon...Marty says you didn't play much high school ball?

NEON

I was still developin'.

PETE

Bill Russell didn't even make his high school team 'till his senior year...same with Elvin Hayes.

NEON

I'm makin' up for lost time, eh?.

PETE

Yeah...you ever think about going to college on the West Coast?

NEON

Any coast, man, any coast'll do.

PETE

Well...there is a difference.

(jokes slightly)

If a person's gonna get an education, he might as well get it in seventy degree weather.

NEON

I could deal with some sun.

PETE

Who can't, eh? As you probably know, we've got a great tradition basketball-wise and education-wise at Western.

NEON

Don't know much about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
(slightly surprised)
Well...we do.

NEON
(cooperatively)
Any college would be fine.
(beat)
Yours would do.

PETE
Right. Maybe we could talk
some more some time soon.

NEON
About what?

PETE
College.

NEON
Sure.

The other players have delayed their game long enough.
They call out for Neon to rejoin the game.

NEON-(cont'd)
Gotta go get back in their faces.

PETE
Right.

Neon and Pete try to shake hands, but it comes out all wrong. Pete's ghetto handshake is clearly behind the quickly changing times. They fumble awkwardly, until Pete's normal sized hand disappears from view inside Neon's enormous palm. This is not unnoticed.

Neon charges back onto the court like an uncaged animal.

CUT TO:

EXT. BED-STY HOUSING PROJECTS - LATER

Pete and Marty talk about what they've just seen.

PETE
He's got hands like chairs.
He's a monster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

He's two monsters, Petey...but
I gotta tell ya, there's a couple
wrinkles in the deal.

PETE

Shoot.

MARTY

One -- everybody in the country
just discovered him, so he's
gonna cost some money...

(slightly teasing)

...and I know you don't do that
sort of thing.

(beat)

He's been offered twenty thousand
dollars cash already...it's
gonna take more than that.

PETE

Jesus...

MARTY

My guess is that a new red Mercedes
delivered to Neon's father might
just swing the deal.

PETE

Just for the hell of it...what's
the other wrinkle?

MARTY

The kid ain't Albert Einstein.

PETE

I figured. How bad are his grades?

Marty frowns and shakes his head.

MARTY

I got him enrolled in Dodge
Junior College to pick up a
couple credits. He'll be
eligible by next fall.

PETE

I never heard of Dodge J.C.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PARKING LOT NEAR THE PLAYGROUND - DAY

CLOSE ON the trunk of Marty's Big Dodge on which the words "Dodge Junior College" have been written in the dust.

Marty opens the trunk to show Pete the contents: Papers, a small file, a portable typewriter, an official seal.

MARTY

It ain't exactly a college.

PETE

"In the classic sense of the term," you mean...

MARTY

Yeah...but I gotta buncha transcripts here...and I do have a teaching credential in case anybody asks.

PETE

What the hell do you teach?

MARTY

Philosophy of P.E., Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Philosophy...

He holds up a metal stamping device.

MARTY (cont'd)

The Official Seal. See, Neon's a good kid, Petey, but without this he's going straight to Sing-Sing.

A VOICE SHOUTS Pete's name, and they look up to see:

THEIR P.O.V. BUSER LEE, 40, approaching on foot. A friend, competitor, and peer of Pete's. Another recruiter.

MARTY

You know Buser Lee from Nevada University?

Of course he does. Buser and Pete shake hands.

BUSER

Petey! Well, I guess we finally found out what it takes to get Mr. Blue and Gold into Marty Rappa's trunk -- a nine and nine record.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete feels awkward being here.

PETE

We're still miserably old fashioned,
Busher. We actually have classrooms
on campus. It's unbelievable, I know...

BUSHER

Well before you award yourself the
Nobel Prize for education, check out
your football team--you got an
All-American backfield that graduated
Magna Cum Laude from Marty's trunk--

PETE

Yeah? Well the basketball program
ain't gonna have anything to do
with this shit.

(cynically)

See ya around campus.

Pete walks away. Marty gets defensive, shouting:

MARTY

Hey, I ain't a leper, y'know! The
NCAA's all over my case! I'm just
trying to help these kids get outta
this fucking neighborhood!

(beat)

We bend a couple rules--the
kids have a future!

PETE

I don't need 'em that bad.

Pete keeps walking.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - LOS ANGELES - DAY

A CAKE SHAPED LIKE A NEW COLLEGE BUILDING - With
a college music department dance band combo plays a
swinging version of the Blue and Gold Fight Song for
a large gathering of faculty and administration at an
outdoor cocktail party to dedicate the new building.

Pete and Jenny cross campus on foot towards the event.
Clearly he has just returned, and she's trying to find
out what happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

...how good is Neon Bodeaux?

PETE

It doesn't matter...I don't think
he wants to come to the West Coast.

JENNY

That's all?

PETE

It's kinda complicated...

JENNY

I never heard of Petey Bell
giving up after one visit.

They arrive at the party and size up the situation.
They work together as a team -- this is familiar turf.
Pete points out their objective.

P.O.V. THEIR OBJECTIVE - A 30 year old bearded professor.

PETE

The hippie is Hathaway. Ph.D.
in communications from Wisconsin.
He's Tony's professor -- the guy's
a mediocre racquetball player.

JENNY

I can lob on him.

P.O.V. a silver-haired man -- THE CHANCELLOR -- He sees
Pete and motions him over.

JENNY

The Chancellor wants to see you.
Try not to foul him.

PETE

Great moments in coaching.
(smiles)
I love pressure.

JENNY

I'll take care of the hippie.
(smiles)
Give him the usual, eh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jenny heads over to cut off Tony's professor. Pete watches as she makes her moves. A polished act.

P.O.V. Jenny gliding through the crowd with a drink, she stops just behind the bearded prof, DR. HATHAWAY. The prof turns and "accidentally" bumps Jenny.

DR. HATHAWAY

I'm terribly sorry, how clumsy...

JENNY

Oh! You're Dr. Hathaway...I'm Jennifer Bell...Pete's wife...haven't I seen you on the racquetball court?

Pete watches Jenny charm the professor, set up a game, and heads off to join the Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR

Petey, Petey...tough loss the other night, eh?

PETE

Ball wouldn't go in the hole -- what can I say?

The Chancellor pulls a cocktail napkin from his pocket and hands it to Pete.

PETE (cont'd)

What's this?

CLOSEUP - A NAPKIN covered with X's, O's and arrows.

CHANCELLOR

It's a new play I designed. Thought it might help the team.

Pete wants to tell him to stuff it but refrains.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

The O's are offense. The X's are defense.

PETE

I know, I know.

CHANCELLOR

I'm no coach, of course... it's kind of a trick play.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete forces a smile.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)
I call it the "London Bridge Offense."

PETE
There's too many men on the court.

The Chancellor looks at the napkin.

CHANCELLOR
Oh yeah...well, I haven't
worked out all the details.

Pete turns to leave.

PETE
I'll show it to Vic, and we'll
see what we can do.

The Chancellor stops him, and the tone becomes less
frivolous.

CHANCELLOR
Pete, we stink.

PETE
We lost a few games. We don't stink.

The Chancellor pulls Pete aside where they are more alone.

CHANCELLOR
I went to grammar school with the
President of Notre Dame. We're old
friends. He calls me up when we lose.
I'm getting tired of his calls.
(beat)
It was a lot more fun when I was
calling him.

PETE
Losing ain't fun, Doc.

CHANCELLOR
It's more than that.
(beat)
When we were winning championships,
the alumni gave an extra three
million dollars a year.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)
Even when we didn't win the national title but won the league, it was worth a million extra a year in unrestricted giving to the University.

PETE
I know all these things.

CHANCELLOR
We've lost nine games.

PETE
(icily)
I read the papers.

CHANCELLOR
Job listings?

Pete gets hot, and the Chancellor fears he has pushed Pete too far. Heads turn. Pete points to a building in the distance.

P.O.V. the University Administration Building.

PETE
We built that. With the seventy-eight team. Your office was built by a huge front line with great shooting guards. In seventy-nine we carpeted the son of a bitch.

P.O.V. the Student Union Building.

PETE (cont'd)
The Student Union was built by the eighty team -- four guys from Watts and an aircraft carrier from Detroit. Our basketball teams have built half this campus!

CHANCELLOR
(calming him)
Petey, you've done a fine job...

PETE
"Done?" You saying I'm finished?

The Chancellor tries to calm Pete.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)

Chancellor, you can dribble dick me in a lotta categories, but there's one thing I know more about than anyone else in the world.

(beat)

Doc...I understand X's and O's and I know basketball.

(beat)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I gotta go show the London Bridge Offense to the rest of the coaching staff. They could use a good laugh.

Pete turns to leave, but the Chancellor stops him abruptly. His voice is full of threat.

CHANCELLOR

Petey...get some players.

Pete listens and leaves as Jenny arrives; the Chancellor calls out as Pete walks away.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

Happy wants to see you.

JENNY

You're not talking to Happy are you?

PETE

'Course not...

Pete joins Vic as the Chancellor walks away.

VIC

What's the boss have to say?

Pete pulls out the cocktail napkin and hands it to Vic.

PETE

He's got another play for us.

Vic glances at the napkin.

VIC

There's too many men on the court.

They smile.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Screaming fans. A game in progress. Vic and Pete are in their same chairs, surrounded by wild action.

Players streak past, and the ball goes out of bounds just out of the reach of a Dolphin player.

Close on Pete who calmly raises a hand to calm his players. This is the other side of Pete -- calm under fire, enjoying the competition and the pressure, at home on the court. Even his outbursts seem partly theatrical, part of the game.

A Dolphin Player looks at him as he retreats upcourt. Pete is cool, reassuring.

PETE

It's okay...we're okay...

BRIEF MONTAGE -- things continue to go wrong for our team.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE BOOTH HIGH ABOVE THE STANDS - NIGHT

The Chancellor watches the game from an air conditioned room where he sits with an extraordinary looking creature -- HAROLD "HAPPY" KUYKENDALL, 40'S. Large, expensively dressed but the clothes don't quite fit right -- he looks out of place next to the Chancellor.

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Jenny watches the scoreboard as Western falls farther behind.

Pete walks in front of his players along the sidelines as the action continues. He kneels down, watching the action carefully.

CLOSE ON Pete -- he seems alone in the arena of 17,000.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE ARENA - LATER THAT NIGHT

17,000 empty seats. And Pete and Vic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

P.O.V. THE CHAMPIONSHIP BANNERS hanging from the rafters.

VIC

Other teams used to walk in here and see our championship banners...scared em to death.

PETE

The banners were worth twelve points a game.

VIC

Yeah...I could throw five empty uniforms on the court and they'd be worth sixty points 'cause they were blue and gold.

(beat)

Other teams are starting to notice we ain't got horses in the uniforms... and something worse is happening--

(beat)

I don't get so upset when we lose anymore. I don't know if it means I'm getting mature, or getting old.

PETE

It means you're getting old.

VIC

Yeah...y'know this must seem like a ridiculous question after all these years...but why do you like to win so much.

Pete thinks about it, and smiles, but he's dead serious.

PETE

I fuck better when we're winning.

VIC

Personally, I never noticed the difference.

PETE

You never noticed?! Vic, Vic--

(beat)

The dollar ain't worth shit, everything causes cancer, the ocean's are full of needles and the ozone's shot to shit! People forgot what "quality" is.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)

You could trace the decline of America in the last twenty years with the decline of the won-lost record of the Western University Dolphins.

Silence. Pete, as usual, is serious.

VIC

It's possible they're not related.

PETE

But they are. We stood for something. People were afraid of us because we were great.

(beat)

The President of the United States used to call us in the locker room everytime we won a national title.

VIC

The President was a Dolphin.

PETE

Everybody was a Dolphin.

(beat)

It was fun.

VIC

I've been here fourteen years. I've won three hundred and six games. I've lost ninety-seven.

(beat)

All I can remember is the ninety-seven losses.

Pete motions to the scoreboard and smiles gamely.

PETE

Ninety-eight.

VIC

Ninety-eight.

(beat)

How did it go with Neon Bodeaux?

PETE

Lousy. It's a meat market. The game's changing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

Maybe not that much. When I first came here we were terrible. We played in the girls' gym. To get a few players, I bent the rules. When we started winning, I didn't have to bend 'em anymore.

PETE

You never bent a rule in your life.

VIC

I was real cozy with the alumni for awhile...later, it didn't matter. We blinded em with trophies.

PETE

What're you telling me?

VIC

I'm telling you, you can get a coaching job anywhere if you wanta leave Western.

PETE

Just leave Western? Vic--I played for you, I coached with you, I was on top with you and I wanta be here when we get back on top...

(beat)

I belong here.

VIC

Then if you wanta stay--you better have a talk with Happy.

PETE

I detest the man.

VIC

Think about it.

(beat)

Petey, they're not listening to me much these days...they think I've lost it...Maybe I have.

(beat)

They think you've lost it too.

Silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. FANCY NEIGHBORHOOD IN BRENTWOOD - DAY

A customized sign sticks in the manicured lawn reading:
THE HAPPY KUYKENDALLS - "HAPPY," LOUISE, STAN, WILLIE,
BOB, NORM, OSCAR and ANNIE.

Pete pulls up in his car, gets out, hesitates at the
sign, and goes to the door where he pushes the doorbell.

HAPPY KUYKENDALL answers the door. He's obnoxiously up.

HAPPY

Petey!

PETE

(flatly)

Happy.

CUT TO:

INT. HAPPY'S HOUSE - DAY

They walk through an extraordinary house, half of which
is lit like an art gallery. Objects d'arte sit on
pedestals lit by spots; paintings on the wall; sculpture.
It is all sports oriented. The rest of the house is
upper middle-class lived-in.

HAPPY

I've got the world's most valuable
collection of sports art.

PETE

What's that?

Pete hesitates at a full-sized glass backboard and
hoop that hangs in the living room.

HAPPY

You should know.

(beat)

That's out of Freedom Hall in
Louisville, Kentucky. That is
the backboard on which we won
the seventy-six title.

(beat)

Our last one.

PETE

I thought it looked familiar.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POOL AREA - DAY

The two men come outside and sit by the pool under a blue and gold awning. Happy pulls on a blue and gold visor.

HAPPY

Why you hate me so much, Petey?

PETE

You're an asshole.

Happy gives it some thought.

HAPPY

Yeah, I'm an asshole. But that's no reason to hate somebody.

PETE

It's a start.

HAPPY

I love my family. I'm a good provider, and I love Western University. I owe everything I've got to Western.

PETE

I love it too.

HAPPY

You see -- we should be buddies. We're potential friends. We need each other. Unlike many of the alumni, I think you still got the best basketball mind in the country...but you ain't living in the real world.

PETE

Don't give me your "real world" horseshit.

HAPPY

When you go on a recruiting trip these days, tell me -- what are you selling?

PETE

Tradition.

HAPPY

You telling me you go to Harlem and sing "Halls of Ivy"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

What do you suggest I sing--
Old Man River?

HAPPY

I don't want you to sing and I
don't want you to sell.

Happy pulls an envelope from his pocket, tosses it on the
table. Pete slowly goes through it--a huge packet of cash.

HAPPY (cont'd)

I want you to buy.

Silence. He puts down the envelope.

PETE

I don't buy high school kids.

HAPPY

Everybody else does.

PETE

Screw everybody else.

HAPPY

We've been losing. Losing
embarrasses me.

PETE

Embarrasses you?! Up there with
the Silver Fox in the Penthouse Suite?

As the tension mounts and Pete barely restrains himself,
Happy leans in as if to break the ice with a confidential
joke.

HAPPY

Petey, Petey...let me put it another way...
(jocularly macho)
When we're winning...I fuck better.

Touche. Silence.

PETE

I'm leaving.

HAPPY

What if I told you the head coaching
job might be open next year.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Vic ain't quitting.

HAPPY
The alumni are tired of Vic,
Vic is tired of the alumni.
(beat)
What if he decides to retire.

PETE
Bullshit.

HAPPY
We'd allow him a gracious exit.
He's a nice old man, but he's losing it.

The money is shoved back in front of Pete. He stares at it, then rises to leave.

HAPPY (cont'd)
Where you going?

PETE
I'm going to the ghetto to sing
Halls of Ivy.

Happy watches with arrogant coolness, aware of his own power.

HAPPY
We could see Petey Bell with a
'head coach' sign on his door.

Pete whirls to say something to Happy, as if to call him on his methods. But he has nothing to say. He turns again and leaves. He too could see the sign on his door.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Pete and Jenny come out the door--she's carrying the baby. He carries a suitcase and is dressed for travel. He picks up the morning paper, and they climb into his Monte-Carlo, blue with tiny gold Dolphins on the doors.

PETE
You pack my stuff?

JENNY
Shaving kit on the left, underwear
on the right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
Terrific.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAR - EARLY MORNING

Pete drives and hands Jenny the paper, which she reads to him. The baby sits in her car seat, bundled warmly.

PETE
Give it to me like a man.

She opens the paper to the Sports Section and turns immediately to the Letters.

PETE (cont'd)
How many?

JENNY
Eight letters -- four that matter.

PETE
Go.

JENNY
"Dear Editor: We all have been patient long enough in putting up with the outdated coaching philosophy of Vic Roker and his staff. The Arizona game was just the latest example of how badly a change is needed. Signed: Billy Glass, thirty-two, Los Angeles."

PETE
Guy had the letter in the mail before the final buzzer. Brought his typewriter to the game. Next.

JENNY
C'mon, Pete, can't we skip them today?

PETE
Next.

JENNY
"Dear Editor: Petey Bell hasn't recruited a quality athlete in five years." It goes on to say the usual.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete turns to his baby daughter sitting in her car seat.

PETE

They love your old man in this town,
sweetie--wait'll you hear these things--

JENNY

I'm not going to honey...the next
one's written by a twelve year old.

Silence. Pete is torturing himself. His mind is elsewhere.

PETE

They're thinking of dumping Vic.

JENNY

No?!

PETE

I'm thinking it might be a good
idea to talk to Happy.

JENNY

No, Pete...

Pete interrupts quickly.

PETE

We might need him.

JENNY

What're you talking about?

PETE

I'm just talking, eh? You're not
actually listening to me, are ya?

(upbeat)

Hey! I wanna hear what the
twelve year old has to say...c'mon.

Somewhat reluctantly, she looks at the newspaper and quotes:

JENNY

He says the Dolphins oughta
change their name to the Guppies.

Pete laughs a gallows laughter. She watches him un-
easily and finally forces a smile.

The car approaches L.A. International Airport.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. VINCENT'S HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

An inner city black, Catholic High School. Just before opening bell, dozens of students are entering. Near the entrance stand SEVERAL COLLEGE RECRUITERS, some white, some black. Pete stands next to Busher, and several cronies.

BUSHER

There he is--

P.O.V. BUTCH MCRAE moving up the steps, flanked by an attractive girlfriend, TAWNA, 18, and another tall buddy, probably another basketball player.

PETE

Where's everybody going?

BUSHER

They're going to class, Petey.

PETE

Weird school, eh?

They laugh. Another RECRUITER leans over.

RECRUITER #1

Father Kochel runs this place like General Patton--don't fuck with him.

PETE

Father Kochel's easy.

BUSHER

It ain't Father Kochel I'm worried about--it's Butch's Momma.

PETE

Momma's tough?

RECRUITER #1

Momma's a killer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Pete enters to see several more RECRUITERS lounging around. He is vaguely familiar with some of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

You guys here looking for science students?

RECRUITER #2

Yeah, science students who can dunk.

There is much jostling around among the men and teasing as Pete informs the SECRETARY of his arrival.

PETE

(to Secretary)

Pete Bell. Western University.
You can tell Father Kochel I'm here
and send these other clowns home.
(he smiles)

She buzzes Father Kochel and as Pete turns to his colleagues who are commenting on Western's losing streak --FATHER KOCHEL does indeed throw open the door and step out into the room.

All heads turn as Father Kochel launches into a theatrical routine. He is a black priest wearing a short sleeve black shirt with a clerical collar. The Recruiters stand up as he enters.

FATHER KOCHEL

Oh my! There's blood in the water!

(silence)

Must be a power forward on the block! Step up and start the bidding, fifty dolluh, who give me fifty dolluh for this strapping young boy, sebenteen years old and growin' ever' day...

(beat)

Dig deep into dem pocketbooks, gen'mun, ahh believe we gots us a po-ten-shul All-Amer'cun and dey tells me da boy can asckshly read and write...

(beat)

Da boy goes right, da boy goes lef'!
Oh my, dig deep, gen-mun, get on down there!

Silence. The Recruiters smile nervously at each other. Pete laughs aloud. Father Kochel then suddenly drops his routine and speaks with absolute calm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER KOCHEL (cont'd)
Good to see you, Pete...why don't
you step inside.

The other Recruiters steam as Pete smiles insufferably
toward them and enters Kochel's office.

CUT TO:

INT. KOCHEL'S OFFICE

Father Kochel sits back in his chair, his feet on his
desk. About 40, it is clear that he runs this inner-
city black Catholic boys' school with casual, iron
discipline. Kochel loosens his collar and chain-smokes
throughout. It is clear that he and Pete are old,
friendly acquaintances.

FATHER KOCHEL
How're ya, Pete? How's Tony?

PETE
I'm fine, Tony's fine.

FATHER KOCHEL
He going to class?

PETE
He's trying.

FATHER KOCHEL
I love him...but if he flunks,
he deserves it.

PETE
He'll make it.

FATHER KOCHEL
I'll call him next week.
(beat)
You're here 'cause of Butch McRae?

PETE
He's something, eh?

FATHER KOCHEL
The best we've ever had. And
he's smart. His head's screwed on
right, and he doesn't make mistakes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

What about Momma?

FATHER KOCHER

Momma's a powerful piece of work.

PETE

I'd like to talk to her. We're still clean.

FATHER KOCHER

But you're not winning like you used to either, are ya?

Pete smiles and nods.

There is a KNOCK at a door to the outside. Both men look. Father Kocher looks strangely.

FATHER KOCHER (cont'd)

That door goes to the basement.

PETE

I'll get it.

Pete answers the door. BUSHER is standing there. He is surprised to see Pete, but plunges ahead at Father Kocher.

BUSHER

I only need five minutes with you,
Father -- I think you'll like our program.

FATHER KOCHER

(coolly)

You use the same door as everybody else.

BUSHER

Five minutes...

FATHER KOCHER

I'll call the N.C.A.A.

Busher moves quickly through the office to the outer room and disappears into the waiting room with the others. Kocher remains with Pete.

FATHER KOCHER (cont'd)

Pete--I like you and your program--
there's no funny stuff going on...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER KOCHER (cont'd)
 ...but I wish you'd start winning again.
 (beat)
 I'll talk to Butch's mother for you.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Pete and Busher sit together at the bar. We see a new side of their relationship, a sympathy for each other's plight, a shared longing for what their profession could be, and a great love of the game.

CLOSE on cocktail napkins as Pete and Busher diagram plays with X's and O's, subconsciously almost, doodling.

PETE
 Remember when coaching basketball
 had something to do with basketball?

BUSHER
 Vaguely...I spend more time in
 Holiday Inns than gymnasiums.
 (order another drink)
 Y'know something, Petey...I really
 believe that these kids oughta be
 able to go to college just to major
 in basketball. Theory of Basketball,
 History of Basketball, Analysis of
 Offensive and Defensive Systems...
 (beat)
 Makes more sense than studying the
 History of Civilization.
 (motions to bartender)
 How's Jenny?

PETE
 Great. How's Linda?

BUSHER
 You don't know?
 (Pete shakes "No")
 She ran off with one of our players.
 (beat)
 I recruited the guy, too.

PETE
 Jesus, who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUSHER
Dokey Poindexter.

PETE
Christ.
(sighs)
He could rebound, too.

BUSHER
Yeah...
(wistfully)
Lost my wife and a power forward
in one weekend.
(beat)
And...my job is on the line.

PETE
But you guys are winning?

BUSHER
Not enough.
(beat)
Alumni gives me keys to new
Mustangs. I'm supposed to buy us
a national championship. You
can't even buy a league title
with a Ford...

PETE
You ever come close to getting
caught?

BUSHER
Never...
(smiles)
...we have three alumni on the
N.C.A.A. rules committee...

A HOOKER walks into the bar and sits down not far from
the two men. They watch silently.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Video tapes of Butch's high school games play on the
t.v. monitor, run through Pete's portable unit.
Pete sits on the bed, phone in hand, watching the young
athlete move up and down the court. He talks to Jenny:

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. JENNY'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

A DRESS REHEARSAL for a kindergarten version of "A Christmas Carol". Jenny's the teacher, amongst 25 tiny kids dressed as 19th Century Londoners. Other parents are there to help supervise the chaos amidst clip-on spotlights, a cheesy backdrop, and hopeless chaos.

FIVE YEAR OLD SCROOGE
(squeakily)
Bah, humbug! Bah, humbug!

JENNY
No, no, over here. No! Here!
Good. Jason, what's your line?
Jason? Come back here...

The phone rings. A parent answers the phone sitting with a long extension cord on an outdoor picnic table.

PARENT
Jenny, it's Pete long distance.

JENNY
Oh God...okay.
(to the kids)
Kids, I'll be right back. Nobody
move.

The kids freeze in a miniature tableau. She gets the phone.

JENNY (cont'd)
Pete, how's it going? I'm in
the middle of a dress rehearsal
for "A Christmas Carol"--

PETE
I won't interrupt then--

JENNY
It's okay. Anything wrong?

PETE
No, actually, I, uh...saw a hooker
in the bar and I didn't hustle her...
I don't cheat on ya, baby...

JENNY
Is that why you called?
(to the kids)
Don't move!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

I was just saying hi and there's
an incredible player back here
named Butch McRae. He could
help us turn things around.

JENNY

You got a chance at him?

PETE

I'm gonna give him my best moves.

JENNY

Your best moves, eh?

PETE

Yeah, yeah--hey, can I talk to
Vicki--say hi?

JENNY

Pete! I'm in the middle of
a Goddamn Christmas Carol!
I got a million screaming
kids here...

(beat)

Yeah...tomorrow...okay...bye bye...

She hangs up, turns to see the tableau disintegrating.

JENNY (cont'd)

Scrooge!

(to herself)

Damnit...

(to Scrooge)

Scrooge!

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. GHETTO - DAY

Every visible face is black -- rich, poor and in between.
We watch this movement until, at last, we see the white
face of Petey Bell moving among the crowds.

TWO STREET-WISE BLACKS approach, and Pete, with
characteristic boldness, steps in front of them.

PETE

Hey, men...gotta proposition for
ya. Quick bread, easy gig.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They look at each other as if this man is from outer space, which arguably he is at the moment.

BLACK #1
Whatchyou talkin' 'bout, little man?

PETE
Hey -- I'm five-ten.

BLACK #2
I'm not. Outta your neighborhood,
don't ya think?

PETE
Free country, pal...wanta make a
quick fin or not?

BLACK #1
Whatchyou got?

PETE
(flashes a bill)
Teach me the handshake.

The two blacks look curiously at each other. No answer.

PETE (cont'd)
Twenty. Final offer.
(flashes another bill)
The latest, the newest, the
grooviest. On the level.

They look at each other again with a 'what the hell' shrug.
And proceed to demonstrate the latest handshake.

BLACK #1
Step one -- this.
(demonstrates)
Step two -- like this.
Step three -- this or this.
(two options)
And this is the icing.
(finishes with a flourish)

PETE
All right...now me.

One of the blacks and Pete go through the movements.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)
How's this?

BLACK #1
You got it, little man.

Pete delivers the final payment.

PETE
Pleasure to do business with ya.

Pete wanders on down the street into a clothing store.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORD STORE

Lots of teenage blacks milling, jiving, bobbing. High level of SOUND on speakers fills the store.

Pete moves to the counter with ease, approaches a young CLERK with an enormous comb stuck in his hair.

PETE
What're the kids buying? I mean today...this morning. What's hot?

CLERK
You mean 'hot' hot.
(as Pete nods)
Bobby McFerrin...the Fat Boys...
my man Prince is always hot...

Pete slaps a five dollar bill on the counter. And leaves with the information.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - LATER

Pete hums the tune he has just heard and crosses an alley. As he does--

Two Black Men grab Pete and shove him violently through a door, into:

INT. DESERTED ROOM - DAY

Pete crashes inside, virtually into the arms of the other black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Black #2 grabs Pete and throws him up against the wall.
Pete is scared to death and tries to mumble a protest.

BLACK #2

Shut up!

PETE

Look, man...

BLACK #1

Fuck this 'man' shit, honky...
gimme your wallet!

PETE

I don't want...

Black #2 pulls an enormous switchblade and flips it open under Pete's nose. Pete points to the location of his wallet. The other Black removes it.

The other Black begins removing Pete's watch, then a large ring he wears, then his wedding ring.

BLACK #2

Whatchyou doin' here?

PETE

(desperately)
Lookin' for horses -- players,
for players --

BLACK #1

You talkin' shit.

PETE

I'm looking for Blue Chippers...
basketball players...I'm from
Western University in L.A.

The words 'Western University' stop the two men cold --
there is an awkward silence as if the words had a magic.

BLACK #1

You a Dolphin?

PETE

Yeh.

BLACK #1

Who you lookin' at?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Butch McRae.

The two black men look at each other, then:

BLACK #1

Butch McRae? He's bad. Butch
is bad.

(beat)

Look, man...we sorry...give 'im
his shit back...

Other Black hands his wallet and jewelry back.

BLACK #2

Butch McRae'd be great at Western.
He's the best player to come out of
D.C. since the Pearl.

The other Black dusts Pete off slightly, trying to clean
his suit.

BLACK #2 (cont'd)

Real sorry about this.

PETE

These things happen.

(beat)

Don't worry about nothin'.

As the three of them exit, moments later.

BLACK #1

Listen, Little Man, we gotta favor to
ask...we got a cousin -- Bad Bobby
Bowden -- think ya could check him
out? Pogo sticks for legs, little
man, the kid's a player.

PETE

I promise ya I'll take a look.

The three men shake hands--the latest ghetto handshake.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. VINCENT'S HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Game in progress. Crowded, small gym. Pete works his
way along a wall, running into other recruiters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Johnny, how're ya -- no chance...

(laughter)

Milt, g'damn, you guys ain't got a prayer with this kid...

They all acknowledge Pete in a friendly manner -- he remains a powerful man in his world.

Busher stands along the wall with a man in a three-piece suit. Pete bumps into them.

PETE (cont'd)

We got him, Bushman.

BUSHER

Pete, I want you to meet one of our alums -- Senator Carmen Rutiglio. Pete Bell, of Western.

The SENATOR knows Pete by reputation and shakes his hand.

SENATOR

Rough game the other night, eh?

PETE

Ball wouldn't drop, Senator...why don't you go pass a law or something...

Pete works along the wall toward Father Kochel as the game progresses. We see:

- 1) BUTCH HITS A LONG JUMP SHOT
- 2) BUTCH BLOCKS A HOT
- 3) BUTCH MAKES A GREAT PASS
- 4) SCOREBOARD INDICATES THAT ST. VINCENT'S IS FAR AHEAD.

Pete watches the game next to Father Kochel, the key man.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. VINCENT'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Chaos of celebration as Father Kochel leads Pete through the happy disorder. Pete is the only recruiter to get in. They find Butch McRae.

FATHER KOCHEL

Hello, Butch, nice game. I'd like you to meet Petey Bell from Western University.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUTCH McRAE

Hello, sir.

Butch bounces off, joining the team celebration.

FATHER KOCHER

Pete, I talked to Butch's mother.
She's willing to see you tomorrow.

PETE

Great.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. HOUSING PROJECT - DAY

Butch, in a letterman's jacket, carrying books, flanked by Pete and his pretty girlfriend, TAWNA, 18, walk up the stairs together into the apartment. Butch dribbles a basketball up the stairs.

Butch dribbles down the hallway off of doors, between his legs -- all as effortlessly as breathing.

BUTCH

Y'know...lotta people don't like
it here, but I kinda do...got a
lotta friends...

(puts arm around Tawna)
..and me and Tawna are pretty
serious--that right, Tawna?

TAWNA

Me and Butch are pretty serious, Mr. Bell--

PETE

Well you could always come to
school on the West Coast--

TAWNA

Naw, I'm gonna go to beauty
school in Baltimore--

Pete tries to make the most of it--

PETE

Well, home is home, eh?

BUTCH

Momma thinks it's a dump.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE
I hear wonderful things about
your mother.

BUTCH AND TAWNA
(smiling)
Wonderful?

TAWNA
Catch ya later, Butch.

Butch and Tawna exchange a quick kiss and she leaves the
apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. THE McRAE APARTMENT - LATE DAY

Modest but neat. Butch's mother, LAVADA, 40, sits on a
stuffed couch. Thin and hawk-like, with glasses --
the Shirley Chisholm look -- she is dwarfed by her son
who sits next to her respectfully. In the b.g. two
early TEENAGE GIRLS prepare a meal.

LAVADA
(tough)
Give me one reason, Mr. Bell,
that Butch should travel three
thousand miles to go to school.

PETE
I will...we're here to discuss
Butch's future.

LAVADA
And your future?

PETE
Everybody's future. The future
is the subject here.

Voice from the kitchen.

DAUGHTER #1
How long on the potatoes?

LAVADA
Fifteen minutes.
(beat)
What are you here to offer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

A full scholarship -- tuition,
room, board, books...

LAVADA

We know that. What else?

PETE

I'm sorry.

LAVADA

(cynically)

Where have you hidden the new car
and the extra tickets to scalp
for spending money? There must be
some surfer girls.

Pete orchestrates a silence, then leads Lavada out of
earshot of the kids and speaks in confidence.

PETE

Mrs. McRae...we don't do those
things. We don't have to. We
have...tradition.

LAVADA

Mmmm...tradition.

(beat)

You also have a good Science
Department...Butch tests very high
in the sciences, though he cares
more about basketball at the moment.

Voice from the kitchen.

DAUGHTER #1

Dinner!

LAVADA

(to Pete)

You eat, you help.

Butch, Lavada and Pete rise to go to the kitchen where
they carry the dishes, silver, placemats and food to the
table. The daughters chatter; Butch pitches in as if it
is routine, and Pete does his best to fit in. He sniffs
a bowl of greens.

PETE

Hey, greens...super.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete leans forward to Lavada in muffled confidence.

PETE (cont'd)
Your kids are very well mannered,
a real pleasure...the strong Catholic
upbringing is clearly apparent here...
I'm a Catholic.

LAVADA
I'm not. I send 'em all to St.
Vincent's because the priests and nuns
don't take any shit...and they
have a good basketball program.

The three kids enter with the remainder of the meal.

DAUGHTER #1
Anthony!

As they sit down at the table, a TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY
emerges wearing a beret and carrying a portable stereo.

LAVADA
This is Anthony.

PETE
My pleasure.
(commenting on the stereo)
Who's that? The Fat Boys? Prince?

ANTHONY
The Fat Boys? Prince?!
(laughs uncontrollably)

Pete tries to look less foolish, smiles, laughs at himself.

LAVADA
Anthony!

Instant silence -- respect. Anthony sits down.

ANTHONY
I'm sorry, Mister. What college
you from?

PETE
Western.

ANTHONY
The Dolphins?! Outtasight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAVADA

Anthony.

(he calms down)

Butch, is there anything you want to ask Mr. Bell?

BUTCH

Yeh...how hard is college?

PETE

Well, Arizona State has a big center and two quick guards.

BUTCH

I mean the classes.

PETE

Oh, we have tutors in every department -- you'll do great.

DAUGHTER #1

Oh, momma, look what time it is -- I'm late! I can't finish, okay?

She darts into an adjacent room.

BUTCH

I've got to go out tonight too -- guy from De Paul University is in town...I promised I'd meet him.

PETE

De Paul University?

Butch rises, puts on his letterman's jacket, waves casually to Pete, and heads out the door, spinning the ball on his finger.

LAVADA

Homework done, Anthony?

ANTHONY

Done to a turn, Momma.

LAVADA

...to a turn. I want you to leave us alone to talk.

Anthony looks disappointed -- he wants to eavesdrop -- and Lavada simply points to the other room, announcing:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAVADA (cont'd)

TV.

Anthony salutes and marches in. Daughter #1 emerges from the bedroom in a McDonald's uniform, kisses her mother on the cheek and hurries out. The other Daughter does dishes, and Lavada pulls out a package of cigarettes and begins smoking with a chain-smoker's ease.

PETE

Ya got a great family, Mrs. McRae.

But her mind is elsewhere, and she zeroes right in.

LAVADA

Yes, I do. Mr. Bell, there's something I want to talk to you about.

(eye-to-eye with Pete)

Butch can't play basketball forever. he doesn't understand that yet - but that's okay.

(beat)

He will choose the team he wants to play for, and I will choose the Science Department. We will agree on a college that satisfies both of us.

PETE

I'm sure you will.

LAVADA

My son is not for sale.

PETE

I understand.

LAVADA

But...

Lavada plays the gear shift for all it's worth.

LAVADA (cont'd)

...this is a funny world. You need basketball players. My son plays basketball. Several million people a year pay lots of hard earned money to watch tall black men run around throwing an inflated ball through an orange hoop.

(another cigaret)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAVADA (cont'd)
I am a secretary. I make shit.
I have references. I hate
Washington D.C. A secretary
cannot up and move across country
without some better job waiting.
I have a family to consider. Do
you understand me?

PETE
Of course.

LAVADA
And...if Butch chooses to become
a Dolphin, I plan on moving to a
new and better job.

Pete weighs this all carefully.

PETE
Mrs. McRae...there are certain rules...

LAVADA
I would also like a house with a lawn.
My children have never had a lawn.

Pete's defense is uninspired, and she knows it.

PETE
Do you know how the regulations work?

LAVADA
(interrupting)
Mr. Bell, I don't know a great
deal about basketball, but I do
know this -- a foul is not a foul
unless the referee blows his whistle.

PETE
I understand the game.

LAVADA
Then you know I'm not begging.
(beat)
I'm negotiating.

Long silence.

PETE
I'd like to think about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAVADA
You don't have much time.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAX - NIGHT

The roar of jets touching down. Pete is back in L.A.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

They both undress for bed. Routine, without seduction or game playing.

PETE
--his mother wants a job and
a house out of D.C....

JENNY
I don't blame her.

PETE
You saying I should do it?

JENNY
No--

PETE
I'm sure I could get away with it--
I mean just once. Vic even said
he used to bend the rules.

JENNY
You're not very convincing--

PETE
Butch McRae's a helluva player.
How big a crime is it to get a
family out of the ghetto?

JENNY
You couldn't cheat if you wanted to.

PETE
Why not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Because when you see a hooker in a bar, you have to call me to tell me how faithful you are.

(Pete smiles)

You don't know how to cheat. You're cursed with honesty.

Pete and Jenny climb into bed.

PETE

I cheated once.

JENNY

You're kidding.

Pete is serious.

PETE

When I was six. Playing Chinese Checkers against Billy Barkowitz, my neighbor. He went to the bathroom in the middle of a game and I moved my marble three spaces. It was a green marble. He never knew.

JENNY

(affectionately)

Three spaces? You moved a green marble three spaces?

PETE

Yes.

JENNY

And you still remember it?

PETE

Yes.

JENNY

That's why I trust you.

She nuzzles up to him.

JENNY (cont'd)

You prepared for your speech at the Press Club tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Aw shit, I forgot. What'm I gonna say?

JENNY

Give 'em the usual crap, Pete.
Be flamboyant and quotable and
don't make promises you can't keep.

Pete takes a deep breath and launches into a speech
with the easy conviction of a politician.

PETE

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,
I'd like to begin my remarks today
with the words of Winston Churchill,
who said, on a dark London night in 1942--

JENNY

(teasing gently)
Pete, don't give me that Winston
Churchill baloney...

She climbs on top of him--he struggles to continue
rehearsing his speech.

PETE

--as German planes buzzed over
the gardens of Southern England...

She drops the nightgown from her shoulders and squirms
slightly on top of him. Pete can hardly bear it.

JENNY

What's buzzing over the gardens
of England, Petey?

PETE

(moaning)
Jesus...

JENNY

Jesus?

PETE

He said--

JENNY

Who said? Churchill, Pete?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

God damn...

JENNY

Pete, shut up and turn out the lights...

PETE

Yes, coach...

He smiles, shuts up, turns out the light. They start to make love.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A BANQUET ROOM - DAY

Pete's speech continues--as he addresses a luncheon press conference. A banner reads: BLUE AND GOLD PRESS LUNCH
Pete is in fine form, playing the crowd.

PETE (cont'd)

...and Churchill's immortal words
"Never have so many owed so much
to so few"--bring one's thoughts,
naturally, to basketball...

SHOTS OF THE CROWD--They smile and shake their heads,
always amused with Pete's absurd metaphors and passion.

PETE (cont'd)

And nine hundred million Chinese don't
care whether we win or not, but I
do, and you do, ladies and gentlemen,
and therefore, we will win again.

(beat)

Everyone knows that when you lose,
ice cream tastes like horse manure
and a rose smells like a wet dog.

(beat)

Thank you very much.

Applause. The EMCEE rises to the mike next to Pete.

EMCEE

Terrific, Petey, as always...are
you ready for a few questions?

PETE

Bring 'em on, eh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Out of the audience, a reporter, ED, rises.

ED

Hiya, Pete.

PETE

(thinly veiled disgust)

Hiya, Ed.

ED

Would you comment on the persistent rumors that Vic Roker's job is on the line?

PETE

Not true.

ED

I've got it from a very good source that if you don't come up with three blue chip athletes, Vic won't be here next year. In fact, I've been told there will be an entire house-cleaning.

PETE

Whose garbage you playing in lately?

(laughs)

How 'bout a quote, you want a quote?

ED

Sure.

PETE

You can lead a horse to water, but unless you teach him to float on his back, you ain't got diddly. Got that?

ED

Are you denying the rumors?

PETE

No. I'm giving you a quote.

ED

Then your job is on the line?

PETE

I didn't say that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED
Would you like to comment on
your recent recruiting trips
and specifically on your
chances of getting Butch McRae
and Neon Bodeaux?

PETE
I'd rather not.

ED
Was it as unsuccessful as last
year's trip?

PETE
You're pushing me!

ED
I read your book on pressure
defense. I think you've got a story.

PETE
Hey, what's your problem?!

ED
I'm just writing a story about
the truth and the truth is that
you've failed in the program recently--

Pete leaps off the dais and charges Ed.

PETE
Who the hell is this guy?! Who
hired you? Huh?

Ed is terrified, and backs off. Chairs and tables
are knocked aside. He sticks his finger in Ed's face.

ED
Get away! This man is loony!

PETE
Where you going?!
(to the crowd)
This guy was a lousy at sports
and lousy at writing so he became
a sportswriter--

Pete grabs Ed by the collar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)

What're you gonna do, eh? Give me another technical foul and throw me outta the game?! You want a story?! Coach beats the shit outta sportswriter--that's a story!

ED

You're crazy!

PETE

I'm crazy when we're losing--when we're winning, I'm flamboyant!

The surrounding crowd swoops down on Pete, pulling him away from the terrified sportswriter.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREE SHADED CAMPUS LAWNS - LATER - DAY

SEVEN YOUNG COED CHEERLEADERS in blue and gold are practicing their routines, bumping and grinding for W.U.

INT. THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

The Chancellor stares out the window at the cheerleaders, then turns to face Pete and Vic.

CHANCELLOR

(calmly)

You can't beat up sportswriters, Pete...at least not in public.

PETE

The guy's a whore.

CHANCELLOR

Nonetheless...

(beat)

...I'm having a statement of apology drawn up. We'll issue the release under your name.

VIC

That sportswriter is a real donkey, Chancellor.

The Chancellor picks up a set of expensive binoculars he has on his desk, and watches the cheerleaders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

P.O.V. THE CHEERLEADERS ON THE LAWN.

CHANCELLOR

These girls get younger every year.

VIC

And better looking?

CHANCELLOR

That too.

The Chancellor passes the binoculars to Vic, who looks.

VIC

Jesus...the redhead...

CHANCELLOR

Pete...have you been talking to Happy?

PETE

No.

CHANCELLOR

We're running out of time.

Vic hands the binoculars to Pete. He looks.

PETE'S P.O.V. THE CHEERLEADERS ON THE LAWN

PETE

They're pretty damn hot...

CHANCELLOR

We'd really hate to lose you, Pete...

Pete puts down the glasses.

CUT TO:

EXT. PETE'S HOUSE - DAY

Pete's car screeches to a halt, and he races inside. Jenny is working in the garden and looks up as he flies by. In a few moments, he comes back outside holding her old cheerleader outfit--pom-poms, sweater, and tiny skirt.

PETE

I want you to put this on, then
we'll make love and we'll both
feel better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

I feel fine.

(beat)

What's going on, Pete?

PETE

You never wear this stuff anymore.

JENNY

You're outta your mind.

PETE

You think it's kinky?

JENNY

I think it's stupid.

(beat)

Pete, did you get fired?

PETE

I almost killed a sportswriter.

JENNY

Hell, that's nothing new.

(beat)

Pete--would you put those idiotic
pom-poms away.

Pete drops the cheerleader outfit. It lands on a row
of seedlings.

PETE

They're not idiotic.

JENNY

Take them off the broccoli.

Pete takes the pom-poms off the broccoli.

PETE

Awright, awright--

(beat)

You think I'm loony?

JENNY

Loony, no. Transparent, yes. It's
one of your best features. You
wanta buy some blue chippers, right?
You wanta talk to Happy about getting

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY (cont'd)
some illegal money, right? You're
chasing me around the garden with
pom-poms, right?

Silence.

PETE
I'm not gonna talk to Happy. I give
you my word.

A voice shouts over the garden gate. They look up.

P.O.V. HAPPY KUYKENDALL waves back cheerily.

HAPPY
Petey! The Chancellor said we
oughta talk.

PETE
Jesus.

HAPPY
I hear you beat up a sportswriter!
Fabulous. They're a buncha jerks.

PETE
Happy...gimme a break...

HAPPY
So--what can I do to help
with Butch and Neon?

Jenny stands watching Pete caught between them.

PETE
Happy--get outta here.

HAPPY
I love it when you get pissed off.
It's the old Pete coming back.

PETE
Happy, go fuck yourself.

HAPPY
I love it! Pete, I'm outta
here but I want you to remember
two things.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAPPY (cont'd)

You ain't Mother Theresa and
and I ain't Albert Schweitzer.
When you're ready to crawl back,
my pockets will be open and my
mouth will be shut.

Happy turns and leaves. Pete turns to Jenny.

JENNY

He's a beauty, Pete.

Happy stops, turns to them once more.

HAPPY

The blue chipper from Indiana--
he's white, right?

PETE

Yeah, Happy, he's white.

HAPPY

White? White...great. The kid's
white. Awright...

Happy heads off, thrilled at the idea of a white blue chipper.
Pete and Jenny stand there in the garden. Several beats.

JENNY

You're going to Indiana?

PETE

(defensively)

Hey, I'm recruiting an All-American
blond kid whose parents are farmers.
Buncha Baptists. There's no ghettos
to get out of. And nobody's gonna
want a red Mercedes in French Lick,
Indiana. Right?

JENNY

I don't know, Pete--you tell me.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIANA LANDSCAPE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. TERRE HAUTE AIRPORT - DAY

Petey Bell heads down the ramp of a plane.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE AT HOWARD JOHNSON'S - NIGHT

Pete and Busher sit at the bar, the thousandth bar of their recruiting careers. They study:

CLOSE ON - PHOTO OF A BIG BLOND KID--RICKY FOX

BUSHER

He's definitely blond.

PETE

The next Larry Bird, eh?

An overdressed SINGLE WOMAN enters the bar and sits nearby. She looks good--she looks great in French Lick--they both stare.

BUSHER

She's a recruiter groupie. Loves assistant coaches.

PETE

Goes to her left -- goes to her right?

BUSHER

(nods affirmatively)

You ain't got a chance with Ricky Fox.

PETE

You think you do? Since when's a good Baptist country kid gonna go to Sin City, Nevada?

BUSHER

Since we recruited his girlfriend. See you at the parade.

PETE

What parade?

BUSHER

You're losing your touch, Pete.

Busher leaves Pete alone at the bar. Pete orders another drink, and the Woman slides over to sit next to him. Pete turns to speak to her.

PETE

What parade?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SINGLE WOMAN

We're honoring the Fighting Red
Devil State High School Champion
Class "A" District One basketball
team. Down Main Street.

(beat)

Buy me a drink?

Pete motions for a drink to be delivered.

SINGLE WOMAN (cont'd)

What school you with?

PETE

Western University.

SINGLE WOMAN

The Dolphins?

PETE

Yeah, the Dolphins.

SINGLE WOMAN

You think you're gonna get Ricky
Fox? He's great.

PETE

You've seen him play?

SINGLE WOMAN

Yeah. And I've fucked him. He
hangs around the hotel sometimes.

PETE

You've done what with him?

SINGLE WOMAN

You heard me. Ricky's pretty
old for his age.

PETE

Jeez. But he can play, eh?

SINGLE WOMAN

The best.

PETE

You mean since Bird?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SINGLE WOMAN

He's better than Bird.

(beat)

How about a date? I like assistant coaches.

Pete goes over to a pay phone a few feet away and pulls out an address book, placing a call. She watches him.

PETE

Larry Bird?

(beat)

Larry?! Hey -- Petey. You guys kicked the living hell outta the Seventy-Sixers the other night, eh?

SINGLE WOMAN

Tell Larry hi.

PETE

Your alma mater has a favor to ask -- there's a Blue Chipper at your old high school -- you gotta help us out...

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET OF FRENCH LICK, INDIANA - DAY

Victory Parade - it's Norman Rockwell time. Marching bands, drill teams, Rotary drum and bugle corps, farm machinery draped with streamers in red and white. A banner proclaims:

INDIANA STATE HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPS
The French Lick Red Devils

The TINNY VOICE of a P.A. ANNOUNCER:

ANNOUNCER

The Marching Devil Band -- let's hear it.

The band does a spin step and smartly marches off, followed by a Girls' Drill Team.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

Ladies and gentlemen...our very own fighting Devil Pep Squad!

(beat)

And here they are -- the champs themselves! We're all very proud!.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A procession of convertibles displaying signs and carrying the "champs themselves."

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

And now a very special treat!
Riding with our own Ricky Fox...

(plays it dramatically)
...is a last minute honorable
mention Grand Marshall of the parade,
the man who went from the Devil
red and white to the Western
University blue and gold to the clover
green of the great Boston Celtics...
the great, the one and only...and
our very own...

(beat)

Larry Bird!

(Larry Bird, of course, went to Indiana State, not
a West Coast university. This will have to be adjusted
according to the celebrity athlete used.)

LARRY BIRD and RICKY FOX sit on top of the back seat of
a convertible, their hands clasped together in the air.

Pete is driving the convertible. He is smiling. The
crowd roars.

Busher and the other recruiters watch the parade from the
sidewalk. They are astounded, miffed, and impressed
with Pete's great move.

Pete waves at them.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOTEL - NIGHT

A crowd is around the elevator, so Pete takes the inside
stairs. Pete whistles his school fight song as he bounds
up the several flights of stairs.

A groaning sound echoes through the stairwell. Pete
stops and listens. More SOUNDS -- grunting and moaning.
A VOICE. He creeps up the stairs and stops again. The
SOUNDS of love-making.

P.O.V. up the stairwell -- Ricky Fox's ass and legs,
his pants around his feet, and a Woman with her dress
pulled up. They are fucking standing up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete stares momentarily, then retreats quickly through a door into a hotel hallway. He just stands there, unsure what to do. Was recruiting always this complicated? Pete is lost, until:

Ricky Fox and the Girl come through the door. Ricky is fastening his belt buckle. He is utterly unphased.

RICKY

Coach!

(to the girl)

See ya later, doll...

(the girl leaves)

Can we talk?

PETE

That's what I'm here for.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LOCAL DAIRY QUEEN - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A local hangout -- kids sit on cars, much teenage activity.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Pete is a passenger as Rick pulls up to the order window. A cute high-schoolish waitress sticks her head out the window.

CUTE WAITRESS

Oh hi, Rick! The usual?

RICKY

Yeah, and one for my friend.

While she disappears, others HONK and wave at Ricky. Clearly this 18-year-old owns the town.

The Waitress hands Ricky two enormous cones, each quadruple decked with endless twists that balance precariously. Rick hands one to Pete.

As Pete takes a lick, Ricky delivers the bombshell.

RICKY (cont'd)

Mr. Bell...I don't want to go to college. Any college.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rick takes an enormous lick of his own cone as the car pulls out into traffic.

Ricky Fox cruises as Pete tries to stay cool.

PETE

That's a joke, right?

RICKY

No joke.

Silence.

PETE

It's always a little scary to leave home the first time...it's ok...

RICKY

I ain't afraid of shit.

PETE

Uh huh...your parents know?

RICKY

Not yet. Just you.

Ricky HONKS at some girls.

PETE

Why me?

RICKY

I like you. I like the Dolphins.
You came a long way.

(beat)

I got to ride in a convertible
with the Birdman.

PETE

Why haven't you told anybody?

RICKY

I like all the attention I'm getting.

Long silence. An honest answer. They eat their cones.

RICKY

I hate basketball.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

You hate basketball. Why do you play?

RICKY

It makes high school less boring.
I get to skip sixth period. My
parents like to watch me.

(beat)

Girls.

The car pulls over to the curb, and TWO HIGH SCHOOL
GIRLS climb in the back seat. This is routine. The
car heads back into traffic.

PETE

What do you want to do with your
life, Rick?

RICKY

I wanta run my old man's farm.

PETE

Farmers need an education these days.

RICKY

No, they don't.

Pete sighs. It's all too complicated.

PETE

I'd like to meet your parents anyway.

RICKY

Give my old man a call. I'm real
sorry you came so far--but all is
not lost.

PETE

What do you mean?

RICKY

(smiles)

You're staying in a great hotel--
beaverwise.

Ricky turns on some Top-40 which turns on the girls.
MUSIC BLARES from the car cruising French Lick, Indiana.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOX HOME - NEXT DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Pete, Ricky, the MOTHER and FATHER are seated around the dining table which is covered with food. All heads are bowed as the Father prays.

FATHER

...and bless this food to the
nourishment of our bodies in
Thy name's sake. Amen.

MOTHER

Amen.

RICKY

Amen.

PETE

Amen.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FOX FARMHOUSE - DUSK

A wide tableaux: The quintessential backyard hoop attached to a barn. Rick shoots free throws without speaking.

The ball goes through the hoop and hits a board which has been specially placed there, returning to Rick. Simple, hypnotically rhythmic: kaswoosh, blang, bounce...

Pete and the Father stand near a very old tractor off to one side. They talk quietly. There is dignity and simplicity in the Father's speech. They speak slowly.

FATHER

My boy can shoot.

PETE

Yes, he can. But he hates the game.

FATHER

I can get him to play.

PETE

How?

Silence. Kaswoosh, blang, bounce. Shot after shot arcs through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER

Mr. Bell...it's real hard to operate a farm like this anymore. With all the Federal laws the way they are 'n all...wheat to the Russians and no wheat to the Russians. Hard to figure it out anymore...'cept I do know one thing -- A tractor could save my skin.

(beat)

I can get him to play.

PETE

The we'd be stuck with a kid who hates basketball.

FATHER

But he does one helluva job of faking it, don't he?

P.O.V. Ricky moving back -- he still doesn't miss.

The Father hands Pete a folded brochure from International Harvester.

Pete unfolds it slowly and reads the paper; as he does they continue watching Ricky shoot. Shot after shot continues through the hoop. Pete takes a long time to respond. The purity and simple beauty of the game is displayed in front of him, the complications that seem necessary to get to that purity he holds in his hand. Tradition doesn't cut it anymore.

Pete watches with uncharacteristic calm, weighing the options in his head.

PETE

Mr. Fox. Don't talk to anyone else.

Pete continues to stare at Ricky Fox, nonchalantly tossing shot after shot through the rickety hoop.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A.X. AIRPORT - NIGHT

A plane touches down.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIC'S HOUSE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Pete knocks on the door. Vic lets him in.

VIC
When'd you get back?

PETE
Just now. We gotta talk.

VIC
Me too. I've got to talk
to you too.

They enter his house, sit down.

CUT TO:

INT. VIC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

VIC
How'd it go?

PETE
Everybody wants something.

VIC
The kid in Indiana?

PETE
He wants a tractor...plus he
hates basketball. You believe that?

Vic pours them each a drink.

VIC
I'm quitting Pete. This is my
last season. I can't keep up
with this shit anymore.

PETE
Who have you told?

VIC
Only you. I won't make an
announcement till the season is over.

PETE
I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIC

No. It's time. I'll be Athletic Director full time. Go to a lot of banquets, eat a lot of luke warm chicken. Play a little golf.

(beat)

I'm gonna recommend they hire you as my successor.

PETE

Will they approve?

VIC

Depends what kind of recruiting year we have.

PETE

What should I do?

VIC

Whatever you do...I don't wanta know anything about it. I've never heard of a tractor, a Mercedes, a job, a house--nothing.

(beat)

If you don't like any of this and want to apply for a job at another school, you do it with my blessing and recommendation.

(beat)

But if you want to stay...well...

(beat)

From this moment forward, I am an ignorant old coach about to retire. You're on your own.

Pete takes a long slow drink.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WESTERN SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Pete walks across campus to the arena.

CUT TO:

INT. WESTERN SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Pete enters the dark cavern, punches up some numbers in a switch box and turns on assorted small, glowing lights.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He leaves off the main overhead light. The effect is like being inside an enormous spaceship. He walks over to a cartful of basketballs. Pete takes a ball, walks to the free throw line. And--

Pete starts shooting free throws. Quietly, smoothly, one after the other. Until...

The silence is replaced by the electrical roar of a full arena. The sounds are all in his head, in our head.

The sounds wash over Pete.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

EXT. HAPPY'S SPORTING GOODS - DAY

A large sporting goods chain operation.

INT. HAPPY'S SPORTING GOODS - DAY

Pete is greeted warmly by Happy and pulls him aside.

PETE

I need your help.

HAPPY

Call me Captain Kangaroo, I got a surprise in every pocket. Welcome aboard.

PETE

It's gonna cost a lot of money.

HAPPY

Come on.

They walk through the store, enter his office.

HAPPY

"You can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit"--Petey Bell.

PETE

Shut up.

Happy goes to a wall safe and opens it, setting several envelopes of cash on the table. The cash spills out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAPPY

The only hands that have touched
this are the hands of Dolphin alumni.
Don't worry. I could launder anything.
(jokes)
Oliver North shoulda used me.

PETE

Shut up.

HAPPY

How good are we gonna be?

PETE

We'll be humungous on the boards,
fast out front, and everybody can
shoot the eyes outta the basket.

Silence.

HAPPY

Happy is happy. Is Petey happy?

PETE

Shut up.

HAPPY

I love it.

Pete exits with the money. Happy smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A balloon pops. Vicki, in a high chair, starts to cry.

JENNY

Oh, sweetie--it's nothing--
just a big "pop"...

The baby calms down as Jenny gives her a cracker, and
Jenny blows up another balloon. Pete enters. He spends
a moment with the child.

PETE

(to the baby, then Jenny)
What's the problem, honey?
Everything okay? Hi, babe. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Can you tie this?

She gives Pete the balloon to tie. He does, then sits down at the table, opening his briefcase.

Jenny turns to the stove where a huge pot is boiling with some gooey, pasty white mixture. She ladles some of the paste into a smaller bowl, then sits down at the table.

Jenny starts tearing strips of paper into neat rows, then dips them into the gooey mix, and begins applying them to the balloon.

PETE

What's that?

JENNY

It's a paper mache pig for school--
at least it will be.

(beat)

We're making pinatas.

Pete starts unloading cash from his briefcase.

JENNY (cont'd)

What's that?

P.O.V. THE MONEY - She knows instantly what it means.

PETE

It's a great move. And I don't
wanta hear any of this 'don't
do it, Petey!' stuff.

JENNY

You're crazy.

PETE

I'm colorful.

JENNY

You're a pimp, Pete...I mean
this isn't exactly Chinese Checkers.

PETE

Actually, in a way, it is.

JENNY

You're just like everybody else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Everybody else is winning.

(beat)

Look, babe -- the game's changing
...I spend some money one time,
that's all, get everything back on
track, Chancellor gets his buildings,
Happy gets his rocks off, fans go
crazy, the crowd roars...

JENNY

You asking for my approval? You're
not getting it. You want my sympathy?

(beat)

Get that money out of here. I don't
want to look at it.

PETE

Lighten up, Jesus...

JENNY

You're starting to bore me.

PETE

I thought I was flamboyant and--

JENNY

(interrupting) :

You're full of shit, Pete,
let's face it. I happen to
have a great character weakness
which makes me attracted to you but,
you are nonetheless, full of shit.

PETE

Things were better when we were winning.

JENNY-

Not necessarily. Sometimes you fuck
better when you're losing. You try harder.

PETE

Hey--don't talk like that in front
of the baby!

JENNY

Leave me alone. I have 25
kindergarten kids who are expecting
this pig tomorrow morning, and I
don't want to disappoint them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Can't we talk about this like
rational people?

JENNY

"Rational people"? Is that a joke?

PETE

Don't you care about winning?

JENNY

Right now all I care about is this
pig and the pinata it will become.
and I don't give a God damn about your
basketball players.

(beat)

Do you know that Jesus Christ probably
never saw a paper mache pig?

Pete gathers the money and rises to leave.

JENNY (cont'd)

Neither did Buddha or Mohammed. Do you
know 900 million Chinese never saw a pinata?

Pete disappears with his money. She makes her pig.

CUT TO:

INT. WESTERN UNIVERSITY LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Vic addresses his players in uniform. Pete stands to
the side. We interrupt Vic's speech in progress.

VIC

...I'm proud of you. I love you
all. Maybe I stayed on too long,
I haven't been as good as I should
have been, but tonight -- my last
game -- we're going to win because
we've got pride, and we've got character.

(beat)

Petey gives better speeches...

(a smile to Pete)

...but I like to win too.

(beat)

Petey? You have anything to say?

Pete steps to the middle of the room to start a "stack"
of hands, and all the players gather around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Right here, right here! I only
got one thing to say, gentlemen...

(beat)

This is not the end...this is not
the beginning of the end, this is
the end of the beginning. Ya wanna
win?

With great emotional heave-ho and shouting, the players
break huddle and charge out of the locker room.

The SOUNDS of the Fight Song continue over the CHEATING
MONTAGE of Petey Bell.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT IN NEW YORK - DAY

Marty sits on a folding stool working out of the trunk
of his car. He types some official papers, signs them
with a flourish, and officially stamps them. Pete
hands Marty an envelope full of cash. Marty hands Pete
the transcripts making Neon Bodeaux eligible.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

Neon's father emerges from an apartment and stops cold
at the sight of a new red Mercedes. He approaches it
slowly, surprised. Pete watches from across the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY IN TEXAS - DAWN

A huge flatbed truck with tarpaulin draped cargo pulls
into the Fox farm. The driver gets out and unloads a
new, shiny, and very expensive tractor. Ricky's father
appears in the doorway.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONG BEACH RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A house for sale -- Pete stands with Lavada in front.
She reaches down and feels the lawn with her hands.

CUT TO:

INT. LONG BEACH HOUSE - LATER - DAY

Pete cooks greens in the kitchen as Lavada watches her children rolling on the lawn outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE UNIVERSAL STUDIOS TOUR - DAY

The Jaws of a Giant Shark swoop out of the water as Neon leaps back in his seat on the tour boat. The father seems amused; Pete takes it all in stride. Neon laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FABULOUS FORUM - DAY

Neon and his father pose with MAGIC JOHNSON for photographers in front of the columnaded pro sports arena. Pete orchestrates.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE QUEEN MARY - DAY

Lavada is introduced to a business type executive by Pete as Butch surveys the ship.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

Ricky Fox stands with his feet in the feet of John Wayne. His feet are twice as big. TWO SEXY CALIFORNIA GIRLS walk by and Pete points. Ricky's face lights up.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WESTERN UNIVERSITY ARENA - DAY

Empty. Pete points to the banners. Neon, Butch and Ricky take it all in. This is the first time we've seen them all together.

END MONTAGE
DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Pete is tying his blue and gold tie at the mirror. Jenny is putting on the final touches elsewhere in the bedroom. Clearly, they are not speaking, though Pete tries.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Talk to me.

(silence)

You'll get used to it. When you see Bodeaux ripping down the boards, Butch leading the fast break like Isiah Thomas, and Fox throwing up thirty footers in his sleep...it'll all make sense to you.

(silence)

Talk to me.

They are dressed up and ready to go somewhere.

JENNY

Rah, rah, rah.

They leave together in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTERN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

The team mascot -- man dressed as a Dolphin -- roams through the crowd. A curtain has been erected on a small platform. TV cameras and radio crews. Vic presides.

VIC

It is with great pleasure that I introduce my successor, the next Head Coach of Western University...

(beat)

Petey Bell.

APPLAUSE. Cameras roll. Pete takes it all smoothly and moves to the mike, shaking Vic's hand.

PETE

I am following a legend -- and a friend, Vic Roker, a man whose shoes I only hope I can come close to filling.

(beat)

Ladies and gentlemen...it is my pleasure to formally announce the signing of letters of intent to attend Western University by Neon Bodeaux, from New York, Butch McRae, from Washington D.C., and Ricky Fox, from French Lick. Indiana.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The curtain goes up. The three players are dressed in Dolphin blue and gold uniforms. Each palms two basketballs in outwardly stretched arms. APPLAUSE. Flashing cameras.

CLOSE ON the three players -- they look scared to death.

Jenny walks away in the background, the whole thing is too ridiculous.

The press begins asking questions.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A party to celebrate. The three recruits with parents, Vic, the current team members, the Dolphin cheerleaders, Happy, others.

Tony is playing a mechanical, parlor basketball game with some other players. He does a running Chick Hearn routine.

The Chancellor enters the front door. Jenny takes his coat, the continuing hostess. When:

Pete is approached by Neon Bodeaux's father, Leon.

LEON

(too loudly)

Hey, Mr. Bell. Did you guys get me that red Mercedes?

PETE

Not so loud, Leon, Jeez.

LEON

I didn't want no red car.

PETE

Marty said you did.

LEON

Marty don't speak for me. He used to but he don't no more. I mean do I gotta pay taxes on that car, or what?

PETE

You didn't ask for a red Mercedes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEON

No.

Pete steers Leon aside.

PETE

(incredulous)

Are you saying you don't want
the car?

LEON

I'm saying I don't wanta get
into trouble and I don't wanta
get nobody into trouble.

PETE

Jesus.

LEON

You want me to sell it or something?
I don't wanta go to jail?

PETE

Look, Leon, just be cool. This
whole car business is just between
us, right? I gotta think about it.

LEON

Whatever you say, coach...

Pete turns to see:

Ricky Fox is leaning against a wall, trapping a willing
Dolphin Cheerleader. The pair is heating up.

PETE

Hey, big guy. Maybe not in
my bedroom, eh?

RICKY

Yeah, sure coach...sorry...

They leave. Pete then hurries to the kitchen--
and sees Jenny.

PETE

Listen, honey, we got anything
to eat?

She carries over two enormous platters of cheese, crackers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

The cheese platters of champions.

PETE

(ignoring her cynicism)

God, I think they're the best you ever made.

JENNY

Thanks, coach.

PETE

Why you got this attitude problem lately?

JENNY

I don't know you anymore.

PETE

Same old me. In fact, things're improving!

JENNY

You're gonna be a better lover now, right?

PETE

Yeah...and so are you.

JENNY

Slam dunk this, Pete.

She picks up the cheese plate and throws it at him. Cheese, crackers, celery sticks, radishes, go flying.

Jenny stomps back to the party. Pete is lost and looks around in frustration. He sees:

Butch and Lavada McRae are in the kitchen. We don't know how long they've been standing there.

LAVADA

Family business?

PETE

Sorry.

LAVADA

I understand family business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Butch is the one embarrassed. The Chancellor enters the kitchen looking for Pete.

CHANCELLOR

Excuse me, folks, I need a word with you, Petey.

Lavada judiciously leads Butch from the kitchen. The Chancellor is at his silver-haired, administrative best.

CHANCELLOR

Petey, could you drop by my office in the morning...for a little chat?

PETE

Sure...what's up?

CHANCELLOR

Nothing.

PETE

What nothing?

CHANCELLOR

Well...something.

(beat)

I was informed this afternoon that Western University is under consideration to be investigated for recruiting violations. I think I can keep the lid on things, but I need your help.

PETE

Violations?

CHANCELLOR

You didn't do anything wrong, did you?

Pete looks ill. Sounds of the party swell in the next room.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Pete looks like hell.

He is playing with the Cheerios, diagramming plays endlessly. The phone RINGS. Jenny answers, though the chill between them is palpable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Yes...this is Mrs. Bell...

(cups phone)

The Times wants a statement about
the rumors of an investigation.

Pete doesn't even look up.

PETE

Tell 'em, 'It takes a heap o'
livin' to make a house a home.'

JENNY

'It takes a heap o' livin' to make
a house a home.'

(beat)

That's his statement. Nope,
I don't know what it means either.

She hangs up. The phone RINGS again immediately.

JENNY (cont'd)

Yes...oh hi...

(to Pete)

KMPC Radio...you have a statement?

PETE

You can lead a horse to water...

JENNY

He heard you. He knows the rest.
Sorry.

Jenny leaves the room, returns shortly with the baby and
an overnight bag. She heads out the back door.

PETE

Where you going?

JENNY

Away from you.

PETE

That's my daughter?! What is this,
some grandstand play?

JENNY

I've learned to appreciate
grandstand plays, Petey. Your
daughter and your wife are leaving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

You're all mixed up!

(shouting)

If one of us screwed up, even though neither of us did, it was me, even though it wasn't, so if one of us was to walk out on the other -- I should take the hike, not you. Besides, you got the kid!

Jenny stops, smiles, and drops her bag to the floor. She opens the back door for Pete and exploits the moment coolly.

JENNY

(calmly, firmly)

You're right. I have the kid.

You should take the hike...

(beat)

See ya around campus, Pete...

Pete stares at his wife and baby, feeling stupid and foolish. And he heads out the back door into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Pete has made an attempt to shave and shower.

CHANCELLOR

What did you do exactly?

PETE

I got some players.

CHANCELLOR

You talked to Happy?

PETE

You know god damn well I did!
Why ain't Vic here?

CHANCELLOR

Vic doesn't know exactly what happened. His ignorance works to your advantage if he has to testify.

PETE

Testify?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCELLOR

It's still in the pre-investigative state, Pete, but as far as I can gather there are some statutory laws in possible violation, plus some NCAA problems.

(beat)

If you cheated, Petey, you weren't very good at it.

This whole tact is so distasteful, so humiliating, that Pete is uncharacteristically caught off guard.

PETE

What do they know?

CHANCELLOR

Mr. Bodeaux has told a million people about this car--that apparently he didn't even want. Since it was purchased in cash through a dealership owned by an alumnus, it's possible to bury the source of the money. It looks bad, but we'll get away with it. The personnel director of the Queen Mary is also an alum and is willing to pre-date the work application forms. Butch's mother will have to go along with it. The cash payments will be hard to prove.

(beat)

So far, they don't know about the tractor.

PETE

Dodge Junior College?

CHANCELLOR

That could give us some trouble. We can claim ignorance, apologize, take the heat, and enroll Bodeaux in summer school with a special tutor. We might even look good out of the thing.

PETE

What am I supposed to do?

CHANCELLOR

I'm calling a press conference in two days. Networks and national

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)
media will be there. I'll sit on
the dais with you. Vic'll be there.
It would be nice if you and Jenny
could patch things up so she could
attend. Looks better...

(beat)
And you should make a statement.

PETE
What do I say?

CHANCELLOR
Petey, Petey...you're the great
speaker. Deny everything, take a
hard line, be crazy...

PETE
...flamboyant, quotable...

CHANCELLOR
Not too flamboyant, and not too quotable.
With a low profile and a few well placed
calls--I can keep a lid on things.

The Chancellor changes tone from manipulative cynicism to
his own kind of earnest bullshit with astonishing ease. We
can see how he got to be Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)
And by the way...congratulations.

PETE
For what?

CHANCELLOR
For your great recruiting. We'll
have a helluva team next year.

Pete is bewildered and doesn't respond.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY - NIGHT

INT. PETE'S CAR - NIGHT

Pete drives -- Neon, Butch and Ricky are his passengers.
This begins as a peaceful respite. Pete wants to talk
basketball and forget everything else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

I thought the four of us should get together...get to know each other a little...I thought maybe we could, for a change, talk about basketball.

(the thought soothes)
We could relax, etcetera.

He points out sights of the city as they drive.

PETE (cont'd)

That's the Hollywood Bowl over there.

The young players stare, wide-eyed.

PETE (cont'd)

Next fall I want you all to stay in the dormitories. It helps the transition from home. I want you to go to class.

(beat)
If you ever miss practice, I'll suspend you from the team automatically for one week. This is Hollywood and Vine. It's all bullshit.

Pete still holds enormous power over these kids. They respect, admire and fear him somewhat.

PETE (cont'd)

If you ever have any problems -- girls, classes, homesickness -- I want you to tell me.

The car heads down the Sunset Strip and pulls into Scandia. The three giants climb out of the car dwarfing the valet absurdly. They look around curiously.

CUT TO:

INT. SCANDIA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Seated in a booth in what is easily the fanciest restaurant any of them have ever been near, Pete is father-like as they are handed the menus. The enormity of their physical presence is out of place.

PETE

You can have anything you want.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A customer comes over, recognizing Pete and the players.

CUSTOMER

Pete Bell! Joe Deeks. I'm a season ticket holder. These must be the kids I've been reading about, eh?

PETE

These are them--Butch, Ricky, Neon...

Neon reaches over and palms the entire pitcher of water, bringing it onto their table. Ricky pulls out a cigaret and lights up; Pete is shocked. So's the fan.

PETE (cont'd)

What're you doing?

RICKY

Havin' a smoke.

PETE

Get rid of that thing! Ya can't smoke and play basketball.

RICKY

Well, I always did.

Ricky snuffs it out. He seems indifferent to training rules but respects Pete.

The somewhat embarrassed season ticket holder dismisses himself awkwardly.

CUSTOMER

I think probably I oughta leave... but congratulations anyway--it's gonna be great to win again!

THE CUSTOMER SHAKES Pete's hand and exits. Pete returns his attention to Ricky.

PETE

Christ, Ricky, you can't smoke and play basketball--but if you did, you sure as hell ain't gonna do it in public.

RICKY

You sayin' I can smoke in private then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

I'm not exactly saying that--

(Ricky rises)

Where you going?

RICKY

I gotta go to the john...will
ya excuse me?

PETE

No smoking.

Ricky heads for the bathroom. He is like a giant six-year-old at a strange Disneyland. He sticks his head briefly into the kitchen out of curiosity, waves, and continues to the bathroom. He stands utterly confounded in front of two doors which read FEMMES and HOMMES. Almost instinctively he pulls out a cigaret and lights up as he ponders the doors, unsure what to do.

The SOUNDS of horns HONKING can be heard outside. Child-like, he heads for the door and peeks outside.

P.O.V. night traffic on the Sunset Strip.

BACK at Pete's table - Pete watches, trying to keep control of his brood, as Ricky explores the premises and finally leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCANDIA - NIGHT

Ricky runs out into the street and hops into a pickup truck with a GUY and TWO GIRLS. He's having a ball. He's totally forgotten about Pete and his dinner date.

CUT TO:

INT. SCANDIA - NIGHT

Pete has gone to the door and is talking to the Maitre d' who shrugs and points to where Ricky was last seen. Pete peeks out the door at the passing traffic. Ricky is long gone. Pete turns to return to his table.

Butch meets him halfway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUTCH

Coach...I want to talk to you.
Not around Neon or Ricky.

PETE

Shoot.

They go over to the side in semi-privacy.

PETE (cont'd)

Anything I can do for you.

Butch is reluctant to talk. He is the smoothest of the three, the most mature, the most civilized.

BUTCH

I'm unhappy here.

PETE

In this restaurant? We'll go somewhere else.

BUTCH

I'm not talking about the restaurant.

PETE

Is your momma okay?

BUTCH

Oh, she is...

(beat)

But I'm not.

Pete is afraid to hear what's coming.

PETE

What're you talking about?

BUTCH

I miss my friends. I miss my old neighborhood. I don't think I'm gonna like it in Los Angeles.

PETE

Well, for crying out loud, Butch...you don't even enroll until fall...you gotta give it a chance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUTCH

I'm just telling you how I feel.
That's what you wanted me to do,
right? I miss Tawna and she misses me.

PETE

Right. I just didn't think you'd
get homesick so soon. I mean you
haven't even moved yet.

BUTCH

Y'see, what I really need to
know is this...

(beat)

If I transfer to another school,
does my momma have to give up
her house?

Silence. It's all turning into a disaster.

Pete struggles for something to say. He likes the kid,
and the kid likes him.

PETE

Butch, your mother owns the house.
Nobody can take it away from her, okay?

BUTCH

That's good, good...but the fact is,
I don't even feel right being here
tonight. I feel like I'm taking your
money on all this expensive food.

PETE

Butch...

BUTCH

If you could call me a cab, I'd like
to spend the evening with my family.

(beat)

Please.

Silence. Basketball didn't used to be this complicated.
He doesn't know what to say. Finally:

CUT TO:

EXT. SCANDIA - FEW MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Pete puts Butch in a cab. The cab drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. SCANDIA - NIGHT

Only Neon Bodeaux remains. Pete is shaken but determined to salvage this evening somehow. He sits down and tries to give all his attention to the giant at his table.

PETE

I'm afraid Ricky and Butch have some problems they have to take care of, but we can continue without them.

(Neon nods)

Have you decided?

NEON

I'd like me a chili dog and a coke. Large coke.

PETE

(gently to Neon)

I don't believe they have chili dogs here.

(points to the menu)

Anything you want to order from this side of the menu might be nice.

Neon continues staring at the menu, nodding slightly as if thinking seriously.

Pete and the Waiter wait and wait and wait. Pete smiles nervously. Finally:

PETE (cont'd)

Have you decided?

Neon continues staring. After an interminable period, he looks up at Pete and speaks in the simplest manner.

NEON

Coach...I can't read.

Pete stares back without speaking.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF LOS ANGELES - DAWN

Pete walks the streets. Aimlessly drifting, weighing it all in his mind. He's dressed a little differently, maybe it's a couple days later. He wanders into:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A LIQUOR STORE--Pete drifts over to the magazine rack and stares at the titles.

CLOSE ON--THE SPORTING NEWS, STREET AND SMITH'S BASKETBALL REVIEW, INSIDE SPORTS, etc. Until his eyes drift over to another set of magazines, the skin mags.

CLOSE ON PENTHOUSE, CLUB, LE CHIC, etc. Each magazine has a more lurid cover than the previous.

PETE PICKS OUT two papers--one a sports paper and one a singles tabloid, full of ads for the "Dates", clearly a cover for hookers. He takes them to the counter.

PETE

I'll take this...and ...a fifth
of the Cutty...

The Clerk gets the bottle of Scotch and, as he rings up the two papers--

LIQUOR STORE CLERK

Hoops and broads. That really
sums it up, don't it?

PETE

You gonna editorialize or you
gonna sell me this shit?

LIQUOR STORE CLERK

Back off, man, I didn't mean
nothing.

PETE

Whatta I owe ya?

LIQUOR STORE CLERK

You're Pete Bell, ain't ya? I
know I recognized ya. I used to
go to the games when we had a
good team but who gives a damn now,
I say...what the hell happened?

PETE

No coaching.

Pete drops a twenty on the counter, more than enough, grabs his purchases and heads out, not waiting for change.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CITY MOTEL - SOMEWHERE IN L.A. - MORNING

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL - MORNING

Pete sits in a disheveled room. Half a pizza on the bed. He's watching ESPN half-heartedly. It's clear he's been living there for a few days.

A knock at the door.

PETE

Come in.

The door opens. A HOOKER, 35, enters. Decent looking, a slightly cheesy outfit, but not absurd. White boots.

PETE

(an awkward pause)

Why don't you sit down?

BAMBI

Well...I'm on the clock. I mean...
you want me to sit down? Or what?
I mean sitting down costs too. 'Cause
of the fact that time's running.

She sits down. This is all supremely awkward for Pete.

PETE

In the paper it said your name
was Bambi...that's a nice name--

BAMBI

It sucks. Face it. It's a
whore name. My real name's
Marjorie. Who cares, right?
So, what're we gonna do?

PETE

Well, how much?

BAMBI

Jesus H. Christ, we discussed
all this. A hundred for a regular.
A hundred and a half for irregular.

PETE

Regular's fine.

(beat)

But we don't know each other yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAMBI

Right. I'm a whore, remember?
The whole idea is this--we don't
know each other, we don't want
to know each other, we do it,
you pay me, I leave. Zippo.

PETE

Bambi is a sad movie, really.

BAMBI

And I'm a sad chick--that's why I
picked the name...so what's your problem?
No, wait...I don't wanta hear it. I know
it already. Your old lady kicked you
out 'cause you're an asshole or
something...you're lonely, you feel like
a jerk, you got my number outta that
trashy paper costs me fifty a week to
advertise in, I show up, you never been
with a hooker, and you wanta talk.

(beat)

What's the deal? Lose your job? Pork
your secretary? Losing you hair?
There's only so many things.

Silence. Pete just stares.

PETE

(softly)

Jesus...

Pete rises, goes to his dresser. He opens his wallet,
removes a stack of money. He hands it to her.

PETE (cont'd)

Thank you very much. You can
leave now...you've been very helpful...

BAMBI

Okay, okay...I know I talk too
much. Look--I don't have to be to
my next appointment for an hour. Can
I hang around and watch T.V.?

Pete glances at the T.V.--Sports News. Basketball.

PETE

Sure. Whatever...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pete pulls on his jacket and hurries from the room as Bambi watches television. She flips channels on the remote until a cartoon comes on.

CUT TO:

EXT. A SMALL SCHOOL - DAY

"JACK AND JILL" KINDERGARTEN - A yardful of 5 year olds at recess, running, shouting, crying around Jenny, their teacher. Pete pulls up in his car, enters the schoolground.

Jenny throws a ball into the air. The kids run after it, retrieving it in some game.

JENNY

Good, good!

PETE

Jenny, I gotta talk to you.

JENNY

For Godsakes, not now!

(to the kids)

Alright kids, form two lines here.

The Red Team and the Blue Team.

Jenny struggles to keep control of her class. Pete is desperate for her attention and feels both horribly out of place in the playground and, in some way, at home.

JENNY

Maria! Get back here! You're on the Blue Team!

MARIA

I wanta be on the Red Team!

One LITTLE KID hits another. Chaos. Pete responds instinctively--as if these were giant athletes.

PETE

Hey you kids! Shape up!

JENNY

Pete, shut up! I'm trying to teach a class! This is my work! We can't talk here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Sorry, I swear. You're right,
baby. I'm a lousy cheater. I'm
about to be thrown out of coaching.

JENNY

(to the kids)

By twos! No! Jeez... Okay,
the Red Team line up. A single
line! One line.

PETE

What do I gotta do to get you
back? Anything, baby.

Two little kids start fighting. Pete grabs them.

PETE (cont'd)

Hey, straighten up!

The two little kids straighten up, out of fear.

JENNY

It's not usually this bad.

PETE

You're doing a helluva job, really...
will you meet me for a drink later?

JENNY

No. Okay, Red Team over here!

Chaos. Pete seizes control with the same intuitive, mad
leadership that makes him a great coach.

PETE

The Chancellor wants me to stonewall 'em.
He thinks we can weasel outta this mess.

(beat)

What should I do?

JENNY

Tell the truth.

PETE

Then my career's over.

JENNY

(casually)

So we'll go to North Dakota.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jenny quickly returns her attention to the kids who have vaguely formed into two lines, two teams. Jenny removes two basketballs from an equipment bag, handing one to each team "captain".

Though Pete is there to tell Jenny he wants to come clean, he seems oblivious to the absurd timing of his visit. She's got a class to teach, and part of Pete keeps being torn toward coaching them--he wants to bring order to the playground.

JENNY (cont'd)

Okay. We're gonna have a relay race bouncing the ball. When I blow the whistle, you each bounce the ball down to and around the tree, coming back to the line where you hand the ball to your next teammate, who does the same thing. Okay?

KIDS

Yeah, yeah, okay!

PETE

Is that it? Is that how you prepare the kids?

JENNY

Of course.

PETE

No inspiring talk?

JENNY

Pete, for Godsakes, this is recess! They're five years old!

PETE

"Recess"? What's wrong with recess?! You can't make a distinction between recess and the rest of life.

(beat)

Wars are fought defending each country's right to spend recess the way it wants. If you think about it. Life is recess.

He turns to the kids, who are mesmerized by his focus, madness, passion, and ability to teach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Pete?!

PETE

Kids, kids, listen to me. Those of you on the Red Team must reach down inside of yourselves knowing that this relay race you're about to run is a symbol of the way you will spend the rest of your day in school, your lunch hour, your weekend, your semester, your entire life. Are you hearing me, Red Team?

The kids stare back silently, intently, a little frightened, a lot inspired. Though they don't quite understand the words, they get the point.

PETE (cont'd)

And if you lose, Red Team, but you gave it 100 per cent--then you can go to lunch hour with your heads high.

(beat)

And you, Blue Team, this relay race is more than a relay race, that tree down there is more than just a marker--it represents a larger goal, that tree, it is everything you strive for in life--

Absolute awe and bewilderment from the tiny kids. And Jenny even submits to part of his old madness, letting him continue.

PETE (cont'd)

--it is all you can become, it is life, death and resurrection. Do you hear me, kids?

(pointing)

That is not a tree.

P.O.V. THE TREE - all the kids stare at it.

PETE (cont'd)

It is your soul.

JENNY

(softly)

Pete...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

One more thing, please...Kids--

(beat)

Jesus Christ never saw a relay race and nine hundred million Chinamen don't care whether the Red Team wins or the Blue Team wins. But I care. And your teacher cares. And you care!

(beat)

Are you ready?!

Silence. She's still attracted to this side of Pete, for reasons she long ago stopped trying to figure out.

PETE (cont'd)

If you're ready yell "ready" when I say ready! Okay. You ready?

KIDS

Ready.

PETE

Louder!

(beat)

Ready?!

JENNY

Pete! Please!

KIDS

Ready!

PETE

Awright--Go!

Jenny blows her whistle. The lead kid from each team goes madly dribbling vaguely toward the tree. The school yard is filled with cheering and shouting.

JENNY

You're hopeless.

PETE

I am hopeless. Man, coach, husband, father--hopeless.

(theatrically)

Cursed with enthusiasm, a big mouth, an undying loyalty to lost causes--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE (cont'd)

If I go to Heaven I'll cheerlead for
God and if I go to Hell I'll give pep
talks to Satan.

(beat)

Jenny, I screwed up royally--but I
miss you, I love you, and in all
probability will remain hopeless in
those things as well.

(beat, looking at the
relay racers)

But look at those little suckers run.

Jenny looks at Pete, with affection and exasperation.
And Pete hurries off the playground.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAPPY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Late at night. Pete's car screeches to a halt, he gets
out and hurries to the door. He pounds on the door. Dogs
are BARKING. Pete is crazed, and as always, he seems at
his unpredictable best during these moments.

Happy, half asleep, staggers to the door.

HAPPY

Petey, for crissakes, you know
what time it is?

Pete pushes his way inside.

PETE

I need more money...lots of money...

HAPPY

Sure, Petey, no problem. Why?

PETE

I delivered the horses, didn't I?
Don't ask questions.

They go to Happy's safe and withdraw an envelope of cash.

PETE (cont'd)

More.

HAPPY

More? Is anything wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

No. Say, Hap', this is strictly
a theoretical question, y'understand,
but if Butch -- this is theoretical --
if Butch transferred to another
school, what happens to Lavada's house?

Happy is horrified at the thought.

HAPPY

It's paid for in cash! What's
wrong! What're you telling me?

Happy hands him two more envelopes of cash.

PETE

More. More.

Happy hands him yet another--the last--envelope of cash.

PETE (cont'd)

Is this all you've got?

HAPPY

For crissakes, Petey!

PETE

Go back to sleep, Hap', try counting
slam dunks. You'll sleep like a baby.
See you at the press conference.

Happy stands bewildered as Pete leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WESTERN SPORTS ARENA - DAY

Press conference. Major news media, dozens of press-
members, television cameras. A Medusa's head of microphones
at the dais. The Chancellor makes opening remarks; Pete
sits nearby.

CHANCELLOR

The plethora of rumors that has
arisen regarding the recruiting
practices within our own athletic
department prompts me to call this
press conference in order to
address the controversy head on.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCELLOR (cont'd)

You all know Pete Bell, a man largely responsible for the great success of our basketball program over the years, a brilliant court tactician, and our next head coach. I have asked Petey to clarify a few things for the press.

The Chancellor sits down and Pete comes to the mike. He looks around, he seems very calm -- he has an audience.

PETE

I have no statement to make. Are there any questions.

This startles the Chancellor, Vic, and half the crowd who are looking forward to his speech.

Ed, his perennial sportswriter adversary, stands.

ED

Pete -- do you have any comments on the rumor that you arranged for an automobile to be purchased for the father of Neon Bodeaux?

PETE

Now, Ed...it wasn't just an 'automobile,' for crissakes -- it was a Mercedes.

The Chancellor jerks his head in astonishment. Murmurs run through the crowd, then nervous laughter. Pete laughs. he must be joking. Happy looks around in disbelief. Pete motions off stage.

A Red Mercedes is driven into the arena.

PETE (cont'd)

You can get a lotta rebounds for a Krautmobile.

More murmurs. Pete seems totally in control.

PRESS #2

How is it you were able to get Ricky Fox when it was rumored he wasn't interested in college?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

When it comes time to harvest the
corn, somebody's gotta load the wagon,
right?! You know how much it costs
for a 6'8" power forward who's white?

Pete motions again, and here comes a tractor.

The Chancellor has seen enough, rises and tries to pull
Pete from the mikes and end the press conference.

PETE (cont'd)

Hey, another Dolphin!

CHANCELLOR

Peter, I think something's wrong...
(into the mike)

Ladies and gentlemen of the press...

PETE

'Peter?!' Nothing's wrong, except
inflation. Used to be able to get
a rebounder with a Chevy.

(beat)

Music!

The BAND MARCHES out playing the Dolphin Fight Song.

PETE (cont'd)

They're playing our song!

He starts singing the fight song into the microphone as
the band marches and the tractor and Mercedes circle.

PETE (cont'd)

Jesus Christ never saw a basketball
game! Buddha, Mohammed, all those
guys, never saw a hoop! Hard to
believe! And Winston Churchill never
had to listen to one of Petey Bell's
stupid speeches--fact is that Petey
Bell is through makin' speeches! And
as happy as you all are gonna be not
having to listen to my bullshit, you
can imagine how good I'm gonna feel
not having to make it up!

The press watches in disbelief. Happy leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY - DAY

Tony, Michael, other players are gathered watching this performance on television -- they are astounded and silent. Tony grabs a jacket and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. THE McRAE HOME - DAY

The McRae children call their mother to the set. Lavada comes over and watches with interest.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOX HOME - DAY

Ricky's mother and father watch curiously as Pete rants and raves.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S HOME - DAY

Jenny is standing and watching the set. She seems surprised but says nothing. Finally, she smiles slightly.

BACK TO ARENA:

INT. WESTERN SPORTS ARENA - DAY

Pete motions to the catwalk above the arena--a hand pulls a lever and releases tens of thousands of dollar bills which fill the air and float downward.

The band plays, the tractor and Mercedes circle each other, and the arena is filled with floating dollars.

PETE

I've sent Butch McRae, Neon Bodeaux,
and Ricky Fox home. Mrs. McRae can
keep her house and job.

(beat)

Don't worry, there's still enough
ough to buy another team.

Pete walks off the stage as the press screams for his attention, a million questions to ask. But Pete keeps walking away from the cameras and pursuing the press.

The money continues to float down out of the 'sky.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Chancellor is besieged with questions and gamely tries to deal with them -- but Pete continues walking out.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ARENA - THE TUNNEL - DAY

Pete is alone, the clamoring chaos of the press conference in the b.g. Tony hurries in and sees Pete.

TONY

Coach, coach! You alright?

PETE

I'm fine. I'm sorry, Tony...

TONY

Don't apologize. It's just a game. Why'd ya do this?

Pete smiles slightly. They continue walking.

PETE

What time is it?

TONY

'Bout two fifteen.

PETE

You're late to class, Tony!

TONY

Yessir.

Tony hurries off to class, and Pete walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND SOMEWHERE IN THE INNER CITY - DAY

Black kids of all ages playing basketball. Pete's world. He stands watching silently.

A game is in progress. In the b.g. a car pulls up. Jenny gets out, their small child under one arm, and joins Pete on the playground. Nothing is said for several beats. Finally:

JENNY

I saw you on T.V.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

Pretty ridiculous, eh?

JENNY

As always.

They watch the playground game for several beats, soothed and mesmerized by the simplicity of the game when all the money, glamour, and institutions are removed. Until:

Pete motions quietly to one of the kids playing ball.

PETE

Hey you, the skinny guy, yeah,
you...c'mere.

The SKINNY GUY comes over to Pete.

PETE (cont'd)

The guy's overplaying ya. Give
him a head fake and go back door.

SKINNY GUY

Who are you?

PETE

It don't matter who I am but let
me tell you one thing--you listening?!

SKINNY GUY

Yeah?

PETE

Nine hundred million Chinese don't
care whether you score or not but
I do...and you do.

Bewildered, the Skinny Guy looks to Jenny for help.

SKINNY GUY

What's he talking about?

JENNY

He's saying that when you lose,
ice cream tastes like horse manure
and a rose smells like a wet dog.

SKINNY GUY

(slightly terrified)
You're all weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The game picks up again at full tilt. Pete and Jenny watch. As the action heats up, the Skinny Guy runs a "backdoor" play as Pete had instructed; he drives the lane, leaps powerfully and elegantly toward the hoop and SLAMS the ball through the hoop. The noise is resounding.

PETE

If I really go to North Dakota, start all over, would you go with me?

JENNY

(softly)

Jeez, Pete, anywhere but North Dakota...

PETE

How about Alaska. They got basketball there.

JENNY

Not Alaska...

PETE

Where then?

JENNY

How 'bout home?

Pete smiles slightly, puts his arm around Jenny and they cross the playground together, and as the young players leap and spin in the air, we:

FREEZE FRAME on the Skinny Guy, balletic, hanging in the air, beautiful.

THE END