

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY

Home-video. Faded imagines.

Pee-Wee football. Dusty, make-shift field.

JORDAN EVERETT (9) tall, skinny. Takes the snap. Rolls right. Number 11.

MONA, Jordan's mom, VOICE on the video.

MONA (O.S.)
Jordan, look up.

DESEAN COLE (9) black. Fastest kid on the field. Breaks open down the middle. Number 23.

MONA (O.S.)
DeSean's open.

Jordan launches the pass just as...

MONA (O.S.)
Watch out.

... he's waylaid by two Defenders at the sideline.

Wobbly spiral sails into DeSean'S outstretched arms. Races across the goal line.

JOE EVERETT (40) leaps in the air. Coach's hat flies off his bald head.

CHEERING PARENTS.

Jordan climbs to feet.

MONA (O.S.)
Great catch, DeSean.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER gives him a hug. Big smile for the camera.

Jordan high-fives his dad. His sister ANNIE (3). Hugs him.

JOE
(On video)
That took guts, son. Take that hit.

Jordan on the sideline. Takes his helmet off.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - PRESENT DAY -- EVENING

Jordan (17), on the sideline. Puts his helmet on. Number 11.

Field perfectly manicured. Bright lights. This is where football is religion.

Jordan jogs to the huddle. Takes a knee.

Looks at the scoreboard.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 17 Visitors 20 Time 0:47 4th Qtr.

JORDAN

All right. I got this.

Faces in the Huddle.

JORDAN

I'm not going to lose this game.

You hear me? Can of corn.

(a wink)

Read option right, post fly, on two.

CLAP of HANDS. Huddle breaks.

AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE -- Jordan BARKS signals.

Ball snapped. CRASH of PADS. Speed of a college game.

Jordan fakes a hand-off. Sprints to the right sideline.

KEVIN WHITE, number 80. Leaks past the defense.

Jordan fires a tight spiral toward the end zone just as he takes a crushing shot.

Kevin never breaks stride. Perfect pass. Crosses the goal line. Hands ball to the referee.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)

Touchdown. Jordan Everett to Kevin

White. Mustangs take the lead.

Jordan gets up. Notices, TAYLOR (17). A cheerleader.

Fans on their feet. SCREAMING.

Massive Band. PLAYS FIGHT SONG.

In the stands, Joe Everett hugs Mona (47). Annie, now (11) high-fives all around.

MONA
He did it. He did it.

JOE
(pointing)
You see them two down there.

Two College Scouts. A couple of rows below.

MONA
Where are they from?

JOE
Pac 12.

MONA
West Coast?
(fretting)
That's a long ways to travel.

JOE
Let's don't get too far ahead of
ourselves.

EXT. TEAM BUILDING -- EVENING

Jordan's family waits outside.

Parents congratulate them.

Jordan comes out. Wet-head dripping.

JOE
Nice game, bud.

JORDAN
Thanks.

JOE
That hit on the sideline. Takes
guts to stand in there.

ANNIE
(hugging Jordan)
Three more touchdowns and you'll
have the state record.

JORDAN
My biggest fan.

MONA
And the birthday girl.

ANNIE

That's right. Let's go.

Family turns to leave.

JORDAN

Hey, I need a couple of more minutes.
Coach wants to show me something.
I'll get a ride with Kevin.

ANNIE

(protesting)

Ah...

JORDAN

Pick up the pizza. I won't be long,
Annie. I promise.

EXT. ALLEY -- EVENING

DeSean Cole (17) squats against a fence.

Lights a meth pipe. Deep inhale. Glassy faced. Number 23 jersey.

Scans the area. Scales up the fence.

Gun stuff down his pants.

Drops down.

EXT. EVERETT HOUSE -- EVENING

Two-story house. DeSean checks the back windows.

Pries open the back door.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL -- EVENING

Taylor and her friend on a bench. Compare fingernails.
Jordan and Kevin approach.

KEVIN

Need a ride, girls?

They look up unsure. Shake their heads.

JORDAN

Must be tough.

TAYLOR

What's that?

JORDAN
(cocky grin)
Cheering for your team.

A moment to figure it out.

TAYLOR
Oh, you're number eleven.

Nods.

FRIEND
(P.A. mocking)
Jordan Everett... Throws another
touchdown pass.

The girls snicker.

JORDAN
(to Taylor)
I saw you on the sideline.

TAYLOR
So.

JORDAN
(stumbling)
So, uh... I just thought maybe--

TAYLOR
... maybe what? I'd want to hook up
with the big time football hero?

JORDAN
No, I--

Two Boys in band uniforms approach.

BOY #1
Ready?

Taylor shoots Jordan a look.

TAYLOR
Yeah.

Escorts the girls away.

BOY #1
(back at Jordan)
Hey, good luck next week. Big game.

JORDAN
Yeah. Thanks.

Kevin SNICKERS. Playful punch on the shoulder.

INT. EVERETT KITCHEN -- EVENING

Joe and Annie enter from the side door. Mona follows carrying pizza boxes. Cake on the table.

Joe spots the half-open back door.

ANNIE

Did you buy ice cream, mama?

NOISE down the hall. Joe signals. Finger to his lips.

Slides in the living room. About to open a desk drawer.

DeSean appears. Gun drawn.

DESEAN

Don't.

Joe freezes.

Mona pulls Annie to her.

DeSean's eyes. A recollection.

DESEAN

I know you.

Joe tries to place it.

DESEAN

You my coach.

JOE

DeSean?

DESEAN

(looking around)

Where's Jordan?

JOE

He had a game tonight.

DESEAN

He still quarterback?

JOE

Yeah.

DESEAN

I don't play no more.

Annie steps forward. DeSean waves the gun.

DESEAN
(warning)
Un..uh.

JOE
DeSean.
(eyes on the drawer)
Just take what you want.

DESEAN
You'll tell the police?

MONA
No, DeSean. We won't say a thing.

Crazy look on DeSean's face.

Joe carefully eases the drawer open. Gun inside.

INT. KEVIN'S CAR -- EVENING

Kevin and Jordan ride. Top down. RADIO BLARING.

KEVIN
(laughing)
Shot down by Ms. Rejection.

JORDAN
Glad you enjoyed it.
(beat)
Can't get a hit without going to
bat.

KEVIN
Her loss.

Fist bump. Car pulls up to Jordan's house.

JORDAN
You made any decisions, yet?

KEVIN
No. My mom says it's like the Wizard
of Oz.

JORDAN
What?

KEVIN
She says I'm either going to be a
lion, a tiger or a bear. Oh my.

Jordan laughs. Climbs out.

JORDAN

Yeah. Our mailbox's blowing up.
Dad set up a couple of visits next
month.

Shuts the door.

KEVIN

Party at the dock, tonight.

JORDAN

(indicating the house)
Annie's birthday.

KEVIN

Don't drink too much.

JORDAN

You should go home. Weights in the
morning.

KEVIN

I'll see you there.

Car ROARS out of sight.

Jordan walks up the driveway.

Gentle BREEZE only sound until...

THREE EXPLOSIVE GUNSHOTS RING OUT!

Jordan's face. Filled with terror. Deep breathes.

Races to the side door.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE -- EVENING

Kitchen door slowly opens. Jordan steps in. Smoke sifts
through the room.

JORDAN

Dad..? Mom?

No sounds. Creeps in the living room.

Disbelief covers his face.

Mona and Annie lay dead embracing each other.

JORDAN

God.

His breathing quickens.
Steps past the bodies to where...
Joe lays dead in a pool of blood.
Pistol in hand.

JORDAN

Dad.

Bends down...
A NOISE outside.
Out the backdoor. A body go over the fence.
Looks back at his Dad's face.
Grabs the pistol from Joe's hand. Bolts out the back door.
Sprints across the yard. Over the fence.
A long moment... the BREEZE. Then...
A single GUNSHOT.
DOGS BARK.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER -- NIGHT

Blue strobe light dances on the pavement.
Jordan sits cross-legged.
Stares at the gun in his hand.
White light shines in his face.

VOICE (O.S.)

Drop the gun.

Looks up. Dazed.
COP stands ready. Revolver aimed.
Other Cop holds a flashlight.

COP

I need you to put the gun down.

Jordan looks at the cop.
Lays the pistol to his side.

COP

Now, put your hands up where I can see them.

Cop kicks the gun away.

Rolls Jordan over. Face on the pavement.

Arms behind his back. Handcuffs SNAPPED on.

Jordan looks sideways down the alley.

Blue lights flashing. Squad car.

Two more Cops over a body.

Hoisted to his feet. Slow walk.

Dead figure wears number 23.

RADIO CHATTER.

Cop walks Jordan closer. DeSean's face.

Jordan looks at the cop. What happened?

COP

Watch you head.

Guides Jordan into the squad car.

A SIREN.

Silhouette of Jordan's face. Car rolls down the alley.

INT. DORM HOLDING CELL -- NIGHT

Jordan on a bunk. Orange jump-suit.

Looks through the bars.

NOISES down the hall.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, God damn it. Shut up.

Guard walks past.

VOICE (O.S.)

I said shut the fuck up.

Jordan leans against the wall. Pure dread.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

High rise buildings in the distance.

Line of cars next to the grave site.

Jordan steps out of a dark car. Blue suit.

MIKE (35) black, plainclothesman. Waits beside the car.

Three caskets side by side. Smallest one in the middle.

Jordan takes his seat next to his Grandma, BETTY EVERETT (78). A hug. She wipes her tears.

JORDAN

Hi, Grandma.

BETTY

Jordie. I can't believe this.

Blank stare.

BETTY

What about you? Is there something I can do to help.

JORDAN

I don't know, Grandma.

(beat)

I don't know.

Hand on Jordan's shoulder. Looks back. Kevin.

PREACHER rise to a podium. Opens a bible.

PREACHER

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures...

Betty SOBS uncontrollably.

Jordan eyes the preacher. Mouth moving. No sound.

People wipe tears.

Jordan's face. No emotion.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Jordan rides. Expressionless.

Mike checks his watch. Turns down a street. Neighborhood grows poorer.

OUT JORDAN'S WINDOW -- A tiny, white clap-board, church.

Side cemetery.

Gathering around a freshly-dug grave.

Car slows.

DeSean's grandmother. Hand on her grandson's coffin.

Drops to her knees. Mourners rush to her.

Car slows to a crawl. The full effect.

Jordan looks back at Mike. I get it.

INT. JAIL RECREATION ROOM -- DAY

Jordan alone at a table.

TV in the corner.

ON TV -- Boxing match.

Offenders imitate the action.

Chess game at another table.

GUARD walks by. Tosses a newspaper on Jordan's table.

GUARD

Looks like your replacement played
for the other team.

Reaches for the paper.

GUARD

Three picks in the first half.

INSERT HEADLINE -- "North Lake Upset in Rival Game!"

GUARD

That's tough.

Jordan looks up. A fierce glare.

JORDAN

Yeah.

INT. MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Jordan waits at a table.

ALEX STEWART (35) business suit. Enters.

ALEX
Jordan, I'm Alex Stewart.

JORDAN
When do I get out of here?

Slings a briefcase on the table.

ALEX
(sitting)
That's why I'm here. I just spoke
with the prosecutor. He's proposing
a deal.

JORDAN
A deal? What's that mean?

ALEX
A plea.
(beat)
Manslaughter.

JORDAN
Manslaughter?
(cynical)
Anybody around here give a shit what
happened?

ALEX
Jordan...

JORDAN
He murdered my family.

ALEX
It's not that simple.

JORDAN
It is for me.

ALEX
Jordan, he was running away from
you. You shot him in the back of
the head.

JORDAN
You damn right.

On his feet. Pacing.

JORDAN

So, what's going to happen?

ALEX

I can't make any promises. But, this would give the court a lot of latitude.

JORDAN

What if I don't take it?

ALEX

The reality is you'll be in here until there's a trial. And that could be at least a year. Maybe longer.

(hesitates)

And you never know what can happen with a jury.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

Alex confers at the bench. Judge TRUDY WELLS, black (55).

He turns animated.

Muffled confrontation with the Judge.

DeSean's Grandmother on the back row.

Alex walks back to Jordan.

ALEX

She wants to speak to you.

He stands.

TRUDY

Young man, I want you to know that I have some reservations to what is being proposed here today.

(glares at the prosecutor)

Taking another human life is not a trivial matter. Not withstanding circumstances or your age.

Leans forward.

TRUDY

There is no justification to taking the law into your own hands.

Checks paperwork.

TRUDY

At the same time, I'm not insensitive
to what happened to you.

DeSean's grandmother's face.

TRUDY

And that is why I'm going to allow
this remedy.

Jordan looks at Alex. Averts his gaze.

TRUDY

Take this as an opportunity. If you
demonstrate exploratory behavior,
the court will see you in nine months
to discuss the possibility of
probation.

She stands.

JORDAN

(to the Judge)

What's that's mean? See me in nine
months?

(to Alex)

I'm going to prison?

Alex grabs Jordan by the arm. Judge leaves her bench.

JORDAN

(to Alex)

You said that--

ALEX

(shakes his head)

I know. I know what I said.

Jordan slumps in his chair. DeSean's grandmother watches.

INT. CARGO VAN -- DAY

Jordan in the middle seat. Shackled.

Van stops at a red light. Out his window.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

High school Kids on the sidewalk.

Carefree play.

Girl hops on a Boy for a horse ride.

Boy throws popcorn.

Play fight. Girl gives him a kiss.

Jordan's face through the window.

Light changes.

Van drives off.

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

Jordan on the bunk. Solitary cell.

Blue fatigues. Short hair.

Lights CLICK off. Shut down.

Undistinguishable CHATTER.

Pulls his knees up into a ball.

Gentle heaving of his shoulders.

INT. CLASS ROOM -- DAY

Chairs in a circle. Tough looking bunch.

DR. BRAUD (50). Leads the group.

Door opens. Jordan walks in. All eyes on him.

Hands Braud his file.

Takes an empty seat next to ALBERT (20). Mute Goliath.

ON THE BLACKBOARD-- Drawing of an umbrella. "ANGER" in bold letters written above. "Covering your feelings with your Emotion Umbrella" written below.

Braud points at the board.

BRAUD

Anger is a feeling of unhappiness.
When we feel angry our body reacts.
Heart rate accelerates. Adrenaline
flow increases. Muscles contract
and tightened.

(beat)

What are some of the internal cues
you feel when you're angry?

No response. Braud sits down and waits.

Jordan watches Albert. Catatonic expression.

BRAUD

Okay. No movie or snacks until we complete this material.

CYNICAL MOANING.

Hand goes up belonging to DWAYNE (21). Trailer trash and in the right class. Face full of scars. A cutter.

BRAUD

Yes, Dwayne

DWAYNE

You want to know what I feel when some ass-hole spills my tray in the mess line?

Dwayne shoots a glance at GIBBS (23) black. Cocky grin back.

DWAYNE

I feel happy.

BRAUD

Happy?

DWAYNE

Yeah. Because I know what I'm going to do to that dumb-ass nigger when I--

Gibbs on his feet.

GIBBS

(screaming)

Yeah, snowflake. What are you waiting for? I'm right here--

Dwayne on his feet, feints a rush...

DWAYNE

Not for long, bro.

Braud on his feet. Seen it a thousand times.

BRAUD

All right. Sit down. Both of you

Albert unconcerned. Calm returns. Dwayne makes eye contact with Jordan.

DWAYNE

What are you looking at hot shot?

EXT. EXERCISE YARD -- DAY

Snow on the ground. Jordan stands off from the action.

Gibbs and INMATES converse. Albert walks by.

Gibbs holds off until he passes.

GIBBS

(to other inmate)

Big man, going for the record.

INMATE

What's that?

GIBBS

Failed his GED for a fifth time.

INMATE

He can't help it, man. He's retarded.

GIBBS

Yeah? You tell him that.

Jordan spots Dwayne in a huddle. Slit throat gesture.

INT. VISITING ROOM -- DAY

Kevin. Heavy jacket. Across the glass patrician.

Jordan sits. Fist bump against the glass.

KEVIN

Hey man.

(rubbing his head)

Nice look.

JORDAN

(smiles)

Yeah.

(rubbing his scalp)

It's getting a little long.

Awkward silence.

KEVIN

Sorry. I didn't get up here sooner.

JORDAN

It's okay.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

(beat)
So, what's going on?

KEVIN

Well, I'm going to be a bear. Full ride.

JORDAN

Yeah? Cool.

KEVIN

I know. Can't wait. School's killing me. Time's really dragging.

Bad thing to say.

KEVIN

Sorry.
(beat)
Hey, you remember that cheerleader?

Jordan doesn't follow.

KEVIN

Ms. Rejection.

JORDAN

Oh. Yeah.

KEVIN

I'm going to her prom.

JORDAN

What?

KEVIN

Yeah. After... you know, what happened. She looked me up, and...

JORDAN

(less than enthused)
Really. That's great.

KEVIN

Yeah.
(the moment of truth)
So... What's it like?

JORDAN

(stumbling)
It's...uh...

Far-off gaze.

JORDAN
It's not... good.
(guffaw)
I wouldn't recommend it.
(upbeat)
I might get my GED, though.

KEVIN
Really?

JORDAN
Yeah. I was thinking about writing
some coaches.

KEVIN
Oh.
(hiding something)
Yeah, I guess.

JORDAN
What?
(insistent)
What?

KEVIN
It's just... one of our recruits got
caught at a bar last week. Underage.
Coach pulled his scholarship. Told
us he wasn't taking any more chances
on a kid who's been in trouble.

Jordan's face.

INT. MESS HALL -- DAY

Jordan stirs his food.

Plate of gruel on bread.

Gibbs slides next to him. Eyes across the room on Dwayne.
Surrounded by his Boys.

GIBBS
You don't talk much, do you?

No answer.

GIBBS
(warning)
You got a problem, man.

Jordan looks at Dwayne. Gibbs gets up.

GIBBS

Keep your eyes open. It's coming.

INT. CELL -- DAY

Jordan pumps out pushups. Collapses. Catches his breaths. More pushups.

LATER -- Lights out. In his bunk. Asleep.

Bolts upright. Nightmare. Exhausted breathing.

INT. EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Jordan at a desk. Pencils in answers. Flips pages. Finished.

Albert across the aisle. Face shows his struggle. Mouths words on the page. Erases an answer. Tears the page.

Proctor walks by. Eyeing the room.

Albert lays down his pencil. Surrender.

Proctor's eyes on the wall clock.

Jordan quickly swaps booklets with Albert.

Writes in his name.

Albert catches on. Erases Jordan's. Scribbles his.

EXT. EXERCISE YARD -- DAY

Green grass. Blue skies. Basketball game.

Ball trickles over to Jordan. Tosses it back.

Uneasy look on Players' faces.

He turns. Dwayne.

DWAYNE

Hey, hot shot.

Takes a step back. Blocked by Dwayne's boys.

DWAYNE

Going to leave you a little something to remember me by.

JORDAN

I don't want trouble, man--

DWAYNE

Not up to you.

Arms pinned behind his back. Dwayne steps closer.

Jordan thrust his head back. Bloodies one nose. Cat-quick, throws a punch. Knocks other boy off his feet.

Dwayne and Jordan square off.

Inmates circle around. Dwayne waves a razor blade slotted in a toothbrush.

Swipes at Jordan's face. Jordan SCREAMS.

Blood flows down his cheek.

Drops to the ground. Dwayne charges...

Hand catches him by the collar. Flings him back.

Albert steps on Dwayne's wrist. BONE CRACKING.

Weapon drops. SCREAMS OF AGONY.

Guards rush in. Billy sticks ready. Jordan holds his bleeding face.

Albert led away. Looks back. They're even.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

Jordan at a table. Bandaged cheek.

Prosecutor at the bench.

Alex takes a seat.

ALEX

(whispers to Jordan)

Stand up.

DeSean's grandmother enters the gallery. Janitorial uniform.

Takes a step toward the front. Judge waves her off...

TRUDY

Not now. We're in a proceeding.

Back to Jordan.

TRUDY

Young man, are you familiar with the term exemplary?

JORDAN

I--

TRUDY

Apparently, not. An altercation
with another inmate is not exemplary.
(checks paperwork)
What kind of grades did you receive
in school?

JORDAN

B's. Couple of C's--

TRUDY

A one-fifty score on the GED
examination is not exemplary.

Jordan's face.

TRUDY

Did you not take me seriously? Do
you believe your behavior warrants
your release?

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)

Can I say something?

TRUDY

(irritated)
Who are you?

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

I'm DeSean Cole's grandmother...

Judge leans back. Busted.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

(walks to the front)

I want to tell you, DeSean meant
everything to me. I raised him from
the time he was a baby. I wasn't
able to give him everything he needed.
But, I gave him everything I could.
And I loved him more than anything
else in this world.

Long pause. Jordan's face.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

But I don't want you to send this
boy back. If you do, then there'll
be two boys who's lives ended that
day.

(MORE)

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

You might fault him for what he did.
But, you need to know I forgive him.
(tears)
Because that's what I was taught to
do.

Turns. Walks out.

Judge's face.

INT. ALEX STEWART'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jordan in street clothes at a table.

Alex walks in with EDDIE WILLIAMS (50).

ALEX

Jordan, this is Eddie Williams.
He's in charge of your probation.

Eddie shakes hands and sits.

EDDIE

I've got your travel cleared--

JORDAN

Travel?

EDDIE

You're going to live with your
grandmother. Charles Block will
contact you after you arrive--

JORDAN

Whoa. Whoa. I'm not going to live
with my grandmother. I visited her
one time when I was a little kid.
She lives on an old farm.

ALEX

She sold that property last week.
Moved to a small town.

JORDAN

You're not serious?
(beat)
What about school?

EDDIE

There's a high school. It might be
a little different than what you
were use to.

Jordan gets up pacing.

JORDAN

Why can't I just go back to....

It's on their faces. He can't go back.

ALEX

Your bus leaves tonight. They start early in the south. Mr. Williams needs to go over a few rules.

EDDIE

No drugs. No alcohol. Mr. Block can and will test you at any time. No firearms. No fights. No late nights. Finish your senior year. Stay clean.

ALEX

Help your grandmother, Jordan. She's your best support.

EDDIE

I've contacted the school's principal, Ms. Parker. She's the only one that needs to know of your situation.

ALEX

It's simple, Jordan. Stay out of trouble or...

JORDAN

I got it. I got it.

Head in hands. Digesting, then...

JORDAN

Can I ask you do something for me?

INT./EXT. CAR -- EVENING

Alex and Jordan ride. Car stops.

OUT JORDAN'S WINDOW -- Jordan's old house.

He climbs out.

Brother and Sister play in a sprinkler.

Jordan leans against a fender. Alex walks around.

JORDAN
(watching)
I should have been there.

ALEX
Jordan. You can't--

JORDAN
No.
(beat)
We were going home together after
the game.
(far off)
I made up a lie, so I could talk to
a cheerleader.

A moment.

JORDAN
(to Alex)
He wouldn't have done it if I had
been there.

The Kids SCREAM running through the water.

Jordan climbs back.

His reflection out the window.

INT. BUS -- NIGHT

Jordan's reflection off the window.

Passing lights.

A CRYING BABY.

Mother reads to her Daughter.

Jordan lays against the window. Shuts his eyes.

EXT. TOWN -- DAY

Jordan climbs off the bus.

Two-story, red-brick store fronts. One stop light.

Driver unloads his duffel bag.

Betty, dressed in Sunday best. Hugs him.

JORDAN
Hi Grandma.

BETTY
(touching his cheek)
Jordie. What happen to your face?

Half-moon scar on his cheek.

JORDAN
It's nothing. Just a scratch.

Dubious look.

Bus pulls away.

Jordan takes in his new life.

JORDAN
So, this is it.

BETTY
(grinning)
Oh don't worry. It's not really as
big as it looks.

Another look down the street.

JORDAN
Where are all the people?

BETTY
(states the obvious)
It's Sunday, Jordan.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Jordan devours a meal.

Betty watches from a rocking chair.

BETTY
School starts in the morning.

JORDAN
What time is the bus?

BETTY
(laughs)
Ain't no bus.

JORDAN
You driving me?

BETTY
Jordan.

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

(points)

The school is two blocks from here.

(beat)

You walk past it and all that's left is the dump. You'll know that by the smell.

Almost a grin.

BETTY

Jordie.

(struggles)

It ain't fair you're stuck here with me. But there's not much fair to what's happened to you.

(beat)

Someday you may need someone to talk to. And if that happens... there ain't much I haven't seen or heard.

(laughs)

Or done myself.

(beat)

You think you can come to me if you need to?

JORDAN

I don't know, grandma.

(uncaring)

I just want to get this over with.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan tosses. Nightmare.

Table by his bed. Slight vibration.

Bolts upright. Eyes wide open. Listening....

Distant sound. TRAIN HORN.

Clock on night table-- 1:59.

HORN again. Closer.

Lays back. Wide awake.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Breakfast. Betty scribbles a note.

JORDAN

(chewing)

Was that a train last night?

BETTY
(not looking up)
Around two o'clock?

JORDAN
You heard it?

BETTY
No.

A look.

BETTY
I sleep right through it. You will
too.

JORDAN
Where do you think it's going?

Keeps writing.

BETTY
I don't know. I don't even know
which direction it's headed.

JORDAN
What are you writing, grandma?

Guarded pause.

BETTY
A letter.
(beat)
It's how old people communicate.

JORDAN
Yeah. We studied it in history.

She smiles.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

Jordan walks past cottages.

Shade trees line the street.

Convertible slowly passes. RADIO blaring.

The Driver, CHAD GUIDRY, (18). Sizes up Jordan.

Speeds off.

INT. SCHOOL - HALL -- DAY

Jordan outside Principal's office.

Students pass. Heading to class.

Wall clock -- 8:00.

BELL sounds. Hall empties.

LATER - Clock -- 8:25

HEELS CLICK down the hall. Belonging to...

DONNA PARKER (53) black. Dressed for business.

Swings open her door. Wags her finger for Jordan to follow.

INT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jordan sits. Parker shuffles papers.

MS. PARKER
(to herself)
First day. Always a few hiccups.

Looks up. Over reading glasses.

MS. PARKER
Settled in with your grandmother?

He nods.

MS. PARKER
I hope you appreciate what she's
done for you. Moving to a new town
and all.

JORDAN
Yeah.

Hard stare.

MS. PARKER
We're use to ma'am and sir around
here.

JORDAN
Oh...

MS. PARKER
I had no choice but to let you start
school here.

(MORE)

MS. PARKER (CONT'D)
But, that doesn't mean you get to
stay here.
(locks eyes)
That'll be up to you.

JORDAN
(bites his tongue)
Yes...ma'am.

Hands Jordan a paper.

MS. PARKER
This is your schedule.

Rises. Eyes on the paper.

JORDAN
Ms. Parker?

MS. PARKER
Yes.

JORDAN
It says, Jordan Evers. My name is
Jordan Everette.

Points him down in the chair.

MS. PARKER
I know we probably look like something
out of a black and white movie to
you. But believe it or not, most of
the kids around here have heard of
the internet.
(mocking)
Some even have cell phones.
(warning)
Of course if I see one being used in
my school... it belongs to me.

Indicates desk monitor.

MS. PARKER
I searched Jordan Everette. Top
football prospect. Also, some
information that I don't think would
serve you, or me, very well.
(beat)
Evers will be your last name. Until
we're done with each other.

INT. SCHOOL HALL -- DAY

Students rush past Jordan.

Couple of stares.

Jordan checks his schedule...

Bumps into Chad Guidry.

JORDAN

Sorry.

Chad gives him a once over.

CHAD

You lost?

JORDAN

Looking for English. Room 111.

CHAD

(directing)

Back that way. End of the hall.
Take a left.

JORDAN

Thanks.

Jordan reverses steps. Chad watches. Smiling.

CHAD

No problem.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING -- DAY

Side door swings open.

Jordan steps outside.

Looks back in. Joke's on him.

BELL sounds.

INT. CLASS ROOM -- DAY

MR. SLAUGHTER (35) at the board.

Door opens. Jordan steps in.

JORDAN

Sorry.

Slaughter points to a seat in front of...

Chad Guidry. Smirk.

Slaughter grabs a text book.

Walks and talks.

SLAUGHTER

Every Friday we will have a review exam...

MOANS and PROTEST.

Drops book on Jordan's desk.

Same book as last year. His face. Dumb look.

SLAUGHTER

Something the matter?

JORDAN

No...sir.

JENNIFER (16) looks back from the front row.

SLAUGHTER

You've seen an English book before?

Class LAUGHS.

Jennifer and Jordan make eye contact.

JORDAN

Yes sir. Almost like this one.

SLAUGHTER

Good. Mister...?

The moment gone.

JORDAN

...Evers.
(blank stare)
Jordan Evers.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA -- DAY

Jordan alone at a table. Until...

LEWIS HUVAL (17) black. Jockey sized.

Plants his tray.

LEWIS

How's it going?

JORDAN
(unfriendly)
It's going.

Bites his hamburger.

LEWIS
Don't get too many new kids around
here.

JORDAN
(chewing)
I don't doubt it.

LEWIS
So. What do you think?

JORDAN
About what?

Lewis laughs. Looks around.

LEWIS
About this school. Isn't it
fantastic?

JORDAN
Yeah. Something else.

LEWIS
Yes sir.

Lewis inspects his hamburger.

LEWIS
Food ain't that great, though.

Jordan, burger in his hand. The memory of prison food.

JORDAN
I've seen worse.

Lewis laughs.

LEWIS
You're kidding me.

Jordan shakes his head.

LEWIS
Well, I don't know where you came
from, my friend. But I know I don't
want to go there.

JORDAN

No, you don't.

Jordan picks up his tray. Walks off.

INT. SCHOOL - HALL -- DAY

BELL RINGS.

Students flood the hallway.

Parker's head on a swivel.

Lewis talks to Slaughter. Points at Jordan.

Slaughter stops him.

SLAUGHTER

Mr. Evers.

JORDAN

Yes sir?

SLAUGHTER

(indicates Lewis)

Mr. Huval seems to think because of
your physical appearance that possibly
you've played sports.

A moment. Jennifer passes. Gives a smile.

JORDAN

It's been awhile.

LEWIS

I knew it. I bet you played football.

Chad Guidry passes.

LEWIS

Hey Chad.

(indicating Jordan)

Don't he look like a football player?

A calculated moment.

LEWIS

(explains to Jordan)

Chad's our quarterback.

Jordan's face.

CHAD
 (down the hallway)
 Lewis, quit your damn gabbing and
 get your ass to practice.

Lewis smiles.

LEWIS
 (to Jordan)
 Good thing my daddy didn't hear that.
 He's a preacher. Does not tolerate
 bad language.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD -- DAY

Afternoon sun beats down. Threadbare field.

Team dressed in white practice gear.

Crunches. COUNTING OFF.

COACH BOB SAGE (53) gum smacking always. Surveys his team.

Assistant Coaches weave in and out BERATING.

COACH LARRY JOHNSON (30) black, truck-size. Leads the tirade.

Last crunch. MOANS across the field.

SAGE
 All right. Huddle in.

Team circles Sage. Takes a knee.

Lewis. Number 1. A head shorter.

Sage studies Jordan approaching. School clothes.

SAGE
 Help you?

JORDAN
 Yes sir. I'd like to try out for
 the team.

Silence.

SAGE
 What's your name, son?

JORDAN
 Jordan Evers.

SAGE

And, you want to play football?

JORDAN

Yes sir.

Removes his cap and wipes the sweat.

SAGE

Seems like a reasonable request.

(looks at Chad)

Don't you think so, Guidry?

Knows better than to speak.

SAGE

One question?

(beat)

Where the hell you been the last three weeks? 'Cause I can tell you where these boys been. Two-a-days in ninety degree heat. Puking up their guts after fifty yard wind sprints. What were you doing? Watching TV in the air conditioning?

Lewis stands up.

LEWIS

He's new, coach.

COACH SAGE

Sit down, Lewis. I'll tell you when it's time for you to speak.

LEWIS

But Coach--

Sage draws a circle in the air.

Lewis drops his helmet. Heads to the track. Passes Jordan.

LEWIS

(confiding)

I don't mind. I like running.

COACH SAGE

Sorry... Jordan, whatever your name is. I don't think it'd be fair to the rest of these boys if I let some latecomer just show up.

Turns his attention back to practice.

COACH SAGE

All right. Line up. Defense,
offensive.

Jordan spots Chad Guidry. Number eleven.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

Jordan walks.

Small pup shadows him.

Kicks at it.

Dog scampers away.

EXT. HOUSE - BACK YARD -- EVENING

Jordan walks out on the back porch.

Yard tilled for a garden

Betty hoes a barren row.

Drops seeds.

Senses her grandson.

BETTY

Key to a fall garden is to know
when the first frost is coming.

JORDAN

(steps down)

How can you tell that?

BETTY

Almanac says seven more weeks. It's
generally pretty close.

Hands him the hoe.

BETTY

Not too deep, now.

Jordan carves a small trench. Betty follows with seeds.

BETTY

This is broccoli. Cabbage and
cauliflower go in later.

He makes a face.

JORDAN

Can't we grow something good to eat?

She smiles. Ignoring.

BETTY

How was your first day?

JORDAN

Not bad.

BETTY

Met the principal?

JORDAN

(lays it on)

Yes ma'am.

Betty give him a look.

JORDAN

Don't worry. I kept my mouth shut.

BETTY

Good.

She rises. Wavers. Loses her balance. Jordan catches her.

JORDAN

Grandma? You okay?

BETTY

I'm fine. Just got up too quick.

Finds her breath. Starts to the porch.

BETTY

That's enough for today.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan sleeps.

TRAIN HORN.

Sits upright. Eyes wide open.

TRAIN HORN. Table VIBRATES.

Slumps back. Deep thoughts.

INT. HALL -- DAY

Parker and Sage monitor the hall.

Jordan passes going to class.

COACH SAGE

New kid.

MS. PARKER

You met?

COACH SAGE

Wanted to come out for the team.

MS. PARKER

What'd you tell him?

COACH SAGE

I can't let some kid who skipped summer drills just walk on. Ruins the team's chemistry.

Parker digests the answer.

MS. PARKER

When's the last time the team made the playoffs, coach?

COACH SAGE

Ms. Parker, you ain't suggesting how to run my football program, are you?

MS. PARKER

No. You know I would never do that. But what I am suggesting is, you might want to consider giving that boy a chance.

A look.

MS. PARKER

Last time I checked Coach, it's been ten years since the team made the playoffs.

(beat)

Might be time to change up that chemistry.

She walks away.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD -- DAY

Team lined up in a scrimmage.

Ball snapped. Chad rolls out. Quick pass TO KENT LANDRY. Number 89. Drops the ball. WHISTLE BLOWS.

Sage grabs Landry by his face mask.

COACH SAGE
God damn it, Landry. Hit you in the
numbers.

Lewis speaks up.

LEWIS
Coach? Your language.

Sage's red face. Signals Lewis to hit the track.

Jordan, number 40. Jogs on the track.

Lewis joins him.

LEWIS
(to Jordan)
I know he don't mean to. Just slips
out.

Team lines up. Ball snapped.

Fake option. Chad sprints past slow-footed defender, JIMMY
ROBERT. Number 20.

SAGE
Jesus H. Christ, Robert.

Sage throws his hat.

SAGE
(to coach Johnson)
Coach Johnson, is it my eyes, or was
Robert actually running. 'Cause I
couldn't tell.

COACH JOHNSON
What about the new kid?
(admiring)
He might have the speed.

Sage watches Jordan jog the track.

SAGE
Don't mean he's got the toughness.

JOHNSON
Can't hurt to try, coach.

WHISTLE BLOWS.

SAGE
Evers. Get over here.

Johnson pulls Jordan aside. Issues instructions. Jordan runs on the field.

Team lines up. Ball snapped. Same option fake.

Chad crosses the line of scrimmage.

Jordan charges. Avoids a block.

Meets Chad head-on. Drives him in the ground.

WHISTLE BLOWS. Sage in Jordan's face.

SAGE
What the hell are you trying to do,
son? Kill our quarterback?

Sage kneels.

SAGE
Guidry, you all right?

Jordan looks in. Chad slowly regains his senses.

Jordan pulls Chad to his feet.

JORDAN
Just showing him how to get to English
class, coach.

Chad still dizzy. Takes a step. Drops to a knee.

Smiles on Johnson's and Lewis's faces.

LATER --

Wind sprints.

Chad on the bench. Head down.

Players drenched in sweat. GASPING for air.

SAGE
Okay girls. Last one.

WHISTLE BLOWS.

Twenty yard line -- Lewis and Jordan lead the pack.

Forty yard line -- Lewis finishes a step ahead.

Hands on knees. Jordan straightens up. Makes a face. Drops down. Throws up. RETCHING.

Lewis pats him on the back.

LEWIS

Don't taste any better the second time around, does it?

Jordan looks up.

Sage and Johnson watch.

Jordan lets loose again.

COACH JOHNSON

Feel better now, Coach?

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Jordan walks in. Wet from practice.

JORDAN

Hi, Grandma--

Betty introduces Jordan to CHARLES BLOCK (45).

BETTY

Jordan, this is Mr. Block. He's--

JORDAN

(shakes hands)

I know he who is.

MR. BLOCK

Your grandmother tells me that you're settling in.

JORDAN

Pretty much.

MR. BLOCK

Any problems at school?

Shakes his head.

MR. BLOCK

Good. Staying clean?

A moment.

JORDAN

Always been clean.

MR. BLOCK
Great. Shouldn't be a problem then.

Block hands Jordan a packet. Humiliating.

Follows Jordan.

MR. BLOCK
(explains to Betty)
I'm required to witness.

EXT. DRIVE-IN RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Betty and Jordan climb out an old Buick.

He scans the lot. Coast is clear.

INT. DRIVE-IN RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Betty and Jordan in a booth.

Chad Guidry bounces in. Jennifer and Friends follow.

KIDDING AROUND.

Jordan tries to disappear.

Jennifer slides in next to Betty.

JENNIFER
(to Betty)
Hey.

BETTY
Hey, yourself.

JENNIFER
I'm Jennifer.

BETTY
Jennifer, I'm Betty. This is my
grandson--

JENNIFER
Jordan.
(eyes on Jordan)
We have English class together.

Two cats playing with a mouse.

BETTY
Is that right?

JENNIFER
 Yes ma'am. But, he never talks.
 Won't even say hello.

Helps herself to one of Jordan's fries.

BETTY
 Really? That's not very nice of
 him.

JENNIFER
 I don't think so.

Betty turns the spotlight on Jordan

BETTY
 Jordan?

JORDAN
 Yes, Grandma.

BETTY
 Next time you see Jennifer in English
 class, you think you could at least
 say hello?

A pauses.

JORDAN
 I suppose I could--

CHAD (O.S.)
 Hey Jennifer. Let's go.

She looks up.

CHAD
 Leave Evers alone with his date.

CAKCLING.

JENNIFER
 (to Betty)
 Sorry. Sometimes, Chad can be a
 little bit of a...

BETTY
 (watches Chad)
 An ass-hole?

Jordan's face. Jennifer laughs.

JENNIFER

(standing)

I was going to say smart-alec. But,
maybe you're right.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Betty steps in. Pulls blinds.

BETTY

Time to get up.

Jordan looks at clock. Remembers...

JORDAN

It's Sunday, Grandma.

BETTY

That's right. Church in an hour.

Jordan's face.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Wooden pews half-filled.

Betty and Jordan near the back.

Jordan asleep.

Preacher at the pulpit.

PREACHER

...King David writes in the psalms...

Betty nudges Jordan awake. Yawns.

PREACHER

...Seek the Lord your God and find
His strength. Seek His face with
all your heart. And then surely you
will see Him.

(beat)

For he is all around us. All we
have to do is look. And we will
find the face of God. Everywhere.
Everyday.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Jordan rides with Betty.

JORDAN
Grandma, you believe what that
preacher said?

GRANDMA
About what?

JORDAN
Seeing the face of God?

GRANDMA
Sure.

JORDAN
You've seen him?

GRANDMA
Well, yes.

JORDAN
Really?

GRANDMA
Uh huh.

JORDAN
You think it was God?

GRANDMA
It's not that simple, Jordan. You
have to know where to look.
(beat)
When you see Him, though. You'll
know.

OUT JORDAN'S WINDOW -- A small red brick church.

Service over.

Lewis stands next to his Father.

Shakes hands with the congregation.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

TRAIN HORN.

Jordan's eyes open.

TRAIN HORN.

Clock-- 2:00.

Rolls out of bed. Slides on jeans.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- NIGHT

Slow moving train.

WHEELS RUMBLE. Endless beat.

Jordan on the street corner.

Empty freight cars pass. Doors wide open.

A streetlight on the other side. Like a movie projector.

BETTY (O.S.)

No telling where it's headed.

He jerks around.

JORDAN

Grandma.

Betty in a snow-white gown.

BETTY

Can't hear a train. But I can hear
the screen door slam.

JORDAN

Sorry.

BETTY

(eyes following)

Something about it. Sets your mind
to wandering.

Last car.

BETTY

I guess you wish you could hop on it
and go back home.

JORDAN

I don't have a home, grandma.

Pain on Betty's face.

GRANDMA

(takes his hand)

Come on.

They start back.

GRANDMA
It wouldn't be good for the neighbors
to see us out here.
(laughs)
They'd think you were with a ghost.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Jordan wraps bacon in a paper towel.

Grabs his pack.

Creeps by Betty's room. Stops.

Her back to him. In bed.

JORDAN
Grandma?

Nothing. Steps in. BOARD CREEKS.

She stirs.

JORDAN
Grandma? I'm leaving, now.

GRANDMA
What time is it?

JORDAN
Time for me to go.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- MORNING

Jordan walks to school.

Rain begins to fall.

Face dripping.

Chad Guidry's car.

Brakes lights flash on.

Jordan takes a step...

Rear tires spin.

Out of sight.

Puts his pack over his head.

Looks down.

Pup. Tail wagging.

Tosses the bacon.

INT. GYM -- DAY

Pep Rally.

Students on one side. Rhythmic CLAPPING.

Band SQUAWKS out FIGHT SONG.

Football team on the stage. Lewis sits next to Jordan.

Song ends.

Coach Sage at the podium.

COACH SAGE

I just want to tell you how much we
all appreciate your support. And I
promise you, that this year's wildcat
football team is going to make you
proud.

CHEERS AND APPLAUSE.

COACH SAGE

And tonight we're going to kick the
ever-living... you know what out of
Pine Valley.

Jordan's face.

Band fires back up. Students clap.

Team rises. Jordan last one up.

Finds Jennifer in the bleachers.

Reading a book.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Team huddled. Heads bowed.

Lewis in the center.

LEWIS

...and Lord we ask that you watch
over both teams tonight. Guide us
with your spirit. Keep us safe. In
your name we pray. Amen.

TEAM

Amen.

Sage holds up a hand. All arms in.

Chad and Jordan. Eyes on each other.

COACH SAGE

On three. One. Two. Three.

COACH SAGE/TEAM

Team!

COACH SAGE

All right, lets go get 'em.

Team hustles out. Sage pulls Lewis aside.

COACH SAGE

Lewis. You think just once you could throw something in there about us winning the game.

LEWIS

Daddy says unless Jesus is our running back. God don't care who wins the game.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - SIDELINE -- NIGHT

Jordan watches. Helmet in hand.

Wildcat bleachers. Half-filled.

Robert kicks off.

Quarterback calls signals. Throws a slant. Receiver blows past Robert.

COACH SAGE

Damn it. Robert.

Receiver crosses the goal line.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)

Touchdown, Crusaders.

(beat)

That didn't take long.

Sage looks at the press box.

Jordan's face. Expressionless.

Extra point kicked.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 0 Visitors 7 Time 6:51 1st Qtr.

LATER -- Chad rolls out. Pass to Landry. Drops the ball.

Sage throws his hat.

Jordan looks in the bleachers.

Makes eye contact with Jennifer.

LATER -- Quarterback rolls out. Takes off. Breaks tackles.

Robert can't catch him.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Touchdown. Crusaders... Again.

Home crowd. Disgruntled.

LATER -- Chad drops back. Blocking breaks down. Tackled.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Guidry sacked. That's the half.
Have mercy.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 0 Visitors 14 Time 0:00 2nd Qtr.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Team looks defeated.

SAGE
(pacing)
Now God... Durn it, boys.
(glares at Lewis)
We didn't put in all that hard work
this summer, to just to go out there
and get humiliated.

Jordan's face.

SAGE
We're a better team than this. Trust
me. Now, we're going to go back out
there for this second half and we're
going to fight. And we're going to
win this game. You hear me?

Dubious faces.

SAGE
Now get in here.

All hands in.

SAGE
On three. One. Two. Three.

COACH SAGE/ TEAM
(less than enthused)
Team.

Team trots out. Johnson pulls Sage aside.

COACH JOHNSON
(looking at number 20)
Coach...

SAGE
I know. I know.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - SIDELINE -- NIGHT

Defense to take the field. Sage grabs Robert.

SAGE
Evers. Get in there. Safety.

Jordan puts on his helmet.

SAGE
Keep everything in front of you.

Huddles breaks.

Quarterback BARKS out the count. Drops back.

Receiver sprints up the sideline.

Jordan caught flat footed. Takes off.

Pass flies in the night sky.

Receiver's eyes on the ball.

His hands reach for the pass, just as...

Jordan crashes into him.

Ball drops to the ground.

Bleacher's explode with CHEERS.

Johnson gives Sage a look.

LATER -- Chad rolls out. Brakes a tackle and scores.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Touchdown, Wildcats.

Jennifer cheers.

Robert kicks extra point.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 7 Visitors 14 Time 7:34 3rd Qtr.

LATER -- Jordan and Lewis. On the sideline.

Chad calls signals. Ball snapped. Fake hand-off.

Landry breaks open. Chad lofts the pass.

Landry juggles, but holds on. Falls across the goal line.

SAGE
(skyward)
Thank you, God.

Crowd ERUPTS. BAND plays fight song.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Guidry's pass to Landry. Touchdown.
We got ourselves a ball game.

INSERT SCOREBOARD - Home 14 Visitors 14 Time 1:14 4th Qtr.

Kickoff. Return to the fifty.

Sage paces. Tension in the crowd.

Quarterback drops back. Deep pass.

Jordan steps in front. Interception.

Breaks tackles. Twenty yard line.

COACH SAGE
Time out. Time out.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 14 Visitors 14 Time 0:04 4th Qtr.

COACH SAGE
(arm around Robert)
Okay, son. Just like in practice.
You can do it.

Robert jogs on the field. Lines up kick.

Whistle BLOWS. Ball snapped. GRUNTS on the line.

Robert kicks.

Sage's face.

Ball drifts inside the uprights.

Referee signals.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
 Robert's kick is... Good. Wildcats
 win. Wildcats win.
 (beat)
 Free haircuts for the team tomorrow
 at Robert's barber shop.

Team rushes the field.

Robert mobbed.

Band PLAYS.

Jennifer hugs her friends.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Team surrounds Sage.

COACH SAGE
 All right. All right. Game balls.
 (hands one to Chad)
 Great game, Chad.

CHEERS.

COACH SAGE
 And to the player who came through
 in the clutch.

Jordan's face. Hopeful.

COACH SAGE
 (hands to Robert)
 Jimmy Robert.
 (beat)
 Great job, boys. Enjoy this one.

Jordan sits on a bench.

Ball drops in his lap.

Lewis. Smiles.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- NIGHT

Jordan looks back. Empty field.

Stadium lights go out. Walks home.

Out of the nowhere.

JENNIER (O.S.)

Hey.

He stumbles. Falls down.

JENNIFER

Sorry.

(laughs)

Didn't mean to frighten you?

Helps him up.

JORDAN

I thought everyone was gone.

Walking and talking.

JENNIFER

They're all at the drive-in.

JORDAN

Why didn't you go?

JENNIFER

I might, later.

JORDAN

You liked the game?

Cross the street.

JENNIFER

Yeah. We won.

(beat)

I never miss any of Chad's games.

Locks his arm.

JENNIER

Ever since we were little.

JORDAN

(uncomfortable)

What would Chad say about us walking together?

JENNIFER

(laughs)

I don't know.

(playing)

You want me to ask him?

JORDAN

No. I mean...
(to the point)
What do you think?

In front of Jordan's house.

JENNIFER

What do I think?

Leans in. Traces his scar with her finger.

JENNIER

I think you've got secrets, Jordan
Evers. And I'm going to find what
they are.

Gentle kiss.

JENNIER

Good night.

Walks away.

INT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

Betty sits, writing. Jordan walks in.

JORDAN

Hi Grandma.

BETTY

How'd it go?

JORDAN

How'd what go?

A look.

JORDAN

Oh. Good.

BETTY

Did you play?

JORDAN

Yeah. Second half.

Starts to his room.

BETTY

It bother you I don't go?

JORDAN
You like football?

BETTY
Not really.
(shutters)
You try to "kill" each other--

A slip.

JORDAN
It's okay. Good night, grandma.

EXT. TOWN - ROBERT'S BARBER SHOP -- DAY

Jordan walks along the store fronts.

Jimmy Robert stops him.

JIMMY
Hey, Evers. Come in here.

INT. BARBER SHOP -- DAY

Jimmy pulls Jordan in.

Chad in a barber chair.

Other Players wait on a bench.

College game on TV.

JIMMY
Hey Pop. This is Jordan.

Stops cutting.

JIMMY'S DAD
(stern)
You the kid took my son's place?

Other Barber butts in.

OTHER BARBER
(menacing look)
Number forty?

Jordan nods.

JIMMY'S DAD
Know what we think about you?

Chad gives Jordan a look.

JIMMY'S DAD/OTHER BARBER
Thank God.

JIMMY'S DAD
Jimmy can kick a ball--

OTHER BARBER
But slow as Christmas--

JIMMY'S DAD
Got his mama's big feet--

OTHER BARBER
That interception. I'm telling you
that saved us--

Shop ERUPTS with CHEERS.

Players on their feet. SCREAMING at the TV.

PLAYERS
Go. Go.. Touchdown.

INSERT TV -- Number 80 crosses the goal. Hands ball to the
referee.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Folks. That's a 100 yard kick return
by true freshman Kevin White out of
North Lake high school. He's going
to be a special one.

Jordan's face.

JIMMY'S DAD
Man. Look at that kid. How good is
he going to be?

INSERT TV -- Kevin takes off his helmet. Close up. Big
grin.

OTHER BARBER
Only a freshman. Now that's a real
football player.

Jordan walks out.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

Jordan's face in the sunlight.

Tears in his eyes.

Complete despair.

SFX --TRAIN HORN.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- NIGHT (JORDAN'S DREAM)

TRAIN HORN.

Jordan on the corner, watching...

Empty freight cars pass. Doors wide open.

A streetlight on the other side. Like a movie projector.

White, strobe light. Changes to a Blue strobe.

Through the passing doors. A solitary figure...

DeSean Cole. Football jersey. Blood stained.

Eyes lock on...

Jordan's face.

VOICES from holding cell.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, God damn it. Shut up.

(beat)

I said shut the fuck up.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan bolts upright.

Face covered with sweat.

Chest heaves for air.

TRAIN HORN.

Clock-- 1:59.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- NIGHT

Jordan watches.

Slow moving train.

Picks up a rock.

Slings it through the open door.

Picks up another one. Throws it. Another one. Another one...

Killing the ghost.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Jordan on the top step.

Cold glass against his face.

Night SOUNDS.

His eyes. It's never going to quit.

Pup appears. Tail wagging.

JORDAN

Go on.

Dog climbs the steps.

JORDAN

I said, get out of here.

Flings the dog off the porch.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING -- MORNING

Jordan across the street.

Students file in.

BELL SOUNDS.

Walks past the building.

LATER --

Walks past dump. Pup trails behind.

LATER --

Sits on a bridge over a creek.

Tosses rocks at nothing.

Pup in the distance.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- AFTERNOON

Sage BLOWS his WHISTLE.

SAGE

All right. Red zone formation.

Offense and Defense line up.

Grabs Lewis.

SAGE
Lewis. Where's Evers?

LEWIS
Don't know, Coach. Wasn't at school
today.

SAGE
He sick?

Lewis shrugs.

EXT. HOUSE -- EVENING

Betty works the garden.

Pulling weeds.

Jordan watches. Unseen.

Wipes her brow.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Jordan on the porch.

Door CREAKS open.

Betty steps out.

BETTY
I didn't hear you come home.

Doesn't answer.

BETTY
Jordan?

JORDAN
What?

BETTY
(turns)
I'll get supper ready--

JORDAN
I'm not hungry.

A moment.

BETTY
Not hungry? You feel okay?

He gets to his feet.

JORDAN
(walking past Betty)
I'm fine. Just don't feel like
eating.

Door SLAMS.

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Betty watches through the screen door.

Jordan heads to school.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

Jordan walks.

A look over his shoulder.

Pup behind him.

Chad's car pulls up.

Window rolls down.

CHAD
Evers, you want a ride?

Jennifer in the passenger seat.

No response. Keeps walking.

Chad shrugs.

Car drives off.

Jordan stops.

Pup stops.

Jordan throws a stick at it.

JORDAN
Get out of here.

Pup runs away.

INT. CLASS ROOM -- DAY

Test time.

Slaughter winds through the aisles.

Students scribble answers.

Jordan's eyes on the clock.

INSERT JORDAN'S PAPER -- His name. The rest blank.

Slaughter looks over Jordan's shoulder.

BELL RINGS.

Students turn in papers.

Jennifer looks back at Jordan.

Room clears.

Jordan last to leave.

SLAUGHTER

Mr. Evers...

Holds up Jordan's paper.

SLAUGHTER

Care to offer an explanation for
your work, here?

JORDAN

Don't have one.

Walks out.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA -- DAY

Jordan sits alone. Food uneaten.

Chad sits down.

CHAD

Where were you, yesterday?

A blank stare.

CHAD

Coach, wasn't happy.

JORDAN

Too bad.

Chad lets it go.

CHAD

I want to talk to you about Jennifer.

A moment.

JORDAN
What about her?

CHAD
Hey...
(beat)
She seems to like you.

JORDAN
That your concern?

CHAD
You damn right it is.
(beat)
I watch out for my sister.

Jordan's face.

JORDAN
Sister?

CHAD
Yeah, ass-hole. If you had sister
you'd know what I'm talking about.

A moment... Snaps.

Jordan lunges over the table.

Right cross the to the jaw.

Chad spills off his chair.

Jordan on top. Raining down blows.

Blood spews.

Students circle them.

Coach Johnson pulls Jordan off.

Still throwing punches.

Up against the wall. It's over.

Chad helped to his feet.

Face a bloody mess.

All eyes on Jordan.

Jennifer. Eyes filled with tears.

INT. SCHOOL - HALL -- DAY

Jordan on a bench.

Through the window.

Parker talks to Chad.

Door opens.

Chad comes out. Beat up face.

Wags her finger at Jordan.

INT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Parker leans back in her chair.

MS. PARKER

(deep sigh)

Well? What do you have to say for yourself?

JORDAN

What would you like me to say?

MS. PARKER

How about, let's start with, I'm sorry--

JORDAN

I'm not sorry. I tired of being sorry.

(beat)

I tired of anyone... who wants me to be sorry.

Looks away.

JORDAN

I'm tired of this school. I'm tired of this town. I just want to...

MS. PARKER

What?

JORDAN

I don't know. Just...go... somewhere else. Be someone else.

Defeated.

JORDAN

What are you going to do to me?

MS. PARKER
I haven't decided yet.
(beat)
But for right now, I want you to go
home.

Jordan rises.

MS. PARKER
And one more thing...

Jaded look.

MS. PARKER
Tell your grandmother, I want to
talk with her in the morning.

A pause.

JORDAN
Tell her yourself.

Walks out.

INT. HALL -- DAY

BELL RINGS

Students flow out the doors.

LOUD CHATTER.

Falls silent.

Eyes on... Jordan.

Shuts his locker.

Walks past the glares.

Spots Jennifer.

Steps in front of her.

JORDAN
(face to face)
You want to know my secrets?
(whispers in her ear)
I was in prison. Because I killed
someone. Shot them in the back of
the head.

Her face.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING -- DAY

Lewis catches up to Jordan.

LEWIS
Hey, what happened?

Keeps walking.

JORDAN
Leave me alone, Lewis.

Lewis hangs on.

LEWIS
But--

JORDAN
I said, leave me alone.

LEWIS
Why'd you do that to Chad?

JORDAN
'Cause I felt like it.

Lewis keeps astride.

LEWIS
He was just trying to--

Jordan elbows through him.

JORDAN
(anger rising)
I don't care what he was trying to
do. Now, I'm warning you. Get out
of my way--

Lewis grabs Jordan's arm.

LEWIS
But, you shouldn't have hit him like
that--

Jordan spins. Grabs Lewis. Explodes.

JORDAN
I'll do worse to you, you god damn
nigger if you don't leave me alone.

Lewis's face.

The word burns.

Releases his grip.

Walks off.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY

Players filter on the field.

Johnson directs warm-ups.

Sage spots Jordan.

Looks in from the fence.

Walks off.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- EVENING

Betty in a rocking chair.

Catatonic expression.

Jordan steps up. Waits.

No recognition.

JORDAN
Guess she told you.

A distance look.

JORDAN
Grandma, I don't care--

BETTY
(to herself)
She'd be eleven? Or twelve?

JORDAN
What?

BETTY
(at Jordan)
Twelve. Right?

JORDAN
Huh?

Betty's eyes.

BETTY
Annie. Today was your sister's
birthday.

Tears start down her face.

BETTY

I miss her so much, Jordie.

Stands. A little waver. Catches herself.

Photo drops from her hand.

Screen door BANGS shut behind her.

Jordan picks up the picture.

INSERT PHOTO -- Annie hugging Betty.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- NIGHT

Jordan measures each car.

Takes the first step.

Slight stumble. Dangerously close.

Starts sprinting.

Heavy breathing.

Faster and faster until...

Catches up.

Rocks kicking out under his feet.

Hand reaches for a hold. Straining...closer.

Wheels RUMBLING.

Fingers wrap around. Almost got it. But...

He trips. Tumbles.

Head narrowly misses the track.

Somersaults down the embankment.

Last car disappears.

Jordan's mud-covered face.

Flat against the ground.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- DAY

Jordan opens his eyes.

Climbs to his feet.

Dirty and beat up.

INT. HOUSE -- DAY

Bathroom mirror. Jordan washes his face.

Cuts and bruises.

Checks in Betty's room.

JORDAN

Grandma?

Empty bed.

Walks in the kitchen.

Table a mess. Chair overturned.

Betty on the floor.

Same clothes.

Rushes to her.

JORDAN

Grandma?

She MOANS. Eyes closed.

JORDAN

Grandma?

Barely conscious.

BETTY

Where were you? I've been calling
your name.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Jordan sits by...

Betty's bed.

She opens her eyes.

BETTY

Jordie.

JORDAN

Grandma?

Takes her hand.

JORDAN
Grandma, I'm sorry.

BETTY
It's okay.

JORDAN
I should have been there.

BETTY
Where were you?

A pause.

JORDAN
I was... Running away.

Knowing smile.

BETTY
You didn't get too far.

JORDAN
No.
(confession)
Grandma, I messed up.

BETTY
We all do.

JORDAN
No. At school--

BETTY
I know. I talked to Ms. Parker last
night.

JORDAN
I can't go back.

BETTY
Yes you can.

JORDAN
You don't understand. I did some
bad things.

BETTY
Jordan. Everyone does.
(beat)
But, you have to face your mistakes.
It's the only way to get past them.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING -- DAY

Jordan faces the school.

Banner above the entrance.

"Go Wildcats, Win Tonight"

INT. CLASS ROOM -- DAY

Slaughter lectures.

Door creaks open.

Jordan steps in.

Chad. Nasty look.

Slow walk.

Takes his seat.

Desks scoot away.

SLAUGHTER

Okay, then. What is Steinbeck saying
when Lenny and George--

Jennifer gets up.

Gathers her stuff.

Walks out.

INT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sage across from Parker.

SAGE

...ain't no way.

MS. PARKER

I realize I'm asking a lot--

SAGE

You damn right.

(beat)

Give me one good reason why that boy
should play football tonight.

MS. PARKER

I'm not sure I have one. I don't
even know if he wants to play.

On his feet.

SAGE

Then why do you care?

MS. PARKER

Same reason you do.

(beat)

You don't fool me, coach. All that gruff and growl.

Sage's face.

MS. PARKER

You teach these boys more than any text book ever will. You teach them about life. How it isn't fair. But if you keep at it don't give up, you just might have a chance.

(directly at him)

You're what's right and good about athletics.

SAGE

Even if we don't make the playoffs?

MS. PARKER

I don't give a rat's ass about the playoffs. I never have. What's important to me is the difference you make in a boy's life.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Team suits up.

Jordan walks in.

Dead Silence.

Sage measures the moment.

SAGE

What do you want?

Chad and Lewis. Eyes on Jordan.

JORDAN

I wanted to see... if I could play tonight.

Sage shakes his head.

SAGE

I don't know about that. I got a locker room full of boys who came to practice all week who want to play.

JORDAN

Yes sir.
(beat)
I'm... Sorry.

SAGE

Yeah. Sorry don't always fix it.

A moment.

SAGE

I don't know if you'll play.
(beat)
But, go get your uniform on.

Player's eyes on the coach. Disbelief.

COACH JOHNSON

All right. All right. Let's go get warmed up.

Team shuffles.

Jordan at his locker. Puts his pads on.

Sage walks past.

SAGE

I'll give you this, Evers. You got guts.
(beat)
Show up where no one wants to see your face.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- NIGHT

Visitors side. Capacity. Enormous band. Twice the Players.

Jordan stands alone. Helmet in hand.

ON FIELD -- Chad barks out signals. Ball snapped.

Fake hand off. Rolls out. Dodges one tackler.

Crushed at the line of scrimmage.

Sage's face.

Home bleachers. GROANS.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Fourth down, for the Wildcats.

Jordan looks for Jennifer.

SAGE
All right. Defense on the field.

Sends in Robert.

Jordan sits on the bench.

Lewis on the sideline. A glance back.

Their eyes meet.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY (JORDAN'S DAYDREAM)

Pee-wee football field

DeSean on the sideline. Looks back.

Jordan squats. Ties his shoe.

JOE
All right, boys. Offense.

DeSean helps Jordan to his feet.

They run on the field.

DESEAN
Did your mama bake her cookies?

JORDAN
Yeah.

DESEAN
Chocolate chip?

JORDAN
Uh huh.

Big grin.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- NIGHT

Sage on the sidelines.

SAGE
Evers!

Snaps out of it.

SAGE

Evers. Get over here.

Robert limps off the field.

Grabs Jordan by the helmet.

SAGE

Play smart. Keep everything in front
of you.

Runs on to the field.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 0 Visitors 0 Time 1:01 2nd Qtr.

Quarterback calls signals.

Jordan behind the linebackers.

Ball snapped. Quick pitch.

Tailback breaks in the open.

Jordan avoids a block. Catches him at the side line.

Tailback steps out of bounds.

Jordan hits him late.

Flags thrown.

SAGE

Evers. What the hell are you doing?

Tailback jogs back on the field

Slaps Jordan on the helmet

TAILBACK

Keep it up, hot shot. We'll take
all we can get.

Teams line up. Jordan close to the line of scrimmage.

SAGE

Evers, drop back.

Ball snapped. Quick pitch again. Same play.

Jordan shoots the gap.

Drills the tailback.

Tailback's face. Big smile.

Jordan turns and looks.

Ball floats in the air. Never saw the pass.

Wide-open Receiver.

Visitor bleaches. Erupts with CHEERS.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Touchdown. Gators.

Microphone still on.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Saw that coming a mile off...
(beat)
Huh? What?

SFX-- SCREECHING. Microphone CLICKS off.

Jordan walks to the sideline. Alone.

Point after made.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- Home 0 Visitors 7 Time 0:00 2nd Qtr.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
That's half time, folks. Gators
seven, Wildcats... yet to score.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Sage paces.

Jordan. Head down. On an island.

SAGE
Boys, if we're going to win this
game, we got to play smarter.
(beat)
O-line, you got to pick up them
stunts. Come on, we practiced that
all week.

Robert holds ice pack on his knee.

SAGE
And defense... you got to play
together. As a team.

Player's eyes on Jordan. He hasn't heard a word.

SAGE
 I ain't looking for no heroes.
 (to Jordan)
 Right?

No response.

SAGE
 You listening, Evers?

No response.

SAGE
 Evers?
 (in Jordan's face)
 Evers?

Jordan looks up.

JORDAN
 (calmly)
 My name's not Evers. It's Everette.
 Jordan Everette.

Players faces.

SAGE
 (nonplussed)
 Okay. Jordan Everette. You want to
 tell me what you were doing out there?
 (louder)
 Where should you have been?

Face breaks a little. Refuses eye contact.

SAGE
 Look at me, son.
 (anger)
 Where the hell should you have been?
 (beat)
 Tell Me!

JORDAN
 (whisper)
 At home.

SAGE
 What?

JORDAN
 I should have been at home. With
 them.

Looks up at Sage.

JORDAN
 (trembling)
 I could have stopped it.
 (tears starting)
 I know I could have. I'm why they're
 dead.

Shoulders heave.

JORDAN
 I just wish I could go back. I just
 wish I could go back and be...
 (utter breakdown)
 ...a kid, again.

Violent wailing. Sage steps back.

JORDAN
 I just want to be a kid.

Face flood with tears.

Player's eyes. Shocked.

Only sound. Jordan sobbing. Until...

MS. PARKER (O.S.)
 Coach?

Parker at the locker room door.

SAGE
 (cuts his eyes)
 Not now.

MS. PARKER
 Coach?

SAGE
 I said, not now.

MS. PARKER
 Sorry, coach.
 (beat)
 Now.

Sage walks to the door.

EXT. LOCKER BUILDING -- NIGHT

Parker stands with Charles Block.

Introduces the men.

Block tells the story.

Sage's face.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Team suffers Jordan's breakdown.

MOURNFUL WEEPING.

All the tears he held for the past year.

Chad. Lewis. Robert. Coach Johnson. Helpless.

EXT. LOCKER BUILDING -- NIGHT

Block finishes his story.

Sage slumps.

Body blow.

A look at Parker.

MS. PARKER

Sorry. I should have told you.

SAGE

My God.

(almost tears)

What I'm to do with that boy now?

Hat off. Rubs his head.

Block walks away. Turns...

MR. BLOCK

Coach. One more thing.

(indicting)

Why you got him playing safety? He
was the nation's top quarterback.

(beat)

You seen something no one else has?

Sage. Mouth open.

Referee walks by.

REF.

Two minutes, coach.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan sits alone. Same spot.

Team is gone.

Wipes snot from his face.

Sound of FOOTSTEPS.

LEWIS (O.S.)

Hey.

Looks up. Lewis.

JORDAN

Hey.

LEWIS

You okay?

JORDAN

Yeah.

SFX -- CHEERS OUTSIDE. BAND PLAYS

JORDAN

You better get back out there.

LEWIS

Can't

JORDAN

Why not?

LEWIS

Coach said don't come back unless I
got you with me.

A moment.

JORDAN

Lewis. I never said that word before--

LEWIS

Daddy always told me. Whenever
someone hurts you, it's because
they're hurting.

JORDAN

Doesn't make it right.

LEWIS

No. But, you're my friend.

(offers his hand)

Come on.

(grin)

I want to see the rest of the game.

Jordan takes it.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- NIGHT

Light drizzle.

Chad rolls out. Avoids a tackler.

Wobbly spiral. Incomplete.

Bodies crash down on him.

Teammates help him up.

Trudges off the field. Covered in mud

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Fourth down for the wildcats.

Punt out of bounds.

Wildcat Bleachers. Worried looks.

Quarterback throws incomplete pass

Jordan and Lewis. Watch from the sideline.

Robert on the bench. Knee bandaged.

Quarterback drops back. Slips. Tackled for a loss.

Wildcats bleachers. CHEERS.

Sage and Johnson. Pace the sidelines.

INSERT SCOREBOARD -- HOME 0 VISITORS 7 TIME 0:00 3rd QTR.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
That's the end of the third quarter.
Gators still leading seven to nothing.
We got a nail biter.

Chad rolls out. Completes a short pass. Hit hard.

Gets up. Limp to the sideline.

Jennifer's face.

Sage looks down the sideline.

Chad tries to walk it off.

Defense takes the field.

Jordan on the sideline.

SAGE
Evers... Get over here.

JORDAN
I'll stay deep. I promise--

Sage flips him a ball.

SAGE
Warm up.

JORDAN
Warm up?

SAGE
Lewis. Help him.

Quarterback calls signals. Drops back.

Pass over the middle.

Drags tacklers. Finally brought down. Mid field.

Jordan tosses passes to Lewis.

Bobbles every one.

Jennifer watches.

INSERT SCOREBOARD-- HOME 0 VISITORS 7 TIME 1:59 4TH QTR.

Tailback scampers down the sideline. Pushed out of bounds.

Visitor Bleachers.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
First down and goal to go. Gators.

Sage and Johnson. Hands on Knees.

Jordan holds the ball. Eyes on the field.

INSERT SCOREBOARD-- HOME 0 VISITORS 7 TIME 1:39 4TH QTR.

Clock winding down.

Ball snapped. Hand off. Tailback hits the line.

Ball shoots straight up.

Player heads search the sky. Rain filters in the lights.

Ball drops to a Wildcat. Total surprise.

Takes off running.

Slow motion train. Gang tackled.

Wildcat fans. On their feet.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)
Fumble.... Wildcats ball.

Offense huddled around Sage. Eighty yards to go.

Chad and Jordan's eyes on each other.

SAGE
Jordan's going in at quarterback.

Unhappy faces.

SAGE
(to Jordan)
Bootleg left. Sideline curl route.

Jordan jogs on the field. Others slowly follow.

Ball snapped. No blocking. Jordan shakes a tackle.
Linebacker crushes him. No help getting up.

SAGE
What the hell was that?

In the huddle.

JORDAN
My bad. Okay. Option right. Pitch.
On three.

Line up. Ball snapped. Jordan runs right. Looks to pitch.
Halfback stayed home. Defense smothers him.

SAGE
(to Johnson)
What are they doing?

Wildcat fans.

INSERT SCOREBOARD-- HOME 0 VISITORS 7 TIME 0:49 4TH QTR.

In the huddle.

JORDAN
That's on me again.
(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 All right, bootleg left. Flanker
 stop and go. On Two.
 (beat)
 Break.

At the line. Ball snapped. Jordan rolls right instead of
 left. Darts up field. Out of bounds.

SAGE
 Time out.

Team huddles around Sage.

SAGE
 (To the Players)
 Are you done?

Guilty faces.

SAGE
 (to Jordan)
 All right. Crossing route.

Jordan starts on the field. Looks at the scoreboard.

INSERT SCOREBOARD-- HOME 0 VISITORS 7 TIME 0:11 4TH QTR.

Trots back over to Sage.

JORDAN
 Not enough time, coach.

Sage checks the board.

SAGE
 All right. Sideline out of bounds.

JORDAN
 How about Lewis. He can outrun the
 coverage.

Lewis's face. Not a good idea.

REF.
 Let's go offense. Winding the clock.

Jordan starts on the field.

Sage grabs hold of Lewis.

Deer in headlights.

SAGE

Okay, son. You know what to do.

Lewis nods. Starts on the field.

Sage pulls him back.

SAGE

I want you to know now, I got confidence in you... Okay?

Lewis nods. Starts again...

Sage pulls him back.

SAGE

But if you don't mind. Just this one time. Could you ask Jesus to help you to catch the damn ball.

Lewis runs on.

Jordan in the huddle.

JORDAN

All right. I... we got this.

(beat)

We're not going to lose this game.

You hear me? Can of corn.

(winks)

I'm rolling right.

(linemen nod)

Lewis, don't stop running. When you get to the twenty, look up. The ball will be there.

LEWIS

That's fifty yards.

JORDAN

That's right. On three.

(beat)

Break.

Teams lines up.

Lewis out wide.

Jordan BARKS signals.

Both Bleachers. On their feet.

Ball snapped.

Heavy rush. Jordan evades a tackler.

Sprints to the right sideline.

Lewis races down the field. Past defenders.

Jordan holds the ball. Last possible second.

Launches the pass. Three defenders level him.

Lewis at the thirty. Twenty five.

LEWIS.

(while running)

Help me, Jesus. Help me.

Looks back.

Pass coming. Like a missile in the night sky.

His face. Terror. Hands reach out.

Ball drops in. Never misses a strides.

Races across the goal line.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)

Touchdown, Wildcats. Can you believe
it.

Fans SCREAMING.

INSERT SCOREBOARD-- HOME 6 VISITORS 7 TIME 0:00 4TH QTR.

Jordan climbs to his feet. Runs to Sage.

Robert on the bench. No kicker.

SAGE

Okay. We're going to go for two.
(beat)

Read option left. Halfback pitch.

Sends Jordan back on the field.

Teams line up.

Both Bleachers. Sending up prayers.

Jordan steps away from center.

JORDAN

Time out.

Referee's WHISTLE.

SAGE

What?

Jordan sends the halfback over to Sage.

HALFBACK

He wants Chad.

SAGE

What?

HALFBACK

Said he wants Guidry.

Sage looks at his injured quarterback.

SAGE

All right. Get in there.

Chad limps out.

Huddle up.

All eyes on Jordan. He takes a knee.

JORDAN

All right. This is what we're going to do.

SFX-- Silent. Slow motion.

Smooths out a section of dirt with his palm.

Players eyes follow his finger marking their positions.

Points at Chad.

Sage and Johnson. Heads shaking.

Jordan points at each Player.

Draws sweeping lines.

Faces acknowledge the plan.

SFX -- Normal motion and sound.

JORDAN

Got it?

TEAM

Got it.

JORDAN

On one. Break.

CLAP of HANDS

Chad splits left.

Jordan calls signals. Ball snapped.

Fake hand off. Rolls right.

Defense closes in. No one open.

Sage's face.

About to be hit. Throws back across field.

Chad catches the lateral.

Defenders charge into him just as he...

Throws a pass back to Jordan.

Juke steps a Defender.

Slings off a tackler. Two more wrap around him.

Drags them. Lunges forward. Stretches. Ball touches pylon.

Referee's hands signal...

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)

It's good. Wildcats win. Wildcats
win. Let it rain.

Fans rush the field.

Rain pours down.

Parents hug each other.

Lewis carried on shoulders.

Players dive on the field. Slip and slide.

Sage spots Parker.

A smile.

P.A. ANNOUCER (O.S.)

Free cheeseburgers at Willie's drive-
in. Courtesy of a Wildcat victory.

Jordan takes it all in.

Sage walks up to him. Soaking wet.

SAGE

Like a bunch of little kids.

Jordan's face.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan's face. Sound asleep.

TRAIN HORN.

LOUDER.

WHEELS RUMBLING.

EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACK -- NIGHT

The last car passes.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan's face.

HORN, AGAIN.

Eyes shut.

Peaceful sleep.

Black pup asleep at his feet.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Jordan's face.

Daylight through the window.

LOUD KNOCKING ON THE SCREEN DOOR.

Eyes open.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Lewis BANGS on the door.

Jordan answers. Buttoning shirt.

JORDAN

What are you doing, Lewis?

LEWIS
Waking you up.
(beat)
Beautiful day, isn't it?

Rubs his eyes.

JORDAN
I guess.

Pup squeezes out. Lewis picks it up.

LEWIS
Ms. Parker wants to see you in her
office.

JORDAN
In her office? It's Saturday.

LEWIS
Called my house this morning. Told
me to come get you.

Jordan ponders.

JORDAN
(to himself)
Grandma...

Off the porch. Across the yard.

INT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Door flies opens.

Jordan rushes in.

Parker on the phone. Charles Block in a chair.

She points. Jordan sits.

MS. PARKER
(into the phone)
Yes. I will let him know. Always
nice talking with you. Good bye.

A moment.

MS. PARKER
That was your grandmother.
(beat)
We'll go see her after our meeting.

JORDAN
What meeting?

Block stands.

MR. BLOCK
Jordan. I can't let you stay by
yourself unsupervised.

JORDAN
Why not?

MR. BLOCK
Against the rules.

MS. PARKER
Besides, Jordan. Your grandmother
is going to need help.

JORDAN
I can help her.

MR. BLOCK
With school and football--

JORDAN
I don't have to play football.

A moment.

MR. BLOCK
Still doesn't solve the problem.

JORDAN
So where's that leave me?

INT. HALL -- DAY

Parker escorts Jordan and Block.

Stops outside the auditorium doors.

MS. PARKER
(to Block)
Amazing how fast information travels.
(to Jordan)
Jordan Everette.

She grabs the door handle.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- DAY

Door swings open.

Gym floor packed with...

Parents. Classmates. Coaches. Townspeople. Their Faces.

First Wave floods Jordan.

LEWIS'S MOTHER

Jordan honey, don't worry about a thing. I'll be there when your grandma comes home.

JIMMY'S DAD

Jordan, we got an extra room. And Jimmy's mom is a hell of a cook--

LEWIS'S FATHER

Jordan, we got room too, now--

COACH JOHNSON

Jordan, you can ride with me to school--

OTHER BARBER

I got a place on the lake. Do you like to fish, Jordan?

Sage against the wall. Nods.

CHAD (O.S.)

(feint anger)

Yeah, well. You're not going to stay with us, Evers.

Turns. Face to face with Chad.

JORDAN

It's Everette.

CHAD'S MOTHER steps up.

CHAD'S MOTHER

Jordan, what Chad means is, we're pretty sure we're going to be seeing a lot of you, anyway.

Jennifer on the bleachers.

Looks up from a book. Knowing smile.

CHAD

Trust me, Evers.

(big grin)

You don't stand a chance.

Crowd gathers back. More offers.

NOISE CRESCENDOS.

He doesn't hear.

All he can do is look at Jennifer.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Jordan stands in front of his family's graves.

Alex Stewart at his car.

Jordan places flowers on Annie's marker.

Walks away.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Jordan rides with Alex Stewart.

ALEX

So, what'd the coach say?

JORDAN

Offered me a full ride.

ALEX

That's great. They've got a great program. And the campus--

JORDAN

Yeah.

(beat)

But... I think I've already made up my mind.

ALEX

I'm sure it'll work out.

Car stops. Simple house.

Jordan climbs out.

ALEX

Pick you up in an hour?

He nods.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

Car drives off.

Jordan walks to the front door.

KNOCKS.

No answer.

Walks around to the back. Finds...

DeSean's grandmother.

Shovels dirt from a wheelbarrow. Barren garden.

Jordan walks up.

JORDAN

The key to a fall garden is to know
when the first frost is coming.

Doesn't look back. Keeps shoveling.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Somebody taught you something?

JORDAN

Yes ma'am.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Ahhh. South's rubbed off on you.

Jordan smiles.

She turns. Her first look at him.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Everything okay?

JORDAN

Recruiting visit.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

And?

Shakes his head.

JORDAN

I think I'm going to stay close to
home where I can help my grandma.

(beat)

Besides, I like warm weather.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

That's not what I heard. I heard
it's all about a girl.

(beat)

Jennifer?

Jordan's face. Tries to come up with a response.

JORDAN

How...

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Your grandma writes me every week.

(beat)

She's something.

JORDAN

Yes ma'am. She sure is.

Jordan swallows.

JORDAN

I came here to ask you a favor.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Oh? What's that?

The apology.

JORDAN

One day, if I play in a game up here.

(beat)

Would you come watch me?

A long thought.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Depends.

JORDAN

On?

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

If you do something for me.

JORDAN

(anxious)

What's that?

Hands him gloves.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Grab that bag of mulch over there.

This is a spring garden. Key to it
is preparing the soil.

Puts on the gloves. Grabs the bag.

Starts spreading.

DESEAN'S GRANDMOTHER

Not too thick now.

(tisking)

You still got some things to learn.

JORDAN

Yes ma'am. I'm sure I do.

They work the garden. Together.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY

Faded images. Home-video.

Pee-wee team hoisting a trophy.

FADE OUT.