

MADDEN

written by

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Based on a true story

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OVER BLACK:

"The only yardstick for success our society has is being a champion. No one remembers anything else."

- John Madden

Then, the deafening cheers of a sold-out crowd cut through the darkness.

MADDEN (PRE-LAP)
Son of a bitch!

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - FIELD - NIGHT

JOHN MADDEN (42) charges toward the crew of REFEREES huddled at midfield. Red-haired. Red-faced. Seeing blood red.

MARV ALBERT (V.O.)
We are all tied up with less than
a minute remaining at the Battle
of the Bay.

Madden slams his clipboard on the ground, snapping it in two.

MADDEN
Son of a bitch!

Spotting the 6-foot-4, 260-pound poster child for high blood pressure trampling toward them, the referees try to scatter.

MADDEN
No! No! Beeks! I'm talking to you!
Get your scrawny ass over here!

It's too late. The HEAD REFEREE is trapped.

REFEREE
(calmly)
It wasn't a hold, John.

MADDEN
I just have one question.

REFEREE
I've already issued you a warning.

Madden lowers his tone, his temper appearing to subside.

MADDEN
Just one question.

Madden drops to one knee.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Will you marry me?

REFEREE
Coach--

MADDEN
My folks keep asking and I gotta
know. Will you marry me?

REFEREE
Why would I--

Back on his feet, Madden's anger crescendos into a testosterone-fueled sonic boom blasted inches from the referee's eardrum.

MADDEN
BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN SCREWING ME
ALL NIGHT, BOB!

The ref bites his lip, trying his best to ignore the downpour of saliva splashing against the side of his face.

MADDEN
Call me old-fashioned, but I
thought I might as well make an
honest woman outta ya!

49ers quarterback JOE MONTANA (23) trots over, his golden mane flowing in the December breeze.

MONTANA
You heard the man, John.

MADDEN
Was I talking to you, Tiger Beat?

MONTANA
Why would our O-line hold when
your defense can't get a sack?

MADDEN
Hey, Montana, how 'bout you hold
my sack?

Madden turns his attention back to the referee.

MADDEN
C'mon, let's make it official.
I'll buy you a diamond ring, let
you wear a pretty white dress--

The ref tosses a FLAG in the air.

MADDEN

No? Okay. Why buy the cow, am I right?

MARV ALBERT (V.O.)

It looks like Madden will be called for yet another penalty. That puts the 49ers in scoring territory.

MADDEN

Honeymoon's over, Bob!
(to himself)
Prick.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - SIDELINE - NIGHT

Madden returns to the huddle to address his DEFENSE. Unlike most coaches, Madden actually towers over his players.

MADDEN

They're not going for the field goal. Wersching's been shaky all season. My money's on Montana going over the top, probably to Simpson.

VILLAPIANO

I'll cover Juice.

MADDEN

I don't want you to cover him. I want you to hit him so hard Hertz stock drops. Understand?

Madden yanks on Villapiano's collar. His forehead collides with the linebacker's face mask.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Get it done.

Madden shoves Villapiano onto the field. The rest of the defense follows.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - FIELD - NIGHT

The Raiders defense eyes Montana as he approaches the line of scrimmage.

O.J. SIMPSON (32) takes his place in the 49ers backfield.

Montana hikes the ball, handles the snap, drops back to pass.

Just as the Raiders linemen converge on him, Montana spots Simpson streaking downfield, Villapiano a step behind.

Montana launches a tight spiral downfield, arcing toward the end zone...

The crowd falls silent...

Simpson SNAGS THE CATCH in the corner of the end zone, his left foot just barely dragging out of bounds.

Madden rushes onto the field.

MADDEN

He's out! Are you kidding me? He's out!

The referees extend their arms in the air. Touchdown.

MARV ALBERT (V.O.)

Niners win! I can't believe it! A last-second Hail Mary pass to Simpson!

The stadium erupts into utter bedlam.

MARV ALBERT (V.O.)

Joe Montana, the Comeback Kid, has done it again!

Madden fights against the current of San Francisco fans flowing out onto the field, desperately trying to locate an official.

MARV ALBERT (V.O.)

Just a heartbreaking way to end the season for the Oakland Raiders.

Madden collides chest to chest with the head referee, who unsuccessfully attempts to sidestep him.

Madden cuts him off, shouting mere millimeters from the referee's face.

MADDEN

He was out! He was out! HE WAS OUT!

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Several MAINTENANCE WORKERS rush to remove playoff decorations as the defeated Raiders players file in.

One employee wheels away a cart of CHAMPAGNE ON ICE.

Villapiano stands in the cart's path, removing a bottle for himself.

Madden bursts through the doors. Spots the champagne in Villapiano's arms.

Madden chuckles, then motions for the bottle. Villapiano hands it over.

MADDEN
Is this what you want?

Madden shakes the bottle.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
A celebration?

He uncorks the bottle. Foam spews all over Villapiano.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
You earned it.

He drains the champagne over Villapiano's head. Villapiano stands motionless.

Madden hurls the empty bottle against the opposite wall, barely missing several players.

Glass shatters everywhere.

MADDEN
Congratulations. You're irrelevant.

Madden exits, slamming the door behind him.

INT. TRAIN - DINING CAR - DAY

Madden sits alone, watching ESPN highlights on a small TV above the bar.

CHRIS BERMAN (V.O.)
With seconds left on the clock,
Cool Joe steps back...

Madden's wife, VIRGINIA, (41) and son, MIKE, (11) stand in the doorway, unfazed. They've seen this before.

CHRIS BERMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and delivers an absolute bomb
to end Oakland's season.

VIRGINIA

The end's going to be the same no matter how many times you watch it.

CHRIS BERMAN (V.O.)

The Raiders will miss the playoffs for the first time in six years. Needless to say, John Madden was not too happy.

On the screen, Montana goes to shake Madden's hand at the 50 yard line.

MONTANA (ON SCREEN)

Better luck next time, Coach.

MADDEN (ON SCREEN)

BLEEP you, you mulleted piece of BLEEP.

Virginia moves to cover Mike's ears from his father's censored tirade.

MIKE

That's a lot of bleeps.

MADDEN (ON SCREEN)

I'll BLEEP BLEEP your mother on your BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP grave.

MIKE

You sound like R2-D2.

MADDEN (ON SCREEN)

BLEEP.

Madden, eyes still locked on the screen, motions to the door with his unlit cigar.

Virginia and Mike exchange looks. As they go to exit, they cross paths with TRIP HAWKINS (26).

TRIP

Not a Star Wars fan I take it?

MADDEN

Too old-fashioned.

TRIP

I guess science fiction isn't for everyone.

MADDEN

No. I want two Old Fashioneds.

Trip glances down at his shirt and tie, realizing that Madden has him confused for the bartender.

TRIP
Right. Of course.

Improvising, Trip steps behind the bar and starts mixing at random.

Trip notices the gnawed cigar lodged between Madden's fingers.

TRIP (CONT'D)
Don't tell me they won't let you
smoke in here.

MADDEN
I won't let me smoke in here.
(beat)
You have to win to get a victory
cigar.

TRIP
So what type of cigar's that?

MADDEN
Shit.

Trip slides Madden's drink across the bar. Madden sips, winces.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
This is terrible.

TRIP
That's because I'm not a
bartender.

MADDEN
Who are you?

TRIP
Trip Hawkins.

Trip goes for a handshake. Nothing.

TRIP (CONT'D)
I'm sorry to bother you, but I
knew you would be on this train
and--

MADDEN
How'd you know that?

TRIP
Because you never fly.

MADDEN
How'd you know that?

TRIP
I've followed you for years.

Madden looks creeped out.

TRIP (CONT'D)
Y'know, from a distance.

Madden looks even more creeped out.

TRIP
I--I've been a big fan of yours
since I started playing college
ball. Your passion. The way you
lead a team, it's just, genius.

Madden sizes up Trip, confused.

MADDEN
You...play...college ball?

TRIP
Played. I graduated two years ago.

MADDEN
From where?

TRIP
Harvard.

MADDEN
Huh. I didn't know Harvard had
sports.

TRIP
They do.

MADDEN
Real ones?

TRIP
Is there such a thing as a fake
sport?

MADDEN
You tell me, Ivy League.

TRIP
Look, I have a very interesting
business opportunity for you.

MADDEN
What's that?

TRIP
The future.

MADDEN
Are we still talking about Star Wars?

TRIP
No. I'm talking about the future of football as we know it. Video games.

MADDEN
So there is such a thing as fake sports.

TRIP
I assure you, video games are real. Before we know it, people won't play football on the field anymore. They'll play it on--

MADDEN
Mars?

TRIP
On a screen. Same game, just set in virtual reality and powered by artificial intelligence.

MADDEN
I don't speak Clip-On.

TRIP
It's Klingon. And that's Star Trek.

MADDEN
What?

TRIP
Not Star Wars.

MADDEN
There's a difference?

Trip tries his best not to take personal offense to this.

TRIP
After I graduated from Harvard, I worked with Apple.

(MORE)

TRIP (CONT'D)

I know for a fact the graphics card on their next-gen PC is going to be a game changer. Literally. Pong is gone. They're looking to leapfrog Frogger.

MADDEN

Did you practice this?

TRIP

Many times. Because I don't want to be just another employee at Apple, helping someone else make their idea come true. I want to build something of my own. That's why I started my company, Electronic Arts.

MADDEN

You guys fix VCRs?

TRIP

I want to work with you. Together, you and I can create the world's first real football video game. Not just blinking pixels on a monitor. A true-to-life simulation. But I can only do that with someone who knows the game inside and out. Someone like you.

MADDEN

Unfortunately, Trip--

TRIP

Trip--

MADDEN

I'm already a coach in reality. Not virtual reality.

TRIP

Please--

MADDEN

Best of luck with your electric art.

TRIP

Electronic Arts.

MADDEN

I hope you're better at that than
you are at bartending.

Trip removes his business card and places it on the bar.

TRIP

In case you change your mind.

Trip walks toward the exit--

MADDEN

I was a college football player
once.

TRIP

I know.

MADDEN

But, y'know, a real one.

Trip leaves.

Madden sighs, eyeing Trip's sad attempt at a cocktail. Shrugs.

He downs the drink before using Trip's card as a coaster.

EAGLES SCOUT (PRE-LAP)

Never seen anything like him.

EXT. SPANOS STADIUM - FIELD - DAY (1960)

A YOUNG MADDEN (22), dressed in a CAL POLY MUSTANGS uniform,
collides head on with an oncoming AZTECS running back.

He plows straight through the opposing rusher, who drops the
ball.

Madden scoops up the fumble and sprints into the end zone for a
touchdown.

His TEAMMATES celebrate with him. For the first time, we see
Madden happy.

EXT. SPANOS STADIUM - STANDS - CONTINUOUS (1960)

In a sea of shouting Mustang fans, a handful of PRO SCOUTS
watch in awe.

EAGLES SCOUT

Never seen anything like him.

JETS SCOUT
You here to recruit him for
offense?

SAINTS SCOUT
Defense.

BROWNS SCOUT
Both.

COLTS SCOUT
They don't make 'em like that
anymore.

COWBOYS SCOUT
He's like a goddamn Model T out
there.

EAGLES SCOUT
Didn't know Model T's came in red.

EXT. SPANOS STADIUM - SIDELINE - CONTINUOUS (1960)

Young Madden removes his helmet as undersized cornerback JAMES MINER (21) nudges him toward the crowd of scouts.

JAMES
Looks like you're getting some
attention.

Madden looks above the scouts' gaze and locks eyes with a YOUNG VIRGINIA (21) sitting in the stands. He smiles.

AL (PRE-LAP)
How's Virginia?

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - OFFICE - DAY

Madden takes a seat opposite AL DAVIS (50) - dressed in black and dipped in silver jewelry.

He looks like an Elvis impersonator moonlighting as a Johnny Cash impersonator.

MADDEN
She's great.

AL
And Mike?

MADDEN
Great. Pop Warner's coming up.
He's excited. Real excited.

AL
Well, the apple doesn't fall far
from the tree.

MADDEN
Yes, sir. He's a good apple.

AL
And how about you?

MADDEN
Me? I'm pissed about Sunday. What
do you think?

AL
No. I mean, how are you?

MADDEN
I'm...fine, I guess.

Al stares at Madden for a moment too long.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
(pointing to couch)
Should I lie down?

AL
How's your health?

MADDEN
My health?

AL
I think you could use some time
off.

MADDEN
Time off?

AL
Time off.

MADDEN
That's what the offseason is for.
Time off.

AL
Time off. Indefinitely.

MADDEN
Al. We missed the playoffs. I'm
not dying.

AL
And we don't want you to.

MADDEN

Who's we?

AL

That's why we feel, first and foremost, you should take care of your health.

MADDEN

I'm as healthy as a horse. A racehorse. A thoroughbred. I'm Seabiscuit.

AL

Seabiscuit won.

MADDEN

I've never had a losing season.

AL

It's not negotiable. This is for your health.

MADDEN

Is that what they tell the racehorse before they put a bullet in his head?

(beat)

This is for your health...

AL

John. It's done.

MADDEN

But I'm not.

AL

You lost.

MADDEN

What? One game?

AL

You lost more than a game. You lost your team. Smoking, drinking, drugs.

MADDEN

What do you expect? They're the Silver and Black. The bad boys of the NFL.

AL

There's a difference between being bad boys, and just being bad.

(beat)

If you traveled with them, you'd know that by now.

MADDEN

Is that what this is about?

AL

No. This is about your health.

MADDEN

You can't fire me.

AL

And I'm not going to. Unless I have to.

MADDEN

I brought this city its only Super Bowl. They need me.

AL

Not as much as I need your keys and your playbook.

MADDEN

That was two years ago. Or have you forgotten?

AL

Football isn't sentimental. There is no last season. Only this season. They don't care about the last time you won. They only care about the last time. Period. And last time I checked, you lost.

MADDEN

This isn't the last time you'll see me.

AL

That's your problem. You're not bigger than the team, John. And you sure as hell aren't bigger than the game. You think you made all of this? Well, who made you? Who discovered you? Hired you? Mentored you? Promoted you at 32 years old? You think you're Jesus Christ? I'm God Almighty.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)
 You think you can walk on water?
 You can't even walk on an
 airplane.
 (beat)
 Your keys and your playbook.

Madden drops his keys and his playbook onto Al's desk.

MADDEN
 Fuck you.

AL
 To your health.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - STANDS - DAY

Madden watches as the field crew converts the Coliseum from the Raiders' football field to the Athletics' baseball diamond.

A changing of seasons.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - PRESS ROOM - DAY

Madden approaches the microphone as camera clicks and flashbulbs flood the room.

Al looms behind him.

MADDEN
 Today, I am officially announcing
 my retirement from the National
 Football League.

INTERCUT:

- At the podium, Madden is grilled by the PRESS.
- Back at home, Madden is interrogated by Virginia.
- Al attempts to save face in front of the cameras.

REPORTER 1
 Why now?

MADDEN
 (to press)
 I gave it everything I have, just
 don't have anything left.

VIRGINIA
 An ulcer? You expect me to believe
 that?

MADDEN
(to Virginia)
It's for my health.

REPORTER 2
Is it true Raiders management
forced you out?

MADDEN
(to Virginia)
You of all people know it's a
demanding job.

VIRGINIA
You think coaching is demanding?
Christ's sakes, John, try being
married to one.

MADDEN
(to press)
This type of thing is easy to talk
about, but it's never easy to do.

VIRGINIA
We've been together too long for
you to start bullshitting me now.

REPORTER 3
Were you fired?

MADDEN
(to press)
For the last time, no.

AL
It's just trash, that's all. I'm
not a man who just fires someone,
especially someone with a track
record like John's.

VIRGINIA
Did Al fire you?

MADDEN
(to Virginia)
No.

VIRGINIA
I knew it. I always thought he was
a slimy little--

MADDEN
(to press)
Fortunate.
(MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)

I'm very fortunate to have been a member of this organization. Seems like just yesterday we were bringing back a Super Bowl trophy.

AL

(to press)

I don't believe in speculation. John's been fired eight times in 10 years, according to speculation.

REPORTER 1

Are you currently looking for any other coaching jobs?

MADDEN

(to Virginia)

You don't think I haven't tried? Nobody in the league will return my calls. I'm damaged goods. I'm worse than damaged goods--

MADDEN

(to press)

I'm an Oakland Raider, I always will be an Oakland Raider.

AL

(to press)

Sure we had philosophical differences, but I think that's what I most liked about him.

MADDEN

(to press)

I never respected people who moved from team to team.

REPORTER 1

How would you describe your legacy?

MADDEN

(to Virginia)

It's not about pride.

AL

(to press)

We wish him the best moving forward.

MADDEN
 (to press)
 Loyalty has always been important
 to me.

REPORTER 1
 What's next?

VIRGINIA
 What now?

Madden stands at the podium...

Stares at Virginia...

Unable to answer.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Draped in a bathrobe, Madden holds a telephone to his ear. He
 stares at the back of a TV showing static.

MADDEN
 (in phone)
 I'll tell you like I told the
 other guy, my TV's not
 working...How would I know if the
 cable's out?
 (looking at wires)
 I see a dozen cables and none of
 them look out to me...No, I can't
 play tapes...So the VHS is
 broken?...What's a VCR?...Then
 what's a VHS?...Can you just send
 someone out here?...Between
 when?...That's a four-hour
 window...Morning or afternoon?

Madden looks at the clock.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 Either. I got nowhere to be.

EXT. MADDEN HOUSE - POOL - DAY

Madden lounges by the pool with the telephone to his ear.

MADDEN
 (to phone)
 He's still not in, huh? Well, just
 tell him that Madden called...No,
 John Madden...The coach.
 (MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

On second thought, could you not
tell him I called again?

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

With nothing to do and nowhere to be, Madden wanders through
his mansion.

He stops in the hallway to straighten a picture frame. In the
frame, Madden holds INFANT MIKE, dressed in a football uniform.

A guttural GROWL comes from within the adjacent room.

Madden peers around the corner and into...

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - MIKE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mike, wrapped in a black cloak, leads his FRIENDS in a game of
Dungeons & Dragons.

He pounds his fist on the table, causing his friends to leap
back.

MIKE

The wizard refuses to spare your
life...unless...

Mike's friends lean in, eating up every word.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You agree to carry him on your
back to the Candlekeep.

FRIEND 1

I don't trust this wizard.

FRIEND 2

Offer him your spare dragon hide!

MIKE

Enough bickering! The wizard has
no use for dragon hides.

FRIEND 1

This feels like a trap!

MIKE

If immortality is what you seek,
carry the wizard to Candlekeep.

FRIEND 2

Quick! Roll a stealth!

Mike rises, growling as he does it.

Madden flips on the lights.

Mike and his friends freeze, their eyes still adjusting.

MADDEN

You guys wanna toss around the ole pigskin?

MIKE

Dad! Get out!

FRIEND 1

What's a pigskin?

MADDEN

Like a dragon hide, but normal.

MIKE

For the last time, I hate football.

MADDEN

How would you know? You've never played football.

MIKE

I don't have time to play dumb games.

MADDEN

(re: Mike's cloak)
Obviously.

Mike stomps to the door, looking up at Madden.

MIKE

I'm not playing. I'm dungeon master.

Mike slams the door in Madden's face, causing the framed photo to tilt back.

MIKE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The wizard demands an answer!

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Madden and Virginia eat dinner in silence.

VIRGINIA
You didn't call Shula's office
again did you?

MADDEN
(lying)
Uh...No...I--No, I don't think so.

VIRGINIA
I don't want Miami to think you're
desperate.
(off his look)
Because you're not. Obviously.

MADDEN
Cable guy's coming tomorrow.

VIRGINIA
John, I'm worried about you.

MADDEN
Between 8 and noon.

VIRGINIA
I think it's worth considering.

MADDEN
No. Absolutely not.

VIRGINIA
It's not a demotion. It's just a--

MADDEN
I'm not going from coaching in the
NFL to coaching college ball. End
of story.

VIRGINIA
And what if the phone doesn't
ring?

MADDEN
I'll ask the cable guy to take a
look at it tomorrow.

VIRGINIA
I'm serious.

Upstairs, Mike and his friends howl with laughter.

MADDEN
Don't worry about me. Worry about
him.

VIRGINIA
What do you mean?

MADDEN
He's been up there playing Ouija
board all day. I think it's
Satanic.

VIRGINIA
It's Dungeons & Dragons.

MADDEN
I don't care if it's Sonny & Cher.
Your son's turning into a damn
vampire.

VIRGINIA
Our son.

MADDEN
What?

VIRGINIA
Our son. And he's not a vampire.
He's a dungeon master.

MADDEN
I just don't understand. Do you
know what I would have done if my
old man offered to play catch with
me?

VIRGINIA
Well, maybe instead of moping
around the house all day--

MADDEN
I'm not moping--

VIRGINIA
Waiting for the cable guy to show
up--

MADDEN
It's a four-hour window--

VIRGINIA
Or the Dolphins to call you back--

MADDEN
I didn't call the Dolphins--

VIRGINIA

Maybe you should use this free time to bond with your son for once.

MADDEN

Our son. And how?

VIRGINIA

Use the game.

Madden leans back in his chair.

MADDEN

You're right. The game. That's it.

(upstairs)

Mike! Get down here!

(to Virginia)

I can't believe I didn't think of this earlier.

Mike reluctantly walks downstairs, still wearing his cloak.

MIKE

What do you want? The trolls are ambushing the watering hole.

Madden smiles back at Virginia, who eggs him on.

MADDEN

I am going to coach your football team.

MIKE

What? No. That's impossible.

MADDEN

I know, it's hard to believe, but I am. It's going to be great.

MIKE

I hate football. It's barbaric.

MADDEN

More barbaric than trolls?

MIKE

You're so annoying.

MADDEN

That's it. You're playing.

MIKE

Mom!

MADDEN

Don't even try. Your mother agrees.

VIRGINIA

Actually...

MADDEN

What do you mean "actually?" You just said we should play together.

VIRGINIA

I meant you should play Dungeons & Dragons together.

MADDEN

No.

MIKE

No way.

MADDEN

Then it's settled. You're going to play football. And you're going to like it.

CUT TO:

EXT. POP WARNER FIELD - DAY

Mike, in full pads, shakily approaches the line of scrimmage. He drops down, taking his position behind the CENTER and...

Nothing.

Seconds go by. Mike remains frozen.

Madden watches on from the sideline with his hands on his hips, disgusted.

MADDEN

What are you doing?

MIKE

I don't want to play!

MADDEN

You're the quarterback! Hike the ball!

Mike shakes his head.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Say hike!

MIKE

No.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

(to center)

Baumgartner!

CENTER

(to Mike)

Please don't get me involved.

A VOLUNTEER REFEREE jogs over.

VOLUNTEER REFEREE

Coach, if you want to sub in another player it's fine.

MADDEN

Oh, perfect. How about I sub my foot up your ass?

VOLUNTEER REFEREE

Coach, I'm just a volunteer here.

MADDEN

So is my foot. Volunteering to go right up your ass. No charge.

(to center)

Baumgartner, so help me God! Either you snap that ball or I snap you in half!

CENTER

(to Mike)

Please, God. Just say hut.

VOLUNTEER REFEREE

You don't have to say it, Mike. Really.

MADDEN

Do I look like a proctologist?

VOLUNTEER REFEREE

What?

MADDEN

Do I, John Madden, look like a board-certified physician specializing in the anus and rectum?

VOLUNTEER REFEREE

No?

MADDEN
 THEN WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME TO TEAR
 YOU A NEW ASSHOLE?!

The volunteer referee tosses a flag onto the field.

Madden stares at the ref.

MADDEN
 Pick that up.

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
 What?

MADDEN
 Pick it up.

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
 You can't tell me to--

MADDEN
 Pick. Up. The. Flag.

The volunteer referee looks petrified.

The parents in the stands and players on the field all crane their necks.

The ref awkwardly bends over and picks up the flag like a scolded child.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 Put it in your pocket.

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
 I--

MADDEN
 New. Asshole.

The volunteer referee looks down at the ground, unable to look Madden in the eye.

Finally, he returns the flag back to his pocket.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 (pointing to parking lot)
 Now, which one of those shitbox
 cars is yours?

The volunteer referee mumbles something under his breath.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 Louder!

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
The '76 Gremlin.

MADDEN
I want you to go sit in that piece
of shit '76 Gremlin for the rest
of the game. Do you understand?

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
Yes.

MADDEN
Yes, what?

VOLUNTEER REFEREE
Yes, sir.

MADDEN
Get off my goddamn field.

The volunteer referee exits, a broken man.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
(to center)
BAUMGARTNER!

The center folds under pressure and snaps the ball to an
unsuspecting Mike - who is immediately waylaid by defenders.

MADDEN
Son of a bitch!

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Madden talks on the phone as Virginia applies an ice pack to
Mike's arm.

MADDEN
(to phone)
I didn't realize I made the
referee cry...Oh, in his car...I'm
unprofessional?...I'm not the one
crying at my place of work...I do
understand that he is a
volunteer...Well, you get what you
pay for...I understand...No hard
feelings...Terrific. Eat shit, and
burn in hell.

Madden tosses the phone across the floor.

MIKE
Did you get fired again?

MADDEN
What do you mean "again?"

VIRGINIA
Boys.

The phone RINGS.

MADDEN
For your information, the Raiders
didn't fire me. I retired.

RING.

MIKE
That doesn't even make sense. Why
would you of all people retire?

VIRGINIA
Boys!

RING.

MADDEN
To spend more time with you and
your mom.

MIKE
Uh huh. Then why can't I retire
from the football team?

VIRGINIA
BOYS!

RING. Virginia picks up the phone.

MADDEN
Because I didn't raise you to be a
quitter.

MIKE
It's not quitting. It's retiring.

VIRGINIA
(covering receiver)
HEY!
(to Madden)
It's the University of California.

Madden grins.

MADDEN
I'm back.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Madden takes a seat opposite the DEAN.

DEAN

I cannot tell you how excited we
are to have you on campus.

MADDEN

I appreciate you for having me.
The honor is all mine.

DEAN

So, I do realize that this
position isn't exactly the Oakland
Raiders--

MADDEN

With all due respect, I think you
have a very great program here.
I've heard nothing but great
things.

DEAN

You've heard about our program?

MADDEN

I have some ideas about how to
lead that program to a conference
championship in less than two
seasons. It all starts with the
offensive line--

DEAN

Coach, I'm sorry, but I believe
there has been a misunderstanding.

MADDEN

A misunderstanding?

DEAN

This is about class.

MADDEN

Of course. All great football
programs have class.

DEAN

Not class. A class.

MADDEN

I don't follow.

DEAN

We aren't interested in hiring you for our football program. We would like to hire you to teach in our communications program.

MADDEN

Like, a professor?

DEAN

Adjunct.

Madden blinks, trying to decide between swallowing his rage or his pride.

MADDEN

What would I teach?

EXT. RATCLIFFE STADIUM - NIGHT (1960)

Down by 7 in the fourth quarter, Young Madden cradles the ball, pushing against a wall of FRESNO STATE DEFENDERS.

Finally, Madden falls on his knee as the whistle blows.

He attempts to stand, but can't. He's in too much pain.

His teammates, including James Miner, help to carry him off the field.

EXT. RATCLIFFE STADIUM - LATER (1960)

On crutches, Madden watches from the sideline as his Mustangs lose 14-0.

EXT. RATCLIFFE STADIUM - STANDS - CONTINUOUS (1960)

Virginia watches the pro scouts exit the stadium.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - CLASSROOM - DAY

We see what looks like a never-ending mathematic equation. A sea of chicken scratch etched across an expansive black chalkboard.

But it's not a complex formula. It's a football play.

MADDEN

(scribbling furiously)

Bam!

(MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Then you bring the strong safety in for the blitz. Slant blitz side A-gap. If you have a nose guard that can 2-gap that will free up your middle backer to run to the ball carrier. Slant B-gap. Pre-snap, stay in a 2-high look. Once the QB begins his cadence, roll down and blitz off of the edge. Deep 3rd. Which of course means?

The students have no idea what Madden is talking about.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Everyone say it with me...Slant B-gap.

Madden takes a deep breath.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

This will be on the final. Any questions?

Crickets.

A SLACKER STUDENT enters late.

SLACKER

I'm sorry, Professor, but would you please sign this for me?

MADDEN

I'm sorry, but I can't.

SLACKER

Why not?

MADDEN

I just can't sign autographs in the middle of a lecture. It's distracting.

SLACKER

Autographs?

MADDEN

Yes. Autographs.

SLACKER

Why would anyone want your autograph?

MADDEN

I don't know. To sell. To collect.

SLACKER

Look, the counselor told me I had to get your signature.

Madden takes a look at the piece of paper. It reads: CLASS WITHDRAWAL FORM.

MADDEN

Go sit down. I'll deal with this later.

The slacker takes a seat, withdrawing a clunky HANDHELD VIDEO GAME.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Does anyone know who I am? I mean, other than your professor.

STUDENT 1

Do you mean adjunct professor?

MADDEN

John Madden.

No one seems to follow.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Former pro football coach? Oakland Raiders? Super Bowl champion? Anything?

Madden's ego is in a free fall. He turns his back to the class, returning to the chalkboard, but can't bring himself to write anything.

Then, he hears a BEEP.

Then another.

And another.

Madden turns to see the slacker immersed in his handheld game.

He walks over, extends his hand. The slacker hands the game over. Madden takes a closer look at the cover.

MADDEN

Football? You call this football?

The bell rings and the students begin to file out.

SLACKER

Will you sign my drop form?

MADDEN
No.

SLACKER
Will you give me my game back?

MADDEN
No.

The slacker sighs. He grabs his backpack and leaves Madden alone.

Curious, Madden presses a button.

The rudimentary game boots up, loading dozens of black and white pixels onto the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - OFFICE - LATER

Madden - temper flaring - sits at his desk, mashing buttons on the video game.

The game BEEPS.

MADDEN
Son of a bitch.

Madden tosses the game onto his desk.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Madden inserts his final quarter, desperately trying to read Trip's business card - smudged from its time spent as a coaster.

Madden waits, holding the phone against his ear.

INTERCUT:

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trip answers.

TRIP
Hello?

MADDEN
The game is wrong.

TRIP
Who is this?

MADDEN
I've played 18 games, and I've
lost every last one of them. Can
you believe that?

TRIP
Madden?

MADDEN
When we make our game, it's going
to be real. Do you understand?
These blinking lights aren't gonna
cut it. I want real players, real
plays, real weather. Everything.

A beat. Trip smiles.

TRIP
Did you say, "When we make our
game?"

EXT. TRIP'S HOUSE - DAY

Madden climbs out of his Chrysler LeBaron and looks around,
confused.

He withdraws a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket.

He checks the address on the paper, then glances at the numbers
on the side of the house. They match.

He crumples the paper back into his pocket.

MADDEN
Son of a bitch.

Madden approaches the door. Knocks.

Seconds later, SALLY HAWKINS (50s) answers the door, holding a
tray of cookies.

SALLY
Can I help you?

MADDEN
I'm sorry to bother you, ma'am. I
must have the wrong address. I'm
looking for Electronic Arts.

SALLY
Huh. I thought he was calling it
Amazin' Games.

MADDEN
Pardon?

SALLY
Trip. Just last week I thought he
was calling his little business
Amazin' Games.

MADDEN
Amazing?

SALLY
Amazin'.

MADDEN
Zen?

SALLY
Zin'.

MADDEN
Like the Buddha?

SALLY
Like the South.

MADDEN
On second thought, I think I'm
just gonna go.

Madden begins to retreat to his LeBaron. Sally grabs him by the
arm with her free hand.

SALLY
Oh, nonsense.
(upstairs)
Trip! You have company!

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fake wood paneling. Fake potted plants. Real owl taxidermy.

Trip sits across from Madden.

SALLY
Another cookie?

Sally extends the now half-empty tray down to Madden, who takes
one. Then another. And another.

MADDEN

Thank you, ma'am.

Sally clears her throat at Trip - darting her eyes toward a large hamper full of clean socks at his side.

TRIP

Mom, I'm in the middle of a--

She clears her throat again. Trip sighs, then reluctantly starts pairing socks.

MADDEN

(for Sally to hear)

Trip, you didn't tell me your younger sister was such a great cook.

Sally exits, beaming. Madden's demeanor darkens as she leaves the room.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

You also didn't tell me your company is based out of your parents' house.

TRIP

Technically, it's my house, too.

MADDEN

(re: stuffed owl)

I love what you've done with the place.

TRIP

It's my house. And their house.
It's our house.

MADDEN

In that case...

Madden pops the last cookie in his mouth, then goes to leave. Trip stands to stop him, toppling over his stack of socks.

TRIP

It's temporary.

MADDEN

Your parents or your business?

TRIP

This is how things are done in Silicon Valley.

MADDEN
Silicone.

TRIP
What?

MADDEN
It's pronounced silicone.

TRIP
My apologies. This is how things
are done in Silicone Valley.

Madden doesn't get the joke.

TRIP (CONT'D)
Steve Jobs started his company out
of a garage.

MADDEN
Was it his parents' garage?

TRIP
Imagine what we could do with an
entire house.

MADDEN
Can't wait to decorate my office.
Is there a guest bedroom
available?

Madden reaches for the doorknob. Trip stands in his path. It's
a very literal juxtaposition.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Get out of my way.

TRIP
No.

MADDEN
Let me put this in terms you can
understand, Ivy League. I'm an
unstoppable force.

TRIP
Then I'm immovable object.

Madden ominously moves moves forward, stopping inches from
Trip's face.

TRIP (CONT'D)
This is the opportunity of a
lifetime.
(MORE)

TRIP (CONT'D)

You can walk away from the league,
but I'm not letting you walk away
from this.

Madden's temper simmers, then cools. He returns to the plastic-covered couch.

Madden reaches down to the floor, handing Trip a match to his sock.

MADDEN

I thought you were in the apple
business?

TRIP

What?

MADDEN

On the train. You said you worked
with apples.

TRIP

I said I worked with Apple.

MADDEN

What kind? Fuji, Granny Smith--

TRIP

Macintosh.

MADDEN

McIntosh. That's a good apple.

A long beat.

TRIP

How much do you know about
computers?

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Darkness. Then, the garage door moves upward.

Light floods into the garage, revealing the two very different silhouettes of Trip and Madden standing outside. They enter.

Madden's gaze moves around the converted garage - full of state-of-the-art COMPUTER EQUIPMENT.

MADDEN

This is impressive.

TRIP

This is just the beginning.

MADDEN

I feel like a caveman, brought to the future...

TRIP

Go ahead. Fire her up.

Madden enters, dodging a tennis ball strung from the ceiling, and examines a large MONITOR in the corner.

MADDEN

So, if this Apple company is so great...

Madden gingerly extends a meaty finger to the ON BUTTON, like Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam."

The monitor comes to life.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

...Then why'd you leave?

TRIP

Same reason you cavemen painted all those murals. I don't want to be forgotten. If I stayed at Apple, my entire life's work would be in service of someone else's vision. Condensed into a single line of code. I don't want to play their game--

MADDEN

You want to change it.

Just as Madden and Trip begin to bond--

HONNNNK.

Behind the wheel of a Toyota Hilux, BILL HAWKINS (50s), lays on the horn. Bill's collar is as blue as his language.

Trip covers his ears. Madden doesn't. He steps between Trip and the truck.

TRIP

This is--

HONNNNK.

BILL

How many times?

TRIP

This is--

HONNNNK.

BILL

How many times do I have to tell you to get this shit out of my goddamn garage?

TRIP

You can't just interrupt my business meeting--

BILL

Business meeting? I think you have to have a business first.

MADDEN

Who's this asshole?

TRIP

John, this is my dad. Dad this is--

BILL

Don't tell me.

Madden prepares to be recognized by a fan--

BILL (CONT'D)

Another dipshit.

MADDEN

Watch your mouth, motherfucker.

BILL

Don't take offense. I'm a dipshit too. Lord knows I bought into it.

MADDEN

Bought into what?

BILL

This. The Trip Hawkins Experience. How do you think he can afford to set up an entire RadioShack in our damn garage?

MADDEN

Your dad's an investor?

BILL

The investor.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Five-thousand dollars down the drain. For what?

(to Trip)

Go ahead. Tell him what you've done with that fancy college diploma. Tell him how long you've been out of a job.

(to Madden)

You think you're the first rich asshole he's brought to my house?

Trip watches this revelation hit Madden.

TRIP

John, please--

Madden nods, then heads toward the exit.

TRIP

Madden.

Madden stops at Bill's driver-side window.

MADDEN

(to Trip, staring at Bill)

I'll be back tomorrow. We're going to need a team.

BILL

What the hell are you talking about?

MADDEN

You'll see. You and the rest of Silicone Valley.

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - DEN - THE NEXT DAY

John and Trip sit beneath a framed painting of a duck taking flight.

On the opposite side of the room is an empty chair.

TRIP

About yesterday--

MADDEN

My ole man was a mechanic. I know how it is.

TRIP

I just don't want you to think that I'm using you for your--

MADDEN

Looks?

TRIP

Your image. Your money. Your anything.

MADDEN

Good. Because I'm not signing off on anything until I see the finished product.

TRIP

No one has a football mind like yours. I mean that.

MADDEN

Thanks, Trip. That touches me deep down in my ovaries.

TRIP

I'm just trying to say that I want you on my team. Sincerely.

MADDEN

Well, sincerely, it's not much of a team until we hire more people. Right now it's two men sitting in a den with your mom.

REVEAL: Sally knits in the corner.

TRIP

Luckily, using my Rolodex from my days at Harvard and Apple, I have assembled a dream team of potential candidates. I present to you, the absolute best of the best.

CUT TO:

WILLIAM JAMES GIN (30s) takes a seat. Wire-rimmed glasses. Mustache. He looks like a police sketch of a pedophile.

MADDEN

John Madden, great to meet you.

Madden reaches to shake William James Gin's hand. He flinches.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL KOSAKA (40s) is wearing a turtleneck and holding a notepad. He somehow has a middle part and a bowl cut at once.

KOSAKA
Question one. Where do you see
yourself in five years?

MADDEN
I'll be asking the questions here.

Kosaka furrows his brow, scribbles something down on his notepad.

KOSAKA
Interesting...

CUT TO:

ROBIN ANTONIK (30s) enters. He is an adult man with a black belt and a ponytail. That is all you need to know about him.

He silently enters, ignoring the chair, and kneels on the floor in front of Trip and Madden.

Antonik gives them a deep bow.

MADDEN
What are you doing?

ANTONIK
I am bowing in seiza.

MADDEN
Yeah, I'll just ask again. What
are you doing?

ANTONIK
What I do before all battles...

MADDEN
Don't make me ask a third time.

ANTONIK
...For while you may call it a
"job interview," I call it a
battle of the minds.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL LABASH (40s) sits, wearing a cape. Again, for emphasis, he is wearing a cape.

LABASH

I am one of the best in the business.

MADDEN

And what business is that? The magician business?

He lets out a calculated, smarmy chuckle.

LABASH

If by "magic," you mean creating some of the most popular gaming titles of all time, then yes. I most certainly am a magician.

Trip shoots Madden a look. "Do not blow this."

CUT TO:

Antonik continues to kneel on the floor, working on steadying his heart rate by controlling his breath.

TRIP

What would you consider your greatest asset?

ANTONIK

My sword collection.

TRIP

Other than your sword collection.

ANTONIK

My nunchuck collection.

CUT TO:

TIMOTHY FLANAGAN (18) enters. He looks younger than he is. And he is young.

FLANAGAN

Oh my God, I am such a huge fan of yours.

MADDEN

Thank you. It's nice to have a football fan in here for a change.

FLANAGAN

I was actually talking to Mr. Hawkins.

TRIP

Please, call me Trip.

MADDEN

Jesus Christ. Have you at least been in a locker room before?

FLANAGAN

Have I been in a locker room? Are you kidding? I practically lived there my senior year.

MADDEN

That's what I like to hear. A gym rat. What sport?

FLANAGAN

Oh, I didn't play a sport. That's just where the freshmen would shove me. In the lockers.

MADDEN

Did you say freshmen?

CUT TO:

LaBash absentmindedly brushes some lint off of his cape.

LABASH

I have worked on projects such as Temple of Apshai, Akalabeth: World of Doom and, of course, Lost Dutchman's Gold.

TRIP

Lost Dutchman's Gold. An instant classic.

MADDEN

My favorite part was when they found the gold.

CUT TO:

ZINA J. YEE (20s) enters. She is all business - except in the back, where she sports a thick mullet.

MADDEN

What's your minimum salary requirement?

ZINA

I don't understand the question.

MADDEN

What's the least amount of money you would work for?

ZINA

Oh, I understand that. It just depends. What kind of pay structure are you referring to? Traditional? Broadband? Step structure? Market-based?

MADDEN

The kind with money?

ZINA

For instance, the traditional salary structure offers flexibility but also has controls, and works well in relatively stable organizations. However, managers have less discretion to give pay raises with this system. Meanwhile, the broadband salary structure offers flexibility and guidelines, with salaries ranging from 80 to 200 percent--

CUT TO:

Madden stares at Flanagan.

MADDEN

Are you old enough to work here?

CUT TO:

Trip tries to calm William James Gin down. He may or may not be on the verge of a panic attack.

TRIP

It's okay. We all get nervous.

WILLIAM JAMES GIN

I am so sorry.

MADDEN

Can I get you something? Water? A brown paper bag?

CUT TO:

Kosaka leans back in his chair, thinking hard.

KOSAKA
My favorite sport? Probably
Astroids.

MADDEN
No. A real sport. With a score.

KOSAKA
Oh. In that case, definitely
Asteroids.

Madden drops his head down on the table.

TRIP
What's your proudest moment?

KOSAKA
Getting top score on Asteroids.

Madden starts banging his head against the table.

CUT TO:

Zina is still in the process of answering the first question.
And has yet to take a breath.

ZINA
...which work extremely well
because they enable tight control
of salary whilst still making
progression attainable and clear.
Management can easily review and
refine the payment systems within
each family without affecting the
rest of the company and staff
members can see exactly what they
will get for going above and
beyond, as well as how to reach an
increased pay packet--

CUT TO:

William James Gin has broken out in hives.

MADDEN
Do you have any questions for us?

WILLIAM JAMES GIN
May I use your telephone to call
Mother for a ride home?

EXT. TRIP'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Madden and Trip toss a football back and forth.

MADDEN

I think we can both agree on hives
guy.

TRIP

Definitely. William James Gin is
in. No questions asked.

MADDEN

Are you kidding me?

TRIP

He's one of the best
troubleshooters there is.

MADDEN

With three names like that, the
only thing he's shooting is a
president.

TRIP

William James Gin is on the team.
Next.

MADDEN

Magician's out.

TRIP

You're probably right, but only
because I doubt we can afford him.
I'm still going to offer.

MADDEN

In that case, just hire them all.
John Wayne Gacy, Cape Guy,
Teenager, Girl--

TRIP

I just might.

MADDEN

Might what?

TRIP

Hire them all.

MADDEN

Seriously? That was your best of
the best?

TRIP
 What they lack in social skills
 they make up for in other skills.

MADDEN
 Half of them can't talk.

TRIP
 Good. I'm not hiring them to talk.
 I'm hiring you to talk.

MADDEN
 What?

TRIP
 Follow me. I have something I want
 to show you.

Madden is left holding the football. He follows Trip.

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Trip pulls up an image on one of the computers. It's a logo for JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL.

Madden stares at his digital likeness BURSTING through a wall on the screen.

MADDEN
 I'm in the game?

TRIP
 You are the game. And if anyone
 can make this game a reality, it's
 that team.

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The coders watch on as Madden finishes drawing a basic play on the whiteboard.

MADDEN
 ...And that is a 3-4 defense, set
 against a spread offense.

ANTONIK
 I don't follow.

MADDEN
 What do you mean you don't follow?
 (beat)
 There's nothing to not follow.
 (MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)
We haven't even started the play yet.

KOSAKA
Oh, this is a play.

LABASH
Not exactly Shakespeare, is it?

MADDEN
It's better than Shakespeare.

Labash snorts.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
It's football.

LABASH
It's still men in tights.

MADDEN
Men don't wear tights, they wear pads.
(pointing to board)
This is a 3-4 defense--

ZINA
So the hugs are defense and the kisses are offense?

MADDEN
What?

ZINA
The hugs are trying to get the ball from the kisses?

MADDEN
No one is trying to hug or kiss anyone. This is football.

LABASH
Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

MADDEN
I don't know what that means.

ANTONIK
So, the X's and O's are like binary code? Like ones and zeros?

MADDEN
They're not ones and zeros.
They're X's and O's.

ZINA
I don't follow.

Madden tries to steady his breathing.

MADDEN
We haven't started yet.

KOSAKA
Where's the football?

MADDEN
What do you mean?

KOSAKA
I don't see the football.

MADDEN
It's just a play. You don't need
to show the actual football.

KOSAKA
How do you play football without a
football?

MADDEN
The football is there, you just
can't see it.

KOSAKA
So, the football is there.
(beat)
But we can't see it?

MADDEN
Yes.

LABASH
Like the cursed amulet in The
Wizard of Wor?

MADDEN
Probably not. No.

KOSAKA
Like the homing mines in Star
Castle?

MADDEN
No. It's under center.

ZINA
So, like the ruins of the ancient
empire in Zork?

MADDEN
NO!

Madden SMASHES HIS FIST through the whiteboard.

MADDEN
It's like football. Just football.
Foot. Ball.

A long beat. Then--

LABASH
A rose by any other name--

Madden struggles to toss the ENTIRE WHITEBOARD at Labash.

MADDEN
Motherf--

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Madden places his overflowing tray of fast food down opposite
Trip.

TRIP
So. This is your happy place.

MADDEN
It's not my happy place. It's
America's happy place. They have a
happy meal.

TRIP
Is that the one thing you didn't
order?

MADDEN
It was a long day.

TRIP
I heard.

MADDEN
Well, it's going to take some
time, but I think it went well.

TRIP
You think it went well?

MADDEN
 (mouth full of Big Mac)
 That's right.

TRIP
 You put your fist through a
 whiteboard.

MADDEN
 Yeah. First day stuff.

Madden absentmindedly downs another order of fries.

TRIP
 Look, I have something I need to
 tell you.

MADDEN
 (offering)
 Milkshake?

TRIP
 My dad isn't happy.

MADDEN
 Just tell him to park it outside.
 It's a Toyota. Not a DeLorean.

TRIP
 No. It's not the truck. It's the
 loan. He wants to collect. Now.

Madden stops eating.

TRIP (CONT'D)
 But I have a plan. You said it
 yourself, this game is going to
 take time.

MADDEN
 And?

TRIP
 And Labash--

MADDEN
 The vampire-looking one?

TRIP
 He has a great game ready to go.
 It's a home run. A grand slam
 even.

MADDEN
 So it's a baseball game.

TRIP
Not exactly.

MADDEN
What is it then?

TRIP
The Bard's Tale. It's about an
evil wizard named Mangar the
Dark--

MADDEN
Jesus Christ. You people and the
elves.

TRIP
Long story short, I think if we
delay working on the football
game--

MADDEN
You mean stop?

TRIP
I mean delay.

MADDEN
Which means stop.

TRIP
Which means stop for now...then I
think we can get this company to
where it needs to be.

MADDEN
Outside of your parents' garage?

TRIP
If Bard's Tale performs well, then
that means more resources for our
game. More programmers, more
coders, a wider launch.

MADDEN
What am I supposed to do in the
meantime?

TRIP
What you were put on this Earth to
do. Make a playbook.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE'S - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Madden stares at a blank chalkboard. Virginia reads from a worn copy of *A Room of One's Own* in the corner.

He struggles to draw up a play. The football equivalent to writer's block.

VIRGINIA
(still reading)
So you're working with a bunch of
kids in a garage?

Madden's focused on the play. He doesn't answer.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
Should I be worried about you?
(beat)
Or the kids?

MADDEN
I told you, it's a temporary
workspace. The guy who invented
apples started in a garage.

VIRGINIA
Jobs?

MADDEN
Honey, for the last time, this is
a real job.

VIRGINIA
No. Steve Jobs.

MADDEN
What does this Steve guy have to
do with my job?

VIRGINIA
That reminds me, Mike has been
begging for a computer for months.

He catches Virginia glancing at him. Then at his play.

MADDEN
Don't watch me.

VIRGINIA
I wasn't watching you.

MADDEN
You're watching me right now.

VIRGINIA

Sixty-two million people can watch you call plays at Super Bowl XI, but I'm not allowed to watch you draw one up in our living room?

Virginia's gaze falls back onto her book.

MADDEN

It's just--I'm a little rusty.

VIRGINIA

Tell that to your outside linebacker.

Madden looks at the play, notices his mistake. He quickly erases the play from the board.

MADDEN

I don't know why this is so hard. I used to have binders full of plays back at Oakland.

VIRGINIA

Then why don't you use them?

MADDEN

Well, they're back in Oakland.

VIRGINIA

So? They're your playbooks.

MADDEN

What if Al says no?

CUT TO:

A CARTOON GOBLIN rips the head off a CARTOON ZOMBIE. We reveal the footage is playing on one of the monitors in...

INT. TRIP'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The coders gather around, watching the pixelated fight scene. They look pleased.

The Bard's Tale is almost ready.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - OFFICE - DAY

Madden and Trip sit opposite Al Davis, looking more "Folsom Prison" and a little less "Jailhouse Rock."

TRIP

...In conclusion, Coach Madden and I would be honored if we could implement his old playbook into our one of our upcoming titles at Electronic Arts.

AL

I'm sorry, but that playbook is property of the Oakland Raiders. As much as I would like to help...what did you call your company again?

TRIP

Electronic Arts.

AL

Electronic Arts. Huh. I never took you for an artist, John. Guess retirement changes a man.

MADDEN

Give me my damn playbook.

AL

Like I said--

MADDEN

It belongs to me.

AL

This is embarrassing.

MADDEN

It is. You're acting like a child.

AL

Not embarrassing for me. For you.
(beat)
Why are you here? Last I heard you were hocking computers out of some kid's garage?

TRIP

Technically, it's my parent's garage.

AL

I tried to send you away with some dignity, but I guess I have to be more clear this time. Get out of my office. Now.

MADDEN

Not without my playbook.

AL

What would you do with it? You can't even coach your own son's little league team. You're a joke.

TRIP

He's not a joke...
(off Al's glare)
Sir.

MADDEN

One way or another, it's going in that video game.

Al grins, then cackles.

AL

Video game? Video game? My God. Is that what this is about? Why didn't you say so?

Al stands up, reaching deep into his pocket.

AL (CONT'D)

Here. Here y'go.

Al tosses a handful of quarters at Madden and Trip.

AL (CONT'D)

Go to the arcade. Have the time of your life. Win something for once.

Madden charges at Al, pushing him against the wall.

AL (CONT'D)

Whatever you're thinking about doing, forget about it.

Madden slowly releases Al, then takes a step backward.

AL (CONT'D)

Forget my name and forget my number while you're at it. Just like every Raider fan has already forgotten yours.

Trip pulls Madden toward the exit.

TRIP

Let's go.

AL (CONT'D)
Nice meeting you, Trip. I'll call
you if my beeper stops working.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - HALLWAY - DAY

Madden and Trip walk away from Al's office.

TRIP
So...you didn't really retire, did
you?

Madden stops. He makes a beeline down another hallway.

Trip follows - slightly curious, slightly concerned.

TRIP
John?

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - RECORDS ROOM - DAY

A dark, dank room stockpiled with rows and rows of dusty boxes
packed with playbooks, film and football equipment.

All of a sudden, the LOCKED DOOR shakes.

TRIP (O.S.)
Are you breaking the law?

Another jolt.

MADDEN (O.S.)
(windy)
No.

Then another.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Just the door.

Finally, the door FLIES OFF ITS HINGES.

The door falls flat to the floor. A cloud of dust dissipates,
revealing Madden.

He enters the room and begins stacking boxes into Trip's open
arms.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - PARKING LOT - DAY

Madden and Trip flee the stadium with as many boxes as they can carry.

A literal paper trail blows in the breeze behind them.

MONTAGE:

- We see copies of The Bard's Tale hitting shelves across the country. Then...
- The shelves are empty. A SOLD OUT sign stands in their place.
- Trip, Madden and the coders move into Electronic Arts' new, modern-looking headquarters.
- During a team meeting, Madden puts his fist through another whiteboard.
- Moments later, Trip installs a glass divider between their offices.
- A calm Trip speaks with Madden, then walks to the other side of the divider, then relays Madden's message in coding jargon.
- Back in the empty garage, Trip's dad happily parks his truck inside.
- The coders type at breakneck speeds, working to implement the stolen Raiders' playbook into the game.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Madden, now wearing an apron, proudly carries in a large tray of grilled burgers, brats and ribs from outside.

Mike follows Madden around the kitchen. Virginia slices ingredients for a salad (that Madden will pretend to eat).

MIKE

Take me with you.

MADDEN

Why do you want to hang out at an office building?

MIKE

It's not just an office building.

MADDEN

It actually is.

MIKE

Take me with you.

MADDEN

Why?

MIKE
You're telling me you know Michael
Labash?

MADDEN
Yes.

MIKE
The. Michael. Labash.

MADDEN
The?

MIKE
The lead designer on Heart of
Africa and Tales of the Unknown?

MADDEN
I usually call him Count Chocula.
But yeah. He works there.

MIKE
And Michael Kosaka? Robin Antonik?
Zina Yee?

MADDEN
Yes. All of them. In an office
building. Far from sunlight. As
usual.

Mike is seconds away from having a full-on meltdown.

MIKE
Take me with you. Please.

The phone rings.

MADDEN
You do know I'm friends with real
celebrities right?

Another ring.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Terry Bradshaw, Walter Payton, Joe
Namath...

Virginia answers the phone.

MIKE
Uh, yeah. Let me know when any of
those guys is the lead programmer
for Targ.

MADDEN
What's Targ?

MIKE
It's like Stratovox, but it
doesn't suck ass.

VIRGINIA
Mike! Language!

MADDEN
We don't talk like that in this
house.
(beat)
You can say "ass," just not the
other weird stuff.

VIRGINIA
(handing phone to Madden)
It's Trip.

Mike squeals like a teenage girl at a Beatles concert.

MIKE
TRIP HAWKINS?!

MADDEN
How do you know Trip--

MIKE
TRIP HAWKINS IS CALLING OUR
HOUSE?!

Madden places a palm to his ear.

MADDEN
(into phone)
Hello?

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Trip sits at his desk. A series of framed game posters line the
walls behind him.

TRIP
(into phone)
Madden. It's time.

EXT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - PARKING LOT - DAY

Madden and Mike - wearing a DARTH VADER T-shirt and a hoodie -
exit the LeBaron.

Madden heads toward the entrance. Mike stands frozen by the car.

MADDEN
Are you coming or what?

MIKE
I-I can't go up there.
(glancing down)
I shouldn't have worn this stupid
shirt.

MADDEN
What are you talking about?

MIKE
Only posers wear Vader.
(to himself)
Should've worn Boba Fett.

MADDEN
There's a guy in there who wears a
cape. You'll be fine.

MIKE
He's not just a guy. He's one of
the greatest programmers in the
history of mankind.

MADDEN
Listen, don't worry about it. I
practically run this place.

Madden places a paw on Mike's shoulder.

MADDEN
Let me put it in terms you'll
understand. This is a dungeon. And
I'm the dragon.

MIKE
(shrugging off Madden's hand)
Jesus Christ. If you're going to
talk like that, I'll stay in the
car.

MADDEN
For the record, I think you are
very cool.

MIKE
(rolling his eyes)
Come on.

Mike zips up his hoodie, covering Darth Vader. He trudges past Madden and toward the entrance.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Just don't embarrass me.

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Trip waits for Madden and Mike - one hand behind his back.

MIKE
(starstruck)
You're...

TRIP
Trip Hawkins. Great to finally
meet you. You must be Mike.

MIKE
You know my name?

TRIP
Of course.
(beat)
And I brought you something.

From behind his back, Trip withdraws an unwrapped VIDEO GAME.

Trip looks at the cover, where a mythical creature with a six-pack wields a giant sword.

MIKE
Deathlord!

TRIP
Thought you might like it. 16
continents, 128 unique monsters,
and 20 dungeons, all on two
double-density 5¼-inch floppy
disks.

MIKE
Rad.

MADDEN
You really shouldn't have.

TRIP
It's the least I could do,
especially if he's going to help
us today.

MADDEN
What?

MIKE
You need my help?

TRIP
We need someone who knows their way around computers to test out the game. But they also need to have firsthand experience playing football too...

MIKE
You mean me?

TRIP
I mean you.

MIKE
I get to play the game?

TRIP
You'll be the first person to play the game. Ever.

Mike is speechless.

TRIP (CONT'D)
Interested?

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Trip and Mike stand on one side of the elevator. Madden on the other.

MIKE
*Of castle walls and torchlit
halls--*

TRIP
And a price men had to pay--

MIKE
*Till men of old for blood and
gold--*

TRIP AND MIKE
Had rescued Skara Brae!

Madden watches his son double over with laughter, sighs.

TRIP
Wait, is that a Darth Vader shirt?

MADDEN

Yeah, only posers wear Vader, am I right?

TRIP

No way. I love Darth Vader.

MIKE

You do?

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Trip, Mike and Madden file in. Mike has unzipped his hoodie.

MIKE

Wait, wait, wait. So it was your idea to put the undead under the temple of the Mad God?

TRIP

(no duh)

Do you have to defeat a Lich to obtain an eye?

Mike and Trip share a laugh. Madden laughs a little too hard a little too late.

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trip opens the door. Mike enters first. He sees Antonik, LaBash and Zina sitting at the end of a long conference table.

His jaw hits the floor.

MIKE

Wow...

Madden files in behind him. He takes a look at the COMPUTER SCREEN behind the coders.

On the screen is Madden's smiling digital likeness, wearing a suit and tie and tossing a football to himself.

MADDEN

(off Mike's reaction)

Clean up pretty good, don't I?

Mike stammers, struggling to form speech.

ZINA

You must be Mike. I'm Zina.

Mike nods.

MIKE

I know.

Antonik gestures toward the computer tower.

ANTONIK

Go ahead. It's ready to go. No quarters required.

Mike smiles, approaching the keyboard.

TRIP

(to Madden)

You too. It's a two-player.

MADDEN

But I've never worked with a computer before.

TRIP

Good. We're not working. We're playing.

Madden assumes his place behind the other keyboard.

MADDEN

(to Mike)

Are you ready for some football?

Mike's hand reaches toward the keyboard. Presses play.

LABASH

One small step for man.

The game fires up...

The synths of the THEME SONG kick in...

And on the bright GREEN FIELD we see...

14 PLAYERS.

Madden looks revolted.

Madden turns to Trip.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

This is...unbelievable.

ANTONIK

I know. The graphics turned out even better than I imagined.

LABASH

It's like watching a real football game. Not that I ever have.

MADDEN

That's pretty clear. No one in this room apparently has.

TRIP

What's wrong?

MADDEN

What's wrong? What's wrong?

Madden stomps over to the screen, his blood pressure skyrocketing.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

There are only 14 goddamn players on the goddamn screen.

MIKE

So what?

MADDEN

So this isn't football.

MIKE

Who cares? It looks awesome.

MADDEN

This isn't football. Like everything else around here, it's make believe. A fantasy.

TRIP

Just wait till you play it.

MADDEN

I can't. No one can. You know why? Because you can't play football without 22 goddamn players on the goddamn field.

TRIP

Even with an aftermarket graphics card, the Apple II doesn't have enough RAM--

MADDEN

Speak English before I ram you through that window.

TRIP

It's not an oversight. It's a logistical issue. We simply don't have the computing power. I believe we can get to 22 players, eventually.

MADDEN

Define "eventually."

TRIP

A few years.

MADDEN

A few years.

TRIP

It's like building a football team. It takes time.

MADDEN

Except I wouldn't have a football team with only 14 players.

TRIP

14 is the best I can do. It's the best we can do.

The room is dead silent.

MADDEN

Y'know what? Who cares, right?

MIKE

Right.

MADDEN

Right? It's just a number.

TRIP

I really think if you just give it a chance--

MADDEN

Here's a number for you. Zero.

Madden HURLS the computer monitor across the room.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Zero. It's how many people will buy this garbage game if we roll it out as is.

He SMASHES the keyboard against the conference table.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

(to Trip)

Zero. It's how much I value a Harvard diploma right now.

He CURB STOMPS the computer tower.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Zero. It's the chance in hell that my name is attached to this piece of shit.

TRIP

It's a beta.

MADDEN

You're a beta.

TRIP

I think you're being unrealistic.

MADDEN

I'm unrealistic? You make your living off of elves and goblins and fairy dust.

MIKE

Dad, stop.

MADDEN

Not now.

MIKE

Maybe he has a point. Video games aren't about being realistic. Like in Questmaster I: The Prism of Heheutotol--

MADDEN

Shut up, Mike. Okay? Just shut up. Enough with the lords and the ladies and the quest for the goblet of who-the-fuck-cares.

Mike fends off tears.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

You know why I push you? Why I make you play football? It's not because I'm trying to be an asshole. It's because I love you. Because I care about you.

(MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)
(looking directly at Trip)
Because I don't want you to end up
like him.

TRIP
What do you want from me?

MADDEN
I want you to make this game
right. Start over. From zero.

Trip bites his lip - but he can't hold it in.

TRIP
Zero. It's how many people want to
be around you on a daily basis.
(beat)
Zero. It's the number of coaching
offers you got after the Raiders
kicked you to the curb.
(beat)
Zero. It's the number of dollars
you have made for this company. My
company.

MADDEN
Your company would still be in a
garage if it wasn't for me.

TRIP
No.

Trip points to the coders.

TRIP (CONT'D)
My company would still be in a
garage if it wasn't for them. If
it wasn't for Bard's Tale.

MADDEN
Go ahead. Keep pretending. Just
like you pretended to be a
bartender. Or a real football
player. Or a CEO.

TRIP
Well, good news, I'm not the CEO.
Not anymore.

MADDEN
What?

TRIP

Zero. It's how much I care about John Madden Football. I'm done.

MADDEN

You think I need you?

TRIP

I don't care what you need. It's not my job anymore. I'm stepping down. I'm going to focus my time on elves and goblins and fairy dust and all the other projects around here that actually make money. Real money.

MADDEN

You're quitting?

TRIP

No, Madden. I'm resigning.

(to coders)

Sorry you had to find out this way.

(to Mike)

Sorry we had to meet like this.

(to Madden)

Sorry about your career.

Trip storms out. Madden turns to the coders - shocked.

INT. SPANOS STADIUM - FIELD HOUSE - DAY (1958)

Young Madden sits upright, his leg outstretched.

A TRAINER enters the room carrying an X-RAY on a clipboard. He takes a seat.

Madden tries to hide his pain.

The trainer gives a look. Bad news.

MADDEN

Don't.

TRAINER

I'm sorry.

MADDEN

Don't tell me that. I'll be fine by Saturday. It doesn't even hurt.

TRAINER

John. It's out of my hands.

MADDEN
I can't miss this game. Not
Bowling Green.

TRAINER
You suffered a very serious knee
injury--

MADDEN
The team needs me.

TRAINER
I can't clear you to play. I can't
even clear you to travel.

Madden turns away. This news hurts more than the injury.

TRAINER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I really am.

The trainer gives Madden a pat on the shoulder. Leaves.

Madden SLAMS his fist against the table. Seething.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Virginia cooks eggs on the stove. Madden sits at the table,
reading a newspaper.

Mike comes downstairs.

MADDEN
Mike, I was thinking we could--

MIKE
(to Virginia)
Is it alright if I go to Martin's?
He said Blockbuster just got Wrath
of Khan.

VIRGINIA
That's fine, sweetie.

Mike leaves. Then, silence.

MADDEN
Mike tell you what happened at the
office?

Nothing. She slides two eggs onto her plate.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
So, I take it you're mad at me?

Obviously.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Should I make my own plate or...?

Virginia walks the pan across the kitchen and dumps the remaining eggs into the trash.

She takes her plate, sits at the table, starts eating.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Okay then.

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - BOARD ROOM - DAY

Madden sits across from a couple of young MARKETING EXECUTIVES. White collar types wearing white collar shirts.

MARKETING EXEC 1
With Mr. Hawkins assuming a more creative role within the company, we wanted to touch base with you--

MARKETING EXEC 2
No pun intended.

MADDEN
No pun at all. Bases are for baseball. We're making a football game.

MARKETING EXEC 1
Right. Well, we wanted to discuss--

MARKETING EXEC 2
Potentially--

MARKETING EXEC 1
Refocusing our marketing strategy for the John Madden Football brand.

MADDEN
What's wrong with the current strategy?

MARKETING EXEC 1
Again, this is all very--

MARKETING EXEC 2
Hypothetical--

MARKETING EXEC 1
But, we think it could be exciting
to put a spokesperson on the
cover.

MADDEN
We do have a spokesperson on the
cover. Me.

MARKETING EXEC 1
Yes, but we think--

MARKETING EXEC 2
Again, hypothetically--

MARKETING EXEC 1
It could be very exciting to see a
real pro athlete right on the
cover.

MADDEN
Trip promised me that my face
would be on the cover. He said I
was the game.

MARKETING EXEC 2
Trip's gone.

MARKETING EXEC 1
Still an employee at Electronic
Arts--

MARKETING EXEC 2
But gone.

MARKETING EXEC 1
We were thinking someone more--

MARKETING EXEC 2
In shape.

MADDEN
In shape? What the hell is that
supposed to mean?

No answer.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
There can't be someone else on the
cover of John Madden Football.
Then it's not John Madden
Football.

MARKETING EXEC 2
That brings us to our next point.

MARKETING EXEC 1
We thought it would be exciting
if--

MARKETING EXEC 2
Possibly--

MARKETING EXEC 1
We changed the name.

Madden holds up his index finger.

MADDEN
Hypothetically, may I show you
something?

MARKETING EXEC 1
Yes.

MARKETING EXEC 2
Of course.

MADDEN
Please, follow me. It won't take
long. Promise.

Madden motions for the execs to follow him to the doorway.

Madden walks to the opposite side of their doorframe. The execs
stand on the other side, still in their office.

Madden, holding his index finger in the air, clears his throat.

MADDEN
Watching?

They nod.

Madden SLAMS. THE. FUCKING. DOOR. IN. THEIR. FACES.

EXT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Madden fumbles with his keys outside his LeBaron.

MADDEN
(under his breath)
Hypothetically my ass.

Then, in the reflection of his driver's side mirror, he spots a
BLACK LIMOUSINE pulling up to the entrance.

He turns, squinting, to see none other than JOE MONTANA getting
out of the limo - his mullet still flowing in the breeze.

MADDEN
Tiger Beat.

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madden barrels down the hall, sidestepping employees every step of the way.

MADDEN
No. No. No--

INT. ELECTRONIC ARTS HQ - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

LARRY PROBST (38) signs paperwork with a very expensive fountain pen.

You know those rich kids who threaten people with questions like, "Do you know who my father is?" He's their father.

Madden bursts through the door, quickly followed by a FRANTIC SECRETARY. She definitely has a perm.

MADDEN
No. Not him. Anyone but him.

FRANTIC SECRETARY
I'm sorry, Mr. Probst. I tried to stop him but--

MADDEN
Joe Montana? Over my dead body.

PROBST
John Madden. I don't believe we've met. I'm Larry Probst. The new CEO. Can I get you something?

MADDEN
Sure, I'll take Joe Montana's beating heart on a platter.

PROBST
We have water, Fresca, both kinds of Coke.

MADDEN
You mean drugs?

PROBST
I mean regular and diet.

MADDEN

Oh, so I need to drink Diet Coke now. Is that what this is about? Is it my figure, Larry? Slim up or else you'll put Joe Cool on the cover of my game?

PROBST

I can promise you Joe Montana will not be on the cover of your game.

MADDEN

Oh.

PROBST

He will be on the cover of his game.

MADDEN

His game?

PROBST

Correct.

MADDEN

Larry, allow me to tell you what I told your marketing team downstairs--

Madden stands up.

PROBST

Things are changing, John. We are no longer Electronic Arts. We are EA Sports. And at EA Sports, we are developing two football games.

MADDEN

And?

PROBST

And the top-selling game survives.

MADDEN

What about second place?

PROBST

There is no second place. You of all people know that. You have until Christmas Day.

Probst returns to signing his forms.

MADDEN

What's on Christmas Day?

PROBST
(without looking up)
The debut of Joe Montana Football.

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - BULLPEN - DAY

Madden sits alone in the vast maze of cubicles and computers.
He checks his watch. Finally, the coders file in.

LABASH
(cackling)
--And then I said to him, "Next
time you'll have to use the
longsword!"

The coders laugh.

ANTONIK
Sorry, we got held up.

MADDEN
Not a problem.

LABASH
Probst wants a sequel to Bard's
Tale.

ZINA
Yesterday.

MADDEN
I'm happy for all of you.

Madden tries his best to smile. Not great.

ZINA
You okay?

MADDEN
What's the sequel about?

ANTONIK
Do you really want to know?

MADDEN
Of course. What's it about?

ANTONIK

(hesitant)

Well, The Destiny Knight must assemble a band of adventurers to track down the seven pieces of the Destiny Wand...

MADDEN

Ooh. A date with Destiny. Nice.

ANTONIK

...And defeat the evil Archmage, Lagoth Zanta--

MADDEN

Zanta. I love it!

ZINA

Are you sure you're okay?

MADDEN

Are you kidding? Never been better.

ANTONIK

(to Labash and Zina)

Is he...smiling?

ZINA

I'm not sure. I've never seen him happy before.

LABASH

It's either that or he's having a stroke.

MADDEN

Ha! The only stroke I'm having is a stroke...of genius! Because this game sounds great.

(beat)

More, tell me more.

LABASH

Um, well, you can choose to play as a human, hobbit, half-elf, gnome...

MADDEN

Why'd you stop?

LABASH

I'm sorry, I'm just waiting for you to call me a virgin or something.

Madden forces a laugh.

MADDEN

Virgin? You? No...

The coders wait for a punchline that doesn't come.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

I'm not here to make fun of you.
I'm here to make history with you.

ANTONIK

Nice try. We know about the other football game.

LABASH

And Jim Dakota.

MADDEN

You mean Joe Montana.

LABASH

Where do they come up with these names?

MADDEN

Do any of you actually know who Joe Montana is?

They all shake their heads. Nope.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Joe Montana is the popular kid in high school. The one with the hot rod and the hot girlfriend. He's here to shove us into a locker.

LABASH

You forgot the part where he wraps the band of your underwear over your eyes--

ANTONIK

And shoves his jockstrap in your mouth--

ZINA

Then has his friends vote you prom queen.

MADDEN

...That last one doesn't sound too bad?

ZINA

They voted a pig as prom king.

MADDEN

Jesus Christ.

(beat)

That sounds exactly like something Joe Montana would do.

LABASH

He would?

MADDEN

Definitely. I ran into him the other day when he was getting out of his limo--

ZINA

Limo?

MADDEN

Yeah, EA Sports got him his own private limo.

LABASH

No one's ever gotten us a limo.

MADDEN

On top of that, he thinks you guys can't code. He said that to my face. Can you believe that?

The coders look disgusted.

ANTONIK

What an asshole.

LABASH

Sounds like a real meatshield.

MADDEN

That's what I said. That's exactly what I said.

(beat)

But now, it's time for your own date with destiny. Are you going to turn down that date?

ANTONIK

No!

LABASH

I wouldn't turn down a date with anyone.

ZINA

Is the date a pig?

MADDEN

Who's with me? Who's ready to make the game that changes football forever?

Madden extends his hand. Antonik nods.

ANTONIK

Fuck Joe Montana.

Antonik places his hand on top of Madden's.

LABASH

Let's nerf that skill monkey.

MADDEN

Right...Does that mean you're in?

LABASH

Aye.

LaBash slaps his hand on top of Antonik's. They all turn to Zina, who hesitates.

ZINA

Why should we work for you? After what you did to Trip?

MADDEN

I don't want you to work for me, Zina. I want you to work with me. No jokes. No threats.

(to LaBash)

No mean nicknames.

LABASH

Why did you look at me when you said that?

ZINA

No yelling.

MADDEN

No yelling? Be reasonable.

ZINA

No yelling, or I walk.

MADDEN
Fine. No yelling.

Zina places her hand on the pile. They all smile.

MADDEN
Alright, on three. One, two--

CODERS
Huzzah!

MADDEN
Usually you just say "team," but okay.

MONTAGE:

A) The coders watch on as Madden uses a marker to break down game film on an old projector.

MADDEN
This is a quarterback. He's the most important player on the field. The offense does whatever he says. He's like the...

Madden flips through a D&D HANDBOOK by his side.

MADDEN
Dungeonmaster.

The coders nod in unison, taking notes.

B) The coders stand behind Madden as he tries to decipher a string of characters on the computer screen.

ANTONIK
In programming, we have a way of storing values so that we can reuse or change them.

LABASH
They're called variables. A variable can easily change its value to make code more flexible.

MADDEN
So, like when a Mike linebacker sees a wideout in motion and calls an audible?

ZINA
Exactly.

C) Madden barks orders at the coders as they run mock plays at the park.

MADDEN
Dungeonmaster fakes to the
wizard--

Antonik fakes a handoff to LaBash.

MADDEN
The ranger blitzes. The barbarian
closes in--

Antonik dodges an imaginary tackle.

MADDEN
The sorcerer's open in the
Forgotten Realm!

Antonik hurls a wobbly spiral downfield to Zina.
She awkwardly catches the ball.

MADDEN
Touchdown!

The coders celebrate. Madden grins.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Madden enters, a copy of The Bard's Tale II under his arm.
He kisses Virginia on the cheek.

MADDEN
How was your day?

VIRGINIA
I need to talk to you.

MADDEN
I made some serious progress with
Antonik and Zina and Cape G--
(corrects himself)
LaBash. They even gave me a trial
version of their game.

VIRGINIA
It's about Mike.

MADDEN
That's what I thought. Mike would
love this.
(MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)

(upstairs)

Mike! I got somethin' for ya.

VIRGINIA

John--

MADDEN

It's going to take some serious work, but I think they're really starting to understand the game. Maybe even like it. Can you believe that?

VIRGINIA

John--

Mike sulks down the stairs. He spies the game. Perks up.

MIKE

What's that?

MADDEN

A peace offering. You're my son, and if you want to play Dungeons & Dragons, then I support you.

Madden places the game in Mike's hands.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

It's a rough cut of Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight.

MIKE

Seriously?

MADDEN

Thought you might like it.

MIKE

If you think this is changing my mind, it's not.

MADDEN

What's not?

MIKE

I'm not playing.

MADDEN

Didn't you hear what I just said? You don't have to quit playing D&D.

MIKE
 (to Virginia)
 You said you were going to tell
 him.

MADDEN
 Tell me what?

VIRGINIA
 Mike quit the football team today.

Madden's demeanor darkens.

MADDEN
 You can't quit.

VIRGINIA
 It's okay--

MADDEN
 No. It's not okay. I didn't raise
 my son to be a quitter.

MIKE
 Just a football player.

MADDEN
 You're not quitting on your team.
 Not in the middle of a season.

MIKE
 You can't make me play a game.

MADDEN
 But I can keep you from playing
 one.

Madden wrestles the copy of The Bard's Tale II out of Mike's
 grasp.

MIKE
 That's mine!

VIRGINIA
 Stop! Both of you!

MADDEN
 You want to be like Trip? Is that
 what this is?

MIKE
 He left because of you!

MADDEN

No. He left because he's a quitter. Because when life gets hard, he gives up.

Madden snaps the disk in half. He hands the broken remains of the game back to Mike.

MADDEN

Here. Have fun.

MIKE

I don't hate football.

Mike tosses the disk pieces at Madden's feet.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Just you.

Mike walks back upstairs. Madden turns to Virginia.

MADDEN

You were going to let this happen?

Virginia shakes her head.

VIRGINIA

I'm tired of playing the referee.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

You can't disagree with me here. If he gives up now, when does it stop?

Virginia goes to follow Mike upstairs.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

We're on the same team--

Virginia turns back and SLAPS Madden across the face.

VIRGINIA

Enough. Enough about teams. This isn't a team. This is me. And you. And our son. This is our life.

MADDEN

I don't know why I even try anymore. I can't win with either of you.

VIRGINIA

If you treat your family like a game, you're going to lose both of us.

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - RECORDING BOOTH - NIGHT

Behind a large black microphone, Madden sits slumped in his chair.

He looks like he hasn't slept in days.

ANTONIK (O.S.)

John?

(beat)

John?

He stares off into space.

ANTONIK (CONT'D) (O.S.)

It's pretty late. If you need a break--

Madden snaps out of it.

He looks back to the coders, who sit on the opposite side of a pane of glass dividing the room.

MADDEN

No. No, I'm fine. What's the line?

ANTONIK

"If this team doesn't put points on the board I don't see how they can win."

MADDEN

I'm not saying that.

ANTONIK

Well, you have to.

MADDEN

Well, I'm not.

LABASH

We have to record the line how I wrote it. It's too late in the design stage to--

MADDEN

Of course you wrote it.

LABASH

What's that supposed to mean?

MADDEN

It means it doesn't make any damn sense. No shit you have to put points on the board to win. That's how you win.

ANTONIK

With all due respect, he's right. Our graphics package is already set in stone--

MADDEN

I won a Super Bowl. Do you understand? You aren't telling me what I can and cannot say.

Zina reaches for the switchboard--

MADDEN (CONT'D)

No. Don't turn it off.

ZINA

You need to go home. Get some sleep.

MADDEN

We have a deadline, remember?

ANTONIK

Let's just take five.

MADDEN

It's fine. I'll read it as is. Ready?

Madden looks through the glass. They nod. He clears his throat.

MADDEN

(Labash impression)

If this team doesn't put points on the board I don't see how they can win.

(back to normal)

How was that? No? I'll try again.

Antonik and Zina stare back. Labash fumes.

MADDEN

(Labash impression)

This is Michael Labash, recording live from his mother's basement.

(MORE)

MADDEN (CONT'D)

I wear a cape and my girlfriend is a fucking wood nymph.

LABASH

C'mon, Madden--

MADDEN

I'm sorry. That's insensitive. I know you don't have a girlfriend.

Silence.

ANTONIK

Are you done?

MADDEN

Now that you mentioned it, I'm just getting started.

Madden tosses his headphones against the glass.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

When are you all going to grow up? Get real jobs? Your whole life revolves around these made-up games with made-up rules and made-up points--

LABASH

How's that any different from your life?

MADDEN

Because my points matter. My points fill stadiums. My points go in record books. Your points are pointless.

(beat)

I won a fucking Super Bowl. You can't even put 22 players on a screen, can you?

(beat)

Can you?! Fucking losers. Go ahead. Quit. Quit like everyone else.

On the opposite side of the glass, LaBash cuts the tape, muting Madden's tirade mid-sentence.

Like the coders, we can't hear anything Madden is shouting on the other side of the room.

One by one, the coders leave the studio as Madden continues his silent tirade.

Madden trashes the studio. Throwing his chair, punching the mic, overturning a drum set in the corner.

INT. CAL POLY DORM - LOBBY - NIGHT (1958)

On crutches, Young Madden, enters to see a crowd of people gathering around the black-and-white TV in the lobby.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Did we win?

No one answers.

MADDEN

Lose?

Madden turns his attention to the TV.

On the screen, a REPORTER solemnly reads over the chyron:

CAL POLY FOOTBALL TEAM IN AIR CRASH; 22 DEAD

Young Virginia emerges from the crowd.

She wraps her arms around Madden's neck.

He crumbles into her arms - weeping.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU - DAY

Commercial footage. Driving a convertible, Madden pulls up to order at McDonald's. He speaks directly to the camera.

MADDEN

On the road, no one can give you a great, hot meal faster than McDonald's. And I figured out how they do it.

INT. MCDONALD'S - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Several McDonald's EMPLOYEES work side by side in the kitchen.

Off screen, Madden HIGHLIGHTS each team member as he breaks down their tasks like a football play.

MADDEN (V.O.)
 Jenny calls signals, sends Carl
 deep for a Big Mac and cuts inside
 for your Coke. Look at him fly!

Another employee squirts ketchup and mustard onto a picturesque
 double cheeseburger.

MADDEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Back here you got Joel, puttin'
 moves on the Big Mac.
 (scribbling on the screen)
 Doink! Doink!

One employee hands off the bag of fast food to another, who
 heads straight for the drive-thru window.

MADDEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Now Carl hands off to Beth and
 clears a lane. This team's got it
 together. See what I mean?

EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU - CONTINUOUS

Beth hands the McDonald's bag to Madden in his convertible.

MADDEN
 It all ends with a pass to you -
 hot and fast!

He pops a fry into his mouth. Grins to the camera.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 Want to see it again? Drive on in.

INT. FOX BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

Now wearing a headset, Madden stands in the booth opposite PAT
 SUMERALL. Picture a sports commentator...

Great. That's Pat Sumerall.

SUMERALL
 (broadcast laugh)
 That, everyone, was of course the
 newest member of Fox Sports. Our
 very own, John Madden.

MADDEN
 Great to be here, Pat.

SUMERALL

You've gone all the way from
selling play fakes to selling
hamburgers.

MADDEN

Well, my wife's shopping bills
aren't going to pay for
themselves.

(to the camera)

I'm just kidding, Virginia. You
know I love ya!

CUT TO:

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - SAME

Virginia sits in her chair, now reading Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*.

She licks her finger, flips the page. The television is off.

BACK TO:

EXT. MILE HIGH STADIUM - DAY

Game footage. The DENVER BRONCOS are down 20-21 against the
DETROIT LIONS.

SUMERALL (O.S.)

Denver approaches the line of
scrimmage. Out of time outs and
out of field goal range. It's now
or never.

The Broncos offense lines up near midfield. The QUARTERBACK
motions for an audible. The defense shifts.

MADDEN (O.S.)

If I'm DeBerg here--

Madden begins marking up the screen with his TELECASTER. He
circles the two wideouts on the left side of the field.

MADDEN (O.S.)

I want the defense to look off
Manning and Moses. So naturally...

He sketches a route for both receivers in the end zone.

MADDEN (O.S.)
 I'm going to fake to Egloff--
 BANG--then run a curl route over
 the top.

He scribbles at the tip of the curl route.

MADDEN (O.S.)
 You see that? You see that mess
 there?

Sumerall squirms offscreen.

SUMERALL
 Uh, well--Yes.

MADDEN (O.S.)
 Once Allen commits to one--

More scribbles.

MADDEN (O.S.)
 BOOM. Somebody's gonna be open.

A long beat.

SUMERALL (O.S.)
 (flustered)
 Um. Well...

Madden's telecaster drawing looks exactly like a 50-yard penis.
 (Yes, this really happened.)

SUMERALL (O.S.)
 Let's, uh, see if you're right.

The Broncos hike the ball and...

SUMERALL (O.S.)
 DeBerg drops back. Fakes right.

They do exactly what Madden drew up just seconds ago.

SUMERALL (O.S.)
 He's going deep to Moses--

The quarterback flings the ball downfield to a receiver - wide
 open in the end zone.

SUMERALL (O.S.)
 Touchdown, Denver! And just like
 that the Broncos are back on top!
 (to Madden)
 You better be careful, John.
 (MORE)

SUMERALL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You just might go down as one of
 the best to ever step in the
 broadcast booth.

MADDEN (O.S.)
 (empty, to himself)
 Better be careful...

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Madden struggles to zip his bag shut as Virginia and Mike watch
 "Dallas."

MADDEN
 The network was so impressed they
 bumped me to the Thanksgiving
 game. Niners, Cowboys. Can you
 believe it?

Neither Virginia or Mike look away from the TV screen.

VIRGINIA
 Nope.

MIKE
 Unbelievable.

MADDEN
 I mean, I'm sorry I have to miss
 dinner with you guys. Really.

VIRGINIA
 It's okay.

MIKE
 We'll be fine.

MADDEN
 You sure? I mean, who's going to
 make the turducken?

Neither of them seem to care.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
 No, no. You're right. I can't
 cancel now. That would be
 unprofessional.
 (beat)
 Well, I better head out. Don't
 wanna be late.

He pauses by the door, wishing either of them would try to stop
 him. They don't.

MADDEN
Game's in Green Bay, so I should
be back on Saturday.

He steps outside, bag in hand. Looks back.

MADDEN
Happy Thanksgiving.

No response. He nods, then closes the door.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Madden sits by himself, reading the newspaper.

Over the sports section, he sees a series of men and women exiting the train. One by one, they are all met by a loved one.

Mothers embracing daughters. Sons rushing to meet fathers.
Grandparents scooping up grandchildren.

Madden walks against the current of heartfelt family reunions flowing out of the train.

Inside, he finds an empty car and slides the door shut.

INT. TRAIN - DINING CAR - LATER

Madden glances around the empty car. It's the same car where he first met Trip.

As Madden takes a seat, the overhead TV cuts to a commercial break.

ON TV:

In full uniform, Joe Montana swaggers to the line of scrimmage.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The designers of Joe Montana
Football wanted to bring you the
best video game possible.

Montana winks at the camera.

MONTANA
Hut! Hut!

NARRATOR (V.O.)
So we worked with the best.

MONTANA
Hike!

Montana drops back, dances around the defense, then rockets a bomb downfield.

The crowd goes wild.

Montana takes off his helmet, flips his hair.

MONTANA
(to camera)
Joe Montana Football. Play the
best.

Madden's face looks like he just stepped in dog shit.

He reaches over the bar, retrieving a bottle of scotch.

MADDEN
(to himself)
Son of a bitch...

He drinks straight from the bottle.

SUMERALL (PRE-LAP)
Can anyone stop Joe Montana?

INT. FOX BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

Madden and Sumerall stand in the booth, which has been decorated for Thanksgiving.

MADDEN
Apparently not, Pat.

Madden looks disheveled, depressed. A shell of a man.

SUMERALL
He might as well be wearing a
chef's hat out there, because Cool
Joe is cooking this Packers D like
a Thanksgiving turkey.

MADDEN
Yeah, he's alright.

Sumerall waits for more commentary that doesn't come.

SUMERALL
Alright then.
(back to camera)
Folks, speaking of turkey, our
very own John Madden has a very
special dish he'd like to share
with everyone.

MADDEN

I would?

A P.A. wheels a heap of meat on a platter into frame.

It's the TURDUCKEN.

SUMERALL

Tell us, John, what exactly is
this concoction?

MADDEN

It's, uh, something that I started
years back with my family. I guess
you could call it a tradition.

The P.A. hands Madden a knife and fork.

MADDEN

We could never decide what to cook
for Thanksgiving. My wife likes
duck, my son likes chicken, and I
like turkey. So--

Madden begins carving the overstuffed bird(s) with precision.

MADDEN

I created the "turducken." It's a
duck, stuffed inside a chicken,
wrapped inside a turkey.

He points to each layer of meat as his voice begins to crack.

MADDEN

I like to think of it like Mike
and Virginia are in the middle
here, and I'm the turkey. And I'm
hugging them from the outside.

Sumerall looks concerned.

Madden takes a bite of the turducken and chews, tears streaming
down his face. He tries to smile for the camera.

MADDEN

(smiling, mostly crying)
It's real good.

CUT TO:

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Virginia and Mike watch Madden's meltdown. Somewhat touched, somewhat worried.

BACK TO:

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - LATER

Snow flurries fall onto the field. The 49ers are up 13-3. The clock winds down to zero.

SUMERALL (O.S.)

And that's the game. The 49ers improve to 5 and 2 on the year. On the field, we are joined by the one and only, Joe Montana.

Joe Montana attempts to put on a headset as his teammates celebrate behind him.

49ERS

MVP! MVP! MVP!

SUMERALL (O.S.)

Great game as always, Joe.

MONTANA

Thanks, Pat, but all the credit goes to my offensive line. Without them blocking for me, I'd be in a world of hurt.

MADDEN (O.S.)

(under his breath)

Jesus Christ...

SUMERALL (O.S.)

As humble as he is talented, folks.

MONTANA

I also want to take this opportunity to wish everyone out there a very Happy Thanksgiving. Especially the team at EA Sports who is busy putting the finishing touches on Joe Montana Football. We've all been working real hard to cross every "T" and dot every "I" before the game rolls out this Christmas.

MADDEN (O.S.)
That's not how code works.

MONTANA
What?

MADDEN (O.S.)
That's not how code works. There
are no T's. There are no I's.
There are ones and zeros. It's
binary, you moron.

SUMERALL (O.S.)
Ha. The excitement of live
television!

MONTANA
I didn't know you were such a
computer nerd, John.

MADDEN (O.S.)
Coders aren't nerds, pretty boy.
They're actually really cool
people.

MONTAGE:

INT. ANTONIK HOUSE - SAME

Antonik, surrounded by his family, watches the game on TV.

MADDEN (ON TV)
For instance, Robin Antonik is the
best computer programmer I've ever
met. His code is so clean, you
could eat a turducken off it.

INT. LABASH HOUSE - SAME

LaBash's family watches the game too. LaBash is nowhere to be
seen.

MADDEN (ON TV)
You think the 49ers are a dynasty?
Michael LaBash writes real
dynasties. Enchanting worlds, with
trolls and dragons and warlocks.
Plus, he wears a cape. Do you know
how confident you have to be to
pull off a cape?

LaBash's family members stare at the TV. Their jaws are on the
dinner table.

LABASH'S UNCLE

Mikey! Come out the basement!
Sports man's talkin' 'bout you on
the TV!

INT. ZINA'S HOUSE - SAME

Zina watches the game on mute. Her family continues talking, ignoring the game, as Zina reads the closed captions.

MADDEN (ON TV)

Zina Yee is the smartest person
I've ever met. Give her a week and
she could design a defense that
would stop you in your tracks.

BACK TO:

INT. FOX BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

Pat stands speechless beside Madden and the turducken.

MONTANA (O.S.)

Pat, is everything okay up there?

MADDEN

This game may be over Montana, but
the real game is just beginning.

Madden tosses his headset onto the ground and storms out.

Pat stammers at the camera.

Then, Madden barges back into the room, grabs the turducken, and storms out again.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Madden holds the receiver to his ear.

MADDEN

C'mon, c'mon--

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Virginia picks up the phone.

VIRGINIA

Hello?

INTERCUT:

MADDEN

Hey, it's me. I was, uh, just thinking about you--

VIRGINIA

Yeah, I saw.

MADDEN

Oh, you were watching that?

VIRGINIA

Along with most of the country, yes.

MADDEN

I figured you didn't want to see me, onscreen or off.

(beat)

I miss you. And I'm sorry.

Mike wrestles the phone out of Virginia's hands.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to come straight home.

MIKE

No!

MADDEN

Look, I know you are still mad at me, and you have every right to be--

MIKE

No. You can't come home. You can't give up now.

MADDEN

Mike, I'll never give up on you. If you want to play football or D & D or Bard's Tale, I don't care. I just want you to be you. To be happy.

MIKE

That touches me deep down in my ovaries, Dad.

VIRGINIA

Mike!

MIKE

You can't let that asshat win. You can't give up on your team. On your game.

MADDEN

Mike, it's over. Montana's game comes out Christmas Day.

MIKE

So?

MADDEN

Even if I could convince everyone to come back, there just isn't enough time. By the time my train gets to California--

MIKE

Then don't get on the train.

MADDEN

I don't have a car. What do you expect me to do? Hitchhike?

MIKE

Dad. You can do it.

MADDEN

I can't--

MIKE

Not for me. Not for you. For the game.

MADDEN

You don't understand. I don't fly.

MIKE

Are you going to let Joe Montana beat you again?

MADDEN

Now, hold on--

MIKE

Or are you going to show him what you're made of once and for all?

MADDEN

Are you giving me a motivational speech right now?

MIKE

Go. Time waits for no man. And neither do airplanes.

MADDEN

But I'm afraid of flying.

MIKE
Fear isn't the end.

Mike hangs up the phone.

Madden looks at the receiver, then checks his watch.

He sprints out of the phone booth and into the snow.

INT. MILWAUKEE AIRPORT - DAY

Ticket in hand, Madden races through the airport, dodging people left and right.

Finally, he arrives at his gate.

He stops in his tracks. Gasps for breath.

A panic attack sets in...

EXT. FUNERAL SERVICE - DAY (1958)

Dressed in all black, young Madden and Virginia watch as JAMES' DAD approaches the podium.

A large photo of JAMES MINER rests beside the closed casket.

JAMES' DAD
My son was afraid. Always was.
When he was a kid, he was afraid
of bees. When he was a teenager,
he was afraid of girls. And in
adulthood...now that I think about
it, he was still afraid of girls.

Madden almost laughs.

JAMES' DAD
James always used to say, "Fear
isn't the end." In fact, he
thought it meant the opposite. It
meant that you're pushing past
boundaries. Venturing into the
unknown. Becoming a stronger
person. A better man.

Madden clutches Virginia's hand.

JAMES' DAD
Now, I am more scared than I've
ever been in my entire life. My
biggest fear came true.
(MORE)

JAMES' DAD (CONT'D)

My oldest son is gone. I don't know how I'm going to live. I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know what I'm going to tell his brother. Or his mother. Or myself.

INT. MILAWUKEEEE AIRPORT - DAY

Madden is frozen, feet away from the gate.

JAMES' DAD (V.O.)

All I know is that I am afraid. But maybe James was right. Maybe now is when I have to venture into the unknown. Become a stronger person for my wife. A better man for my son. Because fear isn't the end. It's just the beginning.

Just as the gate is closing, Madden boards the plane to California.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

A BUSINESS MAN sits down beside Madden, who is trying his best not to look out the window.

BUSINESS MAN

What line of work you in?

MADDEN

Video games.

INT. SAN JOSE AIRPORT - DAY

Madden sprints through the terminal and out the door.

EXT. SAN JOSE AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Madden desperately tries to hail a cab. No luck.

Finally, a taxi pulls up. The DRIVER leans over in his seat.

DRIVER

You John Madden?

MADDEN

Yes, yes. That's me.

Madden steps forward. He pulls on the door handle. It's locked.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

What gives?

The driver laughs. Madden spies a Joe Montana bobblehead on the dash.

DRIVER

Go Niners!

Madden kicks the passenger door in as the taxi speeds away.

A car honks at him. Ready for another fight, Madden turns to see--

Virginia and Mike. In his LeBaron.

Mike throws the passenger door open.

VIRGINIA

Get in!

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - BULLPEN - DAY

Madden, Virginia and Mike sit across from Antonik, LaBash and Zina.

MADDEN

I'm sorry for what I said. What I did. I should've treated you better. All of you.

The coders aren't budging. Not yet.

MADDEN

Without you, there is no team. No game. No Madden.

ANTONIK

We know.

LABASH

We heard what you said on TV.

MADDEN

Wait. You were watching...football?

ANTONIK

I mean, I caught it flipping through the channels.

LABASH

Only because nothing else was on.

Madden swells with pride.

MADDEN

You guys are football fans!

ZINA

We are not--

MADDEN

Admit it. You're basically a bunch of dumb jocks.

ANTONIK

No.

LABASH

Never.

ZINA

No way.

MADDEN

I can see right through you. It's like you're a rouge playing with level 1 deception.

ANTONIK

Hold on.

(to LaBash)

Did you teach him about deception?

LABASH

No.

(to Zina)

Did you?

Zina shakes her head.

MIKE

You like D & D!

MADDEN

Who? Me? No.

MIKE

You've been playing, haven't you?

A long beat.

MADDEN

I travel a lot--

The coders lose their minds.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
There's nothing to do in hotel
rooms, okay?

ANTONIK
You're a nerd!

MADDEN
I'm not a nerd.

LABASH
You are one of us.

MADDEN
D & D is basically football, so--

CODERS
(playful)
Nerd. / You're a nerd. / Virgin.

Virginia cuts through their bonding moment.

VIRGINIA
I hate to break up the love fest,
but we have a deadline to meet.
(beat)
Are we going to kick Joe Montana's
ass or what?

Madden looks at Virginia like he's falling for her all over
again.

MADDEN
We have until Christmas. Who's
with me?

The coders hesitate.

ANTONIK
We don't have until Christmas.

MADDEN
What do you mean?

LABASH
It takes time to put out a game.

MADDEN
So...how long do we have?

ZINA
To finish programming--

LABASH
Plus burning, printing, scanning--

ANTONIK
48 hours.

Madden extends his hand.

Antonik places his hand on top of Madden's.

Followed by Zina. Then Virginia. Then Mike.

MADDEN
On three.
(beat)
One. Two--

They throw their hands in the air.

CODERS
Team!

MADDEN
Huzzah!

MONTAGE:

- LaBash types at breakneck speeds. Hits print.
- Mike grabs the printed piece of paper and takes off at a sprint.
- In the sound booth, Mike hands the paper to Madden.
- Madden records the line. Virginia shakes her head. He reads the line again. She nods.
- On the other side of the sound booth, Zina hands a floppy disk to Mike.
- Mike hands off the disk to Antonik who inserts it into a tower and keeps typing.

CUT TO:

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - BULLPEN - AFTERNOON

Probst enters to see the impromptu assembly line in motion. He waits for someone to notice him, but no one looks up.

PROBST
Hey!

Everyone freezes.

PROBST (CONT'D)

I thought I told you to stop work
on all other projects until Bard's
Tale II is on the shelves?

The coders look at each other. Madden starts to answer but--

PROBST (CONT'D)

I was talking to my employees.
Last I heard you were pulling a
Martha Stewart on Monday Night
Football.

(to coders)

For the last time, get to work on
a real project.

Antonik rises dramatically from his seat.

ANTONIK

You'll get Bard's Tale II when
it's ready.

PROBST

What did you say to me?

ANTONIK

I said...

Antonik gives an awkward kick to the nearby WATER COOLER.

It doesn't fall over. Another kick. It rocks back and forth.

Finally, he shoves it to the ground. The water trickles out.

ANTONIK (CONT'D)

You'll get Bard's Tale II when
it's ready.

PROBST

Are you trying to intimidate me?

Zina begins pulling paper towels out of the dispenser. She
tosses them on the floor - one by one.

ZINA

Yeah. We're tired of being bossed
around.

Probst stares Zina down.

PROBST

Fine. Pack your things. Both of
you.

Antonik and Zina look shocked.

MADDEN

No. Don't fire them. I put them up to this. It's my fault.

Out of nowhere, LaBash smashes the MICROWAVE with a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

PROBST

Jesus Christ! That's company property!

LABASH

ARE YOU A PAIR OF BLUE JEANS, LARRY?

LaBash stands eye to eye with Probst, who stammers.

LABASH (CONT'D)

I SAID, ARE YOU A PAIR OF STONEWASHED, FIVE-POCKET DUNGAREES?

PROBST

I-I don't know what you're talking about--

LABASH

THEN I SUGGEST YOU GET OFF MY FUCKING ASS!

Probst is speechless. He glances at his watch.

PROBST

I have...phone call...meeting.

Probst leaves, quietly shutting the door behind him.

LABASH

AND STAY OUT!

Madden looks on, prouder than he should be. LaBash snaps out of it.

LABASH

I-I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me.

(looking at mess)

I'll clean this up.

LaBash bends down. Madden stops him.

MADDEN

I've got this. You go. All of you.

The coders strut to their respective stations - empowered.

ANTONIK

Did you see Probst's face when I
knocked over the cooler?

MONTAGE:

- Antonik fixes a glitching lineman on his monitor.
- Zina adds synths to the intro.
- LaBash cycles through options on the main menu.

EXT. EA SPORTS HQ - DUSK

The LeBaron sits alone in the parking lot.

The building is completely dark, save for a few lights.

Team Madden is burning the midnight oil.

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - BULLPEN - SAME

Mike and Virginia sleep on a couch. Several cubicles over,
Madden is trying his best to wrap a Christmas gift.

It's the demo for "Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight."

Just as he finishes writing Mike's name on the tag, the coders
burst in.

LABASH

We're fu--

LaBash sees Mike and Virginia asleep.

LABASH (CONT'D)

(whispers)

We're fucked.

MADDEN

(hushed)

I thought you found a workaround
with the bandwidth.

ANTONIK

We did. We rerouted the SQL array
to the auxiliary. Only one catch.

ZINA

We need the source code.

MADDEN

So get the source code.

LABASH
We don't have it.

MADDEN
Who does?

The coders give each other a look.

EXT. TRIP'S HOUSE - LATER

Madden raps on the front door. It opens, revealing Bill in his pajamas.

BILL
John Madden? What are you doing on my porch at 4 in the morning?

MADDEN
I need to speak with your son. It's important. We only have a few hours left. I just need a floppy disk from your garage.

BILL
It's gone. It's all gone.

MADDEN
Gone?

BILL
Trip took it all when he moved.

MADDEN
Trip moved?

Bill motions toward the empty driveway.

BILL (CONT'D)
It's great. I can actually park the truck inside now.

MADDEN
Could you give me his address?

Bill goes to shut the door.

MADDEN
Please.

BILL
Y'know, I heard how you treated him.

MADDEN

And I'm very sorry. I was too hard
on him.

BILL

I'm hard on him. Because I care.
But you, you were cruel.

MADDEN

Bill, please--

BILL

Goodnight, Coach.

Bill closes the door. The porch light turns off.

Madden stands in the darkness, determined.

He knocks on the door again.

And again. And again.

A dog barks in the distance.

MADDEN

(for Bill to hear)

Bill, I know, deep down, you're a
good man. A good dad. But more
importantly, you're a Raiders fan.
And if you don't help us, Joe
Montana's gonna win.

A beat.

The porch light turns back on.

EXT. TRIP'S CONDO - MOMENTS LATER

Bill's truck squeals to a stop. Madden leaps out of the
passenger door.

An expensive gate stands between Madden and the entrance.

Madden mashes the buzzer.

TRIP (O.S.)

(groggy)

Dad? Is everything alright?

MADDEN

It's Madden.

TRIP (O.S.)

Jesus.

MADDEN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry for how I treated you. I was critical and hateful and--

TRIP (O.S.)

Unrealistic.

MADDEN

Unrealistic?

TRIP (O.S.)

Yes. 22 players on the field? There's no way in hell a modern CPU could--

MADDEN

Actually, we fixed that.

TRIP (O.S.)

Bullshit.

MADDEN

All it took was adding a redundant SMTP network to the mainframe.

TRIP (O.S.)

Who is this?

MADDEN

This isn't about me. Not anymore.

TRIP (O.S.)

Your name is literally on the cover.

MADDEN

There won't be a cover unless you help us. Will you please let me in? I have something to show you.

Nothing.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about what I said. I didn't mean it. Well, I did mean it. But I was wrong. You are good coder and a great motivator and an even better businessman.

Still nothing.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

And, and I apologize for calling them elf games. They're so much more than that. They are complex and fantastical worlds, full of action and adventure and meaning. True meaning. They offer people like you an escape from a world built by people like me.

(beat)

To tell you the truth, they're pretty fun. I'm not that great, but I'm getting better. Turns out I'm not an ogre. I'm a dungeon master. Just like Mike.

Madden stares at the gate. He sighs.

He starts to walk back to the truck.

ANTONIK (O.S.)

Say it.

Madden turns around.

MADDEN

Say what?

ANTONIK (O.S.)

You know exactly what I'm talking about.

MADDEN

No. Not that.

ANTONIK (O.S.)

Say it.

MADDEN

I'm not saying it.

ANTONIK (O.S.)

Then I guess we're done here.

MADDEN

They don't even have a mascot. It's just a color.

A long beat. Madden swallows his pride.

MADDEN

(mumbled)

You're a football player, okay?

ANTONIK

Louder.

MADDEN

You're a football player.

ANTONIK

There must be something wrong with the buzzer. I can't hear you.

MADDEN

You are a real football player for a real football team.

Nothing.

MADDEN

TRIP HAWKINS IS A REAL-DEAL
FOOTBALL PLAYER FOR THE HARVARD
MOTHERFUCKING CRIMSON!

In his truck, Bill looks concerned.

Finally, a BUZZ. The gate slowly opens.

INT. TRIP'S CONDO - MOMENTS LATER

Trip closes the door behind Madden.

MADDEN

Listen. We don't have much time,
but I want to apologize.

TRIP

That's the thing. It's always
about what you want. And you're so
good at motivating people, that
most of the time, you trick them
into thinking it was their idea.

MADDEN

This game was your idea. And you
deserve all the credit. Not me.
You.

TRIP

Nice of you to say now that you
have no other options.

Madden hands Trip the case for JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL.

Trip gives it a look.

TRIP
Is that...

Trip squints.

TRIP (CONT'D)
My name?

Sure enough, beneath the game's title reads BY TRIP HAWKINS.

MADDEN
Had them add it myself.

TRIP
Is this some sort of trick? Is
this a game?

MADDEN
It is a game. Your game.
(beat)
But it's nothing without your
source code.

TRIP
Font's a little small...

Madden politely, yet forcefully, ushers him out the front door.

MADDEN
We can discuss that on the way
there. We only have until 8.

TRIP
What?

INT. LEBARON - DUSK

Madden flies down the highway with Trip in the passenger seat.

Madden looks at the clock on the dash. 7:49.

He floors it. Trip looks like he might get sick.

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - BULLPEN - MORNING

The coders awake as Madden and Trip burst through the doors -
floppy disk in hand.

MONTAGE:

- Trip inserts the floppy disk...
- Types like a mad man...

- And just as the clock hits 8...
- Trip clicks. It's done.

INT. EA SPORTS HQ - OFFICE - MORNING

Madden, disheveled, stumbles into Probst's office, followed by the same frazzled secretary from before.

She still has a perm.

FRANTIC SECRETARY

I'm sorry, Mr. Probst. I tried to stop them but--

Madden hands Probst the finished product.

MADDEN

(winded)
It's done.

MONTAGE:

- On store shelves across the country, copies of "John Madden Football" are placed next to "Joe Montana Football."
- A series of KIDS, TEENAGERS and ADULTS all buy the "Joe Montana Football" game.
- They take it home, unwrap it, insert the game into their console and...
- On the screen, we see 14 PLAYERS ON THE FIELD.

KIDS/TEENS/ADULTS

Where are all the people? / This game sucks! / What is this shit?

INT. MONTANA HOUSE - DAY

The phone rings.

Joe Montana answers, wearing sunglasses indoors.

He frowns, removing his sunglasses.

MONTANA

What do you mean "bad news?"

CUT TO:

TV FOOTAGE:

A NEWS ANCHOR reports from behind a desk.

ANCHOR

A few years ago, you might have asked for a football for Christmas. But these days, Old Saint Nick is having to go digital. This year's top gift? It's not just any football. It's John Madden Football.

CUT TO:

GAME FOOTAGE:

For the first time, we see real gameplay from the very first "John Madden Football" game.

It's pixelated. Two-dimensional. Basic.

But, for the time, it's incredible.

We catch glimpses of real teams.

Real players.

Real plays.

Real weather.

And, most importantly...

22. Players. On. The. God. Damn. Field.

INT. DAVIS MANSION - NIGHT

Al Davis, holding a full glass of eggnog, walks past his TEENAGE SON playing "John Madden Football."

He stops mid-sip, furrows his brow. Al spews eggnog all over his son and the computer screen.

AL

That's our fucking playbook!

INT. MADDEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Madden returns home - a lit cigar in his mouth. Victorious.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He places a book beneath the lit Christmas tree.

The tag reads "To Virginia. From John."

It's a copy of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan.

INT. MADDEN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madden carries the wrapped copy of "The Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight" to Mike's door.

The door is cracked open. Madden hears a voice.

His voice.

Madden peers into the room.

INT. MADDEN HOUSE - MIKE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mike is playing John Madden Football.

On the computer screen, we see he is playing against Joe Montana's 49ers.

MIKE
(to himself)
Son of a bitch...

Madden smiles, just as the video game version of himself delivers his most famous line...

MADDEN (ON SCREEN)
BOOM.

CUT TO BLACK.

THEN:

"Madden" is the top-selling American sports game franchise of all time.

The Oakland Raiders have failed to reach the playoffs for 26 consecutive seasons.

In 2006, John Madden was inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame.

His son, Mike, would go on to attend Harvard...where he played football.

THE END