

RUDY

by

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The following is a true story.

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**FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY**

FADE IN:

A grey, smoke smudged sky over which we hear a distant pinched radio sound.

As the camera moves down through billows of noxious black clouds belching forth from massive smokestacks the sound becomes clearer.

RADIO (V.O.)

"Cheer, cheer for old Notre Dame Wake
up the echoes, cheering her name..."

TEXT - JOLIET, ILLINOIS - 1953

The camera continues downward past an unsightly row of brick blast furnaces and pulls back to the neighborhood...

EXT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

A row of identical grey brick houses packed tightly next to each other. The treeless street has a few soot covered cars and trucks scattered about. We push in to one of the houses as the radio increases in volume.

RADIO (V.O.)

"...onward, upward etc." If there's
a more stirring fight song in all
of college football I haven't heard
it yet...

INT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

Close on a small hand touching the speaker of a boxlike Zenith radio. The hand is connected to 3 year-old RUDY RUETTIGER.

DANILO

Rudy, get away from there.

DANILO RUETTIGER, a brushy haired, large framed man in his late twenties picks up his son, carries him back to his chair, and sits him on his lap.

DANILO

Start of a new season, son.

Rudy stares up at his father. Johnny, 7, sprawls out on the floor drawing on sketchpad. A wad of clay goes splat on the drawing.

JOHNNY

Hey!

Johnny turns and spots Frank, 5, standing in the hallway grinning, a slingshot in his hand. Johnny jumps up and goes after Frank who darts across the room toward the kitchen.

Danilo puts Rudy down, stands and grabs both Johnny and Frank by the shirts.

DANILO
Out, both of you.

JOHNNY
I didn't do nothing.

DANILO
Don't step foot in this room until
the game is over.

A baby cries in the background as Danilo leads his sons out into the hallway. He pulls the door shut, walks back over to the chair and sits down. Rudy has calmly watched the event without expression.

DANILO
We got a ballgame to listen to right,
Rudy?

Rudy stares at his father.

RUDY
Right.

Behind them, Frank sneaks in crawling on the floor as...

We push in on the radio:

RADIO
...and Lujack takes it on the five
and heads up the sideline...

FADE:

INT - RUETTIGER HOME - DAY

On a small black and white television as a Notre Dame football player runs toward the end zone.

TELEVISION ANNOUNCER
...Diberio is going to go all the
way. Touchdown! Notre Dame 38,
Georgia Tech 7. The 1963 season is
starting off with an Irish bang.

. Pull back to Rudy, 13, (a small 13) sitting on the floor and clapping along with his best friend Ralph, 13, a gangly redhead with a goofy, everpresent smile. Splayed out on the couch, Frank gazes intently at the screen. Rudy turns around to his father reclining in his chair. Danilo looking a lot older and more tired, nods.

FRANK

That'll do it. Come on Ralph,
there's a game going on at the yard.

RALPH

Only if Rudy can play.

FRANK

Fine. He can be all time center.

RUDY

No way. Plus I'm not leaving while
the game is on.

FRANK

Look, it's over, only three minutes
to go.

RUDY

I'm staying.

Frank crosses the room with a grin and picks Rudy up.

FRANK

Come on punk.

DANILO

Leave him alone.

FRANK

Fine.

Frank drops him on the floor.

FRANK

We don't need you geeks anyhow.

Rudy repositions himself in front of the television.

RALPH

Can we watch Indiana - Purdue game
later?

Rudy turns, knowing this drill.

DANILO

There's only one team we watch in
this house...(a look to Rudy) right?

RUDY

(a smile)
Right.

EXT - PARK LOT - DAY

A fall day in a grey brown neighborhood. Tufts of grass hugging a rusted crosswire fence are the only signs of color as a group of teenaged BOYS play touch football on a hardpacked dirt lot. Rudy, wearing a splotchy gold helmet with the ND insignia on the side, (he's the only one with a helmet) leans over the ball getting ready to hike. He stops then stands up. He gathers himself.

RUDY

I'm tired of being all-time center.

FRANK

You're lucky even to be out here.

One of the boys starts walking away.

BOY

I got to go.

FRANK

Don't leave. We need you.

BOY

I'm gonna be late for work.

FRANK

Come on, one more score.

BOY

Let Rudy play in my place.

FRANK

No way.

The rest of the boys start to drift off. Frank doesn't want the game to end.

FRANK

(reluctantly to Rudy)

O.K. You can rush the passer.

Rudy nods, excited to finally be a part of the action. Johnny, 17, walks over to pick up the ball.

JOHNNY

It's almost five. We're gonna be late for dinner.

RUDY

But it's a tie game.

FRANK

Whoever scores first wins.

JOHNNY

It better be fast.

Frank flips a coin, calling it in the air.

FRANK
Heads...our ball.

As the players take their position Rudy, gets down in a three point stance ready to rush the passer.

FRANK
Take that stupid helmet off. We're
Notre Dame, you're Navy.

Rudy doesn't move as he looks across at Frank.

FRANK
Remember, I'm George Goeddecke,
Ralph, you're Angelo Diberio and
Rudy, you're some dumb Midshipman.

The ball is hiked and Rudy charges as...

Frank backpeddles...backpeddles as...

Rudy chases...

JOHNNY
Get him! Get him!

Rudy dives trying to tag Frank...

Frank niftily dodges him as...

Rudy just misses him as he slides face first on the dirt...

Frank steps forward and spirals a beautiful pass downfield. He waits, then throws his arms up in the air.

FRANK
Goeddecke to Diberio! Touchdown!
Irish win again.

He turns around, looks at his brother on the ground and laughs.

FRANK
What a spaz.

EXT - STREETS JOLIET - DUSK

The boys including Ralph, run down the barren streets. Rudy lags behind. The boys finally cut left and bound up the stairs of their house. They all take off their shoes and enter...

INT - DINING ROOM - EVENING

BETTY, the quiet but strong matriarch of the family and EMILY, 12, ladle soup into the bowls of the eagerly waiting children -all 10 of them. Two tables are pushed together in the small dining room. The boys rush in and sit down, quickly not looking at the steel-eyed stare of Danilo who sits at the table's head. Betty gets an extra chair for Ralph. The only sounds are of the children eating.

DANILO

Ralph, you got a home of your own?

RALPH

Yes, sir. Last time I looked.

Some of the kids laugh.

BETTY

You're welcome here anytime.

DANILO

And tell me, who you are again?

A slight, plain looking girl, SHERRY WOLINSKI, 13.

SHERRY

Sherry Wolinski.

DANILO

(nodding)

Bob's kid.

FRANK

Rudy's girlfriend.

RUDY

She is not.

SHERRY

Yes, I am.

The kids laugh as Rudy looks down, embarrassed. Johnny raises his hand. His father nods.

JOHNNY

DeKalb Junior College has some art courses for high school...

DANILO

Art classes? You gonna make a living as an artist?

JOHNNY

Maybe.

DANILO

What you got next summer is something solid, something you can count on.

JOHNNY

I know - a job at the mill.

DANILO

Making more money than any of your schoolmates. Is that so bad?

JOHNNY

I know the money's good but ...

DANILO

The Reuttigger's are a family of honest sweat and toil. Not of books or drawing pictures. Rudy there, a good hard working boy, but it takes him an hour to read five pages.

FRANK

See Dick run?

Some of the other brothers and sisters laugh. Rudy looks away, embarrassed.

DANILO

(to Johnny)

In June, you start work at the mill. It's a good company, and a good job.

JOHNNY

(edge)

I don't want to work there.

DANILO

Then go, go find a job where you can make more than five dollars an hour, where you have union protection, and relatives to look out for your front and back sides. If you have such good fortune, then God be with you.

Johnny tries to hold his stare firm.

DANILO

Leave the table, you give me indigestion.

BETTY

Let the boy eat.

DANILO

He can make his own way - just listen to him.

Johnny throws a napkin on the table stands and leaves.

DANILO

Now does anybody else have anything
to say before I start my meal?

Rudy raises his hand.

DANILO

Yes?

RUDY

I can read better than Dick and
Jane...

DANILO

I know you can, son. OK. Let's eat.

RUDY

(determined, louder voice)
And I'm going to college at Notre
Dame.

Danilo looks at Rudy as if he said he was flying to the moon.

FRANK

Yeah, and I'm going to buy a mansion
on Lake Shore Drive.

Some of the older kids start laughing which prompts the younger
ones as well. Finally Danilo cracks a smile, then starts
laughing quietly then loudly as...

Rudy looks around defiantly.

INT - OLDER BOYS BEDROOM - NIGHT

A .45 record is dropped down a spindle on a tiny record player.
A needle is put in the groove as we pull back.

RECORD

Announcer: Knute Rockne's halftime
speech during the Army game November
12, 1928...

Rudy sits on one the four beds each in a different corner of the
room. Rudy and Frank's corner is decorated in Notre Dame
paraphernalia.

RECORD

Rockne: "We're going inside of them,
we're going outside of them - and
when we get them on the run we're
going to keep them on the run..."

On Rudy's intense face mouthing the words of when...

Frank slams the door open. He's holding a record of his own.

FRANK
I've got the new Elvis.

But then Frank recognizes the record. His expression changes as he walks over, sits next to Rudy and listens reverently...

RECORD
"...we're going to go, go, go, and we aren't going to stop until we go over the goal line. Today is the day we're going to win, they can't lick us. What do you say men?" (The players roar as they charge out of the locker room.)

On Rudy's face as...

FADE:

EXT - JOLIET HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY - 1968

COACH GILLESPIE
(a weak contrast to Rockne)
We're going to beat 'em in the air
beat 'em in the trenches. I
guarantee, we play our brand of
smashmouth ball from opening kickoff
to final gun we'll be the new City
Catholic League Champions. Are you
hearing me!

RUDY (AND TEAMMATES)
Yes, sir.

On Rudy, now 18, but still looking small, 5'6", (and he'll never get taller) amidst his Joliet High teammates. They are in a semicircle around their COACH GILLESPIE, a short mean faced bulldog of a man.

COACH GILLESPIE
I didn't hear you!

TEAM
Yes, sir!

COACH GILLESPIE
Get out there - make your last
practice your best.

The team scatters out onto the field.

COACH GILLESPIE
Ruettiger, get over here.

Rudy turns around and runs obediently up to the coach.

COACH GILLESPIE
I'm putting you at free safety
tonight. I need Jimbo's speed on
the corner.

Rudy looks disappointed.

RUDY
I've never played free safety.

COACH GILLESPIE
Since Pawderewski and Simmons got
hurt I got no choice. Just remember
to puts clamps on their tight end,
Gouldy.

RUDY
Is it true they'll be coaches here
from Illinois, Indiana, and...Notre
Dame?

Coach looks at Rudy, shaking his head.

COACH GILLESPIE
Nobody's busted their butt harder
over the last four years than you.
But to get to the next level takes
a hell of a lot more than effort.
If God intended you to be a football
player he'd would have made you
bigger, stronger and faster. Now,
your brother Frank, he coulda made
it at a Division 2 school if he had
what you got inside.

Rudy stares at Coach Gillespie defiantly.

COACH GILLESPIE
Gotta face facts, Rudy, you wouldn't
even be starting on a mid level
Catholic High School League team if
a couple guys in front of you hadn't
of gone down with injuries.

Rudy, looking upset, starts to turn around...

COACH GILLESPIE
I'm counting on you tomorrow night,
not to outrun 'em, outmuscle 'em but
to out compete 'em. Got that!

RUDY
Yes, sir.

Coach smacks his shoulder pads as he turns and runs...

CUT TO:

EXT - JOLIET FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

A Joliet player runs into the endzone, a referee signals touchdown and most of the 2000 strong crowd goes wild. Scoreboard reads Joliet 21 - DeLaSalles 17. Time remaining in game - :58.

Rudy, on the sidelines, is jumping up and down in celebration. He seeks out Ralph, now a student manager.

RUDY

Well?

RALPH

He's been here the whole half.

Rudy is pleased as he looks up in the stands for his father.

COACH

Ruettiger!

Coach Gillespie grabs Rudy by the jersey and drops him to the ground. He draws in the dirt.

COACH GILLESPIE

(screaming over the crowd noise)

They'll be going to your man Gouldy now. He's running only two patterns, the hook and the hook and go. Don't bite on the short ones - give him the cushion.

Coach yanks Rudy to his feet.

COACH GILLESPIE

This is your last series as an Eagle - make it your best.

Rudy charges onto the field. He lines up on defense - his eyes are wide, blazing with intensity.

On the snap, the DeLaSalles quarterback steps back into the pocket and fires a pass to Gouldy as he hooks over the middle. Rudy blasts him to the ground. The Joliet players surround Rudy and slap him on the back.

The clock ticks down :13-:12-:11...

JOLIET PLAYER

Stick 'em, stick 'em, one more time!

DeLaSalles lines up again. The ball is snapped.

Ruettiger POV...The tight end, Gouldy, breaks off the line of scrimmage running straight forward. He turns...the quarterback pump fakes.

Rudy holds firm as the tight end turns again and starts to run downfield.

Rudy backpedals furiously as Gouldy reaches him and...

...sprints past Rudy.

The quarterback releases the ball...

Rudy desperately tries to catch up...

Gouldy stretches out the distance between them...

Rudy screams in frustration as his legs won't take him any faster...

The ball, suspended in the air seemingly forever, finally comes down softly, surely in Gouldy's hands as he crosses the touchdown line.

The gun goes off as...

Rudy drops to his knees and pounds the ground.

EXT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Sherry, now 18, still slight and plain waits anxiously as Joliet players exit the locker room door and quietly greet girlfriends or parents. Finally, Rudy comes out and, head down, quickly moves away from the crowd. Sherry walks after him.

SHERRY

Remember me?

Rudy is silent as Sherry slips her arm in his.

SHERRY

(playful)

You promised. The dance tonight.

RUDY

I can't be around people right now.
Just go without me.

SHERRY

I stick with you, buddy.

In the b.g. the celebrating DeLaSalles players climb aboard their bus. Rudy and Sherry leave the parking lot and walk down a muddy, grim looking street.

SHERRY

Nobody out there on that field tried harder than you.

RUDY

Then I guess trying's not enough.

SHERRY
One bad play...

RUDY
Please don't try and make me feel better.

SHERRY
(flirtatious)
Then I guess what you won't be interested in that I had in mind for us later tonight.

Rudy is lost in his own thoughts as they turn the corner and walk down a familiar street.

SHERRY
I only make that kind of offer once.
Rudy smacks his fist into his palm.

RUDY
There was a Notre Dame scout there tonight.

Sherry's eyes roll up as she shakes her head.

SHERRY
You promised. No more Notre Dame talk.

Rudy starts to speak.

SHERRY
I'm glad your football life is over so we can get back to a more real life. We got plans, Mister. One year and six months - 'till death do us part. Am I right?

Rudy, after a long beat nods his head. They reach the Ruettiger house just as Danilo walks down the steps. Rudy looks at him expectantly.

DANILO
(he nods to Sherry)
Sherry. (to Rudy) Third turbine went down.

Danilo walks to his truck. Rudy looks after him as he disappears inside. Rudy turns back to Sherry.

RUDY
You don't mind, I need to be alone.

Sherry smiles, reaches up and kisses him.

SHERRY

We're going to have a great life
together.

Sherry crosses the street and disappears into the darkness. Rudy looks sadly after her.

INT - CLASSROOM - DAY

FATHER TED, a kindly looking, grey haired civics teacher, is using a pointer and a wall chart.

FATHER TED

The bicameral legislature originated
not in England but where?

Father Ted turns and sees Rudy staring out the window. The priest, smiling and shaking his head, walks over and stands about a foot away from him. Rudy is so deep in thought he is oblivious to the Father Ted's presence.

FATHER TED

Mr. Ruettiger, would you be
interested in joining us?

Rudy is startled back to the present.

RUDY

Yes...yes...the Senate and the
House...

FATHER TED

(smiling, but)
Don't even try...If I was giving
grades for daydreaming you would be
getting an A. But here in Civics
you're failing. (to the class) The
problem with dreamers is they usually
aren't doers. Their accomplishments
are grandiose up here...
(points to Rudy's head)
...but here...
(picks up Rudy's empty
notebook)
...where it counts, they come up
empty.

Father Ted, still smiling, drops the notebook on Rudy's desk. The other students stare at Rudy. The bell RINGS. The class starts to rise.

FATHER TED

Hold up. Have an announcement
here...

Father Ted picks up a sheet of paper and starts reading. We push in on Rudy as he brightens with the words.

FATHER TED

...If you are a student interested in making the University of Notre Dame your college choice a bus will be leaving here at 10:00 A.M. Saturday, November 15 for a one day guided tour of the campus, it's facilities and the educational opportunities offered by the this great institution of higher learning. Only serious students welcome. Please sign up by Wednesday November 6.

As Rudy gathers his stuff and follows the quickly disappearing students, a smile on his face. He turns and sees Father Ted staring at him. He quickly, uncomfortably exits the classroom.

INT - RUETTIGER HOME - DAY

CLOSE ON TELEVISION SET

October 16, 1966 - Notre Dame and Michigan State rated No.1 and 2 are playing for the National Championship.

ANNOUNCER

Coley O'Brien goes back to pass.
He looks downfield, he throws,
Gladiuex's got it...Touchdown!

Rudy jumps up in the air screaming, clapping. Ralph gives Rudy thumbs up sign. Frank, in work clothes, sits in the corner his fist clenched.

RUDY

Irish...National Champions!

Danilo, sitting in his familiar chair, nods. Johnny, on the floor, rolls over, yawns and looks up at Rudy pumping his fist.

DANILO

Settle down. It's not over yet.

RUDY

I'd give my right arm to be out there on that field.

FRANK

Yeah, that's what they're recruiting now, one armed players with D averages.

Rudy shoots Frank a look.

RUDY
(directed to the room)
Someday I'm going to college
there...and I will be on that field.

FRANK
(laughing)
Madman.

DANILO
Your brother Mikey lives and breathes
the Cubs. But we don't have to hear
all the time about how he's going
to be their next center fielder.

Rudy is stung as...

Frank sighs, grabs his lunch pail and a hardhat and stands.

FRANK
I'm going to be late for work.

RUDY
(to Frank)
You can't miss "the game of the
decade".

FRANK
What am I supposed to do? Call in
sick?

Both Rudy and Frank look at Danilo.

DANILO
Over my dead body.

Frank shrugs and walks toward the door.

RUDY
Frank...

Frank turns around.

RUDY
You going to be at our touch game
tomorrow at the yard?

FRANK
I don't do that anymore. It's for
kids.

Frank has a pained look on his face as he turns and exits.

DANILO
(pointed)
We got a kick-off here.

RUDY
(a little too loud)
Let's hold 'em Irish!

Danilo shoots Rudy a look. Rudy withdraws into his chair concentrating on the screen.

DISSOLVE:

INT - CHURCH - DAY

Close on Rudy, eyes closed, hands clasped under his chin. In the b.g. we hear a priest performing high mass. Pull back to reveal Sherry staring intently at Rudy. Moving down the row we see the entire Ruettiger family including Frank and his pasty faced wife MELINDA and ending with Danilo.

The priest, FATHER ZAJAK, finishes a canto and the parishioners sit back in their seats - all but Rudy. Danilo and the family all look down at Rudy fervently praying. Sherry squeezes his arm and brings him back to present. Rudy, embarrassed, sits back in the pew. Danilo shakes his head.

INT - C.Y.O. CENTER - DAY

Some church goers, still in their Sunday finest, serve themselves from a potluck table onto paper plates while others eat at long tables running the length of a basketball court. The Ruettiger family fills one table. Father Zajak walks around in the b.g. conversing with the parishioners.

SHERRY
(she knows)
What were you praying so hard for?

RUDY
It's private.

SHERRY
Telling your prayers isn't like
telling your birthday wish. There's
no jinx.

RUDY
I'm learning some thing's you just
got to keep to yourself.

SHERRY
I'm going to be your wife. Nothing
should be private from me.

Rudy looks down as Father Zajak walks up to the table.

FATHER ZAJAK

Danilo, it seems like your family increases in size from Sunday to Sunday.

Danilo stands and shakes the priest's hand.

DANILO

Betty and I, we have our last in Louie, but with wives, girlfriends...

FATHER ZAJAK

The more Ruettiger's the better off for St. Anthony's. You have always been a generous family.

DANILO

If any of my boys gives less than 10% of their salary you let me know. Rudy is next - starts at the plant this summer.

Father Zajak pats Rudy on the shoulder.

FATHER ZAJAK

Good boy, good boy.

The priest spots someone walking by.

FATHER ZAJAK

Tomas!

A corpulent man, TOMAS, stops.

FATHER ZAJAK

Is it true?

TOMAS

(nodding proudly)
Tommy signed the letter of intent yesterday.

FATHER ZAJAK

Tomas' brother's boy got a football scholarship to Notre Dame.

At the table both Rudy and Frank react.

Danilo, smiles tightly as he extends his hand.

DANILO

Congratulations.

TOMAS

We had a party for him last Saturday. Over a hundred showed up - every one of them begging for season tickets.

FATHER ZAJAK

A family could not have been given
a greater gift.

TOMAS

Sometimes prayers are answered.

Father Zajak puts his arm around Tomas shoulder and walks him
away. Danilo sits down. Frank shakes his head...

FRANK

(almost angry)

I can't believe he got a scholarship
to Notre Dame...I burned him twice
when we played.

MELINDA (FRANK'S WIFE)

I just don't get it. What's the big
deal with Notre Dame football?

No one says anything. Danilo finally turns and addresses
Melinda.

DANILO

When I was a boy in Cracow my father
would talk about the greatness of
America, how immigrants with nothing
can make a life for themselves, where
poor Irish, Italian, Polish boys can
play football for a great Catholic
university in the middle of the
country, our Lady of the Lord - Notre
Dame - and beat the rich boys from
the great schools of the East - Yale
and Army. And then when we came to
America during depression Catholic
immigrant groups are even more
objects of hate. So, every Notre
Dame victory on the field becomes
a victory for us.

Rudy stares intently at his father.

MELINDA

It's not the depression anymore and
poor Catholic boys can't even afford
to go to Notre Dame now.

DANILO

But for me, it is the same, in here
(he taps his chest).

Frank glares at his wife as Rudy proudly looks at his father.

DANILO

No more talk. Let us eat.

Rudy, thinking he is sharing an unspoken moment of pride with his brother smiles at Frank.

FRANK

What are you grinning at?

Rudy winces but tries to keep smiling.

EXT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

Rudy, in an ill fitted suit and a badly knotted tie, rushes down the front porch and up the street.

SHERRY (O.S.)

Hey!!

Rudy flinches but keeps on moving.

SHERRY

Hey, Rudy!!

Sherry, in a bulky parka, chases Rudy up the street. Rudy finally, reluctantly slows down.

SHERRY

Where you going so dressed up? It's not Sunday.

RUDY

Job interview.

SHERRY

At the plant?

RUDY

No, at school, for class, business class. They have a guy from the McDonald's, it's kind of like a test.

Sherry shakes her head, disbelieving.

SHERRY

I don't like you lying to me.

RUDY

I got to go.

SHERRY

(staring him down)

Someday I'm going to understand you.
I swear it.

She turns and walks back toward her house. Rudy, stares after her a beat, than turns and starts running down the street.

EXT - SCHOOL - DAY

Students are filing on a bus with NOTRE DAME in letters on the front. Rudy, lurking in the back, finally moves into the line, his head down. Just as he is ready to board the bus, a hand clutches his arm and pulls him out of line.

FATHER TED
(everpresent kindly smile)
What are you doing here?

Rudy looks down stumbling for words.

RUDY
Going to see Notre Dame.

FATHER TED
You have friends in South Bend?

RUDY
No.

FATHER TED
Well there's got to be some other reason.

RUDY
I just want to see it.

FATHER TED
I'm sorry Rudy, this bus is for students interested in attending the university. It's not a sight seeing tour.

RUDY
(a long, considered pause)
Well, maybe someday I can go to school there.

Father Ted shakes his head.

FATHER TED
The dreamer. Rudy, you're in lower 5% of your class. You don't have the grades for DeKalb Community much less Notre Dame.

Rudy looks over as the last student gets on the bus.

FATHER TED
The secret to happiness in this lifetime is to be grateful for the gifts bestowed upon us by the Good Lord and be not bereft of those gifts given to others. Go home boy.

Father Ted pats him on the back, walks to the bus, and climbs on board. The door SLAMS. On Rudy as...

FOUR YEARS LATER (1972)

EXT - STEEL MILL - DAY

A big iron door opens. Rudy, wearing a hard hat and carrying a lunch pail, follows other MILLWORKERS into a dark, shrieking, steaming cavernous hole.

INT - TURBINE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Danilo sits back in a chair like a king (which he is in the power section of the mill), in front of a wide variety of gauges and dials. Four or five other workers with clipboards monitor the machines or wait for orders from "the king".

DANILO

Bradley, check the feeder load on C-13. Duck, what do we got on seven?

DUCK

43 over 20.

DANILO

Bring it down 15 tight.

Rudy walks in the room.

DANILO

Rudy, you're five minutes late. Get down to B-Kettle and check the intake valve, we got a cut out.

Rudy nods obediently.

DANILO

I want you to take this job more serious. Got that?

RUDY

Yes, sir.

Rudy turns and leaves as Danilo continues to bark out orders, full of himself. It's good to be king, even if your kingdom is a tiny fiefdom.

INT - POWER PLANT - DAY

Rudy makes his way down a gnarled catwalk through a maze of hissing boilers, vibrating pipes, steaming turbines, and feeder belts carrying coal from the outside. The noise is deafening. Rudy stops in front of a shaking boiler. He picks up a ratchet handle and starts to turn it.

The steam starts increasing in density. Suddenly Ralph comes running down the catwalk. He pulls Rudy back and grabs the ratchet handle cranking it the opposite direction. The steam narrows down. Ralph turns to Rudy and shakes his head.

RALPH
(shouting over the noise)
You're going to end up killing us
all yet.

Rudy mouths "sorry". Ralph smiles his goofy grin, puts his arm around Rudy and walks him down the catwalk.

EXT - MILL - DAY

It's a hot day. Ralph and Rudy, in dirt smudged t's, are eating lunch outside the power plant under the shade of an old rusty water tower. In the background a series of coal feeder lines angle up towards the giant redbrick edifice.

RUDY
They start practice in a week. With
Coach Parseghian running things they
have a chance to be national champs
every year.

RALPH
I believe it.

RUDY
Do you know that Ara is the first
Notre Dame coach to encourage
walk-ons? I read that.

RALPH
You probably know more about that
team than the half the players.

RUDY
I can't wait to get there. I got
two thousand dollars saved up.

RALPH
You make it sound like heaven.

RUDY
To start out, it's the most beautiful
campus in the world - I read that.
They have two lakes with ducks, geese
and swans right on school grounds.

RALPH
Why don't you go take a look at the
place? It's not that far away.

RUDY

The first time I set foot on that campus is when I'm ready to be part of it.

RALPH

When that time comes I'll take that trip with you.

Rudy sticks out his hand.

RUDY

Deal?

RALPH

Deal.

A whistle SHRIEKS.

RUDY

You're the only one who's ever taken me serious.

RALPH

My dad used to tell me that having dreams is what makes life tolerable.

Rudy grins at Ralph as...

EXT/INT - BUS/JOLIET STREET - DAY

A sweltering day. The bus rolls down the same kind of street Rudy and Sherry live on. Inside Rudy peers out the window uncomfortably. Sherry stares down at a map.

SHERRY

It's only five miles further away.

RUDY

I like walking to work.

SHERRY

Well, you could buy my Dad's truck and we'd still have enough money for a house down payment.

Rudy stares out the window.

BUS DRIVER

Calumet Drive.

Sherry grabs Rudy's hand.

SHERRY

This is us.

EXT - CALUMET STREET - DAY

A sign reading FOR SALE fronts a tiny framed house. Identical houses line both sides of the street as far as the eye can see.

SHERRY

Isn't it cute? We can afford this.

Rudy seems paralyzed as he stands in front of the house.

SHERRY

Come on in. Take a look around.

Rudy doesn't move.

SHERRY

Look buddy, I've put my time in real patiently. Agreed to put off marriage so we could get the money together start things off right.

Sherry steps into Rudy's face.

SHERRY

(sweet but deadly)

You owe me.

She takes his hand and guides him toward the house.

EXT - MILL - DAY

Ralph is walking toward a large elevator carrying a large spool of hose. Rudy, holding a newspaper clipping, runs up to him.

RUDY

(excited)

Ara Parseghian's speaking at the Chicago Gridiron Club tomorrow night.

RALPH

So?

RUDY

I want you to go with me.

RALPH

Sure, if Rhonda lets me stay out that late.

They step on a large freight elevator. Frank walks around the corner and also steps inside. There is no acknowledgement between the two brothers.

RUDY

We can catch the 10:00 D-Train and be back no later than 10:30.

Frank grabs the newspaper clipping from Rudy and reads it.

FRANK
Ara Parsighian...Jesus, you can't
give it up can you?

RUDY
He's the greatest coach in the
country.

FRANK
So what? You gonna get his
autographed picture and kiss it every
night before you go to bed?

Rudy looks away.

FRANK
Or maybe he'll give you permission
to wipe his ass.

RALPH
Leave him alone.

FRANK
As long as he talks this crazy Notre
Dame shit he's gotta take anything
comes his way.

RALPH
You used to be a big Notre Dame fan.

FRANK
I used to collect baseball cards too.
I grew up.

Frank glares at Rudy...A few beats and Ralph turns toward Frank.

RALPH
You know what Coach Gillespie used
to say about you?

Ralph has hit a soft spot.

RALPH
He said you had a lot of talent.

The elevator stops and Frank walks off.

RALPH
But your problem was you were too
afraid of getting hurt on the
field...you had no guts.

Frank turns around as Ralph and Rudy step off onto the platform
Frank stares Ralph down.

FRANK
Fuck you, Ralph.

RALPH
He used to tell me if you had one
half of Rudy's heart and desire you
could have been All-Conference.

Frank steps forward into Ralph's face.

RALPH
He said you were a pussy.

Frank straight arms Ralph back into the wall and starts to go after him. Rudy charges between them and tackles Frank. They crash to the ground and start rolling and punching. Ralph dives in the middle attempting to break them up.

DANILO
Hey!!

All motion is stopped as the three look up as Danilo stands over them.

DANILO
Don't nothing ever change?

The boys get to their feet and straighten themselves up. A long beat as Danilo stares them down.

DANILO
Get back to work.

Frank and Rudy give each other a cold look as they go in separate directions.

EXT - MILL - DAY

Another hot day. Billowing steam clouds rising from the giant chimneys mix with heavy air dense with humidity. Rudy, sweating through his grimy T-shirt, does push-ups next to a machinery shed. Ralph, a grin on his face, comes running up to Rudy, carrying a brown paper sack.

RUDY
You're never late. Where have you
been?

Ralph stands in front of Rudy, the grin stuck on his face.

RALPH
What is today?

RUDY
The day we're going to hear Ara talk.

RALPH
No, the date.

RUDY
August 23rd.

RALPH
And that is...

RUDY
(looks down)
My birthday.

RALPH
22 big ones.

RUDY
It's starting to go by too fast.

Ralph hands Rudy the sack.

RALPH
Sorry I didn't have time to wrap it.
Go ahead. Open it.

Rudy pulls out a bright green jacket with a gold cloverleaf on the front and on the back the lettering NOTRE DAME FOOTBALL. Rudy is knocked out.

RUDY
Fantastic!

RALPH
Yeah, isn't it?

RUDY
This is incredible...I can't thank you enough.

RALPH
Oh, you'll find a way.

Ralph grins as A SHRIEKING SIREN jolts the two back their surroundings. Ralph walks to on the shed wall and picks up the phone.

RALPH
Ralph here....Yeah, we've had that problem before...rocker cradle half way up. We'll handle...

Ralph hangs up the phone and turns toward Rudy.

RALPH
We got a jammed belt over at three.

Rudy nods and follows Ralph to...

Close on a coal feeder belt. The line starts at the coal piles on the ground and angles up 300 ft. to the top of the boiler system.

Ralph, holding a long iron wedge, climbs on the belt full of coal.

RUDY

You sure this thing won't start up...

RALPH

Control room shut the system down.

RUDY

I'll go with you.

RALPH

Stay here. If this sucker does pop on, pull that brake lever there with all you got.

RUDY

You got it.

Ralph turns and starts climbing the three foot wide belt, holding on thin wire mesh on each side.

Rudy waits below looking uneasy as Ralph reaches his destination.

Ralph sticks the wedge under the belt and pushes down. The belt strains, then releases. Ralph pulls the wedge out and holds it up in the air triumphantly. Suddenly the belt LURCHES into motion knocking the feet out from underneath Ralph.

Rudy looks up in horror as Ralph is swept upward toward the...

Coal crusher at the far end.

Rudy sprints toward the brake lever and pulls...

SCREECH, SCREECH...

But it doesn't slow the belt down as Ralph, grabbing desperately at the wire can't stop himself...

Rudy, gasping for breath, lays on the brake...

More SCREECHING...

RUDY

(screaming)

Stop! God, please stop!

A loud WRENCHING GROAN and a CRACK and the belt finally stops.

Rudy jumps on the belt and runs slipping, falling, gasping up the incline. Reaching the top he stops, his mouth drops open, a look of horror comes over his face...

RUDY
No! No! No! No!....

Rudy collapses to his knees.

EXT - CEMETERY - DAY

A coffin is lowered into the ground. Pulling up we see a burnt orange sky, the backdrop to a dull, almost grassless square of land next to a row of grey rowhouses. About 50 MOURNERS surround the gravesite.

FATHER ZAJAK
This good man graced us with his
love, kindness, and spiritual
wisdom...

Rudy, in his ill-fitting black suit, his face devoid of color and his eyes squeezed shut, looks like he might faint. Sherry grips his hand...

FATHER ZAJAK
And as he passes on to the heavenly
plane he will live within us, his
gifts cherished as long as anyone
touched by him shall live and breathe
on this, our earthly plane.

Ralph's wife, RHONDA, a tiny, round faced girl, tosses a package into the grave. Father Zajak sprinkles holy water on the grave...

FATHER ZAJAK
Anno domini, deus te deum, de
spiritus de partum. Deo madre deo
padre eterntiatis...Amen.

GROUP
Amen.

Rudy shakily walks over to Rhonda as the mourners break up.

RUDY
He was my closest friend...If there's
anything...

Rudy stops not being able to go on...

RHONDA
(hugging him)
Thanks, Rudy.

Rudy, looks up and sees his Frank staring at him. Both turn away from each other. Rudy starts walking numbly toward the street. Sherry hurriedly catches up with Rudy.

SHERRY
Where are you going?

RUDY
I don't know.

They keep walking. Suddenly something comes over his face.

RUDY
I do know.

Rudy turns to Sherry.

RUDY
I'm going to South Bend.

Sherry shakes her head.

SHERRY
Come on, Rudy.

RUDY
You wouldn't understand. And no matter what I tried to say, you could never understand.

SHERRY
You can't make decisions like this on the day of your best friends funeral? You're not thinking clear.

RUDY
I've never thought more clear in my life.

SHERRY
What about the house, the marriage...?

RUDY
(tense)
I have to try - now, before it's too late.

Sherry is taken aback by Rudy's anger.

RUDY
(softer)
I'm sorry. If I don't do this, I'll never be any good for you, for me, for anybody.

They look at each other a long moment.

RUDY
I'm sorry.

He turns and walks down the street as a stunned Sherry stares after him.

EXT - BUS STATION - JOLIET - DAY

Rudy, still in his black suit, carrying a small duffel bag, boards a bus with the destination space reading SOUTH BEND - NOTRE DAME.

EXT/INT BUS - INTERSTATE 90 - DUSK TO NIGHT

Rudy sits in a nearly empty bus, tensely staring out at the Indiana countryside.

As the bus finally moves into the city, Rudy opens the window, leaning forward as...

The bus turns the corner on Joseph Avenue and we see Rudy's eyes widen as...

EXT - NOTRE DAME - NIGHT

Rudy steps off the bus and stares in awe at large wooden sign with gold embossed letters UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME du LAC. Dragging his duffel bag behind him he starts to walk down an oak lined lane toward campus.

At a entrance gate he approaches a white haired guard.

RUDY

I need to talk to someone about getting in school here.

The guard looks at suspiciously at Rudy.

GUARD

Now? The admissions office closed three hours ago.

RUDY

There must be someone I could see.

The guard stares at Rudy.

GUARD

Well, you could always talk to a priest. Maybe that's what you need, son.

INT - RECTORY - NIGHT

SISTER THERESE, a tall, harsh looking factotum, has a concerned on her face as she gazes down at Rudy, not a pretty picture with his hair matted to his forehead, an intense look in his eye, in his suit, and holding a dufflebag.

SISTER THERESE
Where are you from?

RUDY
Joliet.

Sister Therese slides a piece of paper and a pen across the table.

SISTER THERESE
Write down your name, address, and
telephone number.

RUDY
(encouraged)
Thank you, sister.

SISTER THERESE
Father Cavanaugh won't be back for
at least an hour.

RUDY
I'll wait here.

SISTER THERESE
No, you won't. The chapel's next
door.

Rudy looks at her quizzically.

INT - CHAPEL - DAY

Rudy is sitting in the Chapel of Holy Cross staring forward as if in a trance. Father Cavanaugh, a tiny, vibrant man in his sixties enters, spots Rudy, walks over and sits down next to him

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Ever been in this chapel before?

Rudy turns around with a start.

RUDY
No. Oh, hi, Rudy Ruettiger. You
must be Father Cavanaugh.

Father Cavanaugh sits down in the pew, leans back and put his hands behind his neck. He gazes forward.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
How long have you thought about this decision?

RUDY
Ever since I was a kid, I used to watch Notre Dame football...

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Have you taken the proper steps, investigated the process?

RUDY
Yes, but I need to learn more...

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Are you fully aware of the sacrifices you'll have to make?

RUDY
Yes. I'm ready. I'll do anything it takes.

The force of conviction in Rudy's voice makes Father Cavanaugh finally turn and look at him.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
What brought you here today?

RUDY
I just came from my best friends funeral and he...

FATHER CAVANAUGH
(nodding knowingly)
Of course.

Rudy looks a bit confused.

RUDY
What do you mean, of course?

FATHER CAVANAUGH
It's very common for those suffering such a crisis to seek an escape into the cloth. We usually recommend a grieving or cooling off period first.

RUDY
Escape into the cloth?

FATHER CAVANAUGH
An expression we have describing those fleeing emotional or psychological pain by choosing priesthood.

RUDY

You think I want to be a priest?

Now it's Father Cavanaugh's turn to be confused.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

You don't?

RUDY

Nothing against being a priest but I don't think it's for me.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Why are you here?

RUDY

I want to go to school at Notre Dame. It's the most important thing in my life.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Have you applied?

RUDY

No. My grades were never very good, even though I tried hard, but I'll try harder, I'll study twenty hours a day if I have to.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

This university isn't for everybody.

RUDY

(almost angry)

I've heard that all my life, I'm not going to hear it anymore.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

You're not, are you?

Father Cavanaugh for the first time smiles at Rudy.

RUDY

Anything, I'll do anything.

Father Cavanaugh studies Rudy carefully. .

FATHER CAVANAUGH

I believe you mean that. O.K., Mr. Rudy, here's my deal. Return home, go mourn your friend, and if you still feel the same way in a month or so, come back and we'll talk. I have an idea for you.

RUDY

What's the idea?

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Be patient.

RUDY
A month?

Father Cavanaugh rises, helps Rudy stand and leads him to the door.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Why don't you go to the Grotto and light a candle for your friend. You will find great peace there. It's right out the door and down the hill.

RUDY
I'll be back Father to hear that idea.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Yes, I have a strong feeling you will. God bless you, son.

EXT - GROTTTO - NIGHT

The dramatic spotlights and serene stillness are only a part the beatific atmosphere of this picturesque holy shrine. To anybody who has been there, religious or not, this is a special place. The cave like rock shell is set gracefully into a hillside, a statue of the Virgin Mary off to the side. Rudy kneels in front of the shell watching hundreds of flickering candles, a calm look on his face.

A pair of footsteps are heard behind him as Sister Therese walks Danilo into frame. She points to Rudy turns and leaves. Danilo stares at his son for a beat and walks slowly toward him. He stands next to Rudy staring transfixed at the Grotto. For Danilo there is a lot of emotion on his face. Finally...

DANILO
It's time to go home.

Rudy turns around and gazes up at his father a disbelieving look on his face.

EXT\INT - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The truck speeds down the highway. Father and son stare grimly ahead. Finally...

DANILO
You can take a couple of days off.

RUDY
(calm)
I'm not going back to the mill.

Danilo looks over at his son and shakes his head.

DANILO

Ralph was a part of our family, you think the rest of us aren't hurting. Maybe we should all quit and go chasing after some half-cocked dream?

RUDY

I don't care what other people do.

DANILO

That's your problem, no sense of responsibility to anybody other than yourself. You got a girl who's stood by you ten years...

RUDY

I don't want to talk right now.

Silence as Danilo agitates. Then...

DANILO

Your grandfather saved up all his life to bring the family to this country. He got a good job at the stockyard, a nice house in South Chicago. But when I was twelve somebody sold him on the idea of moving to the country and becoming a dairy farmer. He bought some land and about a two hundred cows. Five months later all the cows were dead with disease. It was the depression, he couldn't sell the land or get work. One day he just left and never came back...my brothers and me had to split up, live with different friends and relatives...

Rudy turns and stares at his father who had a difficult time telling this story.

DANILO

Chasing stupid dreams can only cause you and everyone around you heartache.

RUDY

My dream isn't stupid.

DANILO

It's not just stupid, it's idiot. That place back there is for rich kids, smart kids, great athletes. You're a Ruettiger.

Rudy's jaw is getting more set.

DANILO

There's nothing wrong with being a Ruettiger. You can have a damn good life. Frank will be taking over Plant 2 in a couple of years and probably be making more money than me and Johnny, you know he's in charge of the new expansion...

Rudy who has been growing more upset finally...

RUDY

(angry)

I don't want to be Frank or Johnny!!

Danilo is stunned by the strength of Rudy's anger.

RUDY

Stop the car...please.

Danilo stares at his son. Finally he pulls the car off the side of the road. Without looking at his father, he jumps out of the cab, pulling his duffel bag after him. The truck pulls off.

EXT - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Rudy, hitchhiking, is picked up by a truck full of produce.

EXT - SOUTH BEND/NOTRE DAME - DAWN

Rudy stares with a grin on his face at the Golden Dome of Sorin Hall catching the early morning sun as it rises above majestic oak trees. He takes off his suit jacket, stuffs it in his duffel bag and pulls out the Notre Dame jacket Ralph gave to him and puts it on.

As Rudy walks, like "paradise found", the picturesque campus reveals itself to him in it's full splendor; the intense green of the wide lawns laced with undulating walkways, the slate blue twin lakes, dotted with students in rowboats among swans and ducks, the majestic yellow bricked buildings partly hidden by ivy and blended by the massed greenery of oak, maple, birch, sycamore, and pine, and the awe inspiring grand Gothic cathedral of the Church of Sacred Heart.

EXT - RECTORY - DAY

Rudy walks up the stairs to the office.

INT - FATHER CAVANAUGH'S OFFICE - DAY

Father Cavanaugh is putting on his vestments when Rudy walks in.

RUDY

I really want to hear your idea.

Father Cavanaugh turns and stares at Rudy. (In his suit pants and Notre Dame jacket.)

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Has a month gone by already?

Father Cavanaugh shakes his head as he studies Rudy standing, smiling in front of him. Rudy looks calmer, steadier than the previous night.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Tell me, why is it so important for you to be part of Notre Dame?

Rudy thinks about this for a few beats...

RUDY

Ever since I was a kid I wanted to go to school here. And ever since I was a kid everybody told me it couldn't be done. All my life people have told me what I could do and couldn't do. I've always listened and believed what they said. I don't want to do that anymore.

Father Cavanaugh is thinking as he holds his look on Rudy. Finally...

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Holy Cross Junior College across the street. I can only promise you one semester. Make grades and you get another one, then maybe with a high enough G.P.A. you might have an outside chance of getting in to Notre Dame.

Rudy grins and sticks out his hand.

RUDY

I'll take it.

But Father Cavanaugh is already moving toward the door.

FATHER CAVANUAGH

I have a class to teach.

RUDY

Thank you, Father, I won't let you down.

But Father Cavanaugh is out the door.

EXT - CAMPUS - DAY

Rudy, lighter than air, walks across campus, a grin on his face as he nods to students passing by as if he's one of them.

We're on Rudy's face as he finally reaches the final Mecca of his pilgrimage. His mouth drops open as he sees...

EXT - STADIUM - DAY

The magnificent reddish yellow bricked bowl, NOTRE DAME STADIUM - "Home of Legends, Place of Dreams".

Rudy, still pulling his duffel behind him, walks transfixed toward the stadium. Seeing a gate slightly ajar, he squeezes through and walks down a walkway into...

INT - TUNNEL - DAY

We stay with Rudy and his awestruck expression as he emerges from the darkness...

INT - STADIUM - DAY

RUDY'S POV

The awesome splendor of the grand yellow bricked bowl.

Rudy drops his duffel, walks to the goal post, kneels down and feels the grass.

FORTUNE

Hey, kid. Not supposed to be here.

Rudy, as if awakened from a dream, looks up and sees FORTUNE, a fiftyish heavy set black man in work clothes. Rudy stands and looks around again.

RUDY

This place is really...something else, huh?

Fortune stares at Rudy stone faced.

RUDY

One day I'm going to be running out of that tunnel onto this field.

Fortune studies Rudy, black suit, duffel bag and all.

FORTUNE

Well, it's not going to be this day.

RUDY
I'm here to play football for the
Irish.

FORTUNE
Coach Parseghian know about it?

RUDY
Not yet.

FORTUNE
Maybe you best tell him first.

RUDY
Yeah, you're right, that's what I
should do.

Rudy picks up his duffel turns and waves to Fortune.

RUDY
Thanks.

Fortune, shaking his head, stares after Rudy as he disappears
into the tunnel.

INT - ARA PARSEGHIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

In the outer office Rudy walks up to desk manned by Ara's
secretary FRAN.

FRAN
Can I help you?

RUDY
I'm here to see Coach Parseghian.

Fran suspiciously eyes this strange vision in front of her.

FRAN
Is he expecting you?

Through a crack in the door Rudy spies Ara in his office, on the
phone.

RUDY
Well, no, but I really need to talk
to him.

FRAN
About what?

RUDY
Being a part of Notre Dame football.

Rudy sees Ara put down the phone.

RUDY

It will only take a minute.

Rudy walks past Fran's desk towards Ara's office. Fran jumps up to stop him.

FRAN

You can't...

But Rudy is already in the door. Ara, leaning back in his chair behind a desk looks up, surprised, as Rudy enters the room. Fran follows him in.

FRAN

...come in here. Coach, I tried...

Ara staring at Rudy calmly holds his hand up.

ARA

I've got it. How can I help you son?

RUDY

Rudy Ruettiger.

Rudy reaches out to shake Ara's hand. Ara hesitates then reluctantly takes it.

RUDY

I'd like to talk to about playing football here at Notre Dame.

Ara stares at Rudy, taking in his crazed look and odd appearance.

ARA

Our walk-ons tryout day was two weeks ago.

RUDY

Oh, not this year, maybe next spring.

Ara leans forward.

ARA

Are you a student here?

RUDY

I'm at Holy Cross now. But I'm going to be. You see, I've loved Notre Dame since I can remember. I've kept statistics on the football team from 1960 until today. I started at cornerback in high school, I wasn't the quickest guy on the field but I led the team in tackles and my coach told me I was an inspiration because I worked harder than anybody else.

(more)

RUDY (Cont'd)

I've been working at a steel mill saving my money and planning to come here. My friend Ralph, he believed in my dream and told me not to waste anymore time. He died in a terrible accident on Friday, I just came from his funeral...

Ara, who has been growing increasingly concerned as this speech lurches all over the map, stands up walks over to Rudy. He starts leading toward the door.

ARA

(speaking gently)
Son, I think you're in the wrong office.

RUDY

What do you mean?

ARA

You might want to talk Father Cavanaugh over at the Rectory.

RUDY

Oh, I already have. He's the one who got me in Holy Cross.

Ara has Rudy at the door.

ARA

He did?

RUDY

Yeah, and he said if my grades are good enough, and they will be, I'll be an official student here.

Rudy reaches out and shakes Ara's hand again.

RUDY

Thanks. See you at practice.

Ara nods, a puzzled look on his face. Rudy waves, grabs his duffel, and rushes out the door.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

A long fence covered with green plastic canvas hides the sightline but not the sounds of the Notre Dame football team being put through their paces. Rudy pleads with a young, officious STUDENT MANAGER, guarding a closed gate.

STUDENT MANAGER

All practices are closed.

RUDY
But I know Coach Parseghian.

STUDENT MANAGER
Sorry.

Suddenly there is a whistle, the collective roar of "team", and the gates swing open. The team, in their practice jerseys come running through the gate. Rudy, in awe, steps back. We see for the first time the enormous size discrepancy between Rudy and the players.

Rudy spots Ara walking out and tries to cross the tide of the moving stream of players to reach him. He is accidentally BLASTED to the ground by GREG BOULAC, a black defensive backs coach.

COACH BOULAC
Jesus Christ!

Coach Boulac reaches down and helps Rudy to his feet.

RUDY
Sorry.

COACH BOULAC
Don't try and run with the big boys, kid.

RUDY
Oh, I'm going to. You'll see me soon.

Coach Boulac shakes his head and runs after his players. Rudy chases down Ara. The coach is talking to JOE YANTO, a grizzled defensive line coach.

RUDY
Hey, Coach, how are you doing?

Ara turns around, wondering who this person is.

RUDY
I'll be trying out for the team next year.

Ara finally recognizes Rudy.

ARA
We'll see you then. Could you excuse us?

Ara turns back to Coach Yanto.

RUDY
Meanwhile, if there's anything I can do to help the team?

Ara continues to ignore Rudy as he walks away.

EXT - NOTRE DAME STADIUM - DAWN

A garbage truck drives up to the front entrance of the stadium. Rudy, dressed in a grey maintenance outfit, jumps out of the truck, runs down to the locked gate and slides through.

EXT - FIELD - DAWN

Fortune is hand seeding the field when Rudy runs out to him. Fortune turns and frowns at him.

FORTUNE

What'd I tell you about trespassing?

RUDY

I need your help.

Fortune goes back to work as Rudy follows him.

FORTUNE

Why should I help you?

RUDY

I want to be your assistant.

FORTUNE

Don't need an assistant.

RUDY

I'll work for free.

Fortune stops and raises an eyebrow.

FORTUNE

What's in it for you?

RUDY

I volunteered to do anything for the football team but they wouldn't let me because...

(hesitates, embarrassed)

...I'm not a student here. But I will be. Anyway, I figured, since I'll be playing here one day, maybe I should get to know the lay of the land...as they say.

Fortune stares at him, perplexed.

FORTUNE

You're nuts.

RUDY

Yeah, people been saying that a lot lately.

FORTUNE

A person has to be nuts to work for nothing.

RUDY

I got another job where I'm getting paid - collecting garbage here on campus.

Rudy beams with pride as Fortune stares at him.

RUDY

I'm just proud to be a part of this university.

Fortune shakes his head, turns and goes back to his seeding.

INT - HOLY CROSS JUNIOR COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A PRIEST is standing before the appropriate charts lecturing on tectonic plates.

PRIEST

The fissures created by glacial pressure and volcanic activity, etc.

Rudy, at a desk, (in his Notre Dame jacket) is taking notes intently. In fact, he's trying to write down every word the priest is uttering. Sitting at a desk in the corner of the room staring at Rudy like he's a lunatic is a large, electric haired boy, DENNY "D-BOB" MCGOWAN. The bell sounds and Rudy continues scribbling away. D-Bob gets up, walks to Rudy and leans over.

D-BOB

You learning stenography or what?

Rudy gives him a don't bug me look.

D-BOB

Everything he's mouthing's in the god-damned book.

RUDY

I've got to make an A in here, alright?

Rudy gathers his stuff stands and walks past D-Bob.

EXT - HALL - DAY

Rudy makes his way down the crowded hall. He stops in front of STUDENT HOUSING bulletin board. He frowns as he reads the monthly fees. A pretty GIRL moves next to him.

GIRL

Are you interested in a room to rent?

RUDY
Well, I'm not sure, but maybe...

GIRL
My brother has a house five blocks
from campus. Only \$200 a month for
a room.

Rudy winces.

From D-Bob's vantage point across the hall: The girl smiles at Rudy and hands him a telephone number. She gives a half wave, turns and leaves. D-Bob makes his way toward Rudy.

D-BOB
You don't have a god-damned clue,
do you?

RUDY
Clue about what?

D-BOB
About how to get that A you seem so
desperate for.

Rudy starts to walk away.

D-BOB
I can help you. Besides being a
sophomore honors student at Notre
Dame and a T.A. in that class, I'm
also a tutor...

Rudy stops and turns to D-Bob.

D-BOB
For hire.

RUDY
(shakes his head)
I can't even afford a room to rent.

D-Bob thinks this over a moment.

D-BOB
Maybe we can make some other kind
of deal.

RUDY
What kind of deal?

D-Bob stares after the pretty girl Rudy was talking to.

D-BOB
Well...

D-Bob thinks about how to say it.

D-BOB
I don't know too many girls around
here and maybe...

RUDY
Maybe what?

D-BOB
You could introduce me...

RUDY
I don't know anybody around here
either.

D-BOB
(shrugs)
Well, so be it.

D-Bob turns to walk away.

RUDY
Maybe, I might know some around here.
In fact, I do, I know a bunch of
girls. I'd just have to find them.

D-Bob turns back.

D-BOB
That's the spirit.

He shakes Rudy's hand.

RUDY
(shaking his head)
Me. Girls. That's funny.

D-BOB
As you can see - I'm god-damned
desperate.

EXT - NOTRE DAME AND ST. MARY'S CAMPUS - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

A series of shots showing Rudy going up to a number of attractive girls (in interesting campus locales) and attempting conversations. He is laughably inept and he is continually rebuffed. Finally, out of desperation, he approaches a homely girl sitting by herself in the cafeteria. She (ELZA) turns and smiles as...

INT - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Rudy and D-Bob are seated next to each other.

D-BOB
I'm not that god-damned desperate.

RUDY
I'm just not very good with girls.

D-BOB
What are you good at?

RUDY
I'm not sure yet.

D-Bob studies Rudy a moment. Finally shrugging...

D-BOB
Well, I guess it wouldn't be fair
to base this deal on results
only...You'll keep trying?

Rudy nods.

D-BOB
Let's have some god-damned standards,
O.K.?

Rudy nods again.

D-BOB
By the way, why is it so important
for you to get good grades?

RUDY
I've got to get into Notre Dame.
I'm going to play football there.

D-Bob reacts, staring at Rudy's diminutive size.

D-BOB
(sarcastic)
I'm so glad I asked.

D-Bob pulls some note papers in front of them.

D-BOB
OK, Gipper, let's get to god-damn
work.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DUSK

Rudy, in workout clothes, sneaks over the fence. We see him in various exercises; tire run, rollover, sled push (which he can't budge), wind sprints and pass patterns. It all looks more like a kid imitating his heroes than the real thing.

EXT/INT - MAINTENANCE ROOM - DAY

Rudy and Fortune enter the maintenance room. Fortune starts accumulating tools.

RUDY

D-Bob said he was suspicious so he made me go to a language lab and take this test. They said I had a slight case of dislexia or something like that, it's like the words are mixed up in your head when you read. So, I've been doing a lot of exercises to get better and...

Rudy grabs Fortune by arm to receive his full undivided attention.

RUDY

(beaming)

Yesterday, I got the first A on a test in my life.

FORTUNE

That's great kid, now grab those routers over there.

Rudy looks around the room for the first time. He sees a cot in the corner next to a shower.

RUDY

Hey, you live here?

FORTUNE

(laughs)

Believe it or not, got my own home. That cot's for when my sciatica acts up.

Rudy scopes out the room further, staring at the windows.

FORTUNE

We got work to do, apprentice.

The two carrying tools exit the room.

RUDY

I forgot one of the routers.

Rudy runs back in the room quickly unlatches one of the windows.

Fortune's POV. He sees him through the crack in the door.

Fortune is looking the other way when Rudy comes running out with his router.

EXT - TUNNEL/STAIRS - DAY

They walk down the tunnel and up the stairs toward the locker room.

FORTUNE
So, you in student housing?

RUDY
Yeah, no. I'm staying with a friend
on camp...in town.

FORTUNE
Pretty low on the funds, huh?

RUDY
All my savings went for tuition,
so...well, anyway, I'm getting by
just fine.

FORTUNE
Uh-hmm.

Rudy's excitement starts to build as they turn the corner to see
a door, a sign over which reads - NOTRE DAME LOCKER ROOM.

As Fortune puts a key in the door Rudy almost starts hopping with
anticipation.

RUDY
So this is it.

FORTUNE
Where it all starts and finishes.

Fortune pushes open the door.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

From Rudy's vantage point it is as if St. Peter had just opened
the pearly gates. He slowly walks inside, his mouth wide open.
(The locker room is the same space the team has been using since
the stadium was built in 1930.) His eye catches a bronze plaque
with an engraved inscription. Rudy's mouth opens as he
reverently reaches up and touches the sign.

RUDY
(reading)
I've got to go Rock, it's alright,
I'm not afraid. Sometime when the
team is up against it, when things
are going wrong and the breaks are
beating the boys. Tell them to go
in there with all they got and win
just one for the Gipper. I don't
know where I'll be then Rock, but
I'll know about it and I'll be
happy.... Wow.

Meanwhile Fortune has been arranging his tools on the floor. Rudy after staring at the bronze plaque for a couple of awestruck moments starts wandering around the locker room chanting names as if part of an incantation.

RUDY

Knute Rockne, Frank Leahy, Moose
Krause, Angelo Bertelli, Johnny
Lujack, Leon Hart, Terry Hanratty,
John Huarte, Jim Seymour, Jack
Snow...

Rudy moves to one of the lockers, touches it.

RUDY

Paul Hornung could have dressed here.

Fortune has been examining the torn seams in the rug, ignoring Rudy.

RUDY

Where's Nick Eddy's locker?

FORTUNE

Time for work.

Rudy grabs a stool, sets it in the center of the room, and stands on it.

RUDY

(imitating the Rockne
speech)

We're going to go, go, go, and we
aren't going to stop until we get
over the goal line. Today is the
day we're going to win, win, win
they can't lick us. What do you say
men?

Fortune stares up at Rudy. Finally, despite himself, he smiles.

INT - LOUNGE - NOTRE DAME STUDENT CENTER - NIGHT

The lounge area is empty with the exception of a lone figure in a chair asleep, an open book in over his head. A OLDER WOMAN walks over and shakes the figure.

WOMAN

It's eleven. Closing time.

Rudy takes the book off his head, gathers himself, stands and exits...

CUT TO:

INT - BASEMENT - STUDENT CENTER - NIGHT

Rudy puts a key into a rental locker, opens it, pulls out his duffel, extracts a few items, stuffs the duffel back, puts a quarter in a slot, takes the key and turns...

CUT TO

EXT - NOTRE DAME STADIUM - NIGHT

Rudy walks up to the ground floor window, stops, looks around, leans over, tests the window, pushes it open, and climbs in.

EXT - NOTRE DAME LIBRARY - DAY

A crisp fall day, the leaves a myriad number of colors, as Rudy and D-Bob exit the library.

D-BOB

By the way, Gipper, here's your gym card.

D-Bob pulls out a laminated card and holds it front of Rudy.

RUDY

(excited)

You did it!

D-Bob doesn't release the card to Rudy.

D-BOB

Remember the deal?

RUDY

I do your laundry for two months.

D-BOB

This was a little harder to get than I anticipated...A semester.

RUDY

A semester?

D-Bob starts to put the card back in his pocket when he sees something in the distance. He stops, grabs Rudy's arm, and points.

D-BOB

Mission.

Rudy turns and sees, sitting behind a folding table with a sign Student Volunteer Activities in front, a pretty, dark curly haired girl, MARY MCDONOUGH.

RUDY

Impossible.

D-BOB

It's your job to give it a shot.

RUDY

Out of our league.

D-BOB

Tell her I'm a Fields - as in
Marshall Fields. Now, go.

Rudy takes a deep breath and then tentatively, reluctantly walks up to Mary. She looks up and smiles. Rudy is instantly gone.

MARY

Are you interested in joining a
student activity?

RUDY

Oh...Yes, absolutely.

Mary hands Rudy a sheet of paper.

MARY

Here are your choices.

Rudy studies the sheet.

MARY

Is there anything on the sheet that
interests you?

RUDY

Oh yeah...everything.

MARY

You're only allowed two choices.

We hear a loud throat clearing from D-Bob. Rudy leans over the table.

RUDY

See that guy over there?

Rudy motions with his shoulder. Mary glances over at D-Bob.

MARY

Yes.

RUDY

Well, he's a...

Rudy hesitates.

MARY

Yes?

RUDY
Jerk...He's, he's...kind of retarded,
so if you could wave, to just kind
of humor him.

Mary looks at Rudy like he's retarded. Nevertheless, she shrugs
and casually waves over at D-Bob. D-Bob waves back
enthusiastically.

RUDY
Thanks.

Mary points to the sheet of paper.

MARY
Well?

Rudy quickly peruses the paper.

RUDY
Choir...I sang in high school and...
(eyes widening)
Football Boosters? What's that?

MARY
We organize pep rallies, paint the
helmets the night before the game,
and do the card section.

RUDY
That's me. Definitely me. Where
do I sign?

MARY
You a Notre Dame student?

Rudy reacts with a start. After recovering...

RUDY
Of course. Don't I look like one?

MARY
We're supposed to ask.

RUDY
I'm Notre Dame gold and blue through
and through.

Rudy grins, bends over and signs his name.

MARY
First meeting for the Boosters is
tomorrow night at the ACC.

RUDY
You're part of it?

MARY
Freshmen co-chair.

RUDY
Great. That's really great.

Rudy stands a moment smiling at the unresponding Mary.
Finally...

RUDY
See you there.

He then turns awkwardly and walks back to an eagerly waiting D-Bob.

D-BOB
Strike?

RUDY
Out.

Rudy turns and starts walking. D-Bob goes with him.

D-BOB
You looked like you were in.

RUDY
She has a boyfriend. Football
player. Quarterback.

Rudy is smiling.

D-BOB
You look awfully goddamned happy
about it.

Rudy, in his own world, ignores him.

INT - WEIGHT ROOM ENTRANCE - DAY

A squinty eyed student manager, DAN DORMAN, is seated behind a desk examining Rudy's card carefully.

DAN
Chris Gardner. (He looks up) Doesn't
look like you.

RUDY
I've lost a lot of weight. I had
mono last year.

Dan stares at Rudy disbelieving, when three football players walk by - DANTE ALARCON, handsome, leonine - STEVE MATEUS, huge, club like arms - ROLAND STEELE, black, small, catlike. Rudy's gaze follows after them as if they were royalty.

DAN

Freshmen. The guy in front, Dante Alarcon, most heavily recruited QB in the country. Ara's counting on him to be the next Theisman.

RUDY

I've heard of him.

DAN

If you ask me though, the guy needs to get cold cocked a few times - bring him down to earth.

Dan hands Rudy the card.

DAN

Have fun.

INT - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Steve Mateus screams out as he bench presses a massive amount of weight, Roland Steele does an endless series of chin-ups, and Dante Alarcon curls barbells. Rudy is following their movements closely trying to hang close, be one with them. When he catches their eyes...

RUDY

(nods)

Hey, how you doing?

The players act if he isn't there. Finally, Rudy can stand it no more. He approaches Dante.

RUDY

I know a good exercise for tricep extensors. Might help strengthen your throwing arm.

Dante looks at Rudy like he's a piece of dirt.

DANTE

Who the fuck asked you?

RUDY

(taken aback)

I was just trying to help.

DANTE

Think I never been in a weight room before?

RUDY

Hey, we might as well be friends I'm going to be a your teammate next year.

DANTE
(laughs)
In your dreams.

Steve walks up to Dante and pushes him.

STEVE
Come on, Prince. We're doing the
circuit in fifteen clicks.

DANTE
Ah, this guy is hassling me.

Steve turns slowly toward Rudy and levels his full 265 pound
glover and points at Dante.

STEVE
Leave "the money" alone. Get it
asswipe?

Rudy's eyes widen as he takes a few steps backward. Roland,
after his five hundredth chin-up finally drops from the bar and
turns around.

ROLAND
(looking younger than Rudy)
Leave the kid alone, he didn't do
nothing.

Steve shrugs and moves on to the next exercise. Rudy tries to
nod his thanks to Roland but the tiny defensive back has already
started to do his first of a thousand push ups.

INT - STEPHAN HALL - NIGHT

A packed hall with gold and blue banners flying, the band
blasting out the Irish Fight Song and the green clad LEPRECHAUN
doing his wild man number. Rudy, wearing an armband - STUDENT
BOOSTER - around his everpresent Notre Dame jacket holds one end
of a rope near the main stage. He is brimming with excitement
as the leprechaun runs to the microphone...

LEPRECHAUN
Let me introduce the No. One team
in the UPI, the AP, and in your
hearts. Youuuuuurrrrrrr Fighting
Irish!

The students go wild as The King (Ara) his Consorts (assistant
coaches) and his Gladiators (the team) emerge from the dressing
room. The royal procession marches through the roped lane past
an awestruck Rudy and then on to the basketball court.

RUDY
Hey, Steve...Roland...Dante.

As the last player passes Rudy, he drops the rope and starts applauding. He sees Mary pulling the rope in and runs over to help her.

RUDY
Isn't this fantastic?

MARY
What's your name again?

RUDY
Rudy Ruettiger.

MARY
I need your student ID to get your card section pass.

RUDY
I...I don't have it with me, but I will have...later.

MARY
By ten o'clock tonight.

RUDY
Yeah, fine.

LEPRECHAUN (V.O.)
...the greatest coach in the country...Ara Parseghian!

Rudy turns around torn between Mary and Ara.

RUDY
Let's go listen to Coach.

MARY
I got work to do.

RUDY
I'll help you...after Coach speaks.

Rudy grins at Mary turns and runs toward the floor.

INT - EQUIPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

We follow down an assembly line of student volunteers and managers, removing the face gear from football helmets, scrubbing them down, putting on masking tape, spraying with a brilliantine gold paint, laying them on a dryer board and finally (Rudy) buffing and polishing the surface to a high sheen. Rudy is quit thrilled with his participation in this ritual. He sees Mary, sets the helmet on a finished product rack and walks over to her

RUDY
(not looking her in the eye)
I've lost my ID.

MARY
Then you can't be in the card section
tomorrow.

RUDY
Can't you let it slide, just this
once?

MARY
It's the rules, sorry. Next game.

Rudy looks crestfallen.

MARY
You coming to Gorby's? It's where
we all go after we're through here.

RUDY
(brightens)
Oh, thanks, I'll be there.

INT - GORBY'S - NIGHT

A Notre Dame hangout packed to the rafters. Rudy, holding two
beers, fights his way through the crowd until he reaches Mary
and her group. He offers her one of the beers.

MARY
I'm not 21.

RUDY
I'm sorry...

Mary stares at Rudy holding the beers.

RUDY
I'm 22. I took some time off after
high school, traveling, working, you
know the usual...

Mary looks at Rudy, expressionless.

RUDY
It's awfully loud in here. Maybe
we could go down the street to
Malone's Pub. I'll...buy you dinner.

MARY
(half attention)
I don't think so.

Rudy is struggling to make conversation.

RUDY
What's your major?

MARY
(looking elsewhere)
Journalism.

Mary's eyes brighten as she looks over Rudy's shoulder. Rudy turns around to see "the Prince" - Dante, walking toward them and almost past them until...

RUDY
Hey, Dante, how's it going?

Dante stops and looks at Rudy like "who the hell are you"?

RUDY
(trying to impress them
both)
Want you to meet a good friend of
mine, Mary McDonough - Dante Alarcon.

And they are both impressed - with each other.

MARY
How do you two know each other?

RUDY
We were working out together at the
weight room.

Dante gives him a look of disdainful recognition.

RUDY
Dante's a freshman quarterback...

MARY
Who passed for over three thousand
yards his senior year at Wilkes Barre
High School. Was named Pennsylvania
Player of the Year twice. Is out
for his freshmen year because of an
Achilles tendon tear which explains
why he's in here the night before
the game.

DANTE
How did you know all that?

MARY
I'm the world's biggest Notre Dame
football fan.

RUDY
Hey, I thought I was...

DANTE
Actually, I'm having dinner with my
brother and his wife over in the
corner. Would you like to join us?

MARY

Sure.
 (turns to Rudy)
 See you later.

And before Rudy can even reply, they are gone. He sadly looks after them, drinks his beer down, picks the other up, turns and walks away.

LATER

Rudy sitting alone at the bar; he's had a beer or three too many.

RUDY

(to the bartender)
 Is that Bob Gladieux over there?

BARTENDER.

Another beer?

RUDY

Oh, sure. He was a great one, wasn't he? Remember in 1966 against Michigan State?

The bartender is not even close to listening to him. Mary walks by.

RUDY

Hey, Mary, Mary quite contrary.

She stops, surprised at his condition.

MARY

Are you alright?

RUDY

(slurry, wobbly)
 I'm great...really. I just wanted to say...It's great working with you.

MARY

Thanks.

RUDY

You said you were the biggest Notre Dame football in the world. It's funny, I thought I was. So we have that in common...

Mary nods and starts to leave.

RUDY

In fact, I'm going to be playing for the Irish next fall. I've talked to Coach Parseghian about it and...you see,
 (more)

RUDY (Cont'd)

I'm at Holy Cross for a semester, maybe two. Father Cavanaugh promised if I made grades I'll have a good chance of getting in and, so far, for the first time in my life my grades have been great so...

MARY

You aren't a student at Notre Dame?

RUDY

(oh shit)

Well...not officially, but next semester, for sure...

MARY

Then you can't be part of the Boosters.

RUDY

Come on, Mary, just pretend I didn't tell you. You know how much of a tremendous fan...

MARY

It's the rules.

Mary turns and disappears through the throngs. Rudy, his face in pain, turns back to the bar.

RUDY

Damn.

BARTENDER

Another beer?

Rudy nods, resigned.

EXT - STADIUM - NIGHT

Rudy wobbles across the parking lot toward the maintenance room entrance.

RUDY

(mumbling)

Stupid. Stupid. Who the hell am I kidding?

Rudy reaches the window. It's latched shut.

RUDY

Damn.

Rudy reaches in to his jacket and pulls out a knife. He kneels down, almost falling. He fumbles to fit the blade in the slot and after a few misses pops the latch.

RUDY

Thank you.

Rudy yanks the window open and in the process, SHATTERS one of the panes. He looks around quickly, holding his breath. Finally, he slides through the opened window and we hear another CRASH.

INT - MAINTENENCE ROOM - MORNING

On a comatose Rudy bundled in one corner of his cot. THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! Rudy jumps to an upright position. He tries to clear his head and orient himself. Rising, he crosses the room and looks out the glassless window pane.

Rudy's POV: The band, in street clothes, is rehearsing in the parking lot.

A look of wonder comes over Rudy's face.

RUDY

Game day.

EXT - STADIUM - MORNING

Like a battalion marching to war, a massed column of Notre Dame football players (in street clothes) move toward the stadium. Several hundred fans, most of them kids, yell encouragement as the team forms a single file to enter the locker room. Young boys swarm the team, looking for autographs. Rudy stands off to one side looking at awe at these larger than life gladiators.

LATER:

Game day. All the color, pomp and circumstance of the most tradition rich college football program in the country. Alumni, students, the band, all primed and pumped for the first game of the 1972 season, stream into the stadium or stand outside in large festive groups. Wandering among these well scrubbed ebullient masses is Rudy. He looks disheveled and a bit frantic as he holds a ten dollar bill in one hand.

RUDY

One ticket. One ticket. Please, anybody.

He may as well be invisible until...

A hand grabs him by the shoulder.

POLICEMAN

Number one, ten bucks' about ninety short of what you need, number two, anybody shows up here with a ticket is not looking to sell, and number three, scalpin's against the law.

Rudy starts to say something, decides against it, and nods.

CUT TO:

There are only a few people outside of the stadium now as we hear the rising and falling roar of the fans, the thumping sound of the band, and the sonorous sound of the P.A.'s player introductions. Rudy's eyes are darting around, as he desperately tries to figure out a way in. Suddenly, he spots a few program vendors going in a special entrance.

CUT TO:

PROGRAM GUY

Who are you?

Rudy stands beseechingly in back of a truck loaded programs.

RUDY

Well, I thought...

PROGRAM GUY

You Sheldon?

RUDY

Ah...yeah. That's me.

PROGRAM GUY

Where the hell you been?

Program Guy shoves a stack of programs at Rudy.

CUT TO:

INT - UPPER TUNNEL - STADIUM

Rudy, programs under his arm, takes a deep breath as he is about to enter his first Notre Dame football game.

INT - STADIUM - DAY

Rudy's POV: Stepping from the darkness into the light, the sights and sounds explode with brightness and intensity; the packed vibrating sea of fans, the bands, the cheerleaders, the leprechaun and the football teams, Notre Dame and Purdue, as the line up for the opening kickoff.

SPECTATOR

Hey, program, I'll take one.

But Rudy is in a near trance as he ignores the program requests and descends the stairs toward the field.

On the field Purdue kicks off to Notre Dame.

RADIO (V.O.)

Eric Penick receives the ball deep in the end zone. He decides to bring it out. The Irish set up a picket fence on the right side. Penick finds a seam, he breaks into the open. He has one man to beat! He's on the 40, 30, 20, 10 - Touchdown Irish!

Programs go flying up in the air as Rudy cheers wildly. He grabs a equally excited spectator next to him as a cannon fires.

SHOTS

Rudy being yelled at by Program Guy as he returns his nearly full complement of programs.

With a purple-orange fall dusk as a backdrop Rudy sits on the top row staring out into an empty stadium.

In the middle of campus Rudy, sits under a light reading, as the sounds of revelry echo around him. He looks at his watch, closes his book, and stands up.

Rudy crosses the parking lot outside the stadium until he reaches the window again. The shattered pane is covered with plywood. Rudy gently unlatches the window, pushes it open and climbs in.

INT - MAINTENANCE ROOM - LIGHT

Rudy strikes a lighter to get his bearings. As his eyes adjust he looks down and sees on the cot - two blankets and a key. He picks up the key, crosses the room to the door, opens it quietly, tries the key in the lock and, for the first time since the touchdown runback, smiles.

INT - STADIUM - DAY

Fortune and Rudy set wheelbarrows full of sod down on the field. Fortune pulls a sod patch off the top and starts to go to work. Rudy looks around the stadium again and...

RUDY

Fortune, you see Eric Penick's kickoff return?

FORTUNE

Nope.

RUDY

He broke free right about here.

Rudy pretending like he's holding a ball starts to run to run down the field.

RUDY

And Penick breaks a tackle. He's off to the races. Can anybody catch him? No, he's on the 40, 30, 20, 10, touchdown!

Rudy, in the end zone, holds up his hands signaling a touchdown.

FORTUNE

Hey, we got work to do.

Rudy runs back.

RUDY

Ever see a game here?

FORTUNE

Nope.

RUDY

Then your first game will be when you come to see me play.

FORTUNE

If you say so, kid. Now, you gonna watch me or help me?

Rudy gets down and starts tamping new sod into the ground.

RUDY

Fortune...thanks for the blankets and the key...

FORTUNE

Don't know nothing about it.

RUDY

Well then...

FORTUNE

(glaring at him)
You hear what I just said?

Rudy stares at Fortune, then nods. Rudy smiles to himself as he goes back to work.

EXT - CAMPUS - DAY

A cold winter day. Father Cavanaugh and Rudy walk down a sidewalk a framed by a webwork of leafless frozen branches.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

I'm proud of you. I know how hard you had to work for those grades.

RUDY
Father, do you think I'm going to
get in?

FATHER CAVANAUGH
(shrugs)
Hard to say. I'm not on the
admissions committee.

RUDY
Is there anything else can I do?

FATHER CAVANAUGH
See the Grotto over there?

Father Cavanaugh points to the beautiful shrine.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Light a candle.

CUT TO:

INT - GROTTTO - DAY

Rudy stuffs a dollar bill into a box, lights a candle and kneels

EXT - STUDENT CENTER - DAY

Rudy, pulling a letter out of his mail slot, holding his breath,
opening the letter, as his face falls.

EXT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

Rudy, carrying a small bag, walks up the snow covered sidewalk.
He hesitates, staring up at his house (Christmas lights decorate
the exterior), before he walks up the front steps.

INT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

Rudy steps inside, his face flushed. A passel of his younger
brothers and sisters playing around a Christmas tree hop up
screaming and hug him. Frank and Danilo sitting in the den
sipping beer and watching a football game on TV, look up. Danilo
immediately turns back to the set.

MARK (7)
Where you been for so long?

RUDY
Going to college at Holy Cross. It's
in South Bend.

BERNIE (9)

Brian took over your side of the room.

There's a momentary hurt look on Rudy's face.

MARK

Don't be mad, Rudy.

RUDY

I'm not, champ.

Rudy looks up and sees Frank staring at him. Frank looks away.

MARK

If you're going to Holy Christ how come you got that Notre Dame jacket on?

RUDY

Because I'm going to school there next year.

MARK

Then that's where I'm going, too.

BERNIE

Yeah, right.

Rudy pats Mark on the shoulder, walks into the den and over to his father. Rudy pulls out a sheet of paper and hands it to Danilo.

RUDY

Three A's and three B's.

Danilo looks at the grade report surprised. He looks up at Rudy.

DANILO

Good for you.

Danilo hands the paper back to Rudy.

DANILO

How long you gonna be home? Staying for dinner?

FRANK

He's got hell of a surprise if he does.

Rudy looks at Frank, puzzled.

RUDY

Well, of course, I'll be here for dinner...so what do you think of my grades?

FRANK

We're all proud as punch. Now, we got Bears and Lions, tie game, five minutes to go, alright?

Rudy is not going to let his moment go. He kneels down next to his father angling himself away from Frank.

RUDY

I wasn't able to get into Notre Dame this semester but if I keep this up I'm in next year for sure.

Danilo is watching the game now.

DANILO

I hope you get what you want.

RUDY

I'll be trying out for the team next fall.

Danilo's eyes narrow as he stares at the television set.

RUDY

I saw every home game this season. I thought about you every minute I was there, about how much you would love it.

A play on the television game causes Danilo to groan.

DANILO

(to Frank)

I thought Hill had good hands.

FRANK

He was bumped. Bad no call.

RUDY

You've got to come over for a game. It's the most exciting thing you can ever imagine. And...I can get you a ticket.

DANILO

(still not looking at him)

Watching the games here on TV's just fine.

RUDY

It's not the same....

(takes a breath)

Would you come to a game if I were playing?

FRANK
(disgusted)
Jesus, we still have to hear this
crap...

RUDY
I wasn't talking to you.

FRANK
A semester of junior college sure
hasn't made you any smarter.

Danilo finally turns to his son.

DANILO
I'm glad you made you made good
grades...

Danilo turns back to the television set. Rudy stands as he hears
the front door opening and...

FRANK
Here's your surprise, Rudy.

Rudy turns around and sees...

His brother Johnny and Sherry, holding hands.

All three of them stand awkwardly as others silently observe
their reactions. Johnny lets go of Sherry's hand, walks over
and shakes Rudy's hand.

JOHNNY
How you doing, Rudy?

RUDY
(in shock)
Fine.

JOHNNY
I just want to tell you - you going
to college, well...I think it's
great.

RUDY
Thanks, Johnny.

JOHNNY
(directed toward his father
and Frank)
Some of us never had the guts or the
support to pull it off.

A direct hit as Frank and Danilo turn back to the television set

JOHNNY
(to Sherry)
I'll be in the kitchen.

Johnny pats Rudy on the shoulder and exits the room. Rudy stares at a still frozen Sherry then walks past her into the hallway. He puts his jacket on.

SHERRY

Rudy...

She follows him.

RUDY

I've got to get back. My job.

SHERRY

I'm sorry. I should of told you.

RUDY

Doesn't matter. You don't owe me anything.

Rudy puts his hand on the door.

SHERRY

You may not believe me but...I hope you make it. I really do.

RUDY

Thanks, Sherry.

Rudy glances into the den. Both Frank and Danilo are watching them. They turn away. Rudy pushes the front door open and exits. Frank stands, crosses the room, and watches Rudy running down the street.

EXT\INT CAMPUS - SHOTS

Rudy:

Singing in the choir -

Helping Fortune line the field -

Studying with D-Bob, who points out a girl to him -

Working out in the weightroom, running -

Passing out flyers -

EXT - NOTRE DAME BOOKSTORE - DAY

Rudy and D-Bob come out of the bookstore. Rudy looks exhausted.

D-BOB

God damn, how do you have time to sleep? And by the way, where in the hell do you sleep?

RUDY
I need more extra activities.

Rudy spots a large sign reading - BOOKSTORE BENGAL BOUTS.

RUDY
What are Bengal Bouts?

D-BOB
It's an open boxing tournament, blood
and guts kind of thing.

RUDY
Who's it for?

D-BOB
No god-damned ideas, Notre Dame
students only.

RUDY
Don't worry. I'm not much of a boxer
anyway.

D-BOB
It's nothing but an exercise in
macho. Most of the football team's
in on it. Keeps their testosterone
level up during off-season.

A new look appears in Rudy's eyes.

D-BOB
Oh shit, I misspoke.

SHOTS

Rudy hitting a punching bag, skipping rope, trying to get the
rhythm of a speed bag, running.

EXT - BOOKSTORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Temporary lights illuminate a boxing ring. About five hundred
spectators are urging on a pair of inept students flailing away
at each other. One finally drops to the ground and the referee
raises the hand of his opponent. The crowd cheers and laughs.

Much of the Notre Dame football team sit in one section hooting
and hollering (we see Dante, Steve, and Roland among them). The
team's boxing monitors, grizzled defensive line coach Joe Yanto
and backs coach Greg Boulac roam behind the officials tables,
notebooks in hand.

RING ANNOUNCER
Next bout in the 170 lb. class,
Spyrdon Stratigos, freshman punter
vs. Chris Gardner, unaffiliated.

D-Bob takes an old bathrobe off Rudy as he walks toward the ring. He looks slightly ridiculous in a baggy pair of gym shorts.

D-BOB

The only goddamned thing you have to fear is fear itself.

RUDY

Who's afraid?

D-BOB

Me. For you.

Rudy climbs in the ring.

OFFICIAL

(Weight room manager, Dan Dorman)

So Gardner, you been a weight pumping maniac for this? If you ask me, you're out of your league here.

RUDY

I didn't ask you.

Rudy nods as he watches his opponent climb in the ring. Stratigos, curly haired, stocky, waves dramatically to his football teammates. Clearly, he's in the ring as a lark.

The bell CLANGS.

Rudy charges Stratigos and unleashes a flurry of blows. Few punches land but the fury of the attack stuns and surprises Rudy's foe. He grabs Rudy in a clinch, already out of breath. He waves to his fans again as Dorman breaks them up. Stratigos then gathers himself and unleashes a barrage of effective and well placed punches. Rudy drops to the canvas. The team goes wild.

As Stratigos parades around the ring, Rudy jumps up to his feet. He has blood coming out his nose as the Dorman approaches him.

DORMAN

You ready to quit?

But Rudy is already half way across the ring. He starts pummeling Stratigos with non-stop punches, a man possessed. Stratigos tries to clinch but can't. Rudy gasping for breath, and wearing down, keeps coming at him, unorthodox style and all. The relentless rain of blows starts to discombobulate Stratigos until finally, after a futile effort to mount a counterattack, he collapses in the center of the ring.

DORMAN

(to Stratigos)

You want to go on?

Stratigos shakes his head. As Dorman raises Rudy's hand his teammates unleash a round of boos.

DORMAN

It's a good thing you drew a kicker in the first round. If you ask me you should quit while you're still in one piece.

RUDY

I didn't ask you.

As Rudy descends from the ring Coach Yanto stares at him. They catch eyes and Yanto gives Rudy a respectful nod. Rudy is beaming when D-Bob throws the robe over his shoulders.

D-BOB

Whose the goddamned wild man now?

Suddenly, stepping out in front of Rudy, holding a notebook, is Mary.

MARY

That was impressive, Rudy.

D-Bob, excited to see such a pretty girl actually talk to Rudy, nudges him.

RUDY

Thanks. This is D...

D-BOB

(stepping in, hand out)
Dennis Robert McGowan.

Mary quickly shakes his hand as she turns to Rudy again.

MARY

I'm working for the The Observer.
My assignment is to write a
background color article.

RUDY

That's great.

D-BOB

I'm kind of an colorful guy.

MARY

(ignoring D-Bob)
Tell me Mr. Gardner, are you
officially a student here?

Damn. Rudy closes his eyes and shakes his head.

D-BOB

Oh, that kind of color.

RUDY
You're not going to write anything
are you?

MARY
I think it would make a great story
- a guy going to Holy Cross who
pretends to be a Notre Dame student.

D-BOB
Nailed.

MARY
I'm sorry Rudy, I believe in playing
by the rules.

Rudy, dejected nods...

RUDY
I've got to shower.

Rudy moves off.

D-BOB
Nice to meet you, perhaps...

MARY
(to Rudy's back)
I like the way you fought, Rudy.

Mary turns and walks away. D-Bob, mouth open, runs to catch up
with Rudy.

D-BOB
She's goddamned wild about me.

Rudy is silent.

D-BOB
Look at this way, Gipper, you get
to retire unscratched and undefeated.

Rudy keeps walking, head down.

SHOTS

Rudy watching spring practice -

Studying in the library with D-Bob -

Putting up pictures of Ralph and his family next to his bed in
the maintenance room -

Helping female students build a float -

Introducing one of them to D-Bob - failure again -

More weight lifting, running...

EXT - GROTTTO - DAY

Father Cavanaugh walks with Rudy.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
All B's and an A?

RUDY
I know my grades went down a little,
but I had eight different extra
ciricular activities.

FATHER CAVANAUGH
Good job, my boy. Those admissions
people, they're a funny bunch. Never
can tell.

RUDY
Have I done all I can?

Father Cavanaugh points to the grotto.

Rudy stuffs a five dollar bill in the box.

He kneels before five lit candles.

INT - STUDENT MAIL CENTER - DAY

Rudy grabs the letter from his box, looks skyward as if in
prayer, takes a deep breath, and rips it open.

Close on Rudy's face as he absorbs the blow. He collapses to
his knees, his head dropping to the ground.

INT - STADIUM - DAY

Fortune is taking a break on one of the benches as Rudy comes
walking over, shoulders hunched, completely dejected.

RUDY
Total failure. Everything I did,
the work, the studying, four hours
a night sleep in a dungeon...for
nothing.

Fortune sips on a coke, not very concerned.

RUDY
I've blown another year of
eligibility.

Rudy sits on the bench scrunching up his face in worry.

RUDY
This whole year's been a waste.

FORTUNE
(shaking his head in
disgust)

Waste? You got your head so far up
your ass about that damn football
team you don't get the fact you just
got one year of top quality
education. Waste. Don't be wasting
my time.

Fortune stands and walks away. Rudy looks after him, surprised
at the outburst.

FALL SEMESTER 1973

SHOTS

Rudy, still trying, his work, studies, classroom, weights,
running, D-Bob, Fortune, the girls, he watches Mary the reporter
at an Ara press conference.

After a victory in the Sugar Bowl, the players carry Coach
Parseghian off the field - Rudy is in the stands cheering. A
large banner reads NOTRE DAME - 1973 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS.

Father Cavanaugh points again to the grotto.

This time Rudy stuffs a \$10 in the offering box and...

Kneels before 10 lit candles.

Rudy, a letter in his hand, slams his fist repeatedly into the
wall.

SPRING SEMESTER 1974

MORE SHOTS

Rudy not giving up, doing more of the same until...

EXT - GROTTTO - DUSK

Rudy is kneeling before what look to be about fifty lit candles.

FATHER CAVANAUGH (V.O.)
How much did this conflagration cost
you?

Rudy turns around to see Father Cavanaugh standing over him, a
concerned look on his face.

RUDY
I'm desperate.

Rudy stands. He does look desperate.

RUDY

If I don't get in next semester, it's over, done. Notre Dame doesn't take senior transfers.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Well, you've done a hell of a job trying to chase down your dream.

RUDY

I don't care what kind of job I've done. If it doesn't produce the results it doesn't mean anything.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Oh, I think you'll discover it will.

Rudy looks back at the hundreds of burning candles.

RUDY

Maybe I haven't prayed enough.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

I'm sure that's not been a problem. Praying is something we do in our time, the answers come in God's time. Now go home, relax.

Father Cavanaugh grabs Rudy by the arm and starts walking him away from the altar.

RUDY

Is there anything else I can do? Can you help me...

FATHER CAVANAUGH

Son, in the thirty five years of my life devoted to religious studies I've come up with only two hard, incontrovertible facts...

Rudy turns to Father Cavanaugh.

FATHER CAVANAUGH

There is a God...I'm not him.

Rudy looks at him, perplexed, then he smiles.

INT - STUDENT MAIL CENTER - DAY

Rudy snatches the letter from the box. He stares at it, unable to breathe, unable to open it.

EXT - TWIN LAKES - DAY

Rudy sits on a bench next to the picturesque oval shaped lake. Boaters share the crystal clean waters with swans and ducks.

Rudy takes a deep breath, closes his eyes and opens the letter.

RUDY

I promise, I'll never ask for anything ever again.

He opens his eyes and we see his reaction. He SCREAMS exultantly. He jumps up, WHOOPS, and dives into the water. Birds, ducks, and boaters scatter.

INT - STEELWORKS POWER PLANT - DAY

Rudy, his hair matted down, his clothes in damp disarray, marches, beaming, past the steaming boilers and sweat covered workers. He reaches the door with the sign CONTROL ROOM and pushes it open.

INT - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Danilo and his co-workers are startled when Rudy bursts through the door.

DANILO

(alarmed)

What's wrong?

With a big smile on his face Rudy walks up to his father and sticks the letter in front of him.

RUDY

Read it.

Danilo stares at Rudy like he's crazy. He puts his reading glasses on nonetheless.

DANILO

(reading)

Congratulations. You have been admitted to Notre Dame Uni...

Danilo looks up at Rudy, shocked.

RUDY

I did it.

DANILO

(nodding)

You did it.

They hold a stare. Danilo masks most of his considerable emotion.

DANILO
(to his co-workers)
Hey, my son is going to Notre Dame.

His co-workers surround Rudy and congratulate him. Rudy spots Frank seated at a control panel staring at him. Rudy makes his way through the workers crossing to Frank. He holds the acceptance letter in front of him.

RUDY
Can you believe it?

Frank barely glances at the letter. His face is full of conflicting emotions. Finally...

FRANK
I guess...congratulations.

He turns back to his work. Rudy stares at Frank for a moment before he turns and walks back to his father.

DANILO
You got a little more stuff in you than I thought.

RUDY
Now it's time to play football.

Rudy just blew the moment with his father.

DANILO
Just be happy for what you got.

RUDY
It's not enough.

Danilo shakes his head.

DANILO
I just don't understand.

RUDY
You will, I promise, you will.

Rudy puts on his game face as he holds a look with his father.

EXT - ARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Rudy paces outside the ACC. When he sees Ara, briefcase in hand head toward the parking lot, he runs over to intercept him.

RUDY
Hey coach, remember me, Rudy Ruettiger?

Ara stops and stares at Rudy.

ARA
Sure, how are you doing?

RUDY
Great. I'm finally, officially a student at Notre Dame.

ARA
Congratulations.

Ara nods at Rudy and continues on his way to his car. Rudy follows.

RUDY
And like I told you two years ago, I'm going to be trying out for the team.

Ara reaches his car and opens the door.

RUDY
August 24, right?

Ara turns around.

ARA
How tall are you?

RUDY
5'7".

ARA
You're more like 5'6" and weigh about 160, 165. You probably run the 40 in about 5 flat. We recruit players who are 6'5", weigh about 250 and run the 40 in 4.6. Why would you want to compete with these kind of players?

RUDY
I read where you said that "the primary value of competition is the opportunity to overcome obstacles".

ARA
I was referring to...

Ara thrown off kilter, stares at Rudy.

ARA
I just want you to look at the situation realistically. Even if we found a place in practice for you, the chance that you would ever dress for a game, much less play a down for us would be somewhere between slim and none.

RUDY

All I want is a chance.

ARA

You got that. Good luck.

Ara climbs in his car.

RUDY

Hey, Coach...

Ara looks up.

RUDY

See you at practice.

Ara nods and pulls his door shut.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dan Dorman, the former weight room monitor, reads a list.

DAN

Rudy Ruettiger? I thought you were
Chris Gardner.

A beaming Rudy holds his arms out. Dan shrugs and hands him
pants, pads, and helmet.

DAN

Well whoever you are, if you ask me,
you're wasting your time and maybe
your body.

RUDY

(grinning)
I didn't ask you.

Rudy turns heads toward the dressing room.

DAN

Hold it.

Rudy turns back around.

DAN

Walk-ons dress in the girls softball
locker.

Dan gets great pleasure out of telling Rudy this.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Rudy, in uniform, looking like he has been called up from the
Pop Warner Football League, bounces anxiously as Coach Boulac
(black, d.b.

coach) paces in front of about forty various sized and shaped walk-ons. The regular team, in different colored uniforms practice on the main practice field in the b.g.

COACH BOULAC

Let me tell it to you as clean as I can. We have 95 players here so accomplished as athletes in high school we gave them full scholarships to the best football program in the country. NCAA regulations allow us to dress just 60 for home games, which means at least 35 scholarship players are going to be watching from the stands. So, if any of you has any fantasies about running out of the stadium tunnel with your gold helmet shining in the sun - you best leave them right here...

Shots of drills, the first series of which are simple. Rudy is giving his all...

COACH BOULAC (V.O.)

...of you forty dreamers out there, maybe we'll keep a handful...

Then the drills get rougher. Rudy puts forth a relentless effort. Coach Yanto observes the group. He is fascinated by Rudy's non-stop motion.

COACH BOULAC (V.O.)

...my job is to basically beat the shit out of you for five days...

Rudy is sandwiched between two tacklers in a "hamburger drill". Stunned as he is by the crunching blow, he hops to his feet for more. Yanto points out Rudy to Boulac. Boulac shakes his head.

COACH BOULAC (V.O.)

...and whoever is still standing at the end we may use for our scout teams. You'll be running the opposition's plays week in and week out...

In another drill Rudy tries to rush the passer against two behemoth offensive lineman. Even though he has no chance, he still hurls his body fearlessly into the forearm shivers. Yanto keeps staring at Rudy...

COACH BOULAC (V.O.)

...like human fodder, your greatest value to us is we don't care whether you get hurt...our first teams will pound on you like you're they're worst enemies...

Rudy, bending over, holding his ribs, his arms scratched, his eyes bloodshot and swollen stands with about ten other walk-ons...

COACH BOULAC

Like what you hear so far? Relax
for a few minutes.

The walk-ons collapse to one knee or to the ground. Rudy stands defiantly.

Boulac stares at the ragged group, shakes his head and walks over to Yanto.

BOULAC

I'd like to get rid of them all.

YANTO

The kid with blood all over his jersey.

BOULAC

Ruettiger? You been watching? No athletic skills. The guy is pathetic.

YANTO

But more effort than any two guys we got combined. Always good to have a "why can't you bust your butt like..." kind of guy around.

BOULAC

With his size, it's either me or Blache and I'll speak for both of us as in "not a chance".

Boulac turns back to walk-ons and blows his whistle.

BOULAC

Shower up. We'll let you know.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy, looking like he got hit by a train, gingerly gets dressed. JIM OBSETNICK, handsome but always wearing a frown, silently dresses next to him.

RUDY

Think you made it?

JIM

(first giving him a glower)
Unfortunately.

Rudy is flabbergasted.

RUDY

What's so unfortunate about making the team.

JIM

It's my third year as a walk-on. I had scholarships to two Big Ten schools but my father was an All-American here. Family pressure, you know.

RUDY

You've never been cut, so you still have a chance.

JIM

(laughs)

Chance to play? The only reason they keep me on here is because I'm a legacy. To them I'm no more valuable than a tackling dummy.

RUDY

Well, I'd give anything to be in your shoes, to get a shot.

JIM

You know that expression "don't wish for something too hard, you might get it"?

RUDY

Never heard of it and don't believe it.

YANTO (O.S.)

Ruettiger!

Rudy turns to see Coach Yanto at the door. He motions Rudy over. Shirttail flapping, one shoe on, eyes wide, his breath frozen Rudy runs over. They step outside.

EXT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Yanto keeps walking, Rudy hops along, following.

YANTO

You want on the team pretty bad, huh?

RUDY

You have no idea...

YANTO

You sure busted your balls over the last five days.

RUDY
I'll do anything...

YANTO
You think you can give the same kind
of effort day in and day out for the
next five months?

RUDY
Sir, there's no question. Absolutely
no...

YANTO
If you do let up one hair, I'll throw
your butt off the team so fast you
won't know what hit...

RUDY
(stunned)
Off the team? Did you say off the
team? That means first I have to
be on the team, right?

YANTO
Don't let me down, kid.

Rudy just is starting to realize he's made the team.

RUDY
I'm on the team, right?

Yanto stops, turns, and looks at Rudy strangely.

YANTO
Yeah, kid, you're on the team.

Rudy lets out a bloodcurdling SCREAM and hugs Coach Yanto.

YANTO
(pushing him away)
Hey, hey, hey.

Rudy starts WHOOPING, running around in circles, throwing fist up
in the air. Yanto quickly retreats from this madman.

INT - RECTORY - DAY

Sister Therese hands Rudy a letter.

SISTER THERESE
He tried to find you, but he didn't
know where you were staying.

RUDY
Where is he?

SISTER THERESE
A mission to the Philippines.

Rudy looks crushed as he opens the letter.

FATHER CAVANAUGH (V.O)
Now that you're officially a Notre Dame student I can use my slight influence to get you a room at the seminary in exchange for a few breakfast and lunch duties. Don't let any of those oh so serious novitiates talk you into being a priest. I'm off looking for that third incontrovertible hard fact, if it exists. I'll be back in two years, just in time for your graduation. Godspeed, Henry Cavanaugh.

EXT - MAINTENANCE ROOM - DUSK

Rudy is sitting on the cot when he puts down the letter.

RUDY

Henry?

Rudy smiles as he takes the photographs off the wall next to the cot; his family, Ralph, and an addition - a newspaper clipping with Mary's picture and the byline "new assistant sports editor". Rudy gathers his stuff, grabs the room key and exits.

EXT - STADIUM - DUSK

Fortune is painting a goal post when Rudy walks up to him, sticks his hand out holding the key.

RUDY

Thanks...for everything.

Fortune looks down at the key.

FORTUNE

What's that?

RUDY

The key to the maintenance room.

FORTUNE

Don't know nothing about it.

Fortune goes back to painting as Rudy laughs and slips the key in Fortune's pocket.

RUDY

You promise if I dress you'll come
to your first game to see me?

Fortune doesn't say anything as he keeps painting.

RUDY

I'll come back to bother you every
so often.

Rudy stares at Fortune (who continues to ignore him). Rudy
starts to say something, then turns and walks away.

FORTUNE

Kid...

Rudy turns around.

FORTUNE

You ever dress, I'll be there.

Rudy smiles and nods.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Rudy, in uniform, comes sprinting out of the girls softball
locker room. He spots Dante walking to the practice field.

RUDY

Hey, Dante, here I am, on the team,
just like I told you.

Dante gives him his usual "get away from me, flea" look.

RUDY

You still going out with Mary?

DANTE

Who?

Dante tries to move away from Rudy, who follows him.

RUDY

I'm real sorry about all your
injuries. You deserve a shot. I
have a feeling this is going to be
your year.

DANTE

I don't really give a damn what kind
of feelings you have.

Dante starts trots away. Rudy shakes his head. He spots Ara
walking toward the practice field and runs up to him.

RUDY

Coach, I really appreciate the opportunity to be part of your team, thanks.

Ara glances over at Rudy, initially not recognizing him in uniform. Finally...

ARA

I had nothing to do with it. Coach Y thinks you'll serve some sort of purpose.

RUDY

I'll serve any purpose you want.

Ara slightly amused, shakes his head.

ARA

You're really something.

RUDY

Thanks, coach. I won't let you down.

Rudy waves at Ara and sprints off to....

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAYS

Rudy getting BLASTED, CLOBBERED, SHELLACKED, SMEARED, WALLOPED, CREAMED, SMASHED and CRUSHED again and again and again, etc. ad infinitum through panting hot, rainy mud, and blue knuckled cold whether. What makes Rudy unique is that each time he is knocked to the ground, no matter how severe the hit, in an instant he bounces back to his feet. We see among the intense "Rudy the pinball" contact, Coach Y exhorting him, Ara taking notice and the team reacting.

On a halfback sweep, Steve Mateus, a pulling guard, comes flying around the end and, with all of his 265 lbs. levels Rudy. For the first time Rudy lies on the ground motionless. Steve stands over him.

STEVE

You alright?

Rudy starts to stir. Steve lifts him to his feet with one hand. Rudy is wobbly. Ara blows a whistle.

ARA

Sloppy. Run it again.

Coach Y motions Rudy out. Rudy shakes his head vigorously.

The play is run again. This time when Steve is in the same position to do the same damage he hesitates and pushes Rudy away with his hands. Rudy hesitates, then goes after Steve.

RUDY

Hey, what do you think you're doing?

Steve turns around.

RUDY

Don't treat me like your kid brother.
I'm playing defensive end for Purdue,
remember?

Steve and the surrounding players are stunned by this outburst.
(all except Roland Steele, who laughs) Coach Y walks over.

COACH Y

He's right. We don't need no
Florence Nightengale's out here.

Steve gives Rudy a hard look and runs back to the huddle. Coach Y slaps Rudy on the back, turns and nods to Ara, who nods back.

On the next play, in the most violent impact we've seen thus far, Steve CRUNCHES Rudy.

EXT - LOCKER ROOM - DUSK

Rudy and Jim walk down the path from their locker room. Rudy looks like an 80-year man, bent over, holding his ribs. Steve, Roland and Dante come down from the main locker room walking in the same direction.

STEVE

Hey little buddy, sorry about that.

RUDY

Don't be sorry.

STEVE

If you don't cool it out there,
you're gonna get yourself killed.

RUDY

If I cool it out there I won't be
helping you guys get ready for the
next weeks games.

Rudy with bravado steps closer to Steve.

RUDY

(looking up)
Got it?

STEVE

(at first laughing, then)
Got it.

Roland laughs to himself. He gets a big kick out of Rudy.

DANTE
Showboating. That's all he's about.

ROLAND
(to Dante, with authority)
He's doing his job. Can it.

The threesome peels off walking in another direction. Jim is almost beside himself.

JIM
I can't believe it.

RUDY
Did I overstep my place?

JIM
I can't believe those guys even talked to you. In three years they've never said a word to me.

Jim shakes his head as they walk on.

INT - THE OBSERVER NEWSROOM - DAY

The Notre Dame student newspaper room is buzzing with activity. We see Rudy in the background getting directions. He wends his way through the chaos to finally stand in front of Mary, who is sitting at a desk, intensely banging away on her typewriter.

RUDY
I have only two things to say to you.

Mary looks up.

RUDY
I'm a student at Notre Dame and I'm on the football team.

Rudy starts to turn away but stops.

RUDY
And I did it by the rules.

MARY
That's three.

RUDY
Three what?

MARY
You said you had only two things to say. You just said three.

RUDY
Good for you. You got me again.

Rudy shakes his head, turns and starts to walk away.

MARY

Rudy...

Rudy turns back.

MARY

I already knew what you just told me.

RUDY

You did, how?

MARY

Some of the players are talking about you.

RUDY

(amazed)

They are?

MARY

They say you have a lot of balls.

On Rudy's eyes as they widen.

SHOTS

Rudy taping his photographs on wall of the spare seminary bedroom.

On the practice field, Rudy getting POUNDED to the ground, struggling to his feet quickly.

In the seminary mess hall Rudy serves the novitiates.

From the stands, as a spectator, Rudy watches his teammates roll up one victory after another.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy being wrapped in endless yards of tape. Cuts, abrasions and bruises mark his body. The trainer taps him on the shoulder, he hops down, walks over to his locker and, like an old man, gingerly puts on his uniform. Jim Obsetnick, shoves his jacket in his locker and reluctantly starts to dress.

JIM

Your John Wayne bullshit out there is making us all look bad. Why don't you dial it down a notch.

RUDY

Dial it down?

JIM

We're all getting sick and tired of hearing "why can't you put out like Ruettiger"?

RUDY

I only know how to play one way.

JIM

What do you get out of getting your butt kicked everyday?

Rudy won't answer him.

JIM

It's a total waste, you know. You have to be in at least one play during a regular season game or you'll never go down on the books as officially being a part of this team. And count on it - the only uniform you'll ever put on is that grungy thing you're wearing now.

RUDY

If you hate it so much...why don't you quit?

JIM

I can't.

RUDY

Why not?

JIM

(reluctantly)
If I quit, my father won't pay my tuition.

RUDY

That's the only reason you're here?

Jim pulls on his pads. He stops and looks at the floor. He takes a deep breath.

JIM

I guess part of me is under the delusion I might get a chance of running out that tunnel.

Rudy stares at him, understanding.

INT - SEMINARY - DAY

Rudy is serving stacks of pancakes to the novitiates. Mary suddenly appears.

RUDY
What are you doing here?

MARY
I want to write a story about you.

RUDY
Why?

MARY
I think you're an interesting guy.

RUDY
No.

MARY
No?

RUDY
There's nothing interesting about
a practice player.

MARY
Maybe there is to me.

RUDY
When I get to dress for a game,
that's when you can write your story.

MARY
Fine.

Mary starts to leave.

RUDY
Mary...

Mary stops. Rudy hesitates, then takes a breath...

RUDY
You think I'm an interesting enough
guy to have dinner with?

Mary studies him a moment, then smiles.

EXT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

A bleak fall day. Johnny, Frank, and Danilo are building a patio addition at the rear of the house. Rudy paces in an agitated fashion, while his everpresent little brothers and sisters play around him.

RUDY
You think I'm lying to you.

DANILO
Nobody said nothing about lying.

JOHNNY
I believe you, Rudy.

RUDY
Should I get somebody to take
pictures of me at practice?

Rudy pulls his sweater up to show his forearms covered with cuts
and bruises. He sticks them in his father's face.

RUDY
Where'd I get these? Professional
wrestling?

FRANK
OK. You're a kind of glorified
waterboy or something.

RUDY
You just don't get it.

FRANK
(almost angry)
If you're part of that team, my
opinion of Notre Dame football just
dropped to the pits.

RUDY
There is no if. I wear a uniform.
I block, I tackle...

JOHNNY
Leave him alone.

FRANK
Tell him to leave us alone.

DANILO
It doesn't really matter. You're
in the best university in the land,
you're making good grades.

RUDY
But I'm on the team too...

Danilo and Frank keep working on the fence.

RUDY
You don't understand...

FRANK
It's simple. Every Saturday when
we turn on the TV to watch the Irish
we see many, many players in gold
and blue. We don't see you.

Rudy turns red with anger. He is so frustrated he finally picks
up a barrel and throws it against the fence.

His father and two brothers look at him in shock.

RUDY
You will...you will.

Rudy turns and storms off.

EXT - PRACTICE - DAY

On a grim and muddy day we can see the players breaths steaming out from their helmets as a scrimmage heads into high gear.

ARA
All right third team and the preps.

Dante breaks his group from the huddle. Rudy lines up at his usual position of defensive end. Dante calls the signals, takes the snap, and backpedals to set up for a pass. The offensive end steps out to block Rudy and slips. Rudy goes charging around him and has a clear shot at Dante.

Rudy tackles him hard and clean, driving him into the ground. Dante rolls over and...

DANTE
Asshole...

Dante throws the ball in Rudy's face. Rudy jumps on top of him. The two start wrestling and punching each other.

Big Steve starts to step in to break them up. Roland grabs his jersey holding him back. Seeing this example (Roland will be next year's captain) the other players stand back as well. Finally, Coach Y steps between...

DANTE
(to Rudy)
Brown nose, suck ass.

Ara comes marching over. He gets in Dante's face.

ARA
What's your problem, Alarcon?

DANTE
It's the last practice of season and this idiot's thinks it's the Super Bowl.

ARA
You just summed up your entire sorry career here in one sentence.

Ara gets in Dante's face...

ARA

If you had one tenth of Ruettiger's heart you might be an All-American. As it is you just went from third team...

(he points to Rudy and his fellow walk-ons)
...to the prep team.

Rudy smiles to himself as he picks himself up and walks back to his position. Steve slaps him on the shoulder pads as do a couple of the other players. He catches Roland's eye, who nods.

INT - ARA'S OFFICE - DAY

Ara, at his desk presses a button on his phone...

ARA

Send him in.

Rudy walks in the room. Ara motions for Rudy to sit down.

RUDY

This won't take long.
(takes deep breath)
First, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be part of the team.

ARA

Rudy, I never thought I'd say this, but, it's been a pleasure. Now, what can I do for you?

RUDY

One of the many things I've learned this season is no matter how hard I try I'm never going get above the prep team. I've kind of accepted the fact God made certain people to be football players and I'm not one of them.

ARA

I wish God would put your heart in some my player's bodies.

RUDY

My father loves Notre Dame football more than anything else in the world. He doesn't think I'm on the team because he doesn't see me on the sidelines. Next year, my senior year, I want to be able to give him this gift.

Rudy takes a deep breath...

RUDY

I would really appreciate if you
could...let me dress one game.

Ara shakes his head and leans back in his chair.

ARA

The NCAA really hampers us with
this 60 rule. In certain positions
we'll have only a single backup and
you know every year we compete for
the national championship...

Rudy's face drops. Ara can't go on with his usual rationale..

ARA

Rudy, is this just for your father?

Rudy stares at Ara. Finally...

RUDY

No. It's also for everybody who said
that me being a Notre Dame football
player would be impossible. My
brothers, people from my high school,
the guys I worked with at the mill
- they can't come to practice to see
- I am part of the team.

Ara studies Rudy. Finally...

ARA

O.K.

Rudy expression changes.

RUDY

O.K.? Did you say O.K.?

ARA

You deserve it. You'll dress one
game next season.

On Rudy's face as it lights up.

RUDY

(clenching his fist)

Yes.

INT - MALONE'S PUB - NIGHT

Rudy on the phone.

RUDY

Yes, yes, I'm sure...I don't know
which game yet. Next season...

(more)

RUDY (Cont'd)
I'll find out a couple of days
before. Just be ready...Thanks Dad.

Rudy is beaming when he hangs up. He walks to a table to join Mary.

RUDY
This story's going to come out next
season?

MARY
The day before your dress game.

RUDY
Alright, what do you want to know?

MARY
Everything.

Rudy smiles.

EXT - STUDENT CENTER - DAY

D-Bob, with a big grin, comes bounding down the stairs. He runs up to Rudy who is sitting on a bench reading a newspaper an alarmed look on his face.

D-BOB
Victory, victory, that's our cry
V..I..C..T..O..R..Y. Goddamned Miami
Law School beckons. I must go.

Rudy stands and hugs D-Bob.

RUDY
Great. Just great.

D-BOB
What's wrong with you?

Rudy shows him the paper with a headline reading COACH ARA PARSEGHIAN RETIRES.

D-BOB
I'll be goddamned. Who's the new
coach?

RUDY
Dan Devine - from the Green Bay
Packers.

D-BOB
I'm sure Ara will let him know about
his promise letting you dress.

Rudy doesn't look to sure.

D-BOB

Walk with me, I have to meet someone.

They start walking.

RUDY

When do you leave?

D-BOB

Spring session starts in two weeks.

Rudy looks depressed.

D-BOB

We've had a hell of a goddamned run,
haven't we, Gipper?

RUDY

Yeah, we have.

D-BOB

Let me know whatever game you dress
for and I'll fly up.

Rudy is pensive, melancholic.

RUDY

There's no way I could thank you for
what you've done...

D-Bob puts his arm around Rudy's neck.

D-BOB

Oh, you already have.

They swing around to the entrance of the library. They stop in front of Elza, the homely girl in the cafeteria of whom D-Bob said "I'm not that desperate".

D-BOB

Remember, Elza? She's my girl now.
Coming with me to Miami. Isn't that
goddamned something?

ELZA

Dennis.

D-BOB

Forgot. Not allowed to say goddamn
anymore. What's a lapsed Catholic
to do?

D-Bob puts his arm around Elza and starts to walk her away.

D-BOB

See you next fall, Gipper.

He turns back and winks, like a ladies man would.

INT - HEAD COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Rudy walks in the office that once was Ara's. Dan Devine, a wiry, bespectacled man in his forties, doesn't look up from the charts he's reading. Rudy sticks out his hand.

RUDY
Rudy Ruettiger.

DEVINE
(not looking up)
Yes?

RUDY
Well, I was a walk-on last year
and...

DEVINE
(finally looks up)
I don't believe in walk-ons,
especially considering the caliber
program we have here. I have 95
quality athletes on scholarships and
we'll probably play 60 of them at
the most. Tell me why would I need
walk-ons?

RUDY
Because the prep team...

DEVINE
My bottom 35 can prep. It'll toughen
'em up.

Rudy is looking alarmed.

RUDY
Sir, if I could just show you, prove
to you...

DEVINE
Football here at Notre Dame is
serious business. There's no room
for sentiment when so much is at
stake.

RUDY
Are you saying I'm off the team?

Devine goes back to his papers. On Rudy's expression.

EXT - CAMPUS - DAY

Mary walks with Rudy, who is in workout gear.

MARY
I'm sorry.

Rudy is lost in thought as he walks forward.

MARY

I know how much it means to you.

Rudy still says nothing.

MARY

Look, you had a year on the Notre Dame football team. How many people can say that?

RUDY

(finally)
It's not over. I've got until fall to change his mind.

MARY

Why am I not surprised you just said that?

Rudy and Mary reach the Joyce Athletic Center. Rudy points.

RUDY

See that window there?

Mary nods.

RUDY

That's Coach Devine's office. Now, you see this strip of grass here?

Mary gives Rudy a quizzical stare.

RUDY

This is where I'll be working out for the next four months.

MARY

(laughs)
You are a different kind of animal.

RUDY

You want to help?

Mary deadlocks Rudy's eyes.

MARY

Of course.

EXT - ATHLETIC OFFICES - DAY TO DUSK

Shots of Rudy working out on the thin strip of grass, wind sprints, (Mary with a stopwatch), footwork drills, (Mary lays out rings simulating tires), crab walk (on all fours) (Mary encourages) etc. Interspersed are indistinguishable faces at the windows and curious passersby.

Finally as an exhausted Rudy looks ready to drop Coach Yanto walks out the door.

COACH Y
OK, Rudy that's enough.

Rudy looks up breathless.

COACH Y
We were going to get you on the team one way or another. You just forced us to make our case a little sooner than we planned.

MARY
So is he back on the team or not?

COACH Y
Yes. So you can go home now.

Mary starts to hug Rudy when Coach Y holds up his hand.

COACH Y
Rudy, you have to forget about Coach Parseghian's promise to dress you for a game. It was all we could do to get you a uniform for practice. You understand?

Rudy stares at Coach Y and says nothing.

COACH Y
(shaking his head)
Deaf ears.

Still shaking his head he turns and leaves. Now Mary can hug Rudy.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Rudy busting his butt in practice, as he takes his usual licking and keeps on ticking. He never lets up.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy goes to the dress list in the main locker room. By his expression we know he's not on it.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Rudy, clapping his hands, exhorting his teammates on.

Roland grabs Rudy.

ROLAND

The prep team is dogging it, it's
your job to keep them up.

Rudy in the middle of a circle of giant players, yelling at them,
pounding his fist, in their face. They all listen attentively
until the final command. The players break the circle screaming,
fired up...

The prep team intercepts a pass and returns it for a touchdown as
Rudy escorts the defensive back across the line. He slaps on the
back, cheering him on. Across the field Roland gives him a
thumbs up as Devine yells at the first team.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

More disappointment as Rudy checks the dress list again...

And again...again...again...

EXT - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Rudy on the phone. In the b.g. the trees are almost leafless.

RUDY

Just don't make plans for this
Saturday. I'll know tomorrow...Yes,
Coach Y said he thinks my chances
are very good. Dad, if I don't make
it...never mind...I'll call you.

Rudy hangs up the phone. Mary is standing, waiting.

RUDY

I need to go somewhere right now,
will you come with me?

Mary nods and starts walking with him.

MARY

Did Coach Y really say that?

RUDY

Not exactly. It was more like "we
have a shot." My Dad still doesn't
believe I'm an official member of
the team. Maybe he's right.

MARY

You haven't gotten where you are with
that kind of self pity junk.

Rudy stares at Mary then finally nods.

RUDY
You promised not to print that
article if I don't dress.

MARY
You know me. I play by the rules.

RUDY
Here we are.

They emerge through an awning to face the Grotto. Mary shakes
her head.

MARY
I don't believe in that kind of
stuff.

Rudy hands her a dollar.

RUDY
Light a candle for me to get on that
dress list tomorrow...please.

Mary shakes her head again and hands Rudy his dollar back.

MARY
I can pay my own way.

Mary pulls a dollar from her pocket, stuffs it in the box, lights
a candle, kneels, bows her head for a moment, stands and turns to
face Rudy.

RUDY
(smiling)
How can I not be on that list?

EXT - MAIN FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy is in full gear as he stands outside the scholarship players
locker room. He takes a deep breath, crosses himself and enters.

INT- LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The first players Rudy sees are Steve and Roland. They avert
their eyes as Rudy walks over to the dress board. He stares,
his eyes wide open as he reads once, then twice the list without
his name. As other players quietly move by him softly saying
"sorry" Rudy stands frozen. Soon tears start forming in his
eyes. Roland watches from a distance. Finally Steve walks up
to him...

STEVE
Rudy...

Rudy runs out the door. Steve and Roland give each other a look.

INT - WALK-ONS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy is ripping off his uniform as Jim watches.

RUDY

To hell with Devine, to hell with
Notre Dame football.

JIM

Where are you going?

RUDY

I quit.

JIM

In two years you've never missed a
practice and the second to last one
of your senior year you quit?

RUDY

That's what I said.

JIM

I don't want you to.

Rudy stops dressing, turns to Jim...

RUDY

What?

JIM

You heard me.

RUDY

What's it to you?

JIM

(hesitates, looks down)
You're the reason I stayed on this
last year.

He stares at Jim a few beats then resumes taking off his uniform.

RUDY

(hoarse)

I'm sorry, Jim.

Rudy pulls on his coat and starts to exit.

JIM

You're so full of shit. All the
things you said, all the things you
stood for...

Jim throws his helmet after Rudy as he disappears out the door.

EXT - STADIUM - DAY

Rudy sits in the stands staring out at the empty field. He shivers as he drops his head in his hands. The sounds of someone climbing the steps arouses him.

FORTUNE

What are you doing here? Don't you have practice?

RUDY

Not any more. I quit.

Fortune stands over him.

FORTUNE

Since when are you the quitting kind?

RUDY

I don't see the point anymore.

FORTUNE

So you didn't make the dress list. Well, there are greater tragedies in the world.

RUDY

I wanted to be able to run out on that field for my Dad, to prove to all those people...

FORTUNE

Prove what?

Rudy hesitates.

RUDY

That I was somebody.

FORTUNE

(laughs)

You are so full of crap.

(yells)

Stand up.

Rudy, startled, looks up at Fortune. He slowly gets to his feet.

FORTUNE

You're five feet nothing and a hundred and nothing and got hardly a speck of athletic ability and you hung in with the best college football team in the land for two years. You're also gonna walk out of here with a degree from the University of Notre Dame.

Rudy stares at Fortune whose eyes are ablaze.

FORTUNE

In this lifetime you don't have to prove nothing to nobody...except yourself. And after what you've gone through if you haven't done that by now it ain't gonna never happen.

Rudy keeps staring at Fortune, he finally nods.

FORTUNE

Now, go on back.

RUDY

I'm sorry I couldn't get you in here to see your first game.

FORTUNE

Hell, I've seen too many games in this stadium.

RUDY

I thought you said...

FORTUNE

I've never seen a game from the stands.

RUDY

(amazed)

You were a player?

FORTUNE

Rode the bench for two years, thought I wasn't being played because of my color, got filled up with a lot of attitude so I quit. Still, not a week goes by I don't regret it. And I guarantee, a week won't go by in your life you won't regret walking out...letting "them" get the best of you.

Rudy stares at Fortune in awe.

FORTUNE

You hear me clear enough? Get your ass back to that practice before it's too late.

Rudy eyes are locked on Fortune's.

EXT - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The teams are going through their normal drills. Steve gets up from the ground and as he is about to run back to the huddle, something catches his eye. Another player grabs Roland by the shoulder and points.

Everyone is momentarily frozen place watching...

PLAYERS POV

In the distance Rudy, back in uniform, walks toward them.

Steve starts clapping slowly, rhythmically, others gradually join in, matching the claps. As Rudy gets closer someone starts chanting "Rudy" to the sound of the claps, and others do the same until the entire team is roaring "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy".

When Rudy reaches the team, Coach Y walks over.

COACH Y

Welcome back.

From the tower Devine sticks his head out bullhorn in hand.

DEVINE

What the hell's going on down there?
Let's get to work.

And practice resumes.

INT - DEVINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Devine is reading his ever present charts when he hears a knock on the door.

DEVINE

Come in.

The door opens and Roland steps in, carrying his bright white and blue game jersey. He walks right to Devine's desk.

ROLAND

I want Rudy to dress in my place.
He deserves it.

DEVINE

Don't be ridiculous. Georgia Tech is the No.1 offensive team in the country. You're an All-American and our captain, act like it.

Roland lays the jersey in front of the head coach, turns, and walks out. Devine shakes his head. There's another knock on the door. Big Steve walks in with his jersey. He deposits it on top of Roland's.

STEVE

I want Rudy to dress in my place.

He turns around and walks out.

Another senior walks in with a jersey.

SENIOR
This is for Rudy.

And another, and another "for Rudy", "for Rudy"....

Outside the office the seniors line up, jerseys in hand.

On Devine's desk the pile of jerseys gets higher. "For Rudy",
"for Rudy. Devine sits there eyes narrow, speechless.

EXT - NEWSPAPER OFFICE - NIGHT

Rudy on the phone again with Mary by his side. (Rudy is still
wearing his Notre Dame jacket, by now worn to the threads.)

RUDY
I promise you, it's the real thing.
I will be on the sidelines...in
uniform.

Rudy beams at Mary.

FRANK'S VOICE
I'll tell him.

RUDY
Frank, I've never asked you for
anything in my life. Promise me,
he'll be on that bus...

FRANK'S VOICE
(pause)
I'll do what I can.

RUDY
Frank...I want you to come too.

INT - RUETTIGER HOME - NIGHT

Frank on the phone. He has a tortured expression. Finally...

FRANK
I'm not sure...

RUDY'S VOICE
Please...

Frank's eyes are closed. He's torn in half by this request.

RUDY'S VOICE
My number is 45. See you after the
game.

Danilo, looking bent over, walks wearily in the front door with
when Frank hangs up.

DANILO
You look like you just got some bad news.

Frank hesitates, then trying to be casual...

FRANK
Rudy called.

Danilo comes to attention.

DANILO
And?

FRANK
Believe it or not...

DANILO
(his voice soft)
He's dressing for tomorrow's game?

Frank nods. Danilo walks over to the table and sets his lunch pail down. He turns back to Frank.

DANILO
It's for sure?

FRANK
I don't know. It's what he said.

DANILO
He's an amazing boy.

FRANK
Look, this whole dress thing has been touch and go and I know you hate to travel...

DANILO
I'm going to South Bend.

FRANK
Really?

DANILO
My boy in Notre Dame Stadium wearing the blue and gold uniform...
(nods, smiling to himself)
...I will be there.

A look of pride crosses Danilo's face as, standing a little taller, he strides out of the room. Frank stares after his Dad, a pinched, sad expression on his face.

EXT - CAMPUS - MORNING

The Notre Dame football team walks across campus in a column, like a Roman legion marching off to war. The players all have their "game faces" on except Rudy, who can't seem to get rid of his smile. (He is wearing, as usual his old Notre Dame jacket.) Students and others all stop and either yell words of encouragement or watch in awe as this impressive sight moves past them.

EXT - STADIUM - MORNING

- The column reaches the stadium and starts to form a single file to enter the locker room. A group of FANS, mostly young boys, ask the players for autographs. One BOY, about 14, (almost Rudy's size) shyly offers a program and pen to Rudy. Rudy is thrilled by the request.

BOY
(barely audible)
Could you write your number next to
your name, please.

Rudy, a big grin on his face, signs the program. A few of his teammates kid him.

BOY
Good luck in the game today, sir.

RUDY
Thank you.

BOY
Neat jacket.

Rudy smiles and turns and moves toward the locker room.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dan hands Rudy his game uniform - the gold pants, the white and blue jersey with Ruettiger stenciled in over the No. 45. and finally the brilliant gold helmet. Rudy grins wide.

DAN
If you ask me this is a great thing.

Rudy grins wider.

RUDY
OK. This time I will ask you.

EXT - STADIUM - DAY

The fans, the bands, the color swirls with the excitement of game day. A bus pulls in front of the main gate. The doors open.

Close on Danilo, in his suit, as he steps off the bus. He stands motionless staring at the stadium. His eyes start to water. He gathers himself and walks forward, followed stepping off the bus by Johnny and Sherry, Ralph's wife, Rhonda, and finally, taking a deep breath, Frank.

EXT - STADIUM - DAY

In another part of the stadium a large limousine pulls up. D-Bob, a big cigar in his mouth steps out with Elza. Elza leans over and picks up a copy of The Observer from a stack of papers as D-Bob moves ahead of her through the crowd like a returning celebrity.

INT - STADIUM - DAY

Danilo steps from the darkness of the tunnel to the bright, bold undulating colors of the stadium. Overwhelmed, he stops, taking it all in.

DANILO

The most beautiful sight these eyes
have ever seen.

Frank tries to take his arm and move him forward. Danilo pulls his arm away and moves down the steps on his own.

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rudy, in full regalia, can't help catching glances of himself in the mirror. He turns and sees Jim, (in street clothes) watching him. Jim keeps staring at Rudy in his uniform. Jim starts blinking away some tears as he walks up to Rudy and hugs him.

RUDY

I wish you could be here with me.

Jim, tries to speak but can't. He releases Rudy, turns and hurries away.

DEVINE

Huddle up.

All the players gather around their coach. In the quiet, the thumping sound of the band, vibrates through the walls, heightening the anticipation of going out into battle. Rudy is near levitation state.

DEVINE

You all know what you have to do.
Remember, no one, I mean no one,
comes into our house and pushes us
around.

(more)

DEVINE (Cont'd)

This is your game now gentlemen and
for you seniors, it's your last one
- make it count, because you'll
remember it the rest of your lives.
Let's get 'em!

The players start chanting "GO,GO,GO" as they file toward the door and go through the Notre Dame ritual. We follow Rudy as he kneels in front of a PRIEST, is blessed, stands, moves over to touch the Gipper plaque, yells "spirit", then runs down the stairs. A smile never leave his face.

INT - TUNNEL - DAY

The team gathers in the darkness waiting for the signal to run out on the field. Rudy bounces up and down. Roland walks over and hits him hard in the shoulder pads.

ROLAND

You ready, champ?

RUDY

I've been getting ready for this all
my life.

Suddenly the band breaks into the Notre Dame fight song. The players ROAR as they burst from the darkness into...

INT - STADIUM - DAY

An explosion of sound and light. The crowd on their feet singing "Cheer, cheer for old Notre Dame. etc., the band, cheerleaders, and leprechaun.

Rudy pumps his fist again and again in the air as he runs, two feet off the ground, across the field.

In the stands we see Frank pointing out Rudy to Danilo. Danilo tries to fight the tears away.

In another section of the stands, sitting alone, watching intently is Fortune.

In the press box Mary claps (a pressbox no-no).

In another section...

D-BOB

The god..darned Gipper pulled it off.

Elza holds up The Observer.

ELZA

There's a big article in here about
Rudy.

D-BOB
Am I in it?

ELZA
Believe it or not, yes.

D-Bob grabs the newspaper

THE GAME

Rudy excitedly paces the sidelines encouraging the players as the Irish totally dominate the game. For the first time we are close into the violence, strength, and athleticism of the best of Saturday afternoon college football.

With 3:00 minutes to go in the game Roland intercepts a pass and runs 35 yards for a touchdown, making the score Notre Dame 17 Georgia Tech 3.

DEVINE
(to Coach Y)
All right. Play the seniors.

COACH Y
Ruettiger too?

DEVINE
No.

COACH Y
Just one play.

DEVINE
Absolutely not.

The senior scrubs go in. Rudy is not one of them. The starters including Steve and Roland start to get agitated, talking among each other. Roland walks over to Steve.

ROLAND
(to Steve)
We've got to get Rudy in there.

STEVE
I'll talk to Coach. It's my last game. I don't give damn.

ROLAND
I'm Captain, it's my job.

Roland walks over to Devine and with beseeching gestures tries to convince the coach to put Rudy in. Devine ignores Roland, finally turning and walking away from him. Roland, angry walks back to the seniors shaking his head...

Suddenly Georgia Tech throws an interception, giving the Irish the ball back with 1:45 to go.

STEVE

There goes his chance. The offense
is going to run the game out.

ROLAND

We've got to get him in some how,
some way.

The senior scrubs, including Dante at quarterback, run on the
field.

RADIO (V.O)

Dante Alarcon, the highly touted
recruit four years ago takes the helm
for the final minute and a half of
the 1975 season. I think it's safe
to say Alarcon's career at Notre Dame
has been a bust.

On the sidelines Roland and Steve are conferring with a couple of
other seniors. They all nod in agreement and...

FOUR SENIORS

(chanting)

Rudy, Rudy, Rudy..

Other seniors start picking the chant up...."Rudy, Rudy, Rudy"..

Rudy hearing his name looks over wondering what's going on.

Devine looks over getting it and pissed.

On the field Dante is in the huddle on one knee when a messenger
arrives.

MESSENGER

Coach wants you to go to one knee,
run out the clock.

The distant sideline chant of "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy" is clearly
audible on the field.

DANTE

Seems like a lot of our guys want
to get Rudy in the game.

The players in the huddle, mostly seniors all agree, "Hell, yes"
"Nobody deserves it more", etc.

DANTE

Well, as long as we're out here he
doesn't have a chance.

Dante looks at ground, pauses...

DANTE

The hell with Devine. Let's get a
score for Rudy.

The rest of the huddle roars their agreement. We see Dante smile, for the first time.

DANTE

Wing left Q48 hook flash on two.

The team breaks with a clap.

On the sidelines all the players are now chanting "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy". Rudy looks around, dumbfounded. Devine is pacing angrily.

On the field Dante takes the snap and fades back to pass.

On the sidelines.

DEVINE

What the hell is he doing?

Dante throws a perfect spiral thirty yards downfield into the waiting hands of his receiver who eludes two attempted tackles and high steps it into the endzone for a touchdown.

The crowd goes wild. Dante runs off the field accepting congratulations until he reaches Rudy.

DANTE

That was for you.

RUDY

Thanks, Dante.

The players start increasing their chant "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy". Roland turns to the crowd motioning...

The cheerleaders and the leprechaun see this and pick up the chant, "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy"...

And the students finally get it, "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy"...

Soon the whole stadium is shouting, "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy"...

In the stands Danilo, a wide smile on his face, chants his son's name as does Johnny and Sherry and...even Frank.

D-Bob is bouncing up and down yelling...

And Mary, now in out of the pressbox, screams Rudy's name...

On the sidelines Rudy looks around amazed and moved as his name rumbles across the stadium.

Devine, defeated, nods to Coach Y...

The players jump and down as Coach Y motions Rudy onto the field

With 28 seconds to go in the last game of his career at Notre Dame, Rudy enters the game.

The crowd gets to their feet ROARING.

In the stands, a man standing next to Frank shakes his head, puzzled.

MAN

Who is this Rudy guy?

Frank slowly turns to him and with pride...

FRANK

My brother.

Close on Frank, full of emotion.

RUDY ON THE FIELD

The kickoff. Rudy runs downfield and trips over his own feet before he can get within twenty yards of the kick returner.

With 18 seconds to play Rudy lines up at defensive end. Across from him is a gigantic blocker. He looks down at Rudy and laughs.

The crowd continues to scream "Rudy, Rudy, Rudy".

The Georgia Tech quarterback takes the snap and fades back to pass. Rudy charges hard to the outside. The tight end swings his forearm around and knocks Rudy back off his feet. The quarterback throws an incomplete pass.

Eight seconds remain in the game. The spectators are on their feet chanting Rudy's name.

The players on the sidelines are screaming at Rudy, urging him on.

Rudy looks over to sidelines and gives his teammates the thumb's up sign. He gets into position across from the tight end.

The ball is snapped. The quarterback again backpedals to get in position to pass. Rudy fakes to the outside, getting the tight end off balance. He flies past him on the inside. The quarterback is clearly in his sights.

As time slows down we cut from Rudy charging the quarterback, to the clock, to the sidelines - Coach Y, Roland, Steve, Dante, to the stands - D-Bob and Elza, Mary, Fortune, Steve and Sherry, Rhonda, Frank and Danilo, back to the clock 5-4-3-...

And Rudy coming at the quarterback, eyes blazing...

As he TACKLES the quarterback for a fourteen yard loss.

The final gun - CRACK.

The stadium EXPLODES ROARING. It's as if the Irish had won a national championship.

The team rushes on the field, picks Rudy up and carries him across the field...

Rudy pumping his arm, turns his head looking, looking into the stands...

As his teammates carry him toward the tunnel, we freeze on Rudy, atop his teammates shoulders, fist high in the air.

DISSOLVE:

EXT - RUETTIGER HOUSE - DAY

There is no sound as we see on the back patio Rudy, in suit and tie, in the middle of a large group of well wishers. Danilo stands proudly next to him as Father Zajak walks over and shakes Rudy's hand. Mary, Frank, Johnny, Sherry, Rhonda are all part of this group. We follow a flash of green as Rudy's younger brother Mark, now 11, wearing Rudy's threadbare Notre Dame jacket, and Bernie, 13, peel out away from the crowd and run onto the side yard. Mark grabs Rudy's old gold helmet from the porch and the brothers join some other BOYS, one of which is holding a football.

MARK

OK. We're Notre Dame this time. You have to be Georgia Tech.

Groans from half the boys.

MARK

And I'm going to be Rudy.

More protests.

BERNIE

You were Rudy last time.

MARK

I have to be Rudy, because I'm going to school at Notre Dame.

BERNIE

Big talk, you are not.

We push in on Mark's confident smile...

MARK

Yes, I am.

And there can be no doubt.

As we pull back from the boys getting ready for their game, the front of the house is revealed. A large banner stretching across the front porch reads...

CONGRATULATIONS RUDY RUETTIGER - UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME -
GRADUATE - 1976

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Since 1975 no other Notre Dame player has ever been carried off the field.

Five of Rudy's younger brothers went on to college. All received degrees.

Rudy presently lives in South Bend and is in the real estate business.