

THE HAS-BEEN

by

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for Dad

THE HAS-BEEN

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - WIDE - NEWTOWN SQUARE, PA - DUSK

A new townhouse community mid-construction.

From a distance, we watch a GROUP OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS shoot the bull after a long day. It's a cold and dreary November gloaming and the men wear flannel coats and hooded sweatshirts and construction gloves and knit caps. Some smoke cigarettes and a few are drinking 22 oz. cans of Bud Light.

We can't hear what they're saying, but they all suddenly laugh loudly at a joke told.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Like that one, Bob-O!? Huh? A
cherry float!

One worker in a heavy, black-and-red flannel jacket -- JACK CUNNINGHAM, mid-30s -- waves goodbye to the others and crosses to an gold Chevy Blazer in the makeshift parking lot.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER - DUSK

Jack climbs in and starts the car. The old engine shudders and whines to life as 97.5 *'The Fanatic'* SPORTS RADIO comes on. He cranks the heat up to full blast.

WE SEE HIM UP-CLOSE NOW: a wiry, working stiff with a cold-roughened face and a week-long beard. You'd never know it by looking at him, but he was once the most heralded basketball recruit in the country.

CALLER (ON RADIO)

My point is -- the Sixers aint
makin' the playoffs out'a the East
without a Top-10 point guard.

SPORTS RADIO HOST (ON RADIO)

And you don't think Rashard Meeks
is a Top-10 point guard?

CALLER (ON RADIO)

He's not even Top 25 --

Click.

SPORTS RADIO HOST (ON RADIO)

Next caller. Can we get one person
who is not a complete moron to call
into the show, please?

Jack smiles, then reaches into the backseat where a MINI-COLEMAN COOLER sits on the floor. He lifts it onto his lap, slides the lid. Inside are cans of Coors Lite. He removes one from the ice and pours it into a Solo cup. Replaces the cooler now and drives off. Sips the beer. Cold. Good.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER/EXT. HAVERTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

ROLL OPENING CREDITS over VARIOUS SHOTS OF JACK driving through his hometown of HAVERTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, a working-class community roughly a dozen miles south of Philadelphia.

The SPORTS RADIO CONTINUES as the CHEVY PASSES --

-- ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CATHOLIC CHURCH. The doors open and the evening-mass congregation spills out into the cold night, bunching their jackets tight and wrapping their scarves.

-- BOCCELLA'S HOAGIE SHOP. Teenagers cram into booths. The girls take 'selfies' on their iPhones while the boys whisper and hope they look in their direction.

-- A STREET OF ENGLISH TUDORS. A pack of YOUNG BOYS play a game of 3-on-3 basketball on a portable hoop with a tattered, dangling net.

-- And finally BURKE'S INN. The oldest shot-and-a-beer bar in town. Locals only. A handwritten sign taped to the door reads, '**OPEN THANKSGIVING.**'

Jack's Chevy Blazer rolls into the lot.

INT. BURKE'S INN - NIGHT

The only thing that's changed since the 1970s are the kegs. A dark walnut bar occupies one half of the rectangular space, tables and chairs the other. Frumpy waitress pass out baskets of old bay french fries, sopping roast beef sandwiches and pints of domestic beer to locals. Dotting the wood paneled walls are photos of famous moments in Philadelphia sports history -- Dr. J choking Larry Bird, Tug McGraw's World Series arms-raise, Bobby Clarke's toothless smile, et al. *The Hooters* 'And We Danced' plays from the Rowe 100 jukebox.

We find Jack sitting at his usual spot at the bar, eating a roast beef sandwich and drinking a Coors draft while watching the 76ers play on the television.

The bartender, **MATTY**, 40s, genial, paunchy, hangs a string of Christmas lights above the shelves of cheap liquor.

A few stools down from Jack sit GERRY and SUSAN NORRIS, 60s. Gerry's a gruff, mustached Boeing retiree. Susan's a husky, hard-headed woman who grew tired of Gerry soon after marrying him, but decided the prospects of finding someone better were improbable and exhausting so she hunkered down instead.

Gerry sips a whiskey while Susan uses her long fingernails to scratch away at lottery tickets.

GERRY

(re: the 76ers game)
Jesus Christ -- look at that shit.
What're they payin' him a year,
Jackie?

JACK

Caldwell?

GERRY

Yeah.

JACK

Seven mil.

GERRY

Fuckin' guy's taller than a giraffe
an' he can't put in a two-footer.
(to Susan, re: the lottery
tickets)
Did we win?

SUSAN

We're not buyin' a house in St
Barts if that's what your askin'.

GERRY

You mean I won't be seein' your ass
in a bikini any time soon?

SUSAN

Not unless you get me that jacuzzi
you been promisin' for the past
fifteen years.

GERRY

And you wonder why I never pulled
the trigger.

Jack and Matty choke back laughs.

SUSAN

Oh hardy-fucking-har-har. Eat shit.
Will you pass me a ketchup, Matty?

Matty steps down from his stool, hands Susan a bottle of Heinz which she uses to drown her onion rings. A new song comes on the jukebox: Stevie Nicks and Don Henley's '*Leather and Lace*'.

MATTY

I ever tell you guys 'bout the time my uncle screwed Stevie Nicks?

GERRY

Bullshit.

SUSAN

Seconded.

MATTY

Swear ta God. '73, '74 he drove a camper out to California. Ended up on a beach in Redondo smokin' grass right beside her. Said her muff was like mohair.

SUSAN

This the uncle comes in here? One with the hairy arms?

MATTY

...hairy arms?

SUSAN

Ask Jack.

(over to Jack)

Whaddaya call Matty's uncle comes in here?

JACK

One with the hairy arms?

SUSAN

That's the one.

JACK

The orangutan.

SUSAN

(back to Matty now)

Now why would Stevie Nicks spread her legs for your orangutan uncle?

MATTY

Beats me. Maybe she was high. Maybe she likes hairy guys.

SUSAN

Or maybe your uncle's fulla shit.

MATTY

That, too.

(to Gerry)

How do you put up with her?

Gerry raises his whiskey glass: *loads of this*. Matty shakes his head and returns to the Christmas lights.

Just then, DOC, 70, enters the bar. He's a retired, widowed optometrist and sports junkie who lives a few blocks away and comes in each night for a put-me-to-sleep scotch. He hangs his wool overcoat on the coat rack.

GERRY

The good doctor is in.

DOC

Evening, folks.

Doc approaches Jack's stool.

DOC (CONT'D)

What's cookin', ace?

JACK

Heyya, Doc.

DOC

Drove down to Rehobeth yesterday to take in the *Slam Dunk Classic*. Wanted to get a close-up'a that five-star from Saint Anthony's.

JACK

6'10 kid, right? Committed to Syracuse?

DOC

Julian Cole. Plays like a baby Anthony Davis. Shot needs a little polish, but he's a vacuum cleaner around the rim. Boenheim'll make him a lottery pick. Anyway, I thought you'd get a kick outta this.

Doc hands Jack a basketball tournament PROGRAM. Jack opens it to an earmarked page. Inside is a PHOTO OF JACK as a high school basketball player. His lean frame captured mid-jump shot. And what a gorgeous jump shot it is.

Elbow tight and straight, the ball cradled gently in his shooting hand as his guide hand slowly drifts away. Naismith himself couldn't have imagined it any prettier. Caption reads:

Jack 'The Landsdowne Lefty' Cunningham scores a tournament record 47 points in the 2000 Slam Dunk Classic Final

JACK

I 'member that game. Played Calvert Hall out'a Baltimore. They had that guard -- whatwashisname -- stocky kid, played for Timmy Welsh up at Providence --

DOC

MoMo Barnes.

JACK

That's it. He was unconscious in the first half. We go into the locker room down twelve. Coach Purcell pulls me aside, says, '*Anythin' over half court you got the green light.*' So I come out an' jus' start fuckin' bombin'. Soon as I cross half court, it's like --
(shooting shots)
Boom boom boom -- an' everything's goin' down.

Bored by their conversation, Susan leans over and interrupts--

SUSAN

Do you have two always hafta talk basketball?

DOC

What is it you'd rather us talk about, sweetheart? Wallpaper?

SUSAN

Sure. What's yours like?

DOC

Well, my wife liked flowers when she was still around. So she put Cottage roses in our bedroom and big palm leaves in the bathroom. Makes you feel like you're takin' a shit in the Amazon Jungle. How 'bout yours?

SUSAN

Daffodils. In the kitchen and the powder room.

DOC

Beautiful. Okay if we get back to basketball now?

Susan rolls her eyes. Doc smiles, pats Jack on the back, then saunters off.

JACK

Forgot your program.

DOC

Keep it, ace. Hang it on the fridge.

Doc takes his usual stool at the opposite side of the bar.

Jack skims through the program until Matty sets a shot of whiskey down in front of him. Jack lifts his eyes.

MATTY

Back corner.

Jack glances over his shoulder and spots a BLONDE WOMAN, 40s, in blue jeans and a fleece jacket, sitting alone at table, smoking a Parliament and sipping a bottle of Rolling Rock.

JACK

...do we know her?

MATTY

I think she's one'a the Moughan girls from St. Dot's.

JACK

Which one? There's like seven of 'em, right?

MATTY

Eight.

JACK

...Is that Moira?

MATTY

Naw, that's not Moira. I used to mess around with Moira.

JACK

Margaret?

MATTY

Naw, I used to mess around with Margaret, too.

(off Jack's look)

What -- there's eight of 'em. I'm battin' .250.

(gives Woman a closer look)

I pretty sure that's Diane.

Matty leaves to fill a drink order.

Jack tosses back the shot of whiskey, then takes a moment to consider his next move. Finally, he stands and ambles over to the Blonde's table.

JACK

Thanks for the drink.

BLONDE

Do you remember who I am?

JACK

One'a the Moughan girls, right?

BLONDE

Which one?

JACK

...Diane?

DIANE

Ding-ding-ding. Here. Sid down.

Diane stubs out her cigarette and slides the ashtray close to make room for Jack. He sits across from her and sets his beer down. A quiet, awkward moment follows. Finally --

JACK

You uhh, you live close to here?

DIANE

Not far. Pennell Road. You?

JACK

Few blocks over on Lynnewood. You're the one married Timmy Reeves, right?

DIANE

We separated in August.

JACK

Sorry to hear that.

DIANE
I'm not. Timmy's an asshole.

JACK
I don't know Timmy that well. His brother Kevin was in my class at Hayes, so --

DIANE
Kevin's an asshole, too.

JACK
Sounds like you got a lotta assholes in your life.

DIANE
(a smile curls)
Tell me about it.

She lights another Parliament. Takes a drag, then regards Jack a long moment, her thoughts reaching back in time.

DIANE (CONT'D)
My father used to take all of us girls to your basketball games. Every Friday night we'd pile into the station wagon to go watch the great Jack Cunningham play ball. We all had a big crush on you.

JACK
That right?

DIANE
One night we all sat around Moira's bedroom an' took turns sayin' why we should be the one to marry you and not the others.

JACK
And what was your reason?

DIANE
My tits.

Jack laughs.

DIANE (CONT'D)
I'm serious. I had these same tits when I was fifteen years old.
(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

I'd go to the King of Prussia mall and all the college boys would hit on me 'cause I looked like I was twenty-five... But you never seemed to notice.

JACK

I had a lot on my mind back then.

DIANE

Do you still?

Off the two of them staring into one another's eyes, knowing the night can only end one way.

INT. DIANE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Diane's naked, down on all fours in her bed. Jack's screwing her from behind like a jackhammer. The JcPenney bed frame jounces noisily and the family photos on the wall threaten to leap off their nails.

DIANE

Oh my God -- oh fuck! -- oh fuck
you found it -- you found it!

She looks back at him over her shoulder.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I can't believe I'm fucking you
right now. Wait until I tell my
sisters.

Whatever excitement and passion existed in Jack a moment ago dissolves in an instant. He squints his eyes, hard, desperately trying to finish as quickly as possible.

LATER

Jack's wide awake, waiting for his chance to escape. He glances down at Diane, asleep, head resting on his chest.

Carefully, quietly, he slides his arm out from underneath her head. She stirs, opens her eyes and smiles dreamily at him before snuggling closer and falling back asleep.

Now he's trapped. He sighs miserably and settles in for a long, regretful night.

INT. DIANE'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL - MORNING

Jack tiptoes down the stairs as he puts on his flannel jacket. He arrives at the front door when he overhears --

BOY'S VOICE (O.C.)
Let's party at Kendrick's house.

He turns to find Diane's TEENAGE SON, 16, sitting in the den, talking on an iPhone. He hasn't noticed Jack yet.

TEENAGE SON
His parents don't care if we blaze
up in the basement and it'll give
me some alone time with Mandy.

Jack opens the door. It CREAKS. Loudly.

Son turns, sees Jack.

JACK
Oh. Hey.

TEENAGE SON
Hey.

JACK
Happy Thanksgiving.

TEENAGE SON
Go fuck yourself, bro.
(back into phone now)
Not you. Some loser who was dickin'
my mom all night.

EXT. DIANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Maple leaves blanket the yards of the English Tudors.

Jack exits the home. It's a frigid Fall morning and his breath escapes in white tufts. He takes a moment to gauge the fastest way home. Looks into Diane's backyard. The home backs up to a stretch of woods. It's a shortcut he knows well so he heads into the backyard and disappears into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

A whitetail doe and her fawn drink from a shallow creek. They pause at the sound of Jack's boots swooshing the leaves as he crosses a ford in the stream and continues up a slope.

EXT. HAVERTOWN - MAIN DRAG - MORNING

Jack walks down the sidewalk, head down, hands tucked inside his jacket pockets. A Wawa delivery truck HONKS its horn as it passes. Jack looks up, waves at the driver, then puts his head back down again and his hand back in his jacket pocket.

EXT. BURKE'S INN - MORNING

The Chevy Blazer is the lone car remaining in the lot.

Jack approaches, climbs in.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER - MORNING

Jack starts the car. 97.5 'The Fanatic' SPORTS RADIO begins again. He blasts the heat, shivers off the cold, then reaches into the backseat for the mini-cooler.

Sets it on his lap and slides it open. The beers are still cold thank God. He cracks one and dumps it into a Solo cup.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - LYNNEWOOD AVENUE - MORNING

A small red-brick Colonial built in the 1940s. Two Frigidaire air conditioning units protrude from the windows. Jack's Blazer sits in the crumbling driveway.

INT. JACK'S BATHROOM - SHOWER - MORNING

A mildew-plagued shower curtain hangs from the two remaining plastic rungs. Jack showers behind it, washing his face with a bar of soap as thin as a potato chip. He reaches for the shampoo bottle, but it's empty. *Shit...* He rubs the soap bar into a lather and uses it to wash his hair.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DEN - DAY

Jack lounges on the sofa in a pair of sweatpants and a hooded sweatshirt, koozie-hugged can of Coors Lite in his hand.

ON THE TV: ESPN coverage of a Thanksgiving-day basketball tournament in Maui. The ANNOUNCERS wear floral print shirts.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

-- greetings from sunny Maui,
folks. And boy have we got a
Thanksgiving day feast for you
basketball diehards out there.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (ON TV)
That's right, Pat. Four games here
today featuring six teams ranked in
the AP Top 25.

Jack reaches for an afghan, drapes it over himself.

INT. BURKE'S INN - LATE DAY

Jack's at his usual spot drinking a Coors draft. The Maui basketball tournament plays on the TV. Susan reads a Sue Grafton paperback while Matty, wearing a goofy turkey hat, pulls cards from an old Sports Trivia deck.

MATTY
Alright, here we go, Ger -- Name
the only player to be awarded NBA
Finals MVP from a team that lost
the championship series?

GERRY
(ponders it, then)
I got two names in mind.

SUSAN
Well there's one answer, so...

GERRY
Oh really? Thank you. For a second
there I didn't know how the game
was played.

Susan raises her middle finger above the book cover.

GERRY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go with Chamberlain.

MATTY
Errrrr. Jack for the steal?

JACK
Jerry West. Lakers in '71.

MATTY
Bingo!

GERRY
That was the other name I had in
mind.

SUSAN
Of course it was.

MATTY
 (to Jack, re: his beer)
 Another one?

Jack glances at his watch, weighs it a moment. Shouldn't really stay, but then --

JACK
 Alright. One more.

Jack quickly drains what's left in his pint glass, then hands it to Matty for a refill.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Jack grabs a few bottles of cheap wine and puts them in his basket alongside a 12-pack of Coors Lite. He's almost at the register when he backtracks and grabs a bottle of Seagram's Gin off the shelf as well.

EXT. BETH'S HOUSE - NEW HOPE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

An immaculate, well-lit Colonial Revival on a secluded three-acre lot. A fall wreath hangs on the front door, pumpkins and ornamental corn adorn the flagstone steps. A Mercedes sedan and a Mercedes SUV sit in the paved, circular driveway.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The table looks like something out a Williams-Sonoma catalog. A gorgeous, golden turkey flanked by countless trimmings spread out across an autumnal runner. Bottles of Bordeaux stand between sterling silver candlesticks.

Seated around the barn-style table are JACK'S FAMILY MEMBERS:

His older sister, BETH, 37, a feisty, stubborn homemaker. Annoyed at the moment that her younger brother is holding up the dinner she spent the entire day slaving over.

Her husband, KURT, 38, an innocuous, big-hearted family man who drinks his coffee out of a *Worlds #1 Dad* mug. He wears a cashmere seater embroidered with the words, *Graham Mercedes-Benz Dealerships*.

Their son, RYAN, 8, a shy, sensitive boy. The only thing Ryan loves more than basketball is his Uncle Jack.

Their daughter SARAH, 4, a rascally pain-in-the-ass whose three favorite words are *poop*, *fart*, and *no*.

And finally Jack's mother, ANNE, 60, a deeply Catholic woman who recently sold her home and moved in with Beth and Kurt.

Beth sips her red wine and glances at her watch for what feels like the thousandth time.

Meanwhile, Kurt surreptitiously reaches out and rips a small piece of skin off the turkey's tail and slips it into his mouth. He believes he's gotten away with it until he lifts his eyes and finds Beth staring at him savagely. He reddens.

KURT

It's good.

BETH

Did I ask if it was good?

Kurt shrinks under her gaze.

Mercifully, the front door opens and Jack enters from the cold carrying the goodies from the liquor store visit.

ANNE

There he is.

JACK

Sorry I'm late. Happy Thanksgiving.
Brought a buncha wine here.

Jack stuffs the 12-pack into the Sub-Zero refrigerator, sets the wine on the counter, then walks over to the table. Hugs Anne first, kisses her cheek.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, ma.

ANNE

Hi, sweetheart.

Shakes Kurt's hand now.

JACK

How's the car biz, Kurt?

KURT

Been a good year, Jack, yeah.
Thanks for asking. Can I pour you a
glass of wine?

JACK

(holds up a Coors)
Brought my own supply, thanks.

SARAH
Hi, Uncle Fart-Poop.

JACK
Uncle Fart-Poop? Who said that?

Ryan points to Sarah.

<p>SARAH (looking at Ryan) Tattle tale tattle-tale tale. Ryan is a farter-tale!</p>	<p>JACK (CONT'D) You know what that means. Time for Tickle Torture!</p>
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Jack moves to Sarah and tickles her sides. She LAUGHS WILDLY, her bony legs BANGING the underside of the table. The wine bottles and candlesticks teeter. Kurt steadies them.

<p>KURT Whoa-whoa-whoa.</p>	<p>BETH Jesus Christ, Jack.</p>
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Jack stops the tickling, continues over to Beth and hugs her. She doesn't reciprocate warmly.

JACK
Happy Thanksgiving, sis. Sorry I'm late. I stopped over Billy Haggerty's to say hi to his mother. She's very sick, you know?

Beth just nods her head: inured to Jack's excuses.

ANNE
I didn't know Ellen was sick.

JACK
Oh yeah. It's any day now.

Jack sits down beside Ryan and tousles his hair.

JACK (CONT'D)
Howya been, kiddo?

RYAN
(brightens, glad Jack sat beside him)
Good.

ANNE
Should we say grace? Ryan, why don't you lead us?

They all join hands.

RYAN
Bless us, O Lord --

Jack squeezes Ryan's hand under the table.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Owww ow owwww.

JACK
 Owww ow owwww? I don't think those
 are the right words.

RYAN
And these Thy gifts --

Jack squeezes Ryan's hand again. Ryan winces.

BETH
 Jack, knock it off. You've made the
 food cold enough already.

Jack relents. Ryan continues --

RYAN
Which we are about to receive

FAMILY (LESS SARAH)
*From Thy bounty, through
 Christ our Lord*

SARAH
 From the Farters and the
 poopers and my Daddy eats
 poop popsicles.

TOGETHER
Amen.

Hands down. The food is passed around. Beth reaches for the
 Bordeaux and fills her goblet. To the top.

INT. RYAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack's reading *Harry Potter* to Ryan when he notices Ryan's
 fallen asleep. He sets the book down on the night stand,
 slips out from under the comforter and switches off the lamp.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Dim lights, a dying fire. Kurt's asleep on the couch as an
 NFL football game plays on the 65-inch flat-screen TV.

In the kitchen, Jack and Beth sit at the counter. She's
 drinking a glass of wine. He's got a Coors.

JACK
Mom gettin' settled in here?

BETH
Seems to be, yeah.

JACK
I never thought you'd get her out
of Drexel Hill.

BETH
Drexel Hill changed. It's all young
couples with young kids now. I
think she was starting to feel like
a castaway there... How about you?
What's new in your life?

JACK
What's new? Well, the boiler went
last week, so I had Kevin McCauley
come over to install a new one.

BETH
Are you seeing anyone?
(Jack shakes his head)
I wish you would. I don't like that
you're on your own all the time.

JACK
What don't you like about it?

BETH
That you're down there drinking
yourself to death.

<p>JACK I'm not drinkin' myself to death, Beth. Come on, that's--</p>	<p>BETH (CONT'D) I know Ang worries about that, too.</p>
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JACK
Ang?

BETH
She called me. Wanted to see how
you were doing.

JACK
She called you ta ask how I was
doin'?

BETH
Is that a problem?

JACK

Why doesn't she call me if she
wants ta know how I'm doin'?
Wouldn't that make more sense?

Beth knows the answer but won't divulge. Her silence pisses Jack off.

BETH

Kathy Collins told me she sees you
inside Burke's every night.

JACK

Oh Jesus Christ -- tell Kathy to
get her own fuckin' life, okay.

BETH

Don't get mean, Jack. Kathy's
my friend.

JACK (CONT'D)

Or go to the gym an' lose
some'a her fat ass.

BETH

Why do you always have to get
nasty?

JACK

And you wonder why I never wanna
come over here.

Jack stands abruptly, fires his empty beer can into the trash and removes another from the refrigerator.

JACK (CONT'D)

Which one'a the twenty bedrooms am
I sleeping in?

BETH

Second bedroom on the left. And
fuck you for saying that.

Beth watches Jack disappear up the stairs, then sips her wine, wondering why she even tries anymore.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack sits up in bed, cell phone pressed to his ear. He's drinking from the bottle of Seagram's gin now. The call finally goes to a WOMAN'S VOICEMAIL.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hi you've reached Angela Horgan
with Capwell Insurance Partners,
please leave me a message.

BEEP!

JACK

(drunk, slurring a bit)
 Hey, it's me. It's Jack. Happy
 Thanksgiving. Just uhh, I'm
 wonderin' why you're callin' my
 sister to ask how I'm doin'. I
 don't, yunno, I really don't
 'preciate you goin' behind my back
 an' uhh... Alright, Happy
 Thanksgiving.

He hangs up and turns his attention to the television. The final game of the ESPN basketball marathon from Maui is on. He sips his gin as his drunken eyes narrow towards sleep.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - FOLLOWING DAY

Jack, bundled up in layers, assists three co-workers as they lift an interior wall frame into place.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER - GLOAMING

Jack drives home following a long day. He sips a Coors from a Solo cup and listens to *97.5 The Fanatic*.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack enters with a 12-pack of Coors under his arm. Hangs his flannel coat on a hook beside the door and crosses into the --

KITCHEN

Sets the 12-pack in the refrigerator. Slips one can out and opens it when he notices the light on the answering machine BLINKING. He presses it --

MAN'S VOICE (ON MACHINE)

Hey, Jack, it's Bryan. The guys and I're getting together for a poker night next Tuesday. Just wanted to see if you were around and --

Jack hits '**Delete**'. Next message --

MAN 2'S VOICE (ON MACHINE)

Hello, Jack. This is Father Tierney calling from Bishop Hayes High School.

(MORE)

MAN 2'S VOICE (ON MACHINE) (CONT'D)
 Give me a call back here at the
 rectory when you get a chance. 215-
 445-3233. I'll be up until about
 10pm this evening. If that doesn't
 work, we can chat in the morning.
 Thank you, Jack. God Bless.

Surprised by the call, Jack replays Father's Tierney's
 message, jotting down the phone number this time.

EXT. BISHOP HAYES RECTORY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An American Foursquare built in the 1950s.

Jack's Blazer rolls into the drive.

INT. BISHOP HAYES RECTORY - FOYER - DAY

The DOORBELL RINGS. BETTY, 70s, the kindly, long-time rectory
 assistant, enters the hall from a nearby office and opens the
 door on Jack standing outside.

BETTY
 Hello, Jack.

JACK
 Howya doin', Mrs. Crawford?

BETTY
 Very well. Come on in.

Jack steps inside and follows Betty down the hall.

BETTY (CONT'D)
 Did you have a nice Thanksgiving?

JACK
 I did. Yeah. How 'bout you?

BETTY
 Oh it was very nice. All the kids
 and grandkids were in so I was in
 my glory.

JACK
 Good for you.

BETTY
 Let's go right in here.

They turn into a --

LIVING ROOM

BETTY

Father Tierney will be right down.

JACK

Alright. Thank you.

BETTY

We're all very excited about the possibility of having you back here at Hayes.

Back here at Hayes? Confused, Jack simply nods. Betty exits.

Alone now, Jack gazes around at the fusty decor. It's like a 1950s time capsule -- cherry grandfather clock, hunter-green carpeting, balloon valances and floral camelback settees.

He wanders over to the mantel. Mixed in with the portraits of past Hayes Presidents is a crystal dish filled with spearmint candy. He tries one. It's as tough as a rest stop steak. Probably years-old. He spits it out into his hand, then looks around for a place to toss it out when --

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Hello, Jack.

Startled, Jack turns to find FATHER TIERNEY, 70s, standing in the doorway wearing a black shirt and clerical collar. He's an old-school, plainspoken Priest who doesn't suffer fools gladly. Jack hides the chewed candy in his hand.

JACK

Hey, Father.

FATHER TIERNEY

Thanks for making the drive. Sit. Please.

Jack crosses to a love seat, furtively depositing the candy in a plant pot as he does. Father Tierney sits across from him. Jack is visibly nervous in Tierney's presence. Though his own Catholic faith atrophied years ago, his respect for those who have taken their vows still runs very deep.

FATHER TIERNEY (CONT'D)

Been a while, hasn't it?

JACK

Yeah. Dad's funeral was the last time, I think.

FATHER TIERNEY

That long? Your father passed away,
what -- four, five years ago now?

JACK

Six actually. He died on October
11th, so, little over six.

FATHER TIERNEY

My Goodness. Where does the time
go?

JACK

I'd tell ya if I knew.

FATHER TIERNEY

Married?

JACK

Was. Been uhh, separated for about
a year now.

FATHER TIERNEY

Any children?

JACK

No. No kids.

FATHER TIERNEY

Okay. Well it's good to see you
again, Jack. I'm sure you're
wondering why I called you here.

JACK

A little curious, yeah.

FATHER TIERNEY

Our basketball coach, Tom Clancy,
had a heart attack the other night.
He's expected to make a full
recovery, but his wife doesn't
think it's a very good idea for him
to return to the team. I tend to
agree... We need a new coach, Jack.
And you were the first person I
thought of.

It's meant as a compliment, but Jack accepts the news as if
he's been told he needs to be catheterized.

FATHER TIERNEY (CONT'D)

Try to suppress your enthusiasm.

JACK

No, it's just, I've been away from basketball for a while now, Father.

JACK (CONT'D)
And I don't --

FATHER TIERNEY
I understand.

JACK

-- yunno, I've only ever played ball. I've never tried teachin' it... Are they any good? The team?

FATHER TIERNEY

No. No, we haven't been competitive for quite a while actually. In fact the last time we made the playoffs was back when you were playing.

JACK

Right. Okay.
(ready to decline)
Well I 'preciate you thinkin' of me, Father --

JACK (CONT'D)
-- but I've got a lot goin' on in my life right now --

FATHER TIERNEY
Why don't you go home and think it over, Jack?

JACK

Excuse me?

FATHER TIERNEY

Go home. Think it over. Call me in the morning with your decision.

JACK

Tomorrow mornin'?

FATHER TIERNEY

Our next game is Monday night, Jack. I don't have a lot of time.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

An NBA game plays on the television as Jack paces around the room, invisible phone pressed against his ear as he rehearses what he'll say to Father Tierney in the morning.

JACK

I gave it some thought, Father, an' uhh, it's just not the right time for me... I've just been away from the game for so long now an'...

Jack sighs, not liking how any of it sounds. He plops down on the recliner and watches the game a moment. Then, an idea hits him. He looks at the clock on the cable box: **7:15 PM**. He hops out of the seat and hurries up the stairs.

INT. UPPER DARBY HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A pick-up game in progress. A group of men in their forties who meet every Thursday night after they put the kids to bed. There's a break in the action when the gym's heavy steel doors open and close with a THUD.

Everyone turns and sees Jack striding down the sideline with a duffel bag in hand. No one says a word, but the tenor inside the space has palpably shifted.

Annoyed at the reverence being paid to Jack, one player -- TIMMY, 40, a tall shithead with a crewcut -- calls out to teammate --

TIMMY

Check the ball up. Let's go!

ON THE SIDELINES

Jack sits on the bleachers lacing up his basketball sneakers.

SAL DeSANTO, 45, a good-natured regular here, approaches.

SAL

Good ta see ya, Jackie.

JACK

Hey, Sal. Still reffin' any Catholic League games?

SAL

A few. My oldest son just went off to college at Marist so the extra cash helps.

JACK

I bet. Need one?

SAL

Yeah. We're up next.

ON THE COURT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The next game's set to begin. Jack's on the court, running in place, warming himself up.

PICK-UP PLAYER
Everyone markin' a man?

Timmy stares right at Jack, up for the challenge.

TIMMY
(loud so Jack hears him)
I got right here.

Ball in. Sal passes to Jack on the wing. Jack crosses-over, rolls off a screen, then zips past Timmy like his sneakers are made of concrete and flips in a reverse lay-up.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
(to a Teammate, angrily)
Call out the pick next time!

A BRIEF MONTAGE NOW AS --

Jack makes shots with his left hand. His right hand. Running down the lane. Out on the arc. Banks. Swishes. Toilet bowls. Off one leg. Falling out of bounds. Spinning in the lane. Over the outstretched arm of Timmy, who seems to grow more and more frustrated by the second --

TIMMY
(to a Teammate)
Jesus fuck -- hedge out on that!
Ever played basketball before!?

The other players roll their eyes in disbelief at the sheer absurdity of it all. Not Jack. Each time the ball falls through the net, he turns and matter-of-factly jogs back down to the opposite end of the court as if he fully expected to make even the most improbable of shots.

LATER - GAME POINT

Jack drives into the lane, spins, goes up for a lay-up when --

TIMMY CLOBBERS HIM! It's an intentional act -- the culmination of his game-long embarrassment at being handed his jockstrap to sniff. The ball rolls off the rim and Jack goes crashing into the wall pads under the basket -- **BOOM!**

JACK
Got it!

TIMMY
Oh bullshit -- that was all ball!

JACK
All ball!?

TIMMY
Fuckin'-A right!

Jack holds out his arms. Bright red scratch marks on both from the beating he's taken all game.

JACK
What'd I do -- wrestle an alligator
on the way here?

TIMMY
Oh fuck you, you fuckin' has-been.

Has-been... That word strikes a nerve in Jack. A competitive fire awakens in him and he marches right up to Timmy's face. Timmy doesn't back down. Noses inches apart.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
I know who the fuck you are --

JACK	TIMMY (CONT'D)
You don't know a fuckin' thing about me, you big fuckin' stiff.	-- you fuckin' burn-out.

CRACK! JACK'S FIST COMES ACROSS TIMMY'S FACE. Timmy staggers backwards, nose-bloodied. He CHARGES at Jack, but he's grabbed by THREE PLAYERS and pulled back before he can get there. Sal wraps his arms around Jack and backs him away.

SAL
Come on. Let it go, Jackie.

TIMMY
You fuckin' burn-out! Bum!

JACK	TIMMY (CONT'D)
I had better first quarters than your career, asshole.	Motherfuckin' bum!

SAL
(back to Players re:
Timmy)
Get him outta here! Let's go!

LATER

Jack sits alone on the bleachers, toweling-off as the other players funnel out the exit doors.

Sal's the last to leave. He lifts his duffel bag over his shoulder, then turns back to Jack --

SAL
Stickin' around, Jackie?

JACK
Nah you can shut 'em off. Thanks,
Sal.

Sal shuts off the gym lights, exits.

Jack remains in the empty, dark gym a few moments. He looks around, all around, the bleachers, the benches, the rafters.

Goddamn, he misses this place.

Finally, he stands and switches the lights back on. Carries his basketball onto the floor and flips it out. Takes a jump shot -- *swish!* Flips it out again, shoots -- *swish!* Over and over and over -- *swish...swish...swish...swish...*

EXT. BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL - DREXEL HILL - AFTERNOON

A Gothic Revival behemoth built in 1957 and run by the Jesuits. A statue of the Blessed Mother stands out front.

SUPER: BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL

After-school and the parking lot's filled with students in their green and white sweaters. The boys wear all tan khakis and the girls plaid skirts and leggings for the cold. The student body is a mix of white and blacks and Hispanics, a decidedly blue collar lot from the Catholic feeder parishes of Drexel Hill, Landsdowne and Upper Darby.

The girls smoke cigarettes and flirt with the boys. The boys that aren't being flirted with pose against their American-made cars pretending not to give a shit.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jack sits inside, watching the students enter their cars and head off. The final school bus departs. He looks down at the dash clock as **3:59** turns to **4:00 PM**.

He finishes the beer left in his Solo cup, dumps a few Tic Tacs into his mouth, then steps out of the car.

INT. BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

ASSISTANT COACH DAN HADEN, 32, a decent, mild-mannered math teacher at the high school, stands at mid-court watching the Hayes team scrimmage in their practice gear. He's dressed in a fishermen's sweater, brown corduroys and penny loafers. The Cheerleaders rehearse on the baseline.

A door opens at the far end of the gym. Dan turns and watches as Jack enters and make his way towards him.

DAN
Coach Cunningham.

Jack nods. Dan offers his hand.

DAN (CONT'D)
Dan Haden. Great to meetcha.

JACK
You the assistant?

DAN
That's right. I teach Algebra here at the school. Thanks for steppin' in like this. Means a lot to the boys... Want me to call 'em in? Do some introductions?

JACK
Nah, let 'em play. I wanna get a feel for what we're workin' with.
(observes the game a beat,
then)
This the whole team? Ten kids?

DAN
We're missin' one. Kid named Bobby Freeze. Football player. He's on an official visit to Penn State this weekend, but he'll be back in time for Monday's game.

JACK
Eleven then?

DAN
Eleven. Lot different than when you played, huh?

JACK
No shit. We had over 100 boys just tryin' out.

DAN
104 my senior year.

JACK
You played ball here?

DAN
Not like you, no. I spent most of my time on the bench. I'm a few years behind you. Graduated '03.

JACK
Okay.

DAN
Enrollment's really taken a dive lately. Every year the diocese threatens to shut our doors an' sell off the land... I'll walk you through our starting five. Kid on the ball now is Brandon Durrett.

On the court, WE FOCUS ON BRANDON DURRETT, 17, black, short, a gifted but exceptionally shy point guard.

JACK
Any relation to Russ Durrett?

DAN
His son.

JACK
Good genes.

DAN
Brandon's our most talented player. He's just not much of a leader.

JACK
What makes ya say that?

DAN
I've been coaching him for three years now and I can count on one hand the number of times our conversation went beyond, 'Yes, Coach' or 'No Coach'. Sam Garcia is our senior captain.

FOCUS ON: SAM GARCIA, 18, Mexican, the team's dedicated, disciplined senior captain. Garcia's the least talented player on the team, but the hardest working.

DAN (CONT'D)

He starts in the backcourt beside Brandon. Not much of a scoring threat, but a solid defender. Kenny Dawes plays the three.

FOCUS ON: KENNY DAWES, 17, a white, rawboned, Eminem-looking, hip-hop-loving roughneck with a buzzcut.

DAN (CONT'D)

Bit of a headcase at times, but he's got a nice long-range stroke. Chubbs Hendricks is at the four.

FOCUS ON: RONALD 'CHUBBS' HENDRICKS, 18, black. Just like his nickname suggests -- round, chubby and proud.

DAN (CONT'D)

And Marcus Parrish is our center.

FOCUS ON: MARCUS PARRISH, 17, black, tall, lanky. He's got a surfeit of swagger but little talent to back it up. He fires up a three-pointer from the wing that misses badly.

DAN (CONT'D)

The rest of the kids --
(pointing out the others)
Dearborn, Daly, Carter, Moore and Judge -- are JV guys we brought up just so we could hold a practice.

Jack watches the game for a few moments. Marcus heaves up another deep three-pointer that clanks off the rim.

JACK

Blow the whistle for me.

Dan does -- WWWWWW! The game pauses. The players turn.

JACK (CONT'D)

Everybody at half-court. Line up, back-to-back.

No one seems to be in much of a hurry. Jack CLAPS his hands --

JACK (CONT'D)

Let's move! Come on! Sleep nights!

The players hustle into position now.

MARCUS

Who are you?

JACK
I'm your new coach, Jack
Cunningham.

Recognizing the name, Brandon looks into the rafters where
JACK'S #24 BISHOP HAYES JERSEY hangs, retired.

Jack stalks down the line of players. They each quietly size
him up. He arrives at Marcus now.

JACK (CONT'D)
Marcus, right?

MARCUS
That's right, Coach. Get used ta
callin' my name.

JACK
(gesturing over the team)
Whaddayou see out there, Marcus?

Marcus looks out over the court, zeroing in on a CHEERLEADER
bending over on the baseline, allowing a nice view of what's
under her blouse.

MARCUS
Keisha's big ol' tigglebitties.

LAUGHS from the peanut gallery.

DAN
Knock it off, Marcus.

MARCUS
He asked me what I saw, Coach Dan.

JACK
Know what I see? You got a good
four inches...
(puts his hand on Marcus'
head)
...on our next tallest player.
(moves his hand over to
the top of Chubbs' head)
Which makes me wonder why you're
chuckin' up three-pointers every
time down the floor.

MARCUS
Cause I got a candy stroke, baby.
Ask Coach Dan -- I made the most
threes on the team last year.

JACK
How many'd he make, Dan?

DAN
(consults his clipboard)
Uhh...last season Marcus made 34
three-pointers.

JACK
On how many attempts?

DAN
130.

JACK
For a percentage of?

DAN
26%.

JACK
26%. Ever wonder why you're so open
all the time? You couldn't throw it
in the ocean from the beach.

Ohhhhs and *ahhhs* from the peanut gallery.

CHUBBS
Oh shit! He dropped a truth bomb on
your ass!

Marcus looks askance at Chubbs.

CHUBBS (CONT'D)
Don't be all butt-hurt cause he
dropped some knowledge.

MARCUS	JACK
You wanna see butt-hurt? Bend over. I'll jam these Size 16s up your fat ass.	Who was second on the team in percentage, Dan?

DAN
Kenny. Shot 92 and made 45.

JACK
For a percentage of?

DAN
49%.

KENNY
Oh snap! See that!? Gimme the rock
an' let me go ham on some bitches.

CHUBBS
Ham and cheese, maybe.

KENNY
No ham an' cheese is what your
sister fries me up after I fiddle
her bean.

Kenny shoves two fingers up to Chubbs' nose as if to say,
Here, smell her. Chubbs pushes him away.

GARCIA
Cut it out, dickheads.

JACK
Run it back.
(to Marcus)
This time your sneakers don't leave
the paint. Understand?

Marcus grouses under his breath.

The players take the floor again. Jack and Dan return to the
sideline and watch as the scrimmage resumes. Jack focuses his
attention on Marcus who moves up and down the court
listlessly, pouting like a spoiled child.

JACK (CONT'D)
(re: Marcus)
Boy he's a dog, isn't he?

DAN
Marcus plays when Marcus wants to
play.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - POST-PRACTICE - DAY

A small, stark office adjoining the gymnasium. Old desk,
filing cabinets, locker tower against the wall.

Dan enters, flips on the lights.

DAN
She's all yours now.

Jack follows him in and gazes around as Dan sets the office
keys and the game balls down on the desk.

DAN (CONT'D)
Keys. And game balls. I left the
game tapes on the desk there if you
wanna get a feel for the sets we've
been running.
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

And that's my phone number in case you have any more questions.

JACK

Great. Thanks.

DAN

See ya tomorrow, Coach.

Dan moves to exit when --

JACK

Why didn't you take over?

DAN

(turns back)

Pardon?

JACK

Woulda made more sense, right? Havin' you just step in as head coach.

DAN

My mother has MS. My sister helps out during the day, but she's got three kids of her own, so I take the nights... Just makes it hard with the practices and scouting. There aren't enough hours in the day, yunno?

JACK

Sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

DAN

No no, not at all. We all have our own cross to bear, right?

Jack nods. Dan exits.

INT. BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Jack walks toward the exit doors with the game balls and game tapes in hand when, out of the corner of his eye, he notices a LARGE TROPHY CASE down the hall.

He approaches. Featured inside is a photo of himself as a high school senior accepting the Markward Award given to the best player in Philadelphia. The man standing beside him is clearly his FATHER as the resemblance is unmistakable.

Emotions rise within Jack as he stares at his father. Some good. Most bad. Theirs was a complicated relationship. Before Jack can dwell on it --

DRIBBLING is heard. He wanders back to the gym doors and, through the windows, sees Brandon inside, alone in the dark, practicing a dribbling drill.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Jack, clean-shaven now, applies some deodorant, then reviews his outfit before the mirror -- sweatshirt and warm-up pants. Struck with a thought, he grabs Dan's number off the dresser, reaches for the portable phone and dials the number --

JACK

Hey it's Jack. Good, good. Listen, is there a uhh, dress code required for these games?

INT. JACK'S ATTIC - MINUTES LATER

Jack climbs up ladder and moves through the dark, cluttered space until he arrives at a rack of old clothes. Sifts through until he finds a ratty, rumpled sport coat. Pulls it off and tries it on. Still fits. He reaches into the pocket and removes two movie ticket stubs for *Meet The Parents*.

JACK

Jesus fuckin' Christ...

EXT. BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Far more empty spaces than cars.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - BISHOP HAYES - NIGHT

Pre-game. Jack, dressed in the ratty attic sport coat, a dated tie and a pair of pleated Dockers, nervously walks circles around the desk. A JAY-Z SONG can be heard playing in the gym as the teams warm-up. Seeking to assuage his nerves, Jack opens one of the lockers against the wall. Inside, hidden behind a duffel bag, is a can of Coors. He takes a swig. Then a longer when --

A KNOCK at the door.

JACK

One sec.

Jack replaces the beer, makes sure it's hidden behind the bag and shuts the locker.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come in.

BOBBY FREEZE, 18, steps into the office. He's a stout, broad-shouldered, hard-hitting All-State linebacker who also plays basketball because it helps keep him in shape.

FREEZE

Coach Cunningham?

JACK

Yeah...

FREEZE

Bobby Freeze.

Freeze shakes Jack's hand as firmly as a Marine.

FREEZE (CONT'D)

I apologize for missin' practice over the weekend.

JACK

That's alright. Coach Dan let me know. Why dontcha get out there an' get warmed up, huh?

FREEZE

You got it, Coach.

Freeze heads for the door, then pauses and turns to Jack.

FREEZE (CONT'D)

My dad used to tell me stories about you playin' ball. Said you had a pair'a nuts the size'a King Kong. Had ta walk onto the court with a wheelbarrow just ta carry 'em.

Jack just stares at Freeze, unsure how to respond to that.

FREEZE (CONT'D)

Excited to play for a guy like that.

Freeze taps the door frame, then exits.

Jack pops a few Tic Tacs into his mouth, looks himself over one final time, then, to himself --

JACK

What the fuck are you doin', Jack?

He takes the game ball out of the locker and WE FOLLOW HIM out of the office, into the --

LOCKER ROOM CORRIDOR

The RAP MUSIC getting LOUDER and LOUDER as he enters the --

GYMNASIUM

and walks along the baseline. He's instantly struck by how empty it is. Whole bleacher sections are vacant. The student turnout just a dozen diehards. The players' parents and siblings are here, but their attendance is obligatory as evidenced by the attention being paid to their iPhones and iPads. It's a far cry from the days when he played, days when the band boomed and the bleachers rattled and you arrived hours early just to claim a spot in the nosebleeds.

He arrives at mid-court and hands the game ball off the LEAD REFEREE.

LEAD REFEREE

Thanks, Coach. Nice ta see you back in the gym, Jack.

Jack nods, then continues over to the Hayes team bench where Dan stands beside FATHER MARK WHELAN, 30s, a bespectacled Jesuit priest at the school and the team's chaplain.

DAN

Jack, I want you to meet, Father Mark Whelan. Father Mark's our team chaplain.

FATHER MARK

Very nice to meet you, Jack.

JACK

You, too.
(re: his outfit)
This look alright?

Dan and Father Mark give Jack's outfit a once-over. Both are visibly taken aback by its shabbiness. If Jack were a student here they'd send him home with a demerit slip. Instead, they politely manufacture smiles --

DAN

Yeah. Looks perfect.

FATHER MARK

Very nice ensemble, yes.

Jack shifts his attention to the court where the Hayes team forms a huddle, arms locked over each others' shoulders. In the center, Chubbs does a dougie-style dance while the players HOOT and HOLLER excitedly around him.

JACK

What the hell is that about?

DAN

It's something they do before every game. Try to get themselves psyched up, I guess.

Jack instantly despises it. But he's got bigger concerns at the moment. The GAME BUZZER SOUNDS.

JACK

Alright. Bring it in! Let's go!

LATER - ON THE BENCH

Jack sits beside Dan and Father Mark. He calls out a play as Brandon dribbles the ball across the timeline.

JACK

Atlanta-high! Atlanta-high!

ON THE COURT

Brandon signals the play, passes the ball to Marcus on the wing. Before the play can be run through, Marcus opts for a jump shot which predictably misses.

ON THE BENCH

Jack glances up at the scoreboard: **Bishop Hayes: 30 Away: 54.** His eyes slide down to the baseline where the CHEERLEADERS sit, pom-poms idle in their laps as they gossip with one another, not paying one ounce of attention to the game. Nearby, the Hayes mascot -- an EAGLE -- has fallen asleep in the bleachers.

INT. BURKE'S INN - NIGHT

Matty, Gerry, Susan and Doc are here. ESPN plays on the TV.

Jack enters, hangs his flannel coat on the rack then takes his normal stool at the bar. Matty's on the portable phone discussing a leak that needs to be repaired, but uses his free hand to pour Jack a Coors draft.

JACK
Thanks, Matty.

DOC
(from across the bar)
How'd opening night go, ace?

JACK
Lost to Dougherty.

DOC
Competitive?

JACK
68-40.

GERRY
Taken to the woodshed, huh, Jackie?

DOC
It's not the X's and O's, it's the
Jimmy and Joes.

SUSAN
The Jimmys and the Whos?

DOC
It means you can't make chicken
salad outta chicken shit,
sweetheart. Right now Jack's
workin' with chicken shit.

SUSAN
You need a recipe for chicken
salad, Jack?

JACK
Get it to me fast, Sooz. We play
again Friday night.

DOC
Who's next on the schedule?

JACK
Roman Catholic.

Doc sighs -- *ooof* -- clutches his heart in mock pain.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - CORRIDOR - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Jack steps out of the coach's office dressed in the same
ratty sport coat and Dockers outfit he wore last game.

He locks the door behind him then turns back to find Kenny in the corridor, making out with a HISPANIC CHEERLEADER.

Jack waits patiently for a few moments, but the make-out session isn't showing any signs of slowing down. In fact, Kenny's hand is creeping under Cheerleader's blouse.

JACK

Kenny.

(no response, louder now)

Yo Kenny!

Kenny stops, turns to Jack.

KENNY

Whattup, Coach C?

JACK

Bus is leavin'. We gotta go.

Kenny kisses Cheerleader one final time, whispers something that makes her chuckle, then joins Jack. They head into the --

STAIRWELL

and move down the stairs.

JACK

Better watch yourself doin' that inside school. One'a the Jesuits catches you an' you'll be spendin' your weekends here.

KENNY

It helps my game, though, Coach.

JACK

Slidin' your hand up some girl's shirt?

KENNY

If I'm gettin' loved on, I feel good. I start feelin' good an' the basket starts lookin' this wide.

(expands his arms)

Basket starts lookin' that wide an' watch out, yo -- it's gonna start rainin' up in here!

JACK

Rainin' huh?

KENNY

Rain forest monsoon-type shit!

They exit the stairwell into the --

SCHOOL PARKING LOT

The team bus is here. Nearby, a GROUP OF CHEERLEADERS are gathered, post-practice, waiting for their rides home.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.C.)

Kenny!

ANOTHER CHEERLEADER waves Kenny over.

KENNY

One sec, Coach.

JACK

The bus is takin' off, Kenny --

But Kenny's already on his way over to the CHEERLEADER. He wraps his arms around her and whispers some bullshit that she apparently buys because she smiles as if he's the man of her dreams and provides him with a nice, wide-mouthed make-out. Finally, Kenny returns to Jack, feeling his oats --

KENNY

My shit's on fleek tonight, Coach!

Jack shakes his head, follows Kenny onto the bus.

INT. ROMAN CATHOLIC GYMNASIUM - PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

WE'RE ASSAULTED BY NOISE -- 3,000 SCREAMING STUDENTS AND FANS crammed into a gymnasium the size of a shoebox, all here to see the #1 RANKED TEAM IN THE STATE -- ROMAN CATHOLIC.

SUPER: ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

A CHORUS OF BOOS welcomes the Hayes team as they take the floor and split into lay-up lines.

INT. VISITORS LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Jack sits alone, reviewing his handwritten game notes.

VOICES RISE in the hall. Through the partially open door, he sees the ROMAN TEAM in the corridor.

They gather around their star player, GREG CHILDRESS, 17, a cocky, 6'7 point guard with a Kobe Bryant-frame and a killer instinct. Only a junior, he's already got the powerhouse programs salivating.

GREG CHILDRESS

(from the hallway)

Listen up, yo! These scrubs aint worthy a bein' on the same floor as us. Let's be up 15 by the first quarter, 25 by half an' spend the rest'a the game thinkin' 'bout what pussy we're tappin' later!

Lots of *hell-yeahs* from the players. The huddle breaks. Jack watches the ROMAN TEAM as they pass by in their shiny yellow-and-purple Nike uniforms, each player taller, more athletic than the last.

INT. ROMAN CATHOLIC GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The FANS ERUPT as the ROMAN PLAYERS race onto the floor. They stomp the wood bleachers, loudly chanting, '*We Are Roman!*'

On the sideline, Dan stares up into the rafters, soaking in the copious '*State Champion*' banners, acutely aware of the beatdown that awaits.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Hey Coach.

He turns to find TONY D'ONOFRIO, 40s, Roman's four-time State-Title winning Head Coach, approaching. He's a Pat Riley-slick, Type-A personality who carries himself as if his shit smells like lilacs. Dan feigns a smile, shakes his hand.

DAN

Coach D'Onofrio.

TONY D'ONOFRIO

Hear ya got a new General in charge.

DAN

Yeah. You remember Jack Cunningham.

TONY D'ONOFRIO

Sure I do. I'm surprised you've been able to keep him out of a bar long enough to hold practice.

Out of a bar? The comment throws Dan. Before he can canvass it, Jack arrives and offers Tony his hand.

JACK
Jack Cunningham.

TONY D'ONOFRIO
(to Dan)
He says it like I don't know who he is. Best high school player I ever saw. Period.
(back to Jack)
I sat front row when you hung 43 on Judge in the Catholic League semis.

JACK
Got a nice club this year, Coach.
(re: Greg Childress)
That 21's a helluva ball player.

TONY D'ONOFRIO
Izzo was in town to watch him last week. Told me he's the closest thing to Magic he's seen in twenty years. I told Izzo if he had him last year they wouldnt'a blown that lead against UCLA.

JACK
That right?

TONY D'ONOFRIO
Nah I'm breakin' your stones. So how you likin' coachin' so far?

JACK
Good, yeah. Just been tryin' to get a feel for the players right now.

TONY D'ONOFRIO
What players?

It takes Jack a second to realize it's a joke. Finally he musters a smile.

TONY D'ONOFRIO (CONT'D)
Just breakin' your stones, Jack.

The GAME BUZZER SOUNDS.

JACK
Good luck, Coach.

TONY D'ONOFRIO
You can have the luck. I'll take the thoroughbreds.

Jack and Dan head back toward the visitor's bench.

JACK

Well he's a fuckin' asshole, huh.

DAN

Big time.

Jack arrives at the bench, but the Hayes team isn't there. He pivots back to the court and watches as the players once again huddle around Chubbs as he does his dougie-style dance. The dance ends. The team approaches the bench and begin taking off their warm-ups. Jack crouches before them.

JACK

No more dancin', Chubbs.

CHUBBS

You serious, Coach?

JACK

We're 3-and-10 on the season an' you're shakin' your ass like your Powerball numbers just hit. We start winnin' a few games an' we can talk about bringin' it back. Until then, it's retired.

(over to Garcia)

You're startin' out on Childress, alright?

GARCIA

Yes, sir.

JACK

He likes to drive right, so you gotta force him left. Make him shoot it off the bounce.

GARCIA

Yes, sir.

JACK

(over to Marcus)

Shade off'a 34. Don't hug him cause you gotta be able to help if Childress gets into the lane.

(to the team now)

We're 22 defensively. Let's get into our Pitt set first time down.

Nods. All hands in the middle now --

JACK (CONT'D)

1-2-3 --

TOGETHER

Team!

The huddle breaks. The Hayes team takes the floor.

ON THE BENCH - SECOND QUARTER

The gym's even louder than before and hot as a broiler. Jack stands on the sideline, sweating, calling out a play to Brandon on the floor --

JACK

Atlanta-high! Atlanta-high!

Brandon signals the play, but the defensive pressure by the Roman players is suffocating. Brandon is unable to make an entry pass to the wing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shot clock! Shot clock, Brandon!

Brandon sees it too late. Before he can get a shot off, REF blows his whistle and indicates a shot-clock violation.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

(shouts to Brandon)

Be aware'a the shot clock! Come on!

Brandon, as always, simply nods, 'Yes, Coach'. His silent act is beginning to wear on Jack. Jack eyes the scoreboard: **Roman Catholic: 40 Away: 12.**

ON THE COURT

Childress brings the ball up the floor, rolls off a screen and drives into the lane. He springs off his feet like he's on a trampoline and throws down a backboard-rattling TOMAHAWK DUNK that brings the crowd to its feet.

ON THE BENCH

Sensing the game getting completely out of hand, Jack signals for a timeout. Ref blows his whistle. Frustrated, Jack confronts the Hayes players as they return to the bench --

JACK
 (to Garcia)
 Didn't I tell you to force him
 left?!

GARCIA
 I'm tryin', Coach.

JACK
 (to Marcus)
 What'd I say about shadin' off your
 man? Huh!?

MARCUS
 Why's the shit always my fault!?

JACK
 (calls down the bench)
 Freeze! Sub in for Marcus!

Freeze pops up excitedly, rips off his warm-ups.

MARCUS
 You're takin' me out!?

JACK
 That's right. Sit your ass down.

MARCUS
 ...fuck this bullshit, man...

Marcus stomps away from the huddle and plops down on the end
 of the bench, indignant.

DAN
 Get back in the huddle, Marcus.

Marcus ignores Dan.

Jack crouches before the team. The embarrassment of the game
 has awakened a competitive fire in him -- the same one we
 briefly glimpsed at the pick-up game earlier.

JACK
 Look at me.

Jack waits until he's holding every pair of eyes, then --

JACK (CONT'D)
 I want each one'a you to reach into
 your shorts right now an' make sure
 you got a set of balls hangin'
 there. Okay? Cause right now you're
 playin' like a bunch of pussies.

Pussies? Father Mark looks like he swallowed a beetle. He glances over at Dan who quickly looks down at his scorebook.

JACK (CONT'D)

(to Chubbs)

The next time that big fuckin' ox 32 goes over your back for a rebound, throw your fuckin' elbow into his gut.

(over to Garcia)

If Childress tries to put your ass on a poster again, you foul him so hard he'll think twice about ever comin' back down that lane...Have a little fuckin' pride in yourselves. Okay? Now I don't give a fuck if we lose Every-Fuckin'-Game this season. But I refuse to coach a team that gets out-toughed. Understand me?

The team reacts with stunned silence. Except for Freeze who nods along as if he's the only one speaking Jack's language.

JACK (CONT'D)

Alright, let's go.

The huddle breaks. The Hayes team takes the floor once again, but Father Mark's still standing on the court, nonplussed.

DAN

Father? Father?

FATHER MARK

(comes to now)

...huh?

DAN

You need to sit down. The game's starting back up.

Still rattled, Father Mark slowly returns to his seat.

ON THE COURT

Chubbs' shot attempt is blocked by a ROMAN PLAYER. Childress snatches the deflected ball mid-air, sprints up the floor and rises for another slam dunk when --

THOOMP! FREEZE ABSOLUTELY CLOBBERS HIM! Childress crashes into the bleachers under the basket and SMACKS HIS HEAD. Livid, Childress leaps up and gets right in Freeze's face. More players get involved in the fracas.

Shoving, shouting, and shit-talking ensue. The REFEREES blow their whistles and aggressively separate the two teams.

The CROWD ANGRILY BOOS the Hayes players. Trash and water bottles are tossed down at them from the stands.

ON THE BENCH

Jack watches the train wreck despairingly.

TONY D'ONOFRIO (O.C.)
That's fuckin' Bush League shit!

He looks down the sideline. D'Onofrio's boiling hot, jabbing his finger in Jack's direction like a madman while his Assistant Coaches fight to restrain him.

TONY D'ONOFRIO (CONT'D)
That's dirty shit, Cunningham!
Control your fuckin' players!

The Hayes team returns to the sideline while the Refs clean up the mess on the court. Jack stands, looks at Freeze.

JACK
What the hell was that?

FREEZE
I was sendin' a message, Coach.

JACK
I said, '*foul him hard*', not crack his head open.

FREEZE
He'll think twice about comin' down the lane again after that.

CLOSE ON JACK as the bloodthirsty fans chant louder and louder and more trash is hurled onto the court. He hangs his head, wishing a trap door would open under his feet and he could slip away from all this unnoticed.

INT. BISHOP HAYES TEAM BUS - TRAVELING HOME - NIGHT

WE DRIFT DOWN THE CENTER AISLE...the players sit in the back of the bus, texting on their iPhones, listening to music on their oversized headphones, watching YouTube clips, etc... Brandon's the only way concentrating on homework.

Near the front of the bus Dan's asleep. Across the aisle, Jack's wide awake, head tilted back against the window, racking his brain for a strategy that could right the ship.

VOICE (O.C.)

Jack...

Jack turns to find Father Mark taking a seat in the row behind him.

JACK

Hey Father.

FATHER MARK

(talks quietly, privately)

I just wanted to have a little chat with you about something that was on my mind.

JACK

...okay.

FATHER MARK

I don't know if you recall from your days as a student, but we have a Code of Conduct at Hayes. And a part of that code includes the use of appropriate language. I understand that you're trying to motivate the team, I just wonder if maybe there's a different approach.

Unbeknownst to Jack or Father Mark, Dan's woken up and now eavesdrops on their conversation.

JACK

What're you sayin' exactly, Father? You want me to try act more Christ-like on the bench?

FATHER MARK

I'd like for you to keep in mind that our mission at Hayes isn't to win basketball games. It's to develop men of integrity and faith.

JACK

Okay. I get that. It's just...

Jack shifts his body, faces Father Mark and talks now as if he's letting him in on a secret.

JACK (CONT'D)

I got a feelin' that we're not as bad our record says we are. Yunno? That we got some half-decent pieces here an' if I could just move them around a certain way and find that right combination, that maybe we could win a few games.

FATHER MARK

Just give it some thought for me. Will you do that?

Jack nods. Father Mark stands to leave. Before he can --

JACK

Father.

FATHER MARK

Yes?

JACK

You really believe whoever's up there -- with all the other godawful crap goin' on in this world -- gives a shit about what I say to these players?

Annoyed at Jack's flippancy, Father Mark responds now, firmer than before, showing an inner strength Jack didn't expect.

FATHER MARK

As Christians we're called by God to integrate our faith into our daily lives. So yes, Jack, I do think He really gives a shit about the example you set for these young men.

JACK

...And what makes you so certain He's up there at all?

FATHER MARK

(ponders, then)

The same thing that makes you so certain this team's better than its 3-11 record... A feeling.

Father Mark stands now and returns to his original seat. Jack watches him go, then looks over at Dan.

Dan pretends to be sleeping.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jack steps in, hangs his flannel coat on the hook and enters the kitchen. He removes a Coors from the refrigerator when he notices the answering machine light blinking. He presses it --

MAN'S VOICE (ON MACHINE)
 Hey Jack, it's Bryan. Haven't heard from you in a while. Wanted to let you know we're having a birthday party for Patrick --

Jack hits '*Delete*'. Next message --

ANGELA'S VOICE (ON MACHINE)
 Hey. It's me.

Me. That voice.

It makes his restless heart beat a little easier. Always has.

ANGELA'S VOICE (ON MACHINE) (CONT'D)
 I know it's late notice, but I'm gonna be up near you for a client visit tomorrow and wanted to see if we could meet up for lunch. Anyway, call me when you get this.

Click. He's quiet for a moment after the message ends, then reaches down and replays it. Just because he wants to hear her voice again.

ANGELA'S VOICE (ON MACHINE) (CONT'D)
 Hey. It's me.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER/EXT. MANOA DINER - FOLLOWING DAY

Parked in the lot of a diner. Jack's inside listening to sports radio. He watches out his windshield as a Ford Focus rolls into the parking lot. His ex-wife, ANGELA, 34, steps out dressed in business attire. Pretty, freckle-faced, light brown hair pulled back and held with a cheap drugstore clip. She's a simple, honest woman and nobody's pushover.

Jack doesn't get out of his car right away. Instead, he waits and watches as Angela sits at a booth and reviews a menu.

INT. MANOA DINER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Not wanting to appear too eager to see her, Jack hustles in as if he's just arrived and approaches Angela's booth.

JACK
Sorry I'm late --

JACK (CONT'D) ANGELA
Bus broke down on 320. It's a No it's fine.
nightmare out there.

She stands and hugs him. They both sit now. Jack slides off his flannel jacket. A long, quiet beat follows. It's been a while since they've seen one another and neither really knows where to begin. Finally --

JACK
You look nice.

ANGELA
Thanks. You, too.

JACK
You likin' the new job?

ANGELA
It's fine. It's insurance. You know how it is -- boring but it pays the bills... I hear you're coaching basketball.

JACK
Did Beth tell ya that?

ANGELA
Is it okay that we talk?

JACK
I don't really have a choice, do I?

ANGELA
Not really, no.

Angela smiles. Jack, too. WAITRESS arrives.

WAITRESS
Getcha started with a drink here?

JACK
Just a coffee, please. Thank you.
(Waitress goes. Back to
Angela now)
Sorry I left ya that message on
Thanksgiving.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's his name?

ANGELA
...Nick.

JACK
Not Nick Mascaro the bartender over
at The Yesteryear.

ANGELA
Another Nick.

JACK
Where'd you meet this Other Nick?

ANGELA
A friend introduced us.

JACK
How long's it been goin' on?

ANGELA
A few months.

JACK
What's a few months? Two months?

JACK (CONT'D)	ANGELA
Three months? Six months?	Jack, please --

JACK
Any sleepovers?
(Angela's silent)
What's he do?

ANGELA
...He's a financial advisor.

JACK
Whoa. Big money guy, huh?

ANGELA
Stop it, Jack. Or I will.

Waitress sets a coffee down in front of Jack.

WAITRESS
We know what we want for lunch?

ANGELA
Maybe just a few minutes, please.

Waitress nods, goes. A beat, then --

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I wanted to tell you myself before
you heard it from one of our
friends.

It hits Jack like a gut-punch. He came here hoping this was
the first step towards a restart between them and now finds
himself tumbling down to the bottom of the basement stairs.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Please say something, Jack.

JACK

What do you want me to say?
Congratulations?

JACK (CONT'D)

I mean, I'm just totally
fuckin' blindsided by this.

ANGELA

No, not congratulations --

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I don't understand how you're
blindsided. We've been separated
for over a year now.

(beat, then)

I tried to make things work, Jack.
I wanted them to. But I'm done
trying now.

He's quiet.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Maybe I shouldn't have come.

JACK

You're the one who called me, so...

Defeated, Angela sets a few dollars on the table. Stands now
and puts on her jacket, slides her purse over her shoulder.

ANGELA

Will I see you on the 23rd?

Jack nods without looking at her.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Bryan and Em are having a birthday
party for Patrick that day. I know
he's tried calling you a few times.
I thought we could go together.

Jack nods again.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Goodbye, Jack.

He nods once more, still without looking at her.

Angela gets emotional. Seems like she wants to say something else, then privately decides it's futile and walks out.

For a few moments, Jack doesn't move. Just sits there, gutted, hands in pockets. Waitress returns --

WAITRESS
All set?

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack lies in bed, unable to sleep. He rolls over. The alarm clock reads **3:12 AM**. He switches on the lamp and reaches for a legal pad and a pen on the night stand.

Writes down -- '**Press??**' -- then draws out a basketball court and begins filling it in with **X's**.

LATER

Dawn now. A dozen sheets of paper are taped to the bedroom wall, each one with a different formation sketched on it. Jack reviews them all, then rips off the one he prefers.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - FOLLOWING DAY

Team practice. Reading off the sheet of paper he pulled off the wall, Jack sets the players up in a press formation. Dan watches curiously.

DAN
This the old Pitino-Kentucky press?

JACK
No, this is the Jack-can't-sleep-at-3-in-the-morning press.

Dan smiles. Once Jack's got everyone in the proper place --

JACK (CONT'D)
Alright listen up. Our half-court offense sucks. Our half-court defense is worse. We gotta create some scoring opportunities for ourselves in transition. So we're gonna press after every dead ball.
(MORE)

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

Game night, just before tip-off. At the bench, Jack kneels in front of the NEW STARTING 5 -- Brandon, Chubbs, Freeze, Garcia and Kenny.

JACK

We're in our Diamond press after every dead ball. If they break it, we fall back into 22. Keep your arms active and watch for shooters.

Nods all around.

VOICE (O.C.)

Hey, Jackie.

Jack turns to find SAL DeSANTO -- his pick-up game pal -- standing outside the huddle in a black-and-white striped uniform. He's refereeing tonight's game.

JACK

Gonna give us a few friendly whistles tonight, Sal?

SAL

I aint gettin' paid enough. I need the game ball when you get a sec.

JACK

Dan, will you run an' get it? It's in the top locker.

Jack reaches into his pocket and hands Dan the office keys.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dan unlocks the door and crosses to the lockers. Opens one and removes the game ball. As he does, he glimpses a few empty Coors Lite cans inside. He reacts impassively, recalling D'Onofrio's bar comment from a few nights earlier.

Finally, he closes the locker and exits the office.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - LATER THAT NIGHT

ON THE SCOREBOARD: **Bishop Hayes: 58 Away: 57. 4th Quarter. 25 seconds** remaining in the game.

SAL
I'll let him know.

Jack watches disgustedly as the OPPOSING PLAYER sinks both free throws. He glances up at the scoreboard -- **Bishop Hayes 58 Away: 59. 15 seconds remaining.**

JACK
(to Sal)
Gimme a timeout.

Sal BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. The Hayes team returns to the bench and sits down. Jack grabs the Dry-Erase board, takes a moment to decide on a play, then kneels before the team.

JACK (CONT'D)
We're gonna run Pitt High.

DAN
No timeouts left.

JACK
Brandon you got the ball. Okay?

Brandon nods his head.

JACK (CONT'D)
No no, don't nod your head at me. I wanna hear your voice. Yes or no?

BRANDON
Yes, Coach.

It's the first time we've heard Brandon utter a word.

JACK
Fifteen seconds left. We go with eight. That'll give us a chance for a rebound or a tip-in.
(drawing out the play on the Dry-Erase)
Freeze, you're gonna set the ball screen out top. Brandon's gonna drive the ball right. Meanwhile, Chubbs you set a pick for Kenny over here.
(back to Brandon)
Three options -- drive the ball to the hole, hit Freeze rollin' off the screen, or look for Kenny spottin' up in the corner. Got it?

Brandon nods again. Jack glowers.

BRANDON
I got it, Coach.

The BUZZER SOUNDS.

JACK
Bring it in.

All hands in the center.

JACK (CONT'D)
1-2-3 --

TOGETHER
Team!

The Hayes team returns to the floor.

ON THE COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Brandon dribbles over the half-court stripe, keeping a close watch on the dwindling game clock: **12 seconds...11...10...** When it reaches **8**, he rolls off a screen set by Freeze and penetrates into the lane. The defense collapses. Brandon fires a pass out to Kenny in the corner. Kenny heaves up a very deep, high-arcing three that seems to hang in the air for an eternity before falling and SWISHING RIGHT THROUGH THE NET AS THE BUZZER SOUNDS!

The Hayes players celebrate and tackle Kenny.

ON THE SIDELINE

It takes Jack a moment to process it. Like everyone else in the gym he just assumed the shot would miss. He confirms the outcome with the scoreboard -- **Bishop Hayes: 61 Away: 59** -- then shakes the OPPOSING COACH'S hand at mid-court --

JACK
Great game, Coach.

EXT. BISHOP HAYES HIGH SCHOOL - LATER THAT NIGHT

The parking lot's empty. Jack and Dan walk down the front steps of the school, still smiling hours later.

JACK
-- I'll take a look at the game tape an' let's talk it over. See if we wanna use that 1-3-1 zone.

DAN
Sounds good. Congratulations on
your first win.

Jack nods, then veers off toward his Chevy when --

DAN (CONT'D)
Jack...

Jack pauses, turns back to Dan.

DAN (CONT'D)
I found some beer cans in your
office.

JACK
Oh. Yeah. I uhh, had a buddy come
in the other day to talk through
some offensive sets.

Dan clearly doesn't believe him. Jack notices.

JACK (CONT'D)
Come on, you're bustin' my balls
over a coupl'a beer cans?

DAN
Just make sure it doesn't happen
again. Alright?

Jack nods, shaking his head as if disgusted to be confronted
with such nonsense, then climbs into the Chevy.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - NIGHT

Driving home, Jack reaches into the backseat and lifts a
Coors can out of the ice-packed mini-cooler. He's about to
enjoy it when he notices Brandon walking down the sidewalk,
alone, shoulders hunched against the cold. He replaces the
beer, steers the car to the curb and rolls down his window.

JACK
Need a ride?

BRANDON
I'm good, Coach.

JACK
It's freezin' out. Get in.

Brandon climbs into the passenger seat. Jack eases the car
back into traffic.

JACK (CONT'D)
You walk home every night?
(Brandon nods)
Where're mom an' dad?

BRANDON
Mom died three years ago. My dad's
at home with my little brothers.

JACK
That why he never comes to any'a
the games?

Brandon nods. A beat, then --

JACK (CONT'D)
You played a nice game tonight.
Next time shoot the ball.

BRANDON
...on the last play?

JACK
That's your shot, not Kenny's.

BRANDON
The defense collapsed on me, Kenny
was open in the corner.

JACK
Right.

BRANDON
So that was the smart play.

JACK
Sometimes the smart play isn't the
right one. You're the best player
on our team. Which means when the
game's on the line, 100 times out
of a 100 I want you takin' the
shot.

Brandon's quiet again. Jack looks over at him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Why's that so hard for you to
understand?

BRANDON
What?

JACK

That you're the best player on the team... I saw you get frustrated when Chubbs didn't go back-door on the ball reversal. And when Freeze didn't duck-in on the Atlanta set. You understand the game in a way the other guys don't. So why didn't you call them out for not makin' the right play?

BRANDON

It's not really my thing to call someone out. I'm not, like, the team captain or nothin', so...

JACK

If I make you team captain are you gonna chew Chubbs' ass out next time he doesn't go back-door?

Brandon chuckles.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yes or no?

BRANDON

If ya want me to, I guess.

JACK

I do. Very much.

BRANDON

I'm the last house on the left.

Jack pulls into the driveway of a modest twin home behind an run-down 2002 Oldsmobile Alero sedan.

JACK

Get some rest, Captain.

Brandon smiles. Sort of.

BRANDON

Night, Coach.

Brandon exits the car. Jack remains in the driveway. Through the house windows, he watches Brandon enter the home and approach his father, RUSS, 40, washing the dishes at the sink. The two have a curt exchange -- no hug or *how was your day?* -- just *get upstairs and get your homework done*. Brandon nods obediently and disappears up the stairs.

Russ looks outside and sees Jack parked in the driveway. The two lock eyes for a moment. Finally, Jack shifts into reverse and backs out of the drive.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Jack lounges on the couch sketching out plays on a legal pad. The DOORBELL RINGS. He sits up, looks out the window and sees MARCUS standing on the front step. Turns back to the coffee table now -- six dead Coors cans and a dirty paper plates. Doesn't feel like cleaning up the mess so he just tosses a blanket over it, then approaches the door and opens it.

MARCUS

Hey, Coach.

JACK

How'd you know where I live?

MARCUS

I looked you up on my phone.

Jack's weirded-out by that. Didn't know it was that easy.

JACK

What do you want?

MARCUS

My mom sent me. She works 'til 7 every night an' she don't want me just bein' on my own after school so she wanted to know if maybe you'd let me back on the team.

JACK

(a bit drunk and unwilling
to sugarcoat)

I don't want you back on the team, Marcus. So if you need to kill a few hours after school, I'll talk to Coach Dan about gettin' you into a study program. Alright?

Marcus nods, head down.

JACK (CONT'D)

G'night.

Marcus doesn't leave right away. Jack shuts the door. Waits a beat, then looks out the peephole. Marcus is still standing on the front step. Jacks opens the door. Marcus seems on the verge of tears.

JACK (CONT'D)

That seemed like a fair deal to me.

MARCUS

My mom didn't send me here, Coach. I'm here cause I wanna play ball. I miss it. I don't fuckin 'like nothin' else.

JACK

Don't say fuckin'. You know they have a Code of Conduct policy at Hayes, right?

MARCUS

They do?

JACK

Yeah. And there's a big section about watchin' your mouth.

MARCUS

Okay. I'm sorry.

Jack regards Marcus a moment. He's not thrilled with the idea of him rejoining the team, but he's beginning to lose heart in the face of Marcus' sincerity. Finally --

JACK

We practice tomorrow at 4.

MARCUS

(brightens)
You serious!?

JACK

Don't be late.

MARCUS

Fuck no -- I mean -- heck no I aint gon' be late, Coach.

Jack watches Marcus run back to his bike and pedal off excitedly before closing the front door.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - PRACTICE - FOLLOWING DAY

Jack stands before the team at mid-court, Dan at his side.

JACK

Two pieces a business before we get started here. First off, as you can see, Marcus has rejoined the team.

The reaction from the team is akin to someone cutting a wet fart at a funeral mass.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (to Marcus)
 Judgin' by that reaction you got a long way to go before you earn back everyone's respect.

Marcus nods, feeling their apprehension.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Secondly, I'm makin' a change at the Captain spot. Goin' forward, Brandon's gonna be our new Captain.

All eyes on Garcia. It's an obvious snub. But Garcia -- the consummate team player -- responds simply by offering a supportive fist-pump to Brandon.

GARCIA
 Good shit, B. I'll follow your lead.

Brandon nods, pounds his fist.

JACK
 Alright, let's get to work.

INT. TRINITY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A LARGE AND ROWDY CROWD fills the bleachers.

SUPER: **TRINITY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

ON THE COURT

Chubbs goes after a rebound and is whistled by the REFEREE for an over-the-back foul.

ON THE BENCH

Dan notes it in his scorebook, calls out to Jack standing near midcourt --

DAN
 That's four fouls on Chubbs!

Jack looks up at the scoreboard -- **Trinity: 42 Away: 41** -- then peers down the bench. Slim pickings...except for Marcus all the way down at the end. He chews on it a moment, then --

JACK
Marcus, let's go! You got Chubbs!

Marcus springs to his feet, rips off his warm-ups and approaches Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're guardin' the inbounder on the press. If I see your sneakers one inch off'a the blocks, I'm gonna super glue your ass cheeks to the bench for the rest'a the season. Understand?

Marcus nods and continues up to the scorer's table.

Jack sits on the bench, then looks over to find Father Mark staring at him reproachfully.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm a workin' on it, Father.

FATHER MARK
Work harder.

ON THE COURT

Marcus rebounds a missed free throw, outlets the ball to Brandon who streaks down the court and puts in a lay-up.

Following the basket, the team gets into its 'Diamond' press. Marcus guards the inbound pass, jumping up and down with an energy and passion previously absent from his game. His big frame and long arms are clearly agitating the INBOUNDER who throws an errant pass. Garcia steals it, lays it in.

ON THE BENCH

Jack leaps up off the bench.

It's a light bulb moment!

The look on his face that of a castaway who's spotted a rescue vessel on the horizon.

JACK
(waving his arms)
Up up! Stay up! Stay up!

ON THE COURT

The team remains in the press. The ball is thrown into the corner. Marcus and Kenny trap the OPPOSING PLAYER, forcing him to throw a cross-court pass which Brandon intercepts and dishes to a cutting Marcus for a TWO-HANDED DUNK!

ON JACK

Now he knows he's found it!

That mysterious, elusive 'right formation' he mentioned to Father Mark on the team bus weeks earlier.

JACK

Up! Up! Up! Stay up!

ON THE COURT

Brandon picks off another pass, fires the ball out to Kenny in the corner. Kenny SWISHES IN A THREE-POINTER!

THE OPPOSING COACH

Dejectedly signals for a timeout. Ref BLOWS his whistle.

ON THE SIDELINE

Jack looks up at the scoreboard. In a matter of seconds, the team has gone from being down 1 to up 6.

The Hayes players sit on the bench and catch their breath.

BRANDON

We still pressin', Coach?

Jack doesn't respond. He's still reveling in the discovery.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Coach?

Finally, Jack snaps from his reverie, kneels before his team, a grin slowly curling to life on his face --

JACK

Alright. Here we go --

And off that smile -- MUSIC SMASHES: *Fleetwood Mac 'I Don't Want to Know'* and we --

BEGIN MONTAGE

It's a LONG, INFECTIOUS MONTAGE that should encompass roughly six weeks in the basketball season. And if it feels at all like we're checking-off every cliché in sports movie history-- that's good, embrace it -- we're going to shatter them all soon enough anyway.

START INSIDE

-- THE BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM. Jack calls the offensive plays in to Brandon who in turn relays them to the team.

-- QUICK CUTS OF THE GAME NOW -- BRANDON DRIVING, SCORING -- KENNY DRILLING A THREE-POINTER -- JACK'S 'DIAMOND' PRESS creating turnovers that lead to easy lay-ups for Hayes -- the OPPOSING COACH, frustrated, signaling for a timeout --

-- LATER. The GAME BUZZER SOUNDS. Jack glances up at the scoreboard: **Bishop Hayes: 64 Away: 46.** He walks down the sideline, shakes the Opposing Coach's hand--

JACK

Nice game, Coach.

-- AT JACK'S HOUSE -- a team dinner in-progress. The players sit around the den watching game tape. Dan doles out pieces of pizza while Jack instructs them on a defensive set.

-- INSIDE AN OPPONENT'S GYM. GARCIA picks the Guard's pocket, passes the ball ahead to Brandon who lofts it off the backboard for a streaking MARCUS TO CATCH AND SLAM HOME!

-- LATER. The GAME BUZZER SOUNDS. Jack shakes the OPPOSING COACH's hand --

OPPOSING COACH

(impressed)

The hell got into your team?

JACK

Just a lucky night.

-- INSIDE BURKE'S INN. Jack sketches out a play on a cocktail napkin. Doc approaches and drops a *Daily News* in front of him. An article reads: '**Cunningham Returns Home, Leads Hayes to 5th Straight.**'

DOC

Must've been one helluva chicken salad recipe, ace.

-- INSIDE THE HAYES GYM. Jack steps out of the Coach's Office to find Kenny making-out with a NEW CHEERLEADER. Jack considers putting an end to it, then decides against it: *You don't fuck with a winning streak.*

-- WE'RE IN THE HAYES TEAM HUDDLE as Chubbs' does his now-unretired dougie-style dance again, shaking his big ass and rolling his shoulders to hoots and hollers of his teammates.

-- WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT AT BETH'S HOUSE. Kurt's set up an ELABORATE CHRISTMAS MODEL CITY AND TRAIN SET. Jack watches beside Beth, Anne, Kurt, and Ryan. Meanwhile, Sarah attempts to derail the trains by smashing them with her Barbie Doll.

A BARRAGE OF MOMENTS NOW -- INTERCUTTING between shots of the new energy the team has brought to the high school with GAME CLIPS of team playing with increasing confidence and swagger, becoming far more than the sum of its parts.

-- The BISHOP HAYES PARKING LOT IS FULL. Security Guards have to turn cars away.

-- JACK CALLS OUT PLAYS from the sideline -- BRANDON CHEWS MARCUS' ASS OUT for missing a play. Marcus, whose attitude has done a full 180-now, simply nods his head --

-- THE STUDENT SECTION packed and loud, a SEA OF GREEN AND WHITE. Students CLAP THEIR HANDS AND STOMP THEIR FEET.

-- GARCIA steals a pass -- MARCUS swats a lay-up -- FREEZE fouls the holy shit out of OPPONENT going in for an easy lay-up then stares him down --

-- In the bleachers, FATHER TIERNEY shakes the hands of alums that have come out of the woodwork to hop on the bandwagon --

-- JACK, passionate and alive in a way we haven't seen, BARKS at a REFEREE over a call. He rips off his blazer again and fires it at the bench. Dan and Father Mark DUCK to avoid it --

-- The CHEERLEADERS CHEER energetically as the HAYES EAGLE MASCOT races around the court, flapping its wings, chasing down and pouncing on the OPPOSING MASCOT with its talons --

-- BRANDON STEALS A PASS, PASSES TO KENNY WHO LINES UP A THREE-POINTER. As he does, WE WHIP TO THE HAYES BENCH where everyone's standing -- including Father Mark -- holding three fingers up in the air, Curry-esque.

-- And, finally, we're back at BURKE'S. Jack's eating a roast beef sandwich. Doc drops another *Daily News* in front of him. Headline reads, '**Hayes Streak Hits 12. Playoffs Next?**'

DOC (CONT'D)
Playoffs would be special, ace...

Off Jack tamping down a rising, unexpected pride, WE SLOWLY --

DISSOLVE TO:

WHITE-TIPPED WAVES

Crash onto the cold sand. They glisten momentarily before receding back into the wintry Atlantic.

WE DRIFT BACK TO REVEAL an overcast February morning at the Jersey shore. Jack stands on the beach, gazing out at a fishing boat on the horizon jouncing across the sea. The familiar, soothing surf-sigh brings a smile to his face.

He once called this place home.

Sensing a presence, he turns to find Angela standing back by the dunes.

JACK
How'd ya know I was down here?

She holds up her paper coffee cup. A match for the one in Jack's hand.

ANGELA
Kelly told me you stopped in.

He moves to her now and hugs her warmly. She reciprocates, guardedly.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Ready?

He nods and they start up the sandy beach path.

EXT. HOLY CROSS CEMETERY - SEA ISLE CITY, NJ - MORNING

Angela kneels before a gravestone, removing the flowers that have wilted and replacing them with fresh ones she's brought. It's a ritual and she's meticulous with it because it's important to her. Finished, she backs away, allowing us a view of their son's gravestone. It reads:

MICHAEL JOSEPH CUNNINGHAM

August 11, 2005 - February 23, 2014

OUR BELOVED SON

As is their routine, Angela goes first. Blesses herself and whispers a silent prayer to her son. After a few moments, she wipes away the tears that always come and stands.

Jack's turn now. He doesn't bless himself, just kneels. And he doesn't say anything. Or he does, of course, just not out loud. Finally, he leans forward and kisses the gravestone.

JACK
Miss ya, buddy.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - SEA ISLE CITY - MORNING

Driving through Sea Isle City. A bustling summer destination but a veritable ghost town this time of year. The only signs of life are the construction crews razing older, smaller homes and replacing them with three-story eyesore mansions.

JACK
Lotta buildin' goin' on down here.

ANGELA
Shelly told me someone knocked on her door the other day. Some real estate guy in a big BMW. Offered her a million dollars for her house. And you remember how small that place is.

JACK
I hope she said yes.

ANGELA
Where's Shelly gonna go?

ANGELA (CONT'D)	JACK
She's eighty two years old.	Anywhere she wants with a wallet that fat.

ANGELA
The same thing happened to the Keller's.

JACK
What are you talkin' about? They sold our house?

ANGELA
I ran into Janet at Church. Some builder kept coming around and making offers.

(MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Each one higher than the last until they couldn't say no anymore. I think she felt guilty about the whole thing.

The news hits Jack harder than he'd like. They pull onto the CAUSEWAY.

JACK

I didn't know you were still goin' ta Church.

ANGELA

I stopped for a while after Michael died. Do you go much anymore?

JACK

I haven't gone in years. Too hard.

ANGELA

See I find it harder not to go.

JACK

It's pretty easy actually. You just plop your ass down on the couch, grab some potato chips and switch the tv on.

ANGELA

(smiles, then)

I mean the idea that there's nothing else after this life. That it all just...goes dark and I'll never see my son again. That's just unbearable to me.

Jack reflects a moment, then, needing a distraction, reaches down and searches for a radio station. He passes over a few channels when --

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Jack.

JACK

...yeah.

ANGELA

Jack, watch out!

Jack SLAMS the brake pedal to the mat! Looks out the windshield and sees...

...a TURTLE crossing the street.

JACK
(exhales, relieved)
Jesus Christ -- you screamed like
that for a turtle?

ANGELA
Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.

Jack waits for the turtle to reach the other side, then lets his foot off the brake when a SECOND, EVEN SLOWER TURTLE begins crossing the road.

JACK
Oh for fuck's sake. Look at this
one.

Angela laughs. Jack looks over at her. Her laughing makes him laugh. And they keep laughing until a car behind them HONKS its horn.

JACK (CONT'D)
Alright. I'm goin', I'm goin'.

INT. KIDS INDOOR PLAY ZONE - DAY

A 10-year-old boy's birthday party in progress. Red-faced boys bounce on trampolines, scale rock walls, and chase each other around like headless chickens.

Jack and Angela walk in. Angela's carrying a birthday present wrapped in superhero wrapping paper. They approach the parents of the birthday boy --BRYAN and EMILY, 40 -- friends they made at the hospital while both couples were battling through their sons' illnesses.

JACK
Hey, Bry.

Bryan turns and, surprised to see Jack, pulls him into a big long hug.

BRYAN
Hey, Jackie. Jesus. Good to see ya.

JACK
(hugs Emily now)
Hey, Em.

EMILY
Hi, Jack. Thanks for being here.

BRYAN
(to Jack)
Let's go inside. I'll getcha some
tickets for the trampoline.

JACK
Yeah right.

Bryan smiles and throws his arm around Jack's shoulder.

BRYAN
Really great seein' ya, pal.

LATER

Angela stands alongside Emily and a group of MOTHERS,
listening politely to things she has little interest in.

Over by the batting cages, Jack and Bryan watch Bryan's son,
PATRICK, 10, hit baseballs.

JACK
He's got a nice swing, huh.

BRYAN
He loves it, Jack. We practically
have to drag him off the field
after practice every night.

JACK
And the doctors...? I mean, they're
all pretty optimistic...?

BRYAN
So far, so good. They told us to
let him do all the things normal
kids do, so... But you know what
remission's like -- you spend your
life waitin' on pins and needles
for the other shoe to drop.
(beat, then)
You talk to Ethan lately?

JACK
He called the house a few times,
but I haven't had a chance ta get
back to him.

BRYAN
Denise called Em on Monday.
Andrew's not doin' well.

(MORE)

BRYAN (CONT'D)
 He's been down at duPont Hospital
 for the past two weeks. They're
 talkin' about hospice.

JACK
 Oh Jesus Christ...

BRYAN
 Yeah, it's not good. Give him a
 call when ya get a chance.

Jack nods. Patrick approaches the cage.

PATRICK
 Can I use a different bat, dad?

BRYAN
 The birthday boy can do whatever
 the heck he wants. Say hi to Mr.
 Cunningham for me first.

PATRICK
 Who?

BRYAN
 Michael's dad. You remember
 Michael.

Patrick's face is blank. He looks at Bryan as if for a clue.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
 Remember you two dressed up as
 Minions that Halloween? Walked all
 around the hospital gettin' candy?

Still no trace of recognition from Patrick.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
 (to Jack, guiltily)
 He remembers.

PATRICK
 No I don't.

BRYAN
 He's always talkin' about
 that Halloween.

JACK
 It's alright. That was a long
 time ago.

PATRICK
 Can I get a new bat now?

Ending the awkwardness, Bryan steps into the batting cage and
 helps Patrick pick out a different bat.

Jack watches, knowing they've all forgotten about his son.

INT. PIZZA PARTY ROOM - NIGHT

The boys sit around a long table, eating Dominos pizza and chips and drinking cartons of juice. The parents stand behind them, chatting with one another, offering assistance.

Because they don't have a child to attend to, Jack and Angela stand in the corner, removed from everyone else, alone with their absence.

EXT. ANGELA'S CONDO - SEA ISLE CITY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jack's Chevy Blazer rolls into the lot of a dated, nautical-themed condominium complex on the bay.

INT. CHEVY BLAZER - NIGHT

Jack shifts into park. Angela doesn't get out right away.

ANGELA

Thanks for coming with me.

JACK

Sure.

ANGELA

(beat, then)

I hate going to those things. It's like I get angry all over again. I start looking around at all the boys and wishing it was one of them and not Michael. Does that make me an awful person?

JACK

I don't know. I've never stopped bein' angry.

ANGELA

I know Bryan and Em invite us because they don't want us to feel left out, but somehow being there makes me feel more like an outcast.

JACK

That's why I never answer their calls. Just don't wanna deal with any of it.

ANGELA

But that's not a life either, Jack.
Are you just never going to answer
the phone the rest of your life?

JACK

Maybe. I don't know.

A long beat. Angela begins to cry unexpectedly.

JACK (CONT'D)

I wasn't tryin' ta make ya upset,
Ang. I just --

ANGELA

I know. It's fine.
(takes a moment to collect
herself, then)
I want you to be happy again, Jack.
Every morning I wake up and I pray
that you're happy. More than my own
happiness, I pray for yours. But
you have to want it, too. Do you
understand that?

Jack's quiet.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I know you're suffering.

JACK

Of course I'm sufferin'. I miss my
son. I'm mad as hell I'm never
gonna see him again. And don't tell
me he's in a better place. Okay? I
don't wanna fuckin' hear that shit.
The best fuckin' place for him was
right here with you and me.

ANGELA

You don't think I'm suffering, too?

JACK

I don't know, Ang. I mean, you seem
to be doin' okay. You got a new
job, you're fuckin' some rich guy --

JACK (CONT'D)

-- while we're still married.

ANGELA

Don't you dare.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Don't you dare, Jack! I'm allowed
to be happy.

JACK

And I'm allowed to still be in love
with you. So fuck him.

Emotion rises in Angela again. She turns away from Jack. She still loves him. With everything inside her. But so much has changed. Most of all him.

ANGELA

I feel like I don't know you
anymore, Jack.

JACK

I don't know myself anymore, Ang.
Something inside'a me shut off when
Michael died. I couldn't believe in
nothin' no more. I'm still fightin'
to believe in something.

(beat)

Do you still love me?

ANGELA

Of course I still love you.

JACK

Then why isn't that enough?

ANGELA

Because you're not you anymore. And
I can't waste my life waiting
around for that other person to
come back. I won't.

Angela opens the door and leaves the car abruptly. Jack watches her disappear inside her condo, then slowly shifts into reverse and leaves the driveway.

EXT. HOUSE ON THE BAY - SEA ISLE CITY - NIGHT

The wood frame of what will soon be a massive luxury home.

Jack parks his Chevy beside the curb, then steps out and enters the home. A SHARP WIND HOWLS, unsettling the dust and making strands of loose construction plastic dance.

He tucks his hands into his jacket, walks up the stairs and down the hall, seeking out one space in particular.

He arrives at it now.

His son's bedroom.

He hesitates at the threshold a moment, then steps inside. There's nothing remarkable about it. Just a small, square room overlooking the bay. He stands here for a long while, his mind's eye filling in the details of what used to be. The WIND HOWLS once again but Jack doesn't even notice.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MEAT PACKING PLANT - NORTH PHILADELPHIA - MORNING

A busy, noisy operation. Saws buzzing, conveyor belts moving, delivery truck engines grumbling.

Jack weaves through the freshly-slaughtered cattle sides hanging from hooks. Lost, he asks a passing EMPLOYEE for directions. Employee waves for him to follow. Jack does.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - MORNING

Quieter back here. A pack of APRON-CLAD MEN stand around a large steel table trimming sides of beef. Brandon's father, RUSS, is one of them.

Employee enters, followed by Jack.

EMPLOYEE

Yo Russ!

Russ looks up and sees Jack. Employee exits.

RUSS

Can I help you?

JACK

Mornin'. I'm Jack Cunningham. I coach your son over at Hayes.

RUSS

I know who you are.

JACK

I use'ta watch you play at Narbeth. You, YaYa Davis and Benny Green.

RUSS

There somethin' I can help you with, Coach?

JACK

I wanted ta talk about Brandon.

RUSS

What about Brandon?

Russ dumps the trimmed meat into a tray, weighs it.

JACK

He's been gettin' some recruitin' letters recently. Programs interested in havin' him play ball at their university.

RUSS

Well I 'preciate you comin' here an' lettin' me know.

Russ carries the tray over to a different table, hobbling with the broken gait of an old athlete whose knees and hips have gone to shit. His lack of interest pisses Jack off.

JACK

How come you never show up at any'a your son's games?

RUSS

I got responsibilities at home. Two young boys that need to be bathed, fed, helped with their homework.

JACK

That's it?

RUSS

Yeah that's it.

JACK

I'll getcha a babysitter. My treat.

Russ looks up at Jack. Now he's the one who's pissed-off.

RUSS

I don't come to any games, Coach, cause I don't support my son's ideas 'bout the game. I don't want him relyin' on basketball to make a life. That was my mistake. It aint gonna be his.

JACK

These universities are willin' to offer him a scholarship.

RUSS

Don't matter. They offered me the same.

(MORE)

RUSS (CONT'D)
 Puttin' your faith in basketball
 don't work out. If anybody oughta
 know that it's you.

Jack just eats it. He's heard far worse, after all. Russ
 starts trimming the meat again. Jack watches a moment, then --

JACK
 Your son loves the game. He's not
 gonna stop playin'.

RUSS
 My son's gon' do what I tell him to
 do... Is that all, Coach?

A tense beat. Finally, Jack nods and walks out.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - DAY

The Hayes team sits on the bleachers changing into their
 practice gear. Chubbs waves the other players over.

CHUBBS
 Check this out, yo!

FREEZE
 If this is another dick-pic from
 your boyfriend, spare me.

CHUBBS
 Lick my ass, Freeze.

Everyone huddles around Chubbs. He presses play on a YouTube
 video he's teed up on his iPhone.

ON THE SCREEN: a clip from an old college basketball game.
 Kansas versus North Carolina, 2000.

CHUBBS (CONT'D)
 That's Coach C there.

ON THE VIDEO: Jack, a player on Kansas, misses a shot.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (VO ON CLIP)
 Not a good shot by Cunningham.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (VO ON CLIP)
 Coach Self apparently agrees. He
 taking Cunningham out of the game.

ON THE VIDEO: Jack's replaced by another PLAYER.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (VO ON CLIP)
(CONT'D)

Been a rough night to go along with
a very rough season for Cunningham.

COLOR COMMENTATOR PLAY-BY-PLAY (VO ON
CLIP)

It certainly has, Pat. Especially
given the enormous expectations
people had for him coming out of
high school --

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (VO ON CLIP)

Now we've got an altercation.

ON THE VIDEO: Jack gets into an argument with his HEAD COACH. Things turn ugly. Assistant Coaches and Players intervene and try to separate the two. Jack has to be restrained by TWO PLAYERS, his frustration level at a boiling point.

MARCUS

Oh shit! Coach C's goin' off!

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (VO ON CLIP)

Now we've got a fan on the floor.

ON THE VIDEO: A man we recognize as JACK'S FATHER rushes out of the stands onto the floor. He looks drunk, wobbly and goes after the HEAD COACH, throws a wild punch.

KENNY

Who the hell's that looney?

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (VO ON CLIP)

We're now being told this is Jack
Cunningham's father.

ON THE VIDEO: Jack's FATHER is hauled off, kicking and screaming, by security.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (VO ON CLIP)

Wow. This is as sad and ugly an
incident as I've ever seen at a
college basketball game.

The Hayes players all watch, amused by the circus...except for Brandon. Perhaps recognizing a bit of his own struggle with his father, he watches far more solemnly.

Just then, they GYM DOORS OPEN. Jack and Dan enter.

CHUBBS

Shit!

Chubbs quickly slips his iPhone back into his backpack as the others put their heads down and pretend to tie their shoes.

JACK

Alright, let's go. Bring it in!
Full-court lay-ups.

The team heads down the stands onto the court.

LATER - POST-PRACTICE

Brandon's the last player to leave. He sits on the bleachers putting his gear into a duffel bag. Jack sits beside him.

JACK

I went ta see your father the other
day.

Brandon looks over at Jack, surprised and a bit hopeful.

BRANDON

What he hafta say?

JACK

About what you told me he would. He
doesn't want you hangin' your
future on some basketball pipe
dream.

BRANDON

(deflates)
...Well I 'preciate you tryin'.

JACK

So that's it?

BRANDON

What else you want me ta say?

JACK

I want you ta say you're gonna keep
playin' the game because you love
it. That you're not gonna let
anyone tell you how ta live your
life. Not even your father.

BRANDON

(beat, a smile now)
...I'm gonna keep playin', Coach.

JACK

Good. Cause we sure as hell need
ya.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Beth's Mercedes SUV is parked behind Jack's Chevy.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Jack, Ryan, Kurt and Anne sit around the den eating hoagies and cheesesteaks. They've come down to see one of Jack's games. Anne rambles on about an old friend from Drexel Hill while Jack -- edgy and anxious -- pretends to listen while stealing glances at the handwritten game notes in his hand.

ANNE

-- Do you remember Mrs. Wheeler,
Jack? From Mason Avenue?

JACK

Mrs. Wheeler? I don't...

ANNE

You went to a formal with her
daughter Marianne at Sacred Heart.

JACK

I don't remember, ma.

ANNE

Anyway, she was driving home from
her daughter's the other night when
she hit a deer on County Line Road.
The animal flew up into the air an'
crashed through the windshield. The
hoof pierced her heart an' killed
her instantly.

KURT

Oh geez, that's terrible.

ANNE

(blesses herself)
Left five kids and sixteen
grandkids behind.

Beth and Sarah come down the stairs following a bathroom visit.

BETH

Do you think maybe it's time for a
new shower curtain, Jack?

JACK

I don't know. I don't think about
it very much.

BETH
That thing smells.

SARAH
Like butts.

Sarah takes a seat beside Anne. Ignores her food and instead begins cracking open fortune cookies.

BETH
Anyone need a drink?

EVERYONE
I'm good -- I'm fine -- no thanks.

Beth wanders into the kitchen.

KURT
So what's the scouting report on
this team tonight, Jack?

<p>JACK Well they're struggling a little right now --</p>	<p>RYAN Saint Pius is in last place in the league.</p>
---	--

RYAN (CONT'D)
They have one good shooter -- TJ
Edmonds -- and a decent big man,
but Jack's team should win. And
they kinda hafta win because if
they don't win tonight...

IN THE KITCHEN

Beth opens the refrigerator and searches for signs of booze. None in here. She opens cabinets and drawers now, pleasantly surprised to find that Jack hasn't hidden any.

RYAN (V.O.)
...their last chance at making the
playoffs is against Roman and
Roman's the number one ranked team
in the state. They have Greg
Childress who just committed to
play at Kentucky.

IN THE DEN

Jack looks over at Ryan, impressed by his knowledge.

JACK

Maybe I should be the assistant coach tonight.

KURT

You should see him, Jack. Every morning after you play, he gets up early and checks the stats on the computer.

Jack rubs Ryan's head. Ryan smiles.

KITCHEN

Beth's finished her alcohol-uncovering mission and pours herself a glass of water at the sink.

Jack enters, fills his giant Big Gulp cup with Pepsi.

BETH

I'm ordering you a new shower curtain.

(looks his outfit over)

And a sport coat. I can't believe you're actually wearing that thing.

JACK

It's good luck.

BETH

It's ugly.

A beat, then -- and this isn't easy for Beth --

BETH (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you. We're all proud of you.

JACK

(beat, it means a lot)

Thanks, sis.

(then)

Whaddaya think dad would say about all this?

The question throws Beth. Saddens her a bit. All these years later, Jack's still searching for his father's approval.

BETH

I don't have any idea what dad would say. I try not to think about him very much.

JACK

I get that. He wasn't very good to you.

BETH

No, he wasn't very good to you. He did me a favor by ignoring me my whole life.

JACK

It was just a question, Beth. Jesus Christ.

JACK (CONT'D)

Does everything have to be some big resentment thing?

BETH

I know it was just a question and that was just my answer.

BETH (CONT'D)

I don't think about him. Sorry.

Annoyed, Jack shakes his head and walks out of the kitchen.

INT. SAINT PIUS X GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Beth, Anne, Kurt, Ryan and Sarah sit in enemy territory, surrounded by impassioned Saint Pius fans. Sarah makes goofy tongue-out faces at the fans cheering against Hayes.

SUPER: SAINT PIUS X HIGH SCHOOL

On the court, Brandon throws a bounce pass that slips through Kenny's hands out of bounds. The ST. PIUS CROWD CHEERS. Ryan hangs his head. The night clearly has not gone as planned.

ON THE SIDELINE

Frustrated, Jack looks up at the scoreboard: **St. Pius: 62 Away: 64. 52 seconds remaining in the 4th Quarter.** He sits down beside Dan now.

JACK

We've been playin' with our heads up our asses all game.

DAN

They're nervous, Jack.
(off Jack's look)
These kids have never played in a game that mattered before.

Too anxious to stay seated, Jack stands once again, calls out to the team.

JACK
One stop now! No threes! No threes!

ON THE COURT

The Hayes team defends. The SHOT CLOCK WINDS DOWN: **3-2-1** --

Trapped on the wing, a ST. PIUS PLAYER heaves up a desperation three-pointer that miraculously BANKS IN!

The SAINT PIUS FANS ERUPT!

ON THE SIDELINE

Jack, feeling his playoff hopes slip away, turns to Dan --

JACK
Do we have any timeouts?

DAN
None.

Jack shouts the play to Brandon as he dribbles up the floor --

JACK
Hawk-reverse! Hawk-reverse!

ON THE COURT

The play begins. Brandon rolls off a high ball-screen, throws a brilliant bounce pass to a cutting Freeze who crashes into a DEFENDER, but manages to lay the ball in for the win!

Until SAL -- the game referee -- waves the basket off and signals an offensive foul!

ON THE SIDELINE

Jack -- shocked, livid -- follows Sal down the sideline as he makes his way to the scorer's table --

JACK
What's the call, Sal?

SAL
Offensive foul on number 22.

JACK	SAL (CONT'D)
You gotta be fuckin' kiddin' me! You're makin' that call!?	He was outside the circle, Jack.

JACK
 (reflective beat, then)
 For a long time I played the game
 'cause it made my father happy.
 Finally I couldn't do it no more.

BRANDON
 (shakes his head)
 Here you are tellin' me, '*Do what
 you love an' don't let nobody tell
 ya how ta live your life*'. Now I
 know that's just a buncha bullshit.
 Cause that's exactly what you did.

A long beat. Jack's silent because Brandon's right.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Now you the one who's not talkin'.

The car pulls into Brandon's driveway. Brandon quickly exits without saying goodbye.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jack walks in. Doesn't bother hanging up his coat, just moves into the kitchen and opens a high cabinet where he's hidden a bottle of SEAGRAM'S GIN inside a box of Ritz Crackers.

He sits at the table. Takes a swig of gin. Then a longer one.

From the quiet of the kitchen, the sound of CHEERING FANS begins. Quiet at first, then growing LOUDER and LOUDER and --

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - BISHOP HAYES GYM - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

The VOCIFEROUS HAYES FANS can be heard just beyond the walls.

Jack sits behind the desk wearing a new sport coat -- a gift from Beth. Dan's across from him. Both are on edge.

DAN
 We stayin' in the press all game?

JACK
 Right from the tip.

DAN
 What if they get a few easy buckets
 on us early?

JACK

We stay in it. Try to get to the fourth within striking distance. They haven't played a close game all year. We get to the fourth and the score's tight, they'll start feelin' the game pressure an' start makin' mistakes they don't normally make. That's the only chance we have to win.

Dan nods, stands now and moves to exit. He pauses at the door and turns back to Jack --

DAN

I know no one expected us to be here and we really got no business winnin' this game. But goddamnit I wanna win this sonofabitch.

Jack smiles, feels exactly the same way. Dan goes.

For a few moments Jack is alone, reviewing his game notes one final time. He tucks them into his pant pocket and stands. Removes the game ball from the locker and exits the office.

And just as we did way back at his FIRST GAME AS HEAD COACH, WE FOLLOW JACK into the --

LOCKER ROOM CORRIDOR

The sound of the CHEERING FANS BUILDS as he steps into the--

GYMNASIUM

We see the Hayes team in lay-up lines on one side of the court, the ROMAN CATHOLIC TEAM on the other.

Jack hands the game ball off to the REF, then walks down the sideline. He looks up into the bleachers -- packed to the rafters with SCREAMING FANS all here to witness the biggest game at Hayes in more than a decade.

In the stands, he spots RUSS standing beside BRANDON'S TWO YOUNGER BROTHERS. The two exchange a look.

Jack continues to half-court now where TONY D'ONOFRIO'S waiting for the pre-game handshake. Jack offers his hand --

JACK

Good luck tonight.

D'Onofrio shakes it. Barely. No pleasantries this time around and no love lost. Just *fuck you* and *fuck you back*.

The GAME BUZZER SOUNDS.

Jack approaches the Hayes bench, crouches down in front of the starting five.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Alright, listen up. We're in our
 Diamond press right from the tip.
 If they break it, we fall back into
 22. First time down I wanna get
 into our Atlanta set. Okay?

Blank stares. Jack surveys their faces -- Brandon, Garcia, Kenny, Marcus, even Freeze -- all scared shitless. The moment's too big. He decides to shift gears now.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Whaddaya call a virgin on a
 waterbed?
 (silence)
 Come on -- a virgin on a waterbed,
 whaddaya call it?
 (beat, then)
 A cherry float.

Smiles break through. Nerves allayed for a moment. Except for Brandon who's still holding onto his grudge with Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Good. Now let's have some fun. You
 hear that.

The HAYES FANS loudly chant '*Let's go Hayes*' over and over.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You earned this moment. Now go earn
 the playoffs.

All hands in middle --

FREEZE
 Let's go, fellas!

JACK
 1-2-3 --

TOGETHER
 Team!

The team takes the floor.

WE STAY WITH JACK on the sideline. He takes one final look around at the packed gymnasium, then sits down beside Dan and Father Mark on the bench and takes a deep breath.

Then does something strange.

He blesses himself.

WE SEE THE GAME PLAY OUT IN MOMENTS

Given what's at stake for Hayes and the bad blood between the two teams, the game is almost impossibly tense.

CHILDRESS drains a pull-up jump shot -- a ROMAN PLAYER SLAMS HOME AN ALLEY-OOP DUNK --

The ROMAN FANS celebrate. The HAYES FANS deflate.

CHILDRESS picks Brandon's pocket at mid-court, streaks in for a lay-up, then turns to the Hayes crowd and presses a finger to his mouth saying, '*Keep quiet.*'

INTERCUT SHOTS OF THE SCOREBOARD along the way -- **ROMAN UP 8**, then **10**, then **15** --

JACK talks to the Hayes team in the huddle. They seem a bit dejected, but he implores them to stick to the game plan --

JACK
Keep fightin', alright? Stay in the
press an' just keep hangin' around.

SECOND HALF NOW --

BRANDON knocks down a jump-shot. On the ensuing possession, the Hayes 'Diamond' press forces a ROMAN PLAYER to throw an errant pass that's intercepted by FREEZE --

And then, just as Jack predicted, the momentum turns.

KENNY DRILLS A 3-POINTER -- CHILDRESS steps out of bounds -- FREEZE scores a lay-up and is fouled -- INTERCUT THE SCOREBOARD AGAIN -- the ROMAN LEAD SINKING FROM **14** to **6** --

As the gap closes, the HAYES FANS ARE LOSING THEIR MINDS while the ROMAN FANS hang their heads in despair.

MARCUS swishes in a hook shot -- D'ONOFRIO screams at his players -- JACK SMILES from the sideline, watching his game plan play out to perfection -- Finally, BRANDON drives around CHILDRESS for an acrobatic reverse lay-up and --

ONE FINAL SHOT OF THE SCOREBOARD -- **Bishop Hayes: 67 Away: 68**
34 seconds remaining in the 4th and WE'RE BACK IN REAL TIME --

ON THE COURT - **34 SECONDS LEFT IN THE GAME**

THE NOISE LEVEL'S AT A HIGH as Childress dribbles across half-court. Brandon guards him. Childress waits for the shot clock to wind down, then drives to the hole. Brandon digs in, grabs hold of the ball as Childress goes up for the lay-up and --

REF blows his whistle and signals a 'jump ball.' The possession arrow points to Hayes.

The HAYES FANS GO WILD!

Childress reacts with disbelief, D'Onofrio pure rage --

TONY D'ONOFRIO

(to REF)

You kiddin' me! He's got his hands
all over him!

ON THE SIDELINE

Jack looks up at the game clock: **12 seconds remaining.**

JACK

(to Ref)

Timeout.

ON THE COURT

Ref BLOWS the whistle. As the teams start back toward their benches, Childress BUMPS Brandon's shoulder. Brandon turns.

GREG CHILDRESS

Say somethin', pussy.

Brandon doesn't take the bait. Just walks away.

ON THE HAYES BENCH

The players sit down. Off to the side, Jack and Dan discuss the play call privately.

JACK

Do we run Atlanta for Brandon?

DAN

Childress is guarding him. He's got a good six inches on him. He won't be able to get his shot.

JACK

Alright. Let's see if we can get Kenny a look on the wing then.

Jack moves to the bench and crouches before the team with the Dry-Erase board in hand.

JACK (CONT'D)

12 seconds. No timeouts. We're gonna run Hawk for Kenny.

Brandon's clearly disappointed, but says nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Brandon, drive right. Freeze and Garcia set a double-screen on the baseline here an' let's see if we can hit Kenny rollin' off.

Nods all around. The BUZZER SOUNDS. All hands in middle--

JACK (CONT'D)

1-2-3

TOGETHER

Team!

The team stands, moves back onto the floor.

Jack instantly regrets his decision. He grabs Brandon before he steps onto the floor, pulls him close.

JACK

Forget the play. Take the shot.

Brandon looks at Jack, then nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

Don't nod your head at me.

BRANDON

(a small smile, then)
I got it, Coach.

ON THE COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Brandon dribbles the ball across half-court with Childress applying token pressure. The GAME CLOCK WINDS DOWN **10-9-8...**

EVERYTHING GOES QUIET NOW and TIME SLOWS DOWN and each moment lasts much longer than a moment.

WE SEE --

Marcus run out to the arc to the set the ball screen.

Brandon waves him off.

Confused, Marcus turns to Jack on the sideline.

Jack just nods, *Listen to him.*

Marcus retreats to the corner.

Childress sees that it's a 'clear-out' and smiles, almost appreciating Brandon's moxie.

THE GAME CLOCK: 5-4...

Brandon penetrates now and makes the simplest move -- a quick 'inside-out' dribble that gets Childress on his heels for a split-second. He rises into the air now.

Childress reacts quickly, leaps up to challenge him.

THE GAME CLOCK: 2-1...

The ball glides just over Childress' outstretched fingertips.

THE FANS' EYES FOLLOW THE BALL TOWARDS THE BASKET.

CLOSE-UPS OF THE TEAM, FATHER MARK, DAN, RUSS, and finally --

JACK

For a long moment, he doesn't react and it's impossible to tell if the shot has missed or gone in.

Then -- an elated DAN wraps his arms around him. Father Mark follows, jumping up and down. Both men hardly able to contain their excitement and shock.

In the background, the BLEACHERS EMPTY like damn walls collapsing. THE HAYES FANS RUSH ONTO THE FLOOR IN A DELUGE.

SOUND RETURNS NOW -- FANS CELEBRATING -- it's deafening and relentless, like standing underneath a massive waterfall.

WE STAY WITH JACK caught in the crush of celebrating fans. Then, Valvano-esque, he pushes his way through the sea of revelers, on a mission. Finally, he spots his target and reaches his hand up to --

BRANDON riding on the shoulders of Freeze and Marcus. The biggest pure-joy smile we've ever seen on his face.

Brandon reaches down and grabs Jack's hand. Not a word is exchanged. This time a nod from Brandon says it all.

Thank you for believing in me, Coach.

And Jack lets his hand go. Allowing Brandon this moment in the sun.

WE PULL BACK ON THE SCENE and watch as Jack pushes against the current towards the solitude of the locker room corridor.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - NIGHT

Jack drives, still riding high. But his happiness is slowly, ineluctably defeated by a far stronger feeling.

The fact that he doesn't have anyone to share it with.

He reaches for his cell phone in the console. Scrolls down to '**Angela**' and presses '**Send**'. It RINGS a few times before a MAN ANSWERS --

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Hello? Hello...?

Jack hangs up quickly, wind fleeing his sails. He arrives at a stop light now. Thinks. Then swings into a u-turn.

EXT. BURKE'S INN - NIGHT

Jack's Chevy pulls into the parking lot.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jack stumbles in, drunk as a monkey. He hangs his coat on the hook and stands in the den unsteadily for a few moments, taking in the terrible silence of the empty house.

Feeling the absence of the two voices that once filled his life.

Finally, he puts his head down and lumbers up the stairs.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jack's deep in a hangover sleep when the portable PHONE RINGS on the night stand. He stirs, fumbles for it, answers now --

JACK
 Hello?... Hey, Ang... Oh Jesus
 Christ...
 (sits up)
 When's the viewing? Okay, I'll see
 ya there... Thanks for callin'.

Jack hangs up the phone, rubs his tired eyes.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - DAY

Practice. The team runs up and down the floor doing a drill.

Jack watching from mid-court, distracted. Dan approaches with
 a sheet of paper in hand.

DAN
 Playoff schedule's in. We're the 7
 o'clock tip next Saturday night.

JACK
 Okay.

DAN
 (notices something's off)
 Everything alright?

JACK
 Yeah. Fine.

INT. DONOHUE FUNERAL HOME - DREXEL HILL - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

A LINE OF MOURNERS wraps around the side of the building.

INT. DONOHUE FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING - NIGHT

Jack stands beside a teary-eyed Angela. He's crawling-out-of-his-skin anxious, doing his best to avoid looking at the 9 year-old boy in the casket and the trio of easels holding photographs from brighter days in the boy's life.

Up ahead, the boy's devastated, enervated FATHER and MOTHER greet mourners. We see BRYAN and EMILY offer their condolences. Finally, it's Jack and Angela's turn.

JACK
 (to Father)
 Hey Ethan.

FATHER
 Hey Jack. Thanks for bein' here.

Jack hugs Father tightly, fighting off the nearly unbearable emotion rising up inside him like a geyser.

JACK
(choking on it)
He was a great kid.

FATHER
He was. He really was.

The emotion's too much for Jack. He ends the embrace quickly because if he stayed a moment longer he'd break down completely. He quickly hugs MOTHER but cannot muster a word of sympathy. He walks briskly past the casket without glancing at it and continues into the --

LOBBY

and just keeps moving right out the exit doors.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - NIGHT

Jack climbs in and speeds out of the funeral home parking lot as if he just robbed the place.

EXT. DONOHUE FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Angela arrives in the lobby. Looks around for Jack.

INT. BURKE'S INN - NIGHT

Jack enters, hangs his coat on the rack and moves to his stool. Matty sets a Coors draft in front of him. He doesn't have a chance to sit down before --

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Jackie!

Jack turns. In the corner, an old basketball TEAMMATE, 35, sits with THREE FRIENDS, drinking and telling stories.

TEAMMATE
Get over here! I was just tellin'
them 'bout that DeMatha game!

Jack grabs his Coors and wanders over to the table.

JACK
Down in Alhambra?

TEAMMATE

Best high school basketball game I ever saw. Here -- erry-body make room for Jackie!

(introducing the group)

This is my cousin Pat, my brother-in-law Ken, and my buddy Eric.

Hand shakes all around. Two of the Friends arrange a seat for Jack as if he's a celebrity sitting for an interview.

TEAMMATE (CONT'D)

DeMatha was loaded that year. They had Allen Jennings, Matthews --

JACK

Corey Davis.

TEAMMATE

That's right! They had Davis, too! Christ, that was a fuckin' McDonalds All-American team! Jackie goes off for 20 in the first! You shoulda seen their fuckin' faces --
(parroting them)

You try guardin' him -- no you fuckin' guard him -- Man, I'm tellin' ya -- if I coulda taken a picture!

Jack smiles, settles in. A part of him misses the adulation. Especially on nights when he's thinking about his son.

A FEW HOURS LATER NOW

The table is littered with empty pitchers and shot glasses. Everyone's significantly drunker, especially Jack.

TEAMMATE

-- Purcell pulls me aside, says,
*'Throw that pass one more time an'
I'll cut your fuckin' nuts off!'*

Everyone LAUGHS.

AT THE BAR

Doc keeps a close eye on Jack. He's seen him talked into these nostalgia-filled, quicksand corners before only to emerge hours later unable to remember his own name. TEAMMATE orders another round. Now Doc's seen enough. He stands and approaches the table. Puts his hands on Jack's shoulders.

DOC

Come on, ace. Let's get going.

TEAMMATE

Ah let him stay a while, Doc. We're talkin' old times here.

DOC

I know what you're talkin' and I'm tellin' ya he's gotta get home. Understand?

He says it in a way that's not a question.

And everyone respects Doc so they all back the fuck off.

DOC (CONT'D)

Come on, ace. Let's go home.

Jack stands and nearly falls over. Gerry intervenes now as well. He and Doc aid Jack over to the door. Susan meets them there and helps Jack put his flannel jacket on.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Doc assists a wobbly, jelly-legged Jack up the stairs.

DOC

Alright, let's see some'a that famous footwork.

Jack does a goofy tap dance with his feet.

JACK

Better than my old man, huh?

DOC

Your old man didn't have moves. I had to carry him up the stairs.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Doc helps Jack into bed. Slips off his shoes and pulls the covers up over his shoulders.

JACK

(half-asleep, mumbling)
Will you just...go and...check on Michael for me?

DOC

Sure, ace.

JACK

Make sure he...the seizure
medication...every four hours...

DOC

Okay. I'll make sure he gets it.
Get some rest now.

Jack quickly falls asleep. Doc reaches over to the night stand to shut off the lamp, then pauses at the sight of a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH OF A YOUNG BOY -- MICHAEL. Handsome, floppy golden hair hanging down over his eyes. He's captured here on a playground swing, mid-laugh. He looks happy.

Doc turns back to Jack and regards him a moment, knowing the depth of his pain. Finally, he switches off the lamp and leaves the room.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jack opens his eyes, takes a moment to try to piece together how he got here. Looks over at the alarm clock now: **8:55 AM.**

Shit! He tosses off the covers, leaps out of bed and --

EXT. HAVERTOWN STREETS/BURKE'S INN - MORNING

Jack runs down the sidewalk in his sweats. He arrives at Burke's Inn. His Chevy's still in the lot. He climbs in.

INT. BISHOP HAYES GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Dan's running practice. The team is doing a dribbling drill. Jack rushes in, breathless, approaches Dan at mid-court.

JACK

Sorry I'm late. Power went at my
place. I didn't hear the alarm.

Dan nods, but notices the shape Jack's in and maybe the smell coming off him and knows no alarm caused that.

INT. LOCKER ROOM CORRIDOR - LATER THAT MORNING

Dan arrives at the COACH'S OFFICE. He's about to knock on the door when he hears the SOUNDS OF JACK THROWING UP inside.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DEN - TWILIGHT

Basketball game tapes play on the television. Jack's passed-out on the sofa under an afghan. The DOORBELL RINGS.

Jack stirs, looks that way. Through the windows, he sees Father Tierney and Dan standing outside in the falling snow.

He lifts the afghan off, stands and opens the door.

JACK
Hey Father. Dan.

FATHER TIERNEY
Hi, Jack. Mind if we come inside for a minute?

JACK
Sure. Yeah. Come on in.

Jack opens the door. Father Tierney and Dan step inside. Father Tierney removes his paddy cap. A quiet moment follows.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's goin' on?

FATHER TIERNEY
We're going to have you step down from coaching the team, Jack.

JACK
...Step down? Are you -- now? We got a playoff game Saturday night.

FATHER TIERNEY
Immediately, yes. It's come to my attention that you brought alcohol around the players.

Jack turn to Dan. The betrayal is palpable.

Dan doesn't flinch.

FATHER TIERNEY (CONT'D)
And we're worried that it might be part of a larger problem. Would that be true?

Hurt, embarrassed, Jack moves to the television. Gathers up all the game tapes he was planning to study.

FATHER TIERNEY (CONT'D)

I know it runs in your family,
Jack. Your mother asked me to
intervene with your father once.

Jack hands Dan the game tapes. Reaches for his keys now and
removes the one for the coach's office. Hands that over, too.

JACK

You couldn't come to me first?

DAN

I did come to you first, Jack.

JACK

Oh bullshit.

JACK (CONT'D)

Now you're a fuckin' liar,
too?!

DAN

And you lied to me about
drinking inside your office.

JACK

You know what -- I can't deal with
fuckin' liars. Get outta my house.
Both of you.

Jack moves to the front door. Opens it. No one moves.

FATHER TIERNEY

Jack, we're not trying --

JACK

Get the fuck out.

Father Tierney and Dan exchange a look, then Father puts his
cap back on and the two men exit the home. Jack closes the
door behind them and slides the bolt.

INT. BURKE'S INN - NIGHT

Pearl Jam '*State of Love and Trust*' blasts on the jukebox.
Matty stands on a stool, taking down the icicle lights. Gerry
watches the 76ers game on the television while Susan reads
another Grafton paperback.

GERRY

(re: the 76ers game)
Jesus Christ -- they oughta blow
the whole team up an' start over
again. Whaddaya think, Jackie?

Gerry looks over at Jack. He's drunker than we've ever seen
him before, bobbing his head up and down to the music.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Got your own little mosh pit goin'
over there?

Jack ignores him. Doesn't want conversation tonight. Just wants to keep drinking and forget as much of his life as he can. Gerry nudges Susan. She looks up from her paperback and regards Jack, concerned.

SUSAN

You alright, Jack? Why dontcha have
some'a my onion rings?

Jack just continues bobbing his head.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Matty get him a sandwich, will ya.

MATTY

Get who a sandwich?

SUSAN

Jack.

Matty looks over at Jack, then, concerned as well, heads into the kitchen.

Just then, DIANE ARRIVES and stands beside Jack.

DIANE

You never called me.

Jack looks over at her, squints. It takes him a few moments to recognize who she is.

JACK

One'a the Moughan girls, right?

DIANE

Diane. You took my number and never
called.

JACK

Well --

DIANE

Lemme guess -- you had a lot on
your mind.

INT. JACK'S CHEVY BLAZER - LATER THAT NIGHT

MUSIC PLAYS on the radio. Jack's can't-see-straight-drunk as he drives through the falling snow. Diane lights a Parliament in the passenger seat.

JACK
(re: the cigarette)
Gimme one a those.

Diane fishes another cigarette out of the box, then looks over at Jack. He's staring down at her chest.

DIANE
What're you doin'?

JACK
Lookin' at your tits.

DIANE
Oh now you notice them.

JACK
Know what I like about 'em?

DIANE
What's that?

JACK
One nipples points this way, the other nipple points that way. They got character your tits.

DIANE
Thank you. I like em, too.

Jack lights his cigarette, takes a long drag.

JACK
Is your son gonna be home?

DIANE
He's at his father's house this weekend.

JACK
He told me to go fuck myself last time I was over.

Diane CHUCKLES.

JACK (CONT'D)
That's funny to you?

DIANE
A little.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'd smack him around if he
was my son.

DIANE
Oh that's good parenting.

JACK
Well it works. My father used to
beat the shit outta me. And I
learned how to treat people.

DIANE
Eddie's goin' through somethin' --
with his father and me splittin'
up. It's been hard on him.

JACK
I don't care. I wouldn't put up
with that shit if he was my son.

Diane looks askance at him.

DIANE
Why you doin' that?

JACK
Doin' what?

DIANE
Pullin' a dark cloud over
everything. I got enough dark
clouds in my life, I don't need you
addin' another one.

JACK
I'm just sayin' --

DIANE
I know what you're sayin' and I
don't wanna fuckin' hear it. Okay?
You're not his parent, he's not
your son, so cut it out... Do you
wanna get laid tonight or not?

Jack looks over at her, grins.

JACK
Gimme a kiss.

DIANE
Oh fuck off.

JACK
Come on. One kiss.

Diane caves, leans over kisses him passionately when --

BRMP! The CAR SHUDDERS. Jack looks outside. He's driven onto the sidewalk. Before he has time to steer off -- **THMP!** He PLOWS OVER A MAILBOX. He brakes now. The car skids across a snowy front yard before coming to a stop. Diane looks around.

DIANE
Shit. This is my neighbor's house.
Park down there. Hurry up!

JACK
What?

DIANE
Park down there before someone sees
you. I'll meet you inside.

Diane grabs her purse and hurries out of the car.

Jack steers the car off the lawn and drives down the street.

EXT. STREET AROUND THE CORNER - NIGHT

Jack parks the Chevy, steps out and makes his way through the snow back towards Diane's house.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The house is completely dark. The front door opens. Jack steps inside, looks around.

JACK
You forget the pay the electric
bill in here? Jesus Christ.

He continues into the KITCHEN. Opens the refrigerator and removes a bottle of beer. Opens it and takes a swig.

STAIRWELL

Jack trudges up the stairs --

JACK
I think we got away with it. But
someone's gon' be burnt up when
they find that in the mornin'.

-- moves into the BATHROOM. Pulls down his jeans and begins pissing into the toilet as he drinks the beer. Then --

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Pull your fuckin' pants up.

Jack turns. Standing in the doorway is a stocky, BEARDED MAN, 40s, wearing only his briefs. He's got an aluminum baseball bat cocked over his shoulder. Jack startles.

BEARDED MAN

My wife's callin' the cops right now, asshole.

JACK

(tugging his jeans up)
...your wife? Diane's your wife?

BEARDED MAN

Who the fuck's Diane?

Jack looks around and notices the Sesame Street toothbrushes on the sink top.

JACK

I think I'm in the wrong house.

BEARDED MAN

Goddamn right you're in the wrong house.

JACK

Okay just -- let me out here --

BEARDED MAN

Fuck that -- you're not going anywhere.

Jack freezes a moment, seemingly accepting his fate. But a deeper sense of self-preservation kicks in. He tries to flee the bathroom. Bearded Man SHOVES him back. A STRUGGLE ENSUES. Jack trying to push his way out and Bearded Man trying to keep him in. Desperate now, Jack PUNCHES Bearded Man, striking his ear. He escapes into the --

HALLWAY

and makes a run for the stairs. Bearded Man chases, grabs a fistful of his jacket. Jack jerks his body away, but LOSES HIS BALANCE and TUMBLES DOWN THE STAIRS, crashing into a pedestal table and glass lamp on the landing.

He stands, barely. There's a DEEP GASH above his right eye. Blood rushes down the side of his face.

BEARDED MAN
(realizing now that Jack's
just a drunk)
Hey man, you alright? Just wait for
the cops, okay?

Jack staggers towards the front door.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack stumbles out and zigzags across the lawn into the street. He can't see out of his right eye. POLICE SIRENS are heard in the distance. He looks around and spots the same STRETCH OF WOODS he took home earlier and heads for it.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Jack plods through the snowy terrain. He arrives at a slope and tries to make his way down cautiously, but he's too dazed and SLIPS, hitting every boulder on his way down to the base.

He grimaces, clutches his ribs. Tries to stand, but can't.

He rolls over and looks ahead. A steep rise awaits him across the stream.

It seems insurmountable.

Or maybe it's what's on the other side that he can't defeat.

Either way, he doesn't want to go on. He curls up into a ball and closes his eyes.

As the snow continues to fall on him we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

An ELDERLY MAN walks along a ridge beside his golden retriever. He pauses at the sight of something odd at the base of the slope. A man in a flannel jacket buried under four inches of snow.

INT. BRYN MAWR HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A VITALS MACHINE beeps and flashes. An IV bag drips.

WIDER REVEALS

Jack lying in a hospital bed. His body hidden under layers of warm blankets, head wound heavily bandaged.

His eyes open slowly. He gazes around the room and stops when he sees Beth sitting in a chair beside his bed.

JACK
Hey, sis...

Beth reaches out and holds his hand.

BETH
They found you in the woods behind
Chatham Glen.
(getting emotional)
Jesus Jack, you could have died out
there.

Memories of the night slowly trickle back to him. As they do, a sadness builds inside -- the same sadness that's been there since Michael died. Only now he can't hold it in any longer.

Despite his attempts not to, he cries.

Beth stands and pulls his head against her chest.

JACK
I'm sorry...

BETH
I know.

JACK
It's just...it's really hard...

BETH
I know.

Off Beth, holding her brother in her arms...

INT. PATHWAYS REHABILITATION FACILITY - MORNING - DAYS LATER

An alcohol rehabilitation center nestled in the picturesque, rolling countryside of Chester County.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jack sits across from a MALE THERAPIST, 50s. The cut above his eye looks a little better. He does, too.

THERAPIST

During our family session, your sister and mother said that you've isolated yourself since Michael died. Would you agree?

JACK

Yeah, I mean, I probably don't see them as often as I used to.

THERAPIST

They also said you never talk about your son.

JACK

(long beat, then)

What do they want me to talk about? The tumors all over his spine and brain? The 30 rounds of radiation? The seizures when he'd scream like someone was rippin' his insides out? Come on -- no one wants to hear about that shit.

THERAPIST

Your son was 9 when he passed away. 7 when he diagnosed. What about his life before he got sick? We get to choose how we remember people, Jack.

Jack considers it a moment. But isn't ready to go there.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

Well maybe that's something we can work towards.

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Dan stands before the floor mirror, reviewing his suit. He's nervous. Understandably. It's his first game as head coach. He turns back to his WIFE, 30s, standing in the doorway with their one-year-old DAUGHTER in her arms.

DAN

This look alright?

WIFE

Very handsome.

Dan smiles. His CELL VIBRATES on the dresser. He answers.

DAN
Hello.

INT. PATHWAYS REHAB FACILITY - FOYER - DAY

Jack sits in a chair on the house phone --

JACK
Hey. It's Jack.

INTERCUT JACK AND DAN

DAN
(surprised by the call,
then)
How ya doin', Jack?

Dan shares a look with his Wife. She exits the room.

JACK
Did my sister drop off the game
notes?

Dan looks down at the piece of paper on the dresser. Game notes written by Jack. Lots of them. Very detailed with asterisks and underlining throughout.

DAN
Got 'em right in front of me.

JACK
One more thing -- if they're
overplayin' the wings hard, see if
we can an easy back-door lay-up on
the Atlanta set.

DAN
On the elbow-entry?

JACK
Yeah. Put Kenny on the wing. And
tell Marcus to play safety on D.
The kids he's markin' -- that 21--
he couldn't throw it in the ocean
from the beach.

DAN
(smiles)
I'll let him know.
(beat, then)
You did good, Coach.

Jack nods, knowing Dan's not talking about basketball.

JACK
Tell the boys I said good luck.

DAN
I will. Goodbye, Jack.

JACK
Goodbye.

Jack hangs up. Dan does as well.

EXT. PATHWAYS REHAB FACILITY - WIDE - LATE DAY

Anne, Beth, Kurt and Sarah sit on in the picnic area having lunch. At the basketball court, Jack stands under the hoop rebounding and passing to Ryan who takes shots.

BASKETBALL COURT

RYAN
Do you like it here?

JACK
Not really. I guess that's not really the point, though. It's something you gotta do, yunno.

Ryan shoots. Front rim. Arms flagging.

JACK (CONT'D)
Gettin' tired?

RYAN
(refusing to show any
weakness)
No.

JACK
Your grandfather used to make me take 1000 shots a day. He wouldn't let me eat dinner 'til I hit 1000. Rain, sun, snow -- didn't matter.

RYAN
Did you make Michael shoot 1000 shots a day?

JACK
Nah. Michael wasn't really into basketball.
(beat, then)
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
He liked those uhh -- whudda they
call those figures? -- Muscle Men.

RYAN
I used to play with those.

JACK
Yeah. He liked to line them all up
in the hall, then get a grapefruit
or an orange an' bowl 'em over.
Used ta drive his mother crazy.

A beat.

Jack sits with the memory of his son.

Ryan swishes one in.

JACK (CONT'D)
Attaboy. Keep that follow-through.

INT. PATHWAYS REHABILITATION CENTER - LOBBY - LATE DAY

Visiting hours are over. Jack hugs Beth, then Anne --

JACK
Thanks for comin', Ma.

ANNE
Love you, Jack.

BETH
We'll be back down next weekend.

JACK
Alright.

When it's Ryan turn to say goodbye, he won't leave Kurt's
side.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's the matter, bud?

Ryan's embarrassed because he's crying.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hey. Come over here.

Jack bends down and gently pulls Ryan away from Kurt and hugs
him. Ryan cries hard on Jack's shoulder.

RYAN
...I just want you to be better.

It guts Jack. He fights back tears.

JACK

I know, bud. I do, too.

Jack squeezes Ryan tightly, then kisses his forehead. Ryan returns to Kurt's side now. Jack stands and watches as his family exits.

EXT. PALESTRA BASKETBALL ARENA - UPENN CAMPUS - NIGHT

The iconic Philadelphia basketball arena. More history in one square inch of this place than all the sponsored arenas in the country put together.

Lines of fans funnel through the turnstiles.

INT. THE PALESTRA - NIGHT

Not an empty seat tonight. One half of the arena filled with the Hayes green and white colors, the other half with the opponent's blue and red.

SUPER: PHILADELPHIA CATHOLIC LEAGUE PLAYOFFS - QUARTERFINALS

Up near the top of the arena, Doc enters. Bag of popcorn and a game program in hand. He removes his overcoat, sidles into a row, takes his seat and settles in for the double-header.

INT. PALESTRA LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The Hayes team -- including Dan -- huddles in a circle as Father Mark says a blessing over everyone --

FATHER MARK

Heavenly Father, we welcome your presence here among us and your spirit of love alive in the community of Bishop Hayes. Help us to be the best we can possibly be, to strive not so much to win, but to play fairly and well. We ask this in your name Lord Jesus.

FREEZE

Come on, fellas! Let's win this fuckin' game for Coach Cunningham!

A beat. Dan looks over at Father Mark.

Father Mark shrugs.

FATHER MARK

Amen.

INT. THE PALESTRA - TUNNEL - NIGHT

The Hayes team stands in the tunnel, looking out at the jam-packed arena. There's not a trace of nervousness on their faces. The moment's not too big anymore.

Brandon spots RUSS and his TWO BROTHERS sitting behind the bench. He smiles, then turns back to the team. *His team.*

BRANDON

Here we go, fellas!

Led by Brandon, the Hayes team races out of the tunnel onto the court to the LOUD CHEERS of the Hayes fans.

INT. PATHWAYS REHAB FACILITY - PATIENT LOUNGE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A RADIO ATOP A TABLE: the APPLAUSE from the Hayes fans can be heard on a radio playing the GAME BROADCAST.

WIDER REVEALS

Jack's in here alone, nervously walking circles around the coffee table. His untouched dinner plate sits on a tray table beside the couch.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)

Certainly the surprise team in the Catholic League this year has been the Bishop Hayes Eagles.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (ON RADIO)

That's absolutely right, John. Really a remarkable turnaround given how they started the season.

There's a KNOCK at the door. It opens revealing a REHAB CENTER EMPLOYEE.

REHAB EMPLOYEE

You have a visitor, Jack.

ANGELA emerges behind the Employee and steps into the room.

A small smile awakens on Jack's face. His heart beats a little slower.

Employee exits, closing the door behind her as she goes.

He looks right back at her.

She's scared to believe him.

But more scared not to. Finally --

ANGELA
I'll be waiting.

Those three words mean everything. He reaches out and takes hold of her hand. She leans her head against his shoulder.

PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)
The tip's controlled by Hayes.
Durrett across half-court stripe
now. Over to Dawes on the wing.
Dribbles across the arc, passes
back to a cutting Durrett who lays
it in. Good start for Hayes.

EXT. PATHWAYS REHAB FACILITY - NIGHT

Jack and Angela sit inside, framed by the window. The sounds of the basketball game broadcast can be heard only faintly.

We watch them on the couch for a long while, holding hands, forever joined together by a light they once held.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATHWAYS REHAB FACILITY - SOME DAYS LATER - TWILIGHT

It's almost dark. But not yet. The sun's dying rays paint the rolling hills.

It's quite beautiful.

WE PAN OVER TO THE BASKETBALL COURT now where a ball lies in the grass beneath the hoop.

Jack approaches. Slips his hands out of his sweatshirt pouch and lifts the ball. He carries it onto the court, flips it out and shoots -- *swish!* Retrieves the ball, flips it out again, shoots -- *swish!*

As this continues, we very slowly --

FADE OUT.

THE END.