

**CONTROVERSY**

by

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**OVER DARKNESS**

Hear CRUNCHING, rhythmic and relentless and what sounds like the FAINT WHIMPERING of a wounded animal...

CUT IN ON:

**BARE FEET**

Plodding over the last vestiges of snow, icy cold asphalt beneath it. The acute eye notices fuchsia toenail polish, cracked with crimson around the edges.

We know this is no casual stroll even before we WIDEN TO:

**EXT. RIVERSIDE ROAD -- PRIDE, ILLINOIS -- LATE NIGHT**

**Thursday. 3:22 a.m.**

A GIRL, 20, staggers down a street. Periodically articulated by passing headlights (the effect is like that of a demonic discotheque), we see she's bloodied and bruised.

Every step exacts a toll as cars blur by, oblivious. All we hear is her LABORED BREATHING until another sound, a more familiar and joyous one, invades...

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)  
*Carrington takes the snap, running  
the edge - he keeps the ball...*

Her body swallowed by an oversized jacket, the Girl has only a torn bra and blood-stained panties underneath it.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)  
*...cuts up field, breaks a  
tackle...at the 35...the 30...*

A trapezoid of light falls across her from ahead - where a blurry edifice comes into view (GIRL POV)...

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)  
*...The 15, one defender left to  
beat - Carrington hurdles him and --*

TILT UP to see the UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ILLINOIS (UCI) HOSPITAL, the silent siren of an ambulance in the driveway providing a beacon as the Girl stumbles closer.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)  
*-- TOUCHDOWN!!!*

Her body trembling, her fractured breath discernible in the night chill, she enters the...

**INT. ER -- UCI HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS**

START ON A TELEVISION suspended in a corner, running a *SportsCenter*-like show (the source of our audio) before we PAN DOWN to find our Girl standing in the lobby.

Everything moves but her.

Nurses gossip at the reception desk, doctors passing, heads bowed in paperwork. No one notices the battered beauty.

YOUNG WOMAN

*Help me...*

And no one heeds her muttered plea, until...

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

HELP!!!

A ripple to a roar. And with it, we FREEZE-FRAME/SUPERIMPOSE:

**Cassie Sullivan. Former Homecoming Queen. UCI Junior.**

RESUME SPEED: CASSIE crumbles to the floor as an OLDER NURSE runs to her aid, a YOUNGER NURSE (VICKY) assisting.

**INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #7 -- UCI HOSPITAL -- MOMENTS LATER**

Nearly catatonic, Cassie sits atop a table, staring at a spot on the wall. The Older Nurse stands, cautious and kind:

OLDER NURSE

You're safe, sweetheart...

We notice a YOUNG MAN (OLIVER) sitting in an examination room across the hall, waiting for a doctor.

OLDER NURSE (CONT'D)

Can you tell me what happened?

Cassie nods. Over and over. Like a bobblehead. Finally:

CASSIE

They-they took me in a room...

OLDER NURSE

It's okay. You're safe...

CASSIE

They hit me...they took turns, over and over...I couldn't stop them.

OLDER NURSE

Who did this, sweetie?

CASSIE  
 ...They did, they all did.

OLDER NURSE  
 Who?

CASSIE  
*Them...*

Her trembling finger points to the MUTED TV, the image of a HANDSOME BLACK QUARTERBACK accepting an award on it.

The Nurse removes the garment off Cassie's shoulders to reveal it's a LETTERMAN JACKET, #7 emblazoned on the sleeve.

And off said jacket, the UCI Pirates insignia sullied by a scarlet streak, we RAPIDLY REVERSE FRAME, blurring backwards in time until we're immersed in total -- DARKNESS

### 20 Hours Earlier

HEAVY METAL MUSIC blasts (Pantera's "Cowboys From Hell") --

CUT IN; ON:

#### CLOSE ON A MAN (HAND-HELD)

So close you can see his pores. Eyes intense, sweat pours down his face as if in absolution. He's jogging. No, fuck that, he's sprinting. Not so much exercising as *exorcising*.

Until he comes up limp, his left hamstring cramping. He turns off the MANIACAL MUSIC bleeding from his headphones, as we WIDEN to see:

#### EXT. CAMPUS DRIVE -- UCI -- MORNING

Meet MATT FLYNN (33). Driven by demons he can neither resist nor understand. Even in a torn "UCI Football" tank-top, we sense his vanity (perhaps it's the uber fit frame or the perfect cut of his hair). He checks his watch, as we...

**Wednesday. 6:34 a.m.**

Limping over to the bronzed statue of FOOTBALL COACH JIM SCARMUCHI, he touches it (part of his routine) before cranking the music back up. Gritting through the cramp, he hobbles back home. Things to do, a schedule to keep.

STAY BEHIND, panning up to behold the south side of UCI, a towering kingdom beset by ivy and brick. A city unto itself.

**The University of Central Illinois. Pride, Illinois.**

**INT. ARCHER BUILDING -- UCI LEGAL AFFAIRS -- ONE HOUR LATER**

PING! Elevator doors open, Matt stepping out. Takes us a moment to recognize him in a three-piece Varvatos suit sans tie (never a tie), hair slicked back. Dude cleans up nicely.

**Mathias "Matt" Flynn. Junior Counsel. UCI Legal Affairs.**

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
You hurt yourself again?

This from KENDRA(40s) the receptionist, on sight of his limp.

KENDRA  
...You're not playing anymore,  
sweetie.

MATT  
Saturday's game...

He places TWO FOOTBALL TICKETS on her desk.

KENDRA  
No, you didn't. Fifty yard line?!

MATT  
Three rows back. Your son turns ten  
this weekend, right?

She's so excited, she springs up and hugs him.

KENDRA  
You have no idea what this is gonna  
mean to him. What do I owe you?

MATT  
More of those hugs. Nothing - don't  
be silly. Go have fun.

He continues into the --

**INT. BULLPEN -- UCI LEGAL AFFAIRS -- CONTINUOUS**

...passing the desk of HOWARD GOODMAN (45). Senior Counsel.

SENIOR COUNSEL  
You look at the Josh Allen thing?  
Ground ball, right?

MATT  
I don't see it that way, Howard.

Goodman stands. Follows Matt through the office.

SENIOR COUNSEL

The kid falls in front of the Student Center. He's drunk - hammered. We're not culpable.

MATT

There's legal culpability and moral culpability.

SENIOR COUNSEL

Is that a riddle?

Matt stops at his uncluttered cubicle (notice the affirmations posted on the wall like "Never Surrender").

MATT

We had signs posted and we took them down. Two lights were out and we didn't replace them. Just pay the kid's medical bill. It's the right thing to do.

SENIOR COUNSEL

I was being courteous. 'Cus we both know I don't need you to sign off.

Goodman marches off. Matt sighs.

**INT. UCI PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- SIXTH FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS**

Goodman enters to find DARWIN JAMES (50s, fastidious) behind his leviathan desk (we can't help but notice the plaque to the left: "HONOR IN ALL THINGS").

**Darwin James. UCI President. Class of '85.**

SENIOR COUNSEL

(places the folder on Darwin's desk)

My recommendation on the Allen filing, Sir.

Darwin studies the folder contents, bifocals on the bridge of his nose as Matt quietly enters, hanging back.

(NOTE: We notice Matt wears a silver chain with a lion head pendant on it. He touches it frequently; a nervous habit.)

SENIOR COUNSEL (CONT'D)

Student was inebriated. Exercised poor judgment and --

DARWIN  
 (closes folder)  
 We're not contesting this, Howard.

SENIOR COUNSEL  
 Sir. If I may. He's --

DARWIN  
 -- a nineteen-year-old kid who got drunk, as college students are wont to do. He has a broken leg and an embarrassing story to show for it. I think that's lesson enough, don't you?

Goodman tics an annoyed glance at Matt before nodding "yes sir" and exiting. Matt's about to follow suit when --

DARWIN (CONT'D)  
 Hang back, Mathias. Close the door...  
 (leans back at his desk)  
 You wouldn't sign off on it, would you? Good for you. I know you've always identified yourself as a football player but --

MATT  
 I'm good, sir...

DARWIN  
 Lemme finish. You were a 5'11 wide receiver and you took that dream as far as it could go. You're good at this. You've got the head for it - but so do a lot of lawyers. It's your heart that sets you apart. UCI needs guys like us, Mathias. To uphold the moral standard.

MATT  
 Thank you, sir.

DARWIN  
 Keep it up. Because I'm going to keep demanding it from you.

Matt nods. Exits.

**INT. ROOM -- PEDIATRIC CENTER -- UCI HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS**

TRAVIS (8) sits in bed, staring blankly up at cartoons on a TV, his embattled MOM on a chair beside him. Mother and son collectively light up on sight of something OC...

BO (O.S.)  
 Word is somebody thinks they can  
 beat me at Madden...

BO CARRINGTON (21, African American), the quarterback we glimpsed earlier, enters in his game day jersey (#7).

**Bo Carrington. Heisman Trophy Candidate and 4.0 Student.**

TRAVIS  
 I beat you the last three times!

BO  
 I was just letting you get  
 overconfident, my dude. You played  
 right into my trap, dawg.

He slides in beside Travis, sorting through a UCI DUFFEL BAG filled with swag.

BO (CONT'D)  
 What're you, like an XL...?

TRAVIS  
 (laughing)  
 No...

BO  
 (fixes a UCI HAT on  
 Travis' shaved head)  
 How you feelin' 'bout this surgery  
 tomorrow, T-Rex?

TRAVIS  
 I'm ready.

BO  
 I know you are. You cool if I  
 brought some friends with me...?

A DOZEN UCI FOOTBALL PLAYERS and the team MASCOT (a bear dressed as a pirate) enter with more swag and balloons.

Tears in her eyes, Travis' mom looks at Bo. Mouths "thank you." Off Bo's infectious smile, we...

**INT. MEN'S ROOM -- PEDIATRIC CENTER -- CONTINUOUS**

Bo wipes tears away, the toll of his visit only now apparent. With a deep breath and a practiced smile, he exits...

**INT. HALLWAY -- PEDIATRIC CENTER -- CONTINUOUS**

...bumping right into the Older Nurse we met at the opening.

OLDER NURSE

I have to tell you, what you do for these kids...

BO

Nah, I get way more out of it than they do.

OLDER NURSE

My little boy - he's 8 - he loves you. We all do - what you do for this community. Would you mind? His name's Tony.

She hands him A PEN and A NERF FOOTBALL. Bo happily signs it.

She admiringly watches Bo head down the hall to teammates BRIAN MEADOWS (20, a hard-bodied hippy, wide receiver) and PHARAOH PITTMAN (21, armored with muscle and tats, safety).

BRIAN

Check this out...

He hands Bo his iPhone - where we see a FLYER for a birthday party for Bo at "1777 National Road."

BO

My birthday's five months away, idiots.

PHARAOH

We marketing majors, dude. First rule is, grab their attention.

BO

If Coach --

PHARAOH

Coach ain't gonna find out. We'll keep it chill. Elite hoes and whatnot.

BRIAN

That was the deal: we do this, you let us have the party at our place.

Off Bo, reluctantly conceding, we...

**EXT. QUAD -- UCI CAMPUS -- DAY**

Effortlessly beautiful in Madewell skinny jeans and a TopShop sweater, CASSIE greets passing students as she confers with her roommate, ASHLEY (20, brunette).

CASSIE  
 ...I don't go to parties I'm not  
 invited to.

ASHLEY  
 Like they're gonna turn you away...

CASSIE  
 I just wanna stay in tonight.  
 (to a Passing Student)  
 Those boots are super cute...

ASHLEY  
 What do you have?

CASSIE  
 Organic Chem. Pre-med requirement.  
 We can't all be "music  
 appreciation" majors.

They go their separate ways, Cassie calling back:

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
 Don't forget, Brit Lit at 3!

Before she can continue on, a young man we've seen before  
 approaches her. This is --

OLIVER  
 Excuse me. Do you have a moment to -

CASSIE  
 Sorry, late for class!

As Cassie hustles off, we STAY WITH OLIVER PECK (21, redhead,  
 we recognize him from the opening scene in the hospital).

**Oliver Peck. UCI Senior. Editor of *The UCI Spectator*.**

Notepad and iPhone in hand, the bony and bespectacled lad  
 attempts to interview two Asian students on the quad.

OLIVER  
 Hi, I work for *The Spectator* and I  
 was wondering what you guys thought  
 about cuts to the Liberal Arts --

The students respond. In Mandarin. Oliver deflates. Watches  
 as they continue on (listen closely and you'll hear them  
 laughing and speaking perfect English as they recede).

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
 How goes it, Clark Kent?

SPENCER (20, half-ass beard, full belly), Oliver's roommate, approaches, foot-long Subway sandwich in hand.

OLIVER  
...Clark Kent?

SPENCER  
Only journalist I could think of.

OLIVER  
Really? Didn't want to go with  
Walter Cronkite? Edward R. Murrow?  
Dan Rather?

Spencer shrugs. Doesn't know any of those dudes.

SPENCER  
(mouth full)  
How's the headache?

OLIVER  
It's not a headache, I told you.  
And it's worse...

SPENCER  
You're just stressed 'cus you  
didn't get into Columbia. What's up  
for tonight?

OLIVER  
I don't know. Netflix and chill?

SPENCER  
I don't think that means what you  
think it does, Cronkite.

**EXT/INT. DODGE CHARGER -- MOVING**

DETECTIVE WINSTON DUNN (40s, slim, angular) drives, DETECTIVE  
AVA STEVENS (29, African American) riding shotgun.

AVA  
I could've done this on my own...

**Detective Ava Stevens. Four Weeks on the Job. Former UCI  
Campus Police Officer.**

DETECTIVE DUNN  
All good. Thought I'd tag along and  
remind you that you're not one of  
them anymore...

**Detective Winston Dunn. 16 Years on the Job.**

He points at TWO CAMPUS COPS waiting outside a sandwich shop as they pull into the parking lot of a...

**EXT. STRIP MALL -- PRIDE, ILLINOIS -- DAY**

Ava and Dunn walk towards the Campus Cops...

AVA

You guys miss me that much you gotta call us in?

CAMPUS COP #1

The "sandwich artist" called you, not us. It's Pittman. Again.

**INT. GREAT LAKES GRINDERS -- STRIP MALL -- CONTINUOUS**

A shirtless Pharaoh Pittman paces. AN EMPLOYEE, 32, behind the counter holds a bag of ice over his left eye.

PHARAOH

...I been coming here for six months, so today I get my grub and this bitch brings me a bill. Tells me after I done eatin', when I ain't got no money. Then runs his mouth off 'bout --

DETECTIVE DUNN

Alright, enough.  
(to Employee)  
Lemme see it...

The Employee removes the ice pack to reveal a nasty bruise.

PHARAOH

I don't know how he do that.

DETECTIVE DUNN

Yeah, it's one of life's great unsolved mysteries...

Dunn pointedly eyes the SECURITY CAMERA behind the counter.

AVA

How can we make this right? Where's Dimitri? - is he in today?  
(off name tag)  
Ethan. You just started here, right?

EMPLOYEE

I think this is my last day.

DETECTIVE DUNN  
You wanna press charges, sir?

PHARAOH  
For what?!

DETECTIVE DUNN  
Shut up.

The Employee takes one look at Pharaoh and...

EMPLOYEE  
No. No, it's cool. I'm okay.

AVA  
Here's what we're gonna do: we're gonna get Dimitri on the phone, confirm that Pharaoh eats for free and everybody's happy.

Pharaoh grabs a pre-made sandwich from the counter and simply, brazenly, walking out...

DETECTIVE DUNN  
Hey. Hey.

Ava gestures to Dunn: *leave it.*

DETECTIVE DUNN (CONT'D)  
Maybe next time we should help him beat the shit out of the guy...

Pissed, Dunn exits. Ava looks back at the Employee.

**INT. WILL MEEKS' OFFICE -- COACHING OFFICES -- CONTINUOUS**

WILL MEEKS (34, boyishly handsome) sits at his desk, going over game film on his computer.

MATT (O.S.)  
We gonna win Saturday?

Matt peeks his head in.

WILL  
The way Bo's been playing? - gonna be hard not to.

**Assistant Coach/Offensive Coordinator Will Meeks. Matt's Former Teammate and Best Friend.**

MATT  
We're grabbing a drink tonight, right?

WILL

Says the guy who doesn't drink alcohol. I gotta take Danny to Chuck E. Cheese's.

MATT

He's still into that?

WILL

He's four, bro.

MATT

I canceled on Nikki for us to hang.

WILL

Which one's Nikki?

MATT

Bring him. Kid's a rock star.

WILL

Yeah, Jess would love that...

MATT

What happened to my boy?

WILL

He has a family, dude, and one day, you will, too.

MATT

One day, maybe...*but not today.*

He exits, Will muttering *asshole* with a smile.

**INT. AUDITORIUM -- 17TH CENTURY ENGLISH LIT. -- CONTINUOUS**

A professor drones on about John Milton (os), Cassie taking notes, Ashley studying her nails with uber intensity.

Cassie sneaks a glance at her iPhone, seeing a familiar flyer image on it before passing the phone to Ashley.

ASHLEY

(off Cassie's iPhone)

Bo invited you? - I knew it.

In the row behind them, GRAHAM WEAVER (19, 6'5", 320), a mountain of a football player, stares intensely at Cassie.

CASSIE

He's got a girlfriend, Ash.

ASHLEY

Uh-huh...

CASSIE

He does! Shut up.

ASHLEY

You two have been doing this dance for way too long. It's exhausting.

CASSIE

He's always been with someone, I've always been with someone.

ASHLEY

This "girlfriend" of his is like in Cleveland or something...

CASSIE

Boston. She goes to Harvard.

ASHLEY

Whatever. He never sees her. Trust me, he's not asking you to go 'cus he likes talking to you - no offense.

CASSIE

Nice. We're friends...

ASHLEY

Fortune favors the bold, babe. You should totally go (to the party)...

Cassie focuses back on the professor, as we PRE-LAP:

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

This is a great day for UCI...

**INT. MEDIA ROOM -- UCI -- CONTINUOUS -- DAY**

CONSTANCE HAWTHORNE (50s, dignity tempered by ferocity) commands the podium, a row of boosters and Darwin James behind her. A smattering of press cover it.

**Constance Hawthorne. Head of UCI's Board of Trustees and CEO of Kenner Food & Beverage, Inc.**

HAWTHORNE

...I'm so pleased to announce a single donation of 100 million dollars from Mr. Clayton Farewell.

(APPLAUSE)

(MORE)

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

And now I'm handing off to much  
more capable hands. Our President,  
Darwin James...

Darwin steps to the podium, eying the assembled before...

DARWIN

Mr. Farewell has always been a  
great friend to UCI, in part  
because he understands the  
transcendent nature of athletic  
competition. A long time ago, I  
played basketball here. The game  
has changed a lot since then but  
the message hasn't...

He continues as we SOUND ADVANCE Bruno Mars' "24K Magic"...

**EXT/INT. FIRST FLOOR -- 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- CONTINUOUS**

Music blasts. Not your lame-ass college house party. A DJ. A  
packed floor of scantily-clad females, dancing, drinking,  
grinding. We continue to HEAR:

DARWIN (V.O.)

...The lessons learned aren't  
measured in wins and losses but in  
rights and wrongs...

FIND CASSIE amidst the human scrum, beverage in hand, she  
edges her way past a platoon of FOOTBALL PLAYERS (who are  
CHANTING: "WHOSE HOUSE?" and responding "OUR HOUSE!").

DARWIN (V.O.)

...we value sports not because it  
makes for better athletes, but  
because it makes for better  
people...

CASSIE

Where's the birthday boy?

BRIAN

(over music)  
WHAT?

CASSIE

WHERE IS BO?

He points upstairs. Graham Weaver, the offensive lineman from  
Cassie's Brit Lit class, watches her ascend.

**INT. BEDROOM -- 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- CONTINUOUS**

Bo sits at a desk, laptop open, in a disheveled room. Bed unmade. Refuse riddles the floors. The door slightly ajar.

CASSIE (O.S.)  
Whatcha' doing?

BO  
Hey. What's up? I got a Philosophy  
129 exam tomorrow. Kant.

Cassie enters on skittish legs; she's clearly intoxicated.

BO (CONT'D)  
You okay?

Seeing that she's having trouble, he stands, helps her.

BO (CONT'D)  
For the record, this is Meadows'  
room, not mine --

CASSIE  
*Happy birthday...*

She kisses him as the CAMERA PULLS BACK until we find ourselves in THE SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY, a few party-goers passing by (notice Graham Weaver in the stairwell) before...

...someone closes the bedroom door.

STAY OUTSIDE, shut out from the events within, before we...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

**INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #7 -- UCI HOSPITAL -- MORNING**

**Thursday. 6:45 a.m.**

In a hospital gown, Cassie sits on the table, alone. A cheerful POP SONG startles her. Her ringtone.

CASSIE  
(into iPhone)  
Hello...

Before we can hear the conversation, PAN ACROSS the hall to:

**INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #4 -- UCI HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS**

...OLIVER confers with a male DOCTOR. Parachute in:

UCI DOCTOR  
...Oliver, I'm afraid you have  
what's known as "Cephalalgia."

OLIVER  
*Oh my God...*

UCI DOCTOR  
Also known as a common headache.  
Which might sound familiar, because  
it's the same thing I told you last  
week. One of the nurses mentioned  
you didn't get into grad school...

OLIVER  
I didn't get into *Columbia*. Not all  
grad schools - and no I don't think  
it's in any way related.

UCI DOCTOR  
We ran the tests. It's not a brain  
tumor. Not an aneurysm. Not  
whatever else you're conjuring up.  
(before Oliver can speak)  
And I don't want to know what the  
Internet says - the Internet is not  
your friend. Save your parents some  
money and invest in some Advil.

OLIVER  
(calls out)  
This is on your conscience, Doc!

As the Doctor recedes, Oliver takes note of the exam room  
across the hall - where we see Cassie still on the phone.

Even with the cuts and contusions, he recognizes her from campus as he ganders further down the hall (OLIVER POV) to see...DETECTIVES DUNN AND STEVENS approaching.

BACK TO CASSIE(STILL OLIVER POV) as she disconnects the call.

OLIVER hops off the table, pulling a mini iPad from his backpack. Sensing a story, he steps out into the...

**INT. HALLWAY -- UCI HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS**

Moving cautiously closer, Oliver passes the young nurse (VICKY) we saw earlier on her way outside, as we...

**INT. ATHLETIC FACILITIES -- UCI -- CONTINUOUS**

Bam! Weight room doors slap open, berthing Matt, post workout, drenched in sweat. We TRACK WITH HIM as he goes through the TRAINING ROOM, replete with state-of-the-art cryotherapy chambers and massage tables on his way to...

...THE SPORTS CAFETERIA. Downright pristine. Internet startups don't have cafeterias this pimpy.

Matt grabs a protein shake waiting for him from the Team Nutritionist. Breakfast in hand, he continues to...

THE INDOOR PRACTICE FACILITY. A linebacker (KIMBLE, 20) runs sprints on the field, stopping on sight of Matt.

MATT

What'd you do, K-9? Coach Scarmuchi punishing for bad haircuts now?

KIMBLE

Late to a meeting. Ten gassers.

MATT

He used to make us do fifteen.

KIMBLE

Back in medieval times?

MATT

Clever. *Douche.*

Matt's iPhone rumbles. He checks caller ID ("Vicky") and --

MATT (CONT'D)

(answers cell)

V, I was just thinking about you...

VICKY (V.O.)

Not so much that you call but...

**EXT. STREET -- UCI HOSPITAL -- MORNING**

Vicky stands in the cold outside the hospital, on the phone:

VICKY  
Relax, Rico Suave, I'm calling to  
give you a heads-up on something...

Intercut as necessary:

VICKY (CONT'D)  
...A UCI coed came in late last  
night, pretty banged up.

MATT  
She okay?

VICKY  
Not the question...

MATT  
Okay, what's the question?

VICKY  
How the football team's involved.  
She's not my patient but  
apparently...

FAVOR MATT as Vicky continues to lay out what she knows (os),  
Matt's face losing its color before...

MATT  
...Thanks, V. I owe you.

He disconnects. Walks over to Kimble - who, palms to his  
knees, recovers from sprints.

MATT (CONT'D)  
You guys have a party last night?

**INT. RECEPTION -- DARWIN JAMES' OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Still in his workout gear, Matt blazes through...

MATT  
Karen. Karen. I need to talk to  
him.

This, to the TWO ASSISTANTS (yes, both named Karen). Before  
they can even respond, he goes into...

**INT. UCI PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- SIXTH FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt enters to find Darwin going over paperwork at his desk.

MATT

Sir, I'd never interrupt like this if it wasn't important...

DARWIN

What's wrong?

MATT

A coed's making allegations against the football team.

DARWIN

What kind of allegations?

MATT

The worst kind. The team had a party last night. The girl showed up at the hospital this morning, beaten up, wearing Bo Carrington's jacket. I'm still putting the pieces together but...

DARWIN

Good Lord. How did you hear?

MATT

A very reliable source.

DARWIN

We have to get the Communications Department involved...

Before he can pick up the phone...

MATT

Sir. The more people that know, the more likely it is to get out. Let me handle it. I can get answers before anyone else. I can get the truth. I know these kids, I was one of them not too long ago.

DARWIN

Something like this...it doesn't just sully the football team, it sullies the entire University.

MATT

You said you were going to demand more of me, sir. How 'bout we start here?

Off Darwin, deeply troubled, we...

**EXT. UCI CAMPUS -- DAY**

WIDE: Oliver Peck hustles across the campus quad.

**INT. ROOM -- FAREWELL HOUSE -- SECOND FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS**

He enters to find Spencer playing PS4. The other side of the room is tapered with UCI Football banners and posters.

SPENCER

What'd the doctor say?

OLIVER

Said I'm fine.

SPENCER

My condolences. Thought you had class?

OLIVER

Something more important came up.

SPENCER

What?

Oliver slides behind his desk, booting his computer up (note the framed and signed picture of Bob Woodward on said desk).

OLIVER

The thing that's gonna get me into Columbia Grad School, that's what.  
(spins chair to Spencer)  
Remember when you needed the room for that sophomore with the braces? Julie?

SPENCER

*Trudy*. You got a girl coming over?

OLIVER

Just get out, dude.

SPENCER

You're lucky I have a Gender Studies class...

OLIVER

Good, maybe you can figure out what gender you are.

Spencer gives him the finger on his way out. Oliver begins typing as if possessed, as we --

**INT. DODGE CHARGER -- MOVING**

Dunn drives, Ava riding shotgun, keeping a steady eye on the cleaned up but traumatized CASSIE in the backseat.

DETECTIVE DUNN

We can't make you press charges...

CASSIE

You don't know what the football team means to this school, to this town...

DETECTIVE DUNN

I know they'll keep doing it if you let them get away with it.

Dunn stops the car outside an upscale apartment complex.

AVA

You have to talk to someone.  
(hands her BUSINESS CARD  
back to Cassie)  
Call. Anytime.

DETECTIVE DUNN

If you press charges, you'll be anonymous. No one will know it's you...

She mutters a *thank you* before flipping the sweatshirt hoodie the hospital gave her up, and exiting.

AVA

(re: apartment complex)  
That's a nice place for a young girl...

DETECTIVE DUNN

This is what these bastards do. You saw her...

AVA

People do crazy things for inexplicable reasons...

DETECTIVE DUNN

So what, she did that to herself?

AVA

I dunno. But I've been on this job a grand total of four weeks and I already know not to be surprised by anything people do.

**INT. LOCKER ROOM -- UCI FOOTBALL FACILITIES -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt enters, FOOTBALL PLAYERS perambulating about. He scans the room, troubled, before spotting...

MATT

Bo...

Matt notices a sizable BRUISE on Bo's bare torso, SCRATCHES on his chest, as he disrobes from a workout.

MATT (CONT'D)

You barely got touched last game...

BO

Hmm? Oh. From practice.

As they talk, Matt discreetly scans Bo's locker: Biblical quotations/a picture of Bo with Travis/various sundries.

MATT

You do anything last night?

BO

Studied. Had an exam this morning.

MATT

You didn't have a party?

BO

(exhales)

You're not gonna tell coach, are you?

MATT

Something tells me he's gonna find out. Anything happen at the party?

BO

No, it was chill. I mean I wasn't lying, I studied for most of it. What's going on?

MATT

Just sit tight.

Matt leaves a confused Bo behind, continuing into...

**INT. BULLPEN -- COACHING OFFICES -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt passes Will Meeks' office and gestures to meet him down the hall as he continues towards...

**INT. COACH SCARMUCHI'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

HEAD COACH JIM SCARMUCHI (47, avuncular) sits at his desk, on the phone, gesturing for Matt to come in as Will enters behind him. They talk as Scarmuchi finishes up his call (os).

MATT

You're letting the Golden Child take hits in practice?

WILL

I don't even let him play foosball at this point. What's up?

MATT

There's some rumors flying around.

WILL

Rumors? - 'bout you and that stewardess?

MATT

*Flight attendant* - and that wasn't a rumor. About the team...

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI (O.S.)

What about the team?

A god-like voice, booming and baritone. Off the phone, Scarmuchi's unblinking eyes fix focus on Matt.

**UCI Head Coach Jim Scarmuchi. Two National Championship Titles. 2014 Coach of the Year.**

MATT

A student is claiming some players raped and assaulted her last night, Coach. She mentioned Bo's name.

Scarmuchi stands (for some reason, we expect him to be taller). Inhales deeply. Pensive. Anguished. Finally:

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI

We've got some characters on this team but...no way any of them are capable of that. I've coached thousands of kids - great kids, kids like you, Matty - and Bo Carrington is one of the finest young men I've ever come across. For God's sake, he babysat my youngest daughter last year.

WILL

We know who the girl is?

MATT

Her name's Cassie Sullivan. She's part of --

WILL

-- The Hostess Squad. I know her, not well.

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI

The goddamn Hostess Squad. What did I tell you about that?

WILL

We didn't have a choice, Jim. As soon as other schools started using students to recruit...

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI

That ain't recruiting.

WILL

They flirt with kids, chat 'em up, that's it.

Scarmuchi smirks, not buying it. Back to Matt:

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI

What's your plan, Matty?

MATT

I'm gonna talk to everybody, see what I can piece together.

SOUND ADVANCE the DING-DONG of a doorbell, before we...

**EXT/INT. HAWTHORNE RESIDENCE -- CONTINUOUS**

CHARLES HAWTHORNE (54, lean and lantern jawed), Constance's husband, answers the door to find Darwin.

CHARLES HAWTHORNE

Good to see you, Darwin. Come on in...

DARWIN

Playing hooky?

CHARLES HAWTHORNE

I have to fly to Switzerland for a conference. Nice donation from Farewell, by the way.

(MORE)

CHARLES HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

Connie was telling me about the football complex he's building.

DARWIN

It's stunning. If you ever need a barber shop, a climbing wall and a bowling alley, we got you covered. Of course, the Environmental Science building's not so happy about their view being obstructed but...

CHARLES HAWTHORNE

I'm sure you'll work it out. Let's grab a drink when I'm back. Connie's in the study...

Darwin ascends a winding and ornate staircase, as we...

**INT. STUDY -- HAWTHORNE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Darwin's just told Hawthorne. We parachute in:

HAWTHORNE

...Who's handling it now?

DARWIN

One of my guys. Matt Flynn.

HAWTHORNE

He has experience with this sort of thing?

DARWIN

No. He's young, but he's sharp and uniquely suited for --

HAWTHORNE

This is not the time to take flyers on people, Darwin. It's like a missing persons case: the longer the search goes on, the worse the outcome.

(then)

I know someone who handles this sort of thing...

**EXT. COURTHOUSE -- DOWNTOWN CHICAGO -- MORNING**

BAM! Courthouse doors fling dramatically open and, all at once, REPORTERS scatter like a school of sperm.

Borne of those gates: a horde of robotic attorneys in Brooks Brothers' finest and a STARLET (donning oversized sunglasses on an overcast day). But our gaze goes to --

JOURDAN PRICE (34, African American, a fashionable lioness), exhibiting a captain's ease in crisis, steps to the dais.

**Jourdan Price. Crisis Management Consultant.**

JOURDAN

The credit here goes to Miss Diamond's legal team. I'm just happy to play a part, a small part, in a loving mom getting full custody of her kids. Thank you.

With that brief statement, she steps away from the podium, instantly met by her assistant, JANET (28, British)...

JANET

(handing iPhone over)  
Constance Hawthorne for you.  
Regarding UCI...

Jourdan takes the phone from Janet, as we...

**INT. BATHROOM -- OFF CAMPUS APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS**

Cassie stares at herself in the mirror, doing her best to conceal the cuts above her eye and lip with mascara.

Flustered, she stops. Braces the sink. Catches her breath. The sound of the door opening startles her. Then:

ASHLEY (O.S.)

...You home, babe?

Cassie collects herself. Calls back:

CASSIE

Just got in...

ASHLEY (O.S.)

You bitch. I knew I should have gone to that party.

Cassie takes deep, silent breaths.

ASHLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Bob and Brenda get in today, right?  
 One of the benefits of being  
 effectively disowned by my parents  
 is I don't have to worry about them  
 showing up for Homecoming. So it  
 was like amazing, right? The party?

Hand over her mouth, Cassie weeps. But her gaze goes to the  
 BUSINESS CARD Ava gave her, as we...

**EXT. 1779 NATIONAL ROAD -- DAY**

Matt stands on a house doorstep, talking to a NEIGHBOR (30s,  
 balding, wearing a Chicago Bears jersey).

MATT  
 You didn't see anything odd?

NEIGHBOR  
 They're always having parties over  
 there. I heard some screams. Hey,  
 you used to play ball, didn't you?

MATT  
 Screams?

NEIGHBOR  
 You know, like fighting. Shouting.  
 You played for the Eagles, right?  
 What happened?

MATT  
 I got cut.  
 (vanity bleeds through)  
 I played in Europe for five years.

NEIGHBOR  
 They have football in Europe? -  
 What're you doing now?

MATT  
 I'm a lawyer.

NEIGHBOR  
 You couldn't think of nothing else  
 to do?

Matt smirks. Hands him a business card.

**EXT. NATIONAL ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER**

Matt walks back to the players' house next door before  
 noticing a tinted PORSCHE 911 blocking his Escalade.

**INT. LIVING ROOM -- 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- CONTINUOUS**

SEVEN FOOTBALL PLAYERS (Brian Meadows and Pharaoh Pittman among them) sit on couches and chairs, listening to --

JOURDAN

...What I need from all of you, is full disclosure of --

MATT (O.S.)

Can I help you?

She turns to see Matt. Bridges the gap between them.

JOURDAN

I'm Jourdan. I'm here to help. You're Matthew, right?

MATT

Mathias. Matt. You're here under whose authority?

JOURDAN

The University. You should have been informed. I'm sorry for that. But things are moving pretty quickly now...

She hands him her iPhone. ON THE SCREEN we see an article in *The UCI Spectator* by Oliver Peck. "COED ACCUSES FOOTBALL TEAM OF GANG RAPE DURING OFF CAMPUS PARTY."

MATT

We don't even know if she's pressing charges yet...

JOURDAN

I'm pretty sure she is...

She points behind him. Through the living room window - where we see THREE POLICE CARS and a familiar DODGE CHARGER descending on the house, pulling into the driveway.

Off Matt, realizing that things have just gotten considerably more complicated, we...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

**EXT. 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- PRIDE, ILLINOIS -- DAY**

**Thursday. 1:45 p.m.**

A wall of uniformed cops stand behind Dunn and Ava as Jourdan looks over a WARRANT. Matt carefully reads along with her.

DETECTIVE DUNN  
You're legal counsel?

JOURDAN  
I'm assisting UCI as a consultant.

Dunn shifts focus to the SEVEN FOOTBALL PLAYERS now standing stiffly on the lawn.

DETECTIVE DUNN  
(to Cop #1 and #2)  
Keep an eye on them.

He barrels up the porch steps, Ava and ten cops following...

MATT  
Hang on a sec...  
(the cops stop)  
"United States v. Thompson" says  
that affidavits have to be signed  
in person, not faxed.

They stare back. Can't believe the balls on this guy.

JOURDAN  
(low; to Matt)  
We wanna play nice here. They can  
get a signature in a half hour and  
we'll all be right back here like  
deja vu.

Matt looks at her. Looks at Dunn and Ava. Finally:

MATT  
Go ahead. You have our consent.

The cops enter the house as Matt does a visual head count of the assembled players. Realizes someone's missing:

MATT (CONT'D)  
...Where's Bo?

BRIAN  
He wouldn't come out.

JOURDAN

That is not the message we want to send...

**INT. HALLWAY -- BO'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt KNOCKS on Bo's closed door.

MATT

Bo. You gotta come out...  
(no answer)  
...Bo?

Quietly, he opens the door, entering to find Bo at his desk. Staring at *The Spectator* article on his computer. Reading his name over and over in it.

MATT (CONT'D)

...We gotta let the cops do their thing, man. You okay?  
(Bo's still silent)  
If you've got nothing to hide, let's not make it easy on them...

BO

When all this is said and done, when we're proven innocent, when everybody involved knows this was bullshit, you know what people are gonna see when they Google me? Not 4.0 student. Not Heisman candidate. Not "Scholar-Athlete of the Year." Rapist. That's what they're gonna see. And that's what they're gonna believe...

MATT

If nothing happened, UCI has your back. You have my word. But right now, staying in here makes you look guilty. So stand up, and walk out with me.

He helps Bo to his feet just as Dunn and four cops enter. Dunn trades hostile eyes with Matt as they pass.

Bo ganders back to see the cops tearing his room apart, one cop ripping an MLK Jr. print off his wall.

**INT. HALLWAY -- 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt finds Ava standing outside a room, tells Bo:

MATT  
Go ahead. I'll catch up.

Bo exits out onto the lawn as Matt talks to Ava:

MATT (CONT'D)  
How ya' doing, I'm Matt.

He extends a hand. She stares at it.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Look, we can help each other here.  
We're after the same thing.

AVA  
What's that?

MATT  
The truth.

He hands over his business card.

**EXT. 1777 NATIONAL ROAD -- PRIDE, ILLINOIS -- DAY**

Cops load boxed items retrieved from the house into car trunks as players file back in. Jourdan and Matt watch.

BY THE POLICE CARS: AVA places a BOX OF ITEMS from the house into the Dodge trunk. Seconds later, Dunn does the same.

AVA  
(shows Dunn Matt's  
business card)  
You know him?

DETECTIVE DUNN  
No. He played here. Was friends  
with a guy named Reed Willis - a  
running back - who punched an  
Economics Professor 'cus he didn't  
like the grade she gave him. Hit  
her so hard, he broke four bones in  
her face.

AVA  
*Jesus.* What happened to him?

DETECTIVE DUNN  
To good ol' Reed? He ran for 122  
yards last week against Tampa Bay.

He closes the trunk and heads towards the driver's seat,  
about to enter when from inside the house he hears a voice --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Beat it, faggot...

Dunn stops.

AVA  
*Let it go...*

Dunn opens the car door. And closes it. And strides over to the house and all its open windows.

DETECTIVE DUNN  
You guys think you can do whatever you want around here. We'll see about that...

Matt and Jourdan watch as Dunn strides back to his car.

JOURDAN  
I like him...

**INT. DODGE CHARGER -- MOVING (MOMENTS LATER)**

Dunn drives, Ava studies the world outside. Silence. Then:

AVA  
That term doesn't even mean what you think it does anymore.

DETECTIVE DUNN  
In this instance, they happen to be right.

For the first time, Ava realizes that her partner's gay.

DETECTIVE DUNN (CONT'D)  
...Although I prefer the term "fairy."

A beat. Ava bursts into laughter. Dunn, too.

**INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE -- MOVING**

Matt drives, Jourdan riding shotgun, annoyed by the riot of sunglasses and protein shake cans at her feet. Silence. Then:

MATT  
I talked to four neighbors. None of them noticed anything --

JOURDAN  
That's not how this goes...

MATT

...How does it go?

JOURDAN

We need to sit down with the girl. See what she wants. Does she want money? Is there a figure that the University can stomach that will make her back off?

MATT

We're not paying her off...

JOURDAN

I was brought in to make this go away. And short of that, to soften its impact. The next 24 hours are critical. What is it you think your job is?

MATT

To find out what happened. 'Cus if they did it then they were never a part of this University and what it stands for. And the same goes for her if she's lying.

JOURDAN

You're gonna have to pick a side.

MATT

Already have. A long time ago.

JOURDAN

What, good and evil? Right and wrong? Those terms don't exist in my universe. If we don't talk to her now, we'll have to pursue a more aggressive approach later.

MATT

(digging in)

We're not paying her off.

She looks at him, amused. As if seeing a pink unicorn.

**INT. BASKETBALL COURT -- UCI FACILITIES -- CONTINUOUS**

SWISH! Sleeves rolled up, tie loosened, Darwin shoots free throws during his lunch hour as Matt sheepishly enters.

MATT

Sorry to interrupt, sir...

DARWIN

It's fine. I do this to clear my head but...it's not happening today.

CLANG. He misses a shot. Lets the ball bounce and roll off.

DARWIN (CONT'D)

...What's the latest?

MATT

This crisis consultant, Jourdan Price...

DARWIN

I'm sorry about that, Mathias. It wasn't my call. A lot of people are very jumpy right now. Myself included.

MATT

I'm concerned she's gonna make the process harder, sir.

DARWIN

How so?

MATT

She doesn't understand that there's a right way to do this...

DARWIN

Then I'm particularly grateful you're involved, Mathias. I'm counting on you.

Before Matt can respond - his iPhone buzzes. Caller ID: "Private."

MATT

(answers iPhone)

Hello? Detective Stevens. What? Now? You're kidding me...

**EXT. CLAYTON FAREWELL PRACTICE FIELD -- UCI -- DAY**

THWACK! A ball carrier gets destroyed by a linebacker. Players go nuts, celebrating as they trot back to the huddle.

**INT. TUNNEL -- PRACTICE FIELD -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt hustles down a long dark corridor, JOURDAN suddenly materializing, falling in with him.

MATT

You heard?

JOURDAN

I posted one of my investigators  
outside the police station.

They exit the tunnel, the sun assaulting them as they bound  
across the field in the middle of football practice. Bee-  
lining for Head Coach Scarmuchi. Will Meeks cuts them off...

WILL

Not a good time, buddy. Coach is in  
a mood.

(re: Jourdan)

Who's this?

MATT

The Princess of Fucking Darkness.  
Sorry to say, his mood's not gonna  
improve much...

JOURDAN

Hi.

(shakes Will's hand)

I prefer Queen of Fucking Darkness.

Before Will can ask what's going on, we hear the exhaust and  
engines of large vehicles. Coming closer. Heads turn to see:

TWO SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT TRANSPORT BUSES drive right onto the  
field along with A DOZEN POLICE CARS.

Players and coaches watch in jaw-agape shock as TWO DOZEN  
Sheriff's Department cops file out, many wielding shotguns (a  
few even carry automatic weapons).

WILL

They're being arrested?

JOURDAN

They're being *processed*.

MATT

Fingerprinting. DNA testing...

The Cops begin loading players, pads and all, onto the buses  
as Will and the other coaches futilely protest, and we --

**EXT. HIGHWAY 41 -- EVENING**

TOP SHOT: A highway caravan. Led by the two Sheriff's  
Department buses, followed by a procession of police cars. A  
persistent SUV brings up the rear.

**INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE -- MOVING**

Matt drives. Jourdan expertly emails on her iPhone.

JOURDAN

According to the police report...

MATT

You got the police report?

JOURDAN

...girl says she was unconscious for part of the assault. The hospital gave her three rape kits. All showed vaginal lacerations and anal bruising consistent with but not endemic to rape.

MATT

So she could have just had rough sex...

Her cell. She snags it on the first ring. Launching in:

JOURDAN

(into iPhone)

Ken, I need everything you can get on all the players. Every one.

She disconnects. Reads the look on Matt's face.

JOURDAN (CONT'D)

I need to know all angles here.

MATT

That's why I'm here.

JOURDAN

My investigators are very good at what they do.

MATT

I'm sure they are. What'd they tell you about Bo Carrington's father?

JOURDAN

Died when he was young.

MATT

That was published in *Sports Illustrated* his freshman year and we never refuted it. His dad's serving a life sentence in prison.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

How good are your investigators when their primary source is a 2014 *Sports Illustrated* article?

JOURDAN

What's his father serving time for?

MATT

Don't overreact. He was a serial rapist.

(before she explodes)

Bo never even met the guy. It's got nothing to do with this.

JOURDAN

It's got everything to do with it. They'll say he has a genetic predisposition to rape - like it's encoded in his DNA.

Her other phone, a BlackBerry TRILLS. Caller ID: "Vanessa."

MATT

(seeing her trepidation)

Go ahead, take it...

Jourdan reluctantly answers, her voice soft and soulful:

JOURDAN

(into BlackBerry)

Hey, sweetheart...

Matt tries to act like he's not listening but one glance and we can see he's riveted.

JOURDAN (CONT'D)

(into BlackBerry)

Call me anytime, baby. Did you talk to Mrs. Jenkins? Call her, sweetie. I love you, too.

She hangs up as Matt follows the cop caravan off the highway.

MATT

How many kids you have?

JOURDAN

None.

(moving on)

Let's hope they handcuffed the players on the bus.

Before Matt can ask why, they pull into THE PRIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT to see A THRONG OF MEDIA assembled.

MATT  
 (re: the media)  
 How'd they get here so fast?

JOURDAN  
 I called them.

Off Matt's reaction, we PRE-LAP:

DARWIN (V.O.)  
 So, we hired someone to get us more  
 publicity?

**INT. UCI PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- SIXTH FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS**

A troubled Darwin confers with Hawthorne as a TV in the BG shows the players arriving at the police station.

HAWTHORNE  
 Miss Price advised Ohio State last year - and we both know what a mess that was. Dan Jennings on their board called her "a miracle worker."

DARWIN  
 We don't need miracles, we need competence - something in shorter supply.

HAWTHORNE  
 What's next on the list?

DARWIN  
 Same issue with the contingent faculty. The adjuncts, postdocs and TAs are threatening to strike. They want guaranteed contracts...

HAWTHORNE  
 That's what we call "tenure." These people confuse outcomes with achievements.

DARWIN  
 They outnumber tenured faculty two-to-one. It's worth discussing.

HAWTHORNE  
 I'll bring it up in our next meeting...

Her gaze goes back to the TV coverage of the players. Then:

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

This is cancer, Darwin. And the Board and I are counting on you to make sure it doesn't spread.

Off Darwin, feeling the pressure, we...

**EXT. PRIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT -- EVENING**

HANDCUFFED PLAYERS cover their faces as the media film and photograph. Jourdan walks alongside them, instructing:

JOURDAN

Do not cover your faces. Just walk. You're being wrongfully accused. Look troubled, not angry.

Cuffed hands still shield faces until Bo peeks at Jourdan. And lowers his hands. Gradually, every player follows.

Matt falls in with Jourdan as they bound towards the station.

MATT

What is this?

JOURDAN

Our narrative.

MATT

Which is...?

**INT. PROCESSING -- PRIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS**

Players split into groups of 3, twenty-five kids lined up against a wall getting photographed and fingerprinted, a cooperative Bo at the front of the line. Always polite.

JOURDAN (V.O.)

"Innocent student-athletes wrongfully accused and treated like common criminals." The only court that matters right now is the court of public opinion.

**EXT. ADAMS FIELD HOUSE -- UCI -- NIGHT**

Cassie, her mom and dad and Ashley walk towards a brick-hewn edifice. A marquee reads: "PARENTS' HOMECOMING DINNER."

CASSIE'S MOM

You know some of these players, sweetie. Are any of them capable of doing these awful things they're saying?

Cassie doesn't answer. Ashley fills in the silence:

ASHLEY

I know girls who make this kind of thing up for attention.

CASSIE'S DAD

I couldn't imagine anyone making this sort of thing up. Who's watching these football players?

(to Cassie)

Sweetheart, you never had any problems with these guys?

Cassie stares back, holding back a tsunami of emotion.

**INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE -- BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS**

Janet, Jourdan's assistant, studies a laptop at a desk as Jourdan and Matt confer...

MATT

The DA hasn't formally pressed charges. If she's making this up, maybe the media spotlight has given her pause. Maybe the evidence isn't there...

JOURDAN

In football, somebody wins, somebody loses. The world isn't like that. In this instance, everyone can lose...

MATT

You said that to say what?

JOURDAN

If they're guilty - and proven so - what happens in your estimation? UCI is instantly purged and purified in equal measure?

MATT

I'm not looking to create "a narrative" here, lady. The only narrative I'm interested in is what actually happened...

JOURDAN

Do you know who Paul Berg is?

(Matt shakes his head

"no")

He's a scientist, a renowned one.

(MORE)

JOURDAN (CONT'D)  
 And the only Nobel Prize winner  
 Penn State has ever had.

MATT  
 Fascinating...

JOURDAN  
 Do you know who Jerry Sandusky is?  
 (off Matt's silence)  
 These kinds of wounds don't heal.  
 And if we don't tend to this - fast  
 - all the good things you're  
 defending? - won't matter. 'Cus UCI  
 will be known as a school for  
 rapists.

JANET (O.S.)  
 You should see this...

They turn to see Janet waving them over to her laptop.  
 Pointing to the screen.

JANET (CONT'D)  
 Someone outted her...

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN, we see a TMZ-like site has named Cassie  
 as the gang rape victim, complete with an Instagram picture  
 of her in a skimpy bikini.

MATT  
 Did you do this...?

JOURDAN  
 What?

MATT  
 You said if she wouldn't cooperate,  
 you'd pursue "more aggressive"  
 methods...

JOURDAN  
 I assure you, I did not do this.  
 (looks back at screen)  
 But it is helpful...

**INT. ADAMS FIELD HOUSE -- UCI -- NIGHT**

WIDE: A packed hall. Cassie sits with her parents and Ashley.

CLOSER: While Cassie's successfully concealed her bruises,  
 wounds are visible in her hollow eyes. PAN DOWN TO see her  
 trembling hands beneath the table (she has them clasped in an  
 attempt to quell the tremors).

PAN BACK UP as she begins to notice other tables (POV): students and parents glance her way. Talking about her. In fact, everyone seems to be looking at her.

A vision of complete paranoia.

Ashley nudges Cassie before indelicately thrusting her iPhone into her roommate's hand.

ASHLEY

It's you...? You're the girl?

Cassie looks down at the phone. Reads her name.

CASSIE'S DAD (O.S.)

Cass, what's wrong, sweetie?

Horrified, Cassie staggers out, every eye watching her go. Her mom looks over to see the iPhone article, as we...

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

**INT. BEDROOM -- MATT'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS**

**Friday. 7:03 a.m.**

In boxers, bottled water in hand, Matt pads in to see VICKY (the nurse from the hospital) waking in his bed.

MATT  
(hands her bottled water)  
Morning. Sorry about last night.

VICKY  
For what? It was nice to just talk  
and not just, you know...

Matt sits on the bed. We note the profusion of SURGICAL SCARS on his body. Vicky traces her hand over one on his shoulder.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
What's this?

She touches the silver chain around his neck.

MATT  
When I was nine, I got caught  
shoplifting. They called my mom to  
come down to Macy's and pick me up  
(like she didn't have enough to  
worry about as a single mom). The  
look on her face, I'll never forget  
it. They made her pay for the thing  
I stole. She decided to give it to  
me. As a reminder to always do the  
right thing...

He gestures to the chain and lion pendant; the item that he tried to steal decades ago.

MATT (CONT'D)  
I started wearing it about four  
years ago, after she passed away.

VICKY  
You know what your dirty little  
secret is, Mr. Flynn? You're a  
sensitive soul.

MATT  
I knew I shouldn't have told you  
that story...

VICKY

*Stop...*

(then, studying him)

You're really struggling with all this...

MATT

My boss has put a lot of faith in me. UCI is like my family. I don't wanna let anybody down...

VICKY

All I know is when that girl walked into the ER...

Her voice trails off, the intimation clear.

MATT

I'm not an idiot. I know these things happen. But I've watched Bo over the years, seen the good he's done when he hasn't had to, when no one was looking...

VICKY

My ex-husband was a Marine and a boxer. Drove a Harley, drank scotch, the whole thing. One day I walk in and see him dressed in my clothes...

MATT

(a laugh)

*Jesus...*

VICKY

The point is, you never really know who someone is...

**EXT. THE QUAD -- UCI CAMPUS -- DAY**

A rally underway. Forty or so students, male and female, hand out pamphlets and raise signs (one reads "CASTRATION!") as their leader chants through a bullhorn:

RALLY LEADER

BRING RAPISTS TO JUSTICE!

BLAKE HORN (19, freshman, backup quarterback), in an oversized hoodie, takes a PAMPHLET as he passes.

BLAKE POV: Under the heading "RAPISTS," the pamphlet has pictures of every football player (taken from a game program), Blake's photo included.

Head down and hoodie up, Blake walks faster.

**INT. CAFETERIA -- UCI -- DAY**

WIDE: Undergrads flood in, many wearing UCI football gear. A giant banner encircles the room, "GO UCI PIRATES!"

CLOSER: Oliver sits at a table, reading his latest *Spectator* column on a mini iPad ("A FOOTBALL CULTURE RUN AMOK").

SPENCER (O.S.)

You're not a little worried?

Spencer shovels cereal across from him.

OLIVER

About what?

SPENCER

Your picture's in the byline, dude.  
You're like a Klingon outside of  
Kronos...

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Are you Oliver Peck?

Spencer looks up to see a PRETTY COED staring down at him. He manages a nod of confirmation.

PRETTY COED

I just have to tell you; I think  
what you're doing is so brave. It's  
totally inspiring.

Oliver's lost in her auburn eyes, words locked in his larynx.

PRETTY COED (CONT'D)

Anyways. I'm Layla. I'm in Bolt  
House, so, I dunno, maybe we could  
hang out sometime or something...

OLIVER

Yes. I mean, yeah...sure.

PRETTY COED

(a cute giggle)

Bye...

He waves as she recedes before turning to Spencer, eyes wide like a Japanese anime character come to life.

SPENCER

Dude, you got a groupie.

**INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE -- BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS**

Jourdan confers with Janet as Matt enters...

MATT

What's this?

He gestures to a WHITEBOARD filled with information and pictures regarding Cassie Sullivan. He reads off it:

MATT (CONT'D)

"Suggestive Instagram photos..."  
"Breast augmentation in 2015" - is  
this a joke?

JOURDAN

Now that her name's public, we need  
to make people question her  
credibility.

MATT

We're not gonna do that to this  
girl...

JOURDAN

Well, you took the first option off  
the table, didn't you? The longer  
we wait, the fewer moves we have to  
make.

MATT

You can afford a scorched earth  
policy. The rest of us have to live  
in the village you leave behind.

JOURDAN

You're still not getting it. There  
won't be a village if we don't  
handle this. You still haven't  
picked a side, have you?

MATT

I told you already...

JOURDAN

I wish I still thought the world  
was black and white...

She hands him A LIST OF PHONE NUMBERS. This is:

JOURDAN (CONT'D)

Cassie Sullivan's phone records.  
There are a few numbers we can't  
identify - you recognize them?

Matt looks at the highlighted phone numbers, staring at one.

JOURDAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ...Matt?

MATT  
 (breaks from his reverie)  
 No but...I'll check 'em out.

He can't take his eyes off that one number.

**INT. ROOM -- PEDIATRIC CENTER -- UCI HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS**

Carrying an enormous teddy bear in a UCI jersey, Bo enters to see Travis, a bandage around his head, in bed. The boy's mom, reading get well cards to him, stops on sight of Bo.

BO  
 Heard you took care of business, my  
 dude. Proud a' you...

He places the bear on the bed beside Travis - who immediately looks up at his mom and moves imperceptibly away from Bo.

BO (CONT'D)  
 You doing okay, brother...?

Travis tersely nods, his gaze going to the TV behind Bo - where we see a muted news report on the "College Gang Rape."

TRAVIS' MOM  
 We're good, Bo. Thank you.

Bo nods. Instantly understands. Starts backpedaling.

BO  
 Alright. Take care, Little Man.

He exits.

**INT. HALLWAY -- PEDIATRIC CENTER -- CONTINUOUS**

Crushed, Bo stops in the busy corridor. Leaning against the wall, he notices a trash can - where he sees THE NERF FOOTBALL he signed for the older nurse. Discarded.

All at once, with a violent burst, he kicks the wall, drawing every eye in the vicinity.

Angry and wounded, Bo stalks out.

**EXT/INT. BMW 528I (STATIONARY) -- STUDENT CENTER PARKING LOT**

Car idling, baseball cap pulled low, Cassie takes a deep breath before placing earbuds in and grabbing her bookbag --

**EXT. MAIN QUAD -- UCI CAMPUS -- DAY**

SOOTHING SOUNDS OF THE SEA bleed from Cassie's earbuds as she walks to class. But despite the calm music...

CASSIE POV: Students study you as you pass, catching your eye, talking to each other about you.

A kid in a BO CARRINGTON JERSEY says something vile - the music mutes the words but you need not read lips to understand the intent.

And Cassie starts to hyperventilate, taking refuge under a tree as her THUNDERING HEART overwhelms the music, and we --

**EXT. HOUSE -- PRIDE -- NIGHT**

A beautiful brunette, JESSICA MEEKS (30) opens her front door to find Matt standing on the porch.

MATT  
Hey Pretty Lady.

JESSICA  
What's up, Goof Ball?

Before Matt can speak - he's attacked by a four-year old.

DANNY  
Uncle Matt!

JESSICA  
Sorry, he's into tackling now. Big surprise.

MATT  
I come in peace, D-Man.  
(to Jessica)  
I need to talk to your husband...

**EXT/INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE -- MOVING**

Jaw clenched, brows furrowed, Matt drives, Will shotgun.

WILL  
I actually needed to get out of the house, dude. Where are we --

Matt suddenly pulls the car over to the curb. Blurts out --

MATT

You said you barely knew her...

WILL

*Who?*

MATT

Cassie Sullivan.

(before Will can speak)

Do not lie to me. *Please*. I couldn't handle that right now. Your number's all over her phone records - that burner you pranked me with last year. She's twenty, Will.

(Will's silent)

Talk to me, dude...

WILL

I didn't mean for any of this to happen...

MATT

You slept with her...

WILL

(a beat; a nod)

Once. I made a mistake - a bad one. The worst.

MATT

Why wouldn't you come to me? We've been best friends since we were eighteen.

WILL

I didn't want anyone to know - *especially* you. You don't know how it eats me up inside. I can't even look at my little boy anymore without wanting to...

His voice trails off. Indeed, he looks utterly anguished.

WILL (CONT'D)

I just wanted it to go away. But this girl, she wouldn't let it go. Calling me all the time. Threatening to tell Jess. She wanted blood.

MATT

Is she unstable?

WILL  
That's an understatement.  
(off Matt)  
What?

MATT  
This would establish motive for her making all this up, trying to get back at you through the team...

WILL  
It would ruin me. Ruin my marriage. Ruin everything I've worked for. I am begging you here, brother. I need you to protect me on this.

MATT  
Where is it?

WILL  
What?

MATT  
The phone, the burner...

A beat. Will reaches into the backpack at his feet, producing the BURNER PHONE. Matt snatches it from him.

WILL  
What're you gonna do?

Off Matt, not sure of the answer, silence lingering, we...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**EXT. UCI CAMPUS -- MORNING****Saturday. 11:41 a.m. Homecoming Game.**

SERIES OF SHOTS: Students, alumni and fans tailgate/  
Cheerleaders hold a pep rally outside the Student Center/The  
opposing team (South Louisiana State) file off buses, game  
faces on. All accompanied by:

SPORTS BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The undefeated Pirates facing the  
SLS Cougars today - a game that  
seemed decidedly less interesting  
before controversy erupted on the  
UCI campus this week --

**INT. TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE -- BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS**

Matt strides in, Jourdan on a call (os). As soon as she hangs  
up, he drops AN ENVELOPE on the desk in front of her.

JOURDAN

What's this?

She opens the envelope to see PHOTOS of Cassie from the  
hospital (taken by the detectives). Downright grisly.

While they make Matt wince...Jourdan's unaffected.

JOURDAN (CONT'D)

You do my job long enough, and you  
don't trust anything anymore.  
Especially pictures.

MATT

They found a strap from her dress  
in the house.

JOURDAN

(a shrug)  
Circumstantial.

MATT

(points to photos)  
Somebody did that...

JOURDAN

Somebody did. But not these guys.  
The report just came in: No DNA  
matter was found on Cassie's body  
from any of the players.

(MORE)

JOURDAN (CONT'D)  
Without DNA evidence - no  
prosecutor in the country is going  
to touch this.

MATT  
(low; almost to himself)  
*They didn't do it...*

Jourdan's phone rings. Her BlackBerry. "Vanessa." She  
hesitates before walking away to take the call. Matt hears:

JOURDAN (O.S.)  
...It's going to be okay. We'll  
work through all of it, sweetheart.  
I promise. I love you, too.

She disconnects. Walks back to Matt - who, point blank, asks:

MATT  
Who's Vanessa?

She thinks about not responding. Waits. Finally:

JOURDAN  
My sister.

MATT  
How old is she?

JOURDAN  
A lot of questions...  
(beat)  
She's 29. She's had some problems  
and I just try to help her through  
them. I have a question for you...

MATT  
Fire away...

JOURDAN  
Why does this mean so much to you?

MATT  
When I got done playing football -  
when they wouldn't let me play  
anymore - I was lost. Looking for  
any way to fill the gap between  
birth and eternity. Darwin's the  
one who saw something in me, who  
encouraged me to go to law school,  
who then gave me a job and a  
purpose when I got out. He reminded  
me what it's like to take pride in  
what you do.

On reflex, he grips the chain around his neck when his iPhone chimes to life. He answers --

MATT (CONT'D)

(into iPhone)

This is Matt. Hey. What? Okay.

(hangs up; to Jourdan)

The DA's office is moving forward. They think they have a strong enough case even without DNA.

JOURDAN

Who's the assigned ADA?

MATT

Someone named Laura Cannon. You know her?

JOURDAN

She's a killer.

MATT

There's something else...

Before he can explain what it is, we...

**EXT. CLAYTON FAREWELL STADIUM -- UCI -- DAY**

CIRCLING HELICOPTER SHOT of the state-of-the-art 300 million dollar stadium, 97,000 rabid fans ready for kickoff.

**INT. LOCKER ROOM -- FAREWELL STADIUM -- CONTINUOUS**

Players stand, pace, stew. Palpable intensity. Bo sits on a stool against his locker, headphones on. Matt approaches.

MATT

I don't know how to say this, Bo, so I'm just gonna say it...

Bo removes his headphones. Stands, towering over Matt.

MATT (CONT'D)

They're not letting you play today. Cassie petitioned a judge to issue a restraining order against you.

BO

What's that mean...?

MATT

You can't come within a certain radius of her.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)  
Her apartment is within that  
distance to the stadium.

BO  
My mom's here. My sisters.  
Everybody.

MATT  
I'm sorry.

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI (O.S.)  
Alright guys, everybody bring it  
in. Take a knee...

And the team begins to form a tight circle, assembling in the middle of the locker room. Bo remains outside it. Fighting back tears. A little boy who can't play with his friends.

HEAD COACH SCARMUCHI (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
We're being tested, gentlemen --

**EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- CLAYTON FAREWELL STADIUM -- DAY**

Bam! A UCI player gets obliterated on the opening kickoff, the game officially underway, as we...

**INT. HALLWAY -- FAREWELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS**

Oliver, in stylish shades (*is that a new haircut?*), strides down the quiet corridor, backpack flung over his shoulder. Stopping when he reaches his dorm room to see...

GRAFFITI on the door. "TRAITOR" sprayed in red paint.

OLIVER  
(pushes ajar door open)  
...Spence?

WHACK! A baseball bat wallops Oliver from behind, sends him sprawling into his room and onto the carpet.

HAND-HELD CAMERA: THREE ASSAILANTS enter, each clad in UCI football gear, closing the door before reigning kicks and punches down on the defenseless and whimpering Oliver.

As the beating continues, we INTERCUT with hard hits and plays from the UCI Football game until finally the three marauders leave a battered Oliver behind, and we --

**INT. UCI PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- SIXTH FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS**

Blinds drawn, darkness consuming, an anguished Darwin sits at his desk, staring into the emptiness. An unseen TV plays(os):

EVENING NEWS (V.O.)  
*...the District Attorney officially  
 filing charges tonight against  
 Heisman candidate Bo Carrington and  
 UCI players yet to be named...*

**INT. DELANEY'S BAR & GRILL -- LATER (NIGHT)**

Matt sits at the counter, watching highlights of the game on the TV behind the bar as Jourdan enters. Sits next to him.

JOURDAN  
 (re: beverage)  
 Vodka?

MATT  
 Filtered water.  
 (nods to TV highlights)  
 What happens when Bo can't play and they lose a game?

JOURDAN  
 We'll get a reversal on the TRO.

MATT  
 You hear about the kid who broke the story? He was attacked tonight; they beat him up so bad he's in the hospital.  
 (then)  
 ...How did we get here?

Jourdan resists the urge to say they should have paid Cassie off. Instead:

JOURDAN  
 You identify those numbers? -  
 From Cassie's phone records?

A reminder of Will and the dreaded choice Matt must make. He ponders for a beat before punting:

MATT  
 Not yet. I will.

Jourdan glances at the TV (os). Tells the Bartender to:

JOURDAN  
 Turn that up, please?

The Bartender boosts the TV volume.

SPORTS REPORTER

(on TV)

*...An unnamed source has revealed that Pharaoh Pittman, the starting safety for UCI, was dismissed from the University of Florida after a coed accused him of rape in 2015...*

JOURDAN

The floodgates are now officially open. And everything's coming out.

Matt stands, galvanized.

JOURDAN (CONT'D)

Where you going?

He doesn't answer. Just bails.

**INT. LIBRARY -- UCI -- CONTINUOUS**

WIDE: A cathedral of books. Desolate save one student.

CLOSER: CASSIE inhabits a table away from the ambient glass, cap pulled low, head bowed in a textbook when a shadow crosses and sits down. She looks up to see --

MATT

My name's Matt Flynn. I'm a lawyer for the University. I'm not here to make you uncomfortable. I just needed to see you. To help you understand where this is headed.

CASSIE

You people released my name to the press...

MATT

No, we didn't.

CASSIE

That's how UCI operates...

MATT

I'm not one of those people. But those people are involved now. Professionals who are paid to look at lives through a microscope. Who are paid to defame and destroy --

CASSIE

Which guy are you?

MATT

*What?*

CASSIE

Are you the guy who threatens me?

MATT

No.

CASSIE

The guy who pays me off...?

MATT

I'm not here for any of that.

She looks at him. Looks deep. Realizes:

CASSIE

Ahhhh. You're the true believer.  
The white knight...

MATT

I just wanna know what happened,  
Cassie...

CASSIE

No you don't. These people, these  
"professionals," tell them  
something for me: If they wanna  
dig, dig. If they wanna question  
how I can afford a BMW 528i when my  
dad barely makes 40 grand a year,  
or how I can afford the six grand a  
month apartment I live in...have at  
it.

A lamb to a lion, she collects her books. Stands.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

But whatever they find is going to  
pale in comparison to what shakes  
out about this place. It'll burn  
UCI to the ground. Ask your boss,  
Darwin. He knows all about it...

And with that, she walks off. Leaving a stunned Matt behind.  
MUSIC UP, carrying over to...

**EXT. LIBRARY -- UCI -- DAY**

Matt staggers out to see Jourdan waiting for him. MUSIC  
SWELLS, muting their conversation. We only hear:

JOURDAN

...I told you, you were going to  
have to pick a side.

**INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE -- MOVING (FAST)**

White-knuckling the wheel, Matt glances to his left to see Lake Michigan blurring by.

All at once, he pulls to the periphery, settling to a stop. He reaches over. Pops the glove compartment.

Removes THE BURNER PHONE he got from Will.

**EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN -- EVENING (MOMENTS LATER)**

Matt stands by an isolated edge of the lake, staring into the quivering sea. And the wind batters him, the City of Chicago looming in the distance like a neon kingdom.

And he thinks about his best friend, about the University, about his identity.

WIDE: Burner in hand, Matt stands there, not sure what to do. Caught in tumultuous crosscurrents, the sun sinks into the sky, as we slowly...

FADE OUT:

END PILOT