

Two For The Money

by

Dan Gilroy

FINAL: 10-29-04

Ext. Home movie - 1982 - day

A DAD tosses a baseball to his SON. The boy swings, connects, sends the ball flying. DAD smiles.

BRANDON LANG'S VOICE

That's me. Five years old. I remember that day. Believe it or not, I remember that hit. I remember it because of the smile that spread over my dad's face...

Ext. Home movie - 1983 - day

BRANDON shooting hoops. DAD drinks a Bud, frowns as he misses.

BRANDON vo

I would've stood there all day to sink one. Just to see that smile...

Ext. Home movie - 1984 - day

BRANDON runs, wears a too-big helmet and pads. A DOG chases him as DAD throws a football -- long pass -- *TIME SLOWS* and --

BRANDON vo

To pop, sports were a religion. To me, it was about purity, a place where all wrongs could be made right, or at least temporarily forgotten. I was going to fill the whole house with trophies for him. There was no doubt in my mind, I was going to make him happy...

BRANDON catches the ball. Blinding light, loud CHEERING and --

Ext. Stadium - 1999 - night

Our eyes adjust to see we're in a STADIUM. It's a night game. Stands packed. A PLAY CLOCK fills the SCREEN. It's the fourth quarter. Seven seconds left. Score: CAL WEST 31 / SOUTH WEST NEVADA UNIVERSITY 27. A bruised and battered UNLV QUARTERBACK gets a play from the COACH, straps on his helmet as he runs back to the huddle. The name on the QUARTERBACK'S jersey -- B. LANG. 10 exhausted, desperate faces come close, hang on BRANDON'S every word --

BRANDON

Last play. Slant red, right back on two. On two, Scottie. It's a lock. A guaranteed TD. *I've already seen it.* So relax. There's nothing to worry about 'cept one thing -- after we win and they're shoving cameras in your faces, I don't want to hear any "Hi moms." Guys, it's overdone, the fans are tired of it and if you have to thank some one you can just thank me. See you in the end zone.

The teams breaks, approaches the line. Loud CROWD roar.

BRANDON vo
I'd been a quarterback since pee-wee football. Set high school records. Won state championships. I wasn't driven by joy, it wasn't winning as much as terror, pure and simple -- fear of losing.

TV ANNOUNCERS (OVER)
South West Nevada needs a score. Seven seconds on the clock. 22 yard line. Win or lose, this has been a spectacular season for Lang. The big question, should he turn pro now or wait until -- *Lang's got the snap--*

BRANDON drops back. A GIANT gets a hand on BRANDON'S jersey. BRANDON pulls free, runs. OPPONENTS charge his way, BRANDON vaults, sails in the end zone, SCORES. BRANDON rolls on his back as an OPPOSING PLAYER hurtles in -- *mid-air -- unable to stop* as -- 300-plus pounds come crashing onto BRANDON'S leg. Sickening sound. BRANDON clutches his strangely angled limb.

BRANDON vo
... My first thought was I can tape it and play next week. Then I puked.

TEAMMATES surround BRANDON, many turning from the sight and --

Int. Emergency room ENTRANCE - night

BRANDON'S wheeled in.

Int. Operating room - night

SURGEONS regard the leg. IVs are hooked up.

BRANDON
What's the rehab time?

The SURGEONS talk between themselves, impressed by the break.

BRANDON
When do I play again?

One DOCTOR examines his x-rays. BRANDON grabs his smock.

BRANDON
The patient's got a question!

Anesthetic haze. A wavy world is melting far, far away.

SURGEON vo
Football's done, son...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

BRANDON'S in a hospital bed. Big leg cast. IV's in each arm.

MAN'S VOICE
Brandon... Brandon, it's me.

BRANDON opens his eyes, focuses on his FATHER (older, cheap suit, beard stubble, clutching a \$2 bouquet of flowers).

BRANDON'S DAD
You okay? I saw what happened on the tv.
Helluva thing that happening like that.

BRANDON
(edge)
What are you doing here?

BRANDON'S DAD
I brought some flowers. From downstairs in the shop.

Brandon
(pressing the nurse's call button)
No, you gotta go -- where's the nurse?

BRANDON'S DAD
I'm thinking of getting into a new program,
Brandon.

A NURSE comes fast through the door, watches unsure --

BRANDON
Could you get him out, please?

BRANDON'S DAD
It's okay, we're fine, I'm his father.

Brandon
Just get out!

BRANDON tries to rise, IV'S coming loose. The NURSE takes his DAD'S arm, leads him out to the hall.

BRANDON'S DAD
(pulling away, straightening)
He didn't recognize me. Must be all the drugs
and all. Boy's been through a lot.
(handing the NURSE the flowers)

If you could put these in some water and leave
'em in his room. Before they die.
BRANDON'S DAD nods thanks, departs down the
corridor and --

EXT. TRACT HOME - DAY

Vegas desert. It's raining. A SWNU car pulls up. The COACH helps
BRANDON out, on crutches now. A middle-aged WOMAN and a TEENAGE BOY
stand under a rusty awning, waiting to greet him.

BRANDON vo
It doesn't rain much in the desert. Maybe it
was that, or maybe the look on my mother's
face, or how fast coach left after getting me
up the steps, but I swore then and there -- no
matter what, *I'd get back* -- I would play
again...

Int. Unlv weight room - 1997 - day

Off-season. The room's packed. Loud hip hop plays. BRANDON limps in on
a cane. Back slaps. ("B's back!" "The man!")

OMIT

EXT. south west nevada university TRACK - Day

Sprinters dart by. Here comes BRANDON. Several months have passed. Big
ass brace on his leg. A GIRL'S TRACK TEAM bounds past like a herd of
gazelles. BRANDON presses on, possessed.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The TEAM'S practicing for a new season. BRANDON'S on the sideline,
flanked by the COACH and TEAM DOCTOR.

BRANDON VO
Doc told me it would take years to heal. One
bad hit and it'd be over. But the team needed
me and I had to play to get drafted. I figured
I'd take a chance...

BRANDON looks at the field, the PLAYERS, the empty stands and--

EXT. south west nevada university STADIUM - 1997 - DAY

CROWDED arena. Electrifying scene. BRANDON'S suited on the sidelines.
Kick-off. A SWNU PLAYER returns the ball.

BRANDON vo
Every minute of recovery I'd dreamt about this
moment. There were NFL scouts in the stands.
I *knew* what happened next.

BRANDON leads his team onto the field. Into the huddle --

Brandon
Let's ease back into it with our bread
and butter -- TD first play. We're going
deep. Split right. Deep two on three!
(coming up to the line)
Red 38! Red 28! Set! Set--

BRANDON drops back. Blitz. Brandon about to throw when one of his own LINEMEN is knocked into him and -- BRANDON'S off balance. Too much pressure on that leg and in one horrible moment... it *buckles*. BRANDON falls. The play whistled dead.

BRANDON vo
...It was over. I could've gone out with
class, a gritty smile and a little wave to the
crowd from a stretcher, instead I opted to go
psycho on national tv.

The PLAYER who hit him leans down to help. BRANDON grabs his face mask, starts punching. Pure rage. A REFEREE steps in and BRANDON slugs him, slams his face in the turf. LINEMEN yank BRANDON off as the bloody REF struggles to get free and --

TV SCREEN -- jim rome sports show

A highlight reel plays a tape of the incident -- BRANDON seen struggling with PLAYERS as the roughed-up REF crawls away --

JIM ROME
Welcome to the jungle! Hey clones, do you
believe this idiot?! That cannot happen! This
is college football, not the ultimate fighting
championship! What we have here is too much
muscle and not enough brain mass -- this is
why we need a life-time ban! Make an example
out of him! Because the sport deserves better
than this! Talk to me!

CAMERA PUSHES IN -- ECU on the TV as we hear --

BRANDON vo
It made all the highlight films. People wrote
editorials. Overnight I became the poster boy
for the "Dark Side of Sports."
The college yanked my scholarship and I was
kicked out of school. The ref piled on,
pressed charges. My probation included
counseling.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A PSYCHIATRIST faces BRANDON. A clock ticks in the corner.

PSYCHIATRIST
Who did the referee *represent*, Brandon?

BRANDON

He represented the nearest guy I could grab.

PSYCHIATRIST

... Let's try again.

INT. WINDOWLESS OFFICE - present DAY - day

CAMERA moves ceiling level above a dreary space. Passing over cramped cubicles. *Murmer* of voices from each one. EMPLOYEES seen, all reading phone copy into taping devices. *Sex lines, astrology and get-rich-quick schemes* are heard.

BRANDON VO

Football wasn't a sport, it was my *life*. Maybe I couldn't play anymore but I couldn't leave. So I went with it, rode it out. Then one day, and it didn't take long, I woke up at the bottom, and I liked it so much, I stayed for six years.

THE CAMERA stops above BRANDON. Older. Scruffier. He sits in his cubicle under a flickering fluorescent light, tossing a weathered football as he reads copy into a recording device.

BRANDON

--You've reached the Jessica Simpson hot line! Jessica's going to tell you all about Nick's surprise birthday party and her rockin' new panty line at Wal-Mart, but first, here's a little fan trivia to win a *VIP Gold Package* back stage pass to Jessica's Omnicon Hotels Summer Tour--

A bull-like BOSS appears at BRANDON'S cubicle entry --

BOSS

Got a job for you, Lang.

Brandon

I'm in the middle of taping.

BOSS

Bauer's sick, can't update his betting line. You know anything 'bout sports?

Brandon

... Yeah, a little.

INT. Neighboring CUBICLE - office - minute later

BRANDON enters a co-worker's cluttered cubicle.

BRANDON vo

900 numbers, audio text, the racket had a lot of names.

Brandon sits at his co-worker's desk. He picks up the text copy sitting beside the recording device, looks it over --

BRANDON VO

This guy's gig was sports handicapping.
Predicting winners for people who bet. I was
supposed to just record his picks.
The thing was, I didn't agree with them.

Brandon starts changing game selections, re-writing the copy.

BRANDON VO

My picks went 9-and-1 that weekend. By
football season, the job was mine...

Int. Brandon's new cubicle - several months later - day

A football is seen, rising and falling from BRANDON'S cubicle. He tosses the football as he records a new update --

Brandon

--Kansas City is 7-1 against the point spread
versus division opponents coming off a Monday
night game. Take K.C. minus the six points.
Call tomorrow for my pro football game of the
year -- Tampa Bay versus Oakland. That's 900-
656-3100. This is Brandon Lang saying good
night and good luck everybody.

BRANDON pops the tape. Dons an old UNLV windbreaker. He shoulders a beat-up bike, walks up front, hands the tape to his BOSS. BOSS hands back a paycheck. Regarding the amount --

BRANDON

I went 9-2 in pro football Sunday and hit my
third straight Monday night parlay.

BOSS

That's what you get paid for.

BRANDON

I want a raise to 12 bucks an hour.

BOSS

I don't make 12 an hour.

BRANDON

You're not picking 75 percent.

BOSS

If you're so good then bet your own games, get
rich and send me a postcard
from the Riviera.

BOSS pops BRANDON'S tape in a multi-line answering system and--

EXT. LAS VEGAS - DAY

BRANDON rides a beat-up bike through downtown.

INT. CASINO - day

BRANDON maneuvers through a bustling casino, enters the SPORTS BETTING ROOM. He goes to a rack of printed betting lines for the weekend games, pockets a printed sheet, sees a SUPERVISOR.

BRANDON

Hey Stu, where's the action this weekend?

SUPERVISOR/STU

We're getting big money on Tampa/Oakland.
Everyone's jumping on Tampa Bay.

Brandon

Crazy.

Supervisor/stu

You think?

BRANDON

That game's gonna be won by coaching, Stu.
Gruden put that Tampa Bay team together before
he came to Oakland, right? He knows every
weakness of that team and every strength. He
knows Brown only likes to catch over his left
shoulder and he'll have him double-teamed to
the right. He knows Gannon always throws on a
3-step drop and the linebackers will take away
the middle of the field. Gannon'll be
intercepted at least 4 times on Sunday.

(STU staring at him, pained look)

...You got sucked into Tampa, didn't you?

(STU manages a nod)

Stu, how many times do I have to bail you out?
All right, listen, forget the point spread.
Oakland's going to win outright. Bet the money
line and bet big.

STU

Thanks, B.

OMIT

EXT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BRANDON rides up. His younger brother, DENNY (18, Metallica t-shirt) and some FRIENDS work on an old, bondo-pocked muscle car in the garage.

DENNY

I scrounged some old headers, B! Check it out!

DENNY turns the key. The car rumbles to life. He revs the bored-out engine, flashes a shit eating grin.

BRANDON

... Awesome dude. That's a righteous ride,
Denny.

INT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MOM'S readying for work, dressed in croupier attire, searching for something as BRANDON enters.

MOM
I'm late. Dinner's in the oven.
Where the hell's my lucky crucifix?

BRANDON reaches to a key rack, hands it to her. She dons it.

MOM
Thank God. A man won 5600 at my table last
night. Tipped me out in color. I gave it to
Denny, help him with college.

BRANDON nods, downs a carton of milk. MOM about to go.

MOM
Mail came, letter for you, from Chicago.
You just tried out last week. They got back to
you quick. That's a good sign.

BRANDON
Wanna bet?

MOM
Open it.

BRANDON opens it. Reads. Words pop out: *"Arena Football League"... "We regret to inform you"... "but based on your performance"... "staff declines."*

BRANDON
At least they kicked me a cap.

MOM
Shit.

INT. BRANDON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Filled with exercise equipment. BRANDON pins the letter to a wall covered by dozens of rejections -- National Football League -- Canadian Football League -- Arena Football League. BRANDON changes into shorts. And now we see, he's in amazing shape. Could maybe still play pro. But that two foot scar running the length of his leg makes you wonder. As BRANDON pumps it out we realize *he still has a dream of coming back*, a dream we sense by his intensity is fast slipping away and --

EXT. LAS VEGAS - DAWN

BRANDON pedals to work when his cell phone rings. Answering:

BRANDON

Hello.

MAN'S VOICE

Brandon!

BRANDON

Yeah?

MAN vo

Congratulations! You went 9-2 last Sunday!
20-4 college! Picking 77 percent winners since
opening weekend! I've been following you! I'm
a big fan, Brandon! A big fan.

BRANDON

How'd you get this number? If you want picks,
call my 900 line.

MAN vo

What I want, Brandon, is for you to come to New
York and work for me.

BRANDON

Who is this?

MAN vo

This is Walter Abrams. I don't know if you
know me but I run the biggest sports service in
the country. Hell, I started the industry.
Ask around. Ask anyone,
even that reprobate boss of yours. It's
my job to keep track of who's doing what and
what you're doing should be rewarded.
Focus, Brandon. Focus. One day you'll
look back, see this was one of life's defining
moments. Allow me to paint a picture for you.
Right now I'm getting a massage, looking out my
window at the greatest city in the world and
all I'm asking you to do is come up with a
number. Write down what you make now, cross it
out and write what you should be making and
then toss in how much it'll take to get you to
fly here first class and come work for me --
did I mention free room and board -- and speak
up when you've got something to share.

(aside to MASSEUSE)

Right there. Yeah. Deeper. Yes. Fuck that
hurts.

BRANDON

Do me a favor and lose my number, I gotta go to
work.

BRANDON hangs up and --

INT. BRANDON'S CUBICLE DAY

BRANDON hefts the bike down the hall, reaches his cubicle to find his phone ringing. Picking up --

BRANDON

Hello.

WALTER VO

It's me again.

BRANDON

This is a joke, right?

WALTER VO

A joke can be the ultimate intellectual pursuit sometimes. *This?* This is just a job offer. In your top drawer there's an envelope with your name on it.

BRANDON opens the drawer, pulls an envelope and a ticket.

WALTER VO

That's travel cash and an airline ticket. It's not a magic trick, Brandon. I paid someone to put it there, who incidentally said the place reminded him of a Turkish prison. I don't have to tell you you're wasting your time there, Brandon, unless this is a part time gig -- unless you're planning some kinda "*comeback*," in which case I request you use a *fraction* of your talents and weigh the odds of that dream becoming reality. Two leg fractures? Passed on by every conceivable team in the league? Any chump can make that call, and anyone who clears the boards the way you do week in and week out should live in a penthouse on Park Avenue -- which is not for you to construe I'm offering that to start, but keep these stats up working for me and I'll have you in one in less than a year. Unless of course you're a village kind of guy...

BRANDON glances at the old faded football in his back pack.

WALTER VO

Run the numbers, do the math. Hold on a sec--

Muzak. BRANDON juggles the phone, searching, finds a pay stub. Amount: \$275.00 a week. BRANDON crosses it out, writes \$1000. He crosses that out, writes \$1500. BRANDON pulls a quarter, flips it. The coin bounces, spins, falls and--

Ext. JFK moving walkway - DAY

BRANDON hefts a duffel bag -- sees an ASIAN DRIVER, chauffeur uniform, mirrored shades, holding a sign reading B. LANG and --

INT. MOVING LIMO - DAY

BRANDON eyes a basket of croissants and juice, grabs a danish, takes a bite, sees the DRIVER watching in the mirror.

BRANDON
I'm gonna pay. I'll pay you--

DRIVER
--Pay me? Pay Walter. His car. I'm Milton, I drive for him.

BRANDON
I thought it was a service.
(moving to the jump seat, seeing MILTON is driving very fast)
So what's the deal with this guy? You work for him a long time?

MILTON
Oh yeah, going on two weeks.
(off BRANDON'S look)
I was bike messenger. Walter's driver hit me with his car. I lie on ground, make it look worse than is, big car, you know maybe get some money. Driver call me name, I call him name, he take swing -- big son of a bitch -- so I kick his ass.
(slicing the air with his hands)
Walter get out. I say his driver can't drive, he say you're right. I say damn right. He ask if I can, I say hell yeah. He take hat off driver, give it to me.
Every day with Walter is...

EXT. BROOKLYN HEIGHTS BROWNSTONE - DAY

Five stories. Next to the Brooklyn Bridge. Manhattan rises across the East River. The limo pulls up. BRANDON steps out, regards the structure. Exhaust fans dot the second floor. Satellite dishes on the roof. Security cameras everywhere.

INT. BROWNSTONE - TOP FLOOR - DAY

BRANDON follows MILTON through a large, wildly furnished apartment. They pass an large library dominated by rows of bleacher seats from the old Polo Grounds. A hot dog stand sits outside a wine cellar. Toys tell us there's a child in the house. A cha-cha plays from a stereo. MILTON stops at a set of doors. About to knock when --

WALTER vo
Bring him in!

INT. WALTER ABRAMS' OFFICE - DAY

WALTER smokes a cigarette, talking on the phone as an ASSISTANT in a separate, adjoining space handles four ringing phones. Across the room,

a large wall is filled with TVs, each turned to a different channel, no sound.

WALTER

I'll hire the trainers too... Well run it by them, you won't know until you try... So, they can stay the night. I'll put 'em up at the Plaza, nice suite, park view... Okay double it... Triple it... *Everything's about money.* Look, on Sunday, my daughter, an angel, turns six, it's not likely to happen again. She loves elephants. Your circus has 10, I only want one, my little girl's happiness is in your hands.

(beat, icy edge)

I don't need parenting advice from a guy who doubles as a clown. I want an elephant and I'll pay. What'll it take to grease your wheels and get one this weekend? Hello?... Hello?" *Fuck wad!*

(intercom his ASSISTANT, furious)

Find Ringling Brothers! Get me on the horn with someone who understands profit!

WALTER sees BRANDON. Something new. Full focus. He removes the headset. Dons his glasses. Circles around.

WALTER

Whoa, look at you. The Marlboro man.
(feeling his bicep)
Jesus you're in great shape.

BRANDON

I've been in better.

WALTER

(assessing BRANDON as he speaks--)

Modesty's not a virtue, it's a vice, as evil as vanity. There are rules to success, Brandon, and this is rule number one, know what you know and know what you don't know and know I gotta know everything you know as soon as you know it, if not sooner! Smile. C'mon! What the hell is that? I said smile. Bigger. Hungrier. More teeth. Ever sell before?

BRANDON

No.

WALTER

If you can sell you'll never starve. Ever speak in public? Perform? Anything like that?

BRANDON

I played quarterback in college. Division one.

WALTER

I know, I'm talking about not in uniform.

BRANDON

I used to sing at church.

WALTER

Oh really? So you're religious?

BRANDON

I don't know. I guess.

WALTER

Certain things, you either are or you aren't.
Which is it?

BRANDON

When I was a kid I thought I wanted to be a
pastor... obviously not now. I mean, yeah, I
believe in God.

WALTER

Relax. What do I care? Besides, it's against
the law to hire based on religious orientation.
You're not a republican are you? Just kidding.
(silent beat, staring at him)
You're *scaring me son*. What's with the deer-
caught-in-headlights vibe? You were a
quarterback for God's sake. A leader.

BRANDON

That was six years ago.

WALTER

C'mon, you won three conference titles at a
major university. You think I went to college?
I'm autodidactic. Big word, huh? Know what it
means? Self-taught. Partially by reading,
sure, but mostly by keeping my eyes open and
asking a lot of stupid fucking questions. I
swear to God I'm looking at myself 30 years
ago. A taller, more athletic version maybe,
but the resemblance is remarkable.

WALTER crushes out the cigarette, sprays air freshener.

WALTER

I'm not supposed to smoke any more, among other
things. It's bad for my condition. So before
I die, did you do anything other than the
sports phone in Vegas?

BRANDON

Just the 900 number recordings, it was full
time, I mean we got 10 bucks a call.

WALTER

Chump change, Brandon. We're angling for bigger fish here. You see, the networks don't talk about it and Uncle Sam can't tax it, but sports gambling is a 200-billion-dollar-a-year-business. These gamblers have needs, Brandon. Come Monday morning, after a losing weekend, a lot of them have big needs.

WALTER presses a button and the TVS fill with football games.

WALTER

That's every pro game played last Sunday. Do you know why Monday Night's the most watched game of the week? It's because Monday's the last chance bettors have to climb out of the hole before paying their bookies on Tuesday. Sports betting's illegal in 49 states, including this one, but what we do is 100% legal -- it's exactly the same as a stock broker, only instead of touting stocks, we advise people on how to bet. We make the big money off our client list. You see, when a client wins with our advice we take a percentage, which they gladly give to keep getting our picks. When they lose we get zip. So the object here, my tall, athletic, religious friend -- is to win.

WALTER clicks a control and his face fills the wall of tvs. Phone numbers and messages ("FOOTBALL SELECTIONS!" COLLEGE AND PRO!" "BASKETBALL PICKS!") flash on the screens. It's a high-octane infomercial for sports gamblers.

TV WALTER

Hello -- this is Walter Abrams and welcome to The Sports Advisors and week three in professional football. After a nice five day vacation on my yacht I can't be any more ready than I am right now. Studying the mismatches this weekend I can only conclude they're giving my handicappers a license to steal. I want you to take out a blank

(MORE)

Tv walter con'd

check right now -- go on, do it -- and write in as much you want to cash it for on Tuesday, that's how much money we're making for you this weekend. Year in, year out, no stock matches our return, and for the first time in the history of the company I'm releasing our three-team college and pro parlays absolutely free! That's right. This is why in a business with a higher turnover rate than Leona Helmsley's maid staff we're still going strong after 28 years! I'm giving these picks away. 800-238-6648. 1-800-BET-ON-IT. Absolutely free. We're looking at a big money weekend so let's get right into

it with our panel of experts--

WALTER

(freeze frames himself, to BRANDON)
My cable show. Tapes Thursday, airs Saturday
and Sunday morning. Nationwide. Hell I need a
new barber. The man should
be shot. Look at my hair in the back.

BRANDON

How'd you afford that yacht if the picks are
free?

WALTER

There is no yacht. Good, keep asking question.
Next.

BRANDON

You didn't answer about the free picks.

WALTER

I know. What else?

BRANDON

What's on the second floor?

WALTER

That's where we print the money. Any more?

BRANDON

No, that clears up pretty much everything.

WALTER

Great. Welcome aboard. We got some good stuff
to work with.

ASSISTANT/over intercom

Ringling Brothers on one.

WALTER

Ever have a manicure?

BRANDON

Me? No. Why?

WALTER

Because you need one. Besides, there's a girl
you gotta meet.

BRANDON

Really? What's she like?

WALTER

Beautiful, you'll like her--
(answering the phone)
--This Barnum or Bailey?

INT. HIGH-End, BROOKLYN SALON - DAY

TONI MORROW looks into CAMERA, styles an attractive, 30-ish WOMAN'S hair as the WOMAN regards her face in a mirror --

woman

I'm just thinking of doing some work around the eyes. Tighten it up a bit. A lift here, look, see these lines?

TONI

I see a beautiful woman. What are you --all of 35? I have a girlfriend, she was stunning, went in to "*tighten it up a bit*" and came out with a permanent smile. Even when she cries she looks like she's laughing. Another, she's on her third eye lift. Her skin's so tight, I swear, if you put an egg shell on her butt she'd look like a baby bird.

WOMAN

I'm just thinking of a tune-up.

TONI

Oh yeah, first it's a tune-up, then it's something else, and one day you'll come teetering in with your new 36Cs and a stretched face and you won't be able to say how unhappy you are because of all the collagen they shot in your lips. Do yourself a favor. Skip the surgery and get a shrink, work on the inside.

WOMAN

Easy for you to say. You used to model.

The other WOMEN CUSTOMERS listening nearby nod in agreement.

TONI

Oh yeah, that's true. Those were the good days. Sometimes I like to just curl up on the ledge with my box of retouched photos and reminisce about rehab.

WOMAN

Tightly wound today, aren't we?

TONI

I guess. Must be the coffee talking.
(handing her a fashion magazine)
Here, read a fashion magazine. Feel more insecure about yourself.

TONI walks through the shop, checks her watch, passes a row of WOMEN getting lunch-hour nail jobs. BRANDON'S squeezed in among them. Only guy there. Cotton between his toes post-pedicure. Hunched and uncomfortable as the WOMEN around him discuss boyfriends and

relationships.

TONI

... Brandon?

BRANDON

Hi.

TONI

I'm Toni. Walter said you'd stop by.

BRANDON

Nice to meet you.

(immediately, re: the pedicure)

This was his idea.

TONI

I know.

BRANDON

He makes all his employees do this?

TONI

Every one.

BRANDON

How often?

TONI

Once. Before they start work.

BRANDON

Weird.

TONI

You think?

BRANDON

I've never had my nails done before.

TONI

I can see that.

(putting his hands in water)

Strong hands. Nice. Do you drink?

BRANDON

No thanks. I'm fine.

TONI

No, *do you drink?*

BRANDON

Excuse me?

TONI

Alcohol. Are you a drinker?

BRANDON

I've been pretty focused on staying in shape.
I mean a beer once in a while.

TONI

Smoke?

BRANDON

No.

Toni

What about gambling?

BRANDON

What about it?

TONI

Look, I'm sorry, I'm pressed for time.
(stopping work, regarding him)
I asked do you bet. Are you a bettor?

BRANDON

No.

TONI

Really? Why not?

BRANDON meets her gaze. Gears turning. She's *hitting* on him.

BRANDON

Toni, huh? Are you here full-time?

TONI

It's my shop, I better be. Why don't you
gamble?

BRANDON

Well I'll tell you, Toni. I bet on something
once. Risked everything I had and lost.

TONI

So?

Brandon

I swore I'd never do it again.

Toni

You're sticking to that story?

Brandon

Hey, we just met. I sure wouldn't want to
start our relationship off by lying.

TONI

Well Walter could definitely use someone with a
little resolve in his life.

BRANDON

(leaning in)

Ya know, Toni, this is my first time in town. I'm not used to how fast things run around here. I'm wondering if you'd like to have dinner tonight? Let's get to know each other without so many people around.

TONI

... He didn't tell you.

BRANDON

What?

TONI

Brandon, Walter and I are *married*.

BRANDON

What? Walter just said I was meeting a woman. He acted like...

TONI

Walter's got a weird sense of humor. Look, he has a big, bright, beautiful spirit, you'll love working for him, but he's held together by meetings. If it has "anonymous" at the end, Walter goes. *He has to*. He also has to be very careful who he let's into his life. In most ways, Walter's brilliant -- but he can be bullshitted and I can't. So he sends 'em over to me before he hires 'em.

BRANDON

You're kidding me? Coming here... the manicure... this was an interview?

TONI

You're swift.

BRANDON

How'd I do?

TONI

Except for an illegal forward pass, perfect, flying colors. Congratulations. I'm late for my next appointment.

TONI walks away, glances back, smiles and --

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

BROWNSTONE. CAMERA favors the ground floor windows.

WALTER vo

The apartment on the first floor is yours. You have satellite tv, a gym, you want to relax

there's a jacuzzi tub the size of a kiddie pool.

INT. BROWNSTONE - FIRST FLOOR - day

900 number office. A phone and a computer on an empty desk. Two TVs mounted on the wall. WALTER shows BRANDON around.

WALTER

I'm starting you on the 900 numbers, same gig you did in Vegas. You'll make your picks and record them every day, once a day Monday through Friday and five times a day on weekends. Each call's worth 25 bucks a shot. Right now we get a few dozen hits a week. We should be doing triple that. I'm sending down some test copy. Before you record it, a little advice.

BRANDON sits. Regards the phone --

WALTER

Your pitch sucks, it doesn't exist. The pieces are there, we just gotta bust you out.

Brandon

How?

WALTER

From now on you have a new name -- *John Anthony, "The Million Dollar Man."*

Brandon

Hold on. What's wrong with Brandon Lang?

WALTER

Brandon Lang is still at home with his mother. You're selling a lifestyle here, and John's livin' large. John's got a direct line to God and for a measly 25 bucks a call you're gonna let the world's losers listen in.

Int. Brownstone - 900 number office - night

BRANDON studies the copy. He pops in a CD, hits record, reads into a mike --

BRANDON

Hello sports fans! This is John Anthony in the Big Apple with my big money picks! The action starts Saturday with college ball and our first matchup, Michigan against Indiana--

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

The upstairs window flies open and a CD sails out.

WALTER VO

Wrong!

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - SAME TIME - DAY

WALTER turns from the window, faces BRANDON.

WALTER

What's your sales pitch?

BRANDON

What's my sales pitch? 77 percent's my sales pitch.

WALTER

Stats aren't enough! These are gamblers you're talking to, people ready to risk what they can't afford for what they can't have! You're selling the world's rarest commodity.

BRANDON

What's that?

WALTER

Certainty in an uncertain world!

INT. BROWNSTONE - 900 NUMBER OFFICE - night

BRANDON back at the mike. Groping for a delivery.

BRANDON

John Anthony here, ready to make all your betting dreams come true! Call now and let me win for you! The point spread in the Indiana/Michigan game's up to four, making that game a gimme--

INT. BROWNSTONE - WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Another CD sails out. WALTER staring at BRANDON --

Walter

What is that shit? You spent 6 years bouncing from one dead-end job to another. Riding to work on a frigging bicycle. Were you making some kind of statement? What the hell were you afraid of?

BRANDON

I wasn't afraid of anything. I was working my ass off, trying to get back in the game.

WALTER

You are back in the game! Convince me you belong here!

INT. BROWNSTONE - DOWNSTAIRS GYM - NIGHT

BRANDON pumping it out. Music pounds on a stereo. BRANDON watches himself in the mirror, muscles straining. He suddenly slams the bar down, goes down the hall, grabs the mike, reads from the copy and --

BRANDON

This is John Anthony here, and from Wall Street to Tokyo to Hollywood, all your big money stays and plays with me! Winning consistently's the name of this game and I always remain the same, winners on a consistent basis, 77 percent winners! So sit back and relax because because it's a scud attack this weekend and I'm shelling your bookmaker!

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

BRANDON bounding up to WALTER'S office.

BRANDON vo

Game one of my three-team parlay is Michigan hosting Indiana; the big boys at Michigan are just 2-7 against the spread as a double-digit home favorite and with arch rival Wisconsin on deck next week, Indiana will catch them looking ahead! Take Indiana plus the 16 points! It's a lock!

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

WALTER listening to the CD. BRANDON watching him.

BRANDON vo

You want more? John Anthony's the man with a plan to make you money! Game two goes to Florida and North Carolina! I don't care how many points you gotta lay with Florida, lay it! They'll win by 50!

WALTER pops the CD, heads for the window.

BRANDON

C'mon! First too little, then too much --

WALTER

It's a start.

Brandon

Tell me what you want.

Walter

No. What do you want, Brandon? That's what this is about!

WALTER stops. Steadies himself. He pulls a prescription vial. Sits. Passing, pained look.

BRANDON

Walter? Are you okay?

WALTER

... Huh?... It's nothing.
(popping a pill from the vial, beat, taking
another)
... *Small one.*

BRANDON

Should I call someone?

WALTER

Not unless they got a spare heart. I'm okay.

WALTER finds a cigarette. Lights it. Savors the first drag.

BRANDON

What are you doing?

WALTER

Courage wants to laugh.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - morning

BRANDON riding his bike hard across the Brooklyn Bridge. Wearing earphones while he listens to a radio sports show.

RADIO ANNOUNCER/keith jackson vO

--Talking about college defenses you have to include Oklahoma. The Okie boys are 2nd-ranked going into this weekend and facing an offensive powerhouse in Oregon.

RADIO ANNOUNCER #2 VO

That game and more coming up after the break.

A commercial's heard as BRANDON pedals away, glances up and --surreal sight -- Brandon hurtling at an ELEPHANT'S ASS -- he swerves -- looks back at the TRAINER walking the pachyderm across the city span and --

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

A TV SCREEN FILLS FRAME. A COLLEGE FOOTBALL GAME starts. ANNOUNCERS riff a MEDLEY of analysis and scores.

PULL BACK TO SHOW -- BRANDON comes out of the shower, towel around his waist, putting on a clean shirt. Through a ground floor window the boardwalk can be seen. A child's party is in progress. The elephant ambles by wearing a birthday hat, the bemused TRAINER walking beside him. TONI and WALTER are seen arm-in-arm with their 6-year-old daughter, JULIA. WALTER crosses the lawn, looks through the window.

BRANDON'S switching between football games blaring from the tv. A radio blasts scores and updates. WALTER knocks on the window, mouths "*How we doing?*" BRANDON grabs a betting sheet, writes something, holds it up -- 0 and 9. WALTER scowls. BRANDON realizes it's upside down, flips it to read -- 6 and 0. WALTER kisses the glass and --

EXT. brownstone - SAME TIME - DAY

WALTER catches up to TONI, walks through the party with her.

WALTER

He's a machine, all he does is work out and pick winners. Talk about fit. Go take a peek, see him with his shirt off. I did. He's a serious side of beef.

TONI

Enjoy your daughter's party.

Walter

Check him out, you know you want to.

TONI

Get out of your head, Walter. It's a bad neighborhood.

TONI kisses him, walks with WALTER through the party and --

Ext. Brownstone roof - dusk

Satellite dishes aim at the sky. ANNOUNCER CHATTER continues OVER, giving non-stop COLLEGE football scores. BRANDON comes down the street, carries a bag of take-out.

BRANDON'S POV -- a second floor window opens as someone blows cigarette smoke into the night. Activity seen inside before the window shuts. BRANDON left staring and --

EXT. PARK SLOPE - NIGHT

BRANDON rides a bike. Wears headphones. Sunday's NFL scores coming in now. BRANDON'S reactions indicate he's doing well.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WALTER writing on a call sheet -- 375 calls at \$25/85 at \$50!" The city's seen through WALTER'S office window. NFL ANNOUNCER CHATTER subsides as scores filter in. WALTER flipping through BRANDON'S betting sheets, smile spreading over his face and --

Int. N.y.c. Restaurant - night

Loud. Crowded. High-end. WALTER, TONI and BRANDON at a table, ordering dinner.

BRANDON

I'll have the bruketta and the -- this, with the pasta.

WAITER

(takes the menus, departs)

Very good, and may I say, sir, an excellent choice.

WALTER

It's bruchetta. Like little pizzas without the cheese.

BRANDON

Bruchetta.

WALTER

Don't worry about it. Anyone goes 20 for 24 in college football, 12 for 14 pro can call it whatever he wants. Ever drink a thousand dollar bottle of wine? Steward!

TONI

It's a waste, Walter. He hardly drinks.

WALTER

It's a celebration. Just because he's out with a couple of reformed drunks doesn't mean he can't enjoy himself.

TONI

I was a lot of things, Walter, but I was never a drunk.

BRANDON

Actually, truth be told, I've never had a 12 dollar bottle of water either.

WALTER

He thinks we're fighting.

BRANDON

No. I just, this place is great.

TONI

--Watch out, Walter, he's a fixer.

WALTER

175 calls on the 900 number.

TONI

Did you call home? Let 'em know how you did? How you're doing?

BRANDON

I will tomorrow. My mom works nights at the casino, she'll sleep till three.

TONI

Are you close with your parents?

WALTER

He's very close. They sound terrific.

TONI
Is your name Brandon?

BRANDON
Oh, they're great. We talk all the time.

TONI
What're they like?

BRANDON
Mom's terrific. Amazing lady. I got a little brother, Denny, going to college next year. Complete motor head. Dad's a... well he's a sports nut. He was, I mean, it all came from that.

WALTER
Kid grew up with the frigging Cleavers...

Int. Restaurant - later

WALTER, TONI and BRANDON finish dessert.

WALTER
I should've ordered two.

TONI
What'd the doctor say, Walter?

WALTER
Oh yeah, I've been meaning to tell you. I had a check-up yesterday. Afterwards he was very concerned. He sat me down, looked me in the eye and said, "Walter, who do you like in the Buffalo/Oakland game?"

WALTER laughs. He reaches to Toni's plate, lifts a dessert pitcher.

WALTER
You didn't touch the sauce.

TONI
Neither should you, Walter.

WALTER
I read chocolate's good for you.

TONI
I'm not raising a kid alone.

WALTER
Don't get dramatic, Toni. In biblical times you'd just move in with my brother Morty.

TONI shoots him a look and WALTER quickly sets down the sauce.

WALTER

--Wow. What a meal. Do you feel good,
Brandon? Content?

BRANDON

Very.

WALTER

Yeah, I can tell. Don't be. Ever. One week's
over, another begins. The past is merely a
prologue. In this job you have to push the
envelope every day.

BRANDON glances at a nearby table, catches the eye of a stunning GIRL
sandwiched between two middle-aged, overweight MEN. WALTER catches the
eye contact before she looks away. The GIRL seems bored as the two big
men heartily chow down.

WALTER

Look at that. Beauty and the beasts. What do
you think of her, Brandon?

BRANDON

She's cute.

WALTER

Cute doesn't half cover it. The girl's
gorgeous. And bored out of her mind. Waiting
for some young buck to save her from those two
gorillas. Check it out. She's eyeing you
again, Brandon.

BRANDON

So are the two guys she's with.

Walter

I'll bet you 10-to-1 on a 1000 you can't pick
her up, cash, if you leave with her.

Toni

C'mon Walter. You might as well go to Atlantic
City and open a house account. You know you
can't gamble.

Walter

Who's gambling? It's a challenge. If Brandon
leaves with her I give him ten thousand
dollars, that's probably more than he made last
year. If not, he gives me a grand, which I'll
give to you.

BRANDON

I don't bet, Walter.
(glancing over, look from the GIRL)
... But I *do* love a challenge.

WALTER

All right. Before you bust a move, just one

thing...

(talks across the table, addressing the
MODEL and the two MEN)
Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt but
(MORE)

Walter con'd
I have to know what's going on here.
You're drop dead gorgeous and your dates
look like they haven't missed a meal
since Christ died. Seriously, you
two are eating like you have a date
with the electric chair. What's the story with
you three? I'm not gonna sleep if I don't
know. Lemme guess. Garment district. The
Hardy boys make lingerie and you're a model.
That
it? Close? Sprechenzee English? *Sit down,
sit down* -- I'm just joking. I better stop
before I get stabbed with a fork. Bon appetit.
(turning back, TONI staring at him)

TONI
What the hell was that?

WALTER
I'll send over a bottle of champagne.

Toni
You'll pick up their check.

WALTER
The voice of reason. She's right. I owe 'em a
meal. Hey -- here we go, Brandon, your
girlfriend's going to the bathroom.

The GIRL glides by their table. Heads up a flight of stairs.

WALTER
Well get moving, slick.

Brandon
After that introduction?

WALTER
Hey, I just raised the bar. C'mon, kid. *John
Anthony could close her.*

Beat. BRANDON looks from WALTER to TONI.

TONI
I'd prefer Brandon...

BRANDON smiles. He walks through the restaurant, up the stairs as the
WOMEN'S ROOM door opens and the GIRL emerges before him. She regards
BRANDON. Jaded, disintested air.

BRANDON
You're beautiful.

GIRL
(stepping past)
Excuse me.

BRANDON
I just want to get to know you.

GIRL
You just want to get into my pants.

Brandon
I want to get into your mind, your heart, your
soul. I don't see you wearing any pants in
this equation.

Beat. This could go either way before -- the GIRL smiles.

BRANDON
I'm Brandon. What's your name?

GIRL
Alex.

BRANDON
Alexandria. Beautiful name for a beautiful
girl.

BRANDON leans in close, talking too low now for us to hear. Selling
hard. ALEXANDRIA laughs at something he says and --

INT. MOVING CAB - NIGHT

BRANDON and the GIRL all over each other and --

INT. GIRL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

40th floor of a luxury high rise. In the darkness, BRANDON'S seen naked
on a big bed, GIRL straddling him, body rising and falling, pace
quickening, back arching. BRANDON looks up --GIRL silhouetted against
the floor-to-ceiling windows -- city spires sparkling all around and --

OMIT

INT. BROWNSTONE BACK STAIRWELL - DAY

WALTER and BRANDON reach the second floor landing, stand outside a solid
steel door.

WALTER
Everything you've ever done's been leading up
to this moment. Put your ear to the door.
Hear that? It's the sound of possibilities.
The din of greatness.

WALTER turns the knob, BRANDON nearly tumbles through and --

INT. BROWNSTONE SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Another world. A dozen SALESMEN work in a large room. Phones ring. FAXES churn. Numbers are called out. A half-dozen GIRLS stroll the space, deliver betting and tip sheets.

WALTER

We use the 800 number and free tips to bait the hook. Then the bettors are bounced to our sales staff.

(stopping at the front desk, talking to a pretty Brooklyn GIRL)

You're looking lovely today, Tammy. Give it up baby, you know what I need.

TAMMY smiles, hands WALTER a long list of names and numbers. WALTER studies the sheet as he walks BRANDON through the room.

Walter

This is the day's phone sheet, it's a list of everyone who's called. Only way to keep track of the action. All leads equal money.

BRANDON'S POV -- walking by SALESMEN doing their thing. The first is a chain smoker, battering ram tone. This is SOUTHIE.

Southie

Did I not tell you that game was going over the total? Now stop holding back and let's make some serious dough...

What's our game plan this week? Look, Mr. Mitch, collect from your bookie, wire our pitiful frigging share and then we'll discuss the goddamn game plan.

The second MAN'S HERBIE. Slight. Polite. Soothing tone.

HERBIE

Trust me, we're going to turn all this around... I'm aware last weekend was difficult... Well of course I do, that's a substantial sum--

(cupping the phone, to WALTER)

--He's a bit miffed about our picks

Walter

Fuck him if he can't take a joke.

BRANDON

You're telling me that all this is legal?

WALTER

It better be. Five of these guys are off-duty cops. We're just *advising* people how to bet, not making the bets for 'em.

C'mon, I want you to hear our best salesman,
Reggie Hawks.

REGGIE/INTO PHONE

--It says here your minimum bet's five grand,
so let's be honest now, can you
move 50 large on this game or not?... I don't
have time for this shit, Jimmy. I
know you're a loser, because if you
were such a big winner you wouldn't have paid
money to call me today. Vegas is calling, I'm
putting you on hold.

(pressing hold)

What's up big Wally, you slummin' today!
This the new kid?

WALTER

Brandon Lang, meet Reggie.

REGGIE

You're the QB that went off on the refs.

(BRANDON shamefully nods)

--Yeah, but you covered! Shit, as much money
as the refs cost us every year, that was pure.
Totally crystal. Hell, I like you already.
Even if you did get the best office.

WALTER

(re: an item on the sports ticker)

Barker's not playing this weekend?

REGGIE

Hamstring.

BRANDON

No, he's in the middle of renegotiating. It's
a tantrum, he'll play Sunday.

WALTER and REGGIE exchange a glance, *they can use that* and --

ANGLE ON -- TWO GLASSED-IN OFFICES overlooking the sales room. One
office is crammed with clutter, bears a prominent KEEP OUT sign on the
door. Inside, a big, bearded MAN wolfs a breakfast burrito, scours the
sports pages. In the other office sits a suited, studious-looking MAN in
his 30s, talking on a headset--

Int. Office overlooking sales room - same time - day

JERRY SYKES types stats into a computer as he fields a call. Three
other computer screens flash football info and data. Large, complex wall
graphs chart esoteric team trends. A framed promotional picture shows
JERRY standing in a bank vault, the banner type below reading "Jerry 'The
Source' Sykes, Creator of The Sykes Sports Wagering System."

JERRY

(typing on a computer as he speaks)

--I know it's a new stadium, I'm asking if they

used Astroturf or Astroplay?... Astroplay, it has a rubber silica base, like ground up tires... Look, I don't have time to explain abrasion indexes and resistance scales to you, trust me, it makes a big fucking difference...
(looking through the glass, seeing WALTER showing BRANDON around)
So bribe a security guard, sneak in with the grounds crew, do what you have to --
this is what I pay you for.

Int. enclosed office - SECOND FLOOR - day

WALTER and BRANDON enter. It's spacious. Nicely appointed. A glass partition overlooks the sales room.

WALTER

I had three guys who picked games. I fired one last weekend. I'm giving you his job. This is your office. From here out your picks are going straight to our biggest customers. How do you like it?

BRANDON

What's not to like?

JERRY SYKES appears at the door. Fast glance at BRANDON, attention to WALTER --

JERRY

The Miami/New York point spread shifted a half tick up to 10.

WALTER

What do you think?

JERRY

Miami's still a lock. The win/loss ratios and RPI ratings are off the charts. I'm keeping it on my sheet.

WALTER

Jerry's our top handicapper, came to me straight out of grad school. Jerry, meet the new kid in town.

JERRY

Whoa, phone guy makes good. Big jump from the 900 numbers. Watch out you don't get a nose bleed. Just kidding, best of luck, I gotta get back to work.

BRANDON

Pleasure meeting you. By the way, Jerry, New York's gonna win straight up. They always play the fish tight. Tonight it's foregone, they win outright.

JERRY

Really? Listen up, stick to college, sonny.
You have to work up to pro ball around here.
Nice try though.

WALTER

(watching JERRY walk away)

I got three guys who can handicap and 20 who
can sell but I never had one who could do both,
not really, not until now.

BRANDON

You mean me?

WALTER

Not you. John Anthony.

BRANDON

John Anthony doesn't exist.

WALTER

That's a shock 'cause I'm standing in his
office and you're sitting in his chair!

BRANDON

Look, making predictions is one thing -- but
pushing people to bet, it's not me.

WALTER

Pushing people? Get real, this country was
built on gambling. Look at Wall Street -- one
big casino. The state spends millions hawking
the lottery. If people want to pay for advice
on who to bet, who are we to say no? Stop
being selfish, spread the word! Check your
bible, Brandon, tis better to give than
receive.

Brandon

You got a whole room full of salesmen.

WALTER

Big bettors don't want to talk to a middle man,
they want to speak to the guy making the picks
-- and you're picking 80 percent winners.

(MORE)

WALTER CON'D

What's the matter? Gonna lose your purity?
C'mon, what do you think selling is? We're
just talking a few well-timed phrases. Let's
start with an easy one. A throw-away. "I
don't want your money, I want your bookie's
fucking money?"

BRANDON

I don't want your money --

WALTER

--Jesus, don't start that shit again. *Sell me.*

BRANDON

I don't want your money, I want your bookie's money!

WALTER

What happened to the fuck?

BRANDON

Nothing, I just don't talk like that.

WALTER

I can't have someone working for me who can't say fuck.

BRANDON

It's not that I can't. Why do I have to?

WALTER

Because there's no other fucking word that can convey the precise feeling and fucking flavor of life's various predicaments and certain concepts the way a well-placed fuck can. Fuck is your friend. Fuck can be your *best* friend.

BRANDON

I'm happy for you and your friend, Walter, but I'm not using it.

WALTER

Chaucer used it 600 years ago. It was good enough for him. C'mon--

(calling out to the SALESMEN)

--this fucking guy has a problem saying fuck!

A chorus of "Fuck yous" fill the air.

WALTER

C'mon, repeat after me -- fuck fuck fuck
fuck fuck. Fuck he, fuck she, fuck me,
fuck them, fuck me -- try it.

BRANDON

It's not me. Let it go.

WALTER

Backbone. Almost as good. We'll keep working on the other thing... So, you really like New York in tonight's game?

Ext. manhattan - mid-day

Looking down Fifth. Thousands of heads in a hurry to get somewhere. Here comes BRANDON and WALTER.

BRANDON
Where are we going?

WALTER
Continue your education.

INT. MANHATTAN apartment building - day

A dozen people fill an upscale living room. Doorbell. A well dressed WOMAN answers. WALTER and BRANDON stand before her.

WALTER
We're here for the gambler's anonymous meeting...

Int. Manhattan apartment - day

The GROUP sit in a circle, listen as a BUSINESSMAN, near tears, gives his testimony.

BUSINESSMAN
...I mean you'd think with two mortgages out, repo guys staking out my car, my job on the line and my wife threatening to leave, you'd think I'd have the goddamn brains to stop, instead of staying in the chase, doubling down, which of course is what I did... I know I'm sick because I keep thinking if I just pulled that game out then I got a lock on the parlay and I'm flush going into Monday night and--
(breaking down, unable to continue)

MEMBER #1
... It's a disease, Leon.

MEMBER #2
Admitting you have a problem is the first step.

BUSINESSMAN/LEON
Then I guess I'm doing pretty good because I got one big fucking problem.

Someone claps. Everyone joins in. LEON smiles. Warm beat. WALTER suddenly stands. BRANDON watches, concerned.

WALTER
My name's Walter. I'm new to the group.
(various "hellos")
Hi. I've been going to meetings like this for 18 years. Once a week, every Friday night, for 18 years. This, my friends, is my 936th consecutive meeting.
(enthusiastic applause)
Thank you. Thanks. And my hand to God, I haven't been to a track, casino or bet a game that whole time. Not a cent.

(murmurs of approval)
I've listened to thousands of sob stories by people like Leon here, and I gotta say, Leon -- if I learned one thing it's that gambling is not your problem.

LEON

It's not?

WALTER

Not even close. You're a lemon. Like a bad car, there's something inherently defective in you. And you. And me! All of us here -- we're lemons! Big, juicy, acidic, ice-tea flavoring lemons! We look like everyone else but we're defective because when most people make a bet they want to win, while we, the degenerate gamblers of the world, we're subconsciously playing to lose. All humans like going to the edge of the abyss, but what makes us different is we go all the way and hurl ourselves off into the void! And we like doing it so much we do it time after time after time! Me? I always felt most alive when they were raking away the chips, and every one here knows what I'm talking about. People like us, even when we win, it's just a matter of time before we give it all back. But when we lose, and I mean the kind of loss that makes your asshole pucker to the size of a decimal point, there's a moment when you're standing there and you've just recreated the worst possible nightmare this side of malignant cancer for the 20th goddamn time and you suddenly realize -- *hey, I'm still here, I'm still breathing, I'm still alive!* In order to really live you have to be aware of your own mortality -- and a *losing* bet of a certain size is one of the best ways

(MORE)

WALTER CON'D

I know of getting that feeling. When you win, you defy death, but when you lose, you survive it, and that's remarkable! Us lemons, we fuck shit up on purpose! We need to constantly remind ourselves that we're alive! Gambling's not the problem, Leon, your fucked up need to feel something, to convince yourself you exist, to test what's really real, that's the problem!

BICYCLE MESSENGER

Hey! You're the guy I see on tv every weekend selling betting picks!

WALTER

... Yeah. So?

SHLUB IN A GIANTS JACKET
This guy peddles a tout service on tv.

WALTER
Check the charter, buddy, we all left our jobs
at the door. You gonna toss an ex-alcoholic
bartender out of an AA meeting?

BICYCLE MESSENGER
(to BRANDON)
Hey, didn't you come with this jerk?

BRANDON

... No, I mean, we walked in together --

WALTER
(handing out business cards)
-- My card -- we're topping 80 percent this
season -- put it in your wallet, in case you
fall off the wagon --

Int. APARTMENT elevator - day

WALTER and BRANDON riding down in silence. Finally --

BRANDON
What the fuck was that?!

WALTER
... What'd you just say?

BRANDON
You heard me! I said what was *that*?

WALTER
No, you said "What the fuck?" That's what you
said.

BRANDON
So?

Walter
That was great! It was all worth it! Don't you
see? I felt your anger because of that one
word! Well done! I'm proud of you! The
progress you're making Brandon, I gotta say,
it's exhilarating!

OMIT

INT. SALESROOM - DAY

Cacophony of calls. Building buzz. College football games play in the
BG. The big, bearded MAN exits his pack-rat cluttered work space,

strides to the office coffee machine, pours a quick cup. BRANDON approaches, extends a hand.

BRANDON
Hey, I stopped by to say hi, I'm Brandon.

BIG MAN
(averting his gaze, walking past)
Congratulations.

BRANDON
I'm picking now with you and Jerry.

CHUCK
(ducking back into his office)
Whatever.

The MAN shuts the door, leaves BRANDON looking at the *KEEP OUT* sign. SOUTHIE stops for a coffee, has seen the exchange.

SOUTHIE
Don't take it personal. Chuck's got a condition, get's anxious around people.

CHUCK closes his blinds, blocks out his glassed-in walls and--

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

BRANDON'S poring over sports pages and injury reports when TAMMY enters his office, sits on his desk, extends a lead sheet.

TAMMY
His name's Amir, he's a dime bettor. Owns a dry cleaners. We got him for the subscription. He's on line three.
(leans in, gives BRANDON a kiss)

TAMMY
Walter wanted your first call to be special. Go get 'em tiger.

BRANDON
(picking up)
Amir, my man, John Anthony here!

INT. NEW JERSEY DRY CLEANER - DAY

A MIDDLE EASTERN MAN (ratty t-shirt, beard stubble, sleepless look) stands in the back of a low-end dry cleaners.

AMIR
Yes, hello.

BRANDON

Today's your day, Amir! It's a Pamplona thing, I'm running wild in the streets this

weekend! Starting with the hottest
Saturday of my life! How much can you lay
with your bookie? 20 large?

Amir

You crazy? No way. I was betting a thousand a
game but... Look, I saw an ad. I was just
calling to see--

BRANDON

--Amir, this is my lock of a lifetime! Texas
plus the six points! They win by two
touchdowns!

Amir

Really? I like Oklahoma in that game.

BRANDON

(looks up, sees WALTER watching)
Oklahoma huh? Okay... well considering that, I
like Texas even more now.

Amir

I shouldn't have called. Thank you for--

BRANDON

--Amir, buddy, I'm talking about banging out
the biggest win of your life.

WALTER crosses, whispers to BRANDON. Into the phone:

BRANDON

Hold on, I got Vegas on the line.
(pressing HOLD)

WALTER

There's only one thing you have to know about
any of our clients -- they're all in the hole.
The second they pick up the phone, *wham!* Right
to the point! You're above them! Let 'em feel
it! More confidence! More John Anthony!
(punches speaker phone)

BRANDON/into phone

Amir, what's your favorite drink?

AMIR

Favorite drink? I dunno, Pina Colada.

BRANDON

Tomorrow we gotta get you a new drink. But for
now, this is what you're gonna do. First,
you're going to bet 20 large on Texas, then
you're going to put on a
Hawaiian shirt, whip up your sweet little rum
concoction with the orange slice and
the cherry, turn on the game and play

with the little umbrella while you sit
back and watch Texas tear those Okies a
new asshole -- and when you call me back
after winning 20 G's the first thing out of
your mouth will be words every fratboy knows --
"Thank you, sir, may I have another!"

AMIR

... What about payment?

BRANDON

Good question. What about it?

Amir

Well how much is this going to cost me?

BRANDON

We take a percentage if WE win, Amir -- not
exactly your problem of late, is it?

Amir

What if I don't pay?

BRANDON

It's simple, you don't get any more picks.
Comprende? So make the bet, make the drink and
let's roll this into
something big!

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BRANDON jamming, using a phone headset.

BRANDON

To hell with power ratings -- *McNab lost his
dog yesterday!* Hunting accident. Everyone
knows you don't mess with a man who just lost
his dog! Take Atlanta plus the points and send
me ten thou Western Union by tomorrow, Stan --
let's ride this wave into Sunday!

(punching a new call)

Denny! Sorry to keep you on hold, bro... Hell
yeah it takes pictures, bitchen
little phone, huh? Now I got something else
for ya, Green Bay against Minnesota, *take the
Cheesheads...* That's right -- go to a sports
book and put 500 hundred on 'em... So I'll send
you the money to bet... Don't worry about it,
just JPEG your big brother a smile when you
win.

Int. Sales room - day

WALTER paces like a hyped-up Ahab as his SALESMEN jam.

SOUTHIE

Billy, thanks for the 15,000 Fed Ex. What're

you up, 160 or something?
Did you ever go 12-2 betting college football
before? Didn't think so. Now, Greenbay--
Dallas--Cleveland--100,000 across the board,
got it?

REGGIE

The fuck do you care how he does it? And where
the hell's our 30 grand for hitting that 3-team
college parlay last night?

HERBIE

(sipping a cup of tea)
Do this, call your off-shore sports book right
now and put the whole 100,000 on Green Bay-
Dallas-Cleveland, it's called a three-team
parlay and pays 6-1. I do appreciate the
40,000 you sent us today, but let me assure you
we've only just begun to make serious money.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

NFL GAMES fill the TV screens. Theme music, announcers and action create
a frenetic pace.

TIME LAPSE

SAME SHOT. LATER. Sunday sports start winding down and --

TIME LAPSE

SAME SHOT. LATER. All the screens are dark save one, where the last
game of the day finally ends in overtime and --

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BRANDON pulls the headset, heads out to the water fountain. SALESMEN
work the phones, glance at him as he passes.

Herbie

... Hey -- *great job.*

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TONI in the kitchen cooking pasta. Moving fast. BRANDON sits in the
living room, watches JULIA ride WALTER like a horse. Music on the
stereo.

JULIA

Faster daddy!

WALTER crawls around the room, stops before BRANDON, grins.

WALTER

10-2 in pro football? 85 percent for the
weekend? Jesus, you're a mutant.

JULIA

Go daddy!

WALTER whinnies like a horse, keeps crawling. BRANDON goes into the kitchen. TONI cooking at the stove, referring to a daily planner, talking on the phone.

TONI

Monday's no good because I take Julia to ballet. Tuesday I work late at the salon. Wednesday's a maybe if I can move a couple clients to after six but I'll have to check. I really want to come in with him. Listen, I have to call you back tomorrow.
(grabbing a pot about to boil over)

BRANDON

What's all the commotion?

TONI

The doctor, thank God, put Walter, on an exercise program. I want to be there the first time he goes. Make sure the trainer understands Walter's aversion to consistency.

BRANDON

Aversion to consistency?

TONI

He's always been that way.

BRANDON

Well that's consistent.

CLOSE ON -- WALTER watches from the living room -- sees TONI and BRANDON laughing, enjoying each other and --

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

WALTER, TONI and BRANDON relaxing after dinner.

WALTER

Life is fucking... good.
(burp, regarding BRANDON)
Let's talk about making it better.

TONI

Duck, Brandon, here it comes.

WALTER

I've been tracking you since last year.

TONI

Don't let him steamroll you.

WALTER

--Can I get the damn thing out? I want to put

John Anthony on tv this week.

BRANDON

That's me. You mean me.

WALTER

That's right. You, John Anthony. You're one in the same.

TONI

Go on -- get to the good part, Walter.

WALTER

Hold on. Before I say another word, understand -- you do this thing, Brandon, and from here out you gotta eat, sleep, shit, breathe, walk, talk and fart John Anthony. It's not just a new persona. You can't *play* it. You gotta live it. That's how this works. The only way it works. You have to sell it all the way.

TONI

Think it over, Brandon, don't decide now.

BRANDON

It sounds like a promotion.

WALTER

Bet your ass it is. Five-star.

BRANDON

--*I'm in.*

TONI

Well that's a thoughtful response. Here I was, worried you'd rush your decision.

BRANDON

It's the only move. For six years I've been living on Ramen noodles. For the first time in a long time I've got something going. If that means I gotta do a little acting, fine.

WALTER

Living, not *acting*. You understand that as of right now Brandon Lang with his fettucini knee and his self-fucking pity is as flat dead as Donald Trump's hair and John "I-can-walk-on-fucking-water" Anthony has taken his place?

TONI

Listen to what he's asking you, Brandon.

WALTER

She's right. There's no going back. I mean

that. This is gonna cost me. I'm talking about building an *empire* around you. Do you understand that?

BRANDON

... Should I wait a little to create some tension? Of course I understand, I'm John Fucking Anthony. I've got the crystal ball...

INT. TONI'S SALON - DAY

BRANDON'S FACE FILLS SCREEN. Scissors come in, start cutting. TONI begins bringing John Anthony to life. BRANDON chatting her up in the chair, TONI laughing at something he says and --

INT. BARNEY'S MEN'S STORE - DAY

BRANDON (new haircut) stands in private room, modeling a suit. WALTER nearby, looks through racks of clothes with a SALESMAN.

INT. mercedes DEALERSHIP - DAY

BRANDON (new haircut, new suit) walks through the showroom as WALTER talks with a DEALER.

WALTER

I need a new car for my friend.

DEALER

(to BRANDON)

Do you have any credit?

BRANDON

No.

DEALER

Walter, do you trust him?

WALTER

With my wife naked.

DEALER

(calling to BRANDON)

In that case, which one do you want?

BRANDON comes over, runs his hand over a sleek, silver SL500.

WALTER

I think he likes that one.

EXT. SIXTH AVENUE BAR - day

The silver SL500 pulls to the curb. License plate reading "900 KING." A pair of \$500 shoes emerge. BRANDON stands on the sidewalk as the DOORMAN comes up, eyes the car.

Doorman

I'll watch it for you.
 (seeing the license plate)
What's "900 King?"

 BRANDON
 (handling him a card)
I don't lose.

BRANDON heads into the bar, meets WALTER and a group of HEAVY HITTERS outside. John ANTHONY instantly comes alive and --

INT. tv production house - NIGHT

BRANDON and WALTER sitting side-by-side, getting made-up.

 MAKE-UP ARTIST/to brandon
You're sweating a lot honey.

BRANDON nervously regards himself in the mirror. WALTER sees.

 WALTER
You okay?

 BRANDON
I'm scared shitless.

 WALTER
Don't worry about your lines, it's all
scripted. You've been here before, kid, just
think of it like a football game.

 BRANDON
This is different.

 WALTER
How?

 BRANDON
There's no opponent.

 WALTER
Perfect, then you're a lock to win.

INT. TV PRODUCTION HOUSE - NIGHT

The CAMERA TRACKS to a talk show-like set dominated by a triangular table, three chairs and a backdrop bearing a sports-themed logo and the words - THE SPORTS ADVISORS. BRANDON sits between WALTER and JERRY, increasingly nervous as the CAMERAS push close. CHUCK arrives, loud suit, takes a seat at the end of the table, head down, averting eye contact with everyone.

 TECH
30 seconds. Walter, we're not getting your
audio.

 WALTER

(fumbling with a clipped on mike)
Something's wrong here.

JERRY

(leaning over, plugging in a wire)
Your lead's loose, I got it. I'm talking to
the tech guys about going wireless.
JERRY looks at BRANDON, staring anxiously at
the teleprompter.

JERRY

John Anthony, huh? All I see's another
wannabee in a 1000-dollar suit. Word to
the wise, save the clothes you came in.

TECH

Five, four, three, two, one--

(NOTE: WALTER and the PANEL follow text from a teleprompter.)

Walter

Welcome to this week's edition of *The Sports
Advisors!* America's premier sports information
program with myself, Walter Abrams, Jerry
Sykes, Chuck Adler and a truly gifted newcomer
to the Sports Advisor panel, a substantial find
-- John Anthony! We're entering week six in
pro football! This is when the cream rises to
the top! This is when things get hot! It's
oven mitt time! This is big-time ball season
so let's get right into it with the Wizard of
Odds -- Jerry "The Source" Sykes! Jerry,
what's the Sykes System predicting for this
weekend?

JERRY

Walter, my patented computer models tell me
we're looking at nothing less than the perfect
storm of betting opportunities. But first,
last week I cashed in a big-time call on on
Chicago as an outright winner over Indianapolis
-- making it my 8th *straight* top selection
winner right here on this tv show! This Sunday
I have 5 match-ups I absolutely love, including
Miami at New York! Stats, rankings, records,
weather, the Sykes System uses 42 proven indexes
to *eliminate* the guesswork from sports
wagering. Without my *patented*, computer-based
picks you have a better chance of seeing God
knocking on your door with five strippers and a
bag of Bolivian cocaine than winning on your
own! Call me for my five games! Absolutely
free -- 800-238-6648!

WALTER

Our experts know how to read between the lines,
we know how to analyze a point spread, we're
not pulling rabbits out of

a hat here. Certainly not Chuck Adler --
(turning to CHUCK)
Chuck, you'd probably eat that rabbit if you
got your hands on it.

CHUCK
(coming suddenly, wildly alive)
Hell yes -- with a side order of fried
bookmaker!!! I'm the grim reaper of
bookmakers! I've put more bookies out of
business than the I.R.S.! How many gamblers
did I bail out last weekend with my game of the
year! Denver, a 10-
point underdog beating Cincinatti by two
touchdowns! A \$100 bettor made \$10,000!
(MORE)

CHUCK CON'D
A \$500 bettor made \$50,000! I've got six games
on Sunday I'm releasing absolutely free! These
games are a burial! A blow-out! A human lock!
You can bet your children's unborn children's
children on these six games -- ABSOLUTELY
FREE!!!

WALTER
(finger in his ear)
Holy Christ, I forgot my earplugs. Take a
break before you blow a gasket, we'll get back
to you after my hearing returns. Saturday
comes before Sunday and looking at this
Saturday's college match-ups is the last but
certainly not least member of The Sports
Advisors -- John Anthony!

BRANDON
(reading off the teleprompter)
--John Anthony here, the Million Dollar Man
with the billion dollar plan! From Wall Street
to Tokyo to Hollywood, all your big money stays
and plays with me!
(beat, processing this, suddenly going off
the teleprompter script)
--Someone wrote some great stuff for me here
but the "*Million Dollar Man*," I dunno, it
sounds kinda small somehow. I mean maybe if
you change that M in million to a Z I could get
behind it. They tried all sorts of names,
wanted to call me the Magic Man -- but picking
80 percent winners sounds pretty scientific to
me. So let's just call me John. I was a
quarterback. And every QB knows the key to
victory is anticipating -- the ability to see
the future and react to it. That is what I do,
that's the truth, and what do they say about
the truth, Walter?

WALTER

... It bites you on the ass?

BRANDON

Not in my case. You tell us, Jerry.

JERRY

It sets you free?

BRANDON

That's right, but with me it makes you M-O-N-
EE! I'm picking 80 percent, is that
unbelievable? Well it used to be. I know the
leagues! I know the players! I

(MORE)

BRANDON CON'D

know the game! I'm your friend on the field!
Your insider on the outside! You can't do what
I do if you haven't been there! Played at the
level I have! Maybe you'll get lucky -- guess
right once in a while -- but these match- ups
won't be called consistently by anything other
than experience! Forget trends! Throw out
every system you possess! Keep your friends
but toss their opinions out the window! It's
time to change I-would-if-I-could to *I-can-and-
I-am*! You wanna know who I like -- call that
little number at the bottom of your screen!

BRANDON continues. CAMERA on WALTER, watching proudly and --

INT. WALTER AND TONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WALTER walks down the dim hall, looks in on JULIA, sleeping.

INT. WALTER AND TONI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dim darkness. Silence. Then someone bumps into something. Muffled
curse. A light goes on. TONI sits up in bed, sees WALTER fully dressed,
across the room, holding his shoes.

WALTER

I'm not here. Go back to sleep.

TONI

It's four in the morning.

WALTER

(continues to his dresser, manic)
What a show! You should have seen him! I'm
sitting there watching him roll and I swear he
made me want to grab a phone and call! I took
the sales boys out to Smith and Wo's. Get 'em
primed for the
weekend. Chuck got drunk, took a swing
at one of the deer heads on the wall.
Just blowing off steam. I'm gonna hire more

guys Monday. Put in more phones.
Everything's amping up. It's okay. There's
room. I'll tear down a
few walls, fit another 10 desks down
there easy. I'm gonna do a whole dot-com thing
around him! Oh shit, if I had me when I was
his age... I never had a
protege. Someone you hand it all down to.
Anything happens to me, he steps in! Just
knowing that, with the thing... I
mean that's just beautiful!
(changing into workout clothes)
Just beautiful.

TONI

What are you doing?

WALTER

Going for a run. See the sunrise. We're
doubling volume this week. And doubling it
again after that. He can pick, he can sell,
he's gonna change things around here. He's the
real deal. Knows sports from the *inside*.
That's how he picks. Guy like him comes along
once in a -- a --

TONI

-- 100 years.

WALTER

Yeah, a lifetime.

TONI

Walter, come to bed.

WALTER

Not tired.

TONI

You're exhausted.

WALTER

I'm just gonna run the bridge, up Fifth, circle
Central Park, be back in no time.

TONI

Get in bed. Lie down next to me. Come on.
Come here, Walter.

WALTER

Just a quick once-around.

TONI

Roll on your stomach for a minute.

WALTER

Just for a sec. I've gotta meet the trainer

tomorrow. Told me to run. Run in place, or
from one place to another...

WALTER lays down. TONI gently massages his back. She leans in, whispers
to him. We sense she's done this before.

TONI

--I know. Of course you do. This is no time
to sleep, Walter... Can't sleep now... Just
because you're so tired... Completely, totally,
utterly exhausted... I'll be here when you get
back from your

(MORE)

TONI CON'D

run... Right beside you... You go on now, baby,
I'll stay right here... It's okay... Close your
eyes... Just for a second before you leave...
I'm not going anywhere... I'll just hold you--
(quietly crying)
I'll wait right here for you...

TONI'S whisperings become a constant, soothing, mantra. WALTER'S eyes
close. Dressed in sweats and sneakers. Gone. TONI loosens his laces,
covers him with a blanket, slides under the covers. TONI kills the
light. Seen in darkness. Holding WALTER close, draping a protective arm
around and --

INT. SALES ROOM - DAY

A SLEDGE HAMMER smashes through a wall. DELIVERYMEN dolly in new desks
and chairs to accomodate more salesmen. SOUTHIE and REGGIE at the water
fountain, watch the room expand.

SOUTHIE

You see him this morning? Wearing those suits
to work now.

REGGIE

He keeps picking 90 percent I'll press the
fuckers for him.

WALTER walks in, stops at the front desk, speaks to TAMMY.

WALTER

What a weekened! Helluva Christmas bonus if
this keeps up. Where'd you hide the phone
sheet?

TAMMY locates the sheet, hands it to him. WALTER studies it, starts
away. He sees something, stops. Walking back --

Walter

(to TAMMY, pointing on the sheet)
Who's this? This guy here -- *Lang*?

TAMMY

I dunno, he said it was personal.

WALTER

Did Brandon take the call?

Tammy

He wasn't in.

WALTER

Don't mention it to him. And don't patch the guy through. Say Brandon doesn't work here, you can't reach him.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

BRANDON at his desk, reading *The New York Post*. JERRY enters.

JERRY

You know anything about Stokley being out this weekend against the New York?

BRANDON

A knock would be nice, Jerry.

JERRY

I'm underwater here, man. Yes or no?

BRANDON

No.

JERRY

You know something... You hear anything, let me know. That's how this works.

BRANDON

I'll rush right over. Stat.

JERRY

All inside information gets shared.

BRANDON

Inside? I've got nothing *inside*.

JERRY

F.Y.I. -- we work as a team here, that's the way we do it. I'll do the same for you. So stop holding out on me, babe.

BRANDON

This wouldn't have anything to do with you going 30 percent this weekend, would it?

JERRY

Listen you little shit, I've been doing this six years to your one.

WALTER

(entering, to JERRY--)
What are you doing in here? Hit the phones and
do some damage control -- re-write your
frigging computer program.

JERRY
Hey, it was a fucked weekend.

WALTER
For some people.
(to BRANDON)

Walter
There's a 50-dime bettor on line three. Wants
to talk to John Anthony.

BRANDON
Who?

WALTER
His name's Carl. Carl owns a couple dozen
McDonalds franchises. Guy's a gazillionaire.
That sign out front might as well be his bank
account.

JERRY
No no no no no. What'd you mean? I landed
that lead! That's my guy!

WALTER
Was.

JERRY
He's raiding my fucking lists!

WALTER
Your clients are jumping ship you lactose
intolerant fuck! Get outta my sight!

JERRY leaves. BRANDON picks up the phone --

Brandon
Carl, John Anthony here, how's the fast-food
king...? Good--

INT. WALTER AND TONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door opens. TONI, carrying groceries, and JULIA, dressed in
ballerina clothes enter, walk into the kitchen.

JULIA
Can we play?

TONI
Okay, let me just put the groceries away.

JULIA

I want to play princess.

TONI

So do I. Go put your dress on.

JULIA runs off to her room when TONI suddenly spies a tacky, woman's jacket draped on a chair. TONI regards it and --

The CAMERA tracks TONI through the apartment. Down the hall. Voices heard. A man and woman as -- WALTER emerges from his office with a CALL GIRL. He's pulling bills from his wallet.

WALTER

Easy 200, huh? Here's something extra for a cab.

GIRL

Thanks, Walter. Talk to ya.

WALTER

(seeing TONI)
I can explain.

The CALL GIRL slides by, shows herself out. TONI staring.

WALTER

No, no, you think she was for me? Are you crazy? No. I just had her come up to pay her. I got her for John.

TONI

I don't give a damn who you got her for! We have a 6-year-old in the house, Walter! What the hell is going on here?
(looking in, checking the made bed)
Don't bullshit me!

WALTER

You think I slept with her? C'mon!

TONI

Who the hell's John?

WALTER

Brandon, we all call him John now.

TONI

You got Brandon a hooker?

WALTER

New city, no friends, working all hours.

TONI

What the hell are you creating here, Walter?

WALTER

I don't understand this. I was helping him

out, that's all.

TONI

Helping him? Really? Like the others before him?

WALTER

This kid's different, he's different -- wait a minute. This has nothing to do with you, you know I do business up here. Why are you so angry?

TONI

Are we actually going to have this conversation? Are you completely clueless?

WALTER

You're jealous. Look at you!

TONI

Of what?!

WALTER

Gee, I don't know -- *Brandon screwing someone?*

TONI

You really are fucking crazy, Walter! That never entered my mind!

WALTER

That's not where those thoughts enter.

TONI

Fuck you!

TONI goes into the kitchen, slams the door. Calling to her --

WALTER

You'll be happy to know he didn't sleep with her. I paid her off just for coming. No pun intended.

WALTER grimaces, clutches his side. WALTER pops one, two -- three pills from a vial, let's them settle as JULIA, princess clothes, runs down the hall, leaps in his arms. WALTER stifles the pain of her embrace. Carries her down the hall.

WALTER

... Julia my jewel, you're getting big angel.

JULIA

Can we play princess, Daddy?

WALTER

Course we can. Who am I gonna be?

JULIA

You're the king, daddy, like always.

INT. SPORTS ADVISORS tv SET - NIGHT

BRANDON practicing John Anthony expressions. A pretty MAKE-UP ARTIST finishes touching him up.

MAKE-UP ARTIST

I made 500 bucks off your picks last week. I was thinking maybe we could go out later and get a little wild... you can help me blow some.

BRANDON

Let's get really wild and you can blow mine.

The GIRL laughs. BRANDON crosses the stage, takes his place on the set between WALTER and JERRY. CHUCK sits off to the side, eating a muffin. WALTER looks over at BRANDON --

WALTER

Look at you. I *like* the tan.

BRANDON

Toni put one of those lamps down in my room. The ladies do love it.

TECHNICIAN

60 seconds!

WALTER

John's up first tonight, Jerry.

JERRY

What?

WALTER

John Anthony's leading off tonight.

JERRY

John Anthony's leading?

WALTER

Somebody tell the engineer there's an echo in here.

JERRY

Two years I lead and you bury me in the deck over a few lousy fucking weekends? The Sykes System's based on percentages -- the long haul.

WALTER

No, that's called a *mutual fund*, Jerry.

JERRY

(to CHUCK)

You gonna sit for this shit?

CHUCK shrugs, finishes his muffin. JERRY turns to WALTER --

JERRY

... He leads, I'm walking.

WALTER

He's leading.

JERRY unclips his microphone, stands.

WALTER

That's baby talk! You need a fucking rattle!
Sit down!

(staring him down)

You probably think you know what I'm gonna say... how everything you got I pay for. Your apartment, your car, your kid's school -- and it's true. You'd be right. I do. Now I don't know, Jerry, maybe you break your losing streak, end the shneid, start winning again and find yourself another job, but then of course maybe you don't. I don't see you taking that chance. My gut says you'll walk out of here on principle or even pride but not on a gamble, a hunch yet. And if you do, fuck it. I give a shit? The only reason I keep you around is it makes me look loyal and him--

(pointing at BRANDON)

--look good! Now you got three fucking seconds to stop standing there like dog shit on my porch and sit down and shut the fuck up or you can kiss everything you have goodbye! The clock's started.

Beat. JERRY sinks into his seat. WALTER turns to BRANDON.

WALTER

See that? He made the safe play. Me, I would've walked, but I'm a fucked-up human being. That's the difference between us. Right there. Jerry's a statistician, I'm a gambler. And you're not a gambler, not really -- until you bet more than you can afford to lose.

TECHNICIAN

Five, four, three, two, one --

Walter

Welcome to week 7 of pro football!

INT. SPORTS ADVISORS TV SET - BACK HALL - NIGHT

BRANDON done taping, wiping off make-up, talking on his cell --

BRANDON

Denny, it's me... What'd I tell ya?... Hey,

it's your money, dude, you won it... Well did you hook it up yet?... Hell yeah, crank it, let me hear--

INTERCUT - EXT. DENNY AT HOME IN GARAGE - NIGHT

Denny on his cell, crouched under the dash of his car, wiring a new stereo. He touches two wires and the sound system BOOMS to life, *deafening* hip-hop before Denny disconnects the wires.

DENNY

It's the bomb, B!

Brandon

Sure sounds like it! I'm heading out with some people, everything else cool?

DENNY

Everything's great. Did dad reach you?

Brandon

Dad? No, why?

DENNY

He keeps calling. He saw you on tv, wants to talk to you. I gave him your work number but he says they won't put him through.

BRANDON

Really?

BRANDON'S eye catches WALTER across the set, watching a playback of the show. TONI enters the studio, kisses WALTER hello and --

Int. tv production HOUSE lobby - night

WALTER, BRANDON and TONI exit the stage, enter into the lobby.

WALTER

I'm starved, there's a new steak house around the corner. You two split a prime rib, I'll get the porterhouse, we'll whack it up!

TONI

Let's walk, you could use the exercise.

WALTER

Stop worrying. We're set--

(arm around BRANDON)

--I got the next Jimmy the Greek here! I'm serious! Nostra-fucking-damus was a novelty act next to this guy!

BRANDON

Let me ask you something, Walter.

WALTER

Shoot.

BRANDON

Have you been blocking any of my calls?

WALTER

Of course. You don't need distractions,
there's a lot of crazies out there.

BRANDON

Does that include my father?

WALTER

You're asking, I'll tell you... Yeah.

BRANDON

(striding outside)
Son of a bitch -- for how long?

WALTER

(following)
Week or so.

TONI

Walter.

EXT. TV PRODUCTION HOUSE building - night

WALTER and TONI trail BRANDON down the lamp-lit sidewalk.

WALTER

Hold on, Brandon, if I didn't block his calls
would you've talked to him? *Honestly.*

BRANDON

That's not the point!

WALTER

Then what exactly is the point, Brandon? What's
the full story here? What's the deal with your
old man?

BRANDON

You tell it, you seem to know.

WALTER

--I only know pieces. I was trying to spare
you from something.

BRANDON

(stopping under a street light)
Spare me? By blocking my calls? There's
nothing you can spare me from. He's a drunk.
Left when I was 9. I couldn't compete with a
bottle. End of story.

WALTER

... *That's it?* That's the best you can do?
Hell, Toni and I'll match our dysfunctional
childhoods against yours
any day of the week. My father, 5-foot-
arms like this, cock the size of a hebrew
national -- if I even looked at him wrong he
knocked me across the room like LaMotta. He
yelled so much, until I was five I thought my
name was asshole. Tell him about you, Toni.
Well go on --

TONI

I didn't have a great home-life either.

WALTER

"Great?" Tell him about the uncle--

TONI

--He gets the idea.

WALTER

Don't sugarcoat this shit, you were abused by
everybody but the family pet, isn't that right,
honey?

TONI

Walter, *please*.

WALTER

(to BRANDON)

Your father was a drunk, a jerk -- *so what?* It
happens. I'm glad I blew him off. Know why?
Because what you need is a new image of a man.
How 'bout me?

BRANDON

That's a really scary thought.

WALTER

If not me, then pick someone else. It's all in
your head! The shit that happened to you, to
Toni, to me -- you know what it is? Just that,
shit that happened.

(MORE)

WALTER CON'D

It's not who we are. After
(MORE)

Walter con'd

all the therapy and the analysis and the
meetings and the -- aaahhhh! -- the one thing I
know--

(yelling to the sky)

--WE'RE ALL FUCKED UP! We are all just so
fucked up!

(to BRANDON)
Say it! Shout it! Come on, you two -- wallow
with me here!

A MAN sticks his head out a window down the street, yells --

MAN
I'm trying to sleep, asshole!

WALTER
Dad! Is that you?

MAN
I'll crush you like a beetle!

WALTER
How's Mom?!

MAN
Fucking freak!

WALTER
I love you too! Don't wait up!

WALTER, TONI and BRANDON all laugh. The three of them doubled over on the dark, deserted street. MAN screaming from above. The ring of a phone begins bleeding in and --

Int. Brandon's office - day

New furniture and sports photos on the walls suggest the passage of time. BRANDON stands before a mirror, being fitted for a suit by a TAILOR. He has a cigar in one hand, Coke in the other, talks into a headset as he watches the TAILOR work.

Brandon
Are you serious, Amir? You gonna fucking
haggle with me over a measly 50 thousand on the
250 grand I won you this weekend?

EXT. Amir's dry cleaners - day

AMIR (sharply attired) stands outside his business, leaning against a brand new, red Ferrari as he talks on the phone.

AMIR
Don't get me wrong, John. I'm thankful, very
much, you're amazing, it's just that 50
thousand seems slightly steep--

BRANDON
--The first time you call me you're in a hole
the size of the Grand Canyon, you're crying
about hocking your fiance's ring and this
weekend you're phoning me from a suite at the
Bellagio that I put you in -- you know what --
I'm cutting you off... You want to continue

with me, I'm tagging on a 10 percent
aggravation tax! Now get to Western Union and
shoot me 75 grand by tonight and we'll kiss and
make up.

(hanging up, to the TAILOR)

No cuff.

(the phone rings, picking up--)

John Fucking Anthony, talk to me.

WOMAN vo

This is... May I please speak to a Brandon
Lang?

BRANDON

... Mom?

INT. brandon's vegas home - day

BRANDON'S MOM drinking coffee, talking on the phone

BRANDON'S MOTHER

Brandon, is that you?

BRANDON vo

That's me.

INTERCUT

BRANDON'S MOTHER

Are you okay?

BRANDON

Never better. Kicking ass and taking names.
Did you get the money I sent?

BRANDON'S MOTHER

Well that's why I'm calling, honey.

BRANDON

Good good good. I talked to Denny. Next month
I'm flying you and him out here. First class.
I'll put you up at The Plaza. You'll love this
joint.

BRANDON'S MOTHER

It sounds great, Brandon, but the money -- *it's
too much.* Where did you get it?

BRANDON

I made it. Earned it. Every fucking cent.
Put it in Denny's college fund.

BRANDON'S MOTHER

Listen to you.

BRANDON

It's just how people talk here.

(looking down at the TAILOR, edge)
How many times I gotta say no cuff?

BRANDON'S MOTHER
Who's this John Anthony person?

BRANDON
He's me. I'm him.

BRANDON'S MOTHER
And he talks like that?

BRANDON
He's pretty fucking salty -- geez, I'm sorry,
Mom -- I mean yeah. Look, the main point is
I'm learning a lot here.

BRANDON'S MOTHER
Then you should know you can't be two people,
Brandon.

BRANDON
I appreciate the concern, Ma, but the checks
I've been sending -- the checks you've been
cashing -- those are from John Anthony.

BRANDON'S MOTHER
Funny, I thought they were from my son.

WALTER enters, slaps an airline ticket on his desk.

WALTER
We're going to Puerto Rico!

BRANDON
Gotta put you on hold, Ma.
(pressing a button on the headset)
What's in Puerto Rico?

WALTER
Since Ricky Martin moved out, all that's left
are tourists, cruise ships and C.M. Novian --
one of the biggest sports bettors in the world.
He just called. Wants to meet you in person!
To-day! Flight leaves Laguardia in 45 minutes.

BRANDON
(activating the headset)
I gotta go, Ma... Ma... Son of a bitch -- my
own fucking mother hung up on me!

Ext. SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - night

An AIRLINER roars in for landing.

INT. AIRLINE TERMINAL - night

WALTER and BRANDON pass through FRAME.

BRANDON

What do you know about him?

WALTER

Not much, 'cept for the fact he's a world class prick. Bastard treated me worse than my Hong Kong tailor. Never once returned a call. I've been trying to bag this guy for years. Do you have any idea what this is worth?

BRANDON

No, but I want a bonus if we pull it off.

WALTER

Look at me. There is no if -- it's only when. This time he called *us*, remember? You hooked him. Know that. Sweat that.

BRANDON

Relax, I'll get in character in the car.

WALTER suddenly slows, winces. He angles toward a bathroom.

BRANDON

... Walter?

WALTER grabs for a water fountain, misses, suddenly collapses.

BRANDON

Your vial -- *where's your pills, Walter?*
WALTER finds the vial, pops it, his chest heaves and the pills spill on the floor.
WALTER looks wide-eyed up at BRANDON, mouths "Big one." BRANDON frantically loosens WALTER'S shirt. A crowd gathers. A BUSINESSMAN pulls a cell phone, dials 911.

BRANDON

Hold on, Walter we're getting help! Oh my God. Listen to me. Walter -- Walter. You're gonna be fine. Hold on!

(to the CROWD)

We need a doctor! Is there a doctor?

WALTER

Brandon --

BRANDON

Save your strength. Help's coming. Help's coming.

WALTER

... *Do you love me?*

BRANDON

Of course I do.

Walter
Uh-huh.

BRANDON
I do. I really *do* love you.

WALTER
... How much?

BRANDON
A lot! Now don't talk.
(turning to the CROWD)
We need a doctor!

Several stunned ONLOOKERS run for help. WALTER fading fast.

WALTER
I believe you. I believe you love me. I love
you too... Just one thing --

BRANDON
Save your strength, Walter.

Walter
... Would you love me if this was a *joke*?

BRANDON
What?

WALTER
I'm fine. Just practicing...

WALTER smiles. Stands. Brushes himself off. To the CROWD --

WALTER
I'm okay! Little gas. Must've had too many
peanuts on the plane.

The confused ONLOOKERS drift away.

BRANDON
You sick fucking fuck! That was too goddamn
fucking far!!!

WALTER
You weren't listening! You're not paying
attention to me! There's no such thing as *too*
far! Push everything as far as you can! Push
it until it starts pushing back and then push
some goddamn more! Remember that when you're
with this guy today!

OMIT

INT. PUERTO RICAN MANSION - DAY

Palatial. Drapes dance before the open doors. Music plays. BRANDON and

WALTER sit in the living room. Peaceful beat.

WALTER

I start to die, fuck the hospital, just sit me down, I wanna kack here.

A beefy BODYGUARD enters followed by a tan, broad shouldered MAN of 50. WALTER extends his hand.

WALTER

Mr. Novian! What can I say? An honor. This is my associate, John Anthony.

MR. NOVIAN nods, settles in a chair. WALTER and BRANDON sit.

NOVIAN

You should know I think that most sports services are a complete scam... However, I hear your boy here's having quite a season. What's your system?

WALTER

(looking around)

Our system? Fuck that, what's your system?

Walter laughs. Novian stone-faced, glances at his watch when--

BRANDON

It's a privilege to meet you, Mr. Novian. You have a beautiful home. Let's start with how much you bet.

NOVIAN

A million a game, across the board.

BRANDON

Nice round number, is that our ceiling here? Is that the most we're working with?

NOVIAN

"We're" not doing anything until I hear how you feel about this weekend.

Brandon

Do you rent that yacht out there?

NOVIAN

I own it.

BRANDON

Well, sir, that's how I feel about this weekend. That may sound cocky, I don't care. I didn't come down here to lie.

NOVIAN

Do you have inside information?

BRANDON

If I did I wouldn't share that with you. My record speaks for itself. The truth is I know these teams better than they know themselves. I'm going 12 for 12 this weekend, and that includes the Monday Night parlay.

NOVIAN

Why should I believe you?

BRANDON

With all due respect, Mr. Novian, you can't afford not to.

NOVIAN

I can afford to do any damn thing I please.

BRANDON

Can you? What I'm saying is can you -- can anyone for that matter -- afford to lose as much as a man like you probably needs to bet to feel a win? Winning's a funny thing, Mr. Novian... it's one of those rare commodities on earth money can't buy. Or *was*, until you called me.

Charged beat. A tight grin's glued to WALTER'S face.

BRANDON

The price is a quarter million, Mr. Novian -- up-front -- in addition to a percentage of every game you win.

NOVIAN

Fuck you. I never pay anything up front.

BRANDON

And we've never charged it before. But with what you're betting, 250 up front's a bargain. You want this weekend's winners, that's my offer. Take it or leave it.

NOVIAN

(standing)
... *Step outside.*

BRANDON and WALTER exchange looks, unsure where this is going.

Ext. Novian's balcony - day

NOVIAN and BRANDON regard a group of GIRLS lounging topless by a pool.

NOVIAN

... Ever pick oranges, Mr. Anthony?

BRANDON

Nope.

NOVIAN

I have, in fact it's how I started.
Builds character. See those girls down there?
Pretend they're oranges and pick some ripe
ones. Take 'em upstairs and build some
character. Mr. Abrams and I need to refine the
terms.

BRANDON goes to an ice-filled cooler by the door, pulls a bottle of
champagne, carries it dripping down to the pool and--

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

A FOOTBALL BETTING FORM fills FRAME. Two columns of teams seen. Point
spreads penciled in between them. 11 of 12 games checked off. Monday
Night the last to be decided.

PULL BACK TO SHOW -- BRANDON in his office, the unfinished form before
him. A young SALESMAN appears at the door.

YOUNG SALESMAN

They need it, Mr. Anthony.

BRANDON picks up his pen, regards the box for Monday Night -- Seattle or
New Orleans? The point spread is Seattle minus 3. A box beside it is
for the over/under. That number is 34. BRANDON about to pick when he
stops, looks up, smiles --

BRANDON

Three questions. What's your mother's name?

YOUNG SALESMAN

Shelia.

BRANDON

What street did you grow up on?

YOUNG SALESMAN

Atlantic Avenue.

BRANDON

Who do you like Monday night?

YOUNG SALESMAN

I don't know.

BRANDON

Pick one.

YOUNG SALESMAN

That's your job.

BRANDON

I'll do your job tomorrow, today you do mine.

YOUNG SALESMAN

What are you talking about?

BRANDON

Pick one. Stop stalling. You know who's playing. Seattle versus New Orleans.

YOUNG SALESMAN

... I dunno. I guess I like Seattle giving the two points.

BRANDON

(writing on the form)

Over or under?

YOUNG SALESMAN

You can't do that.

BRANDON

Sure I can! Over 34 points or under!

YOUNG SALESMAN

Over!

BRANDON checks it off, gives him the finished form.

YOUNG SALESMAN

I'm not handing that in. Like a million dollars is going on that game!

BRANDON

Like a *lot* more than that. Relax. I think we know I can pick. Today I'm picking you. The outcome'll be the same.

YOUNG SALESMAN

What if I'm wrong?

BRANDON

Didn't they tell you? There is no if.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL. Final seconds of a hard-fought game. The Seattle QUARTERBACK'S driving, completes a long pass to a RECEIVER who's brought down at the New Orleans 10-yard line.

WALTER

They score, we win!

AL MICHAELS/vo from tv

--Kuhn's stopped at the 10! Seattle down by three. Two seconds on the clock. Kuhn suffered a concussion last week and with that foot injury in the first quarter he has no mobility -- *Hanratty drops back, he's out of the pocket, breaks one tackle, throws*

*downfield, it's tipped! Raymond's got it!
Breaks the plane! Touch down! Seattle takes
it 20 to 17! They win by three! What a game!*

The buzz in the BG explodes as we see -- every EMPLOYEE is packed into WALTER'S office. Riot of celebration all around.

WALTER

100 fucking percent!

Champagne corks start popping. Someone hits the remote and the wall of screens fill with a jamming MTV video. The lights dim. People start dancing. Cell phones start ringing and --

VARIOUS SALESMEN/into phones

-- Call back tomorrow!
-- Who knows who he likes next week you
fucking degenerate!
-- I don't have anything yet!

The YOUNG SALESMAN who made the Monday night and over/under picks talks excitedly to SOUTHIE and REGGIE.

YOUNG SALESMAN

He kinda mesmerized me, see, and like Spock or something I visualized Seattle and the over and he wrote it down! Said picking me was the same as him doing it.

SOUTHIE

What kinda power is that?

REGGIE

Who fucking cares? He's money.

JERRY SYKES stands nearby, listening. Whoops of excitement as WALTER jumps up on his desk, starts throwing cash. JERRY moves through the raucous CROWD, finds BRANDON against a wall, out of the fray, watching WALTER hurl money in the air.

JERRY

Congratulations, Brandon... Or should I say John? Either way it's amazing. I must say I *am* impressed. Letting salesmen make your picks? That's balls.

BRANDON

(watching WALTER hurl money)
Best get in there and collect some of this, Jerry. The way you're picking, you're gonna need some for a rainy day.

JERRY

Keep talking, sugarmouth. Must feel pretty good to be that plugged in. You got a good streak going. Well enjoy it while it lasts. The gambling Gods are a fickle bunch, sooooo

easily offended.

BRANDON makes his way through the room, reaches WALTER.

WALTER

Here, get you teeth fixed. There might be some other businesses you can make two mill in one weekend, but tell me, someone please tell me -- where else are you gonna have this much fun?

BRANDON

How much of that big stack's mine?

WALTER

A one with five zeros behind it.

BRANDON

...A 100 fucking thou? On two million?

WALTER

You're working out of my shop.

BRANDON

I was thinking of ten percent.

WALTER

Really? Is that what you were thinking?

BRANDON

I got you Novian.

WALTER

Nice job, now don't blow it by getting ahead of yourself. I'm looking beyond the money.

BRANDON

You can afford to, you're holding it all. C'mon, I only want what's fair, Walter.

WALTER smiles. Wraps an arm around. Puts him in a headlock.

WALTER

"Fair?" Honey, you don't know what fair is. What's fair is not giving you the money. Now I'm only gonna say this once. If you want something from me more than a gazunheidt after a sneeze you have to do more than think about it. Or *ask* for it. You gotta earn it. You gotta fight for it. You gotta rip it out of my fucking talons. John Anthony would know that. That's what he'd do. As a matter of fact, next time you come with that shit, come as John Anthony. 'Cause from now on I'm not talking to you about money.

BRANDON pulls free. Stunned. Seething. MTV pounds from the TVs, people dancing all around. TONI walks up.

TONI

The big winner. How are you doing?

BRANDON

I'm winning... *I'm winning...*

BRANDON leaves. WALTER pulls her close, moves with the music.

WALTER

Dance with me. Close, that's it. I gotta dance with you more. Listen, I'm thinking of buying a plane. Big one. G-something. We can just get on it and go, you and me, anywhere in the world, any time we want. There's a house for sale in the Bahamas with a runway right beside it. Comes with its own 50-foot boat. Two for one. What an investment. Anything happens, you and Jules always have it. Let's go down and check it out. Next week, just us, barefoot in the sand.

(TONI watching him)

Well say something.

TONI

... Are you gambling again, Walter?

WALTER

What? Oh, c'mon -- *hell no.*

TONI

Look me in the eye and say it.

WALTER

I am not gambling. Not now, not ever. 18 years clean. That shit's over.

TONI

It's *never* over, Walter. You know that.

WALTER

Get a lie detector if you don't believe me. Shoot me with truth serum. Baby -- *we just made two-million dollars.* I'm working miracles here. Now can I enjoy a dance with my wife? Huh? I swear, it's a shame you can't drink, we need something to kill that bug up your ass.

TONI smiles. WALTER holds her close, kisses her and --

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

BRANDON'S Mercedes speeds into the city.

INT. MANHATTAN STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Big breasts, G-strings, testosterone. BRANDON in a booth with a topless BLACK GIRL. We can see from his moves it's the Million Dollar Man

talking. Drinking Dom. Flashing cash. He whispers something to her. She reaches for her top as he grabs the hand of her topless FRIEND and --

INT. STRIP CLUB - PRIVATE BACK room - NIGHT

DARKNESS. A light goes on, illuminates a cave-like bedroom. MUSIC from the club rumbles through the space, reduced to a driving bass beat. The ASIAN GIRL pulls an outrageous wad of cash from BRANDON'S pocket, tosses it confetti-like in the air as -- BRANDON, the ASIAN GIRL and the BLACK GIRL fall on the gold lame sheets. Clothes are peeled off, money sticking to their bodies, GIRLS clawing the cash from BRANDON'S skin --

Black girl
(kissing his neck, hands roving)
What's it feel like to do what you do? To win
like that?

BRANDON flips her over, leans in from behind.

BRANDON
It's just like sex. You start by massaging the
numbers, very relaxed,
getting a feel, see how they move. Then
there's a shift, a plan forms and you connect
to your teams.
(the GIRL moans, reacting to something
unseen)
Sunday's like penetration and the games have
started and teams are scoring and
you're inside and you're doing it and
it's doing you, feeling every shift,
every score, every trickle of sweat --
the giving, taking, the long, the short,
excitement growing *bigger* and *bigger*--
(BRANDON cupping her breasts)
And it's not an idea or part of you anymore --
it is you, all of you -- and the crowd's
roaring and the clock's
ticking and you know everything except
how it'll end and then you've won -- over
and over and over and it's like one, big, huge,
insane, weekend-long orgasm.

FRIEND
(totally turned on, kissing him)
Nice job description.

BRANDON presses her below FRAME, naked ASIAN GIRL climbing on top as the sound of APPLAUSE is heard, building in volume and--

INT. BROWNSTONE SALESROOM - DAY

25 SALESMEN stand on their desks, clapping, as BRANDON passes through on the way to his office. Only it's John Anthony who's strutting through the room, high-fiving SALESMEN, kissing the GIRLS, a tanned, tailored, magnetic presence and --

INT. BROWNSTONE - BRANDON'S OFFICE - MORNING

WALTER waits within, standing at the window overlooking the sales room as BRANDON enters.

WALTER
Know what time it is?

BRANDON
(glance at his watch)
Yeah, it's--

WALTER
--*Wrong*. It's time to press, my friend. We're yanking out all the stops. When you're winning -- you press.

BRANDON rummaging a closet, produces a set of golf clubs.

WALTER
What are you doing?

BRANDON
I have a 10:30 tee time at Wingfoot with a client, that Howell guy. Don't call me unless the lines change.

WALTER
The salmon are running! You're staying right here and fielding calls. You're not going off to play golf and have fun.

BRANDON
Fun? Senor, you have obviously never played Wingfoot.

WALTER
Stop screwing around, you got a lot to do before this weekend.

BRANDON
I'm not *asking* you if I can leave, Walter -- I'm telling you that's how it is, understood? You want my picks, hell I'll make 'em now.

BRANDON sits, starts filling out the week's betting form.

WALTER
Whoa -- hold on -- slow down -- today's only Tuesday, you have all week.

BRANDON
I don't need it.

WALTER
Hey -- we're gonna be advising somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 million dollars this week.

BRANDON

Nice neighborhood.

WALTER

You're really gonna make your picks now? No study? No analysis? Just like that?

BRANDON

I'm in the zone, Walter. Locked in. You want my picks, I might as well do it now! Washington at Miami giving 8, Washington! Saint Louis at K.C. getting 12 -- K.C. by three touchdowns! Pittsburgh at Philly giving 3 -- Philly, another blow out!

(handing WALTER the finished form)

Brandon con'd

There they are, unless you want next weekend's picks too. You're welcome to join me, Walter, it's a beautiful track.

WALTER

... Okay, fine. Take a break. Go play golf. We'll put the picks on ice and look 'em over tomorrow.

BRANDON

(walking out)

I won't be in tomorrow.

WALTER

Then the next day!

But BRANDON'S gone. WALTER considers what's just occurred, regards the finished betting form. He dons his glasses and begin examining BRANDON'S picks and --

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BROWNSTONE - DAY

BRANDON loads his golf clubs in the Mercedes, spies TONI coming down the front steps.

BRANDON

Where're you headed?

TONI

Some of us have to work.

BRANDON

Come on, get in. I'll give you a lift.

ANGLE ON -- upper brownstone window. WALTER looks down. Watches TONI'S legs swing into BRANDON'S sports car and --

INT. MOVING mercedes - DAY

BRANDON speeds fast down a street. Uncomfortable beat.

BRANDON

Some ride, huh? Feel that? *Feel that?*

TONI

Slow down, Brandon.

BRANDON

Why? This car was made to go fast.

TONI

Not with me in it.

BRANDON

C'mon, Toni, loosen up.

(goosing the gas, laughing)

Let me ask you something. When you're not at the shop, or running Julia to play dates or keeping Walter from losing his mind, which I know is a full-time job, what do you do for you, Toni?

TONI

I stay busy.

BRANDON

That's not what I asked.

TONI

Yes it is.

BRANDON

What do you do for you, Toni, *for yourself*.

TONI

"What do I do for myself?" If you drove past my salon and went two blocks down Prospect Street you would have found me 20 years ago with a needle in my arm. I was a 5-bag a day junkie. I would have sold Julia to get high. Keeping it all on track, that's what I do for myself.

BRANDON

That's not living, Toni. That's just maintaining. You cashed in.

TONI

What the hell does that mean? Are we talking perfection here?

BRANDON

Well, nobody's perfect... except me last weekend going 14 and 0.

BRANDON pulls up outside her shop. TONI regards him.

TONI

Yeah, that's living.

BRANDON

Hell yeah. You oughta try it some time.

TONI

(stepping from the car)

Thanks for the ride, *John*...

TONI enters her shop and --

Int. Walter's office - day

Eight football games are winding down, another four starting. Favor one of the TV SCREENS. A network sports update. CHRIS BERMAN motor-mouthing a one-minute list of results.

CHRIS BERMAN

-- Big loss for Washington, going down 24-12 in Miami. Saint Louis upsets K.C., 34-14. And another Sunday surprise, Philly trounces Pittsburgh, 23-10.

CHRIS BERMAN continues with the scores as -- a PENCIL runs down BRANDON'S betting sheet -- checking off results -- loss -- loss -- loss -- loss -- loss -- the pencil pauses -- suddenly snaps from the pressure of the person's hand and -- WALTER stares at BRANDON, seated on the sofa, watching the tvs. It's obvious they're getting killed.

BRANDON

I'm gonna go work out.

WALTER

Sit down! You're watching every game! Every second of every minute of every game! Don't even think of leaving!

Int. Walter's office - night

All but one tv is dark. The last game ends and a remote control suddenly shatters the screen. WALTER paces the office. BRANDON still on the sofa. No one else in the room. A wall clock reads 12:19 AM. WALTER picks up BRANDON'S betting sheet, holds it like a dead fish.

WALTER

... How do you go 3 and 11? Wanna know how -- you make Sunday's picks on Tuesday! It rained in Cincinatti! Two starting QBs didn't play! You're a handicapper, not a psychic!

BRANDON

There's still Monday night and the parlay.

WALTER

Fuck Monday night! Fuck the parlay! You were pissed at me, right? The commission thing?

BRANDON

I don't know.

WALTER

You fucked with me, right? Joke's on me, *right*? The money thing. Okay, I think we're on dangerous ground here but I'm giving you a bump, 10 percent. Now what about Monday night's game? You want to look over that pick? Because everyone's gonna double down to climb out of the fucking hole you put 'em in.

BRANDON

Monday night's fine.

WALTER

You'd bet your mother's house on it?

BRANDON

I don't bet.

WALTER

If you did?

BRANDON

I like the pick, Walter.

WALTER

On your mother's house or not?

BRANDON

With my mother in it.

INT. upper east side BAR - NIGHT

Up-scale. BRANDON sits at the end of the rail, empty glasses lined before him, watching a wall TV with the sound off. Monday Night Football's on. His glazed expression suggests it's been a long three hours. PATRONS around him socialize, laugh, enjoy the bar's oasis-like vibe. But for BRANDON, it's just him and the game as -- a GIRL approaches, big smile.

GIRL

Oh my God -- Brandon!

BRANDON glances up, quickly goes back to watching the game.

Girl

Oh come on, I know you remember -- two weeks ago, Aqua -- I'm *Heather*.

Brandon

(eyes glued to the game)
Uh-huh.

Heather

This is like such a coincidence. I live right

around the corner. This is my neighborhood bar.

She sits beside him, signals the bartender.

Heather
Apple martini.
(back to BRANDON)
So listen, my office is renting out a loft this weekend, really fun group, it's gonna be a big blow-out, a PR thing -- music, open bar.
Wednesday night, I want you to come, I mean I'd really love to hook up.

POV BRANDON -- flurry of action on the TV. Final seconds. BRANDON lasered on the screen.

HEATHER
(leaning in, laughing)
Earth to Brandon, you're blowing it.

The BARTENDER steps in front of the TV to deliver her drink -- BRANDON jumps from his seat so he can see -- flurry of action on the screen -- the game ends -- the final score flashes and--

BRANDON
(pounding the bar)
FUCK!

HEATHER taken aback, pulls away.

BRANDON
Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck!!!

HEATHER quickly leaves. Other PATRONS react. BRANDON in his own world of pain. BARTENDER eyeing him now. BRANDON throws down the rest of his drink, trying to steady himself. His beeper suddenly sounds. He looks and --

WALTER'S NAME scrolls across the screen. BRANDON wipes the sweat from his brow. Mind racing. Trying to *understand*. BRANDON's cell phone rings. He checks the number, picks up --

BRANDON
Denny! Hey -- yeah, I'm in a bar.... Of course in New York, I own this town. What's going on -- you okay?... *Tonight's game?* You took my picks? How much?...
All of it? That was for your college you dumb ass! Denny, I gave you one game -- goddamn it you should have told me you were following my picks!
(pacing the rail)
All right, listen. Does Mom know?... Okay, good. Don't say anything. I've got next

weekend wired. I'll win it all back for you and more. Understand? Now I'll call you Friday with who to take. It's all gonna work out. I gotta go, talk to you later.

BRANDON hangs up. Straightens. Strides out of the bar and --

Int. Brandon's office - day

BRANDON'S a man absorbed. The office is filled with sports pages from every newspaper in the country. Injury reports. Power ratings. BRANDON studying everything and --

QUICK CUTS

A FAST PACED HIGHLIGHT REEL OF THE NEXT NFL WEEKEND

-- A dozen rapid-fire kick-offs fill the SCREEN -- RECEIVERS catch passes, OTHERS drop them spectacularly -- RUNNING BACKS brilliantly juke tackles, score -- QUARTERBACKS are slammed from behind, stripped of the ball -- kicks miss goal posts by inches -- PLAYERS are carried off on stretchers -- footballs sail through RECEIVERS'S hands, their fingers clawing empty air -- scoreboards blink outcomes, stadium lights flare and --

EXT. CHELSEA PIERS - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Similar lights illuminate a driving range on the Hudson River.

EXT. DRIVING RANGE -- TOP TIER - NIGHT

BRANDON smacks one to the 250 sign, about to hit another and --

WALTER

Helluva swing. Great game. Sport of kings, right? Or is that horse racing?

BRANDON

What are you doing here?

WALTER

Southie told me where you were.

BRANDON

I had to get out. Clear my head.
(teeing one up)
Well talk to me. How'd we do?

WALTER

You haven't seen the scores?

BRANDON

Nope. That's how I wanted it. Just make the picks and get the results later.

WALTER

Highest sales volume ever. Take a guess.

BRANDON

I think we kicked ass.

WALTER

It was amazing.

BRANDON

I told you. Last week was nothing.

BRANDON smacks a drive, watches it soar --

WALTER

You're right, nothing compared to how much we lost today!

BRANDON

... What'd I go?

WALTER

I have an idea. I give you a few glimpses of what happened here today and you take a stab.

BRANDON

Just give me the numbers, Walter.

WALTER

You don't like that game. Too bad. Woulda been fun. Grown men crying on the phone. Wives screaming in the background. Three salespeople quit 'cause they couldn't take the pressure!

BRANDON

Fuck!

WALTER

No. When you lose 10 out of 12, fuck doesn't quite cover it. What would be more appropriate is something like "Holy Fucking Shit!" Or "My Fucking God." Or "Jesus Fucking Christ!"

BRANDON

Enough. I get the idea, Walter.

WALTER

You're right. I mean 2 for 12 on our biggest volume weekend -- what the hell's left to say? Except maybe keep the phone number and switch it over to a fucking suicide hotline!

BRANDON hefts the golf bag, walks away. Yelling after him --

WALTER

Tomorrow morning, Brandon! Bright and early! We start in all over again! No getting off!

I'm gonna ride you until you're more sick of me than losing! Turn it around and we avoid a lot of pain!

Omit

OMIT

Omit

Omit

EXT. BROOKLYN PARK - early morning

Gloomy fog. A few PEOPLE heading home from work. BRANDON riding his bike, pedaling fast when a MAN suddenly steps out, flash of something in his hand, jamming it in the spokes and --BRANDON *wipes out*, over the handlebars -- hard to the ground --

BRANDON

Son of a bitch... What the fuck--

BODYGUARD

Mr. Novian wants to see you. Now.

BRANDON

(seeing a gun in his waistband)
... Tell him to call.

BODYGUARD

You tell him.

BRANDON looks, sees NOVIAN nearby.

NOVIAN

I didn't recognize you without the suit, John.

BRANDON

This is my time off. It's how I clear my head.
You want to talk, pick a time.

NOVIAN

Or should I call you Brandon? Someone costs you 18 mill, you do some research.
I know more than your name, Brandon. I know where you're from. Where your family lives.
Hell, I just came from Vegas. Your Mom, sweet lady... dealt me three blackjacks in a row.
(stepping close)
Where's the cocky motherfucker who came to my house?

BRANDON

I'm leaving.

The BODYGUARD grabs his arm. Iron grip.

NOVIAN

Feel that? I hate the cold. Winter's coming.
Water's getting rough.

BRANDON

What the fuck is this about? If you don't like
my picks, use someone else.

NOVIAN

Oh, I'm not using you again. That's already
decided. And I can't get my money back. It's
gone. No, I came for an apology.

The BODYGUARD holds him tight. Light fading. No one around.

NOVIAN

Look me in the eye and say you're sorry. Say it
so as to make me believe you mean it.

Cold gust. NOVIAN closes the distance between them.

Brandon

You flew to New York for--

NOVIAN

--That's right.

BRANDON

... I'm sorry.

NOVIAN

I don't accept it. Not good enough. Try
again.

BRANDON

I don't know what you want me to say. I'm
sorry. I am. I'm very sorry.

NOVIAN

Pathetic.

BRANDON

I am very, very sorry. That's a lot of money.

NOVIAN

Not even close.

BRANDON

I'm sorry!

NOVIAN

This isn't going to work. I'll have to get
satisfaction somehow else.

BRANDON

Look, I'm not it -- I...

NOVIAN inches from BRANDON. Unbuttons his coat. Sound of a zipper. BRANDON glances down, sees Novian reach into his fly. BRANDON jumps. The BODYGUARD holds him. NOVIAN comes close. BRANDON struggles, very unsure where this might be going and--

He *squirms* -- enduring something -- trickling water heard -- NOVIAN *staring right at BRANDON* -- finishes pissing on BRANDON'S leg. NOVIAN motions his BODYGUARD to let go and the men walk off. BRANDON stands there. Alone in the gloom and --

Int. Studio production set - night

WALTER, BRANDON, JERRY and CHUCK at the desk, waiting for the weekly taping to start. WALTER jots notes. JERRY leans over.

JERRY

I scored you the new mikes, Walter. No wires to mess with. What do you think?

WALTER

I'm busy.

JERRY

Listen, I think I should lead off. I have some really strong stuff.

WALTER

You got a good hole, Jerry. Stay in it.

JERRY

C'mon, I went 8 for 12 last weekend. I'm hot. I'm feeling it.

WALTER doesn't respond, continues working. JERRY fumes.

TECHNICIAN

60 seconds.

JERRY

What am I, wood?

WALTER

You got one good weekend under your belt, don't push it.

JERRY

One weekend? The Sykes System revolutionized this industry.
(pulling a newspaper, showing a full-page ad for JOHN ANTHONY)
Explain something to me, where's my fucking ad?

WALTER

Take a hike.

JERRY

What?

WALTER

You heard me. You're fired. Goodbye.

JERRY

I'm not fired, you need me more than ever.

WALTER

Beat it, you cut-rate parasite!

JERRY

In six years my worst weekend was never as bad as any of his last three weeks!

WALTER

Get out! You don't work for me anymore!

JERRY

What the hell are you doing, Walter? C'mon, man -- it's me, Jerry. These other guys come and go.

WALTER

(pointing at BRANDON)

Not this one! That's true talent! I'm firing your ass 'cause you don't see it and I can't explain it to you!

JERRY

Think what you're fucking doing!

WALTER

I am! You couldn't pick your fucking nose without a computer! You're small! You belong in a can! Show some self-respect! It's over, Jerry -- leave!

Beat. BRANDON watches as JERRY gathers his things, walks off.

WALTER

... Fuck him where he flosses. Asshole doesn't understand I'm building an empire around you. Finish the countdown, we got a big weekend to get to! Let's go, chop chop!

Int. Brandon's bedroom - night

A BUDWEISER COMMERCIAL fills FRAME --

PULL BACK TO SHOW -- BRANDON in bed, under the covers, peeking at the tv over a remote. The sports wrap-up comes on, scores flashing on the screen. No clue how he did until his phone rings. Then his cell vibrates. BRANDON gets out of bed. Fully dressed. Buries the phone under the mattress. He turns off the cell, but within seconds it starts vibrating again. BRANDON sinks into a corner. Knock at the door.

BRANDON doesn't move. Another knock and --

Intercut -- toni in the hall, talking through the door

TONI

It's me, Brandon. Can I come in?

BRANDON

No. It's not a good time. What do you need?

TONI

I need to talk to you, it's important.

BRANDON lost, doesn't answer.

TONI

You need to get out, Brandon. You need to go.

BRANDON

I gotta pick a winner is what I gotta do. I gotta get back on track.

TONI

It won't matter. You could go 100-and-0 and it won't be enough -- it'll never be enough. He'll ride you into the ground.

BRANDON

I gotta figure this out.

TONI

Please, Brandon.

BRANDON

I'll figure it out...

TONI leans her head against the door, exasperated, spent and--

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE - MANHATTAN - night

BRANDON, suit and tie, stands in the lobby of an apartment high-rise, speaks on a house phone. An unsmiling DOORMAN watches nearby.

BRANDON vo

Alex, it's *Brandon*. Hey, it's been awhile but I never got your number that night. I was in the neighborhood so I thought I'd take a chance and stop by.

INT. LUXURY HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

The DOORMAN stands at the entrance, watches BRANDON wait. ALEX appears, beautiful as the night BRANDON picked her up in the restaurant. Her demeanor, however, is far from friendly as she exits the elevator.

BRANDON

Man, you got a Doberman for a doorman.

ALEX

What are you doing here?

BRANDON

I came by to take you out for a late dinner and a couple of killer bottles of wine. C'mon. We'll go back to that place where we met.

ALEX

Are you out of your fucking mind?
(stepping close for emphasis)
I live in this building, asshole. It's *home*.
I don't like creeps coming around unannounced.
Lurking around outside.

BRANDON

What the hell's gotten into you? What about that night?

ALEX

Let me make this real clear so this shit doesn't happen again. You mean nothing to me. Oh wait, I take that back -- you meant 5000 bucks. Your friend set it up.
(already heading back inside)
Don't fucking bother me again.

EXT. MANHATTAN - DAWN

Pale sunrise over the East River.

INT. SALES ROOM - dawn

BRANDON, suit and tie, walks through the silent, empty room.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - dawn

BRANDON sits at his desk. Staring out at the city. His phone rings. Again. *Again*. Finally pressing speaker phone --

BRANDON

Hello.

Intercut - amir in payphone beside N.J. Turnpike - dawn

Amir

(dishevelled, distraught)
I'm wiped out, John...

BRANDON

Amir?

Amir

My business... My house... My credit...

BRANDON

No, now listen to me -- we got a big weekend

coming up, buddy --

AMIR

Still you talk like this. *Who the fuck are you*, like this is some kind of game. I was betting a few thousand a Sunday when I called you. You pushed me. Every call. All the time with your talk... I lost \$380,000 this weekend... I was going to get married... *I had a life...*

BRANDON staring at the phone, barely holding it together, sees TAMMY standing there -- holding the day's newspapers, hearing the conversation on speaker.

AMIR

No words now, huh? No more money to squeeze so you shut up. How do you fucking live with yourself?

Click. Amir hangs up. Crushing beat. TAMMY staring at him.

Brandon

What?

(face hardening)

Fuck him if he can't take a joke.
TAMMY puts the day's newspapers on his desk, leaves. BRANDON glances down, something catches his eye. BRANDON pulls a newspaper from the pile -- finds himself staring at a full-page ad for JOHN ANTHONY. Big smile. Copy advertising "The Million Dollar Man!" and --

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - early morning

BRANDON paces the dim space. Sits on the bench press. Leans back on the board. He stares up at the weights. Moves the weight pin to 250... and slowly starts to lift. One rep. Two. Three. Four. A bad of sweat forms. BRANDON throws off the jacket. Pulls off the tie. Removes his shirt and shoes. He resumes lifting, grim determination -- the weights rising over and over and over -- faster and faster and --

Int. Walter's apartment - morning

BRANDON, t-shirt and sweats, approaches WALTER'S office, bursts through the door --

BRANDON

I know what the problem is!

BRANDON freezes. WALTER watches two MEN unload stacks of money from a briefcase, pile them on his desk.

BRANDON

I'll come back later.

WALTER

No! C'mon in. We're done here. Right fellas?
All through? You want a bite before you go?
Something to drink?

The two MEN leave. WALTER lights a cigarette.

BRANDON

Who were they?

WALTER

We need a bat light or something, you know a
signal I can shoot up at the
(MORE)

Walter con'd
clouds and no matter where you are you
can look up and you'll know I need you. Maybe
that would work. 'Cause last night I must've
beeped you a hundred times.

BRANDON

Who were they?

WALTER

They're from the Salvation Army. How the hell
does someone go 1-for-8? A fucking monkey
tossing darts could do better!

BRANDON

What's with the money, Walter?

WALTER

1-for-fucking-8!
(coming around the desk)
I have a plan. From now on we take your picks
and reverse everything! Like a Twilight Zone
episode where everything's the opposite! You
say black we go white! A is B! Lose becomes
win!

BRANDON

(staring at the pile of cash)
How much is that?

WALTER

(sweeping the pile to the floor)
How much is what? Oh, that -- 275,000 dollars!

Brandon

What happened to the two mill, all the other
money?

WALTER

I was carrying twice that in red ink before you
showed up. The last few weeks I thought keep
the pressure off. He'll come around. Climb

out on his own. Now I figure fuck it! Time to turn on the lights! Let him see the toilet he's drowning us all in! Maybe that'll shake him up! So what do you want to know? I got three mortgages on this house, I'm gambling again and to cover my losses I just got a loan from a guy who works out of a bar on a 106th and Broadway! All this -- everything you see around you -- is smoke and mirrors! I shoulda been a magician!

(MORE)

WALTER CON'D

... What'd you say when you came in? You were in a good mood when you walked through the door and you said something.

BRANDON

You're betting my picks?

WALTER

You went 82 and 11! *You were picking 80 percent* -- how could I fucking not!? Trouble is I bet heavy after you went a hundred percent and rode you right into the fucking toilet! One decent weekend and I would have been set for life! One decent weekend!

BRANDON stares at him, stunned.

WALTER

"*I know what the problem is!*" That's it! You came in with a big smile and said, "*I know what the problem is!*"

BRANDON

... I'm Brandon Lang, Walter. Brandon's the one who played sports. Brandon's the one who can pick games. I lost touch with him -- *myself*. It wasn't an act, man. I became John Anthony. But he's not me. If I go back to being Brandon--

WALTER

--You can pick again! Of course! All you gotta do is go back to being Brandon! Talk like Brandon! Eat like Brandon! Forget John Anthony! Burn the suits! It's all my fault. I see that now. I pushed you into something you weren't. I took the golden goose and tried to turn it into a duck. We're winding down the season. There's only two games this weekend. Two winners and two over/unders. That's all we need. You crunch the numbers, sprinkle in a little Brandon magic, we get the sales people burning up the phones and come Monday we go four for four going into the big game! Right? Huh? Let's

get
something to eat! Go to Smith and Wo's!

BRANDON
No thanks. I'll stay here. Eat light.

WALTER
(kneeling down, stacking the cash)
The Brandon thing! What am I thinking trying
to get you to go out? What would Brandon eat
for lunch? Peanut butter and jelly? Ramen
noodles? What?

BRANDON
(on the floor, helping him)
I'll get something.

WALTER
You want anything shipped from home? Your bed?
Clothes? Porno collection?

BRANDON
No, I'm fine.

WALTER
Blow job?

BRANDON
Thanks anyway. Maybe later...

WALTER
Because it's important.

BRANDON
Pressure doesn't help.

WALTER
God forgive me, you're an artist. I fucked
with that. Two little winners and a couple of
over/unders. That's all we need. You could
phone it in. Two's nothing. Not for you. Not
for Brandon. Right, Brandon? Isn't that
right?

BRANDON stands. Looks down at WALTER, unable to hide the desperation
behind his frozen smile and --

MONTAGE OF BRANDON WORKING THROUGH THE WEEK

--BRANDON closes the blinds in his office, blocks the view --BRANDON
works out, watching ESPN -- the SALES STAFF sit idle at their desks,
playing cards -- a pick sheet fills FRAME, shows New York versus
Atlanta, Tennessee versus Kansas City and an over/under beneath each game
-- WALTER waits in the SALES ROOM, edgy, pacing when BRANDON emerges
holding the sheet -- all eyes on him -- WALTER approaches --

WALTER

These are the winners?

BRANDON

That's who I like.

WALTER

Brandon made these picks?

BRANDON

You're looking at him.

WALTER

(regarding the picks, to the room)
New York and the under, Tennessee and the under!
Sell 'em hard!

Int. Walter's office - day

SALES STAFF crowd into the room. WALTER and BRANDON sit side-by-side. Seconds before kickoff of the New York/Atlanta game. JULIA climbs into WALTER'S lap, holding her puppy.

Julia

Can I watch, daddy?

WALTER

Sure, Angel. I need you to root for me.
(pointing at ATLANTA)
They're the bad guys. Atlanta. We want the blue team. New York. They have to win by more than five points. And root for a low score. Both teams have to make less than 42 points total. New York and under 42 points.

JULIA

Why do we like the blue team?

WALTER

Because Brandon likes them.

JULIA looks at BRANDON, smiles. BRANDON'S barely holding up here, forces himself to find a smile in return.

THE TV FILLS FRAME. New York kicks off. An Atlanta RECEIVER takes it back for a 60 yard return. We start cutting from the game to BRANDON, to WALTER, the SALESPEOPLE, JULIA, all reacting as the betting Gods raise hopes one play, dash them the next. Play after play. Tide going for New York one minute, Atlanta the next. Tension in the room building. Everyone crowds the TVs as New York defends a 10 point lead with a minute left. 37 points on the board. Only an Atlanta TD can lose the two bets and they're 80 yards from scoring. A few high fives as Atlanta fumbles on a run, recover the ball for a five yard loss. Backed up to their own end zone. Two plays left. WALTER excited, things going their way and --

BRANDON starting to breath again and -- Atlanta tries a final hail mary, ball coming down into a crowd -- time runs out as a New York PLAYER swats it and an Atlanta RECEIVER pulls it down -- running hard -- open to the

end zone -- the room freezes -- a New York PLAYER grabs hold -- trying to bring him the bastard down but the Atlanta RUNNER is strong and just makes it in for the score -- game over -- and Atlanta hasn't won but they've killed the point spread and pushed the game over -- nobody speaks -- the second game comes on right on the heels of the first and now Tennessee is kicking off to Kansas City and we're on the roller coaster all over again -- SALES PEOPLE start drifting from the room and they've pushed their clients huge on these games and their cell phones are ringing and WALTER'S just staring at the screens and BRANDON'S dying and --

DISSOLVE TO

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER - NIGHT

WALTER and BRANDON alone in the room. Sound of the ANNOUNCERS as Atlanta get trounced by Denver. Not even close. Well over 42 total points scored. The game ends. All four bets lost. A commercial comes on. Horrible stillness.

BRANDON

...I'm finished. I'm done.

WALTER

That's great.

BRANDON

I can't do this anymore, Walter. I can't sleep at night. I can't eat.

WALTER

You're not gonna sit there and tell me you're ending this because you have a little indigestion or some insomnia.

BRANDON

It's a lot more than that.

WALTER

I made it very clear before we started what the stakes were.

BRANDON

Walter, it's over. What use could John Anthony be to you now? Only an idiot would follow him after the streak I've been on.

WALTER

Wrong! Hot streaks go cold, cold streaks go hot. Bettors will climb back aboard.
(MORE)

WALTER CON'D

They *know* you! And when your luck turns they'll remember you went 80 percent for half the season! We'll make it all back on the last game and by next year they'll forget

everything.

BRANDON

Who said anything about next year?

WALTER

Sports betting's year-round.

BRANDON

I'm not doing this next year.

WALTER

You made a career choice! I bankrolled it!

TONI VO

Let him go, Walter.

WALTER and BRANDON turn, see TONI at the door.

WALTER

Of course you stick up for him!

TONI

Meaning what?

WALTER

Who's side are you on?

TONI

I didn't realize I had to choose.

WALTER

(to BRANDON)

Look, you got a magnificent gift. *Own that.* So you strike out sometimes, big deal, you're swinging for the fences. You're a champion, Brandon. A champion goes down 186 times but gets up 187. I'm not letting you stay down. This isn't about you or me or Toni, this transcends that -- this is metaphysical, this is cosmic, this is *eternal* -- this is God... Besides, we have a contract.

BRANDON

Bullshit!

TONI

You can't own someone, Walter.

WALTER

I created the hottest sports tout this country's ever seen! I plugged him, took out full page ads, built a show around him, hooked him up with every major client I have and I will be goddamned if he's going to walk out the door and take all that with him! Why the hell am I even explaining this to you! This is

between me and him! Get out!

BRANDON

Don't talk to her like that.

WALTER

I need you to tell me how to talk to my wife?
When I'm talking you'll shut your fucking
toilet!

TONI

(to BRANDON)

Leave.

INT. WALTER AND TONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BRANDON comes down the hall. TONI and WALTER heard yelling through the office door. BRANDON hesitates, walks out and --

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dim darkness. A distant siren bleeds in as --

WALTER'S VOICE

Brandon... *Brandon.*

BRANDON'S POV. His eyes open. WALTER'S face fills FRAME.

WALTER

Wake up.

BRANDON

What time is it?

WALTER

Five in the morning. Listen, I gotta fly to Vegas to meet with some clients. Hand holding thing. Keep 'em on board for the final game. Because you can do this thing, Brandon. End of the season's the perfect place to turn this streak around. I'll be back to you out to dinner. Get you back in the groove. 9:30. Nobu. Gotta catch my flight. See you tonight. Look sharp. We're turning it around.

WALTER backs out, kills the lights. Darkness returns and --

INT. Nobu - NIGHT

BRANDON alone at a table, sipping a sake when TONI, evening dress, sits next to him.

BRANDON

Hey, I didn't know you were coming.

TONI

Walter was delayed, he's coming back in the

morning. Asked if I'd fill in.

BRANDON

(processing this)

That's funny, he didn't call me. You look great.

TONI silent.

BRANDon

You okay?

TONI

Julia did her ballet recital today. God she was beautiful.

Brandon

She is.

TONi

... He's betting again.

BRANDON regards her.

TONI

I can't believe I'm here again. I saw it coming. I just... I just couldn't stop it.

BRANDON

Nobody could.

TONI

He won't stop on his own. He can't.

Brandon

I gotta win one more game.

TONI

You can't fix this, Brandon.

BRANDOn

After Sunday's game I'm taking off...

EXT. BROWNSTONE STEPS - NIGHT

A cab pulls up. BRANDON and TONI emerge. BRANDON looks around as they start up the steps. Both reach for their keys, regard one another.

BRANDON

It's still early. Come in for a while.

TONI

I don't think so.

She leans in to kiss him on the cheek and -- BRANDON suddenly shifts. Their lips meet. A casual goodbye suddenly grows in intensity as neither

tries to part. Seconds ticking by. Things getting heated. TONI tries to pull away.

TONI

Brandon--

BRANDON comes close, whispers something. He unlocks the door. She hesitates before BRANDON takes her hand, leads her into his dark apartment and --

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - SAME TIME

A cold wind blows off the river. Whips through the cables of the span. A match flares. WALTER'S face is lit briefly by the flame. He stands on the bridge walkway, looking down at the brownstone and --

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. WALTER AND TONI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gray, winter day. View of a snow-covered window sill --

INT. WALTER AND TONI'S APARTMENT - DAY

WALTER'S FACE fills a shaky HOME VIDEO VIEWFINDER, video coming close to show WALTER opening a book-size present -- removing a beautifully framed photo of TONI and JULIA.

WALTER

Look at that. With the leaves and all. This goes on my desk.

Quick PAN to TONI -- sitting near the fireplace, fire blazing.

TONI

Happy anniversary.

KNOCK at the door --

JULIA vo

I'll get it.

JULIA hands the CAMERA to WALTER. VIDEO CAMERA view of JULIA and the puppy running to the door, opening it and --

JULIA

Brandon!

BRANDON

Hey darlin'.

Walter vo

There he is. C'mon in. We're having a little celebration. Toni and I were married 12 years ago today.

BRANDON

Congratulations, I didn't know.

WALTER vo

Sit down. I want you to be part of this.
Okay angel, give Mommy my gift.

WALTER aims the CAMERA as JULIA hands TONI a small gift box. TONI opens it, reveals a set of very expensive earrings.

Toni

Walter...

WALTER vo

Relax, I had some saved. Put 'em on, lemme see.

TONI puts the earrings on.

Walter vo

Beautiful. God I got good taste.

TONI stares into the CAMERA as WALTER PANS to BRANDON --

WALTER vo

I saw something else, I couldn't help myself.
Here, Brandon -- for you.

WALTER hands BRANDON a small black case. BRANDON unsure, looks at TONI, opens it -- produces a very expensive watch.

WALTER vo

It's a Chopard. Designed for car racing. Guy
won six times at LeMans wearing it. Put
it on, maybe you'll start winning.

BRANDON

I can't take this.

WALTER vo

Why not?

BRANDON

It's too much.

WALTER vo

For what? You're family, Brandon. We all love
each other, right? I'm like a father, you're
like my son -- gee, sorry Toni, but I guess
that makes you his mother.

WALTER PANS to TONI, staring at the fire. Strained silence.

WALTER vo

What? Somebody fart or something?

TONI starts taking off the earrings.

WALTER vo
Leave 'em on.

TONI
They're for evening.

WALTER vo
Good, wear 'em to bed tonight.
(VIDEO CAMERA back on BRANDON)
Who do you think'll win the big game?

BRANDON
Turn it off.

WALTER/still taping
Better yet, don't say anything. *Surprise me.*
We'll break it when we do the live show. Take
your time, Brandon. Enjoy yourself. Give
Walter a smile.

WALTER ZOOMS IN -- BRANDON staring back at us and --

Ext. Times square news stand - day

BRANDON loads up on newspapers and sports magazines and --

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

BRANDON surrounded by a sea of sports pages, comentary, ratings. He
looks up at a blaring TV and --

THE TV FILLS FRAME -- *TIME CUT* as various sports shows come on back-to-
back -- each providing a wealth of competing Superbowl predictions and
analysis.

CAMERA TIGHTENS ON THE SCREEN AND WE SEE, for every hopped-up
SPORTSCASTER who picks Denver, an equally assured COUNTERPART chooses New
York. *One after another. No* consensus at all. Airwaves awash in *past-*
season stats -- regular season stats -- post-season stats -- all of it
blending into an overwhelming, mind-numbing, jarring blather of pure
disagreement and --

INT. TV PRODUCTION STUDIO BATHROOM - NIGHT

BRANDON, suit and tie, splashes water on his face, stares at himself in
the mirror. He pulls reams of stats and newspaper reports from his
pocket, regards the Superbowl pick sheet. Blank space for the winner.
Blank space for the over/under. BRANDON fumbling with his sheets of
data, desperately searching for an answer when he suddenly hurls it all
in the trash. Kicks the can. Kicks it again.

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE
60 seconds till we go live, Mr. Anthony!

BRANDON looks over. The unfinished pick sheet lies crumpled by the
toilet. He smooths it. Pulls a coin.

BRANDON

Heads, New York. Tails Denver.

He flips the coin. Palms it. Heads. BRANDON checks the box.

BRANDON

Heads, over. Tails, under.

BRANDON flips again, lets the coin hit the floor, watches it spin, slowly come to a stop, drop to its side and --

INT. TV PRODUCTION STUDIO - NIGHT

BRANDON sits at the set. Looks over at CHUCK, in his own world, working something from his teeth. BRANDON Slides the pick sheet to WALTER.

TECHNICIAN

Ten seconds!

BRANDON

Wanna know about the picks?

WALTER

New York minus the two-and-a-half points and the over, what should I know?

BRANDON

I flipped a coin to decide.

TECHNICIAN

Five, four, three, two, one --

Walter

Hello everybody and welcome to the big weekend! John Anthony's just given me tremendous news about his assessment! Let me say to all of you who've used our service and those of you thinking of using it for the first time -- never before in the history of this industry has an offer been made like the one I'm about to present to you now! I am so confident of John Anthony's picks for this Sunday, so sure of the skills he's brought to bear and so anxious to get you on the phone and dialing the toll free number on your screen that for the first time in sports service history I will guarantee our picks this weekend! What's that mean? Tell us how much you're betting with your bookie. You lose, we cover! That's right! Risk free! Lock Of The Millenium! Now let's go to the oracle, God's gift -- John Anthony!

BRANDON'S face fills the monitor. Completely off-guard.

BRANDON

... Wow. What an offer. The phones'll be

flooded.

WALTER

We're that sure! John, rundown the pitfalls facing the average bettor. I mean a game this huge, all the added dynamics, without your expertise most bettors might as well just... flip a coin, am I right?

BRANDON

(tapping into it)

That's right, Walter! Last game of the year ladies and gentlemen! Come Sunday you're either ending the season a winner or a loser! It's crunch time! The last action on the way out the door! And I am absolutely, 1000-percent sure that I, John Anthony, will end the season ahead of the game!

EXT. TV PRODUCTION STUDIO - NIGHT

The studio doors open. WALTER exits. BRANDON right beside.

BRANDON

You can't guarantee they'll win! It's insane!

WALTER

You think? Well I say if you can flip a coin to pick, I can guarantee the game!

BRANDON

What if you lose?

WALTER

Fuck it, I'm ruined anyway.

BRANDON

At least cap it out!

WALTER

(turning to him)

Can't you feel it, Brandon?

BRANDON

I don't know what you're talking about.

WALTER

I think you do. The best part of the best drug in the world isn't the high. The best part is the time just before you take it! The dice are dancing on the table. Between now when they stop -- that's the greatest high in the world!

INT. SALES OFFICE - DAY

Mayhem. Loud and crowded. They can't answer the phones fast enough. A

big screen TV is set up in front. The Superbowl pre-game show is seen coming to an end. SALESMEN machine-gun last minute calls. Scribble like mad.

Southie

Win, we get a piece! Lose, we cover! It ain't rocket science! Take New York minus two and the over! 42 points! It's an iron-clad lock! How much you betting with your book?

HERBIE

Our reputation's the guarantee! 28 years in the business, we're not going anywhere! Bet this game big!
(yelling toward the windows)
Can we please get some air in here!

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

BRANDON, suit and tie, looks through the glass at the feeding frenzy. He closes the blinds. Goes to the closet. Hangs up his jacket. Removes his tie and --

INT. SALES OFFICE - night

Kick-off is seconds away. WALTER and the SALES STAFF gather around the set, turn up the sound.

1ST TV ANNOUNCER

New York wins the toss and elects to receive.

2ND ANNOUNCER

Some bettor somewhere just made some money.

WALTER

That's it! No more calls! Kill the phones!
Kill 'em now -- right now!

The ringing stops. All eyes on game as the two teams line up for kick-off. WALTER before the tv. Laughing with SALESMEN.

Int. brandon's office - same time - night

TONI alone. View across the hall into the office. BRANDON enters, wearing his UNLV jacket and faded jeans.

TONI

(to BRANDON, re: WALTER)

Look at him. Dead man walking, should be getting last rites. Hours away from losing everything, but Walter -- he's having the time of his life.

BRANDON

Maybe he thinks he already did lose everything.

VARIOUS SHOTS AS THE GAME UNFOLDS

WALL OF TVS, the ball's kicked and the game begins -- the SALESROOM explodes in cheers after a good play -- PLAYERS collide -- a fumble bounces across the field -- SALESMEN clamber atop desks for a better view -- WALTER in agony after an interception, a moment later elated when a flag brings the play back -- the score board FILLS FRAME, New York trails 14/7 at the half and --

PULL BACK TO SHOW -- the tension level in the room is suddenly suspended. We're in the eye of the storm. WALTER like a fighter between rounds. BRANDON appears.

WALTER

Hold onto that coin you flipped. Game keeps up like this I'll have to borrow it.

BRANDON

It's not over yet, Walter. I wouldn't change my bet.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - night

BRANDON packs things into a duffel bag. The Superbowl's on tv. The sound's off. Play's resumed. BRANDON removes the watch. Sets it on a nightstand beside an envelope and the Mercedes keys. Picks up a plane ticket and --

EXT. BROWNSTONE - night

BRANDON comes down the steps, carrying his bag, dressed the same as the day he came. BRANDON starts down the sidewalk. Flags a cab. It stops. He opens the door, about to get in when a cheer from the SALES ROOM makes him look up and --

POV BRANDON -- TONI looks down from a window. Frozen beat. She turns away. BRANDON climbs in the cab, drives off and --

INT. SALES OFFICE - night

Fourth quarter. Superbowl blaring from the tv. New York's driving. Minutes left. The SALES STAFF are screaming at the set, climbing over each other to get a better view and New York suddenly scores and the room erupts and WALTER'S right in the middle of it, looks around --

WALTER

Where the hell's Brandon?

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - night

The door's ajar. WALTER rushes in.

WALTER

You're missing the game! We're back in it! A New York touchdown and we win both bets!

Walter walks back to the bedroom. The tv's on. WALTER pauses to watch another play, about to leave when he spies the Rolex on the nightstand, envelope beside it. WALTER picks up the letter. Sees his name on the

outside. He opens it, reads. TONI appears in the BG. WALTER turns.

WALTER

... *He left.*

TONI

I know.

WALTER

And you didn't you tell me?

TONI

He asked me not to.

WALTER

Just like that? No goodbye?

TONI

I'm sure it's in the letter.

WALTER

I'm sure it is... I wonder what's not in here?

TONI

What do you mean?

WALTER

What do you mean, what do I mean? When it comes to Brandon you seem to have all the answers.

TONI

He had enough. He wanted his life back.

WALTER

He said that to you?

TONI

Yeah, loud and clear, by leaving.

WALTER

I think it's something else.

TONI

Yeah, tell me.

WALTER

You know.

TONI

No.

ON -- the TV. New York's driving. Game reaching a head. A clock in the corner counts down the final two minutes.

WALTER

You have no idea, huh?

TONI
You're missing the game.

WALTER
No I'm not. This is the game.

Int. Jfk airline terminal - night

BRANDON travels down an escalator and --

Int. Brandon's bedroom - night

TONI at the door. WALTER approaches.

WALTER
Something was bothering him. I mean sure,
maybe he was homesick. Or I was thinking maybe
he had such, you know, deep feelings for me he
couldn't face saying goodbye. What a minute.
I just
thought of something. Just came to me. Out of
the blue. What about this? Maybe Brandon left
without telling me because --
(full volume, in her face)
You let him fuck you!

ON -- TV. A New York RECEIVER catches a long bomb. Nailed at the 20.
Clock down to a minute 30. No time to huddle and --

WALTER
Do you deny it?

TONI
Do I have to?

WALTER
I know you did!

TONI
Really? Another "lock of the year?"

WALTER
I saw you, Toni! I saw you go into his room
that night! *This* room! With him! I never
went to Vegas!

Int. Jfk airline terminal - night

BRANDON walks through FRAME. PASSENGERS rush for flights and--

Int. Brandon's bedroom - night

TONI and WALTER in the middle of it --

TONI
You mean you lied to me about the trip!

WALTER
Don't talk to me about lying!

TONI
I guess you had the whole thing planned?

WALTER
Don't make this about me!

TONI
Put me out there on a tray!

WALTER
Yeah, I put the tray out there -- but you
didn't have to shove an apple in your mouth and
jump on it! On him!

ON -- New York throws a pass. Blocked. 45 seconds left --

WALTER
Admit it!

TONI
You played me!

WALTER
You're damn right I did!

TONI
... Brandon was right. Son of a bitch!

WALTER
You don't deny it!

TONI
Best pick he ever made.

WALTER
What the hell are you talking about?

Int. Jfk airport bar - night

PASSENGERS watch the Superbowl on a tv over the bar. Final seconds.
BRANDON appears. Stands outside. CROWD of people around the set, it
looks like the last play and --

Int. brandon's bedroom - night

TONI before WALTER. Inches away --

TONI
You were gambling with me that night, Walter.
Brandon knew it. Knew you. He told me he was
sure you were watching somehow. So he asked me
in to spend the night, put on a show. I didn't
believe him -- I mean after all we've been
through -- but I figured what the hell.

(MORE)

Toni con'd
He slipped out the back,
(MORE)

TONI CON'D
didn't even stay here. And you... you were in
such a good mood the next day. I figured he
must have been wrong. Otherwise why wouldn't
you confront *us*? Confront me?

CLOSE ON -- TV. Last play. No time left. The New York QUARTERBACK
drops back, about to be sacked, starts to run --

INT. SALESROOM - NIGHT

The room's at fever pitch, everyone screaming at the TV and --

Int. brandon's bedroom - night

WALTER still as a statue. Game in the BG. TONI rolling --

TONI
And now I find out you've been thinking ever
since then that we did sleep together? Living
with it like that? Looking at me like that?
You sick fuck! You wanted to lose! You set us
up! Like I was something you just toss on the
table! Only we booked your bet, Walter!
Brandon and me. The two of us, who evidently
love you more than you love yourself. Your
fantasy's to end up alone with nothing! Well I
won't let that happen to you! Understand? I
will *never* let that happen! This is it! We're
all we have, Walter! All we're ever gonna
have! You and me, we're all that's real!

WALTER stands there, staring at her. Tears streaming down his face and -
-

Int. Jfk airport bar - night

CAMERA on the tv. Blaring the game. Bar going crazy as the New York
QUARTERBACK runs for the end zone. Juking LINEMEN. Dodging tackles.
Nearing the goal. A last-second block clears a lane and the QUARTERBACK
barrels by, dives -- a hit -- a fumble on the goal line -- a beat -- a
replay -- a REFEREE signaling a touchdown -- and the game's over -- and
New York has won, but more importantly they've covered the spread and --

BRANDON walks down the corridor, his cell rings. Answering --

BRANDON
It's me.

BRANDON'S DAD
Hello, Brandon?

Brandon
Hey, hey the big winner. What's going on?

BRANDON'S DAD
Nothing much... the usual.

BRANDON
C'mon, I know it's rough, it's supposed to be.
A friend turned me on to the place. She said
it's the best.

BRANDON'S DAD
Where are you headed?

BRANDON
I don't know, but I got an airport full of
planes to choose from.

BRANDON'S DAD
Does your mom know I'm in rehab?

Brandon
Yeah, I told her.

BRANDON'S DAD
Great pick on New York. It's like I always
said, you don't bet quarterbacks and receivers-
-

BRANDON
(finishing his words)
--*You bet the offensive line.* I remember.
That's exactly what I was thinking about, pop.

BRANDON'S DAD
(excitement creeping in)
No kidding! Wow. Helluva game, huh? Boy,
that opening drive was a beaut, the way they
drove like that, six first downs -- you shoulda
seen me, Brandon -- I'm screaming at the tv...

BRANDON smiles as he listens to his DAD talk. The loud sound of a jet
taking off fills the terminal as BRANDON walks down the corridor and --

DISSOLVE TO

ext. Elementary school playground - day

A dozen 9-year-old PEE-WEE FOOTBALL PLAYERS, barely able to move in over-
sized gear, are lined for practice. BRANDON, coach's whistle, faces
them.

BRANDON
We're up against a tough team today, toughest
on our schedule. But you're ready for it.
You're prepared. Most important I want you to
go out there and have some fun. Enjoy

yourselves. Keep it loose. Because you can't
make me any more proud of you than I already
am. Team cheer, bring it in --

The KIDS gather close, thrust their hands in the center --

KIDS AND BRANDON TOGETHER
Thunderbirds!

Brandon
Go get 'em!

The KIDS scramble across the field, other TEAM seen suited and ready.
PARENTS on the sideline. One of BRANDON'S tiny TEAMMATES hangs back,
approaches BRANDON.

TEAMMATE
You really think we can win today, Coach?

BRANDON
... I'd bet on it.

BRANDON drapes an arm over the KID, walks him to the game --

CAMERA lifting higher --

And higher --

And that's it.

FADE OUT

THE END