

WE ARE MARSHALL

Screenplay by
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Story by
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CURRENT REVISIONS BY

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- 1 EXT. HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA (PRESENT DAY) - DAY 1
- The peaks of the Appalachians loom above the town.
- ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
- Along its 900 mile journey from
Pittsburgh to the Mississippi, the
Ohio River passes through the town
of Huntington, West Virginia.
- 2 EXT. OHIO RIVER - DAY 2
- The river. Ohio on the north. West Virginia on the south.
- BIG CONCRETE WALLS hold back the water.
- ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
- It's a big river in the middle of a
smallish town, and sometimes,
during the rainy season, it
overflows its banks.
- 3 EXT. STEEL MILL - DAY 3
- The rusty hulk stands in the midday sun.
- ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
- A long time ago, when it got really
bad, the town built flood walls to
stem the tide.
- 4 EXT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT ON FIFTH - DAY 4
- Waitresses in crisp white uniforms serve steak and
spaghetti to lawyers and businessmen on their lunch break.
- ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
- And it worked. We've gone years
without a flood.
- 5 EXT. THE CAMPUS OF MARSHALL UNIVERSITY - DAY 5
- Brick buildings surround a quiet green quad.
- ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
- So long in fact, some people forget
we ever had one. They forget it's
even possible.

6 EXT. FRONT OF CAMPUS - DAY 6

In stark contrast, hundreds of people stand silently around a large, flowing FOUNTAIN.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
But it is. Believe me. The water
can rise up...

A WREATH is placed before it.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.) (*cont'd*)
And sweep away everything you know.

Someone flips a switch and the water slowly stops flowing.
Silence fills the air.

FADE TO BLACK.

7 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 7

CRUNCH. A QUARTERBACK IN GREEN releases the ball just before he's sandwiched by two TACKLERS IN PURPLE.

SUPER: **NOVEMBER 14th, 1970 -- GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA**

8 8,000 people are on their feet. A RECEIVER IN GREEN 8
streaks down the sidelines, diving to catch the ball
inbounds at the 25 yard line.

9 THE SCOREBOARD reads EAST CAROLINA PIRATES 17, VISITORS 149
It's the FOURTH QUARTER. The clock ticks down -- 0:21...
0:20...0:19...

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
*First down! But the clock keeps
ticking.*

9A INT. PRESS BOX, GREENVILLE - DAY 9A *

GENE MOREHOUSE stands, excited, microphone in hand. *

GENE MOREHOUSE
If they're gonna get another play
off, the Herd had better hurry. *

10 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 10 *

The home crowd HUSHES. The QUARTERBACK (#7) stumbles to his feet, then screams at his team to hurry to the line as THE CLOCK ticks away -- 0:14...0:13...0:12...

11 ON THE SIDELINES, RICK TOLLEY (the coach of the visiting 11
Marshall Thundering Herd) is frantic, his face flushing.

RICK TOLLEY
Call it in, Red, goddammit, call it
in!

ASSISTANT COACH RED DAWSON grabs a RECEIVER on the
sideline.

RED DAWSON
77 Split option. You got it? 77
Split option. Go go go!

The receiver runs onto the field. There's no time for a
huddle so he just screams it.

RECEIVER
Malta, you're out! 77 split
option! 77 split option!

Red's hands tighten into fists.

RED DAWSON
Guys! Snap it, guys, snap it!

12 THE CLOCK keeps ticking -- 0:05...0:04...0:03... 12

13 The line sets their feet. The QB gets in position. The 13
crowd murmurs nervously.

On the sideline, ANNIE CANTRELL (head Marshall cheerleader)
tenses, too caught up in the game to do any cheering.

And then, right as the ball is about to be hiked...

14 CLOSE ON RED'S FACE... 14

As it registers everything we don't see -- the snap -- the
blitz -- the scramble -- the pass -- and then --

The crowd roars. Red's shoulders sag. His eyes close.
Cut all AMBIENT SOUND.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
*And now the clock hits all zeroes.
The Greenville faithful are already
on their feet.*

15 EXT. HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA - DAY 15

A view from the Appalachians of the city lit up at dusk.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
...so there it is, it's all over.
Marshall loses a tough one, 17-14
to the East Carolina Pirates.

16 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

16

The crowded restaurant sits still for a moment, bummed.

Behind the counter, PAUL GRIFFIN sighs, taking the loss as if he'd played the game himself.

CAROL DAWSON (Red's young wife) smiles ruefully at Paul from her counter seat.

CAROL DAWSON
There goes date night.

Paul sets a consolation beer down in front of her.

CAROL DAWSON (cont'd)
Tolley'll have Red in the film room
'til dawn, I bet.

PAUL GRIFFIN
He'd better. Your husband hasn't
figured out a way to beat the 3-4
all year.

He gives Carol a teasing smile.

Just then, SUE GRIFFIN comes out of the back carrying an egg carton with only one egg.

SUE GRIFFIN
Paul? You got any idea how to make
a three-egg omelette with one egg?

Paul rolls his eyes and turns.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)
I can't find the cartons from
Wednesday's shipment.

PAUL GRIFFIN
I had Chris put them in the
storeroom. And since you're
wondering? He finished with six
tackles and a sack.

SUE GRIFFIN
I'd be proud of my boy if he
carried the dirty towels, but this
remains one sad omelette.

Paul puts an arm around his wife and they head back to the kitchen, passing...

A WALL OF MEMORABILIA DEDICATED TO THE EXPLOITS OF CHRIS GRIFFIN, MARSHALL LINEBACKER.

The radio still plays:

*GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
-so the boys in green will return
to Huntington for the season finale
against Ohio on Saturday.*

17 INT. MARSHALL STUDENT CENTER - DUSK 17

NATE RUFFIN (20, black, with a soft cast on his arm) and TOM BOGDAN (20, white, middle America), both in Marshall Varsity Football jackets, sit near a radio.

A few freshmen players sit around them...at a respectful distance.

*GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
And if they've got any hope of
salvaging their season, and their
pride, then next week's a must win.*

REGGIE OLIVER, a black baby-faced freshman, impatiently holds a tin foil antenna.

REGGIE OLIVER
Man, that was ugly.

He lets his antenna drop, massaging his sore arm. The radio signal goes FUZZY.

Nate glares at him. He hollers over his shoulder.

NATE RUFFIN
Hey, Wes?

Behind him, two other varsity players -- WES HICKMAN (on crutches) and FELIX JORDAN (arm in a sling) -- play pool.

WES HICKMAN
Yeah?

NATE RUFFIN
You hear anyone tell the Freshman
he could put the antenna down?

Reggie freezes.

WES HICKMAN
No. Why do you ask?

Reggie immediately lifts the antenna back in the air.

NATE RUFFIN
Nevermind. No reason.

Felix Jordan tries to shoot with his bad arm, but miscues.
He throws his stick down and walks away.

Tom Bogdan checks his watch, then slaps Nate's shoulder.

TOM BOGDAN
You still want to go?

NATE RUFFIN
Better than hanging round here.

They head for the door.

REGGIE OLIVER
Where you guys going?

NATE RUFFIN
(to Tom)
You hear something?

TOM BOGDAN
I think it's the radio.

NATE RUFFIN
Yeah, you're probably right.

Once they disappear, Reggie turns to see the other freshman
staring at him holding the antenna.

He lets it drop.

REGGIE OLIVER
Man, this is bullsh-

18 INT. LOCKER ROOM, GREENVILLE - DAY 18

THE PLAYERS KNEEL as the TEAM CHAPLAIN finishes a prayer. *

TEAM CHAPLAIN
In the name of the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit. Amen. *

Coach Tolley walks in, trailed by assistant coaches Red
Dawson and DEKE BRACKETT (older, with a paunch).

RICK TOLLEY
Fellas. You gave a good effort
today. But let me be clear about
this -- a good effort is not
enough.

Tolley paces in front of them.

RICK TOLLEY (cont'd)
Now I'm proud of you. But I will
not accept losing with you.
Because there's only one thing they
judge us on. There's only one
thing people remember. And it
ain't how we play the game.

He turns and heads toward the door.

RICK TOLLEY (cont'd)
Plane leaves in an hour. We'll be
home by eight. Plenty of time for
ya'll do to whatever ya'll do on a
Saturday night. Tomorrow's yours,
so enjoy it. Because Monday's
mine, and it's gonna be hell.

He walks out. The room lets out a collective GROAN.

19 INT. GENE MOREHOUSE'S LIVING ROOM, HUNTINGTON - DAY 19

Five of Gene's SIX CHILDREN watch TV.

The sixth, nine-year-old KEITH, holes up with his
transistor radio. His dad's voice comes in loud and clear.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
*...you have to wonder if the
confusion on Marshall's sideline at
the end of the game won't make that
target on Coach Tolley's back just
a little bit bigger.*

Their mother, LINDA, enters, wearing an apron.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
I'm not gonna ask you guys again.

The other kids jump up and trudge toward the dining room.
But Keith stubbornly hangs back.

KEITH
Just a few more seconds. Dad's not
off yet.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
*As usual, we'll start our exclusive
coverage here at three...*

LINDA MOREHOUSE
You know he'll still be droning on
about that game when he gets home
tonight. Let's go.

Before she can reach him, Keith clutches his radio and
rolls under the couch, just out of her reach.

20 INT. PRESS BOX, GREENVILLE - DAY 20

A tired looking GENE MOREHOUSE wraps up his broadcast.

GENE MOREHOUSE
Until next week, then, for WGRN and
Marshall University, I'm Gene
Morehouse. Goodnight...

21 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM (UNDER THE COUCH) - DAY 21

Where Keith Morehouse mouths along...

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
...and go Herd.

Keith smiles, then switches off the radio just as his
mother drags him out by the foot.

22 EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT 22

Nate Ruffin and Tom Bogdan walk down 5th Avenue. At the
movie theater (the marquee reads *M.A.S.H.*), the lone TICKET
TAKER catches sight of the Marshall players.

TICKET TAKER
East Carolina? I mean, I can
understand giving up 300 yards to
Bowling Green. But East Carolina!?
My grandma plays tighter D...and
she's only got one leg!

Nate gives the Ticket Taker a withering look as he pays for
his ticket.

NATE RUFFIN
We'll be sure to look for her at
tryouts **next** spring.

*

The Ticket Taker glances at Nate's cast, shamefaced, then
looks at Bogdan.

TICKET TAKER
You hurt, too?

But then Nate grabs their change and heads inside.

Bogdan shrugs at the Ticket Taker and follows Nate.

23

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PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)
Mr. President, I believe the chair
is yours.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I understand our boys didn't fare
so well today.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Had a shot at the end, there.
Black, two sugars?

*
*

Dedmon nods. Paul moves on, passing three FIREMEN eating
at the counter.

*

FIREMAN
Your boy looked good today, *Paul*.
You must be proud.

*

Before Paul can respond, Sue puts an omelette down in front
of the fireman.

SUE GRIFFIN
Six tackles and one sack, you bet
we are.

24 EXT. GREENVILLE AIRPORT - NIGHT

24

A Southern Airlines DC9 sits on the runway. A STEWARDESS
opens the plane door. Two chartered buses pull up.

The MARCHING BAND tunes up. 75 or so BOOSTERS watch as the
coaches and team spill off the bus.

ONE BOOSTER converses quietly with ANOTHER.

*

BOOSTER
I just don't think Tolley knows how
manage the close games, that's all.

As Tolley approaches, the boosters change their tune,
bursting into APPLAUSE and the "We Are Marshall" chant.

Red Dawson and Deke Brackett trail behind.

DEKE BRACKETT
You really think I should ask?

RED DAWSON
Don't see how it can hurt.

Tolley shakes some hands, including the Booster's. He
glances sideways at Red and Deke.

RICK TOLLEY

(under his breath)

They'd give a standing "O" to a pig
right before they stuck him on the
spit.

DEKE BRACKETT

Listen, Rick, about this recruiting
trip. I got it on good authority
the Davis kid's already in West
Virginia's pocket-

RICK TOLLEY

We're not giving up on any of the
recruits, Deke.

DEKE BRACKETT

I'm not saying give up on him. I
just-

Just then, TOLLEY SPOTS THE **THREE** TUSCALOOSA BOYS (all big,
all black) huddling around a pay phone. Their ringleader,
BOBBY DELANY, whispers into the receiver.

*

RICK TOLLEY

You'll excuse me, gentlemen.

Without waiting for a reply, he heads off to investigate.
Red grins, but Deke just sighs.

DEKE BRACKETT

All right, then. Thanks for
listening.

25 At the pay phone, Bobby grins at his cohorts.

25

BOBBY DELANY

(into phone)

I just need a favor, Reggie, not
your damn life story...What?
Whatever, Pabst is fine. Just make
sure you get at least a case.

Suddenly, the other Tuscaloosa Boys scatter.

A hand taps Bobby on the shoulder. Bobby shakes it off.
The hand taps again. Bobby spins, annoyed.

BOBBY DELANY (cont'd)

What is it, godda--

(sees Tolley)

-da-at's right, Reggie. Carry the
two and divide by the...sum of
the...parts.

He hangs up the phone and gives Tolley his best smile.

BOBBY DELANY (cont'd)

Boy's just hopeless at math.

As Tolley starts to unload on him...

26 THREE CHEERLEADERS squeeze into an idling MID-60's CORVAIR
KATIE (THE DRIVER) yells:

KATIE

Annie! Hurry up, we gotta go!

27 Across the lot...ANNIE CANTRELL kisses her boyfriend, CHRIS
GRIFFIN.

She waves her friends off.

ANNIE CANTRELL

Do you want to talk about the game?

CHRIS GRIFFIN

Not even a little bit.

They kiss...

ANNIE CANTRELL

Neither do I.

They kiss some more...

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

But you were great.

And some more...

CHRIS GRIFFIN

Did you take your passport picture
this morning?

ANNIE CANTRELL

How could I? I was driving down
here...

CHRIS GRIFFIN

Annie.

She levels with him.

ANNIE CANTRELL

I want my hair to be longer.

He looks at her sternly, then breaks.

CHRIS GRIFFIN

You could be bald and I'd still
marry you. In London, Paris, or
Huntington, West Virginia.

ANNIE CANTRELL
Paris, please. But with longer
hair.

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Yes, ma'am.

They kiss one last time, then:

RICK TOLLEY (O.S.)
Griffin! Get over here!

Chris smiles at her...

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Race you back.

...then RUNS for the plane.

Annie sprints over to the cheerleaders and jumps in as they
pull away, passing right by...

28 RED AND DEKE, HEADING FOR THE PLANE.

28

RED DAWSON
So what's this concert you're
missing?

DEKE BRACKETT
Sally's piano recital. She's
playing Minuet in G. Tell you the
truth, she kinda just bangs on the
keys, don't sound like anything.
But she's cute up there, and it's
the kinda stuff I missed the first
time around with my boys.

Red sees the players start to board.

RED DAWSON
Guess that's my cue.

DEKE SAGS, RESIGNED TO HIS FATE.

DEKE BRACKETT
Y'all have a good flight now.

Red watches him walk away, alone. He closes his eyes -- he
doesn't believe he's about to do this.

RED DAWSON
Deke? Deke!

Deke stops and looks back at Red.

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DEKE BRACKETT

Yeah?

RED DAWSON

Tell you what. Take my seat.

DEKE BRACKETT

No, you go-

RED DAWSON

I'm serious. Gimme your keys, I'll go see the Davis kid.

DEKE BRACKETT

Now don't tease me here, Red.

Red takes the keys from Deke's hand.

RED DAWSON

Go on. It's Minuet in G.

Deke doesn't have to be told twice. He sprints for the plane, making it inside just as...

THE STEWARDESS CLOSES THE DOOR.

32 EXT. GREENVILLE AIRPORT - NIGHT

32

The DC 9 takes off into the evening sky.

Red stands at the pay phone, receiver to his ear, watching them go.

The phone RINGS as the plane gets smaller on the horizon.

Red sighs, hangs up, and dials another number.

33 INT. STILLWELL HOUSE, HUNTINGTON - NIGHT

33

THE PHONE RINGS, startling DORIS STILLWELL (old and tiny) away from *Let's Make A Deal* on her black & white TV.

She hobbles over to the phone while Monty Hall shows door number one to a young woman dressed as a cat.

DORIS

Oh no, never pick door number one.
(into phone)
Good evening?

RED DAWSON (O.S.)

Hey Doris, Red Dawson calling from Greenville. Can I trouble you to look and see if Carol's home?

Doris barely takes her eyes off the TV, just pulls the curtain to peek at the house next door. All is dark.

DORIS
Sure doesn't look like it, Red.

RED DAWSON (O.S.)
Yeah, that's what I thought. Could you do me a big favor then and leave her a message for me? Tell her I'm going to Virginia on a recruiting trip and I won't be home until tomorrow evening. Tell her I'm sorry, it's just...well, they asked me to do it, so I did.

DORIS
(fixated on the TV)
Okay, you'll be back tomorrow evening, got it.

RED DAWSON (O.S.)
Thanks, Doris. Have a good night.

Doris hangs up and heads back to her chair, watching the cat woman ponder her choice on the TV.

DORIS
Trust me girl, pick number three.

Outside Doris' window, RAINDROPS begin to ping against the glass. THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.

34 INT. CHEERLEADER'S CAR - NIGHT 34

Katie the Driver turns on her wipers against the rain.
The other two cheerleaders (JULIE AND JANE) grill Annie.

JANE
Are you coming tomorrow?

ANNIE CANTRELL
Where?

JULIE
The soccer team's having a barbecue.

ANNIE CANTRELL
I can't. I've gotta work breakfast if I want to see Chris in the afternoon.

The girls sigh.

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KATIE
Sounds like a fair trade to me.

*
*

They laugh. Annie leans her head against the window, staring up at the cloudy sky.

35 INT. PLANE - NIGHT

35

Chris Griffin stares out the window, looking for Annie through the dark floor of clouds.

A hand taps him on the shoulder. He looks up to see Rick Tolley passing by.

RICK TOLLEY
Good effort today, Griffin.

Chris nods. Tolley makes his way through the plane. All around him, the plane bustles with life.

A player leans over his seat, goofing with a teammate. Tolley gives him a good-natured shove.

RICK TOLLEY (cont'd)
Could've used a little of that
hustle on the field.

The player grins. Tolley moves on, trading jokes and hellos. He comes upon Gene Morehouse.

RICK TOLLEY (cont'd)
Hey there, Gene. I know this might
sound weird, but would you do me a
favor and scratch my back? 'Cause
the giant target on there's really
starting to itch.

*

GENE MOREHOUSE
You know you can't believe
everything you hear on the radio,
Coach.

*
*
*
*

Tolley chuckles and keeps moving, finally making it to the front.

*

INTERCOM
*This is Captain Dettro speaking.
Looks like we made good time in
spite of the weather, so if
everyone could return to their
seats and prepare for landing,
we'll be on the ground shortly.*

Tolley turns and looks over his team and his coaches.

RICK TOLLEY

You heard the captain, boys. Let's
straighten those ties and give 'em
all a big smile. Looks like we're
home.

*
*

He sits.

STAY ON THE SHOT for a long beat.

AND THEN A HUGE BUMP SHAKES THE PLANE.

*

CUT TO BLACK.

HOLD ON IT A LONG TIME.

SILENCE...until, in the distance, THE MONKEES's "DAYDREAM
BELIEVER" begins to play.

36 EXT. VIRGINIA ROAD - NIGHT

36

Red drives Deke's '67 Chevy down the empty two-lane
highway, tapping to the song on the radio.

He passes a sign: 'WELCOME TO VIRGINIA.'

37 Red pulls into a lonely gas station, stopping at the only
pump.

AN OLD ATTENDANT sits on a rocking chair, eating boiled
peanuts and listening to A SMALL RADIO. He moseys over.

ATTENDANT

Fill 'er up for ya?

Red nods and gets out to stretch his legs. He notices two
crock pots of peanuts on a window sill.

RADIO

-which comes at a time when the
state department reports increased
war activity. At least 44 US
fatalities in the past week-

RED DAWSON

Those peanuts look pretty
good. Lemme get a batch of
them, too.

RADIO

-while in other news the
Cambodian government has
charged four family members
of a former US Chief of
State with subversion-

ATTENDANT

Sure, 50 cents, just help yourself.
Regular's on the left, cajun's on
the right.

RADIO

-and we're getting word across the wire just now that an airplane has crashed in Huntington, West Virginia. No details yet on-

Red scoops himself some peanuts.

RED DAWSON

Wait, what did that say?

RADIO

-those and other top stories of the hour right now on CBS radio.

ATTENDANT

Dunno, wasn't listening. That'll be an even five, gas 'n' nuts.

Red absently hands him the money.

RADIO

Good evening. We'll update the situation in Huntington as more details are released, but first-

Red just blinks. The announcer goes into a Vietnam story.

ATTENDANT

Son? You okay?

Red drops his peanuts and runs for his car.

38 INT. CHEERLEADERS' CAR - NIGHT

38

The girls sing along to the radio.

CHEERLEADERS

"Cheer up Sleepy Jean! -- Oh what can it mean! -- To a Daydream Believer and a Homecoming Queen --"

Suddenly, a local station jingle interrupts the song.

RADIO

This is a WGNT special report...

39 EXT. OPEN ROAD - NIGHT

39

The brakelights flash. The Corvair SLOWS TO A STOP on the side of the road.

*
*

40 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT, OFFICE - NIGHT 40

Sue Griffin goes over the books. THE PHONE RINGS.

SUE GRIFFIN

Paul? You wanna get that?

But it keeps RINGING. She rolls her eyes, walks over and snaps up the receiver.

41 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT 41

Paul Griffin walks Carol Dawson to the door of the nearly empty restaurant.

PAUL GRIFFIN

You have a good night, now. Red needs any pointers on picking up the blitz, you have him give me a call.

Suddenly, SUE CRIES OUT from the back. Carol and Paul pause.

42 INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT 42

The *M.A.S.H.* football scene flickers off and the lights come up. The audience boos.

The Ticket Taker appears in the doorway, looking shaken.

Nate and Bogdan stare at him from their seats, confused.

43 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 43

Keith and the other Morehouse kids sit packed on the couch, watching *The Newlywed Game*. Their mother knits in a chair.

Suddenly, text scrolls across the bottom of the TV screen: "PLANE DOWN AT TRI-STATE AIRPORT; DETAILS TO COME."

Keith reads the scroll, confused. He looks at his brothers and sisters. No one makes a sound until their Mom happens to look up from her knitting...

AND MOANS. Suddenly, six voices begin talking at once.

44 INT. DORIS STILLWELL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 44

The same show and the same text play on Doris' screen. But the only sound is snoring...

Doris lies asleep in her armchair, out like a light.

45 EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT 45

Reggie Oliver walks out of a LIQUOR STORE with A CASE OF
PABST BLUE RIBBON. *

A FIRE TRUCK ROARS BY.

Reggie watches it pass without much interest.

But then another SIREN SCREAMS. A police car flashes by.
Then another. Then an ambulance and one more fire truck.

Across the street...Nate and Bogdan flag down a pick-up
outside the theater. *

NATE RUFFIN
Hey, you going to the airp-

MAN IN TRUCK
Get in.

They jump in the back of the truck and squeal down the
road. *

46 EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - NIGHT 46

Fire trucks and police cars crowd the shoulder. Traffic
jams in both directions.

Past the road, the heavily-treed terrain slopes steeply
down. Despite the rain, the unmistakable hue of FIRE seeps
through the brush.

Nate and Bogdan arrive in their truck, jumping out to join
A CROWD already gathered behind emergency ropes.

The Griffins stand with Carol Dawson. Wes Hickman and
Felix Jordan huddle together. Nate hurries over.

NATE RUFFIN
Have they said anything?

They shake their heads. Nate ducks under the ropes, but a
RESCUE WORKER notices him.

RESCUE WORKER
Get back behind the ropes.

NATE RUFFIN
C'mon, give us something here. At
least tell us which airline it is.

The rescue worker just looks back at Nate, sincere and sad.

RESCUE WORKER
If we knew, believe me, we'd tell
you.

NATE RUFFIN
How do you not know? Just look on
the front of the damn plane.

RESCUE WORKER
Son...there isn't any front of the
plane anymore.

Nate stares, stunned. The Rescue Worker heads down the
slope, where he confers with a Fireman.

The Fireman holds something up to the Rescuer:

A CHARRED BUT STILL ALL-TOO-GREEN MARSHALL PLAYBOOK.

The crowd stares as they all process this horrible
confirmation.

At first, there is silence. Then slowly, a few of the
women start to SOB. Others SCREAM.

Carol Dawson blinks, too stunned to move. Tom Bogdan goes
limp. Nate Ruffin staggers to the Rescue Worker.

NATE RUFFIN
Are there...there could be
survivors, right?

The Rescue Worker answers by not answering. Nate closes
his eyes, then just sits down in the dirt.

Sue trembles as Paul slowly walks up the hill toward her.

SUE GRIFFIN
No. Don't say it. Don't say it
because it isn't true. It's just
not.

Paul wraps his arms around her as she breaks.

PAUL GRIFFIN
They're gone, Sue. They're all
gone.

Next to them, Carol Dawson stands frozen.

After a moment, she turns and walks away.

POLICE OFFICER
Sir! Turn the vehicle around.
This whole area's closed.

The driver's side window rolls down. President Dedmon looks out, stone-faced. The cop turns and shouts.

POLICE OFFICER (cont'd)
Okay, let this one by!

48 Dedmon parks and steps out of the car. He walks through 48 the crowd, down the embankment, past the trees...

AND THERE'S THE PLANE. Or what's left of it. Dedmon squints from the heat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
My god in heaven...

CHIEF BEN WELLES appears behind him. Dedmon composes himself, then turns to survey the crowd -- all in shock, all huddled together outside the ropes, soaked by the rain.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)
I-I think we need to get all these people home.

Chief Welles nods somberly but still touches Dedmon's arm.

CHIEF WELLES
Don? We're still going to need help...identifying the bodies.

Dedmon pauses, the idea making his stomach turn. Before he can respond, a voice speaks up behind them.

NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)
We'll do it.

They turn to find Nate and Tom walking slowly down the slope, Bogdan looking a little hesitant.

Dedmon starts to shake his head, but Nate interrupts.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
What, would you rather do it? Or do you wanna go get one of them?

He points to the shattered crowd then heads for the crash. *

Bogdan doesn't move...until Nate shoots him a sharp look and he reluctantly follows.

Dedmon just watches them go. *

49 EXT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT 49

Reggie Oliver walks slowly up to the building, alone.
He opens the doors to find...

50 INT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT 50

The center is crowded with students and townspeople. They
whispers in huddled groups, sharing information.

A GIRL looks up and stops talking, stunned by the presence
of a player.

*
*

Reggie takes a seat in back. He stares up at THE ROUGH-
HEWN CROSS.

51 EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT 51

Nate and Bogdan stand in the fire glare.

Rescue Workers carry a bodybag up to Bogdan. They unzip
it. He looks in. He speaks in a small, resigned voice.

TOM BOGDAN

Nick DeAngelis.

A Paramedic writes the name in chalk.

Nearby, Nate stares into another bodybag, his face a mask.

NATE RUFFIN

I'm...not sure.

RESCUE WORKER

Okay. Another unidentified here.

Nate watches the Workers carry the bodybag to a growing
line of black bags.

The Workers unzip another bag in front of Bogdan.

HOLD ON Bogdan as he goes pale. After a long moment, he
walks away and leans his head against a tree.

Nate sees, but doesn't go over to help. Instead, he turns
back to the body in front of him.

NATE RUFFIN

How am I supposed to tell?

The Rescue Worker just nods and takes the body away. But
another bag is quickly carried in.

President Dedmon and the Griffins watch the scene, their eyes bloodshot, their faces numb. *

52 A tire squeal draws their attention to the road, 52
where...THE CHEERLEADERS' CAR PULLS UP.

Annie jumps out, the other girls close behind.

Annie hurries down the hill, frantic.

Paul restrains her before she can see. *

ANNIE CANTRELL
Where is he? Where's Chris?

Paul just holds her. *

At that moment, Nate walks up, pale. *

NATE RUFFIN
Mr. And Mrs. Griffin... *

They turn to him...and know what this means. *

Paul holds back a struggling Annie. *

Sue swallows and walks down the hill. *

She reaches a bodybag, marked with white chalk letters:
GRIFFIN. A rescue worker stands by. *

Nate nods at him. *

CLOSE ON SUE'S FACE...as we hear the ZIP...and she reacts,
falling to her knees. *

53 INT. DAWSON HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT 53

Carol lies fetal on the bed, sobbing into a pillow.

Finally, she pulls the pillow off her head, trying to catch
her ragged breath.

Just then, A DOOR OPENS downstairs.

She freezes.

FOOTSTEPS clunk in the foyer.

Carol gets up and walks hesitantly to the bedroom door.

She hears the sound of a SUITCASE dropping to the floor.

She steps into the hall and sprints to the staircase,
looking down to see...

RED, exhausted, standing in the downstairs hall. He sees the shock on her face and grimaces.

RED DAWSON
You didn't get my message.

Carol flies downstairs and jumps on him, sobbing. They stand there for a long time, neither wanting to move.

DIP TO BLACK.

54 EXT. HUNTINGTON - DAWN 54

All is dark and quiet. In the east, the sun somehow begins to rise once again, and day slowly breaks over the city.

55 EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - DAWN 55

The crash site still smolders. Rescue workers still work the wreckage.

On the hill, Red Dawson sits alone, watching through the smoke and haze, his eyes bloodshot, his face numb.

56 EXT. MARSHALL DORMITORY - DAY 56

Sun shines on the brick building, inappropriately bright.

57 INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY - DAY 57

The hallway lies silent. The doors to certain rooms hang open, the occupants never to return.

58 INT. REGGIE'S ROOM - DAY 58

PAN OVER: THREE BEDS, still made, unslept in.

In a FOURTH BED, Reggie Oliver just stares.

A CASE OF PABST BLUE RIBBON sits unopened on the dresser.

59 INT. NATE'S ROOM - DAY 59

Nate lies in bed, awake. After a long moment, he heads to the sink for a glass of water.

In the mirror, he sees Bogdan, also wide awake.

TOM BOGDAN

I keep thinking if I can just fall
asleep, everyone will be here again
when I wake back up.

Nate grimaces, but doesn't respond.

FELIX JORDAN (O.S.)

Hey.

They turn to see Felix slumped in the doorway. He sinks
into a chair, unbidden.

Nate just stares at him, something running through his
head.

NATE RUFFIN

How many of us are left?

TOM BOGDAN

What?

Bogdan and Felix look up at Nate. He stares back at them,
suddenly determined.

60 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY

60

Red pulls into the driveway and gets out, haggard.

He stops at the front stoop, staring at THE MORNING PAPER:
"MARSHALL TEAM, COACHES, FANS DIE IN PLANE CRASH. 75
BELIEVED ON BOARD."

RED DAWSON

Oh, Jesus.

There, halfway down the page, next to a list of the dead,
is RED'S PICTURE.

60A INT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY

60A

*

SANDY LENGYEL stares down at THE WOOSTER DAILY RECORD:
"TRAGEDY IN WEST VIRGINIA."

*

*

She wipes away a tear.

*

SANDY LENGYEL

*

Jack, have you seen this?

*

JACK LENGYEL stands at the kitchen window, watching his
kids play on the lawn. He nods.

*

*

JACK LENGYEL
I don't know how you get over
something like that.

*
*
*
*

Sandy hugs him.

61 EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY 61

A few students huddle around, quietly mourning.

At the CENTRAL FOUNTAIN, a GIRL IN HER PAJAMAS cries on the shoulder of a CONSOLING GUY. Suddenly, he sees something and lifts her chin.

NATE, BOGDAN AND THE OTHER SURVIVING VARSITY PLAYERS walk across the quad, each dressed in his letterman jacket.

They move with purpose, Nate leading the way. Everyone knows who they are. Everyone watches where they're going.

62 INT. DEDMON'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY 62

DEDMON'S SECRETARY looks up, her breath catching as...

Nate leads his teammates through the door.

Without a word, she flips a switch on her desk.

SECRETARY
President Dedmon? There's some
players here to see you.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (V.O.)
I'm sorry, players?
(beat)
Hold on, I'll be right out.

Dedmon steps out, taking a beat as he sees the boys.
Before he can speak, Nate steps forward.

NATE RUFFIN
Sir? We want to play next week
against Ohio.

He points at the others.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
All of us'll play iron man on both
sides. We're only two short.
We'll play 'em nine on eleven.

Dedmon breathes hard and glances away. When he finally looks back at Nate, his eyes are misty.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

You boys have a lot of heart. I'm proud of you. Your teammates would be proud of you. But this...

NATE RUFFIN

It's what we gotta do, sir.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Son, even if there were enough of you, it would never work. Think about it, you're injured.

He looks them over: Nate in a cast, two others on crutches. Dedmon sadly shakes his head.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

And that's the only reason you're alive right now.

Bogdan stares at the floor.

NATE RUFFIN

But we are alive, sir. And we want to finish our season. We want to finish their season.

Dedmon puts his arm around Nate.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

This school...this town...we've all been dealt a serious blow. No one more than you boys. But now is not the time for football. Now's the time to grieve, and then, God willing, to heal.

Nate opens his mouth to speak, but Dedmon stops him.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

There'll be plenty of football games to be played in the future. But right now we've got 75 funerals to put on, all over the country. You want to do something for your teammates? Spread out. Represent the team and the school at as many as you can. Go stand up tall in front of those families and tell them what it really means to be a Marshall football player. I promise you, there's no better way to honor them than that.

Dedmon heads back into his office. The players all turn to Nate, who just looks away.

BEGIN THE FUNERAL MONTAGE -- (MUSIC: SAM COOKE'S "A CHANGE
IS GONNA COME.")

*
*

63 OMITTED 63 *

64 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 64

Nate Ruffin, in a suit and tie, walks out alone and places
the ball on a tee on the 20 yard line.

He turns to face...

4,000 PEOPLE PACKING THE STANDS.

PASTOR (O.S.)
Today is not a welcome day.

Dedmon, Red, Coach Mickey Jackson, and the players gather
on the field.

*

Annie and the cheerleaders stand in black dresses in front
of the bleachers.

The crowd sits absolutely silent, waiting for a kickoff
that will never come.

65 INT. PRESS BOX - DAY 65

Keith Morehouse curls beneath his father's chair in the
broadcast booth. He stares vacantly.

66 EXT. HUNTINGTON STREETS - DAY 66

Flags are lowered to half-staff.

PASTOR (O.S.)
The sun is not kind.

Businesses sit deserted. 'CLOSED' signs hang in almost
every window.

67 EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY 67

A traffic light turns from yellow to red.

A HEARSE comes to a stop.

PASTOR (O.S.)
And the shadow offers us no
comfort.

At the intersection, ANOTHER HEARSE drives through.

68 INT. FIRST CHURCH, TOLLEY FUNERAL - DAY 68

A picture of Coach Tolley rests on a closed coffin.

HIS WIDOW sits up front with Carol Dawson and the other COACHES' WIDOWS.

PASTOR (O.S.)
Clocks tick, but time does not
pass.

Red, Dedmon, Nate and the rest of the players sit stoically behind them.

69 INT. SECOND CHURCH, BRACKETT FUNERAL - DAY 69

Deke Brackett is laid to rest. Red and Carol Dawson sit with Deke's LARGE FAMILY up front.

A little girl in a black dress plays the piano.

PASTOR (O.S.)
With every breath, we feel we are
stealing the air meant for someone
younger and finer.

The congregation rises for a HYMN. At the very back, Nate Ruffin and a few of the other players stand up to sing.

70 INT. DEDMON'S OFFICE - DAY 70

An exhausted President Dedmon opens up the newspaper. The headline reads, "KNEE SURGEON IDENTIFIES TWO MORE BODIES."

A BOX ON THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE LISTS THE DAY'S FUNERALS.

PASTOR (O.S.)
Our child gave to us. With his
laughter and his smile and his work
and his passion.

Dedmon takes out a marker and begins circling the funerals he'll be able to make.

71 INT. THIRD CHURCH, TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA - DAY 71

THREE CASKETS rest side by side.

*

PASTOR (O.S.)
With his friendship. And with his
love.

Reggie Oliver sits with **THREE** SETS OF GRIEVING PARENTS at
the front of the church.

*

A door opens in back and people turn to see...

Red Dawson and Nate Ruffin, both wet from the rain. They
quietly take seats in the last row.

72 EXT. FIRST HUNTINGTON GRAVEYARD - DAY 72

Linda Morehouse stands in a veil next to her six kids.

PASTOR (O.S.)
So let us not mourn him. Let us
remember him. Let us celebrate
him.

The mourners (including Nate and Bogdan) bow their heads.

Linda watches her six children cross themselves. She
breaks down.

73 EXT. SECOND HUNTINGTON GRAVEYARD - DAY 73

Annie Cantrell twists a funeral program in her black-gloved
hands. She stands beneath a tree, at a distance from...

Chris Griffin's burial. THE PASTOR reads at the graveside.

PASTOR
Let us treasure the memory of our
boy, our friend, our Chris. Surely
he was one of God's dearest
creations. Amen.

Sue Griffin sobs into her husband's coat. Paul, red-eyed,
stares straight ahead.

Wes Hickman and Felix Jordan unroll Chris' football jersey
over his coffin.

They step back and join Red and Nate as the casket is
lowered into the ground.

Sue verges on collapse. Paul turns her from the grave and
leads her away.

As they pass President Dedmon, PAUL MEETS HIS EYE, **WITH AN
INTENSE LOOK.**

*

*

At the grave, a funeral attendant somberly scoops a shovelful of dirt into the hole.

74 INT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY 74

Jack Lengyel, in a Wooster College polo shirt, absently scoops coffee into a coffee maker.

He looks over to the breakfast table where Sandy tries to corral their three kids. Unsuccessfully. He smiles.

*
*

JACK LENGYEL
Hey, honey? You ever been to
Huntington?

SANDY LENGYEL
Mouth closed, Peter, thank you.
(to Jack)
What, Jack?

Lengyel slides the filter into the coffee maker, and joins his family at the table.

JACK LENGYEL
Nothing. Just thinking out loud.

He takes a bite of cereal, then makes eye contact with his son. Jack opens his mouth and shows Peter his food.

Peter giggles. Sandy sighs.

75 EXT. MARSHALL CAMPUS - DAY 75

Dedmon and Paul Griffin watch as students make their way to class.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Have you mentioned this to any of
the other board members?

PAUL GRIFFIN
A few. Most of them would rather
not think about it.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I can understand that sentiment.

PAUL GRIFFIN
It just doesn't make sense to rush
right back into it, you know? So
many of our boosters were on that
plane...

Paul's voice wavers. Dedmon puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)
And we'd have to start all over
again from scratch. For what? My
God, do we even have the energy?
We sure don't have the resources or
the manpower.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I know all the reasons to suspend
the program, Paul. I'm just
surprised to hear them coming from
you.

Paul looks him in the eye and sighs.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Sue's having a real hard time. And
more football just isn't going to
help. It wouldn't be a game
anymore. It'd only be a weekly
reminder of what we've lost. I
don't see how that would do anyone
in this town any good.

*
*
*

Dedmon surveys his campus.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I'll call a board meeting. You
draw up a proposal. Let's see if
we can't lock up the votes sooner
rather than later.

Out on the quad, a girl hugs BIG EDDIE CARTER.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)
Jesus. Somebody's going to have to
tell them.

76 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

76

The six remaining varsity players and Reggie sit on
benches.

President Dedmon stands stiffly in front of them. His
overcoat lies folded neatly on a chair.

He seems out of place surrounded by lockers and athletic
tape.

Move around the room. The players react as if they've been
punched in the gut. Betrayed.

All except Tom Bogdan, who looks, if anything, relieved.

Finally, Nate Ruffin stands.

NATE RUFFIN

You can't end football.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

We're not talking about ending the program. We're talking about suspending it. All of your scholarships will still be honored. We're just going to take a collective breath, as a town, and figure out the proper course of action-

NATE RUFFIN

The proper course of action is to bring the program back. Sir. Right now. Right away.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I certainly understand your position. And I will personally pass on your concerns to the board before they make their decision.

NATE RUFFIN

How about you let me pass on my concerns myself?

Dedmon picks up his coat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Unfortunately, Board of Governors meetings are, and always have been, closed door.

NATE RUFFIN

Well, you better just open that door up then, huh?

Dedmon steels himself.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I know you're upset, son, but don't speak to me like I'm one of your... *cronies*.

Nate glares, furious. Dedmon pauses, teetering on the brink of anger. He manages to collect himself.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

You've been through a lot in a short time.

PRESIDENT DEDMON(cont'd)
But I'm afraid it's out of my
hands.
(to the team)
I'm sorry.

With that, Dedmon turns and walks out.

NATE RUFFIN
Hold on! This isn't right! Get
the hell back here!

Nate tries to follow, but Eddie grabs his shoulder. Nate
tries to slap it away, but Eddie won't budge.

77 INT. MARSHALL STUDENT CENTER - DAY

77

Moments later, Nate, Reggie, Felix and Bogdan burst in.

NATE RUFFIN
Reg, you and Felix find everybody
you can, and tell 'em to meet up in
the lobby at five.

REGGIE OLIVER
You want the freshman?

NATE RUFFIN
Freshman, everybody. Tell 'em five
o'clock. Tell 'em anybody wants to
keep playing, they'll be there.

Felix and Reggie peel off.

TOM GRABS NATE BY THE ELBOW.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate, hold on. Some of the guys...
(he sighs)
Some of 'em are kinda...wavering.

*

NATE RUFFIN
What do you mean, wavering? What
are you talking about? Who's
wavering?

Bogdan doesn't answer, refusing to make eye contact.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
Tom?

Bogdan finally looks up at Nate.

TOM BOGDAN
I overslept. That's why I wasn't
on the plane. My back is fine.

NATE RUFFIN

What?

TOM BOGDAN

It was Steve Sullivan's birthday.
We were out all night.

(tearing up)

If I had woken up five minutes
earlier, I would've been with them.
They were counting on me...

Tom breathes raspily through his tears.

TOM BOGDAN (cont'd)

I'm only alive because I let them
down. I'm not even supposed to be
here...

Nate stares as Tom breaks down, collapsing into a chair.

Nate shakes, overwhelmed with pain and anger.

Finally, he just walks away, leaving Tom crying alone.

77A	EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY	77A	*
	Nate KNOCKS at the door. There's no answer.		*
77B	INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY	77B	*
	Red sits on the steps, looking at the door.		*
	NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)		*
	Coach Dawson?		*
	Red rubs his face.		*
	Finally, the knocking stops.		*
77C	EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY	77C	*
	Nate shakes his head and walks away.		*
78	EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY	78	
	Red walks out his backdoor.		*
	PULL BACK just as he swings up a SLEDGEHAMMER and SMASHES IT into the side of A DILAPIDATED TIN SHED.		
79	OMITTED	79	*

80 EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY 80

Eddie Carter and Felix Jordan hand out fliers to the passing students. Felix hands out his last two.

FELIX JORDAN

You think we got a chance, man?

Eddie doesn't answer. He just stares across the quad at Nate coming out of a classroom, talking earnestly with a STUDENT IN A SPORTCOAT.

Eddie turns to Felix and shrugs, hopeful.

81 INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY 81

A RADIO on the kitchen table blares Hank Williams.

Carol makes tuna salad. She wipes her hands and clicks off the radio.

Only now can we hear THE BANGING FROM OUTSIDE.

She smiles tightly and opens the window.

CAROL DAWSON

Red! Lunch is ready!

She stands in the kitchen, listening to the banging...finally...stop.

Somewhere, A GAVEL BANGS...

82 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 82

Dedmon calls to order a meeting of the Marshall faculty and Board. As the 35 or so people take their seats, a nervous buzz courses through the room.

Paul Griffin sits quietly, his face drawn.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

All right. There's only one piece of business on the docket tonight, so what I'd like to do is-

Just then, THE DOOR OPENS and Nate Ruffin walks in.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

This is a private meeting, young man, I think I made myself clear-

But Dedmon is interrupted by THE STUDENT IN THE SPORTCOAT.

PAT PINSON

Actually, sir, Mr. Ruffin is here
as my guest. And as student body
representative to the board, I'd
like to motion that he be provided
an opportunity to speak.

*

Dedmon glares at him, then glances at Lloyd Boone.

Boone shrugs. Dedmon looks to Paul.

PAUL GRIFFIN

(begrudgingly)

I guess he's got a right.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Fine. Your time starts now, Mr.
Ruffin.

Nate steps to the podium. The Board members look up at
him, expectant.

But Nate doesn't say anything.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

If you have something to say,
son...

Nate still doesn't move. Then, finally, he steps away from
the podium.

NATE RUFFIN

You know what? Nah.

Nate heads back toward the door. Paul Griffin looks up,
suddenly hopeful...

UNTIL NATE STOPS BY THE WINDOW.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)

I ain't got nothing to say....

He opens the curtain that runs the length of the room.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)

But they do.

Nate pushes open the large double windows with his cast so
that the board members are looking down upon:

OVER A THOUSAND STUDENTS filling up all corners of the
campus green. In the front, Eddie, Reggie, Felix, Wes and
the cheerleaders lead the crowd in chanting, as one voice:

CROWD
We are...Marshall!
We are...Marshall!
We are...Marshall!

As most of the board members rush to look out at the gathered crowd, we move in...

ON NATE, puffed up with pride...

CROWD (cont'd)
We are...Marshall!

ON DEDMON, struggling to keep his emotions in check...

CROWD (cont'd)
We are...Marshall!

ON PAUL GRIFFIN, stone-faced. Defeated.

CROWD (cont'd)
We are...Marshall!

83 INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY 83

Red and Carol eat lunch at the table.

CROWD (O.S.)
We are...Marshall!

Carol drops her fork. She looks up at her husband...who *barely eats*, ignoring the noise.

*

Suddenly, the chant turns into a ROAR.

84 EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY 84

THE CROWD CELEBRATES. Players beam, students shout.

ANNIE CANTRELL stands to the side, expressionless.

*

Finally, she just turns and walks away.

*

85 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 85

Paul Griffin gathers his things and heads for the door, brushing past...

*

*

Don Dedmon.

*

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Paul...

*

*

But Griffin just walks out.

*

Dedmon sighs and looks over at...

*

NATE, still standing at the window, watching the crowd.

*

NATE RUFFIN

It's the right thing to do, sir.
You won't regret this.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Mr. Ruffin, do you have any idea
how long the road's going to be?
We don't have a team. We don't
have a staff. We don't even have a
damn athletic director.

(reeling himself in)

May he rest in peace. Under the
best of circumstances, it takes
years to build a program. We've
got months. There are so many
loose ends, I don't know where to
start.

Nate nods, trying to look thoughtful.

NATE RUFFIN

Well, maybe you ought to start with
a coach.

86 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY

86

A distant doorbell RINGS.

Red raises up a roof beam and nails it into place.

He glances up to see President Dedmon crossing the yard.

Red grimaces. He turns and nods evenly.

RED DAWSON

Don.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Hey, Red. What're you working on
there?

Red fits another piece of plywood into place and starts
nailing it in.

RED DAWSON

I've been promising Carol a new
shed for a while now, and I
dunno...no time like the present, I
guess.

Dedmon waits for Red to finish hammering. But he doesn't.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
(raising his voice)
So. Got an offer for you, Red.

Red stops nailing but doesn't look up.

RED DAWSON
I was afraid you might.

87 INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY 87

Carol looks out from the kitchen window to see Dedmon dip his head and listen to Red turn him down.

88 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY 88

Dedmon walks to his car.

CAROL DAWSON (O.S.)
It's always been his dream to have
his own team.

*
*

He looks up to see Carol standing on the porch.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
That's not quite how he put it.

*

CAROL DAWSON
Red's...got his own way of dealing
with things.
(at a loss)
I'm just happy he's alive.

*
*
*

They both listen to the faint hammering in the distance.
Dedmon nods, understanding.

*

PRESIDENT DEDMON
If it had been me...I don't know
how I'd even make it out of bed in
the morning.

Dedmon opens his car door, then fixes Carol with a look.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)
Let him build a hundred sheds.

BEGIN COACH SEARCH MONTAGE:

*

EXT. OLD MAIN - DAY

Dedmon shakes hands with A FAT COACH. The coach nods sympathetically and walks away.

INT. NATE'S ROOM - DAY

Nate frowns at a headline: "MARTINELLI PASSES ON COACHING JOB."

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Dedmon points out the facilities to AN OLD COACH. The coach looks dour.

INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Paul reads the paper at the counter: "FLANAGAN STAYS AT STATE."

He glances up to see ANNIE COMING IN FOR WORK, WEARING AN OVERSIZED LETTERMAN'S JACKET.

On the breast, it reads, "GRIFFIN, #55."

She hangs up the jacket and puts on her apron.

EXT. OLD MAIN - DAY

Dedmon smiles and shakes hands with COACH DICK BESTWICK.

89 INT. DEDMON'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

89

"BESTWICK QUILTS -- HERD UNATTENDED -- MARSHALL RENEWS SEARCH FOR HEAD COACH."

Dedmon's secretary scans the newspaper.

A tired Dedmon steps out of his office.

SECRETARY

Any luck?

He hands her a LIST. All three names on it have been crossed out.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

We're going to need a longer list.

He walks over to a coffee pot and pours himself a cup.

SECRETARY

Actually, I did get a call this morning. Hold on...here we are. From a Jack Lengyel at the College of Wooster. Said he wants to interview.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Where in the world is Wooster?

She holds out the phone message.

SECRETARY

Does it really matter?

90 EXT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY

90

A boy fixes a FULL-SIZED FOOTBALL HELMET onto his small head. He growls, then gets down in a three-point stance.

Jack Lengyel holds a football in front of him.

JACK LENGYEL

Remember, stay low to the ground.
Keep your knees high.

*
*

The boy nods, the big helmet shaking up and down.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.) (cont'd)

Seventeen-razor...hut...hut...
hike!

The boy bolts from his stance and charges at his dad.

Lengyel hands off the ball. His son lowers his head and
RUNS STRAIGHT INTO A TREE.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

First down!

Jack smiles over to...DEDMON, sitting speechless on the porch.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Is he all right?

JACK LENGYEL

Sure, he is. You all right, 32?

The boy leaps up, beaming.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Good for now. Go kill your
brother.

Jack joins Dedmon on the porch.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Leaves a little bit to be desired
in the execution, but that play
there, that's exactly why we
switched to the nickel. Now I know
the nickel package sounds counter-
intuitive in such a run-heavy
league-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Jack, I'm sorry, but I don't have
the faintest clue what a nickel
package is.

JACK LENGYEL
Really? Oh, it's just a basic
defensive scheme where you put-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You don't understand. I don't care
what a nickel package is. I'm
actually quite confident that I'm a
better man not knowing what it is.

JACK LENGYEL
Okay, um...we'll have to agree to
disagree there, but-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You've got a nice house here, Jack.
And Wooster sure looks like a good
little town. Seems a lot like
Huntington.

JACK LENGYEL
I'll take your word for that.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You know, you're the first person
I've interviewed who isn't an
alumnus.

JACK LENGYEL
That right?

PRESIDENT DEDMON
And since you called us, well,
excuse me for being blunt, but I
have to ask...

He leans in.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)
What's your angle, Jack?

JACK LENGYEL

My angle?

PRESIDENT DEDMON

If you're just in it for press...I mean, if you're thinking of taking advantage of the unfortunate spotlight we might get next season-

JACK LENGYEL

I don't care about press, Don.

Lengyel takes a sip of his tea, eyeing Dedmon coolly.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Then what is it? You seem like a decent guy, but you're a perfect stranger. You've got no ties to Marshall. Why do you want this job?

Lengyel doesn't appear to be listening. His attention is drawn to his children on the far side of the yard.

JACK LENGYEL

Son, don't put that in your mouth. Just put it down. Put it down!

PRESIDENT DEDMON

It's not an outrageous question.

JACK LENGYEL

What's he gonna do now, put it in his pants? Don't put it in your -- shit, he put it in his pants.

Lengyel grins over at Dedmon...but Dedmon's not smiling.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Sorry. What were you saying?

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I was just wondering, Mr. Lengyel, if you gave this any thought at all before you had me drive 200 miles out here to see you.

JACK LENGYEL

A little bit, yeah.

Dedmon stares for a long moment. Finally, he presses himself up off his knees.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Please thank your wife for the dinner, but it's getting late. I have a long drive.

Dedmon shakes Jack's hand and heads for his car.

Lengyel looks after him a moment before calling out.

JACK LENGYEL

You wanna know why I picked up the phone? Is that it?

Dedmon turns.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

It's not gonna be complicated.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I've had four months of complicated. I just need honest.

Lengyel looks out to the yard where his wife plays with their three kids.

JACK LENGYEL (CONT'D)

When I heard about it...your situation...the only thing that went through my mind was the four of them.

Dedmon watches the kids tumble through the grass.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

I just thought about how much they mean to me. How bad it'd hurt if I lost them. And then I thought about a team, and a school, and a town that's hurting real bad...and I thought, hell...maybe I can help.

He takes a sip of his tea and shrugs one last time.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

So, I picked up the phone. I guess that's the only real "why" I got.

Dedmon looks at him, suddenly feeling like a shit.

91 INT. MARSHALL PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

91

SUPER: MARCH 17, 1971

*

Lengyel, in a loud plaid suit, sits in front of a microphone and a Marshall tableau.

*

*

Reporters, townspeople and students pack the banner-strewn room.

ERNIE SALVATORE of the Herald raises his hand.

ERNIE SALVATORE
Realistically, Coach, what are your expectations for the season?

JACK LENGYEL
My expectations? I expect to struggle. We got a lot of tough teams on the schedule. Morehead and Xavier right out of the gate. There's an excellent chance we start 0 and 2, so I'd just as soon not weigh ourselves down with expectations.

The crowd MURMURS, not exactly fired up.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Anyone else? Okay, then, thanks-

PAUL GRIFFIN (O.S.)
I've got a question.

The reporters turn to see Paul Griffin standing in the back of the room. Lengyel peers out at him.

JACK LENGYEL
Yes, sir.

PAUL GRIFFIN
I was just wondering what a Division III coach with a .500 record can offer a Division I school like Marshall?

Dedmon steps out of the wings.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Paul, that's not exactly-

JACK LENGYEL
No, it's a fair question.

He fixes Paul with a look.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I will admit, my resumé is slim compared to some other coaches. And I'll admit that this job is big step for me. It's an honor, you want to know the truth.

Paul folds his arms.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
But I will also tell you this. I
don't coach football to be honored.
I don't expect miracles, and I
ain't no magician. I play to win,
and I win more than I lose. Any
promises beyond that...well, let's
just wait and see.

He looks over at Dedmon who gestures for him to get off.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Thanks gentlemen. See you out
there.

Lengyel meets Dedmon in the wings.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Well, that coulda gone smoother.
You think it's the suit?

PRESIDENT DEDMON
(deadpan)
Not a chance.

Lengyel looks down at his jacket, then takes it off.

JACK LENGYEL
Let's go meet the team.

92 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

92

Nate (his cast now gone), Reggie and the other players wait
in the locker room. Only Bogdan is missing.

The door at the far end opens. Everybody looks up as
Dedmon walks in, followed by Lengyel.

Lengyel stands in front of the team for a long moment, just
studying them. Finally,

JACK LENGYEL
Gentlemen, I'm Jack Lengyel. In
order to stay on this team, you
gotta give me three things. Your
eyes, your ears, and every drop of
blood in your body. You got any
other uses for those particular
parts, this locker room ain't the
place for you.

Nate nods, impressed.

Lengyel spots the Coaches' Room.

*

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
(to Dedmon)
That my office?

*

Dedmon nods. Jack looks at the team.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Right. Seniors, move your lockers
down there near me. First from the
door on down.

*

*

REGGIE OLIVER
Coach. That was Bobby Delany's
locker.

Lengyel takes a beat, looking at Reggie.

JACK LENGYEL
I said Seniors next to my office,
and I meant it. Spring ball starts
Monday, six a.m. You'll want to
run some on your own before that.
We'll be in light pads to start,
but it won't stay that way.

He nods at all of them.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
See you then.

He turns and walks out the door, shooting a smile at Dedmon
as he leaves.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I like 'em. I'm just gonna need 55
more of them.

*

*

93 INT. STADIUM, HALLWAY - DAY

93

Dedmon follows Lengyel out.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Well, we've got a healthy
recruiting budget-

*

JACK LENGYEL
I'm gonna need more than that. I'm
gonna need freshmen.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Jack, I may not know football, but
I have dealt with the NCAA. They
like their rules.

PRESIDENT DEDMON(cont'd)
And the biggest one is freshmen are
not allowed to play intercollegiate
athletics.

JACK LENGYEL
That's why you're gonna get them to
make an exception.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
How am I supposed to-

JACK LENGYEL
Explain it to them. We would like
to field a team. We don't have
enough players to do that. They
can help us get more players,
faster. Simple as that.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Simple as that.

JACK LENGYEL
It's the only way we'll be even
halfway competitive in recruiting.

Dedmon shakes his head.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
My youngest crapped his pants
yesterday.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Well, that happens-

JACK LENGYEL
He's four. Sandy was out so I had
to clean him up. When she got
home, I told her what happened, she
couldn't believe it. I said I
know, the kid's four, he shouldn't
be doing that anymore. She said
no, not that, I can't believe after
all these years you finally changed
a diaper.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Congratulations.

JACK LENGYEL
There's a first time for
everything, Don.

Dedmon thinks for a long time. Finally, he nods.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I'll make some calls. Let's take a
swing at it.

*
*

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Lengyel grins.

JACK LENGYEL
Look who's getting sporty.

94 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY

94

Red bangs away on a two-by-four.

Down below, Jack Lengyel stares up at him.

JACK LENGYEL
Now what do you call those
thingies? Up there on the roof?

RED DAWSON
Shingles.

JACK LENGYEL
No shit? They don't look like
shingles, they look like...
something else.

RED DAWSON
Nope. They're shingles.
(beat)
I saw you guys play once.

JACK LENGYEL
Did we win?

RED DAWSON
It was the Ashland game.

JACK LENGYEL
That'd be a no, then.

RED DAWSON
You guys looked good 'til the
fourth quarter. Probably should've
gone to the nickel.

Jack keeps his smile to himself.

JACK LENGYEL
I met your team today. That's a
tough little group.

Red nods, but just keeps hammering.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I was thinking I could use somebody
who knows them. I'm gonna be
making a lot of changes. Might be
easier coming from a familiar face.

RED DAWSON

You asking me to block for you,
Jack?

Jack just smiles, offering Red his hand.

*

JACK LENGYEL

Just putting it out there, Red. If
you got better things to do, I'd
certainly understand.

Red watches him go.

95 INT. NATE'S ROOM - DAY

95

Tom Bogdan lies in bed with a book. He tries to read a
page, but finds himself just staring.

Suddenly, Nate slams through the door.

NATE RUFFIN

Tell me that you forgot we were
meeting the coach today.

Tom takes a breath, putting his book down.

TOM BOGDAN

I didn't forget.

NATE RUFFIN

So? What'd you do, oversleep?

Bogdan winces, but doesn't lash out. He just sits up.

TOM BOGDAN

I can't do it, man.

*

NATE RUFFIN

Do what?

TOM BOGDAN

Football.

*

Nate stares at Tom.

*

NATE RUFFIN

Like hell you can't. Football's
all we got.

*

*

*

Tom rubs his face, broken. Nate leans in close, pleading.

*

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)

I need you with me, man. It's on
us. We got to be the ones to step
up.

*

*

*

*

Tom just shakes his head.

*

TOM BOGDAN
It's just not in me anymore.

*
*

Without another word, Nate walks over to Bogdan's closet, pulls out a suitcase, and flings it on the bed.

NATE RUFFIN
Then pack up your things. This dorm's for football players.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate-

NATE RUFFIN
And you haven't been one for a long time.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate, listen-

NATE RUFFIN
No. I don't have to. I know what I know.

He storms off.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
And it ain't you.

Bogdan stares at the book in his hands...then throws it across the room.

95A EXT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT, REAR - DAY

95A *

CLOSE ON: A BOOK, "FRANCE ON \$3 A DAY!"

*

Annie stares at it a moment, then throws it in the dumpster.

*
*

She follows it with a stack of TRAVEL BROCHURES.

*

Then she turns for the diner.

*

96 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - NIGHT

96

Red Dawson stands inside the skeletal frame of his shed, looking up at the huge winter moon.

CAROL DAWSON (O.S.)
Looks good.

Red turns to see Carol, bundled in a sweater, stepping inside the shed.

CAROL DAWSON (cont'd)
It's really coming along.

Red looks around at his handiwork.

RED DAWSON
What if it stayed like this for a while?

*
*

She tightens her sweater against the cold.

CAROL DAWSON
That'd be fine. No hurry.

*

RED DAWSON
Unless you really need it.

CAROL DAWSON
Red, what I need...

She smiles, wrapping her arms around him.

CAROL DAWSON (cont'd)
Is not a shed.

They hold each other, the wind blowing through the unfinished walls.

*

As we pull back...

CAROL DAWSON (cont'd)
Now, a gazebo, that would be nice.

97 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

97

Dedmon's secretary flicks on the light, showing Lengyel in.

*

The room has been cleaned since the crash, all of Tolley's personal effects sent away.

SECRETARY
President Dedmon says you can remodel if you want. Just tell me what you need.

*
*
*

Lengyel sits behind the desk, then clicks open his briefcase. He pulls out TWO FRAMED PICTURES:

One of him, his wife, and his three children. Another of him and his father on the sidelines of a game.

He sets down a nameplate on the front of the desk: "COACH LENGYEL." He smiles at her.

*

JACK LENGYEL
All set. Thank you, Marie.

She nods and leaves.

Lengyel pulls out a notebook but can't find a pen.

He checks a drawer. Nothing. He slides out the writing board...and just stops.

There, taped to the metal, is COACH TOLLEY'S PRACTICE SCHEDULE. Handwritten notes fill the margins.

Taped next to the schedule is a Polaroid of a golden retriever.

Lengyel blinks. Then...

RED DAWSON (O.S.)
Okay. I'll give you one year.

In the blurry background, Red appears in the doorway.

Lengyel smiles, but doesn't look up.

JACK LENGYEL
Well, if that's all the time we got, we'd better get a move on.

He slides the writing board closed.

BEGIN THE RECRUITING MONTAGE -- (*Music: The Zombies' "THIS WILL BE OUR YEAR."*)

98 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY 98

Lengyel shakes hands with A BLACK MAN IN MARSHALL SWEATS, MICKEY JACKSON

*

*

LENGYEL, RED and MICKEY INTERVIEW COACHES. They look over resumes, talk strategy. They shake hands with several new hires.

*

99 INT. DEDMON'S OFFICE - DAY 99

Dedmon works the phone, cajoling members of the NCAA.

Finally, he nods and hangs up. REJECTED.

100 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY 100

THE WALL OF LENGYEL'S OFFICE is covered with names. This is the RECRUITING WALL, a wish list for every position.

At the top of the quarterback list is:

1) *Jake Gibbs, East Fairmont High.*

101 EXT. FAIRMONT HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY 101

JAKE GIBBS throws perfect spiral after perfect spiral, putting on an exhibition for scouts on the sidelines.

Lengyel jots down a quick note in his notebook, impressed.

Next to him THREE COACHES in West Virginia sweatshirts jot notes. Lengyel eyes them, then tries to out-jot them.

102 EXT. AIRPORT, TARMAC - DAY 102

Lengyel kisses Sandy goodbye and boards a plane.

103 INT. AIRPORT, HALLWAY - DAY 103

Lengyel runs down the hallway of another airport, late for another plane.

104 EXT. GREYHOUND BUS TERMINAL - DAY 104

Red kisses Carol, then boards a...Greyhound Bus. No planes for him these days.

105 INT. KITCHEN, TAMPA, FLORIDA - DAY 105

Red sits across the breakfast table from a mother and father.

RED DAWSON

Now, I know some other schools have been here to see you. I'm just hoping Stevie hasn't made up his mind, yet.

STEVIE'S MOTHER

That boy takes an hour and half to get dressed in the morning. Ain't no way he's made up his mind.

(she looks up)

And here he is.

Stevie comes down the stairs wearing a red GEORGIA BULLDOGS sweatshirt, sweatpants and matching hat.

Red sags.

106 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY 106

BACK AT THE RECRUITING WALL, Red crosses out "Stevie Shaw, Robinson Senior High."

Lengyel walks in and motions for the marker. He crosses out Jake Gibbs' name and writes three letters: W.V.U.

107 TIME LAPSE -- as more names get crossed off the chart. 107

108 INT. DEDMON'S OFFICE - DAY 108

Dedmon's secretary hands him a letter. The return address clearly reads: "National Collegiate Athletic Association, Indianapolis, Indiana."

He unfolds the letter and reads: "REJECTED."

108A EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 108A *

Lengyel, Red and Dedmon meet at the 50-yard line. *

PRESIDENT DEDMON
How are we doing? *

RED DAWSON
West Virginia should be very
competitive next year. *

JACK LENGYEL
You? *

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I wish I had something encouraging.
Every call, every letter just
bounces off a big fat NCAA wall. *

Lengyel looks at his president. *

JACK LENGYEL
You married, Don? *

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Fifteen years. *

JACK LENGYEL
I'm betting you didn't ask her over
the phone. And I'm damn sure she
didn't say yes in a letter.

Dedmon looks Lengyel in the eye.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
No. As a matter of fact, I took
Bea out in a rowboat. At sunset.

Lengyel smiles at Red.

JACK LENGYEL
The great romantic.

109 EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY 109

Lengyel catches some baseball players leaving the dugout.

110 INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY 110

While the Marshall basketball team scrimmages, Red
approaches the coach on the sideline.

111 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 111

Lengyel instructs A GANGLY SOCCER PLAYER (BILL SHALHOOP) in
the fine art of field goal kicking.

112 INT. NATE'S ROOM - NIGHT 112

Bogdan's things are gone. Nate does bench-presses on the
spare bed.

His arm still clearly hurts.

113 EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT 113

NCAA PRESIDENT MARTIN SHUMER, a fat man in a three-piece
suit, walks to his Lincoln. He digs for his keys.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (O.S.)
President Shumer?

Shumer turns to see Dedmon getting out of his Cadillac.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)
I'm Don Dedmon. From Marshall.

Shumer takes in Dedmon's haggard face and wrinkled suit.

MARTIN SHUMER

Don. What are you doing in Indianapolis?

Dedmon pulls the "REJECTED" LETTER from his back pocket.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I appreciate that there are channels for this sort of thing. I appreciate that there are procedures.

He holds out the letter.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

But there are a lot of people back in Huntington who need help. They're counting on me to get it for them. And they're running out of time.

Dedmon clears his throat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

That's why I look the way I do. That's why I've been in my car all night. That's what I'm doing in Indianapolis. And I'll be damned if I'm going to let the rules send me home empty handed.

Shumer blinks, stunned.

114 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

114

Lengyel crosses out another name on the recruiting wall. He and Red just stare, deflated.

Dedmon walks in. They look at him.

He slowly breaks into a big smile.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Jack, you son of a gun. Guess who's gonna change our diaper.

Lengyel grins, immediately getting it. Red looks at them both as if they've lost their minds.

115 INT. KITCHEN, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

115

Red and Jack sit across the table from high school senior LUCAS BOOTH and his FATHER.

MR. BOOTH

Listen, guys. West Virginia won eight games last year. Marshall won three. They're reloading. You're rebuilding.

RED DAWSON

Yeah, but the thing is-

MR. BOOTH

Now I'm sorry for your loss and all, but I gotta think about my boy's long-term career here.

JACK LENGYEL

So are we. That's why we're offering Lucas something other schools can't -- immediate, substantial playing time as a freshman.

RED DAWSON

He goes anywhere else, he's gonna spend a quarter of his collegiate career just twiddling his thumbs.

JACK LENGYEL

(directly to Lucas)

But you come to us, you're gonna start, you're gonna star, and you're gonna do 'em both this year.

Booth makes eye contact with his Dad, then nods thoughtfully.

116 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

116

Red, fatigued but grinning, CIRCLES Lucas Booth's name on the recruiting board.

The rest of the receivers are crossed out. Three have *W.V.U.* scribbled next to them.

PULL OUT to see the whole wall. While the majority have been scratched, here and there a circled name stands out.

Red and Lengyel stare up at the wall, satisfied.

JACK LENGYEL

All right. Now, we're getting somewhere.

117 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 117

The Morehouse kids watch TV. Linda Morehouse appears in the doorway.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
Who wants mac and cheese?

The kids head for the table. Linda counts them as they pass: three, four, five...

She looks around, then under the couch.

LINDA MOREHOUSE (cont'd)
Okay, where's Keith?

118 EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY 118 *

Keith climbs over the gate, drops to the ground and sneaks through the concourse.

119 INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM, TUNNEL - DAY 119

Keith creeps up until he can just see...

THE NEW MARSHALL TEAM, practicing.

He grins, taking them all in.

Suddenly, a figure appears behind him. Keith freezes, waiting to be thrown out.

But TOM BOGDAN just nods and stands next to him.

They turn their attention to the field.

A WHISTLE BLOWS.

120 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 120

PRACTICE.

Linebackers shuffle around cones. Some STUMBLE.

121 Linemen smash into blocking sleds. Some MISS. 121

122 Running backs high-step through ropes. Some FALL. 122

123 ON THE SIDELINE, Lengyel and Red watch as... 123 *

Reggie and a FRESHMAN QUARTERBACK drop back, side by side. *

They throw simultaneous passes to the sidelines.

JACK LENGYEL

I want to name a number one by the
end of the week.

Over and over, the two quarterbacks look evenly matched.

RED DAWSON

Speaking for the defense, it would
be a lot harder to scheme for
Reggie Oliver.

JACK LENGYEL

You sure you're just speaking for
the defense?

RED DAWSON

Returning guys should be beaten
out. Not demoted.

Reggie throws another strike to a receiver. Lengyel nods
thoughtfully.

JACK LENGYEL

Then it's his to lose.

LENGYEL BLOWS HIS WHISTLE, tugs on his shirt, and points
out at Reggie.

Mickey Jackson tosses Reggie a RED JERSEY.

Reggie smiles and puts it on.

124 ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FIELD...

124

The linebackers get ready for a sideline drill.

Lengyel hands a ball to DOUG LISZT, a freshman running
back.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Set...GO.

Liszt takes a 45° angle toward the sideline...

WHERE NATE RUFFIN BLASTS HIM OUT OF BOUNDS.

Lengyel blows his whistle.

Liszt scrambles to his feet.

DOUG LISZT

What the hell was that? I'm out.

NATE RUFFIN

Your ass is out when I say it is.

Red pulls Nate away. He lowers his voice.

RED DAWSON

You want to take it easy? The
kid's gotta last four years.

Nate hides a smile.

125 BACK ON OFFENSE...

125

Lengyel and Mickey Jackson watch Reggie lead the team.

He hands off to an **UNDERSIZED FULLBACK** who promptly **fumbles** the ball.

*

MICKEY JACKSON

Boy acts like he's never seen a
football before.

JACK LENGYEL

He hasn't. I got that kid out of
Chess Club.

LENGYEL SIGNALS IN A PLAY. Reggie nods.

126 IN THE HUDDLE...

126

REGGIE OLIVER

Red-Pass-60-Right. On two.

Reggie eyeballs Lucas Booth.

REGGIE OLIVER (cont'd)

Get there.

LUCAS BOOTH

Man, I'm always there.

They break the huddle. Reggie looks poised.

He snaps the ball, pumps left, then fires a strike to Lucas
Booth on the slant...

But the ball passes inches in front of Booth's fingertips.

He swats at the air, frustrated.

127 LATER...

127

As Reggie walks off the field, helmet in hand, Lucas Booth
runs by him.

LUCAS BOOTH (cont'd)

Wouldn't mind you tossing a few my
way.

*
*

REGGIE OLIVER

Soon as you learn the difference
between a flag and a post,
freshman.

*
*
*

128 INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

128

Lengyel walks into a meeting of HIS ASSISTANT COACHES.

A TEAM MANAGER hands him a playbook, but Lengyel just
tosses it in the trash.

JACK LENGYEL

What? You really think these boys
are ready for flea-flickers and
dime blitzes?

Lengyel points at a complicated play on THE CHALKBOARD.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

We've been at it for two weeks and
the only thing we've learned is
that our guys are too small, too
slow and too young to run the stuff
we're all used to running.

He goes to his desk and starts squeezing A TENNIS BALL.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

What's the simplest offense y'all
have used that still won you a ball
game?

*

(off their silence)

Don't all talk at once. Mick?

Lengyel tosses the tennis ball to Mickey Jackson.

MICKY JACKSON

I'll always vote for a plain old I-
formation.

JACK LENGYEL

Come on, you've seen our guys, we'd
get killed in the I. What else?
Something other defenses haven't
seen a hundred times.

*

RED DAWSON

There's always the Veer...

JACK LENGYEL

The Veer? Where've I heard of
that? Mickey, hand him the ball.

With a sideways glance, Mickey tosses Red the tennis ball.

RED DAWSON

West Virginia runs it. They pretty
much trademarked it. It's built
for teams that don't have much of a
front line.

*
*
*

JACK LENGYEL

Well, we certainly qualify. You
got a folder on it somewhere?

RED DAWSON

You know West Virginia...

*

JACK LENGYEL

Not really. But I suppose I'll
find out when we stop in tomorrow.

*
*

Red and the other coaches gape.

*

RED DAWSON

Jack, that's insane. We're rivals.
We show up in Morgantown
unannounced, what do you expect
them to do -- invite us to lunch
and hand over their playbook?

Lengyel grins at Red as he walks out.

JACK LENGYEL

They don't have to buy us lunch.

129 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

129

Sue Griffin wipes down the counter.

*

Annie carries in a tray of clean coffee cups. She eyes the
bustling diner.

*
*

SUE GRIFFIN

Annie. Isn't it about time for
your break, sweetheart?

*
*
*

ANNIE CANTRELL

I'm all right. I mean...

*
*

Annie picks up A BIN OF DIRTY DISHES.

*

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
I guess I'd really rather not take
one.

Just then, the bell above the door rings. Annie looks
up...and freezes.

Sue turns to see...

Eddie Carter and Wes Hickman standing there in their
Marshall jackets.

Lucas Booth and Doug Liszt wait nervously outside.

EDDIE CARTER
Afternoon, Mrs. Griffin.

WES HICKMAN
We were wondering...if you had room
for...there are four of us-

EDDIE CARTER
We really missed your pancakes,
ma'am.

Sue looks at the boys' faces.

After a long moment, she smiles tightly.

SUE GRIFFIN
Marshall players are always welcome
here. Good to have you back.

The boys smile. They wave the other players inside.

Annie stands at the counter, watching.

Her hand shakes just slightly.

130 OMITTED

130

131 INT. W.V.U. COACH'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

131

Red and Lengyel sit in the waiting room, reading old Sports
Illustrateds.

RED DAWSON
Jack, I really don't think this is
your best idea.

JACK LENGYEL
You're right. My best idea was
calling a double-reverse against
Tulane.

He smiles at the STERN SECRETARY, then turns back to Red. *

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd) *
If we walk out of here with a play, *
you owe me a steak. *

A door opens and BOBBY BOWDEN, WEST VIRGINIA'S COACH steps out. Fleshy and well-dressed, he doesn't smile.

BOBBY BOWDEN
Red. Good to see you again.
(then, to Jack)
And you must be-

JACK LENGYEL
(sticks out his hand)
Jack Lengyel. Thanks for meeting
with us.

BOBBY BOWDEN
Bobby Bowden. Not a problem.

But Lengyel keeps pumping his hand until it gets awkward.

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont'd)
Gonna need that hand. Playing a
little golf later.

Lengyel smiles and lets go.

JACK LENGYEL
Bobby, I'll get right to the point.

Red winces, but Lengyel keeps on.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I understand you run the Veer.

132 OMITTED 132 *

133 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - DAY 133

Annie carefully pours four waters, staring down at the
glasses. *

Finally, she takes a breath, gathers herself, and carries
the tray to THE FOUR MARSHALL PLAYERS *

WES HICKMAN *
Hey, Annie. How you doing? *

She doesn't look at them as she rests their glasses down. *

ANNIE CANTRELL

Good. Real good.

Annie pulls out her pad and looks up.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

We've got a special today-

She stops, staring awkwardly at Doug Liszt.

He stares back, confused.

DOUG LISZT

Hi.

She doesn't respond. She just stares at Doug's jacket.

And the number 55.

EDDIE CARTER

Annie, are you-

But Annie just runs for the kitchen, her breath coming in gulps and gasps.

Sue watches sadly from the counter. Then she straightens her apron and walks over to the booth.

SUE GRIFFIN

Sorry about that.

Lucas Booth opens his mouth, but EDDIE SILENCES HIM WITH A LOOK.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)

Now, I bet you're hungry. Coach been running you hard?

DOUG LISZT

(groans)

We're still doing two-a-days.

She catches sight of his number...and smiles.

SUE GRIFFIN

That'll stop by September. Got to keep you fresh for the opener.

134 OMITTED

134

135 INT. W.V.U. MOUNTAINEERS RESOURCE ROOM - DAY

135

Bowden leads Lengyel and Red inside.

On one side of the room sits A LIBRARY OF BINDERS -- on the other, ROWS OF FILM CANISTERS.

BOBBY BOWDEN

Help yourself. Playbooks are over there. Scouting reports and game film right there. If you need anything copied, see Kitty down the hall.

*

Red stares from the shelves to Bowden.

*

RED DAWSON

Are you serious?

*

BOBBY BOWDEN

We're not playing y'all this season, so hell, have at it.

*

*

Bowden heads for the door.

*

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont'd)

Just put everything back after you're through.

Bobby closes the door behind him.

*

Lengyel grins at Red.

*

JACK LENGYEL

Maybe a big porterhouse. Medium rare.

*

*

136 INT. REGGIE'S ROOM - DAY

136

Reggie lifts a barbell, staring out the window.

The case of beer still sits unopened on the dresser.

DOUG LISZT (O.S.)

Got your burger, Reg.

Reggie turns to see Doug holding a *Paul's* take-out bag.

REGGIE OLIVER

Chili on the fries?

DOUG LISZT

(a little nervous)

They were out.

REGGIE OLIVER

Oh, come on, freshman. Gonna be a rough year if that's the best you can do.

Reggie turns back to the window, finishing his set.

REGGIE OLIVER (cont'd)
Put it on the desk.

Doug puts the burger on the desk. Behind him, **MORE FRESHMAN** walk in (including tight end **ALAN GREEN**).

ALAN GREEN (O.S.)
Hey, sweet.

Suddenly, the sound of a BEER OPENING cuts through the room.

Reggie freezes...and turns. Doug sees it, too.

DOUG LISZT
Oh, shit.

Alan stands next to the open case, a foaming Pabst in his hand.

ALAN GREEN
What?

REGGIE STARES FOR A LONG MOMENT.

Finally, he blinks.

REGGIE OLIVER
Toss me one of them, man.

The tension breaks. **Alan** tosses Reggie a beer.

137 INT. W.V.U. MOUNTAINEERS RESOURCE ROOM - DAY 137

Red makes notes from a playbook. Lengyel pages through black & white game photos. He taps the picture.

JACK LENGYEL
Well, that ain't dumb.

Just then, TWO **REALLY** HUGE W.V.U. PLAYERS barge in, carrying their helmets. They see Lengyel and Red.

W.V.U. PLAYER
Oh, sorry. We thought coach was in here.

BOBBY BOWDEN (O.S.)
What do you need, Butler?

They turn to see Bowden in the doorway. As the players huddle with their coach...

SOMETHING CATCHES RED'S EYE. He nudges Jack and points to the back of the players' helmets...

Where a large GREEN MARSHALL CROSS has been painted on the West Virginia gold.

Bowden sees them and nods.

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont'd)
Colors clash like hell, don't they?

RED DAWSON
Bobby, I...

BOBBY BOWDEN
It's nothing. We just wanted to honor 'em.

Red looks down, gathering himself. Lengyel sees how moved both men are.

JACK LENGYEL
Bobby, I don't know how to thank you.

BOBBY BOWDEN
Enjoy it, now. You're on the schedule next year.

He puts his hands in his pockets, *winking*.

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont'd)
I'm a lot less friendly on the field.

138 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

138

THE BALL IS SNAPPED.

Reggie sprints to the right, followed by a tailback. But instead of pitching, he heads upfield, where he's immediately tackled.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
Time!

Lengyel grimaces as he trots over to Reggie.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
So?

REGGIE OLIVER
I committed before the backer did.
He sat on me, I shoulda pitched it.

JACK LENGYEL
Right. Fine. Go again.

Reggie runs a hand over his tired face.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
You all right?

REGGIE OLIVER
Just got a headache.

Jack eyes him, understanding.

JACK LENGYEL
Oh, I know those headaches. Try
two aspirin with a glass of orange
juice. Chase it with a little
honey.

Lengyel heads back to the sidelines.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
And, next time, save the headaches
for the offseason.

139 LATER...

139

Reggie sweeps to the right, ducks a blitz, then hurls a
bullet to Lucas Booth who takes off downfield...

UNTIL HE'S TACKLED BY NATE, who lands hard on his arm.

Nate grimaces, the injury still troubling him.

But the coaches clap from the sideline, enthused.

RED DAWSON
Not bad, not bad. Let's go again.

Lucas Booth and Nate walk back to their huddles

LUCAS BOOTH
(muttering)
Dumbass doesn't know where to put
the ball.

NATE RUFFIN
What? You bitchin'?

LUCAS BOOTH
Not to you.

NATE RUFFIN
You wanna go play somewhere else,
freshman?

Booth glares and lines back up.

140 The ball's hiked. Reggie rolls right and pitches it to ~~140~~
tailback, who breaks through the line into **the** open field. *

JACK LENGYEL
(applauding)
All right, all right! If I didn't
know better, I'd say that looks a
little like the Veer!

Red nods, half-amazed.

RED DAWSON
Looked a lot like it.

Jack grins at him.

ERNIE SALVATORE sidles up next to him.

ERNIE SALVATORE
They don't look half bad, Coach.

Lengyel shrugs, modest.

ERNIE SALVATORE (cont'd)
I was fooling around with some
numbers last night. Do you know
the average age of a starter in
college football these days?
(off another shrug)
20 years, ten months. Do you know
the average age of yours? 18
years, seven months.

JACK LENGYEL
Yeah, well, that's us. The Young
Thundering Herd.

Salvatore grins and scribbles that into his notebook.

ERNIE SALVATORE
Mind if I use that?

JACK LENGYEL
Go ahead. Hell, I'm making T-
shirts.

141 EXT. CAMPUS NEWSPAPER STAND - DAY

141

CLOSE ON: The Huntington Herald -- *"Court Bars NY Times
From Publishing Pentagon Papers."*

YOUNG THUNDERING HERD TO ROAM AGAIN
Lengyel sets lineup, tweaks offense

JACK LENGYEL GRABS A COPY OF THE PAPER. He sees the headline and smiles to himself.

142 CLOSE ON: The Charleston Gazette -- "*Ratified: National Voting Age Now 18.*" 142

MARSHALL SCHEDULE RELEASED

*Season kicks off at Morehead St.
First home game Sept. 25th against Xavier*

*

PAUL GRIFFIN BUYS THIS COPY. He quickly flips to the voting article.

143 CLOSE ON: Marshall U's The Parthenon -- "*Nixon Issues 90 Day Tax Freeze.*" 143

"WE'LL BE COMPETITIVE"

Lengyel promises sound fundamentals

EDDIE CARTER SNAPS IT UP. The front of his shirt reads, "1971." The back reads, "*THE YOUNG THUNDERING HERD.*"

144 CLOSE ON: The Huntington Herald -- "*South Korea To Withdraw 48,000 Troops From Vietnam.*" 144

MARSHALL READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP?

*National press descend on Huntington
Ticket sales swell*

A STOCKY FRESHMAN GRABS THIS COPY. A banner hangs over the crowded campus green: "*WELCOME FUTURE CLASS OF 1975.*"

145 CLOSE ON: The Huntington Herald -- dated Sept. 18, 1971. 145

REBIRTH

*Football returns tonight against Morehead St.
Thousands set to make the trip to Kentucky*

146 EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - DAY 146

The Marshall bus rolls down the highway...

FOLLOWED BY CAR AFTER CAR cutting a path through eastern Kentucky.

147 INT. MARSHALL BUS - DAY 147

Doug Liszt drums on the back of Lucas Booth's seat. Booth squirts him with water. Other players laugh and chatter.

The mood changes as WE TRACK THROUGH THE BUS...

In the back, Nate, Eddie, Reggie, Felix, Wes and the other returning players sit, focused and somber.

148 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 148

Linda comes in and sees...

Keith sitting on the couch, staring at his switched-off radio.

Linda walks over and touches his head.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
It's okay, sweetie. Go ahead and listen.

He smiles and switches it on.

149 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY 149

The fans file in to the small stadium, nearly filling it to capacity.

Nervous, Carol Dawson and Sandy Lengyel take their seats in the stands.

150 INT. VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM, JAYNE STADIUM - DAY 150

The Marshall players sit silently, dressed and ready.

THE DOOR OPENS. Lengyel enters, followed by Red and the other coaches.

Lengyel stares at his players for a long moment. Then he pulls a slip of paper out of his pocket.

JACK LENGYEL
Got a letter here I wanna read. It says: "Good luck tonight. Friends across the land will be rooting for you, but whatever the season brings, you've already won your greatest victory by putting the 1971 varsity on the field."

Lengyel folds up the paper and puts it back in his pocket.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
It's signed Richard Nixon, President, United States of America.

Again, he stares at his team. Determined faces. Anxious ones. Somber ones.

Finally, Lengyel sticks his hand out.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

In here.

Nate Ruffin jumps up and puts his hand on top, and the others follow. Seventy hands squeeze together in a circle.

Lengyel looks at his team.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Play hard. Play smart. Play to
win.

*
*

He looks over at Nate...WHO LETS OUT A BATTLE CRY.

THE OTHER PLAYERS JOIN HIM IN A ROAR.

151 OMITTED

151 *

152 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY

152

Nate bursts out of the locker room, leading his troops toward the field.

But when they reach the edge of the grass, he stops.

On the other side of the stadium, Morehead State is making their entrance, too.

The PA ANNOUNCER introduces the Morehead Eagles. The home crowd stands to clap for their team.

But when MOREHEAD STATE'S COACH sees the Marshall team, he looks up to the press box and points over at them.

PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

*And then, ladies and gentlemen,
please welcome tonight's opponent,
the Thundering Herd of Marshall.*

THE MARSHALL FANS go wild.

153 ERNIE SALVATORE turns to PRESIDENT DEDMON.

153

ERNIE SALVATORE

Never thought I'd hear those words
again.

Dedmon yells to make himself heard.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

"That which sounds in my ear will
echo in my heart."

Salvatore looks at him blankly.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

Lord Byron.

ERNIE SALVATORE

Don. I know you haven't been to
one of these in a while, but trust
me, a football game is no place to
quote Byron.

154 INT. CAR - DAY 154

The crowd roars over A TINNY CAR RADIO.

Tom Bogdan listen in his parked car.

155 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - DAY 155

At the end of the counter, two old men lean in to hear the
game on the radio.

Just as the crowd noise grows louder...

Paul Griffin turns the dial to Hank Williams.

The old men wilt.

156 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY 156

BILL SHALHOOP, Marshall's gangly kicker, places the
football on the tee and steps off his approach.

The sun sets behind him, casting a glow over the field.

FINALLY, THE WHISTLE BLOWS.

Shalhoop steps forward...and CONNECTS.

THE BALL soars up until it crests...and starts to fall to
the earth...

TIME CUT:

157 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - NIGHT 157

Where a Morehead State player plucks it out of the air and
flies downfield.

IT'S NIGHT NOW. THE STADIUM LIGHTS GLOW BRIGHT WHITE.

The Morehead Player dodges one tackler, then another. He
gains momentum as the yard markers fly under his feet.

But Nate Ruffin is waiting. Nate anticipates his angle, turns on the speed, and moves in for the tackle...

BUT HE'S CLIPPED ON HIS BAD ARM by a blocker. He sprawls to the ground.

158 ON THE SIDELINES, Red slams his clipboard. 158

RED DAWSON
Flag, ref! Where's the flag!

159 The Morehead Player blows by Wes Hickman, loping into the 159 *
END ZONE for a touchdown. *

160 THE SCOREBOARD flips to 25-6, Morehead State, with less 160
than two minutes left in the third quarter.

The crowd roars their approval.

161 ON THE SIDELINE, a tired Hickman trots over to Lengyel. 161 *

WES HICKMAN
He's too fast, coach.
(gasping for breath)
I'm sorry. *

Lengyel pats him on the back.

162 IN THE MARSHALL SECTION, Dedmon and the other faithful 162
watch as A TRAINER hurries onto the field.

163 Nate waves him away. With a wince, he gets to his feet. 163

164 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 164

Keith applauds Nate's effort. Linda smiles sadly.

165 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY 165

Reggie looks over the line of scrimmage and sees a defense he likes. He calls out to Lucas Booth in the slot:

REGGIE OLIVER
Three-two-Houston! Three-two-
Houston!

But Lucas Booth doesn't hear him. *

166 The play clock winds down. The ball is snapped. 166

167 Reggie drops back quickly and fires over the middle... 167

RIGHT INTO THE ARMS OF A DEFENDER. Interception.

168 Lengyel looks to the heavens. 168

169 Walking off the field, Reggie corrals Booth. 169

REGGIE OLIVER (cont'd)
What are you running?

LUCAS BOOTH
I'm running Razor-

REGGIE OLIVER
I called out of that.

LUCAS BOOTH
Just run the play.

170 LATER... 170

A MOREHEAD RECEIVER CATCHES THE BALL FOR A 20-YARD GAIN. *

171 Lengyel looks to Red. 171 *

JACK LENGYEL
Red, let's go to cover two. *

Red just stares at the field, FROZEN. *

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Red! *

Red does nothing. Jack grabs a defensive back. *

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Cover two, Double Eagle. Go! *

Lengyel slaps the player on the butt and sends him out. *

Red just stands there, miserable. *

Lengyel looks down the sidelines at his players. *

They're all miserable. *

Shell-shocked.

Out of their league.

Lengyel just watches the clock tick down.

172 OMITTED 172 *

173 INT. VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM, JAYNE STADIUM - NIGHT 173

The players trudge in, pulling off their jerseys.

Doug Liszt tosses his jersey to the ground in frustration.

NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)

Pick that up.

Liszt turns to find Nate glowering behind him.

DOUG LISZT

What? My jersey?

NATE RUFFIN

It's not your jersey, it's Bobby Delany's jersey. Now pick it up.

Liszt stares at Nate a long time.

The locker room stands still.

DOUG LISZT

I'm sorry...

Nate nods and eases up...

DOUG LISZT (cont'd)

But I came here to play ball.

He looks at the other players.

DOUG LISZT (cont'd)

All of us did. And, yeah, I knew what this team was about, and I'm gonna honor tradition, and be just as respectful as I can be. But I'm also gonna play. Me. For me. Not for somebody else. I'm the one playing ball for Marshall now. I'm number 47...

He points at the sweaty uniform.

DOUG LISZT (cont'd)

And that's my jersey. And it's staying right there.

MANY OF THE FRESHMAN NOD, their thoughts finally being expressed.

Doug turns and opens his locker.

The tension dissipates. The other players turn to their lockers...

But Nate just stares at Liszt's back.

He rushes forward and JACKS DOUG AGAINST THE LOCKERS.

Liszt and Nate roll around on the floor for a few moments before RED and LENGYEL can pull them apart.

Red holds down Liszt. Lengyel drags Nate away.

174 INT. JAYNE STADIUM, TRAINER'S ROOM - NIGHT 174

Lengyel throws Nate against the training table.

Nate just stares defiantly at him, his lip bleeding.

Lengyel stares right back.

After a long moment...

JACK LENGYEL
You're bleeding.

Nate wipes the blood from his lip.

NATE RUFFIN
So?

JACK LENGYEL
Thought you'd want to know.

Lengyel turns for the door.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
That's what you wanted, wasn't it?

Lengyel exits, leaving Nate Ruffin standing alone in the trainer's room, bleeding.

174A INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT 174A *

Paul marries half-full ketchups. He looks up as TWO MEN WALK IN. *

MAN #1
That was a goddamn disgrace. *

MAN #2
That's what you get, hiring a glorified high school coach. *

MAN #1
Just a damn shame, is what it is. *

Paul scowls over to where... *

LLOYD BOONE sits at the counter, equally glum. *

174B INT. JACK LENGYEL'S STUDY - NIGHT

174B

Lengyel sits alone at his desk, flipping through his
playbook.

Finally, he just closes it, dispirited.

SANDY LENGYEL (O.S.)
You can't unlose the game, Jack.

He looks up to see Sandy in the doorway.

JACK LENGYEL
I don't know what happened. I've
never been beaten that bad before.

She rubs his shoulders, teasing.

SANDY LENGYEL
What about the Ashland game?

He smiles ruefully, kissing her.

175 EXT. THE OHIO RIVER - DAY

175

WATER FLOWS BENEATH THE IRON BRIDGE.

Dedmon stands on THE FLOOD WALL, watching the current suck
and swirl.

PAUL GRIFFIN (O.S.)
You know, some people didn't think
we needed those walls.

Dedmon turns to see Paul approaching.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)
But after the flood didn't come,
they understood. Building 'em was
the right thing to do.

Dedmon eyes Paul's stone face.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)
The board voted you out this
morning.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I don't understand.

PAUL GRIFFIN
This town needs to get it's dignity
back, and the only way we're gonna
do that is with a clean slate.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

There is no one who values the
reputation of this town more than I
do-

PAUL GRIFFIN

If you did, you'd know how
humiliating yesterday was.
That game was a travesty. It
should've never happened.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Damn it, I work for the students.
And when 3,000 of them get together
to speak in one voice, I'm
obligated to listen.

PAUL GRIFFIN

Don...this town can't survive any
more of your obligations.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

This isn't about the town, Paul.

Paul turns to leave, but Dedmon grabs his arm.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

It's not about football or me or
embarrassing the university.

Paul pulls himself away. Dedmon fixes him with a look.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

You lost a son. And until you find
the strength to face that pain,
none of this is going to get any
better.

Paul walks away, leaving Dedmon alone on the flood wall.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

No matter how many presidents you
fire.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

RED BLOWS HIS WHISTLE HARD.

RED DAWSON

Not good enough! Run it again!

REGGIE sees Lucas Booth break free, but hesitates just long
enough for the pass to be batted down. Lucas scowls.

ON THE SIDELINES, Lengyel makes a note on his clipboard.

EDDIE CARTER tackles Doug Liszt hard. Eddie sticks his hand out to help him up, but Liszt ignores it, scowling.

Freshman Tight End ALAN GREEN catches the ball downfield. Nate slams him, then falls to the grass, gripping his arm.

ALAN GREEN

You all right?

Nate struggles to his feet.

NATE RUFFIN

I'm fine. Let's go again.

REGGIE fires a pass. It flies through Lucas' hands, bouncing on the field. Reggie shakes his head.

Alan and Nate collide again. His arm twisted weirdly, Nate looks up at Alan from the ground.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)

That the best you got?

ON THE SIDELINES, Red frowns.

LUCAS goes deep, laying out for a ball Reggie throws just out of his reach.

Another freshman helps Lucas Booth up.

ALAN catches the ball downfield, with only Nate left to beat...

Right before they collide, Nate drops his right shoulder safely back, then brings his left forearm around for a hard shot at Alan's neck.

Alan crumples to the ground.

FED UP, RED DAWSON STALKS OVER TO NATE. He grabs his helmet and shoves him so hard that Nate loses his balance and falls over a bench.

Red glares down, wild-eyed.

RED DAWSON

What the hell is the matter with you, Nate?

Nate just looks up at him, stunned that Red, of all people, is acting like this.

NATE RUFFIN

I was just trying to protect my arm-

RED DAWSON

Bullshit! You think you're the
only one who's got a right to be
pissed off? You think you're the
only one who's had it rough?

All the players stare at Red. He looks around at them.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)

All of you! You're acting like
goddamn children!

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY

Red stomps towards his car. Lengyel runs out after him.

JACK LENGYEL

Red!

Red stops and turns.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

What happened? Forget your lunch?

RED DAWSON

What are we doing here, Jack? I'm
serious. What are we actually
doing here?

JACK LENGYEL

Getting ready for Xavier.

RED DAWSON

Really, 'cause it seems a lot more
like Bloody Knuckles. I mean, come
on, we're not helping them. We're
bringing out the worst in them.
And for what? So we can collect
pity applause in front of every
college in the conference?

Lengyel just takes it.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)

You didn't know Rick Tolley. I
did. And you know what he said to
us, on the actual day he died? He
said there's only one thing they
judge us on. There's only one
thing that counts. Winning.
Nothing else matters.

Red stares at Lengyel, challenging him.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)
So what did we do? How did we
honor their memory? We put
together a team that doesn't win.
That can't win. Not this week, not
this season. Maybe not ever.

Red gets in his car. He looks up at Lengyel.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)
We're not honoring them, Jack.
We're disgracing them.

Lengyel watches him drive off.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nate sits alone in a whirlpool tub, nursing his arm. His
eyelids droop.

Lengyel's voice echoes from the hallway.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
How's Meadows?

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)
A little tape, a little aspirin,
he'll be ready.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
All right, he's in at corner.
Linebacker?

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)
That'd be Ruffin.

Nate suddenly perks up, listening.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
How's the arm?

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)
Not great. I'd sit him.

Nate flushes with anger. He pushes himself up to confront
them. BUT HIS ARM GIVES OUT AND HE TUMBLES BACK.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
He ain't gonna like that.

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)
He ain't gonna like learning to
write with his other hand either,
but that's what he's looking at, he
keeps going.

The coaches' voices fade down the hall.

Pain and frustration twitch on Nate's face. Tears leak from his eyes. He tries to stop it, but they come harder.

Other players walk in, talking and laughing.

Nate ducks down under the water, unable to control his raging emotions.

More players file in. He stays submerged, holding his breath, his body shaking from the sobs, his tears mixing with the water around him.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

Early morning. Lengyel stares at a play on the blackboard. He erases an arrow, makes another.

NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)
Don't bench me.

Nate stands in the doorway, looking like hell.

JACK LENGYEL
Jesus, Nate. Have you even slept?

NATE RUFFIN
Not now. Not before Saturday.

JACK LENGYEL
Son, your arm...the rest'll do you good.

NATE RUFFIN
No, sir. No, it won't.

He rubs his head, tortured.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
Football's all I got. And it's all I got to give. You understand that?

JACK LENGYEL
You've given an awful lot already. There's no shame in looking after yourself.

NATE RUFFIN
I don't need looking after. I need to play.

Nate looks around, grasping for the words.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
If I don't, then I'm not...

JACK LENGYEL
What? Worthy?

NATE RUFFIN
I gotta see it through for them.

Nate starts to break down.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
The guys, man...they left it in my
hands...

JACK LENGYEL
No, they didn't, Nate.
(softly)
They just left.

Nate stares at Lengyel, his mouth open, his eyes red.

NATE RUFFIN
But why? Why?

Lengyel holds him as he weeps.

JACK LENGYEL
I don't know, Nate. I really
don't.

176 EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT

176

A cardboard sign droops in a dark store window: "GO HERD."

Jack Lengyel stares from the empty sidewalk.

Finally, he turns up his collar and walks away.

177 INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

177

Paul stands at the counter, going over the receipts.

The bell over the door rings. Paul doesn't look up.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Just about closed. Sorry.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
My wife tells me you got the best
apple pie in Huntington.

Paul looks up see Lengyel standing in the doorway. He
stares at him a long time. Finally...

PAUL GRIFFIN

It depends on the apples.

Lengyel nods at a stool.

JACK LENGYEL

Mind if I try?

Paul shrugs. Lengyel sits.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

I heard Don Dedmon lost his job
this week. That's too bad.

*
*

Paul slides him a slice of pie.

PAUL GRIFFIN

Times are hard.

Paul wipes off the counter, keeping busy.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)

He's more than qualified. He'll
find a place.

JACK LENGYEL

Wish I could say the same about
myself. After Morehead, though,
I'll tell you-

Paul throws down his rag.

PAUL GRIFFIN

Do you even know what you're
embarrassing? The history? The
legacy?

JACK LENGYEL

I never thought that doing my best
would be an embarrassment, sir.
I'm sorry if you feel it is.

PAUL GRIFFIN

Well, I do.

Lengyel puts a few dollars on the counter and stands.

JACK LENGYEL

My wife was right. That's good
pie.

He walks toward the door, then stops and turns. He meets
Paul's gaze.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
You asked if I knew the legacy. I
do. Chris Griffin, number 55.
Starting Outside Linebacker. 72
tackles, 6 sacks, 2 interceptions
last year. M.V.P. his sophomore
season. Sure would have like to
have met him.

*

Paul just stands at the counter.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I don't have all the answers, Mr.
Griffin. But I'll take all the
help I can get. The door's always
open.

*

*

*

*

*

He leaves.

*

178 INT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT

178

The center stands quiet and empty.

The door opens with a sigh. Lengyel steps inside.

He stares reluctantly at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL
Um...hi. I just thought I'd check
in.

He glances around nervously, then back up at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
'Cause I gotta say, you're either
making things awful hard down
here...or you're not lifting a
finger to make 'em easier.

He runs his hand through his hair.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
These people need something. And
they act like I'm supposed to have
it...

*

Lengyel looks down at his feet, then back up at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
I mean, it's still a game, right?

Silence.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Isn't it?

179 EXT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT 179

Lengyel steps outside and finds...

Annie Cantrell, sitting on a bench, looking up at the stained-glass window.

She meets his eyes.

ANNIE CANTRELL

Did you get any answers?

Lengyel looks at her, a tiny girl bundled in AN OVERSIZED
VARSITY JACKET.

*
*

JACK LENGYEL

I don't know.

(beat)

But there's no charge for asking.

He turns up his collar and heads down the path.

Finally, Annie stands...and goes in.

192 EXT. HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA - DAY 192

Dawn breaks over the city.

193 EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAWN 193

The stadium stands oddly majestic, surrounded by empty parking lots.

194 INT. DAWSON HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY 194

Carol sleepily rolls over to realize Red's not in bed.

195 EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY 195

Red stands in the morning light, staring at his half-finished shed.

195A INT. JACK LENGYEL'S STUDY - DAY 195A

Lengyel packs his playbook into his briefcase.

*
*

PETER LENGYEL (O.S.)

Remember, stay low to the ground...

*
*

Lengyel turns to see little Peter standing there in his pajamas, holding a popart.

PETER LENGYEL (cont'd)
And keep your knees high.

He does a little high-stepping. Lengyel grins.

196 EXT. SPRING HILL CEMETERY - DAY

196

THE OBELISK memorializing the bodies of the six unidentified players gleams in the morning sun.

A RUMBLING interrupts the serenity.

A BUS pull up the circular path. The doors open and Lengyel steps out.

Then Nate Ruffin exits the bus, trailed by player after player.

The team silently gathers around the memorial to pay their respects.

Finally, RED STEPS OUT and stands apart from the team.

Lengyel walks over and stands beside him.

JACK LENGYEL
He was right.

RED DAWSON
Who?

JACK LENGYEL
Tolley. Winning is everything. Every coach who's worth a damn believes those words. It doesn't matter what city, doesn't matter what sport. Except here. And except now.

He stares out at his team, their heads bowed.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Marshall's different. We're different. When I got here, I didn't think so, but I was wrong. I'm telling you, for the first time in my life -- hell, maybe for the first time in the history of sports -- it really doesn't matter if we win or lose. How we play the game, that's out the window, too. All that matters is that we play.

The team starts to head back to the bus.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

That we step onto the field and
keep this program alive. 'Cause if
it dies, it'll never come back.
And this town, this school and
these boys will be the lesser for
it.

He smiles.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

And who knows? One day -- not
today and not tomorrow, not this
season or the next either -- but
one day, if we do our jobs right,
things'll be different. One day,
down the road, we'll wake up and be
like every other team, in every
other sport, in every other city,
where winning is everything and
nothing else matters. And when
that day comes, well...that's when
we'll honor them.

Lengyel claps Red on the shoulder and heads for the bus.

Finally, with a last look at the obelisk, Red follows.

197 EXT. HUNTINGTON STREETS - DAY 197

Cars jam the streets of downtown. Crowds cluster on the
sidewalks, all heading toward...

198 EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY 198

Cars fill the lot. News crews set up.

Tailgaters light barbecues. Scalpers hawk tickets.

199 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 199

Fans pack the bleachers. A buzz of anticipation floats
through the crowd.

The P.A. system crackles.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, here they
are...your Young Thundering Herd!

200 The team BURSTS out of the tunnel. All 16,159 fans leap200
their feet.

THE ROAR IS OVERWHELMING.

The players run across the field, soaking in the applause.

Red jogs alongside, head down, subdued.

201 On the sidelines, Nate looks to Lengyel. Lengyel nods. 201
Nate smiles and straps on his helmet.

202 Shalhoop sets the ball on the tee. 202

The crowd noise builds to a crescendo.

The ref blows his WHISTLE.

Shalhoop steps forward and CONNECTS...

203 THE FOOTBALL soars up until it crests. 203

CRAWFORD, (#19, Xavier's best player) plucks it out of the
air and flies downfield.

NATE RUFFIN SWOOPS IN AND LAYS HIM OUT. THE CROWD ROARS.

Nate's arm is clearly tender, but he barely notices.

204 On the sidelines, Lengyel calls over Reggie and Lucas 204
Booth.

JACK LENGYEL
(watching the game)
Lucas, what color is your helmet?

LUCAS BOOTH
(confused)
Green.

JACK LENGYEL
Reggie, what's yours?

REGGIE OLIVER
Green.

JACK LENGYEL
What do you know? You two are on
the same team.

He finally looks at them.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Now how 'bout you play like it?

They nod, chastened.

*
*
*
*
*

205 PLAY STARTS IN EARNEST... 205
Xavier sacks Reggie.

206 Nate hits #19 hard, causing him to drop an easy pass. 206

207 Xavier punts. 207

208 Marshall punts. 208

209 The scoreboard at the end of the first quarter reads: 209
MARSHALL 0, VISITORS 0.

210 IN THE SECOND QUARTER... 210
A stopped run. A punt. A sack.

211 And then a big hit from Nate knocks the ball loose. 211
Marshall recovers.

212 THE CROWD ROARS. But then they see Nate rolling on the 212
ground.
Just like last game, a trainer runs out, but again, Nate
waves him away.

213 Red meets him at the sideline. 213 *
RED DAWSON *
Let's take a look at that shoulder-
NATE RUFFIN
Not until halftime.
RED DAWSON *
Nate, it could be serious- *
NATE RUFFIN
Not until halftime.
Red just shakes his head. *

214 ON THE FIELD...Marshall looks at 4th down on Xavier's 18214
yard line.
Lengyel and Red glance back at Shalhoop.
JACK LENGYEL
What the hell. Let's give him a
shot.

215 Shalhoop, runs nervously onto the field. 215
Reggie eyes him warily, but gets in position.
Shalhoop steps off his approach. The crowd quiets.

The ball is hiked. It's high but Reggie corrals it.

Shalhoop steps forward, kicks, and watches...

THE BALL SPLIT THE UPRIGHTS BEAUTIFULLY.

THE CROWD ERUPTS.

216 The scoreboard reads: **MARSHALL 3, VISITORS 0.** 216

217 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 217

The players steam into the locker room, **cautiously hopeful.** *

217A INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY 217A *

Lengyel **opens his door** and STOPS. *

There, staring **through the glass at the team...** *

STANDS PAUL GRIFFIN.

Lengyel steps up behind **him.** *

JACK LENGYEL

Look at 'em. You'd think we were winning this game or something. *

PAUL GRIFFIN

I wish this thing had gone away. I think it would've been easier. I still think that...

He **turns to look at Lengyel.** *

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)

But maybe it's not about what's easier.

217B INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 217B *

A trainer retapes Reggie's ankle. *

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)

Guys, huddle up. *

Reggie and the trainer look up to see LENGYEL STANDING WITH PAUL GRIFFIN. *

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Mr. Griffin here would like to say a few words to you. *

The players quiet down.

Paul stands there for a moment, awkward. Finally:

PAUL GRIFFIN

Some of you knew my son. Some of
you...never got the chance. That's
a shame, because I know Chris would
have liked you all. A whole lot.

He looks out at them.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont'd)

What's more, he would have wanted
you to win.
(beat)
And so do I.

He nods, finished.

JACK LENGYEL

All right. In here.

Lengyel sticks his hand out. All the players slap their
hands on top of his. Paul Griffin's is the last.

Lengyel eyes Paul, then announces to his team:

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

Gentlemen, the funerals end today.

218 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

218

THE PLAYERS STORM OUT OF THE TUNNEL.

THE CROWD ROARS.

219 Nate jogs out, grimacing with every step, his arm taped 219

Red catches up to him. Nate barely looks over.

NATE RUFFIN

I'm fine.

Red stops him by the bench.

RED DAWSON

You're sitting.

NATE RUFFIN

I'm the only one who can cover 19.

RED DAWSON

Nineteen's got six catches for 95 yards, and most of those are because he knows you can't go to your right.

He rests a hand on Nate's shoulder.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)

Nate. You've done enough. All this...

He gestures at the roaring stadium.

RED DAWSON (cont'd)

Is because you never stopped pushing. But now you can.

Red heads off.

Nate sinks into the bench, finally stopping.

220 ON THE FIELD, the Xavier kicker launches the ball high into the air...

221 EXT. THE OHIO RIVER - DAY

221

Sue Griffin sits alone at a bench overlooking the river. She pulls her coat tight against the wind.

Annie Cantrell sits down wordlessly, still wearing Chris' jacket.

ANNIE CANTRELL

Sorry I'm late.

SUE GRIFFIN

I don't mind waiting.

They stare out at the river and the bridge. Finally, Sue reaches into her purse.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)

I found this in the dumpster.

She holds out Annie's book, "FRANCE ON \$3 A DAY!"

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)

It had some eggshell on it, but it's still good.

Annie bites her lip.

ANNIE CANTRELL

We were suppose to go in June.
Paris. Maybe London, too if we
saved enough.

Tears well in Annie's eyes. She turns away.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

That's not going to happen anymore.

SUE GRIFFIN

Why not?

ANNIE CANTRELL

Because it was all about us.
Starting our lives together. What
do I have to start now? Nothing.
He was all I had.

Annie breaks down, inconsolable.

Sue rubs her back.

SUE GRIFFIN

I know, sweetheart, I know.
Believe me, if I go a half hour
without crying, I feel guilty.
This is going to take both of us a
long, long time.

She takes Annie by the shoulders and turns her.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)

But it has to start.

Tears stream down Annie's face.

ANNIE CANTRELL

What's the point?

SUE GRIFFIN

The point is life.

She wraps the girl in her arms.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont'd)

I know you loved Chris. And he
loved you. But don't let his dying
stop you from living.

They hold each other.

222 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 222

CRAWFORD (Xavier's #19) fields a punt, weaves through four tacklers, and takes it into the end zone.

223 THE SCOREBOARD reads: **MARSHALL 9, VISITORS 13.** 223

224 The crowd DEFLATES. A LOT OF THEM SIT DOWN for the first 224
time since the half.

In the middle of the stands...TOM BOGDAN can't believe what he's seeing. He jumps up and shouts.

TOM BOGDAN
COME ONNNNNN! Get up! Get back
on your feet! Let's go Marshall!

*

And sure enough, he guilts the fans back up.

225 3:39 LEFT AND TICKING... 225

226 ON THE FIELD, Marshall goes three and out. 226

227 IN THE STANDS, President Dedmon leans forward in his seat 227

228 ON THE FIELD, Xavier punts, giving Marshall the ball back 228
on their own 40.

229 THE CLOCK stops with 1:18 to go. 229

MARSHALL BEGINS TO MARCH...

230 Reggie hands off to DOUG LISZT for a big gain. 230

231 Reggie hits Lucas Booth for another 20 yards. 231

232 Reggie scurries through a hole, going deep in Xavier 232
territory.

233 THE CLOCK stops for the 1st down, 0:37 seconds left. 233

Suddenly, Marshall's only 12 yards from the end zone.

234 Lengyel signals in a play. 234

235 The ball is snapped. Reggie looks off a receiver, but.. 235

A LINEBACKER BLINDSIDES HIM.

The ball slips free. It rolls across the grass...

236 EXT. GRIFFIN BACK YARD - DAY 236

Sue Griffin hacks at the weeds around her azaleas. A shadow passes over her. She looks up to see...

Paul, carrying a hoe and a bag of topsoil. He smiles. *

PAN ACROSS THE YARD to where... *

CHRIS' VARSITY JACKET hangs on a lawn chair. *

237 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 237

Reggie crawls out from under an Xavier player...reaches as far as he can...and pulls the ball into his chest.

237A INT. CAR - DAY 237A *

Annie steps on the gas, headed out of town. *

She smiles through her tears. *

238 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY 238 *

ON THE SIDELINE, Nate Ruffin breathes a sigh of relief.

Lengyel checks the scoreboard as the clock ticks under 30 seconds. He motions for his final TIMEOUT.

The team huddles around Lengyel and Red.

JACK LENGYEL
Guys, here we go. Z fly 41 out.
(to Booth)
You get open...
(to Reggie)
And you get it there.

Lucas and Reggie eye each other. They nod.

239 IN THE STANDS, Ernie Salvatore looks to see if anyone's 239
watching -- then he blesses himself.

240 THE WHISTLE BLOWS. Reggie leads his team onto the field240

THE BALL IS SNAPPED.

241 IN THE STANDS, Bogdan shuts his eyes, unable to watch. 241

242 Reggie rolls out, just as TWO XAVIER LINEBACKERS BLITZ 242
through the line.

He reverses direction and takes off across the field,
trying to outrun them.

243 Lengyel's eyes practically pop out of his sockets. 243

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Get outta bounds!

244 Lucas Booth sees what's happening and runs toward the ba~~244~~
as if he's gonna tackle Reggie himself.

LUCAS BOOTH
Get outta bounds!

245 IN THE STANDS, Keith Morehouse climbs atop his brother. 245

KEITH MOREHOUSE
Get outta bounds!

246 Reggie sprints for the sideline...only a few more feet..246
But he's tripped up by an Xavier player, and he falls face
first, less than two feet from the boundary line.

247 SO THE CLOCK TICKS DOWN... 0:20... 0:19... 0:18... 247
And Marshall is out of timeouts.

248 THE SIDELINE EXPLODES. 248

RED DAWSON
Set up, set up! Get back, get
back!

JACK LENGYEL
513 bootleg screen! 513 bootleg
screen, go! Booth, you're out!

Lengyel checks the clock -- 0:13... 0:12...

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Shit, Booth, you're in, you're in!

249 ON THE FIELD, confusion reigns. 249

250 ON THE SIDELINES, Lengyel almost can't watch. 250

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)
Just snap it, for Chrissakes! Snap
it snap it snap it!

251 IN THE STANDS, Carol, Sandy, Dedmon, Bogdan, and every 251
single one of the Morehouses all yell.

CROWD
Snap it! Snap it!

252 THE CLOCK ticks down...0:04... 0:03... 0:02... 252

253 ON THE FIELD, Reggie hurries everyone to the line. He 253
checks the clock, and the ball is snapped...

254 JUST BEFORE IT REACHES 0:00. 254

255 Reggie rolls RIGHT. His tailback is covered, and here 255
comes the blitz.

He looks down the MIDDLE, no one open...

Then LEFT, where LUCAS BOOTH breaks free from his man and
streaks toward the end zone.

Reggie sets his feet...and THROWS THE BALL.

BUT WE CUT AWAY.

256 TO RED. He sees everything we can't. 256

BEHIND HIM, the players on the sideline twist with
anticipation.

But Red's face is unreadable. He watches the play unfold
without moving a muscle.

TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL.

Then the players around him tense...

AND SUDDENLY ERUPT. THEIR ARMS FLY IN THE AIR.

Booth has made the catch.

MARSHALL HAS WON.

But Red doesn't move. He doesn't even flinch.

257 IN THE STANDS, though, it's bedlam. Fans leap over the 257
bleachers, flooding the field.

258 REGGIE OLIVER sinks to the ground as players pile on him 258

259 BILL SHALHOOP puts his helmet on and runs out on the fie 259

JACK LENGYEL, grinning ear to ear, hurries to grab him.

JACK LENGYEL

Bill, Bill, the game's over. You
don't need to kick any more.

Bill takes off his helmet. The crowd knocks him down.

259A BENEATH THE PILE, Reggie grins at Lucas Booth. 259A *

260 NATE RUFFIN gets swept up in the moment, grabbing hold of
anybody he can find, until he comes face to face with:

TOM BOGDAN. Bogdan looks back at him, unsure...

But Nate doesn't hesitate, pulling Tom into a bear hug.
Tom tries to hold it together.

261 ON THE XAVIER SIDELINE, the visitors quietly watch the
celebration. 261

262 AT THE 50, DOUG LISZT shakes hands with CRAWFORD (#19). 262

CRAWFORD

Good game.

DOUG LISZT

Did you leave it all out there?

CRAWFORD

Only way I know how to play.

263 CAROL DAWSON finds her husband on the sidelines. She 263
embraces him, but he still appears numb.

CAROL DAWSON

Red, what is it?

Red glances around at the 14,000 people now on the field.

RED DAWSON

Yeah...I dunno. I guess I'm just
afraid this'll all be for nothing.

CAROL DAWSON

My God! Look around you! How in
the world could this ever be for
nothing?

*

264 A REFEREE makes his way over to Lengyel. 264

REFEREE

You want the game ball, Coach?

JACK LENGYEL

Yeah...

He spots someone in the crowd.

JACK LENGYEL (cont'd)

I do.

265 Lengyel takes the ball and heads off, passing right by 265
Lucas Booth...by Reggie Oliver...even by Nate Ruffin...

Until he arrives in front of the bleachers, where

DON DEDMON quietly watches the commotion.

Lengyel holds out the ball. Dedmon looks at him, puzzled.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

What's this?

JACK LENGYEL

Little tradition we have, Don. At the end of the game, we give the game ball to the player who most deserves it.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I'm not a player.

JACK LENGYEL

Hey, we're Marshall. We'll take anybody.

He winks. Dedmon smiles...and takes the ball.

266 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 266

A celebration rages. Champagne pours over jubilant players.

In the corner, Red sits quietly, taking it all in.

267 TIME LAPSE... 267

The celebration ebbs and flows, and gradually breaks up.

But through it all, Red remains rooted in the same spot, the same distant smile on his face, until...

268 He's the only one left in the room. The place is trashed 268
strewn with uniforms, sticky from beer and champagne.

THE DOOR OPENS. AN OLDER JANITOR quietly starts to clean the place up.

Red snaps back to reality, and looks around for a clock.

RED DAWSON

You got the time, by any chance?

JANITOR

Oh, lemme see...quarter past 10.

Red jumps up and hurries out of the room.

269 INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM, HALLWAY - NIGHT 269

The hallway lies deserted, too...except for Carol, sitting against the wall.

She smiles at Red as he rushes over.

RED DAWSON
God, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to
keep you waiting, I just-

CAROL DAWSON
Red. You didn't keep me waiting.

She takes him by the hand and pulls him down the hall.

CAROL DAWSON (cont'd)
Come here.

A quiet buzz grows louder as they walk toward the field.

270 INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT 270

When they emerge from the tunnel, Red stops short.

Even though the lights have been shut off for hours...

THOUSANDS OF FANS REMAIN.

CAROL DAWSON
Nobody here wants to go home,
either.

People mill about the bleachers. Some play touch football on the grass. And some stand alone, just staring at the scoreboard.

But no one has left.

FINALLY, RED'S EYES WELL UP WITH TEARS.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
*Marshall would only win one more
game **that season**.*

*

As Carol pulls Red towards the field...

A SNAPSHOT is taken of him.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Red Dawson kept his word, and left
the team at the end of the year.
He never returned to football.*

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Today, he owns a construction
company in Huntington.*

271 A SNAPSHOT of President Dedmon, alone in the stands, 271
clutching onto the football that Lengyel gave him.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Donald Dedmon stepped down as
school president in the fall of
1971.*

272 A SNAPSHOT OF THE WHOLE STADIUM, swarming with people, 272
alive in the darkness.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
But football remained.

273 A SNAPSHOT of Nate, among his teammates. 273

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Nate Ruffin graduated in 1972. He
moved to Virginia and went to work
for a first amendment advocacy
group.*

274 A SNAPSHOT of Reggie. 274

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Reggie Oliver started every game at
quarterback for the Thundering Herd
until he graduated in 1973. He
returned to the program in 1982 as
an assistant, and now coaches high
school football in Ohio. In 1984,
he was inducted into the Marshall
Athletic Hall of Fame.*

*
*
*

275 A SNAPSHOT of Lengyel, with Sandy on the field. 275

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Jack Lengyel resigned as head coach
in 1974 with a record of 9-33. He
went on to become Athletic Director
for the University of Missouri,
Fresno State, and the Naval
Academy.*

276 TIME LAPSE OF THE STADIUM -- as night turns into day, and 276
gradually, the building begins to age. Entire weeks fly
past in the blink of an eye...

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)
*Marshall lost more football games
in the 70's than any other program
in the nation.*

277 WHOLE SEASONS GO BY NOW. Crowds gradually dwindle. 277

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*The team was so bad that a petition
circulated around campus,
requesting football be dropped
altogether.*

Buildings pop up around the stadium.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*But the families of the crash
victims protested. They did not
want to see the legacies of their
sons, husbands and fathers
disappear.*

Through it all, though, the crowds in the stadium never
disappear entirely...

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

And so, football remained.

278 TO ONE GAME IN PARTICULAR. The stadium is half full -- 278
team is on the field. Marshall's running back leaps his
way into the end zone. The crowd rises to their feet.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*On November 17, 1984, the
Thundering Herd beat Eastern
Tennessee State to finish the
season 6-5. It was their first
winning record in 20 years.*

279 The fans return en masse. The stadium grows, too. More279
bleachers here, another deck there.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*They haven't had another losing
season since.*

Skyboxes are added -- brand new seats throughout. It's
standing room only.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*Since 1990, Marshall has won more
games than any other team in
college football.*

280 TO A COLD NOVEMBER AFTERNOON IN 1997 -- where Marshall's280
quarterback (#10) looks downfield for a receiver.

TRACK THROUGH THE CROWD TO THE NEW PRESS BOX, and focus in
on a television analyst, calling the play live.

KEITH MOREHOUSE

Pennington throws up the right side
to Moss -- who snags it -- who
breaks free -- who's got one man to
beat -- who's in the end zone!
Touchdown, Randy Moss!

THE CROWD ROARS. The announcer can barely contain his
excitement.

ANNIE CANTRELL

*Gene Morehouse's son Keith followed
his father into broadcasting. And
he's been on hand for every single
Herd victory since.*

281 EXT. FRONT OF CAMPUS - PRESENT DAY

281

A small crowd gathers on a warm spring day around the DRY
FOUNTAIN.

The real Red and Carol Dawson are here. So are the real
Jack and Sandy Lengyel, along with Ernie Salvatore, Reggie
Oliver, Eddie Carter, and the rest of the 1971 team.

The current President of Marshall, STEPHEN KOPP, nods to
someone offscreen...

And the fountain springs back to life once again.

282 EXT. SPRING HILL CEMETERY - PRESENT DAY

282

The memorial obelisk still cuts up into the sky.

ANNIE CANTRELL

*In 2001, after a prolonged illness,
Nate Ruffin finally succumbed to
leukemia at his home in Arlington,
Virginia.*

An elegant black woman (SHARON) lays down a bouquet of
flowers. Her two grown children (GREG and SHONTE) stand
beside her.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont'd)

*He would return to Huntington one
last time.*

A plaque beside the obelisk reads: NATE RUFFIN 1948-2001.

283 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - PRESENT DAY 283

TRACK THROUGH THE STADIUM -- over the new million dollar turf -- past the state-of-the-art luxury boxes -- to the north end zone, where a small, inauspicious green banner hangs.

***From the ashes, we rose.
We are Marshall.***

CROWD (O.S.)
WE ARE...MARSHALL!

The banner rustles in the breeze.

FADE OUT.