

Goat

An Anti-Sports Horror Movie

written by
Zack Akers & Skip Bronkie

ARCHIVAL MONTAGE

A series of shots---increasing in quality as time passes---telling the life story of **CONNOR DANE**, the greatest quarterback to ever live, and his potential successor, **BENNY MATHIS**.

- grainy home video of an **INFANT CONNOR DANE** lying in a crib next to a football that's almost as big as he is. An adult reaches into the frame to reposition the football so the laces are up.

- VHS footage of a **FOUR-YEAR-OLD CONNOR** with an oversized football helmet in his backyard. **CONNOR'S DAD** speaks off-camera.

CONNOR'S DAD (O.C.)

And who are you going to play for,
Connor?

FOUR-YEAR-OLD CONNOR

The Cowboys!

CONNOR'S DAD

Yeah!

- VHS footage of **EIGHT-YEAR-OLD CONNOR** throwing footballs through a tire hanging in the backyard. He throws it through the tire every single time as his dad cheers him on.

- VHS footage of **TWELVE-YEAR-OLD CONNOR** dropping back to pass in peewee football. He takes off running, breaking one tackle with ease, then speeding down the sideline, clearly faster than any of his peers. **CONNOR'S MOM** shouts relentlessly.

CONNOR'S MOM (O.C.)

RUN, RUN, RUUUN! GO CONNOR!

- local news footage from field level of a **TEENAGE CONNOR** launching a ball halfway down the field and into the arms of a receiver for a touchdown.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Freshman phenom Connor Dane with one
of his four touchdowns on the night.

- local news footage of Teenage Connor surveying the field as he runs to his left, then deciding to tuck it and run, powering into the corner of the end zone. He does a choreographed celebration with teammates.

CONNOR (PRE-LAP)

Everything was clicking for us
tonight---

Connor, being interviewed after the game.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

---and it was fun as hell---heck, sorry.

Connor smiles, covering his mouth and looks to the camera.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Sorry.

- VHS footage of Teenage Connor in a football uniform and homecoming king crown walking his queen, **CAMI**, from the middle of the football field closer to the stands. Everyone is cheering, and Connor can't stop smiling.

- local news footage of Connor and his team hugging and celebrating on the field. The losing team is devastated.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The win makes it three straight for the Crusaders, all under the guidance of top quarterback and soon to-be Nittany Lion, Connor Dane.

- SD TV broadcast of a full whiteout at Beaver Stadium at Penn State, as **CONNOR DANE** evades a defender, runs to his right, and darts a pass down the field into the end zone.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

What an amazing throw from the freshman off the bench! Penn State takes the lead!

- news camera footage of Connor being interviewed after a win, fans and teammates mobbed around him on the field.

CONNOR

(shouting over crowd)

I just thank God for the blessings he's given me. I am the luckiest man alive.

- SD TV broadcast of Teenage Connor standing on stage holding up the National Championship Crystal Football as his teammates and coaches celebrate all around him.

- SD TV broadcast of Paul Tagliabue, the NFL commissioner, standing at a podium on stage at Radio City Music Hall.

PAUL TAGLIABUE

With the first pick of the 2000 NFL draft, the Dallas Cowboys select, Connor Dane---

Connor stands, hugging his mom and dad.

PAUL TAGLIABUE (V.O.)
Quarterback, Penn State University.

- minidv home video of **INFANT BENNY MATHIS** being held by his father, **HOWARD**. Benny's mother, **YVETTE**, holds the camera.

YVETTE (O.C.)
Say hello, Benedicto. Say hey, Benny.

Howard looks up, smiling.

- TV broadcast of Connor, now a Dallas Cowboy, getting crushed for a sack.

In another shot, he throws an interception.

In another shot, he slams his helmet down on the sideline.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
This isn't Indiana, this isn't
Pitt, you're lining up against the
best athletes in the world now,
kid. Welcome to the NFL.

- minidv footage of **TWO-YEAR-OLD BENNY** throwing a ball so hard that his father has to duck out of the way. The camera shakes from Yvette laughing.

- TV Broadcast of Connor screaming in pain on the field holding his knee.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now that's something you never want
to see.

Connor is being driven off the field in a cart, his knee braced as he gives a thumbs-up to the crowd.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's been a tough couple of seasons
for Connor, you just hope he's OK.

- minidv footage of **FOUR-YEAR-OLD BENNY** running across a backyard with a football in his arm as Howard runs hard after him and can't keep up. Benny is FAST.

YVETTE
You're being outrun by a four-year-old, Howard!

Benny laughs as Howard huffs and puffs, raising a middle finger to his wife.

- TV broadcast of Connor breaking the huddle and walking to the line, surveying the defense.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
So for the first time since
September of last season, Connor
Dane is back on the field.

Connor throws touchdown after touchdown after touchdown.

ANNOUNCER
A man possessed! What a comeback season!

ANNOUNCER #2
I've been at this a long time, and I
have never seen a throw quite like
that. That's just absolute perfection.

- iPhone footage of **TEN-YEAR-OLD BENNY** posing with a football in front of a poster of Connor Dane in the same pose.

HOWARD (O.C.)
You're Connor Dane now, huh?

BENNY
I'm going to be better.

HOWARD
Better than Connor Dane?

BENNY
Yeah.

- TV broadcast of Connor taking a knee and removing his helmet as confetti rains down him and teammates pound his shoulder pads.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The Dallas Cowboys, champions once more!

- iPhone footage of **TEENAGE BENNY** cutting, dodging, juking defenders on the football field as he breaks free for a long run. Howard runs with the camera on the sidelines to keep up.

HOWARD
Run, Benny! RUN, BENNY! RUN!

- TV broadcast of Connor being interviewed after another win, calm and collected.

CONNOR
We just have to take everything one
game at a time, week by week.

- local news footage of Benny being interviewed after a win, excited beyond measure.

BENNY

I just want to thank God, man. What a game! How can you not love this?

- TV broadcast of Connor jogging out onto the field before a game, calmly extending a hand to the crowd.
- TV broadcast of Benny, now at the University of Tennessee, leaping up and down, pumping up the crowd as he runs out onto the field.
- TV broadcast of Connor throwing a touchdown and pumping his fist.
- TV broadcast of Benny throwing a touchdown and jumping up and down, flexing and shouting towards the stands.
- TV broadcast of Connor staring from the bench, clearly pissed off, but alone.
- TV broadcast of Benny clapping at his teammates on the sidelines, encouraging them.
- iPhone footage of a miserable Connor with his wife, **ELSIE**, holding their **INFANT SON**, walking through an airport completely mobbed by paparazzi and fans as security clears a path.
- TV broadcast of Connor holding up the Lombardi trophy on stage, relief on his face.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Connor Dane lifts the Lombardi trophy for the sixth time in his storied career! Father Time, you have met your match!

- Benny holds up a College Football Playoff National Championship Trophy, nothing but pure joy.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's back-to-back national championships for Benny Mathis, who you will surely be seeing on Sundays very soon.

END MONTAGE.

BLACK.

INT. BENNY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A toilet with the lid up.

Benny stares down into the clear water. His chest heaves a bit, holding back the vomit. *Shit.*

He closes his eyes and takes a few deep breaths. *You can't throw up, you can't throw up, you can't---*

Benny brings a fist to his mouth as he heaves again, but nothing comes up.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK on the bathroom door.

TOM

You OK in there, Benny Boy?

Benny opens his eyes, resolving to be normal, like he doesn't want to fucking puke his guts out.

BENNY

Yeah, all good.

TOM

They need you out here.

BENNY

OK.

Benny quickly closes the toilet lid, runs some water over his hands, then pulls the door open to --

INT. BENNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A modest living room, with a TV and a **SMALL CAMERA CREW** facing the couch, where **FRIENDS AND FAMILY** are gathered.

TOM, Benny's agent, puts his arm around Benny's shoulders as they walk to the far side of the room.

TOM

You good, my guy? You pumped for this?

BENNY

Yes, all good.

Tom points to the camera crew setting up.

TOM

So after you get drafted, you'll do a live interview with Marty and the ESPN guys on the monitor there, OK?

BENNY

Yeah.

Tom shouts so everyone in the room can hear.

TOM

And please remember, from the moment this starts, you are on camera. Please, please, everyone, be on your best behavior---that includes you, Joe.

UNCLE JOE

Fuck you, Tom.

Everyone laughs---except for Benny.

Tom fake laughs way too loud, then turns to Benny.

TOM

You gotta smile for me, guy. Smile, come on, come---there it is. There's my Benny Boy. You're going to do great. This isn't the work, this is the celebration. Love you, kid.

Tom gives Benny one last hug before vanishing off to do whatever agents do.

Benny walks to the couch and sits next to his mom, Yvette, and younger sister, **NOELLE**. He grabs his young niece, **STELLA**, and puts her on his lap.

Yvette grabs his hand.

YVETTE

Are you good?

BENNY

I'm good.

ON THE TV: the NFL Draft plays on the TV.

ROGER GOODELL (ON TV)

...The New York Jets are now on the clock.

RECE DAVIS (ON TV)

And with that, the NFL commissioner has kicked off the 2022 NFL Draft and officially started the clock on the New York Jets, as we all wait for the inevitable, the drafting of the starting quarterback from the Tennessee Volunteers and reigning Heisman Trophy winner---

PRODUCER PHIL from the TV crew raises his hand to everyone in the room and counts his fingers down as he talks.

PRODUCER PHIL

OK, we're going live in 5, 4, 3...

He drops his last two fingers in succession.

Benny grips his mother's hand, takes a deep breath.

ON THE TV: a live shot of Benny and his family.

RECE DAVIS

Benny is obviously not here tonight in person, but back at home in Georgia to be close to his father, who is dealing with---

Time slows down as Benny takes in the moment. His breathing the only sound we hear. *Everything he's worked for. Everything he's ever wanted. It's here.*

THEN:

TOM (O.S.)

There's been a trade.

Everyone looks over at Tom, standing out of sight of the camera, covering his phone to silence himself.

TOM (CONT'D)

(to Benny)

Dallas.

NOELLE

Holy shit.

Yvette turns to Noelle.

YVETTE

Noelle! Cameras!

PRODUCER PHIL

We're not recording any audio right now, it's fine.

Everyone in the room starts saying, "Holy shit," "I can't fucking believe it," "The fucking Cowboys, are you serious?" Yvette covers Stella's ears, glaring at her family.

Benny just stares at Tom in complete shock. Tom smiles and nods.

TOM

Dallas, Benny.

Benny looks back to the TV.

ON THE TV: the ANALYSTS sit at the desk. A chyron pops up: "PROPOSED TRADE."

RECE DAVIS

OK, hold on, so it sounds like we have a shocking trade announcement coming in, one of those earthquake moments that can only happen on NFL Draft night---

Tom walks over to Benny, extending a phone to him.

TOM

It's Jerry Jones.

His family and friends start jumping around in excitement all around him.

Benny slowly takes the phone and puts it to his ear. He covers his other ear to hear.

BENNY

Hello?

JERRY JONES (V.O.)

I'm proud and blessed to be talking to you, this is Jerry Jones, and I'm calling to tell you we're turning your card in. You're a Cowboy.

BENNY

Thank you, sir. I don't know what to say right now.

JERRY JONES (V.O.)

(laughs)

It's not too big for you, is it?

BENNY

No, sir.

JERRY JONES (V.O.)

Of course not. We sure have enjoyed watching you progress in your career, you had unbelievable support in this room, so we're proud to get you here. Coach McCarthy is grinning ear to ear, he's got his thumb up, so I'm going to hand you over to him, OK?

BENNY

Yes, sir.

Benny looks at the TV, where Roger Goodell is making his walk to the podium to announce the pick.

MIKE MCCARTHY (V.O.)

Benny, congratulations. Hey, Peyton Manning, you gotta keep the tradition going---

BENNY

Yes, sir.

ROGER GOODELL (ON TV)

With the first pick of the 2022 NFL Draft, the Dallas Cowboys select---

MIKE MCCARTHY (V.O.)

(over)

I'm just excited to get you down here and get to work.

Benny's family cheers in earnest as his name is announced. People are hugging and pounding Benny's back, as Benny remains on the phone.

BENNY

Yes, sir. I have to ask--- what about Connor?

MIKE MCCARTHY (V.O.)

What's that? I can barely hear you, you get drafted or something?

BENNY

WHAT ABOUT CONNOR DANE?

MIKE MCCARTHY (V.O.)

You'll talk to him soon. Enjoy this time, enjoy this moment with your family. Alright, Benny, God bless you.

Benny hangs up the phone.

Tom hands him a Dallas Cowboys hat and jersey.

Benny takes them and stands. Tom hugs him.

TOM

Fucking Dallas, Benny Boy. Fucking
Dallas!

Tom steps back as Yvette envelops Benny in a hug.

YVETTE

I'm so proud of you,
Benedicto.

Benny squeezes his arms around her tighter.

BENNY

Couldn't have done it without you, Mom.

YVETTE

My angel.

PRODUCER PHIL

Alright, Benny, can you put on the
hat and hold up the jersey, please?

RECE DAVIS (V.O., ON TV)

(under)

Of course the question now becomes what
does this mean for Connor Dane, the
starting quarterback for Dallas, and
the most decorated and accomplished
quarterback of this or any era.

TODD MCSHAY (V.O., ON TV)

Good luck to whoever has to make
that phone call.

Benny puts on the hat and holds up the jersey towards his TV.

PRODUCER PHIL

(pointing to another camera)

Over here.

Benny turns to the other camera.

PRODUCER PHIL (CONT'D)

OK, step this way, please.

Phil is pointing to an interview setup area, with a monitor
facing him to be interviewed.

MARTY SMITH, a reporter for ESPN, walks up to Benny and
shakes his hand.

MARTY SMITH
Congratulations, man.

BENNY
Thanks.

MARTY SMITH
I'm just going to ask a couple
questions, nothing big, then you
can get back to your family.

BENNY
OK.

The lights turn on. Benny stares into the future.

INT. BENNY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Benny stands next to his father, Howard, who is lying in bed, blankets tucked under his arms, nasal prongs connected to an oxygen tank that is whirring and hissing in the background. Yvette sits next to Howard holding his hand.

BENNY
Dad.

Benny smiles, looking into his father's eyes.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Dallas.

HOWARD
Holy shit.

Benny and Yvette laugh.

Howard lifts his free hand and Benny clasps it, instantly fighting back emotion.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
You did it.

Benny nods, trying not to cry in front of his dad.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR, which then slowly pushes open. *It's Tom.* He's holding out his phone again.

BENNY
Not now, man.

TOM
It's Connor Dane.

Howard gasps before chuckling to himself.

Benny blinks before taking the phone from Tom, and stepping into---

INT. BENNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benny stares out onto in the backyard, where the moon is reflecting off a birdbath. Down the hall his family is still celebrating in the living room.

BENNY

Hello?

CONNOR (V.O.)

Benny, it's Connor Dane.

BENNY

It's an honor to speak with you, sir.
I've been watching you my whole life---

CONNOR (V.O.)

(over)

Sure, sure. Congratulations on being drafted, I know it's a big deal for you and your family. I just want to welcome you to the team and congratulate you on all your success that got you here.

BENNY

Yes, sir, I---

CONNOR (V.O.)

You want my job, right?

Benny looks around him to make sure no one is listening.

BENNY

I...

CONNOR (V.O.)

You have all the talent in the world, and I am standing in front of you. Do you want my job?

Benny is silent, not sure what to say.

CONNOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I just need to know if you're a joke or not.

BENNY

When it's my time.

CONNOR (V.O.)
What does that mean?

BENNY
When it's available, when
it's...right. I want the job.

CONNOR (V.O.)
OK. Thank you for being honest. So
let me just say: you are going to
have to take it from me. I can't
give it to you. Even if I wanted to.

BENNY
Yes, sir.

CONNOR (V.O.)
No. No "sirs." This isn't
coachspeak, Benny.

There's a long pause. Benny isn't sure if he's supposed to
speak or not, then --

CONNOR (V.O.)
Do you have a family?

BENNY
Yeah, I have...a family.

CONNOR (V.O.)
Mom, dad?

BENNY
Yeah. Yes.

CONNOR (V.O.)
You love them?

Something about the question gives Benny pause, but he shakes
it off and presses on.

BENNY
Yeah, of course.

CONNOR (V.O.)
Of course, yeah. God, family, country.

Benny squints his eyes, trying to understand what this
conversation is.

BENNY
Uh-huh.

CONNOR (V.O.)

I want you to come train with me at my place in Vegas. Five days. We'll get it worked out through your team.

Connor hangs up.

Benny stares at his phone. *What the fuck?*

THEN: Yvette appears, arms crossed.

YVETTE

What did he say?

BENNY

He wants me to come train with him for a few days.

YVETTE

Mmhmm.

BENNY

What?

Yvette steps closer.

YVETTE

He's not your friend. And you are there to take his job, a job he has had for a very long time. It's a trap.

BENNY

You think this is the first time I've been on a new team?

YVETTE

Then you should know better.

BENNY

I'll be fine. If he underestimates me, he'll learn who I am like everyone else has. Don't you remember---

Yvette *stomps her heel to the ground*, the sound echoing through the empty hall and jolting Benny into silence, his smile dropping from his face.

She lifts one finger.

YVETTE

This is a trap.

Yvette turns and walks back to where Howard is resting.

Benny sees a *Sports Illustrated* sitting on a table in the hallway. Connor Dane is dressed in a suit holding a football in both hands, covered in six Super Bowl rings. A goat stands next to him.

It reads: CONNOR DANE, G.O.A.T.

Benny stares Connor in the eyes. Connor stares back.

EXT. AIRPLANE - LAS VEGAS - PRE-DAWN

We're looking down on a private jet as it soars over the desert, gently descending.

THEN: Las Vegas appears beneath the jet, the unmistakable flashing lights and unnatural shapes that pull humanity to the middle of the desert.

EXT. SUV - ROAD TO CONNOR'S COMPOUND - DAWN

A black SUV drives through Nevada's Valley of Fire, red stone shaped into devastating waves that sit on top of sand stretching on into forever. Everything feels like death, like another planet is invading our own.

In a long series of images of the SUV driving through the valley, we know and feel this: you are driving into forsaken land, and you are all alone.

It's beautiful. It's eternal. Here before, here after.

TITLE CARD: Goat

INT. SUV - CONNOR'S COMPOUND - EARLY MORNING

Benny looks at his phone in the back of the SUV: *no signal*. He makes the face we all make when our phone is suddenly a useless brick.

Benny leans forward as the SUV crests a hill, and he sees it: below in the valley, sits a massive blocky home, glass paneling covering the outside. A large green field is fenced off behind it, with a fully painted football field within, and a beautiful blue pool nestled in front.

Benny notices the driver, **FAUSTO**, muttering to himself as his eyes stare straight at the building.

FAUSTO
(whispering)
Ayúdanos a asumir nuestra carga
diaria, como lo hizo San Cristóbal.
Ayúdanos a navegar los peligros---

BENNY
Do you drive here often?

Fausto stops muttering to himself, then:

FAUSTO
I am the only one who drives here.

BENNY
Cool.

Benny sees Fausto is gripping **rosary beads** in one of his hands on the steering wheel.

TITLE OVER BLACK: DAY 1

INT/EXT. SUV - CONNOR'S HOUSE - POOL - DAY

Fausto parks the car at the front of the house, next to the pool.

Benny leans in to talk to him.

BENNY
Thanks for the ride out here. See
you Saturday, uh... Sorry, I didn't
catch your name.

Fausto doesn't look back as he says:

FAUSTO
We will never see each other again.

Benny stares at him, Fausto's hand gripping the rosary beads so tightly his knuckles are white. *What the fuck does that mean?*

The car door opens.

Benny is startled by the intrusion. He turns to see---*holy shit, it's him*---**CONNOR DANE** smiling broadly in sunglasses, dressed in nothing but shorts and running shoes, his chiseled body covered in sweat. A true masterpiece of human engineering.

Benny quickly realizes he's being weird just staring and sticks out a hand towards Connor.

BENNY
Yes, sorry, Mr. Dane.

Connor waves him out.

CONNOR
Come on out, come on out.

Benny grabs his bags and a plastic container of cinnamon rolls before stepping out of the car.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Benny extends his hand again to Connor.

BENNY
Hi, Mr. Dane.

Fausto quickly spins back, driving away with purposeful speed. Benny turns to watch him drive away, as his hand stays out for Connor.

Connor grabs his hand and his attention.

CONNOR
Please, call me Con.

Benny smiles.

BENNY
OK. Con. I'm Benny.

CONNOR
Of course. Thanks for coming out, gives us a good chance to get to know one another.

BENNY
It's... strange, I guess. I'm sure you hear it a lot, but I honestly feel like I've known you my whole life. As long as I can remember watching football, I've been watching you. You're a big part of why I became a quarterback to begin with.

CONNOR
That's really kind of you.
(beat)
And uh, I hate to admit it, but I've barely had a chance to watch any college the last few years, so I can't say that I've seen you much at all.

Benny is noticeably taken aback by this.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
But hey, Jerry and Coach think a lot of
you, so that's all that matters, right?

Connor notices the plastic container.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Are those... pastries?

BENNY
Oh. Yeah, my mom made them, and...

Benny ashamedly lifts up the plastic container to Connor.

Connor takes them, smiling.

CONNOR
Oh man, that's so nice of her, I'll
be sure they go to someone who can
eat them.

Connor drops the container on a pool chair nearby, wiping his
hands clean.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Let's get inside, OK? I'll show you
where you'll be staying.

Benny clocks the container being left behind before following
after.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Benny rolls his suitcase in as Connor kicks off his shoes,
transitioning to slippers.

Benny gawks at the house. Stone, hard edges, glass, sunlight,
tastefully designed furniture, and art on the walls. Yet
somehow even with a home so thoroughly designed to co-exist
in its desert environment, it remains... cold.

CONNOR
No shoes in the house, OK?

Benny's jaw closes as he again is jolted back to reality.

BENNY
Sure, sorry.

Benny kicks off his shoes and finds a pair of slippers in his
size, as they are arranged on the floor as such.

Connor continues to walk into the house.

BENNY (CONT'D)
(re: the slippers)
You have a lot of guests here?

CONNOR
Not really.

Benny follows him into the labyrinth.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benny is immediately stunned by the length of the hallway, and the number of open doorways. Each one he passes is a different arrangement of chairs and tables that all feel very similar. It's odd.

He quickly catches up to Connor as the hallway turns a corner---leading to another hallway, with more open doorways.

CONNOR
So if you don't mind, our time is limited, and I'd like to get started right away.

BENNY
Absolutely.

The hallways finally opens up into a large room.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Benny enters the massive room with windows lining the walls, and a large dining table surrounded by chairs in its center. A skylight looks down onto the table, a beam of light falling onto the wooden top.

Connor stops a moment to point towards the table.

CONNOR
After you get settled, this is where we'll be eating breakfast before we start.

Connor continues to walk as Benny lingers a moment to take it all in. He hustles to follow.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Another long hallway, more open rooms.

BENNY

So will we be talking playbook or more just... training-training?

CONNOR

The playbook is the playbook, Benny. You're either going to learn it or you're not going to be in the league.

Benny nervously chuckles at this.

BENNY

Right.

Connor turns a corner---but when Benny turns it, the hallway splits two different directions. *And he doesn't see Connor in either of the hallways.*

Benny stops walking for a second. *Where did he go?*

BENNY (CONT'D)

Connor?

Connor pokes his head out from a room down the hall. He waves Benny over.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Connor stands at the entryway to a guest bedroom, with windows facing the desert.

Benny wheels in, standing next to Connor.

BENNY

You could get lost in this place, huh?

CONNOR

Ah, you get used to it pretty quickly.

Benny takes in the room, but his eyes stop on the doorway: *huh. There is no door.*

Benny peers down the hallway again, noticing all the many rooms without any doors.

BENNY

Why don't any of the rooms have doors?

CONNOR

It's better for air-conditioning.

BENNY

Huh. Really?

CONNOR

Do you have a background in air-conditioning?

BENNY

Forgive me, it's... pretty unusual, right?

Connor takes a moment before:

CONNOR

Doors are a distraction. They hide things. They stop you going where you want to go.

BENNY

What about privacy?

CONNOR

I live in the middle of the desert, I don't also need doors.

BENNY

What about...intimacy? What about using the bathroom?

CONNOR

Are you worried I'm going to watch you take a shit?

BENNY

I mean. Yeah.

CONNOR

Part of being here for the next few days is acclimating to this life. You are free to come and go as you please, but here, in *this* place, there are no secrets. I can't afford them.

BENNY

No secrets?

CONNOR

No.

BENNY

You don't have any secrets?

CONNOR

There are no secrets here.

BENNY

(beat)

OK. Just, you know. Don't watch me
take a shit.

CONNOR

(smiling)

OK. Deal. Throw your stuff down,
then let's eat.

Connor walks past him. Benny throws his stuff on the bed,
then takes a moment to take everything in.

BENNY

(to himself)

The fuck is this...

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - EARLY MORNING

Benny walks up to Connor, who is already sitting at the large
table.

Two smoothies rest in the center.

Connor takes one and begins to drink from it.

Benny sits down across from him, not taking the other smoothie.

Connor quickly downs the smoothie, placing the glass back on
the table. He looks at Benny, confused.

CONNOR

Not hungry?

BENNY

I...don't eat breakfast.

CONNOR

(beat)

Why?

BENNY

It's...intermittent fasting.

CONNOR

What is that?

BENNY

You only have a small window of
eating time every day. The idea is
that your body needs...

(MORE)

BENNY (CONT'D)
(seeing this is not going
over well)
You know what? Never mind.

CONNOR
You're gonna need fuel today.

BENNY
I'm good. I've been doing this for
a while, my body is used to it.

CONNOR
(long beat)
OK.
(beat)
Well, if you're not going to eat we
should get ready to work.

Benny smiles.

BENNY
You gonna try to kick my ass?

Connor smiles back, but almost sadly.

CONNOR
You just need to know what you're made
of. That's what the next five days will
be.

BENNY
Yeah, OK. We'll see.

CONNOR
We will.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Still morning. The sun is lazily rising over the desert: it's
hot, but it's not brutal. Yet.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Benny watches Connor strapping on a weight vest to his torso
standing at the head of a trail leading off into the desert.

Connor lifts a weight vest for Benny.

Benny takes it, straps it to his chest.

Connor picks up a football, and tucks it against his chest.
He hands another football to Benny.

CONNOR

We're going 5 miles, OK? Don't drop it.

Benny takes it, tucking it in.

Connor smiles before running off down the trail.

Benny---surprised by the sudden transition---runs after him.

JUMP: Benny runs behind Connor on a hilly trail up an incline carrying his football. He takes a moment to take in the beautiful scenery around him---then Connor kicks it into another gear.

BENNY

(to himself)

Shit.

Benny runs harder to keep up.

FROM ON HIGH: Connor and Benny run through the desert as the sun edges more and more over the horizon, like roaches scurrying to find shelter before they're caught.

JUMP: Connor's compound is now in sight as the two men run towards it.

Benny begins to sprint towards the house, trying to move ahead of Connor.

Connor picks up his pace to stay even.

Benny runs even harder, his teeth gritting in determination.

Connor runs harder to keep up, a maniacal smile growing across his face.

CONNOR

YES! YES!

Benny lets out a grunt as he sprints even harder, beginning to leave Connor behind.

Benny continues to run as hard as he can, his breathing getting more and more ragged, but the determination never leaving his face. The gap between him and Connor grows.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - POOL - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

Benny runs all the way to edge of the pool, almost falling into it as he bends down to lean on his knees to breathe. He stands, putting both arms over his head, pinning the football to it.

Benny turns around to see Connor sprinting full speed towards him, then past him and *dives into the pool*.

Benny stares down at the still water. He waits. And waits.

Benny looks around to see if anyone else is around to be alarmed.

BENNY
(to himself)
Shit.

Benny starts tearing off his weight vest to jump in---when Connor's head emerges from the water, then he quickly, in a single quick movement, leaps from the shallow end of the pool onto the deck.

Benny's jaw drops as he realizes what he's just seen.

Connor walks past him to the house.

CONNOR
You have impressive speed.

BENNY
Thanks, man.

Connor walks past him trailing water with every step, then strips off his weight vest and hurls his football---a perfect spiral---over the house, heading inside.

CONNOR
Come on.

Benny comes back to reality and jogs to catch up.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Connor kicks off his shoes as he walks in, transitioning to slippers as water still trails him.

Benny clumsily follows suit, but Connor keeps moving, entering a new hallway on the other side of the house.

BENNY
Wait up.

Benny finally gets into the slippers and he rushes after Connor, who did not, in fact, wait up.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Another hallway lined with open doorways and rooms with chairs in them.

BENNY

I guess finding a place to sit
isn't a problem around here, huh?

Connor doesn't respond. Benny tries something else.

BENNY (CONT'D)

So what are we doing now?

CONNOR

The trainers will get us ready to
work on the field.

BENNY

Great, so we get to throw some?

CONNOR

With resistance and pressure, yeah.

BENNY

Cool, cool.

The hallway turns and leads to a training room. Lining the hallway are Super Bowl photographs and memorabilia, the only sign in the house that Connor Dane lives here.

Benny scans them: *various images of Connor holding the Lombardi Trophy, in mid-throw, shaking hands with a defeated opponent.*

Benny jogs ahead.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Benny follows Connor into the training room, where **MARCO**, a trainer, stands smiling and holding a tablet.

MARCO

Mr. Mathis?

Benny stops.

BENNY

Yeah.

Connor walks past him to go to a chiropractor's table, where **JAN**, the chiropractor, is waiting for him.

Benny watches as Connor lies facedown on the table.

MARCO

Hi, I'm Marco, it's nice to work with you today.

BENNY

Yeah, cool, you too.

MARCO

So you had ACL surgery on the left knee 4 years ago, and three fractured ribs last year. Are there any other major injuries we should know about?

As they talk, Connor receives a very aggressive chiropractor session. His body is twisted and popped in several uncomfortable ways.

Benny tries not to pay too close attention.

BENNY

Uhhh, no, other than some sprained ankles and a couple dislocated fingers, nothing major.

MARCO

Are you feeling any tightness or pain in any other area of your body?

Benny is staring as Connor's shoulder is brought behind his back and Jan puts his body weight into it, popping something inside his body.

BENNY

Uh, no, no, I'm good.

Marco motions towards an empty trainer's table behind him.

MARCO

OK. Have a seat on the table, please. Let's get you ready.

BENNY

Yes, sir.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A series of tight shots of men preparing for battle.

- Connor's leg is twisted to his side and cracked.
- A tight sleeve is pulled over Benny's left knee, where we see an ugly, jagged scar on his kneecap.
- Connor's neck is twisted to the side and pops.

- Benny's ankle is taped tightly, as TRAUMA SCISSORS cut the tape, grazing the skin.
- Elbows jam into Connor's calf.
- Benny's feet as he bounces on them to test the wrap.
- Connor slides on a new shirt.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Benny follows Connor onto the training field, where equipment is laid out strategically all around for their workout.

CONNOR

Are you more comfortable in the pocket or...improv?

BENNY

I love when the pocket breaks down.
I go with what the defense gives me
of course, but if---

CONNOR

We're only going to work in the pocket stuff this week.

BENNY

Oh. OK.

CONNOR

Every movement on a football field hurts. Less is more.

BENNY

Hey, it's your camp.

CONNOR

Great.

Connor jogs away.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A series of shots of conditioning and quarterback drills in the hot Nevada sun.

- Benny and Connor rapidly step in and out of ladder rungs on the ground as **MALIK**, the head trainer, yells at them to move faster.

- Bungee cords attach at the hips of Benny and Connor as they squat and explode up.

- Bungee cords anchored to the wall attach to vests the two men wear as they pull away from the wall holding a football in the throwing position. They throw the balls as they reach peak resistance. Again. Again.

We see that Connor's footwork is much more precise, much more practiced than Benny's.

- Connor and Benny hold a plank pose as **TWO TRAINERS** pound the absolute shit out of their sides wearing mitts. Benny is gritting his teeth against the pain as Connor stares flatly ahead.

- Benny stands in his throwing position dodging tennis balls that Malik is throwing at him. One bounces off his nose.

BENNY

Fuck!

- Benny sprints holding a ball as Malik pulls the band strapped around Benny's waist. Benny screams against the resistance.

- Benny grits his teeth while doing jumping split squats, keeping pace with Connor.

- Benny and Connor doing fast feet into burpees at Malik's command, each and every one hurting more and more.

- A bullhorn sounds the end of training.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - DAY

The sun boils the desert, heat waves rising from the sands.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - DAY

Benny stumbles into his room, soaked in sweat, huffing and puffing. He drops to the floor on his hands and knees, catching his breath. Then he stands, stumbling into---

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - BATHROOM - DAY

Benny goes to his sink, but stops...

The sink is filled to the brim with red, dark water.

Benny sticks a finger in and pulls it out---*thick, viscous red liquid runs down his finger.*

BENNY
The fuck...?

Benny shakes his head---*can't deal with this right now*---then stumbles over to his shower, desperately turning it on, spraying it directly in his face, trying to cool his body.

He collapses on the floor, water raining down.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - DAY

Benny shuffles his way into the dining area. In the far corner, Benny sees Connor is sitting in front of a camera with a lighting rig with a backdrop behind him.

Connor is reading to the camera. He's charming.

CONNOR
...You've inspired so many people, not only myself, but millions of others also. So the NFL and the Cowboys look forward to sending fans to the Super Bowl each year, and fans that have incredible stories like you. So I worked with the mmm, nope, cut---
(clears throat, resets)
Take 2. Hey Cameron, long time no see. I'm glad to hear your fight with cancer---

Benny sees food set out on the table covered in metal lids, and quickens his pace to finally eat.

Benny lifts the lid to his plate, stabs the piece of grilled chicken with his fork, lifting it and biting into it as it hovers in the air. *It's the best thing he's ever eaten.*

Connor wraps up behind him as Benny continues to shovel the food in his mouth. He walks over and takes his place across from Benny.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
How's the fasting going?

Benny glares up at him, his mouth full. Connor's grin could accurately be described as "shit-eating."

Connor lifts the lid off his food and grabs his fork and knife to eat like an adult.

BENNY

Nice work with the bloody sink thing. I've been hazed a lot, but that was a new one.

Connor looks up, alarmed.

CONNOR

What bloody sink?

BENNY

Come on, man. My sink was filled to the brim with red paint or something.

CONNOR

That's... disturbing. I apologize, I'll get that cleaned up right away.

Benny stares at him. *Is he bullshitting me?*

BENNY

No problem.

They both eat for a few moments before:

BENNY (CONT'D)

(mouth full, re: the camera setup)

What was that?

CONNOR

Part of the job.

BENNY

(swallowing)

What do you mean?

Connor weighs his words carefully before:

CONNOR

People think we're gods. It's a little uncomfortable, but it is what it is. So that's what we have to be. When you're on the field, you have to do things they've never seen before. When you're not on the field, you smile, you give credit to others, and you get Super Bowl tickets to sick kids. That's how you become a name they echo into eternity. You become immortal. That's the reason for all of it.

Connor cuts his chicken and takes a bite.

BENNY

We destroy ourselves on the field for their entertainment. They don't deserve my time off of it. That's for me.

CONNOR

That's because---and please, forgive me---you haven't done anything to deserve their full attention yet. Plus, I just like doing it.

Connor continues to eat without looking up. Benny holds his gaze. *What is he talking about?*

BENNY

Well. What's next?

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - DAY

The sun glares down like an angry god on his unbelievers.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Benny stares out over Connor's weight room. Every piece of strength equipment imaginable fills a room lined with mirrors.

Malik and a few trainers mill around, prepping the workout ahead.

BENNY

You still do weight training?

CONNOR

You don't?

BENNY

I thought we were all about pliability and joint health and longevity now.

CONNOR

Benny. You're talking to me, right? This is how I train.

BENNY

Yeah, but... it just seems---

CONNOR

(over)

I'm not going to tell you what to do with your body. I'm just asking you for five days, to trust me. OK?

Benny nods, realizing this is exactly the kind of shit that gets him left behind if he's not careful.

BENNY

OK.

BEGIN MONTAGE.

A series of shots of an extremely intense leg workout.

- Benny does a barbell squat as Connor watches a couple feet behind.
- Connor does a barbell squat as Benny spots him properly.
- Benny and Connor run with heavy sandbags on their shoulders.
- Benny strains to complete a Romanian deadlift.
- Connor puts more weight on the barbell before doing a few squats as Benny spots him.
- Benny eyes the weight apprehensively, but steps under and squats the weight as Connor watches.
- Connor and Benny holding 50-pound dumbbells in each hand as they step up onto boxes.
- Connor and Benny do explosive squat-to-calf raises in the standing calf machine.
- Connor and Benny both covered in sweat do insanely fast jump rope.
- Connor strains to rack a barbell after a squat with even more weight on the bar as Benny spots him. He slams the barbell into place as he gets to the top. Connor steps back.

CONNOR

OK, your turn.

Benny eyes the weight.

BENNY

That's fifty more pounds than I've ever done.

CONNOR

Does that mean you're not going to fucking try?

Benny exhales deeply before ducking under the barbell. He turns slightly to look at Malik, who stands nearby.

BENNY
Can you spot me?

CONNOR
I got you.

He steps back with the barbell across his shoulders. Connor remains a couple steps behind.

Benny drops down, then *puuuushes* back up through gritted teeth.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
That's it, that's it.

Benny drops and screams as he comes up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Again!

Benny drops again.

- Benny grunts as he drops the barbell from deadlift.
- Benny hurls his sandbag to the side.
- Benny and Connor finish a speed jump rope session.

Connor stands tall as Benny clutches his knees.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Woo!

- Bullhorn ends another workout session.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The moon rises over Connor's house. A coyote howls somewhere in the distance.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Benny sinks down into an ice bath, his breath catching in the extreme cold.

Benny blinks back the pain and takes a deep breath before he lowers his face beneath the ice completely.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - NIGHT

Benny walks gingerly into the dining area, where Connor is on a video call on a monitor going over his fashion line with several designers.

CONNOR

No, no, no. I don't want any vertical stripes in this, guys, we've talked about that. Just keep it simple, solid colors.

Connor sees Benny walking in.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I gotta go, but let's get into the polos tomorrow.

Connor clicks out of the meeting and walks over to the table, where more food under trays await.

Benny makes it and sits down, letting out a pained grunt as he sits to squat.

Connor smiles as he pulls the lid off his salmon and veggies plate.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Good. That means you did it right.

Connor starts eating.

Benny pulls off his lid to see the salmon. *Ugh, not salmon.* After a moment of hesitation, he takes a bite, miserably chewing the fish---*but maybe it's not so bad.*

They both eat in silence for a moment.

BENNY

You have a fashion line?

CONNOR

Yes.

Benny pauses for elaboration, but it isn't coming.

BENNY

OK.

After a few moments of quiet eating:

BENNY (CONT'D)
I gotta hand it to you, that was a
hell of a day. But I feel good. I
feel acclimated now, you know?

Connor gives a nod, happy to hear it.

CONNOR
Good.

Connor keeps eating, giving Benny nothing.

BENNY
Can I ask you a real question?

CONNOR
Of course.

BENNY
When was the last time you had a
piece of pizza?

Connor stops to think.

CONNOR
Huh. I don't know. Probably my
second year in the league.

BENNY
Jesus, man. That sounds miserable.

Connor laughs, then shrugs. *It is what it is.*

CONNOR
Oh, that reminds me, be careful not
to eat too much right now, OK? We
still have the steps.

Benny pauses with the fork still shoved in his mouth.

BENNY
Steps?

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT

Benny and Connor stand looking up at the bleachers under the
lights.

CONNOR
They're built to the exact
specifications of my high school's
back in Pennsylvania.

BENNY

Uh-huh.

CONNOR

Do you know what number Super Bowl
we're on now?

BENNY

Fifty... Uh...

CONNOR

Seven. Fifty-seven. Fifty-seven
times up and down.

Benny rubs his forehead. *Jesus Christ.*

Connor moves to the bottom of the steps, waving on Benny
playfully.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Come on, come on. Step up.

Benny steps up beside him.

A BULLHORN sounds---*they run up the stairs.*

JUMP: They slap the top of the bleachers at the same time.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

One.

JUMP: Descending the stairs together.

JUMP: Connor slaps the top of the bleachers a little before Benny.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Twelve. Come on!

BENNY

Twelve.

JUMP: Benny's breathing is ragged going down the stairs as
Connor bounces ahead, but Benny pushes to catch up.

JUMP: Connor slaps the top of the bleachers right before Benny.

CONNOR

Thirty-seven! You're doing great!

Benny is in a bad place, and can't talk as he turns to go
back down, but he won't let up.

JUMP: Benny fights to go faster down the stairs, almost
foaming at the mouth with exertion.

His breathing is getting bad, and he looks like he's about fall over *but he's staying right with Connor, who seems to be enjoying this.*

They hit the bottom.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
This is forty-one! Come on!

Benny turns and heads back up, his breathing is getting even worse. SUDDENLY---*he stumbles.*

Benny catches himself and keeps going, *but then falls into the steps HARD with his head. CRACK!*

Stars, the world swirling, the sound drops, then:

BLACK.

Suddenly, Benny pushes himself up from the stairs---*then throws up.* He collapses to the side again, away from his mess. Blood trickles down from a small gash above his left eyebrow.

BUT THEN: BENNY KEEPS GOING, DRAGGING HIS LIMP, USELESS BODY UP THE STAIRS WITH HIS BAREHANDS.

MARCO (O.C.)
Jesus, he's still going.

Connor places a hand on Benny's back to stop him.

Benny collapses, heaving in air.

CONNOR
There it is. Good. Just stay awake for me.
(to Marco)
Can we get some water over here?

Connor looks back down at Benny, who is looking up at him with a mix of bewilderment and a whole lot of concussion.

BENNY
How are...you doing this?

CONNOR
What do you mean?

BENNY
You're forty-four years old. It doesn't make sense.

Marco comes up with a bottle of water, leaning down to pour it into Benny's mouth.

CONNOR
You did real good, Benny. Real good.

Connor smiles at him. *We realize this is the first real smile he's given Benny all day.*

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The moon is now high overhead.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny walks into his room slowly, drenched in sweat, still a little shaky from everything he's been through over the course of one goddamn day.

He's holding his head, which has been bandaged up, but he's still clearly feeling slightly disoriented.

Benny collapses on his bed. He reaches for his phone that's plugged in on the nightstand. He looks at it: *still no signal.*

Benny passes out facedown in all his workout gear.

CUT TO:

Benny startles awake, drenched in sweat and immediately runs into his bathroom clutching his head.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - BATHROOM- NIGHT

Benny vomits into his toilet, then collapses onto the floor.

Benny takes a moment to catch his breath, then gets to his feet and turns on the water in his sink to rinse out his mouth---but the sink is still clogged with blood, and it splatters all over him and the counter.

BENNY
Shit!

Benny backs away, disgusted, tearing off his workout clothes as he clumsily walks back into his room.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny stumbles to his window facing the desert, trying to figure out a way to get any natural air---then he sees the two patio doors facing the pool.

Benny gives a deep sigh of relief as he stumbles towards them, pulling the doors open, THEN FREEZES:

*On the patio in front of the door is a mangled, disemboweled bighorn sheep---and standing next to it, another **younger BIGHORN SHEEP with a broken horn.***

Benny and the one-horned sheep lock eyes.

BENNY
What the fuck---

The one-horned sheep runs off into the distance, jolting Benny back with the sudden movement.

Benny watches it run, then stares down at the gore right outside his room.

Benny slams the sliding door shut and crawls back onto his bed, his back to the desert, trying to catch his breath.

He blinks his eyes.

CUT TO:

Benny startles awake in the same position. He looks around him. *What woke him up?*

Then he hears something: *screaming*. Fucking awful, pained screaming, somewhere deep in the house. THEN: *it stops.*

Benny slowly shifts to put his feet on the ground. Stands. *Listens.*

Silence.

THEN: *a more intense scream, this one drawn out.*

Benny runs out of his room and into---

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The scream gets louder as he enters the hallway, which allows him to locate it. He runs toward the scream, taking a left--- just as a shadow disappears around the far corner.

BENNY
Hey!

Benny runs after where he saw the figure run.

BENNY (CONT'D)
HEY!

As Benny runs down the hall, he nearly plows into Connor, who is walking out into the hallway in his underwear.

CONNOR
Is everything OK?

BENNY
(out of breath)
I, I heard screaming. And then I
thought I saw someone running away---

CONNOR
What?

BENNY
Someone. Was screaming. They were in a
lot of pain. And then I saw someone
running, and there's a big
fucking...dead sheep outside my room---

Connor motions for calm.

CONNOR
(over)
It's OK, it's OK. I can promise you
didn't see anyone, OK? Security
would have locked the place down by
now. There's no one in here to
scream besides you and me, so.
(beat)
You said there's a dead sheep?

BENNY
Yeah.

CONNOR
Well. The desert is unforgiving.
We'll get it cleaned up.

BENNY
And the sink!

CONNOR
And the sink. Of course.

Benny is confused. *Did he hear screaming?*

BENNY
I heard screaming. I'm not crazy.

CONNOR
Today was a lot. You took a pretty nasty
fall. Just try to get some rest, huh?

Connor slaps Benny's shoulder before turning around and heading back to bed.

Benny looks to where he saw the figure run.

He blinks and wipes the sweat from his eyes.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The moon reflects off the pool.

A gila monster drags itself across the desert sands.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The one-horned sheep from Benny's patio crests the hill, looking down on Connor's compound. The moon is now the only light in the desert.

The one-horned sheep stops, and looks back.

Then it continues on.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The one-horned walks slowly, its breathing ragged. It's exhausted.

It reaches a pool of water and almost collapses drinking it. Every sip is restoring life, THEN---

Coyotes howl somewhere in the dark.

The sheep shoots up, alert to the danger.

Shadows move, eyes glint in the moonlight.

INT. COWBOYS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT - ARCHIVAL

Local news footage of Connor being interviewed by a dozen reporters 20 years ago. Connor's hair is longer, shaggier, and he wears a backwards cap, his face slightly rounder, more cherubic.

It's after a game, Connor's hair is matted to his head, eye black smeared on his cheeks.

CONNOR

I know it's not something people want to hear, but it's not like I need this for my life to be OK. This is a game. Am I doing as well as I hoped? No.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 Am I going to work as hard as I can to
 fix that? Yeah. But it's still a game,
 and I still have a life outside of it.
 This game doesn't define me.

BLACK.

TITLE OVER BLACK: Day 2

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny sleeps, his jaw slack against the pillow.

SUDDENLY: a strobing light starts flashing in his room, followed shortly after by "CUT TO THE FEELING" BY CARLY RAE JEPSEN.

Benny jolts up, not sure *what the fuck is happening*.

He gets out of bed, wearing only his underwear, as the song gets louder and louder. Benny looks around the room for any clues of anything, then looks outside---*nothing*.

Benny covers his ears, moving out into---

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benny inches out of his room, the lights still strobing out here. He slowly moves down the hallway, past one room, then another.

Benny scans all around him, the strobing and the blaring song making this all a strange nightmare.

SUDDENLY: it all stops. It's completely dark.

Nothing but Benny's breathing.

THEN: the lights come on and a COMPUTER VOICE echoes throughout the hallway.

VOICE
 Good morning.

Standing there in the middle of the hallway is Connor, smiling broadly, dressed in his workout gear.

CONNOR
 Ready to get to work?

Benny stares at him, his hands still covering his ears, still dressed in nothing but boxer briefs.

Benny lowers his hands from his ears.

BENNY
Was that Carly Rae Jepsen?

CONNOR
Yeah. Great song. Put some pants
on, Benny.

Benny watches Connor walk away.

EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN

Benny follows Connor as they run on the desert trail as the sun barely peaks over the ridge behind them, weight vests strapped on, footballs tucked in.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - DAY

Benny sits at the dining table across from Connor. In front of him is a smoothie.

CONNOR
How's the head?

BENNY
I'm OK.

CONNOR
Are you actually OK, or...

BENNY
I'm straight, man. No worries.

CONNOR
Great. I want apologize if we got
off on the wrong foot.

BENNY
It's OK. I knew you were testing me.

CONNOR
Yeah, well, I'm sorry. And you passed.

BENNY
Good. And be honest: you've seen me
play.

CONNOR
That third down cross-body throw
against Georgia this year? Jesus, kid.

BENNY
I knew you were fucking with me!

CONNOR
Your eyes never left the safety.
How did you even see the receiver?

BENNY
(smiling)
I didn't.

Connor smiles and nods. *Respect*. He drinks some of his smoothie before:

CONNOR
So, I should tell you: on Friday, I'm going to have some friends over to scrimmage on the field under the lights. Just a fun way to end the week.

Benny's eyebrows raise. *Oh?*

BENNY
What kind of friends?

CONNOR
Teammates mostly, past and present. Everyone is anxious to see what you can do.

BENNY
(trying not to smile)
Huh.

CONNOR
So. That's what we're working towards.

Connor finishes his smoothie.

Benny is zoned out, happily imagining playing with professionals.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
You really love playing the game, huh?

Benny smiles. *Hell yeah he does*.

BENNY
It was what I was born to do. That's what I feel every time I play. I love the history, the legends. I just want to be a part of that.

Connor nods, really taking this in. Then:

CONNOR
I'm having security review all the
footage from last night. I couldn't
stop thinking about it.

BENNY
I couldn't either. It was
really...unnerving.

CONNOR
We'll make sure either way, I promise.
We good?

Benny nods.

BENNY
Yeah, we're good.

Connor smiles, pointing to the smoothie.

CONNOR
I know you want to drink that.

Benny scoffs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Come on. Did yesterday teach you
nothing?

Benny rolls his eyes before picking up the smoothie and chugging.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
There we go!

Benny sighs as he finishes, slamming the glass down.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Benny is facedown on a massage table as Marco leans an elbow
into Benny's hamstring, loosening a knot there.

Benny groans in pain and relief but mostly pain.

MARCO
How's your head?

BENNY
I'm OK.

MARCO
Hard work with Mr. Dane yesterday, huh?

Connor, being loosened up by Jan on his own table, laughs before:

CONNOR

Nah, I took it easy on him.

Jan cracks Connor's spine in a twisted position.

BENNY

Please don't encourage him.

Marco smiles as he continues to iron out Benny's legs.

Jan taps Connor's back.

JAN

All done.

Connor sits up and twists his torso back and forth.

CONNOR

As usual, feeling like a new man.
Thank you, Jan.

Connor slides his shirt back on and taps Benny's heel as he walks past him to the field.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

See you out there.

BENNY

Yep.

Marco has shifted down to Benny's calves, as they are now the only ones in the room.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Hey Marco, where can I get cell service out here?

MARCO

You have to get back to the road for that, I'm afraid.

BENNY

Wi-fi?

MARCO

Everything is hardwired here.

BENNY

Damn, how does anyone get in touch with anyone out here?

JAN
There's a landline in Mr. Dane's
library. I'm sure he'd be fine with
you using it.

BENNY
Thanks man, that's good to know.

Jan walks out of the room carrying dirty towels.

Marco immediately stops working on Benny's legs and steps
back. He doesn't make a sound.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Marco?

THEN: Marco is leaning down to him under the table. *He looks
scared, his eyes wide, never blinking.*

MARCO
(whispering)
You can't use the phone.

BENNY
Why would I not---

Marco holds a finger to his lips. Then he taps his ear, and
circles it around.

MARCO
(whispering)
Always. Someone listening.

Marco leans in close to Benny's face.

MARCO (CONT'D)
(whispering)
It's not safe for you here. Connor
is not. What you think.

Before Benny can respond---*Jan walks back into the room to
wipe down his table.*

Marco quickly stands and works on Benny's shoulders.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Arm day today, right?

Benny stares at the floor. *What the fuck...?*

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Benny watches Connor as he strains to flip a tractor tire under Malik's watchful eye.

MALIK

Good! Good! Keep that hip crease,
keep that hip crease!

Benny's eyes never leave Connor as he successfully flips the tire. Connor holds up his arms in triumph. Malik and the other trainers clap.

Benny just stares. *Who is Connor Dane?*

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - DAY

Benny is watching with the same intensity as Connor finishes eating his meal.

Benny then smiles before:

BENNY

Hey, do you have a phone I can use? I just need to talk to my agent about a deal we're trying to close and I can't seem to get any service out here.

CONNOR

Yeah, sure. We have a landline in the library.

BENNY

You have a library?

CONNOR

Why yes, young Benny, he does read. It's just down the hall, hang a right, it's the one with all the books in it.

Benny gives a polite chuckle before standing.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You good?

BENNY

Yeah.

CONNOR

You just seemed a little distracted out there.

BENNY
I promise, you have my full attention.

CONNOR
(shrugs)
OK.

Benny's smile drops as soon as he's out of Connor's sight.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

Benny walks into the room lined with books he's very sure Connor has never read. A ladder that slides on a track to help reach the books at a higher level is shoved into the corner.

A phone sits in the middle of a desk with lamps and empty notepads on either side.

Benny walks over to it apprehensively, like he's doing something wrong. *But he's not, right? He got permission.*

Benny sits in front of the phone and picks it up.

Dial tone.

Benny types in a number on the pad.

Ring.

Benny looks around him nervously. *Why?*

Ring.

Tom, his agent, picks up.

TOM (V.O.)
Hello?

BENNY
Tom. It's Benny.

TOM (V.O.)
Benny Boy! How's it going out there in Sin City? Connor make you stop eating bread or whatever? I'm driving with my dog if you hear weird panting.

BENNY
Tom, I need ask you something. It's important.

TOM (V.O.)
Yeah?

Benny looks around again, leaning in.

BENNY

I just need to know --

Benny hears a click on the line.

He freezes. *Is someone listening?*

TOM (V.O.)

What do you need to know?

BENNY

Um. I was uh...

Benny leans back, speaking more comfortably now.

BENNY (CONT'D)

How the response has been to going
to the Cowboys.

TOM (V.O.)

Kid, are you fucking kidding? I could
get your shit a book deal right now.
Seriously, you could take a shit and
I could get you publishers fighting
over it right now.

BENNY

Ha, that's great, Tom. And you're good?

TOM (V.O.)

I'm great, but how the fuck are
you? What's going on?

BENNY

I'm good, I'm good. Listen, I gotta
take off now, OK? Gotta get back
into the grind.

TOM (V.O.)

Kiss Connor for me, will ya?

BENNY

Yeah, OK, bye Tom.

TOM (V.O.)

Bye kid.

Before Benny hangs up, *he hears another click*. The phone is
silent. Benny listens for anything.

BENNY

Hello?

Silence.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Who is listen---

Dial tone.

Benny slowly sets the receiver down.

CONNOR (O.C.)
Hey Benny!

Benny quickly turns to see Connor standing in the doorway.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Got your deals lined up?

BENNY
Yeah, all good.

CONNOR
Great. I'll meet you in the weight
room in like 20?

BENNY
Yeah, cool.

Connor taps the doorframe before heading out.

Benny looks back at the phone. Shakes his head. *I'm being
fucking paranoid.*

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - EVENING

The sun is lowering behind the house.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Benny is grunting through bench presses, as Malik stands over him as his spotter.

MALIK
That's it! That's it! Keep it up!

Benny is exhaling on every lift, and he is comfortably working his way through the reps.

Connor taps Malik and motions him away. Connor is now spotting Benny.

Connor claps.

CONNOR
Let's go, let's go!

Benny looks at him for a second, but then continues to press.

Connor grips the barbell on either side of Benny's hands.

As Benny pushes up---*Connor is pressing down.*

Benny strains to press up, his teeth gritting with the weight.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Come on, come on, don't stop now.

Benny glares at Connor as he maintains the bar with all his might.

BENNY
What the fuck are you doing?!

CONNOR
I know you're stronger than this,
Benny, now come on!

Benny screams as he presses up, *but Connor just leans down more into the bar.*

THEN: Benny's arms start to give out. Panic washes over him as he realizes he can't stop what's coming. He looks into Connor's eyes---*I can't do this.*

Connor just stares back.

BENNY
(through gritted teeth)
Help. Help me.

Malik steps over to help.

CONNOR
(to Malik)
No!
(to Benny)
Push this bar to the rack goddammit!

Benny squeezes his eyes shut and gives one last effort to push the bar---*but his arms give out.*

The bar falls back towards his chest and throat---*but Connor grips it and hauls it back onto the rack right before it crushes Benny.*

Benny rolls off the bench onto the floor.

BENNY
What the fuck was that? What's
wrong with you?

CONNOR
(shrugs)
We're working out.

BENNY
That could have killed me!

CONNOR
Did it?

Benny just stares at Connor. Then:

BENNY
No.

CONNOR
No. Let's keep working.

MALIK
All right, on to skullcrushers.

Benny watches as they move to the mat. He gets back on his feet.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Benny lowers down into another ice bath. He stares up at the ceiling, sinking down into the ice a little more. He closes his eyes...

MARCO (O.C.)
Hey, Benny.

Benny's eyes open, as he sees Marco standing over him, smiling maybe a little too much.

BENNY
Hey.

MARCO
Jan and I are going to head over to Vegas tonight to get some supplies and blow off some steam. Would you like to join us?

Benny takes a moment to process this.

BENNY
I'm not sure I am...allowed to.

MARCO

As I understand it, you are free to come and go as you please. It's a good place to get some... fresh perspective. And don't worry, we won't do anything to compromise your training.

Marco's mouth is still locked in a smile, but his eyes are screaming at Benny to hear what he's saying.

BENNY

OK.

MARCO

Great. The chopper will be ready in about an hour.

Marco tilts his head to the side before leaving Benny to soak.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Benny and Connor eat at the table, the only light in the entire desert.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - NIGHT

Benny drinks some water after finishing his meal.

He clears his throat before:

BENNY

I'm going to go out to Vegas tonight.

Connor takes this in for a moment before:

CONNOR

OK.

BENNY

I just need to clear my head, and Marco invited me out.

CONNOR

OK.

BENNY

I won't let it fuck with what we're doing.

CONNOR

You're a grown man, Benny. You do what you want to.

BENNY

Thank you.

CONNOR

No need. Have fun. See you in the morning.

BENNY

(beat)

Yeah.

EXT. HELICOPTER OVER VEGAS - NIGHT

A helicopter soars in over Las Vegas, the neon lights glinting off the sides and rotors, a whirling kaleidoscope.

INT. HELICOPTER OVER VEGAS - CONTINUOUS

Benny stares out at the city below. He glances over at Jan, who is staring out the other side. Then to Marco, who rides with his eyes closed. But his lips are moving. *What is he saying? Is he praying?*

JAN (O.C.)

You ever been on a helicopter before?

Benny looks over at Jan, who has now focused on him.

BENNY

No.

JAN

Beats walking, huh?

BENNY

(polite chuckle)

Yeah.

Benny glances over at Marco, who is now staring out his window. Benny follows suit.

EXT. HELICOPTER PAD - VEGAS - NIGHT

As Benny steps off the helicopter with Marco at his side, his phone begins to vibrate and ping and boop with every built-up message and notification he's gotten while in the desert. He pulls it out to look at it.

Texts from his mom, sister, dad, agent, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok.

When they speak, they have to shout over the helicopter blades still spinning.

BENNY

I gotta call so many people.

Marco leans into his ear.

MARCO

Wait until you can get away from Jan.

Benny looks at him, back at Jan, who is just stepping off.

Jan jogs to catch up as Benny tucks his phone away.

He puts an arm over Benny's shoulder.

JAN

Ever spent time in Vegas?

BENNY

No.

JAN

Great! It's loud and stupid.

They all climb into the limo waiting for them.

INT. LIMO - VEGAS - NIGHT

The limo drives down the strip as Benny takes in all the lights and people walking with fanny packs.

INT. WYNN LAS VEGAS - XS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Benny stands in between Jan and Marco against a wall on the far side of the club from the bar, facing the dancers on the floor under a giant chandelier. Strobing lights and pop music... *again*.

Jan bobs his head to the music, the only one who seems to be enjoying this.

When they speak, they have to shout over the music.

JAN

Much like your wake-up alarm, yeah?

Benny nods, giving a polite smile.

Benny looks at Marco, who just seems anxious.

BENNY
You OK?

MARCO
What?

BENNY
Are you OK?

Marco looks at him with a fake smile and gives a nod before looking back out on the dancers.

Benny turns to Jan.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Do you think you could get me
another drink?

JAN
What?

BENNY
(louder)
Do you think you could grab me
another drink?

Jan looks to Marco. Marco shrugs. *He asked you.*

JAN
OK. Be right back.

Jan walks towards the bar.

Marco instantly leans to speak into Benny's ear.

MARCO
OK, listen, I know this isn't going
to make a lot of sense right now,
but there's not much time, just
hear what I am saying to you,
remember it. I overheard last night
that you...you passed.

BENNY
Yeah, I know, Connor said---

MARCO
No, no. You passed. You're eligible.

BENNY
I'm eligible? Eligible for what?

MARCO

Just don't ask for anything. OK? Do the work. Don't ask for anything more.

BENNY

What the fuck are you talk---

JAMIE (O.C.)

(over)

Oh my god, are you Benny Mathis?

Benny turns to see a woman, **JAMIE**, staring at him like he's a giant cowboy steak.

BENNY

Um, yeah, look, I'm sorry---

Jamie moves in closer, almost knocking Benny over.

JAMIE

Holy shit, I knew it. I love you, you are literally my favorite.

BENNY

OK. Thank you.

JAMIE

I'm Jamie. What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be in Dallas?

JAN (O.C.)

He's training! With Connor Dane!

Jan has now returned with drinks.

JAMIE

No way, is he here?

BENNY

No, just me.

JAMIE

I have to tell you, your coverage recognition at the line is elite for a college quarterback.

Benny smiles in spite of himself.

BENNY

Thank you.

JAMIE

I still don't know how you knew
Alabama was running a Cover 6 when
they lined up --

Jamie continues talking about football shit as Benny sees something in the crowd. *Someone*. They're staring directly at him, smiling... He focuses in, the lights strobing, making it hard... It's a face, a face he knows...

Holy shit, is that fucking Connor?! But not Connor now. Connor 20 years ago. What the fuck is going on?

Benny steps out around Jamie to look closer, *but the person is gone.*

He looks back at Marco, who looks legitimately ill now.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(to Benny)
Everything OK?

BENNY

Yeah, sorry, I thought I saw... someone.

Jamie continues to talk at him.

Benny looks around the club. *Nothing. Nothing.*

FUCK. CONNOR IS CLOSER NOW, STARING RIGHT AT HIM, SMILING.

Then he's gone. Benny can't see him anywhere in the strobing madness.

A hand on his shoulder---it's Marco.

MARCO

I'm sorry I can't help you. I
thought I could.

Before Benny can answer, Marco takes off into the nightclub.

Benny tries to go after him---but Jan grabs his shoulder.

JAN

Where are you going?

BENNY

I'm worried about Marco.

JAN

Marco is fine, relax.

Jan smiles.

This is too fucking weird.

JAMIE

You have to tell me what it was like
to play at LSU at night---

Benny looks and sees Marco pushing through the crowd. THEN:
*someone else cutting through towards Marco. Only flashes,
only flashes, it has to be him.*

BENNY

Fuck.

Benny pushes past Jamie and Jan, heading through the crowd.
He can barely make out Marco forcing his way through.

*Then a flash of the young Connor's face, but it keeps moving
in and out of shadows and the crowd, it's impossible to get a
clear sight on.*

Benny keeps fighting through, the lights strobing, Marco, *someone
who looks an awful lot like fucking Connor Dane pursuing Marco---*
back and forth, push, Marco, Connor, push, Marco, Connor, push---

THEN: Marco stops and turns to look back at Benny.

Benny keeps pressing his way through people, but keeps his
eyes locked on Marco.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Wait! Wait!

SUDDENLY in a flash, Connor appears behind Marco and **uses
TRAUMA SCISSORS TO SNIP MARCO'S THROAT.**

BENNY (CONT'D)

NO! NO!

Marco stares at Benny, eyes agape, *his lips jabbering, **the
cut moving in sync with his mouth.***

Benny is closer now, forcing his way through dancing idiots.

Marco stumbles over to a pillar and collapses beneath the sea
of people not 10 feet from Benny.

BENNY (CONT'D)

GET THE FUCK OUT OF THE WAY!

Benny forces his way through to the pillar---but Marco isn't
there. *There's no blood. Nothing.*

Benny stares down at the floor in disbelief as Jan emerges
next to him.

JAN
Benny! Are you OK?

BENNY
Did you see that?!

JAN
See what?

BENNY
Marco! Someone hurt Marco.

JAN
I watched Marco walk straight out
of here, he just needed some air.

Benny looks at Jan. *Are you bullshitting me?*

Benny sees a **BALD MAN** standing next to the pillar with a drink. Benny walks up to him.

BENNY
Did you see someone fall? Right
here! Right in front of you!

The Bald Man just shakes his head no before walking away from this weird guy yelling at him.

Benny stares off into space. *What the fuck is happening? What the fuck...*

Jan places his hand on Benny's shoulder---Benny shrugs it off and quickly forces his way through to the exit and heads into---

INT. WYNN LAS VEGAS - CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Benny steps out into the much quieter casino shopping area, with brands lining the walls, people milling everywhere---but no Marco.

Benny is scanning everywhere.

He starts moving, towards the casino proper. His head is on a swivel for anything.

Benny pulls out his phone. He quickly dials Tom.

Benny holds the phone to his head as it rings, scanning, scanning...

TOM (V.O.)
Benny boy! What's going on?

BENNY

Tom, I, I, I don't know, um. I think something is, is... wrong.

TOM (V.O.)

OK, slow down, kid. Tell me where you are, what's happening.

Benny keeps looking all around him. People laughing. Pulling levers. Rolling dice.

BENNY

I'm in Las Vegas. And I think. I'm just.

A flash: Connor's smiling face in the crowd. When Benny focuses: nothing.

TOM (V.O.)

You're freaking me out, Benny.

BENNY

Am I safe? Am I safe here? Do you know anything you're not telling me?

TOM (V.O.)

What do you mean?

BENNY

Something isn't right, something isn't right with Connor, or, or, me.

People laughing. Pulling levers. Rolling dice.

TOM (V.O.)

He's the greatest quarterback who ever lived, and you're training with him.

BENNY

I know, I just---

Connor. Then nothing.

People are starting to recognize Benny, talking to their small groups and pointing.

TOM (V.O.)

You just nothing, Benny. This is how you become who you're supposed to be. It's what we've always talked about, right? Eat some shit now, be a tree later.

Benny realizes this is a dead end with Tom.

BENNY

Yeah.

People laughing. Pulling levers. Rolling dice.

People moving towards him.

Another flash of Connor. Closer now.

TOM (V.O.)

It's OK to be scared.

Benny starts moving towards the bathroom.

BENNY

I gotta go, Tom. I'm going to get the fuck out of here.

TOM (V.O.)

Don't fuck this up---

Benny hangs up the phone as he darts into---

INT. WYNN LAS VEGAS - CASINO BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Benny closes the door behind him---no lock.

He starts walking past the stalls---all empty.

Benny ducks into the last one, shutting it behind him and locking it.

He pulls out his phone, and quickly dials his mom, Yvette.

Benny holds the phone to his head as it rings. He attempts to calm his breathing. Yvette answers.

YVETTE (V.O.)

Benedicto! Why have you been ignoring us?!

BENNY

Mom.

Yvette can instantly tell something's off.

YVETTE (V.O.)

What's wrong?

BENNY

I think I'm in trouble.

YVETTE (V.O.)
What kind of trouble?

BENNY
I don't know, I don't know, I feel
like I'm in over my head or, or---

The front bathroom door kicks open.

A pair of heavy feet step inside.

Benny immediately gets quiet and carefully pulls his feet from the floor to his chest.

YVETTE (V.O.)
What do you mean, baby? You're
scaring me.

Benny hangs up, carefully clicking his phone to silent.

The footsteps move closer. THEN: *the far bathroom stall door is kicked in.*

Then the next.

Benny focuses entirely on controlling his breathing, but every kicked-in stall door causes him to flinch.

Only a couple away now.

BANG.

You're next.

SUDDENLY: the front bathroom door pushes in again.

JAN (O.C.)
Benny? You in here?

Benny doesn't respond.

Jan moves closer to him.

JAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Benny?

Benny carefully places his feet on the toilet and raises himself up to barely see over the stalls.

It's only a very concerned Jan.

Benny stands straight. Jan finally sees him.

JAN (CONT'D)

Benny?

BENNY

Are you the only one in here?

Jan looks around him. *Is this a trick?*

JAN

Why don't we head back?

BENNY

Did you find Marco?

JAN

Yeah, he's fine, he just went out to get some air like I said.

BENNY

Are you sure?

JAN

I just saw him, Benny. I think the crowd got to him a bit.

Benny steps down from the toilet, opening the stall door. He looks to be on the verge of tears. *Fear. Embarrassment. Confusion.*

JAN (CONT'D)

Shit, Benny. Let's get you back.

BENNY

I don't want to go back.

JAN

It's only three more days.

BENNY

Something's going to happen.

JAN

The rest of your life is going to happen, Benny. And this will just be a stepping stone to the rest of it.

BENNY

Are you sure Marco's OK?

JAN

Marco knows how to take care of himself here, let's worry about you, OK? I'll come back myself after to make sure he gets home.

Benny shakes his head, not sure what to do.

BENNY

OK.

JAN

OK.

INT/EXT. HELICOPTER OVER VEGAS - NIGHT

Benny looks down on the city of Sin, which almost swallowed him whole.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Benny walks down the darkened hallway, past each open doorway, with flashes of the desert and dark corners all around him.

Benny creeps as silently as possible to Connor's open doorway. He peeks in.

Connor, with his back to Benny, is Facetiming with his son, **TYLER** (9), on one computer monitor, while the other is frozen in the middle of a football play from the previous season.

Tyler seems distracted, clearly wanting to get off the call.

CONNOR

Did you blow out all the candles at once?

TYLER

Yeah.

CONNOR

I'm sorry I couldn't be there, buddy.

TYLER

Yeah.

CONNOR

You'll be good for Grandma while Mom comes to visit me, right?

TYLER

Yeah.

CONNOR

OK, I love you, I have to get back to work, OK? Say hi to your sister for me.

TYLER

OK, bye.

CONNOR

I love---

Tyler ends the call before Connor can finish.

His shoulders slump as turns his attention back to the other monitor. Connor picks up a remote that is wired to the computer, and he hits play to unfreeze the football action.

Connor watches a few seconds before stopping, rewinding, watching the moment again, then stopping the action and writing something on a pad.

Connor picks up his phone and records a voice memo.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

On 84 Bronco, Larry, watching
Giants week 4, 2-8 on Lamb jumps on
the slant after the handoff, we
need a double move off that. Check
it out, Giants week 4, play 27.

Benny stares at him, watches him work at 3 in the goddamn morning. He grits his teeth. *This is fucking crazy.*

When Benny looks back at Connor, he sees Connor *looking at him in the reflection of the blank monitor.*

Benny quickly ducks away, heading to his room.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny slides a chest of drawers in front of his open doorframe.

He crawls into his bed still wearing his club outfit, and wraps the comforter all the way around his head, where only his face is poking through.

Benny stares out at the desert.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The rocky desert rests under the moon. Coyotes barking viciously can be heard in the distance.

CUT TO:

A COYOTE GNASHES HIS TEETH AT THE ONE-HORNED SHEEP BACKED INTO AN OVERHANG IN THE ROCKS.

The sheep makes a coughing sound of alarm as it stamps at the mouth of the coyote.

Other coyotes circle behind, waiting for their chance to strike.

The coyotes can't reach the sheep, who is able to fend them off in the narrow space.

Just a matter of time.

EXT. COWBOYS' TRAINING CAMP - DAY - ARCHIVAL

Local news footage of Connor in the late 2000s standing in a visor after a preseason practice, surrounded by media. His hair is now shorter, his visor facing the proper direction.

A HAPPY KID on his dad's shoulders is asking him a question, but Connor can't hear him.

CONNOR

I didn't hear the question.

KID

What advice do you have for kids who want to be in the NFL?

CONNOR

Great question, great question. I'd say work hard. Eat, sleep, drink it. Put everything you have into it. Talent isn't enough. You have to devote yourself. Entirely.

Connor's smile has dropped as he says this, but he quickly flashes his teeth again.

BLACK.

TITLE OVER BLACK: Day 3

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - DAY

Benny's eyes shoot open from the same position as the night before. He looks around confused... *Is that daylight?*

Benny throws back the covers. He's still wearing what he wore to the club the night before.

The chest of drawers has been moved back into its place. His doorway is open.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BACK HALLWAY - DAY

Benny cautiously makes his way down the hallway. *Why didn't the alarm go off? Where is Connor?*

He hears music coming from somewhere down the hall. Orchestral music, oddly.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

Benny finds the source of the music: Connor's library. Inside Benny sees Connor resting on the couch, reading *Paradise Lost*.

Benny stands in the doorway, not sure what to make of anything that has and is currently happening.

Connor sees him and closes the book.

CONNOR
Good morning.

BENNY
Morning.

CONNOR
I thought you might need the sleep.

BENNY
I appreciate that.

CONNOR
Sometimes it's good to take a mental day. Reset. My wife is going to join us for dinner tonight.

BENNY
Were you in Las Vegas last night?

CONNOR
No, I was here watching film, as I believe you saw.

BENNY
I saw you in Las Vegas.

CONNOR
I don't know what to tell you.

BENNY

I know what I saw.

CONNOR

I can show you the security footage
if you want.

BENNY

(beat)

Where's Marco?

CONNOR

Who is Marco?

BENNY

Marco, the trainer, who went with
us to Las Vegas last night.

CONNOR

I honestly don't know. I can ask
Jan. I'm sure he's... somewhere.
Why does it matter?

BENNY

I think I need to leave.

CONNOR

You mean, go home.

BENNY

Yes.

CONNOR

Can I ask why?

BENNY

Because I don't want this.

CONNOR

Yes you do.

BENNY

If this is what it takes, if this
is the life, I don't want it.

Connor stands, walking closer to Benny.

CONNOR

Do you want to know why you're here?

BENNY

I know why I'm here.

CONNOR
Why are you here?

BENNY
Because you want to break me. You
want me to quit.

CONNOR
No. No, that's not right at all.

BENNY
Why then?

CONNOR
Because you scare the shit out of me.

Benny stares at him, confused. *I scare YOU?*

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I look at you, and I see the end.
I've never felt that before. In 20
years. Not once. You have everything
it takes to do what I've done, and
then more that I never could. That's
why I told Jerry to do whatever it
took to get you in the draft.

BENNY
You...wanted me on the team?

CONNOR
I've had my eyes on you for a long
time, Benny. You're the one. You're
the one who takes this from me.

BENNY
Then what the fuck...
(motions to the world
around him)
...is all this? The tests, the
stairs, the fucking whatever shit is
happening here you're not telling me.

CONNOR
What am I not telling you?

BENNY
I don't know!

Connor lets out a deep exhale, annoyed now.

CONNOR

At some point, it needs to land on you who I am, and what I have done, and what I am giving you access to. I am showing you the path, because I believe you're worthy of setting foot on it. Do you remember the one question I asked you, the most important one? The first time we talked.

BENNY

(beat)

Do I want your job.

CONNOR

Do you. Want my job?

BENNY

I...I don't know. Anymore.

Connor nods, taking this in.

CONNOR

OK. I can work with that. Just stick it out a few more days, and then I promise you'll know either way. OK?

BENNY

(beat)

OK.

Connor walks back over to his couch.

CONNOR

Will you be joining us tonight for dinner then?

Benny takes a long moment before:

BENNY

OK.

Connor sits on the couch.

CONNOR

Excellent. Take the day to recover. Great hiking around here.

Connor picks up his book.

Benny slides his hand off the door frame and looks back from whence he came.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - DAY

Benny sits on the edge of the bed, staring out at the desert, deep in thought.

The desert lies before him, unmoved. Waiting.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Benny hikes along a trail heading away from the house in a direction he's never been before. He's wearing sunglasses and a sun hat, water bottle in hand. Benny stops to drink from his water, taking in the surroundings.

The natural beauty of the desert is stunning: in every ripple on the surrounding rock, we see the age of the world. Eternity, in beautiful stones of fire.

Benny keeps walking.

EXT. THE DESERT - THE CHAPEL - DAY

Benny crests a hill and stops. Below him in the distance and in the middle of absolute nowhere, he sees a stucco, block of a building next to a juniper tree. On top is a small steeple.

Benny stares at it. He looks back, barely making out Connor's compound in the hazy distance.

Benny walks toward the Chapel.

EXT. THE CHAPEL - DAY

Benny takes in the outside of the Chapel. It feels taken care of. Not worn down by the elements. The white double doors seem clean, freshly painted... except for... what is that?

Benny steps closer to see what the dark red mark in the middle of the left door is.

It's a thumbprint, dragged across in... blood?

Benny leans back, alarmed.

BENNY

Hello?

(beat, waits)

HELLO? IS ANYONE HERE?

Nothing.

Benny looks around him one last time, but his curiosity gets the better of him--he grabs the doorknob. It freely turns.

INT. THE CHAPEL - DAY

Benny opens the door.

The sunlight streaks onto a stone slab in the middle of the Chapel, but the rest of the room is in the shadows.

Benny steps into the darkness slowly. A breeze blows in, making multiple pieces of paper flap in the wind. *What is on the walls?*

Then Benny sees: all along the walls are images of Connor. From his entire life. Photos, newspaper clippings, posters, magazine articles...

Benny looks around to the front wall, the side... All Connor. *His face, staring back at Benny everywhere he looks. What the fuck is this??*

THEN: SOMETHING HEAVY THUMPS ON THE ROOF ABOVE HIM. LIKE SOMETHING---OR SOMEONE---HAS LANDED.

Benny catches his breath, turning up to the sound.

A HEAVY CLAWING SOUND DRAGS ACROSS THE ROOF, CLOSER, CLOSER---

Benny takes off through the open door into the desert, hitting it with his shoulder, which bounces back to almost closed.

Through the sliver of the door we see Benny running away.

But we're still inside the Chapel. *Why are we inside the Chapel?*

Then we see. We see what Benny didn't. All along the inside of both doors: *images of Benny from his entire life. Newspaper clippings, magazine covers...*

And a photo of him sleeping in Connor's house from two days ago.

EXT. THE DESERT - THE CHAPEL - DAY

Benny makes it to the top of the hill looking down on the Chapel. He quickly looks behind him: *nothing is chasing him.*

Benny catches his breath and looks back down on the Chapel for anything, any sign of...*fuck, what was that?*

Just the Chapel. In the middle of absolute nowhere.

Benny looks over to Connor's compound.

He stands and screams to the heavens:

BENNY

Fuck! Why is everything so fucking weird!

Benny starts walking back to the house.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - DAY

As Benny nears the house, he hears a helicopter somewhere in the distance. He turns until he spots it. It's flying towards the house.

Benny quickens his pace.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - HELICOPTER PAD - DAY

Benny is still walking up as the helicopter touches down.

The door opens, and out steps **ELSIE MORENO**, humanitarian, businesswoman, former athlete, and Connor's wife. She is elegantly dressed, with a Chanel handbag, and moves with a grace only afforded the confidently wealthy.

Elsie walks straight towards Benny, who is starstruck by a woman he's seen his entire life, only here she is, literally floating down from the sky.

Benny is suddenly aware he's drenched in sweat and probably smells like ass.

Elsie takes off her sunglasses and smiles as she nears Benny.

They shout over the helicopter when they speak.

ELSIE

Hi, are you Benny?

Benny sticks out his hand.

BENNY

Yes, Ms. Moreno.

ELSIE

Please, call me Elsie.

Elsie moves past his hand and hugs him.

BENNY

I'm sorry I'm so sweaty.

ELSIE

What?

BENNY

I'm sorry---never mind.

ELSIE

I heard you play tennis?

BENNY

I used to in high school, yeah.

ELSIE

Do you want to play?

BENNY

You and me?

ELSIE

Yes. Come on, I need to catch up to your sweat stains.

Elsie flashes a smile before heading towards Connor's house.

Benny looks over to see Connor watching them from next to the pool. He sees as Elsie walks right past Connor and into the house.

Connor gives Benny a wave.

Benny nods back, and watches as Connor walks back into the house.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TENNIS COURT - DAY

Benny walks onto the indoor tennis court with Elsie, taken aback by its size.

BENNY

I had no idea there was a tennis court down here.

ELSIE

It's for me. Did Con not give you the grand tour?

BENNY

I know where I sleep and eat.

Elsie laughs as they stop at the net.

ELSIE

That sounds about right.

BENNY

Speaking of, do you by any chance know about a...chapel, I guess you'd call it, like a mile or two from here?

ELSIE

A chapel?

BENNY

I just came across it hiking.

Elsie shrugs. *Sorry.*

ELSIE

I don't really know the area, honestly. I'm rarely here.

BENNY

You know, I used to watch you play growing up.

ELSIE

Oh yeah?

BENNY

Yeah. I never understood why you quit.

ELSIE

(beat)

Family comes first.

BENNY

(being careful)

Does your whole family know that?

Elsie gives him a knowing smile, then:

ELSIE

How's training going?

BENNY

It's going well.

ELSIE

Be honest with me.

BENNY

(beat)

It's, uh...very tough. I am. Questioning. A lot of things.

ELSIE

Like what?

BENNY

Like if this is all worth it. Not just these five days. But the next twenty years.

Elsie studies him a moment.

ELSIE

You're a special person, Benny. I can tell.

She jogs over to her end of the court.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Let's play.

Benny, going with the flow, jogs over to his side.

BENNY

I have a feeling this isn't going to go well for me.

Elsie bounces her ball, readying for a serve.

ELSIE

(laughing)

Yeah.

Elsie blisters a serve that completely freezes Benny in place.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

15-Love.

MONTAGE OF ELSIE KICKING BENNY'S ASS IN TENNIS

- Serve after serve goes by Benny, in which he either barely moves, completely misses, or the ball flies off his racket in the wrong direction.

- Benny finally returns a serve.

BENNY

Ah-ha!

Elsie calmly smashes it it past him with a forehand. Benny just turns to watch it.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Goddammit.

- Benny rushing to the net.

- Benny running side to side.

- Elsie forehands, backhands, drop shots...

- Finally, a volley: Benny returns a serve, Elsie backhands it to the corner, Benny gets a solid forehand back to Elsie, who calmly hits a drop shot *right over the net*. Benny runs and lunges for it, losing his racket and his last ounce of dignity as he collapses, then rolls over to his back.

Elsie walks up to the net, barely breathing hard.

ELSIE

Thanks for the workout! Sort of.

Benny laughs, a man defeated.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

Come on, I'll show you around the lower level here.

Benny looks at her from the ground.

BENNY

OK.

END MONTAGE.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Elsie leads Benny into the massive kitchen beneath the living area.

A KITCHEN STAFF works diligently preparing food, dance music blaring through a stereo in the corner.

ELSIE

So these are the human beings who keep you fed. In case you just thought that was magic.

One of the cooks, **HECTOR**, sees them coming and quickly turns off the music.

HECTOR

Sorry, Ms. Elsie.

ELSIE

No, no, Hector. I'm just showing Benny here around, please carry on.

Benny gives a meek wave.

BENNY

Thanks, um. For the food. Guys.

The Kitchen Staff mostly stares. One guy waves back.
Hector turns the music back on, as they keep working.
Elsie motions for Benny to follow her.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - SECURITY ROOM - DAY

A bank of screens, covering every room and angle of the house, fills the entire wall in front of a seated security guard, **ISABELLA**.

She stands when Elsie and Benny enter.

ELSIE
And these are the eyes in the sky,
here to keep us safe.

ISABELLA
Hello, Ms. Elsie. Mr. Mathis.

ELSIE
I never seem to surprise Isabella
here. How's your little Jane doing?

ISABELLA
She's much better now, thank you.

ELSIE
Wonderful. Well, please don't let
us interrupt.

Isabella gives a slight bow before sitting back down.

Benny's jaw can't help but drop seeing how many goddamn cameras there are. It takes him a moment to formulate his thoughts, which only comes out as:

BENNY
Why?

Elsie studies him for a moment before smiling and:

ELSIE
One last room.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DANCE WORKOUT AREA - DAY

The walls are lined with mirrors, with rails along the walls for barre, and two upright poles for pole dancing. An elaborate computer setup in the corner is just to control the music.

Elsie walks over to the computer setup.

BENNY

Who knew Connor was into pole dancing?

Elsie laughs as she turns on dance music. An elaborate lighting system corresponds with the beat.

Elsie makes her way over to Benny, dancing in front of him.

Benny laughs. Then he starts dancing. Because why the fuck not?

Elsie gets close to him, still dancing. She shouts close to his ear, but we can't hear her over the music---*which is the point.*

ELSIE

(subtitled)

Keep dancing and smiling. He's watching us.

Benny's smile fades for a second, but he brings it back.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

I know being here has been hard, and I can't imagine how confusing everything is. But please, don't walk away from this.

Elsie runs over to a pole, spinning around it, then running back to Benny, leaning in close next to his face.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

Keep smiling. I fucking hate Connor more than anything on earth, and I want you to take away the only thing he really loves.

Elsie's smile drops after saying this.

ELSIE (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

Just do what you have to do.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - SECURITY ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Connor leans over Isabella's shoulder watching Benny and Elsie on the dance floor. The music has been mixed way down in the room, and her voice is amplified, every word crystal clear.

ELSIE (ON MONITOR)
 Play whatever games you have to
 play. So I can be free. Now laugh!

Elsie leans back, the smile returning to her face.

Benny laughs, turning away and dancing.

Elsie's smile drops and she turns right to the camera. She glares at it.

Elsie's glare quickly drops as she starts dancing when Benny faces her again.

ELSIE (ON MONITOR) (CONT'D)
 Woo!

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The moon has risen over the compound once again.

Elsie's laugh can be heard from inside the house.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - NIGHT

Empty plates and full wine glasses rest in front of Connor, Elsie, and Benny. Elsie is in mid-story, and Connor is clearly the one being roasted by it.

ELSIE
 So then we literally had to pull
 over to the side of the road so Con
 could shit next to the highway.

Benny laughs, harder than he maybe should.

BENNY
 Oh my god.

ELSIE
 He was just squatting at the bottom
 of this hill, waving his arm and
 shouting at me not to look at him.

CONNOR
 You did, though.

ELSIE
 Of course I did, I wasn't going to
 miss that.

BENNY
When was this?

ELSIE
Was that the first or second year
in Dallas?

CONNOR
Second. It was when I thought I was
getting traded and that my life
might be over, which is probably
why I was taking an uncontrollable
shit next to the highway.

ELSIE
God. I miss those days. The first
two years in Dallas were just...

Elsie stops herself. Connor turns to her, they share a moment.

BENNY
(to Connor)
Do you still love the game?

CONNOR
(beat, smiling)
I love winning. But I hate losing more.

BENNY
But do you still love the game?

Connor's smile drops.

CONNOR
Of course.

Benny studies him. *You sure?*

ELSIE
Shit, is that clock right? Here I was
talking about time and I can't even
keep track of it. I must be going now.

BENNY
Aw, come on. I am living for this
shit talk on Connor Dane, both
literally and figuratively.

ELSIE
Well, as much as I enjoy nothing
more, I have to get back to the kids.

Connor gets up, heading towards the front.

CONNOR
I'll make sure they're ready out front.

Elsie stands, so Benny follows suit.

ELSIE
(to Benny)
Walk me out?

BENNY
Of course.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - POOL - NIGHT

Elsie walks with her arm looped around Benny's.

ELSIE
I'm sorry for earlier. I didn't
mean to scare you.

BENNY
That's OK. I understand. All your
feelings.

The helicopter starts its rotors beyond them.

ELSIE
I just don't want you to be confused.
This life can offer so much. Security
for your family, forever. You are
gifted beyond measure, and the world
needs to see what you can do. Just
know it doesn't have to be this way,
the way Connor has done it. You do it
in your own way. With your own pure
heart. Don't lose that. OK?

Benny nods.

Elsie hugs him, then pulls back, a broad smile.

BENNY
Thank you for coming. I really
needed that.

ELSIE
No, thank you. I am so excited to
see what the future holds for you,
Benny Mathis. Do take care.

She walks away towards the helicopter.

Elsie continues to smile as a tear streaks down her face. She discretely wipes it away before getting to Connor, who stands near the helicopter.

ELSIE (CONT'D)
He's staying. Finish this.

Connor looks at her with a mix of pain and love.

CONNOR
Thank you.

Connor reaches out for her shoulder, but she brushes his hand away and gets on the helicopter.

Connor looks back at Benny, who just stares at him next to the pool. Connor gives him a nod.

Benny turns his back and walks inside.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The one-horned sheep walks through the desert. Its breathing is ragged, there are dried blood and cuts on his body. But he is alive.

Suddenly he stops: a **gila monster** is resting next to a log just ahead.

The sheep gets closer, curious---then the gila monster starts to hiss.

The sheep turns to get away, but the gila monster bites his leg, latching onto it. The sheep runs and rolls over, slinging the lizard away.

The sheep runs off, but with a clear limp.

INT. SUPERDOME - NIGHT - ARCHIVAL

HD news footage of Connor being interviewed on the field after winning the Super Bowl years earlier. Confetti rains down as players celebrate behind him.

REPORTER
How are you going to celebrate winning your fourth Super Bowl?

CONNOR
I'm going to get back to work to win the next one.

The reporter laughs. Connor doesn't.

BLACK.

TITLE OVER BLACK: Day 4

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny sits on his bed, staring out at the desert towards the Chapel. He quickly and quietly gets out of bed, grabbing his robe.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Benny tiptoes down the hallway, carrying his slippers in his hand to remain as silent as possible.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Benny silently closes the front door behind him.

EXT. DESERT - THE CHAPEL - DAWN

Benny stands on the hill that looks down on the Chapel. He's wearing an open robe with boxer briefs underneath. He stares down at the Chapel, catching his breath. He starts walking.

EXT. THE CHAPEL - DAWN

Benny sees the front door of the Chapel has a *full handprint of blood that has been dragged across the entire panel*. The door is slightly ajar.

Coughing and gagging can be heard from within.

INT. THE CHAPEL - DAWN

Benny pushes the door open. The interior is exactly the way he saw it yesterday, except a fire is burning on the slab, lighting the space.

In the far corner, Benny sees A MAN on his hands and knees, retching. He gets closer and the man turns back---it's CONNOR FROM 20 YEARS AGO.

YOUNGER CONNOR
Help. Help me.

Connor quickly turns back and retches---and vomits blood onto the floor of the Chapel.

BENNY

Oh shit!

Connor's whole body retches as he vomits more blood onto the floor. He collapses, rolling over to face Benny, reaching for him, now covered in blood.

Benny backs away from Connor.

BENNY (CONT'D)

I don't know how to help you.

Connor starts retching again, lifting his entire body from the floor, and back onto his knees. It's starting to get violent as his stomach swells---then his mouth opens wide as his entire back arches.

Then: fingers, a hand emerge from his mouth---Connor's jaw starts to rip apart as an arm further extends out from his open maw---

CARLY RAE JEPSEN (V.O., PRE-LAP)

I WANNA CUT TO THE FEELING, OH YEAH!

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny shoots awake as the morning alarm is going off, lights flashing, "Cut to the Feeling" blaring. Wait, was that a *fucking dream*?

He looks over to his doorway... *Is someone there?*

FLASH... Someone standing in the doorway?

BENNY

Connor?

FLASH... They're getting closer... this isn't right.

FLASH... NOW THEY'RE SPRINTING AT BENNY---

Benny shields himself with his arms, throwing himself back on the bed. *But nothing happens.*

Benny sits up to look around him. *He's all alone.*

Benny stands to his feet in his underwear.

BENNY (CONT'D)

HEY! WHAT WAS THAT? STOP FUCKING WITH ME!

The lights come on, the music stops.

VOICE

Good morning.

Benny waits to hear or see anything else. He slowly peeks outside his bedroom doorway into the hall. *Nothing.*

Benny lets out a deep breath.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - PRE-DAWN

Benny walks up to Connor, who holds out Benny's weight vest.

BENNY

Were you just in my room?

CONNOR

Good morning. No, Benny, I was not in your room.

Benny stares at him a moment longer before snatching his weight vest.

BENNY

I'm leading today.

Connor loves the initiative, smiling in response.

CONNOR

OK.

EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN

Benny runs holding the football with Connor behind him. Benny is locked in, like he knows exactly where he's going, something he hasn't felt in a while.

EXT. DESERT - THE CHAPEL - DAWN

Benny runs to the top of the hill looking down on the Chapel. Connor sees it below.

CONNOR

Where are we going?

Benny just keeps running.

EXT. THE CHAPEL - DAWN

Benny stops outside the Chapel. Connor stops behind him, his eyes locked on the building.

Benny notices the bloody thumbprint is gone. The doors are clean. He drops his football.

CONNOR

Why are we stopping here? What is this?

BENNY

Don't, don't do that. You tell me what this is.

CONNOR

I have no idea.

BENNY

Stop lying to me! What is this place?

CONNOR

I've never been here.

BENNY

OK. Fine. Let's go inside.

Benny steps toward the door---

CONNOR

Wait! Wait. What are you doing?

BENNY

You don't want me to go inside?

CONNOR

This is someone's property, you can't just---

Benny grabs the knob of the door.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Seriously, wait! Don't open that.

BENNY

Why not?

Benny tries to turn the knob of the door---it's locked. He turns it a couple more times. Nope.

CONNOR

Good, let's just head back.

BENNY

Fuck you.

Benny rams his shoulder into the door.

CONNOR

What the fuck, Benny?

Connor comes to grab him, to hold him back.

Benny shoves Connor back.

BENNY

Don't touch me!

Benny quickly turns---

CONNOR

No!

---and KICKS the door wide open.

They both stand there a moment taking this in.

Benny looks inside... *it's empty. What the hell?*

BENNY

I don't... I don't understand.

Benny steps inside.

INT. THE CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Benny scans the walls for anything. But there are only blank walls, with the stone slab in the middle.

Connor stands in the doorway, football in hand.

CONNOR

What am I looking at?

BENNY

You cleaned it out.

CONNOR

Cleaned what out? What are you talking about?

BENNY

I came here yesterday. This whole room was filled with, with you. With pictures, and, and, newspaper...it was a shrine.

Benny's shoulders drop. *Shit.*

CONNOR

I know it's not an easy conversation, but the reality is that we hit and get hit by people for a living. You slammed your head just a couple days ago on the bleachers.

BENNY

No.

CONNOR

If these are symptoms, we can get you to see someone, no one else has to know.

BENNY

That's not it. You did something.

CONNOR

You can blame me for everything you want, but this doesn't make any sense, and I think you know that.

Benny shakes his head, holding back tears now.

BENNY

I'm not crazy.

Benny walks past Connor, bumping Connor's shoulder on the way out.

EXT. THE CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Benny picks up his football.

CONNOR

I don't think you're crazy, it's just something you need to be honest with yourself about.

Benny starts running back towards the compound.

Connor looks on the inside of the door and sees a **single scrap of newspaper clipping taped there.**

Connor quickly pulls it off and tucks it inside his vest before running to catch up with Benny.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - POOL - DAWN

Benny runs up to the pool, hurling the football over the house and ripping off his weight vest. Connor runs up behind him, slowing down by the pool.

CONNOR
Are you eating this morning?

BENNY
No.

CONNOR
See you in the training room?

Benny just keeps walking into the house.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - DAY

Benny sits at the edge of his bed staring out over the desert.

MEMORY FLASH: Young Connor cutting Marco's throat.

Benny slams his thigh with a closed fist.

BENNY
Two more days.

MEMORY FLASH: Young Connor vomiting fingers.

Benny slams his thigh even harder.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Two more days.

Benny stands.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Benny walks into the training room. Connor is already on Jan's table as Jan works his left ankle.

A new trainer, JOSHUA, greets him with a clipboard, smiling broadly.

JOSHUA
Hi, I'm Joshua, and I'm happy to
work with you today.

Benny looks past Joshua and talks to Connor.

BENNY
Where's Marco?

CONNOR
Who?

Benny walks past Joshua and stands next to Jan.

BENNY
Marco, the trainer, the only other
person who has been in this room
with us.
(beat, off no response)
Jan?

Jan looks up, as if noticing him for the first time.

JAN
Yeah?

BENNY
Where is Marco?

JAN
Marco's taking a break.

BENNY
What does that mean, taking a
break? Where is he?

JAN
I don't know, he just needed to
take a break.

BENNY
Right after warning me about
Connor? Weird timing, right?

Connor turns his head to face Benny.

CONNOR
Warned you what about me?

BENNY
Not to trust you, and he was
fucking right.

Connor sits up.

CONNOR
Benny, what is this?

Benny steps aggressively towards Connor.

BENNY

Don't gaslight me right now. I'm on the fucking edge already.

Connor stands.

CONNOR

Hey, come on. Let's try to bring the temperature down and talk about this.

Benny gets right into Connor's face. This is full-on confrontation.

BENNY

I'm sick of this fake-ass shit! Be real with me, Connor! What the fuck is going on? You're 44 years old and you train like a high school senior. Your body should be broken, it doesn't make sense. I hear screaming in the night, I see someone else in the house who isn't you, you tell me I didn't fucking see or hear it. You follow us to Vegas, and do god knows what to Marco, you tell me you've been home all night. I find a Chapel in the middle of the desert that is a full-on shrine to your life, and it's gone the next day when I try to show you. There are cameras! Fucking everywhere! There are no doors! To any room! And a landline? A landline! Come on.

CONNOR

Do you want another day off? Do you think that would help.

Benny shoves Connor away from him, into Jan's table, nearly toppling over it.

BENNY

No, I don't think it would help!

Jan steps in to intervene, but Connor holds him back.

JOSHUA

Should I leave?

Connor snaps toward the new guy.

CONNOR

STAY RIGHT FUCKING THERE, JOSHUA!

Connor stands upright.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

There's no need to escalate this.

BENNY

You're so full of shit, Connor.
Your whole life is a facade. You
have no friends, other than maybe
this fucking guy---

(points to Jan)

---so, congratulations, I guess. Your
kid can't stand to talk to you for
more than two minutes. Your wife
fucking hates you, she told me
herself. All you have is football,
and everything else is a goddamn lie.

Connor stares at him---then laughs in Benny's face.

CONNOR

Man. You just have no idea.

Benny steps nose to nose with Connor. They stare into each
other's eyes, waiting. *This is a fight.*

BENNY

Fuck you!

Benny shoves Connor again, but this time Connor charges back--
*they lock into each other, grappling with all their
strength, each trying to find advantage over the other.*

JAN

Guys! Hey! Come on!

Connor twists, taking all of their momentum towards Jan's table,
knocking it over, taking Connor and Benny to the ground.

Jan jumps back from the scrum, pointing to Joshua.

JAN (CONT'D)

Get Malik in here!

Joshua runs out of the room.

Benny gets an arm free from the ground and punches Connor in the
face. He tries to punch him again, but Connor grabs his arm.

Connor grits his teeth and headbutts Benny in the mouth,
knocking him back away from him.

Connor gets to his feet, and grabs Benny by the waist,
grunting as he picks him up, and hurls him across the room.

Benny quickly gets to his feet, ready to fight. Connor circles him.

Connor charges him, colliding once again into a grapple. They each try to land punches, but they're both too strong, grabbing at anything that comes free.

They awkwardly stumble like this through swinging doors into---

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor is pressing Benny back as they charge into the weight room, stumbling over a plated barbell on the floor.

BENNY

Shit!

Connor lands on top of Benny and immediately pounces, striking Benny in the face and head, again, again, until Benny can twist an arm free, *smashing his elbow into Connor's face.*

Benny wriggles free, blood flowing from his lip and eyebrow as Connor clutches at his broken nose.

Benny stands to face Connor, blinking through the haze of being punched in the head multiple times.

Connor starts to laugh, then spits the blood that has run into his mouth. Before Connor can get to his feet, *Benny charges and tackles him, smashing him into the mirrors on the walls.*

The mirror smashes and cracks spread all over. Connor knees Benny in the ribs, then pushes against him, forcing him back over a bench, toppling Connor over.

Connor slowly tries to get to his feet, putting his hand inside the weight stack of a seated leg press.

Benny rolls over Connor, and before even thinking about it, *releases the handle on the seat to drop the weight stack, sending 225 pounds of weight DIRECTLY ONTO CONNOR'S FINGERS.*

Connor SCREAMS in pain, his hand stuck in the weights.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Oh fuck.

Connor tries to rip his hand free but he can't.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Oh fuck, oh fuck, HELP! HELP!

Connor continues to scream and growl as the pain intensifies on his hand.

CONNOR
GET IT OFF! GET IT OFF!

Benny sits on the leg press and strains to extend his legs, lifting the weight off Connor's hand.

Connor rolls away, clutching his hand.

Benny looks over to see Connor's mangled fingers, bloody, broken in the wrong direction, smashed beyond repair.

BENNY
Oh god. I'm so sorry.

Connor stares at his hand, furious and in pain.

CONNOR
FUCK! I DON'T WANT THIS ANYMORE!

Malik and a couple other trainers charge into the room, surveying the damage, shouting at Benny for answers, but the sound and images of the world drop away as Benny realizes what he's done.

He's ended Connor Dane's career.

Malik and another trainer get Connor to his feet, walking him out of the room. Connor looks back:

CONNOR (CONT'D)
DON'T FUCKING LEAVE!

Benny remains sitting, in shock. *What the fuck just happened?*

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - BATHROOM - DAY

Benny stands in the shower, letting the blood wash down his face and into the drain. He stares vacantly ahead. *What the fuck just happened?*

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - DINING AREA - DAY

Benny stands in the dining area. It's empty. No food is waiting for him there.

BENNY (V.O., PRE-LAP)
I think I screwed up.

He looks through the window at the training field below. *Empty.*

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - POOL - DAY

Benny stands next to the still pool. The helicopter is gone. No one is around.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TENNIS COURT - DAY

Benny walks through the empty tennis court.

BENNY (V.O., PRE-LAP)
I don't know what to do.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Benny looks at all the monitors on the wall. All the screens are empty. No one is here.

BENNY (V.O., PRE-LAP)
Everyone's gone. I don't know what that means.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

Benny sits on the phone in the library. He's leaning forward with his head almost between his legs.

BENNY
I know there's some seriously fucked-up shit going on here, and that walking away should be easy, but I feel like I just blew my chance to play this game. And I don't know what my life is without it.

TOM (V.O.)
Benny, you have to relax. We will figure this out.

BENNY
Tell me. Do you think I should...leave?

TOM (V.O.)
No, no. You can't leave. Listen, did anyone else see what happened?

BENNY
Yes.

TOM (V.O.)
No one called the cops?

BENNY

No.

TOM (V.O.)

Then you wait. You wait.

(beat)

You OK, kid?

BENNY

No.

TOM (V.O.)

Well. Fuck Connor, right?

BENNY

No. I fucked up, Tom. I really fucked up. I gotta deal with this.

TOM (V.O.)

Look, this might end up being a good thing for you. You never know.

Benny stares at the floor. He lifts his head back up.

BENNY

I gotta go.

TOM (V.O.)

We never talked about this, if anyone, you know, asks.

Benny shakes his head before hanging up.

He lifts up the phone again. Dials a number.

Benny's mother, Yvette, picks up after a few rings.

YVETTE (V.O.)

Hello?

Benny opens his mouth to speak, but can't.

YVETTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Hello? Who's there?

(beat)

Benedicto? Is that---

Benny hangs up the phone.

He stares out over the desert, the sun slowly descending.

EXT. CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The full moon shines down on the dark and silent monument to Connor Dane.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Benny stands in his underwear in front of the window facing out over the desert. His eyes are glazed over, unblinking.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The one-horned sheep has collapsed in a field of cacti. His breathing is ragged, unsteady. He's dying.

A LARGE BIGHORN SHEEP walks up to one-horn.

The one-horned sheep looks up at him.

The large bighorn sheep huffs down at him before sauntering away.

The one-horned sheep watches him. Strains to get up to his wobbly legs.

The large bighorn sheep stops to watch him. Then leads the one-horned sheep.

EXT. THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

The large bighorn sheep approaches the Chapel, stopping outside its doors.

The one-horned sheep stands next to him, looking at the Chapel. Then the sheep nudges the door open, and steps inside.

INT. PODIUM - PRESS ROOM - NIGHT - ARCHIVAL

Connor is dressed in a tailored suit and speaking to the press after a game.

CONNOR

All I'm going to say is, if you're going to step into the arena with me, if you're going to stand between me and a championship, you better be willing to give up your life, because I've already given up mine.

BLACK.

TITLE OVER BLACK: Day 5

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thump... thump... thump...

Benny's eyes blink open.

Thump...

A sound coming from his patio door.

Benny looks over, but can't make anything out in the darkness.

Thump... thump...

Benny slowly gets out of bed and cautiously walks over to the patio door.

Thump...

Benny slides the door open and sees *the one-horned sheep, perfectly healthy again, standing next to a **dead, mauled coyote.***

Benny jumps back in alarm.

The one-horned sheep just looks up at him.

Benny slowly walks over to the sheep, staring. *Is he trying to tell me something?*

CONNOR (O.S.)

Let him in.

Benny turns to see Connor standing in his doorway.

BENNY

Connor.

Connor motions to the sheep.

CONNOR

Let him in. He's on the same journey we are.

Benny looks back at the sheep. He steps back and opens his arm wide, welcoming the sheep in.

The one-horned sheep walks in, continuing further into the house.

Benny is entirely focused on Connor.

BENNY

I'm sorry.

Connor motions to Benny's bed.

CONNOR

No need. Have a seat.

Benny sits on his bed, his eyes locked on Connor.

Connor slowly walks up to him and holds out the hand that was crushed in the weight stack---but now it's completely healed.

Benny stares at it.

BENNY

I don't understand.

CONNOR

You can touch my hand.

Benny slowly reaches out, grabbing Connor's hand. Moving his fingers. *It's perfectly healed.*

BENNY

I don't understand.

CONNOR

Do you want to know how this is possible?

BENNY

Yes.

CONNOR

Do you believe me? That I can make you great?

A tear runs down Benny's cheek.

BENNY

Yes. I have to.

CONNOR

Then stay. Finish the day. I'll show you everything.

Connor holds out his hand for Benny to grab.

Benny stares at it, still overwhelmed. Then:

BENNY

OK.

Benny grabs Connor's hand, and Connor pulls him to his feet.

EXT. DESERT - PRE-DAWN

Benny and Connor run carrying their footballs, weight vests strapped on, perfectly in sync, side by side.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Benny and Connor work side by side in their throwing motions wearing the vests anchored to the wall by bungee cords. Their throws are in sync.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Connor spots Benny during a heavy squat, shouting encouragement as Benny stands upright. Again. Again.

The mirror is still crushed behind them.

BENNY (PRE-LAP)
I'm sorry, Mom. I didn't mean to
scare you.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Benny sits, holding the phone to his head.

HOWARD (V.O.)
We're just relieved to hear from you.

BENNY
It's been...a tough week. I've thought a
lot about leaving, but...there's still
something for me here. Something I have
to know.

YVETTE (V.O.)
You need to come home.

BENNY
Just one more thing, Mom.

YVETTE (V.O.)
Come home, Benedicto.

A helicopter passes in front of his window to land at the pad on the other side of the house.

BENNY
I'll call you guys from the
airport. Love you.

Benny hangs up the phone.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Benny walks the hallway but stops. He can hear Connor talking. *He can't make out the words...*

Wait, who's here?

Benny walks, listening as he goes. Connor is having a full-on conversation.

Benny stops as he nears Connor's bedroom.

CONNOR (O.C.)
I guess I should say thank you? I
don't know. I don't know what
things would be like without you.

Benny decides he needs to reveal himself and steps into---

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - CONNOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connor sits alone on his bed. *There's no one else in his room. He's not holding a phone. No headphones.*

Connor looks surprised to see him.

Benny looks around the room.

BENNY
Were you just talking to someone?

CONNOR
Uh, no. No. Sometimes I just...talk.
It's a weird habit. I'm alone a lot.

Benny shrugs.

BENNY
I get it. It's a weird place.

Connor smiles.

CONNOR
Yeah. It is.
(beat)
(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 You asked me if I still love the game,
 and the truth is... I don't. Not
 anymore. I used to. I think about my
 dad and...

Connor smiles, thinking about another life. Then:

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 I've won everything, and now I don't
 feel anything. It's not worth... It's
 not worth it to me now. You being here
 has allowed me to think---actually
think---for the first time in a long
 time. And... I wish I could eat pizza.
 I wish a lot of things were different.
 I just wanted you to know that.

Benny takes this in, realizing how sad Connor actually is. He
 forces a smile.

BENNY
 Still time, right?
 (re: the helicopter)
 I think your friends are here, by
 the way.

CONNOR
 Good. This, at least, should be fun.

BENNY
 After this week, I sure fucking hope so.

Connor laughs as he grabs a football from his desk.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT

The stadium lights are turned on to light the field.

Benny and Connor walk out onto the field where **TWENTY
 PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS** are already waiting.

They walk up and greet each one, Connor in a friendly way,
 Benny in a more formal, awkward way.

From the players to Benny: "HEY ROOK!", "Hope you brought
 your big boy britches!", *some barking sounds, etcetera.*

Connor takes center stage.

CONNOR

All right, boys, what we have here
is a seven-on-seven with a center
and five receivers, four-second
delay in the rush, man-to-man
coverage only, two-point conversions
after scoring, two-hand touch---

The players jeer at this. *Two hand touch, pfft.*

CONNOR (CONT'D)

---two-hand touch---it is the
offseason, after all---scrimmage.
There is a 60-minute running clock
on the scoreboard---

Connor points to the high school level scoreboard on the far
end of the field.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

---highest score at the end wins. You
have already been divided by teams,
blue wrist band is team Dane---

Blue wrists fly into the air, whooping with glee.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

---red wrists are team Mathis.

The blue wrists just boo the red ones.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Take it easy, fellas, this is just
for fun, right?

They all agree in some form or fashion, most sarcastically.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

OK, let's play ball.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF SCRIMMAGE:

-Connor stands behind the center.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Set hike!

The center snaps the ball. The defender over the ball,
RASHAN, counts for the pass rush.

RASHAN

One Mississippi, two Miss--

Connor zips a pass to a receiver on a post route, hitting him 20 yards down field with beautiful precision.

-Another Connor pass to the far sideline, showing off his arm strength.

-Benny shakes his head standing on the sideline with a few other players.

-A Connor pass on a dig route over the middle for a touchdown.

-Connor throwing a perfect fade for the two-point conversion.

-Scoreboard shows: HOME 8, AWAY 0

-Benny now stands behind his center, surveying the field.

BENNY
Hut, hut, hike!

Benny catches the snap and bounces on his feet.

WARREN, the other defender over the center, counts.

WARREN
One Mississippi, two Mississippi,
three Mississippi---

Benny keeps bouncing, not pulling the trigger.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Four Mississippi!

Warren quickly blows past the center and SMASHES an unsuspecting Benny to the turf.

Benny clutches his chest, trying to breathe, as the other players on the field push and shove each other about the hard hit.

Connor runs in from the sideline.

CONNOR
It's two-hand touch, Warren!

WARREN
I used both my hands!

Most everyone laughs at that.

CONNOR
Hey! That's not---

Benny stands.

BENNY
We're good.

Connor looks at Benny.

BENNY (CONT'D)
We're good.

CONNOR
OK.

Connor jogs back to the sideline.

Benny motions for his receivers to get back to the line. He stands behind the center.

BENNY
Readyyyy---hike!

Benny catches the ball, bouncing again.

WARREN
One Mississippi, two Mississippi---

Benny just stares at Warren.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Three Mississippi, four
Mississippi! Ready or not!

Warren again quickly blows past the center and charges towards Benny.

Benny waits until the last moment to step aside, and *shove a stiff arm right into Warren's face, jamming his head and neck straight up as Benny escapes the pocket.*

Benny runs with shocking athleticism, juking one defender, two defenders, then as he heads to the sideline, fakes running out of bounds---then *crushes a defender, **ZAIRE**, by lowering his shoulder right into his chest before stepping out of bounds.*

Benny spikes the ball next to Zaire, who is rolling on the ground.

BENNY
WOO!

The defensive players go nuts, charging Benny, who is protected by his teammates.

Warren charges, having to be held back.

WARREN
I'm gonna kill you, motherfucker!

BENNY
Fuck you, bitch!

The sound drops away as the two sides yell at each other with shocking ferocity. Whatever friendliness existed has now turned into a street fight.

Connor smiles from the far sideline.

-CLOSE-UP NIGHTMARE IMAGERY AT VARIOUS SPEEDS: Benny's elbow whipping through space to make a pass. WATER spraying into a mouth. Sweat SPRAYING off the top of someone's head as they're hit.

A SERIES OF MOUTHS SHOUTING, TEETH GNASHING, SPITTLE FLYING, EYES UNBLINKING with the faint sound of dogfighting. FINGERS BENDING BACK as they catch a football. A NOSE BLOWING SNOT onto the grass below. DREADLOCKS BEING YANKED BACK almost ripping from the scalp on a tackle.

Dirt FLYING up from a cleat. A FACE SMASHING AGAINST A SHOULDER, CRUNCH. A DISLOCATED FINGER pointing in a wrong direction. Fingers searching in a bloody mouth for a MISSING TOOTH. BENNY SHOUTING ANGRILY.

END CLOSE-UP IMAGERY.

-Connor throwing a spiral to a receiver in the end zone. Celebration.

-Benny throwing a beautiful deep pass on the run for a touchdown. Celebration.

Players on the sideline are impressed---*this kid is for real.*

-A Connor pass. A Benny pass. A Connor pass. A Benny pass. Again. Again. Again.

-Receivers catching in various angles, in various difficult ways, some getting smashed, others fighting through tackles.

-Connor taking the snap, bouncing in the pocket, then unleashing a perfect spiral 45 yards down the field, hitting a receiver in stride and running into the end zone.

Connor claps his hands.

Benny looks up at the clock on the scoreboard: **1:30 remains and counting, the score is HOME 62, AWAY 60.**

Benny quickly runs onto the field, motioning for his players to line up.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Come on, come on! Let's go, line
up, line up!

Benny stands in shotgun and makes sure everyone is lined up.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Hut, hut, hike!

Benny gets the ball as Warren counts---but *he unleashes a perfect strike on an out pattern 20 yards down the field.*

Benny quickly runs down the field to the spot where the receiver stepped out.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Line up, line up!

Benny looks up at the running clock: **58 seconds and counting.**

Benny claps his hands feverishly.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Come on, come on, come on!

He waits behind the center, waiting for the exact moment everyone is lined up.

BENNY (CONT'D)
HIKE!

Benny catches the ball, bouncing as Warren counts. He pump fakes to one side, then quickly pivots to the other side, throwing a beautiful pass on a corner route.

The receiver catches it over his shoulder at the 15-yard line before getting caught from behind.

Players cheer from the sideline as Benny again runs down the field to the spot.

Players are rushing to the line.

Benny looks up at the clock: **25 seconds and counting.**

The receiver who caught the ball, **DAVANTE**, is slow to get up.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Shit.

The clock keeps counting as Davante is trying his best to drag himself off the field.

BENNY (CONT'D)
GET OFF THE FUCKING FIELD!

WARREN
Clock's ticking!

The defensive players shout "TICK TICK TICK!" "HURRY YOUR ASS UP!"

Benny runs over to Davante, taking one of Davante's arms and putting it on his shoulder---without much thought of Davante's injury---quickly pulls him to the sideline as Davante *screams in pain*.

Benny quickly runs back to the center as a new receiver comes on for Davante. Benny looks at the clock: **8 seconds and counting.**

WARREN (CONT'D)
Last play! Last play!

Benny lets out one final breath to calm himself.

BENNY
HIKE!

Benny catches the ball, surveys the field. *Nothing, nothing.*

WARREN
Three Mississippi, four---

Benny takes off running toward the end zone. He dodges one defender, then sends another vicious stiff arm into the chest of another defender who can't grab him.

Benny sees the end zone right in front of him.

THEN: from the side Zaire *crashes into him, wrapping his arms around Benny's chest, leaning on him to bring him down.*

Benny struggles to fight forward, just feet from the touchdown. He *stretches* the football out with his off-hand as Zaire slides back, pulling on his other arm---his throwing arm---stretching it all the way out behind Benny.

From behind: *Warren charges Benny.*

Benny screams to stretch the ball to the end zone---and right as he does, Warren **SMASHES** into Benny's back and extended arm, **INSTANTLY BREAKING IT, SENDING HIS ELBOW IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.**

Benny screams as his limp, completely unnaturally broken arm dangles next to him, his other arm and football in the end zone.

Benny's team wins. But everyone now huddles around the top pick in the draft, in complete shock at the horrific injury.

Some drop to their knee in prayer, others have to look away, some wave over the trainers.

Benny continues to scream in pain, tears falling.

Connor appears, looking down at him.

CONNOR
You won, kid.

Benny looks up at Connor.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
You're a fucking legend, do you hear me? Everyone here is a witness to it.

Players around him voice their agreement.

TRAINERS rush in, instantly getting to work to set the arm in an aircast.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Let's get him to the helicopter.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE - HELICOPTER PAD - NIGHT

Benny is being carried on a stretcher he's strapped to by several players, including Connor. Benny just covers his face.

The helicopter is starting up, its rotors gaining speed.

The men carefully slide him onto the helicopter.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONNOR'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The helicopter lifts off the ground, Las Vegas bound.

Connor stares down at Benny. They're both wearing headsets. Benny looks up, tears in his eyes.

BENNY (ON HEADSET)
I never got my chance.

Connor takes off his headset and leans down next to Benny's head.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Give me the chance, Connor.

Connor stares at Benny before leaning back closer.

CONNOR
(subtitled)
Do you want to go to the hospital
or the Chapel?

Benny looks at Connor in confusion.

Connor stares back. He nods. *Yes, you were right.*

Benny's mouth forms the word "CHAPEL."

EXT. THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

The helicopter lands a short distance from the Chapel, spraying sand in all directions.

Outside the Chapel, a burning juniper tree colors the night around them.

Benny leans into Connor as Connor helps him off the helicopter and onto the ground.

Connor motions to the helicopter to take off. It quickly heads back in the direction of the compound.

Benny and Connor slowly make their way to the Chapel.

*The **one-horned sheep** stands just outside the doors, watching them approach.*

Connor pushes the door open.

INT. THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

As they walk in, Benny sees **TWO ROBED FIGURES** *standing in the two far corners of the room, their backs to Benny and Connor.*

Candles are the only lights in the room, lining the slab in the center of the room.

Every word Benny speaks is painful, exhausting.

BENNY
What. The fuck. Is. This?

Connor doesn't respond, and just guides him onto the slab.

CONNOR
Lie on your back.

Benny carefully lowers himself onto the slab.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I didn't want it to happen this way. You have to understand, there's no good way to say what I am about to. But I think this week has prepared you for it.

Connor sits on a stool next to the slab. Connor takes a moment as the hooded figure turns and walks to stand next to him. His face remains in the darkness of the hood. This is **CONNOR'S CURSE**.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

My second year in Dallas. I made a deal. A choice.

Connor's Curse places a hand on Connor's shoulder, long, black fingernails extending out onto Connor's chest.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

It allowed me, with certain stipulations, to always be at my best. To train as hard as I needed without fear. It allowed me to become everything you've seen. But I could never stop. Until someone made the same choice. It means having no balance in life. It means this is your religion, and you are its zealot. It means whatever illusions you have about family, friends...

Connor shakes his head "no."

CONNOR (CONT'D)

But I'm an old man now, and this isn't a choice for old men to make.

The second hooded figure turns and walks over to the other side of Benny. Benny's breath catches as he turns to see the darkened face. This is **BENNY'S CURSE**.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

That's the thing, Benny. It's your choice.

Connor's Curse pulls back his hood to reveal: **CONNOR FROM 20 YEARS EARLIER, ONLY HIS EYES ARE MIDNIGHT BLACK, HIS TEETH SLIGHTLY LARGER AND WHITER AS HE SMILES DOWN AT BENNY.**

Benny's on the verge of panic, but his mind reels through its meaning, as everything from the past week clicks into place.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You've seen the rewards. You understand the consequences. No one can know. No one will understand. And then you have to pass it on. To be clear: you could leave here, go home to your family, and make good money from this injury, you would be taken care of. But you'll probably never play football again.

(beat)

Or you can.

Benny's Curse pulls back his hood: **IT'S BENNY, ONLY WITH BLACK EYES, SMILING WHITE TEETH.**

Benny stares at his curse, dumbfounded.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

And you can fucking rule the field like no one else has.

Benny looks to Connor. *Everything hurts.*

BENNY

Why...all the games? The tests? The lies?

CONNOR

Because I couldn't give this to you. You had to take it.

Benny's Curse opens his mouth to speak, his teeth snapping at nearly each sound. *What escapes his lips is a guttural, nasty pattern of speech that is almost painful to hear, but it echoes, like a chorus of thousands---like all the ravenous fans inside a football stadium.*

CONNOR (CONT'D)

He says: "I eat your pain, and give you glory."

Connor's Curse makes his way onto the slab, crawling over Benny, his smiling face even with Benny's.

Benny just stares in shock, blinking at yet another completely fucking unexplainable thing,

Connor takes Benny's hand on his good arm.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Do you want my job?

Benny looks at Connor. Then leans back, closing his eyes. *He can hear the roar of the crowd. 60,000 people chant his name: "BENNY! BENNY! BENNY!"*

BENNY
(whispering)
Yes.

*Benny's Curse instantly reaches out a long fingernail to the Connor's Curse's throat, **slicing it open, blood gushing down onto Benny's face.***

EXT. THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

The one-horned sheep stands outside the Chapel as the juniper tree burns, and we hear **BENNY'S SCREAMS TURNS TO A GURGLING MESS.**

BLACK.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

ON THE TV OVER THE BAR: Benny is setting up behind the center for the Dallas Cowboys, the Star on his helmet. The volume is turned down. This is a classy place.

Benny lifts a knee, sending the receiver in motion.

Benny barks out his cadence, finally getting the ball from the center and going into a five-step drop.

The pocket collapses around him, but he steps up, throwing a strike down the middle of the field.

The ball lands perfectly in the arms of the sprinting receiver, taking it into the end zone.

We are drifting away from the TV, slowly taking in more and more of the restaurant. Diners, servers. The sound in the room slowly drops away.

The players on the sideline erupt, the crowd goes crazy.

Benny calmly pumps his fist.

We shift to a table with food, lots of it. Pastas, pizza, charcuterie, cocktails.

Connor Dane, now about 20 pounds heavier and looking ten years older, is the happiest he's ever been, and sits laughing with Elsie, Tyler, his younger daughter, **PENNY**, and their FRIENDS.

Connor takes a big bite of pizza, enjoying the absolute hell out of it.

Out of the corner of his eye he spots the TV. Connor stops chewing for a moment, seeing what it is.

Connor leans back, motioning to get the attention of his SERVER, his arm noticeably stiff as he does so.

She walks over. Connor says something to her we can't hear, but she nods, and walks away.

Connor starts laughing again with the conversation at the table, eating some more perfect pizza.

ON THE TV OVER THE BAR: Benny sits stoically on the bench, waiting for his time to get back on the field. *We see the crowd, as the sound builds, like we're inside the stadium: but this isn't just the 60,000 fans cheering maniacally, it's the 160 million around the world whose insatiable hunger will never be satisfied.*

Now back to Benny. We push into his face---his troubled, weight-of-the-world expression---until the grain starts to show.

Then someone turns off the TV.

BLACK.

THE END.