

An Everyday Hero

(Inspired by True Events)

Written By

Frank A. Rossi

"What a piece of work is man,
how infinite in faculty."

- Hamlet -

EXT. STEEL PLANT - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - AUGUST 1978)

A colossal orange light contrasts the blue sky. Its source, three Herculean blast furnaces operating at full capacity at the Bethlehem Steel Plant on the shores of Lake Erie.

Bruce Springsteen's, "Promised Land" CHIMES in, as thousands of WORKERS hustle in and out of the antaeon's 12 main gates.

INT. STEEL PLANT ELECTRIC SHOP - DAY

Loud POUNDING sounds inundate the area, as a dozen WORKERS wearing orange hard-hat helmets, protective goggles and work clothes, toil on dismantled AC and DC motors.

In the center of this boundless room rests an intimidating 10-foot high disassembled DC motor. Inside the motor, a worker finishes connecting wires to the motor's housing unit.

The worker exits the fuselage. Dressed in a green-striped orange hard-hat and work uniform is handsome, hard-as-nails, 40-year-old 5'4" 145 pound FRANK "CHEECH" DEMARCO. Frank waves to a CRANE OPERATOR, who hoists the 5 ton motor away.

BOBBY (V.O.)

A product of the old country, my Pop believed in an honest day's work for an honest day's wages -- even if that meant being harassed by his fellow union workers at the steel plant. Pop may have been small in stature, but he was twice that size on guts.

Suddenly, a second worker makes a bee line toward Frank, his SCREAMS drowned out by the pounding. He is 6'4", monstrous, PAT "IRISH" HOLLERAN. Towering over Frank, Holleran signals to the clock, it reads: 3:30 PM.

HOLLERAN

...3 O'clock means 3 O'clock, DeMarco!
Union rules!

FRANK

(gestures to motor)
Chief needs it online by four.

HOLLERAN

Screw that kraut bastard! That's my motor... my peace-time dollars... clothes on my kids' backs. I'm senior man here, Frank.

FRANK

And I'm the sub-foreman. And carrying your butt on this one, forces me to call in three more men before finally getting to Johnson, who's the only one out of you five who knows how to repair the damn thing. Union rules!

Frank grabs a large wrench off a bench, hustles to leave.

HOLLERAN

Listen, you little guinea bastard...

Holleran WHIRLS Frank around, delivering a haymaker toward his jaw. Frank sidesteps the punch, responds with a flurry of PUNCHES to Holleran's midsection, causing the titan to plummet to the ground.

Standing at the entrance is engineer and head foreman, BRUCE KILPATRICK, (50). Bruce is 6 feet tall, wise, all business. He bypasses Holleran and approaches Frank.

BRUCE

Union can't bulwark the bastard this time, Frankie. Witnessed the hook, combination flurry and knock-down myself. Smelling would have been proud.

(grins)

You want to file a report?

FRANK

Just a little misunderstanding, Chief.

Frank exits, leaving Bruce to assist Holleran off the canvas.

INT. STEEL PLANT LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The room is archaic, with steel lockers four rows deep. Standing by a locker in a towel is Frank. Decorating the left side of his middle-back is a scarred three inch hole.

Frank reaches into his locker, retrieves a soap dish. Taped on the inside door is a Polaroid of Frank with a woman and two teenage children, one boy and girl. Below them, a single Polaroid of a teenage African-American/Cherokee-Indian boy.

BOBBY (V.O.)

But nothing was more important to him than family -- well almost nothing. That's my mom, sister and stepbrother, Charlie. Pop took Charlie in after his mom died in a car accident the year after we started playing little league football together. I just turned 8. Charlie was 9.

Below Charlie rests a magazine photo of Vince Lombardi.

BOBBY (V.O.)

And that's legendary NFL football coach, Vince Lombardi. Pop loved that man -- used to quote him all the time. Pop was obsessed with football. He ate, slept and breathed it.

INT. SPORTING GOOD STORE - DAY

Frank approaches the counter: mesh colored football shirts, two helmets, and two new pair of football cleats in hand. Frank hands the cashier all his cash, three twenties. The owner, a mountainous man, BIG MIKE, 40's, hands him back two.

FRANK

We've run this play before, Big Mike.

BIG MIKE

No penalty here, Cheech. See, I got it all written down.

(points to ledger)

It's part of my charitable contribution to your Sting Ray Blue Devils and little league football this season.

FRANK

But the spikes are for my boys --

BIG MIKE

Have a nice day, Coach.

Frank exits, passing by two young BOYS (6 and 8) entering with their FATHER. One of the boys has his sneakers untied.

FRANK

Tie your shoes. It'll make you faster.

Frank hustles out of the store.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

A gold 1972 Gran Torino, its back quarter panel shrouded in a smooth fiberglass repair, works its way through this low-income neighborhood.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank sits behind the wheel; edgy, excited, several bags of foodstuffs occupying the backseat. He glances at several city KIDS playing football on a tiny front lawn, checks his watch then SPEEDS off.

INT. BASEMENT - DUSK

The area is small, cluttered, claustrophobic. It dons a stone floor and surrounding limestone walls.

An old-fashioned steel utility sink is adjacent to a weathered gas stove, all four of its burners engaged. A hand pours olive oil into a boiling pot of water on the left front burner. Three boxes of Zitti quickly follow.

Donning an apron, "Cheech's Kitchen" written on it, and handling the cooking duties is Frank. He tastes the sauce, adds spices then glances at his watch. It reads: 7:15 PM.

EXT. MODEST CITY BACKYARD - NIGHT

Complete with sideline markers, hash-marks and a white-striped goal line, this perfectly manicured football field is twenty yards in length and half that distance wide.

A 4-foot high fence engulfs the field. The backyard is lit up with halogen lights affixed to wooden poles strategically placed around the gridiron. An electric scoreboard riveted to the house reads: South Buffalo 24 West Seneca 24.

BOBBY (V.O.)

I think I may have been the only kid in America whose father built a football stadium in their backyard. It wasn't regulation or anything, but it sure seemed that way, especially to a 13-year-old back then. Pop would schedule games every Friday night. It was mostly for the kids who couldn't make the little league weight limit. People would journey for miles just to see us play. And we'd draw some pretty big crowds, too. Especially when we battled our arch rivals, the West Seneca Braves. Although, looking back on it now, I think the people came mostly for the food. Pop was a phenomenal cook -- made everything from scratch.

Several tin containers filled with hot macaroni and meatballs rest atop a folding table. Dressed in 70's garb, dozens of PARENTS and CHILDREN devour plates of the tour de Force.

EXT. MODEST CITY BACKYARD - LATER THAT NIGHT

The scoreboard reads: South Buffalo 32 West Seneca 40. The energized crowd stands shoulder-to-shoulder along three sides of the fence. Emitting from a speaker, the THEME from Rocky.

SIX YOUNG PLAYERS huddle at the ten-yard line. Dressed in football gear, their vests read: Sting Ray Blue Devils.

INSIDE THE BLUE DEVIL HUDDLE -

is handsome 13-year-old BOBBY DEMARCO. At 5'4", 135 pounds, this born leader has a penchant for calmness under fire.

BOBBY

Okay boys, let's tie this baby up.
Otherwise our Pop goes ballistic in front
of the home crowd. Right, Charlie?

Bobby glances toward, CHARLIE NODIN DEMARCO, (14). Charlie is athletic, handsome, 5'9" and 150 pounds. He is of African-American and Cherokee-Indian descent. He nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Okay, here we go. Flank right, 16 X-ray.
You guys on the line, cut your man right
away so I can see. On one, ready --

TEAM

Break!

Three Blue Devil players position themselves on the line of scrimmage. Bobby moves under center, a fullback behind him.

Charlie flanks out right, and is blanketed by TWO OPPOSING PLAYERS, their blue vests reading: West Seneca Braves.

A REFEREE, 40's, dressed in uniform, places the ball ready for play, then BLOWS his whistle. The crowd ROAR intensifies, as Bobby calls out signals.

BOBBY

Down. Set. Hut one!

He drops back to pass. With the linemen cut, Bobby unleashes a strike over the middle to Charlie, who makes a one-handed circus catch, then is HAMMERED to the ground by 2 defenders, the play gaining five yards. Bobby sprints to the sideline.

AT THE SIDELINE -

wearing a Fedora, new white T-shirt and polyester pants, is a composed Frank.

FRANK

You call it from here, son.

BOBBY

You sure, Pop?

Frank SMACKS Bobby on the butt. He returns to the huddle.

INSIDE THE HUDDLE -

Bobby glances into the crowd and spots, 13-year-old LINDA HOFFMAN. Dressed in high-wasted flared jeans and a tube-top, Linda smiles confidently at Bobby, who sheepishly waves back.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
She came, Charlie.

PLAYER
Out of your league if you ask me.

Bobby glares at 14-year-old Tommy "Fitz" Fitzpatrick. Fitz is the team jokester and leviathan at 5'10" and 190 pounds.

BOBBY
Nobody asked you. Okay, flank right, fake
16 X-ray, naked pitch right.
(seething at Fitz)
This one's all you, Fitz -- dickhead.

Adjacent to Fitz is mellow hipster, 15-year-old, 5'7" 145 pound RICKY BEAMISH. Ricky slaps Fitz some skin.

RICKY
Boombdiggity, my brother.

They approach the scrimmage line. Bobby takes the snap, fakes a slant-in to Charlie, then pitches to Fitz, who RUMBLES around the corner.

With the goal line in sight, and Bobby leading the charge, Fitz is finally ridden out-of-bounds at the 1-yard line, TWO DEFENDERS LAUNCHING him into the food table.

The players rise, their uniforms covered in sauce. The crowd ERUPTS, as the players return to their respective huddles.

INSIDE THE HOUSE SLIDING DOOR -

stands 37-year-old Lebanese-American CATHERINE DEMARCO. Dressed in a beige tunic and slacks, this 5'4" no-nonsense woman manifests a look of concern.

Adjacent to her and dressed in denim separates is attractive and independent, 5'5" 15-year-old DENISE DEMARCO.

INSIDE THE BLUE DEVIL HUDDLE -

BOBBY
Screw this shit! Charlie, fake the slant,
I'm nailin' you on the flag.

The boys approach the scrimmage line. Bobby takes the snap, drops back, then fires a dart, hitting Charlie for the TD. Suddenly, a West Seneca player blind-sides Charlie, THRUSTING him over the fence and into the bipartisan crowd.

WEST SENECA PLAYER
(hovering over Charlie)
Payback for the "Little Big Horn",
black boy.

Bobby promptly takes out the player's knees from behind. Mayhem ensues, the players and crowd engaging in fistcuffs.

MOMENTS LATER -

Frank and the WEST SENECA COACH quickly restore order, the two teams returning to their respective huddles.

In the crowd, observing the chaos, is 45-year-old PASQUALE "UNCLE PAT" DEMARCO. Standing 6 feet tall, and dressed in a tailor-made suit, Pat is a dead ringer for Dean Martin.

INSIDE THE BLUE DEVIL HUDDLE -

BOBBY
Okay, we need two to tie and then we
tak'em in overtime. Flanker right. Fake
slant-flag, fullback swing pass right,
quarterback draw.

With the Rocky THEME intensifying, Bobby takes the snap from center, fakes the pass to Charlie, the pitch to Fitz, then makes a bee line for paydirt.

With TWO GIANTS blocking his path, Bobby goes airborne, CRASHING hard into them inches away from the goal line. Bobby attempts to extend the pigskin over the plain, fumbling it into the endzone. A DEFENDER POUNCES on it, game over!

Dejected, their heads down, Bobby and his teammates shake hands with their elated counterparts. The teams then exit.

EXT. MODEST CITY BACKYARD - LATE NIGHT

A rain-soaked field. Anchored at the goal line is a muddied Frank. Standing at the 3-yard line is Charlie. Bobby, exhausted, his uniform caked with mud, paces three yards behind Charlie. The field is muted, the music long gone.

FRANK
...c'mon you little Mary! You go through
me, and not around, and we take it in.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Otherwise -- hey, my shift doesn't start 'til seven. You boys'll thank me one day when you're playing on Sunday afternoons.

INSIDE THE SLIDING DOOR -

filled with angst are: Catherine, Pasquale and Denise.

ON THE FIELD -

a reluctant Charlie takes the ball from Frank. Seething with anger, Bobby readies himself, taking several steps back.

CHARLIE

Ready, set, hut one!

Bobby takes the pitch and gathers speed. With both gladiators bracing for impact, the two COLLIDE head-on, Frank's right shoulder meeting with Bobby's thighs. Frank lifts Bobby high into the air, then PILE DRIVES him into a rain-soaked puddle.

Bobby SCREAMS out in pain. He struggles to his knees, rips off his helmet, desperately trying to regain his wind. Charlie attempts to intercede.

FRANK

Leave him alone!

Catherine immediately rushes to Bobby.

BOBBY

(masking his pain)

I'm okay, Mom. You may wanna' check on him, though.

Defiant, Frank stands there striking a Tarzan pose.

FRANK

Your old man's still got plenty left in the tank. Ain't that right, Charlie Boy?

Unraveled, Catherine approaches Frank, begins repeatedly SMASHING him hard on the shoulders.

CATHERINE

Have you completely lost your mind?!

FRANK

Take it easy, okay? He just got the wind knocked out of him is all.

(she finally relents)

The boy's a DeMarco. Nothing can keep us down. Right, Bobby?

BOBBY
Got that right!

Frank approaches Bobby, extending a hand to assist him off the ground. Bobby declines, springs to his feet, then stands mano a mano with his father. Frank snarls.

FRANK
Big balls... I like that. Remember, "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up." The great Italian-American Vince Lombardi said that.
(grabs Bobby's face mask)
Next time, you don't let nobody stop you from the promised land, boy. Nessuno!

Bobby and Charlie walk off. Catherine picks up the football, fires it hard at Frank, who snatches it with one hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Excellent throw, Kiddo.

Denise approaches, strikes the ball from Frank's hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You too, now?

INT. BASEMENT STEPS - NIGHT

Completely spent, Bobby and Charlie sit on the bottom steps discarding mud and debris from their cleats into a bucket.

BOBBY
I ain't never been jacked up like that in my life. Guy's a real prick...

CHARLIE
He's just trying to make us better, little brother. NFL or bust. Need to start the dream, right here, right now.

BOBBY
You sound like him.

CHARLIE
'Cause he's right, Bobby. It's our ticket out of here. Both of us.
(beat, then)
And thanks for having my back out there tonight.

BOBBY
You'd do the same for me.

A special handshake, ala 1970's, is followed by Pasquale walking down the steps. Bobby sees him, lights up.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Hey, Uncle Pat!

CHARLIE
Hi, Mr. DeMarco.

UNCLE PAT
(Italian accent, broken English)
Uncle Pat you call me.
(a wide grin from Charlie)
Tonight, you boys play bene.

BOBBY
Yeah, but we still lost.

UNCLE PAT
Ah, so you wina' next time.

INT. BASEMENT FRONT - CONTINUOUS

The three pass by a heavy bag hanging from the ceiling, and a set of free weights lying on the floor. In front of them rests 3 wine barrels on crates. Uncle Pat fills a styrofoam cup from atop one of the barrels, sips its contents.

BOBBY
Is it ready?

UNCLE PAT
Your father, he do good. You taste.

Bobby takes a sip, hands it to Charlie, who swigs it down. A startled Uncle Pat eyes Charlie, who simply shrugs.

CHARLIE
It's my Indian blood.

UNCLE PAT
Not too mucha', okay?
(to Bobby)
You come out front with me.

BOBBY
You scored the car?
(off Uncle Pat's grin)
This baby is sweet, Charlie...

CHARLIE
You guys go. I'm gonna' hit the weights
-- plus Vanessa's waiting on my call.
See ya' later, Uncle Pat.

Bobby and Uncle Pat rush out. Charlie lays down at the bench press, struggles to lift the 175 pound weight one time.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Bobby and Uncle Pat edge their way along the narrow path.

UNCLE PAT

My brother... sometime he a little Patso'. But your father, he a good man.

Bobby hastens to respond, then notices a new 1978 red Ford Mustang parked in the driveway. He sprints toward it.

BOBBY

Wow, this is smokin,' man! Can you afford something like this, Uncle Pat?!

UNCLE PAT

Ford plant employee discount. And, I got a few things on the side.

BOBBY

I'm gonna' have a car just like this when I grow up. I'm gonna' have a whole shop full of cars like this.

UNCLE PAT

You want? You have. Checka' the engine.

Uncle Pat starts the engine, dislodges the hood. A mesmerized Bobby ogles at the 302 Windsor V-8 engine, as Dean Martin's, "Return to Me" CROONS over the car stereo speakers.

INT. MODEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

A queen-sized bed, wooden dresser, with a large mirror attached to it, and a small oak desk fill the cramped space.

Dressed in a towel, a fatigued Frank enters and begins dressing. Sitting at the desk, bills in hand is Catherine. A TV REPORTER opines on the small B&W TV atop the dresser.

TV REPORTER

And behind me you can see federal workers in protective gear. Today in Niagara Falls, New York, the Love Canal was officially designated a federal disaster area. One can only speculate as to what the local levels of contamination will be in the years to come.

Catherine glares at the television, eyes Frank.

FRANK

What? The plant's 20 miles away.

CATHERINE

You may not have the radiation, but that plant is loaded with asbestos, deafening machinery --

FRANK

Hey, we gotta' eat, right? Besides, I wear my mask and earplugs.

Frank resumes dressing, the scar on his back in full view.

CATHERINE

What's tonight's game plan?

FRANK

Can't sign in until one o'clock again.

CATHERINE

You can't keep burning the candle--

FRANK

What choice do we have?

CATHERINE

I could --

Frank lashes out at her.

FRANK

You could nothing! You got a job! Taking care of this house and being a good mother to those kids. Because in the end, Catherine, family's all we got.

CATHERINE

Family's not going to pay our bills. You're spending way too much money on these Friday night football games you insist on organizing.

(beat)

And Denise's prom is this month. She's going to need a new dress.

FRANK

What's the matter with the old one?

CATHERINE

That's just it, Frank, it's old.

Frank finishes getting dressed.

FRANK
How much do we need? To cover everything
for the month?

CATHERINE
Fifteen hundred.

FRANK
That include Nesi's dress?

CATHERINE
(nods, then)
She also plans on enrolling in nursing
school the year after next.

FRANK
She got that idea from you, didn't she?
Fine. We'll worry about that then.

Frank begins scouring through his pockets.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Did you see my --

Catherine holds up his wallet. Frank reaches for it.
Catherine quickly places it behind her back.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(agitated)
Jesus. Now what? What else is on your
mind?
(off her smoldering stare)
Look, what happened tonight between me
and the boy... is between me and the boy.

CATHERINE
You're driving that boy away, Frank. And
I'm concerned the distance between you
two may one day be too great to overcome.

FRANK
(explodes)
He's my son, Catherine! I know what I'm
doing! Now let me have the wallet.

CATHERINE
Your son, Frank? I'd like to think I had
a little something to do with it.

She fires the wallet at Frank, who snags it in midair. Angry,
Frank jumps to respond, abruptly changes course.

FRANK

Have faith in me on this one okay, Kiddo?
I know how far to push our son. And could
you set the alarm for six? Bruce got me
overtime on tomorrow's first shift.

Frank exits. Moments later, a car engine STARTS. Catherine
hears this, then removes a textbook on nursing from her desk
drawer. Behind her, Happy Days PLAYS on the TV.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Complete with overflowing trash receptacles, a fattened black
cat, and two SEEDY MALES finishing a drug deal. Frank pushes
by them and out of the darkness. His watch reads: 1:00 AM.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A neon sign reads: RECCHIO'S BOWLING LANES. An excited MALE
BOWLER, 20's, exits. Seeing Frank, his joy turns to despair.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Frank enters the smoke-filled building, approaches the front
desk. Behind the counter is SONNY PETRONI; wide girth,
gregarious, (45), a cigar protruding from his mouth.

SONNY

Cheech, I got four and five lit up
for you. Heavy oil on four. Sorry,
boss's orders.

Frank glances at the leader board, it reads: \$1,000 2 Game
Bimonthly Jackpot. PAUL KOSOL inhabits the top slot at 665.
Frank grins then moves toward the bar area.

INT. BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Frank retrieves a 7-Up from the disco-clothed male BARKEEP.
In the b.g., VAN MCCOYS, "Do the Hustle" PLAYS on the
jukebox, as stray PATRONS, dressed in leisure suits, smoker
dresses, etc., grind to the music.

Frank shakes his head, steps out from the bar area, then
advances toward a set of lockers alongside the last alley,
lane 18. He opens locker four, retrieves two bowling bags.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - LATER THAT NIGHT

A bowling ball creeps down the alley. Up ahead looms a 4-10
split. The ball BLASTS the 4 pin, launching into the 10. A
stunned CROWD of onlookers APPLAUD and BOO simultaneously.

Off to the side, Sonny marks the spare on a score sheet affixed to an easel. 197 in the 8th frame with a spare up.

Uncle Pat holds court at a table in front of the lanes. THREE SINISTER MEN, 40's, stout, and dressed in dark suits, surround Pat, glaring at the stack of cash in front of him.

SINISTER MAN I

He needs two in the tenth to cash in.
Double down, Pasquale? I say your brother
chokes.

UNCLE PAT

Mio' Fratelo, he never choke. Tre'
Ciento? Done.

The man SLAPS the money onto the table. Uncle Pat glances at Frank. In the zone, Frank nods to his brother then readies himself for the 10th frame.

SINISTER MAN II

Lanes get awfully blurry at two-thirty in
the morning, garlic eater.

Uncle Pat snarls at the man. All focus then shifts to Frank at the lane's approach. Frank unleashes a perfect release, the ball accosting the 1-3 pocket solidly, EXPLODING all 10 pins into the pit. A DRUNK PATRON interjects.

DRUNK PATRON

Hey, Tatoo from Fantasy Island! A fifty
says you can't do that again.

UNCLE PAT

Double your bet... we take.

DRUNK PATRON

A C-note it is.
(joking to crowd)
God damn midget's smaller than the pins.

ANGRY SPECTATOR

That guy's a setup, a friggen ringer!

AT THE ENTRANCE DOOR -

stands a distraught owner, JOE RECCHIO, coiffed hair, dark suit, (35). Adjacent to Joe, the name Mario on his mechanic's uniform lapel, is MARIO CAPPACHIO, portly, (45).

ON THE LANE -

Frank delivers another devastating ball, CASTING all the pins into the awaiting abyss.

Mario grins, exits.

UNCLE PAT
(to drunk patron)
Mio' Fratelo, he never choke.

DRUNK PATRON
(throws money)
Go get yourself some English lessons.

Uncle Pat collects his winnings, joins Frank, hugging his brother. Joe approaches, hands Frank the cash.

JOE RECCHIO
Maybe it's best you don't come in here
for a while, okay?

UNCLE PAT
(in Italian)
What do you mean by that, Joe?

JOE RECCHIO
(in Italian)
The bowlers don't want to come in here
anymore. Your brother wins almost every
time now. It's bad for business.
(to Frank)
Cheech, you understand...

A dejected Frank nods.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Denise glances at her mom, then opens a box on the kitchen table, revealing a gorgeous new dress.

Frank enters. Denise rushes and kisses her dad. Embarrassed, he coils back, unsure how to respond. In the B.G., red roses occupy a vase. Catherine eyes them, beams, turns to Frank.

CATHERINE
You just love that pressure don't you?

FRANK
(grins)
Got that right, Kiddo.

EXT. BETHLEHEM STEEL PLANT - MORNING

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - NOVEMBER 1983)

The sleeping giant is down to one blast furnace operating at twenty-five percent capacity.

Billy Joel's, "Allentown" PLAYS in the background, as the concentration of workers entering and exiting the plant has been reduced to a trickle.

INT. ELECTRIC SHOP - DAY

Bruce enters. In his right hand are pink slips. The workers halt for the news, all except Frank who continues repairing a motor. Bruce approaches a WORKER, 30's, hands him a slip.

WORKER

Back under the bus again, huh?

Bruce shrugs, advances toward Frank, taps his shoulder.

FRANK

Something you needed, Chief?

BRUCE

Just got the order from the suits upstairs this morning, Frankie.

(reluctantly hands him slip)

My best man and I'm forced to let you go -- "Union Seniority Rules."

FRANK

I'm just gonna' finish up here, okay?

Bruce nods then continues on, passing by Holleran and African-American, RODNEY JOHNSON, 6'2", late 40's. He shakes his head in disgust, exits. The two then strut up to Frank.

JOHNSON

I'd like to say I'm sorry to see you go, but I'm not sorry to see you go...

HOLLERAN

Yeah, so hop on that pigboat you came here in, and sail it back to your guinea homeland. And while you're at it, take your kraut bastard goombah with you.

Frank flips them off, returns to work.

BOBBY (V.O.)

Pop took that layoff pretty hard. He'd been with the plant 27 years. And although he was now the assistant head-coach at my high school, where I grew up coaches only made 500 dollars a season. So Pop went to work doing what he could to stay off the unemployment line.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

The four phone lines are lit up like Christmas trees. The CUSTOMER LINE extends out onto the street.

Several EMPLOYEES man their stations, generating pizzas effortlessly. One extracts a pizza from a four-tier oven and turns. It's Frank, the sweat glistening off his brow.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Dressed in a butcher's uniform, Frank lifts a slab of beef onto a counter. Then with surgical precision, he slices two quick filets.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DUSK

Dressed in Nike warm-up gear, Frank briskly jogs through the city streets, his neighbors CHEERING him on.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

A KID, scruffy, early 20's, handles the score keeping. The clock on the wall reads: 3:00 AM. The usual suspects inhabit the tables behind Frank. Covering all bets is Uncle Pat.

BOBBY (V.O.)

But no matter how many hours he worked,
or tournaments he bowled, Pop always had
one focus, football.

EXT. MODEST CITY BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

The once perfectly lit and manicured football field has been replaced with a wooden two-car garage.

INT. GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

2 Kef speakers BLAST out Boston's, "Long Time." Tools of all sorts and engine parts cloak the stone floor and shelves. A heavy bag hangs from the ceiling in a corner of the garage.

On the south wall sits a poster of, "Race Car Driver of the Year," MARIO ANDRETTI. Next to him is pinup beauty, FARRAH FAWCETT. Adjacent to her, a ROCKY poster gleams down at us.

Lying on a crawler under the front of a 1978 Mustang, a male figure dressed in greasy overall jeans.

MALE (O.S.)

...that's the third time on the horn,
little brother, he sounds freaked!

The figure rolls out, socket in hand. It's 18-year-old Bobby.

BOBBY

Tell him to take a chill pill will you,
Charlie?! I'm finishing the oil pan.

Standing in front of Bobby is Charlie. Now 19, 6'2" and a chiseled 195 pounds, Charlie is dressed in a cut-off T-shirt, paisley designer sweats and Swedish Clog shoes. Bobby stands, revealing a 5'9" 175 pound frame.

CHARLIE

I ain't telling him that --

Frank STORMS in, still dressed in his butcher's uniform.

FRANK

Telling him what? Didn't you hear me
calling you?

BOBBY

Yeah, but --

FRANK

But nothing. The biggest game of our
lives in less than three hours, and
you're in here playing with yourself
and your damn toys!

BOBBY

I wanted to drive it to the game --

FRANK

Nevermind that, let's go.
(turns to Charlie)
You ready, Charlie Boy?

Charlie grins. Frank then delivers a flurry of PUNCHES into the heavy bag. With lightning quickness, Charlie follows suit, PUMMELING the bag with even greater intensity.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Remember, "It's not whether you get
knocked down --

BOBBY

(sotto, rolls eyes)
It's whether you get knocked up.

Charlie glares at Bobby in disbelief.

FRANK

What'd you say, wiseguy?

BOBBY

I said, "It's whether you get up." The great Italian-American Vince Lombardi said that.

FRANK

Damn right. Greatest coach in NFL history. Let's go, men... we got college scouts and a championship waiting on us!

CHARLIE

Coach, okay if Bobby catches a ride with me to the stadium?

FRANK

That your skirt's car out front?

(Charlie nods, beat)

Yeah, it's okay.

(makes a V with his fingers)

Just make sure you boys don't let that little patch of hair ruin you.

Frank abruptly punches Charlie in the arm, grins.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Benching 285, with 4.5 forty to boot. Real proud of you, Charlie Boy, real proud.

(beat)

Can you give us a minute?

Charlie glances toward Bobby putting away his tools then exits. A disgusted Frank approaches.

FRANK (CONT'D)

When in the hell are you going to get your priorities straight? Be more like Charlie. You want out of this neighborhood don't you?

BOBBY

285 and 4.5 forty. Is that my ticket out?

FRANK

Only if you punch it, son. There's a DI scholarship waiting for you out there. Followed by your family watching you on the idiot box on Sunday afternoons.

BOBBY

You really believe it's going for me that way don't you?

FRANK

Why do you think I've been bustin' my ass all these years? "If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you'll be fired with enthusiasm." The great Italian-American Vince Lombardi said that. Now let's go out there and impress those scouts!

Bobby rolls his eyes, exits. Frank glances at the disassembled engine parts, kicks one, then follows him out.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Groping Charlie against the fender of a black 1983 Trans Am; complete with teased hair, tight-fitting shorts and a halter-top, is privileged 5'9" 18-year-old beauty, JENNIFER BURNS. Bobby rushes up.

BOBBY

Man, this baby's dope! She all yours, Jennifer?

JENNIFER

Daddy promised it to me for my 18th birthday. And Daddy always keeps his promise.

BOBBY

You wanna' switch Daddies?

CHARLIE

Bobby needs a lift to the game.

JENNIFER

Sure, no problem.

CHARLIE

You want us to pick up Linda, too?

BOBBY

If you guys don't mind?

CHARLIE

No, we don't mind.

Charlie kisses Jennifer passionately. He abruptly stops, whispers in her ear, then tosses the car keys to Bobby.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Knock yourself out, little brother.

BOBBY

Really?

JENNIFER

Oh what the hell, it's just a car, right?

Bobby slides in behind the wheel, Charlie in the passenger seat. Jennifer squeezes in back.

ON THE PORCH -

Frank ferments, as he watches the Trans Am SPEED away, the song, "Flashdance" ROARING out its stereo speakers.

EXT. STREET CORNER - LATE AFTERNOON

The car grinds to a HALT at the street corner. A quick turn left, and Bobby opens up the five-speed on the straightaway, weaving in and out of moderate traffic.

INSIDE THE CAR -

An excited Jennifer ROOTS Bobby on -- Charlie CHASTISING him the whole time to slow down.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Bobby makes a sharp left turn down a side street. Another quick left, and the car finally comes to rest in front of a modest one-story dwelling. Bobby exits the car.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

On the porch in a brown jumpsuit, pulled back hair, and Chaolan black sneakers, is now 17-year-old, 5'6" Linda Hoffman. Bobby approaches, lifts her high into the air. The two kiss then stroll back to the car.

LINDA

The car's beautiful, Jen.

JENNIFER

I know. Don't you just love it?

Bobby and Linda enter the car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Bobby SLAMS the car into gear and SPEEDS off.

INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The room has archaic steel-mesh lockers, splintered benches and a stone floor. The players prepare for battle, (adjusting equipment, taping extremities, listening to Walkman's, etc.) as Springsteen's, "Badlands" EXPLODES out of a Boom-Box.

Charlie and Bobby dress by their lockers. Next to them is 20-year-old Ricky Beamish. Bobby retrieves a large pair of black satin panties from his locker, glares at Ricky.

BOBBY

Is this your idea of a joke?

RICKY

What, you don't like the color?

BOBBY

(spreads them out)

Little small don't you think?

RICKY

That was the biggest size they had.

FITZ

Hey, Bobby, you finally found a heifer that'll date you, huh?

Standing by his locker is 18-year-old Tommy "Fitz" Fitzpatrick. He is now 6'2" and 240 pounds.

BOBBY

Yeah, Fitz. I stopped by your house and got'em from your sister.

CHARLIE

What time did you stop by?

BOBBY

Uh, around seven, why?

CHARLIE

Must of just missed you.

The room ERUPTS. Fitz takes the panties, squeezes them on over his jockstrap, then slides on his football pants.

In steps head coach TOM DANESCO, (40). Tom is tall, stern, and short on speeches. Frank enters behind him.

COACH DANESCO

Okay, gentlemen, bring it in.

(to Frank)

Coach?

The players give their full attention to assistant head coach Frank DeMarco. An OFFICIAL enters, nods to Danesco.

OFFICIAL

Five minutes, Coach.

The official exits. Frank addresses the players.

FRANK

For you seniors, this is it, your last opportunity at a championship.

Behind Frank stands a chalkboard. It displays the numbers and positions of the starting players on the opposing team.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Blow an assignment, screw up an audible, you're coming out, no excuses.

(to Charlie & Bobby)

If we win the toss, we want the ball. If not, we'll kick with the wind.

(crosses to chalkboard)

Now their right corner has a bad ankle. First offensive play from scrimmage we attack -- go right at him.

(draws an X through number 22)

Okay boys, take a knee.

(all kneel)

Lord, we know none of us should wish adversity on our fellow man, but last year Timon stuck it to us pretty good. This year we figure... well, we figure it's our turn. So please help us kick their butts.

GROUP

Amen.

The official reenters, taps his watch, exits.

FRANK

The spirit of the great Vince Lombardi is with us here tonight. Take a listen while you men prepare for battle.

Frank hands Bobby a cassette tape. He and Danesco then enter the cramped coaches' office and shut the door. Bobby places the tape in the dual-play Boom-Box, hits play. The team half-listens, while finalizing their gear.

VINCE LOMBARDI (V.O.)

"Winning is not a sometime thing: it's an all time thing. You don't win once in a while, you don't do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing."

Bobby places a second audio cassette in the Boom-Box. The theme from Rocky RESONATES out its speakers.

COACH DANESCO
Time to go, gentlemen.

Fired with enthusiasm, the players overwhelm the exit, the THUNDEROUS music now vibrating the steel lockers in the B.G.

VINCE LOMBARDI (V.O.)
"It's a reality of life that men are competitive, and most competitive games draw the most competitive men, that's why they're there, to compete. They know the rules and objectives when they get in the game."

EXT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

In the distance, the towering lights of Lackawanna Football Stadium illuminate the nocturnal sky. The team affixes their helmets, then begins the half-mile march to the gridiron. Bobby checks his gear, then abruptly hustles back inside.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bobby retrieves his mouthpiece off the floor. On his departure, he peers into the coaches' office and notices Charlie, his uniform pants down to his ankles. Standing over Charlie, two syringes in hand, is Jennifer. Undetected, Bobby sneaks out, as Jennifer administers the shots.

VINCE LOMBARDI (V.O.)
"The objective is to win -- fairly, squarely, decently, by the rules -- but to win."

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

The staunch Baker faithful fill the bleachers. Wine flasks and thermoses are well represented. FIVE UNDERCLASSMEN have the school letters written across their bare chests.

IN FRONT OF THE BLEACHERS -

The BAKER CHEERLEADERS, led by Linda, lead their fans in several verses of an old favorite, (R.O.W.D.I.E).

ON THE FIELD -

Bobby returns the opening kick-off. Receiving stellar blocks from Fitz and Charlie, he sprints down the right sideline, TWO DEFENDERS giving chase. Catching him, they LAUNCH Bobby into the Gatorade table at the 40-yard line.

Frank rushes in, BERATES his son. Then regaining his composure, Frank sends Bobby in with the game's first play.

Glancing up to the press box, Frank spots a MAN with an 8mm video camera in hand. The man gives Frank a "thumbs up."

INSIDE THE HUDDLE -

Bobby instructs his troops.

BOBBY

Slot left. Fake 22 dive, all go right.

(to Charlie)

Smoke that sucker. On two, on two.

AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE -

#22 is guarding Charlie. Bobby takes the snap and drops back to pass. Avoiding a BLITZER, he steps up in the pocket, then unleashes a bomb to Charlie flying down the right sideline. Charlie catches the perfect spiral for a 60-yard score.

The crowd ERUPTS as Baker takes a 6-0 lead. The five bare-chested underclassmen harass the beaten defender, as The Raiders, "Indian Reservation" SCREECHES over the loudspeaker.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The scoreboard reads: TIMON 20 BAKER 17. Baker has the ball on its own 20-yard line. One minute remains in the contest.

ON THE FIELD -

Bobby sweeps right, sprints by TWO DEFENDERS, then steps out-of-bounds with 30 ticks remaining in the contest.

On the next play, Bobby throws a wobbly pass to Charlie on the post-pattern. Charlie, a man among boys, darts in and out of traffic, finally corralled by a host of DEFENDERS at mid-field. Bobby calls time-out with 5 ticks remaining.

ON THE SIDELINE -

The two boys rush up to Frank.

BOBBY

Charlie can --

CHARLIE

22's my bitch today,
Coach.

FRANK

(glares at Charlie, then)

Yeah, but you're drawing double, maybe triple coverage on this one.

(beat)

32 swivel pass. Charlie, you're at tight end. You're gonna' need to out jump those D-Backs.

Charlie nods. Frank then grabs Bobby by the face mask.

FRANK (CONT'D)

There's a dozen DI scouts out here. Only spirals from you, you got that?!

Moments later, the team breaks the huddle. The crowd noise SURGES, as the announcer's voice, JOE COREY, (44) kicks in.

JOE COREY (O.S.)

Hold onto your seats folks, there are five seconds remaining in this thriller. Bobby DeMarco takes the snap from center, and drops back to pass. He steps up, pumps once, then rolls to his right, eluding two defenders. Charlie DeMarco is streaking down the middle of the field. Bobby sees him and unleashes a Hail Mary to his brother in the endzone. With two defenders draping him, Charlie elevates -- stretching high into the air for the pigskin. Did he come down with it? YES HE DID! Touchdown, Baker! Bobby threw that ball fifty yards on the run! Unbelievable! It's pandemonium here in Lackawanna, New York as the Baker faithful storm the field!

The Sugarhill Gang's, "Apache" BLASTS over the PA system. The Baker crowd and players celebrate, dancing the Apache dance at mid-field, Charlie and Bobby leading the charge.

VINCE LOMBARDI (V.O.)

"But I firmly believe that any man's finest hour - his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear - is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious."

The two boys are joined by Frank. He hugs Charlie, then approaches Bobby, a handshake all they can muster. TV reporter and blond-beauty, MARIA GENERO, (25) rushes Charlie.

MARIA GENERO

Sports fans, here we are with tonight's hero and Blue Chip prospect, Charlie Nodin DeMarco. Charlie, you caught 11 passes tonight for over 200 yards and three touchdowns. How do you feel?

An exuberant Charlie throws his hands into the air, shouts.

CHARLIE
 Psyched! Freaken' psyched, man!

MARIA GENERO
 You pretty much single-handedly led your
 team to victory. How did you do it?

Charlie grabs a reluctant Bobby, drags him into the shot.

CHARLIE
 Can't catch pass one without this guy.
 Western New York Champs, baby!

BOBBY
 (mimicking into camera)
 Yo, Adrian! We did it!

On scene is veteran newspaper reporter DICK BARRY, (60).

DICK BARRY
 Charlie, you have a host of DI schools
 huddled at your door. You think you'll
 enlist at a top ten powerhouse?

CHARLIE
 That's the plan, Dick.

Jennifer slithers in, grabs Charlie's arm, then leads him off
 the field. The reporters follow. Frank sees this, sprints
 toward Dick Barry, as Bobby stays back with Linda.

FRANK
 Hey, Dick, what about my other boy?! The
 kid went 20 for 25 with three touchdowns.

DICK
 Bobby performed stellar --

FRANK
 Then why aren't you talking to him?

DICK
 Your other boy's yarning the stories now.
 Especially with Penn State and Michigan
 squatting at his doorstep.

FRANK
 That's no reason for Bobby not going DI.

DICK
 Not my call.

FRANK

You write the yarns. People respect you.
Your column matters.

DICK

(becoming testy)

Look, Frank, the kid's a great high school player. But in this lowly reporter's opinion, Bobby's D3, D2 at best. At 5'9", and clocking a 4.7 forty on a good day, I'm sure the good Lord has other plans in mind for him.

FRANK

God sent Flutie to Boston College.

DICK

Yeah, with a thunderbolt for an arm, and lightning 4.5 speed. Great season, Coach.

Dick hurries off. Frank cries out to him.

FRANK

Lombardi weighed 170 when he played D-line at Fordham! A DI school, Dick!

INT. DEMARCO HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room is overflowing with family, players, etc. Seated at the head of the table, glass in hand, is Frank.

FRANK

On behalf of my wife and children, I'd like to congratulate all of you on a tremendous season. "A man can be as great as he wants to be. If you believe in yourself and have the courage, the determination, the dedication, the competitive drive and if you are willing to sacrifice the little things in life and pay the price for the things that are worthwhile, it can be done." The great --

GROUP

(excited, in unison)

Italian-American Vince Lombardi said that... we know, Coach!

DENISE

Dad, sing that Italian song.

FRANK

No, no, I couldn't. Which one?

DENISE

Che La Luna Mezzo Mare.

Frank breaks into the Louie Prima song, his pitch perfect. After one verse, he hands out the lyrics. The guests join in, singing as best they can. All APPLAUD at the end.

RICKY

Hey, Chuckster', I hear that Paterno dude's stopping by for some spaghetti and meatballs. Pretty schweet', bro.

CHARLIE

Yeah, and it's all thanks to Coach here, my Mom... you guys, and my best friend and little brother, Bobby.

Charlie and a hesitant Bobby perform their handshake.

FITZ

Bobby, where you off to?

BOBBY

I was thinking of taking a year off. Move up to Alaska... maybe do some deep sea fishing.

A collective LAUGH from the group. Frank is not amused.

FITZ

Where's he headed, Coach?

FRANK

Division II if he doesn't stop wasting time playing with his car and other things and get his priorities straight.

A LOUD silence deafens the room. Catherine glares at Frank.

CATHERINE

Could I see you in the kitchen, please?

Frank and Catherine exit. Masking his hurt, Bobby raises a glass of wine. He glances toward his uncle. Adjacent to Uncle Pat, his wife JO JO, pretty, (45).

BOBBY

A toast. To priorities!

LINDA

And to my boyfriend passing for over 300 yards and 3 touchdowns.

CHARLIE
I'll drink to that!

The group toasts.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Catherine is livid.

CATHERINE
Now you're ridiculing our son in front of his friends and Linda, too?

FRANK
Just telling it like it is, Kiddo.

CATHERINE
No, your wine's telling it like it is.

FRANK
I had two glasses. What's the big deal?

CATHERINE
Well, besides embarrassing yourself, and Bobby in front of his friends, there's your recent stress test report.

FRANK
That boy needs to get his head out of his ass! He's chasing that skirt around like a Lap Dog -- and there's nothing wrong with my ticker.

Frustrated, Frank GULPS a glass of wine, sits at the table, then downs a second glass as well. He motions to pour another, stops, then FLINGS the glass off the table.

CATHERINE
(beat, concerned)
You haven't been yourself all night. What is it, Frank?

FRANK
Dick Barry thinks Bobby's too small and slow to play DI. Danesco agrees.

CATHERINE
Life's not all about playing football in a certain division. That boy brings home all A's and B's. He's desperate for you to be proud of him.

FRANK
I am proud of him.

CATHERINE

He doesn't know that. And as for his size, height doesn't make the man, Frank.

FRANK

Nor should the lack of it stop him from achieving his dreams.

CATHERINE

His or yours?

Frank ignores the comment, as Catherine answers the phone.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Hello. Hi, Bruce. Yes he is, hold on.

FRANK

(takes phone)

Yeah, Chief. We're Champs. Bobby threw for three touchdowns. Really? When? I'll work anywhere they want to put me.

(hangs up, to Catherine)

I'm back to work under a union loop-hole.

Frank lets out a big SIGH.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank and Catherine enter to a dispersing crowd.

FRANK

Hey, where's everybody going?

RICKY

Got a couple of bad to the bone parties that need our attention, Mr. Cheech.

FITZ

Thanks for dinner, Coach -- you too, Mrs DeMarco. The food was awesome.

The group exits. Charlie eyes Bobby standing with Linda.

BOBBY

We'll meet you at Rat's later.

Charlie exits with Jennifer. Uncle Pat turns to Frank.

UNCLE PAT

There's a race at the track. I take my nephew and Linda.

FRANK
 (nods, to Bobby)
 Then it's back to weights and sprint
 training first thing in the morning.

BOBBY
 Fine... no problem.

FRANK
 (takes to side)
 You're every damn bit good as Flutie was.
 You remember that.
 (to group)
 Go have a nice time.

JO JO
 Take me home first, Pat.

An obeying nod from Uncle Pat.

EXT. WATKINS GLEN SPEEDWAY - NIGHT

Two stock cars are neck and neck into the final turn. Car #13
 ACCELERATES with a burst of energy, crossing the finish line
 nearly a car length ahead of his opponent.

EXT. PIT AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Car #13 is engulfed by an elated crew. The DRIVER, 20's,
 exits the vehicle, and is immediately hugged by a man in a
 mechanic's uniform, it's Mario.

OUTSIDE THE FENCE -

stands an enamored Bobby, along with Linda and Uncle Pat.
 Mario waves them in. Excited, Bobby turns to Uncle Pat.

BOBBY
 You know him?

UNCLE PAT
 He come with us from the old country.

Bobby rushes in. Linda stays back with Uncle Pat.

LINDA
 Okay if I ask you something, Uncle Pat?

UNCLE PAT
 Yeah, sure. You ask.

LINDA

Why is your brother always on Bobby's case about football? He really loves working on cars. It's his passion.

UNCLE PAT

My brother, he tough on everybody.

LINDA

Do you think, Mr. DeMarco would be okay if your nephew didn't play in college?

UNCLE PAT

(nervous laugh, then)

My advice you want? Play college ball. Free education. After, I help you two with your dreams all I can. Capisce?

LINDA

Capisce. And grazie.

She kisses Uncle Pat on the cheek. They then join Bobby.

INT. STEEL PLANT BATHROOM - MORNING

Decrepit toilets, broken doors and cracked mirrors expose the room. A worker dressed in protective gear scrubs a urinal.

Bruce enters, approaches him. The man rises from one knee, lowers his mask and safety glasses.

BRUCE

How you doing, Frankie?

FRANK

Family's gotta' eat right, Chief?

BRUCE

I filed another grievance for you.

FRANK

You think it'll do any good?

BRUCE

(shrugs, then)

My best worker scrubbing toilets. It's no wonder this country's going to hell.

A disgusted Bruce exits. Frank returns to work.

MOMENTS LATER -

Frank's reflection glares back at him through the cracked mirror. Bracketing him in the glass are Holleran and Johnson.

HOLLERAN

Finally got you doing what your people
are good at... cleaning shit.

Holleran and Johnson maneuver in, crowding Frank.

FRANK

(lowers goggles and mask)
I don't want any trouble.

JOHNSON

Too late for that now, Cheech. What the
hell kinda' name is that anyway? Sounds
like a... you a cholo, Frank?

HOLLERAN

Your heinie friend won a grievance with
the union. To keep our jobs, me and
Johnson gotta' take classes -- learn what
the hell we're doing. I'm too old for
that shit, Frank!

Holleran pushes by Frank, unzips his pants, then urinates on
the floor in between two urinals. Grabbing several paper
towels, he discards them onto the floor.

HOLLERAN (CONT'D)

What, you ain't gonna' do anything about
it this time? I figure any fisticuffs is
fair now -- your boxing pedigree and all.

Masking his rage, Frank picks up the paper towels.

JOHNSON

Let's go. He don't want no part of us.

They move to exit. Holleran fires one final salvo.

HOLLERAN

Cleaning piss and shit used to be
reserved for the black slave, Frank.
Hey, I hear your white son's following
right in your footsteps. Should be no
problem him cleaning up in here -- you
two being the same size and all.

Unexpectedly, Frank strikes, DRILLING Holleran twice in the
face. He instantly DROPS, his nose bloodied. A frightened
Johnson flails his arms high into the air.

JOHNSON

This whole thing was his idea! I never
even liked the racist prick!

Frank allows him to leave. He then lifts up a garbage can and pours its contents over Holleran's head.

FRANK
 Maybe I'm what you say... but not my
 boy. Not my boy.

Stirring with fury, Frank returns to work.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Charlie and Bobby stand coiled at the starting line. A whistle SOUNDS and the two men fire out, reaching top speed within seconds. Neck and neck, Charlie then pulls away, crossing the tape two yards ahead of his brother.

Waiting for them are: Jennifer, stopwatch in hand, and Linda, a whistle in hers. A confident Charlie jogs up.

JENNIFER
 4.495.

CHARLIE
 Psyche! How'd Bobby do?

JENNIFER
 4.69. Best time yet.

CHARLIE
 Way to go, little brother!

BOBBY
 A D3 time, but thanks.

Jennifer and Charlie share a look. She then approaches Bobby.

JENNIFER
 You want to finally get your father off
 your back? Break 4.6?

BOBBY
 That ain't happening in this lifetime.

CHARLIE
 I just broke 4.5 didn't I?

Charlie nods to Jennifer, who then removes a vial and syringe from her sweat jacket.

BOBBY
 What's in there?

JENNIFER

Your ticket to independence. A DI scholarship. Maybe even pro ball?

BOBBY

You give that stuff to my brother before the Timon game?

Baffled, Charlie glares at Jennifer, then chimes in.

CHARLIE

Yeah, and before that too. How do you think I got where I am, Bobby? Steroids made me bigger and faster and stronger... and they're 100% safe, too.

LINDA

Who told you that?

JENNIFER

My dad's an orthopedic surgeon. All his college and pro patients are on this stuff. They call it the Superman drug.

BOBBY

I'd really be able to run a 4.6?

JENNIFER

Maybe even faster.

BOBBY

It just sounds like it's cheating.

CHARLIE

Screw that, Bobby! It's perfectly legal. All the great DI players are juicin' up. And they did it in high school, too.

AT THE TRACK ENTRANCE -

Frank pulls up, HONKING the car horn several times. He exits his car, dressed in shorts, new sneakers and a T-shirt.

FRANK

(belts out)

"If you're not fired with enthusiasm, you'll be fired with enthusiasm!"
Lets go, Kiddo!

Jennifer quickly slides the drugs into her pocket. She and Linda then exit, passing by a perturbed Frank. He snickers.

EXT. TRACK - LATER THAT DAY

Frank stands at the finish line, stopwatch in hand.

Bobby and Charlie stand poised 40 yards down the track.

FRANK
Charlie, you're up first.

Buffalo News reporter Dick Barry joins Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)
On your movement.

Charlie digs in. He EXPLODES off the line, crossing the tape seconds later completely spent.

FRANK (CONT'D)
4.5 flat! Not bad.
(Off Dick Barry's approving nod)
Okay, Bobby... fourth quarter now.

Bobby takes off, SPRINTING hard down the track. He dives across the tape, SMASHING hard into the ground. Frank grins.

DICK
Get a time there, Coach?

FRANK
(checks stopwatch)
4.69.

Dick Barry tips his hat, exits. Aghast, Frank approaches a brush-burned and beaten Bobby.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Pressure's what separates the men from the boys. It's obvious you're still a boy. Well, let's go, boy. Time to get your ass schooled again by your old man.

Bobby snarls. Frank growls back, hands Charlie the whistle.

AT THE STARTING LINE -

Frank and Bobby dig in.

Charlie BLOWS the whistle. Both men take off, sprinting down the track neck and neck. They cross the tape simultaneously.

CHARLIE
4.68. Way to go, Bobby! You too, Coach.

FRANK
Who won? Who won, God damn it?!

CHARLIE
(apologetic)
Dead heat.

Frank glares at Charlie, then storms off the track YELLING at himself. An elated Bobby tackles Charlie to the ground.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

8x10 room with two single beds. On the wall above a sleeping Charlie rests three framed photos of: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Indian leader, Wilma Mankiller & NFL star, Jerry Rice.

Over Bobby's bed are several Polaroid photos of Linda. Tossing, Bobby opens his eyes, notices a blinding light shining through the lone bedroom window.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A steady drizzle cascades off the blacktop, as a car's high-beam headlights illuminate the telephone pole finish line. Sprinting out of the shadows and crossing the line is Frank. He checks his time then angrily jogs back into the darkness.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Standing inside the picture window are Bobby and Catherine.

BOBBY
The man needs some serious help. Always quoting Vince Lombardi on everything. Well, I'm sick of it! I have a life, too!

CATHERINE
Lower your voice, Bobby.

BOBBY
Maybe football's just not in the cards for me. Did he ever think of that?

CATHERINE
Then fold in your hand and move on.

BOBBY
Right. You wanna' tell him that? Pop wants me to continue playing so he can keep his stupid dream alive.

CATHERINE
Is that why you think he's out there?

BOBBY

He's running sprints at midnight in the middle of a pouring rain. Why the hell else would anybody be out there?!

CATHERINE

He's out there because he cares about you.

BOBBY

No, Mom. He only cares about playing DI ball, Charlie's 40 times and himself. There's no room left in there for me.

CATHERINE

He may not be as eloquent as some others, but no one loves you kids more than that man out there running forty yard sprints.

BOBBY

That's how you show love?

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW -

Frank sprints into the glare of an oncoming vehicle, barely avoiding it at the last moment.

CATHERINE

That's how he does.

(beat)

You really don't know why he's out there do you?

(takes her son's hand)

He's out there because he knows one day, one day very soon, he won't be able to beat you anymore.

BOBBY

It's gonna' happen eventually.

CATHERINE

Your father knows that. He just wants to help you for as long as he can. Let him have his time with you, Bobby. The man's certainly earned it.

Bobby stares out the window at Frank crossing the finish line. Frank glances to his stopwatch, pumps his fist high into the air, enters his car then exits. Bobby scowls.

INT. STEEL PLANT OFFICE - DAY

Dingy, hardened, with a small steel desk and four chairs. On the walls are posters of aged trains and Max Smelling.

Frank enters. Bruce motions him to sit down, pours two cups of tea off a hotplate on his desk, hands one to Frank.

BRUCE

The plant bought out the shop's union contract, Frankie. The derailment came down this morning. All lockers need to be vacated by 5:00 PM today.

FRANK

Can they do that?

BRUCE

Made the union an offer they couldn't refuse. 10,000 buyout per eligible man.

FRANK

Any recourse on our end?

BRUCE

Management's had enough. They're fed up with paying all that overtime to guys like Holleran and Johnson in order to get to guys like you. It's cheaper to farm the work out at this point.

FRANK

How long you think I'll be out this time?

Bruce glances toward a photo of a locomotive on the wall.

BRUCE

The "Big Boy." The most powerful and reliable steam engine ever built. And it occurred during a time when men took pride in their work. Men like you.

(turns to Frank, struggles)

I'm afraid the layoffs are permanent this time, Frank. I'm sorry.

Bruce removes a brochure from a drawer, hands it to Frank.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

But I think there may be a silver lining in all of this for a guy like you. The plant's offering to front all costs for any man interested in furthering his education in a related field.

FRANK

Me, go back to school? After twenty-five years? No, I'm afraid that train's long gone... left the station.

BRUCE

It's a great opportunity for a man with your drive. Think about it?

Nervous, Frank nods, rises to exit, then spins back.

FRANK

About that 10,000 dollars...

BRUCE

Paid out to any man with thirty years or more on the job. What do you have in?

FRANK

Twenty-seven.

BRUCE

Son-of-a-bitch.

FRANK

It's okay, Chief. Thanks for everything.

The two shake hands. Frank then embraces his good friend.

EXT. FATHER BAKER BRIDGE - DAY

The Grand Torino speeds over the degrading structure.

INSIDE THE CAR -

a troubled Frank sits behind the wheel. A quick glance into the rear view mirror offers a surreal view of the steel plant in the B.G. -- Frank peers ahead, his speed ever increasing.

EXT. VEGETABLE FIELD - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NEW YORK - 1951)

Several immigrant WORKERS labor in the blistering sun, picking and filling baskets full of string beans. An eager 14-year-old Frank toils with enthusiasm.

A seedy MAN, (50), notices the diminutive boy's high volume output, YELLS at him just the same.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

His speed intense, Frank jerks the wheel toward a flimsy guardrail. At the last moment, he SLAMS on the breaks, taking out part of the guardrail. Frank grasps the steering wheel. Firmly placing his head against it, tears begins to flow.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

With the tension caustic, Catherine readies herself for bed, brushing her hair in front of the mirror.

CATHERINE
 (finally)
 I'm sorry, Frank, but we can't live on --

FRANK
 Hand-outs from the government?
 Don't you think I know that?!

Frank removes a bowling ball from its bag, sets it on the dresser, then removes electrical tape from its thumb hole.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 I know what I'll do, I'll go back to Paolini's -- the pizzeria -- whatever. I ain't afraid of working for a living. And I don't want you blabbing to the kids about me losing my job -- especially, Bobby. He's got enough on his mind.

Catherine retrieves a stack of letters off the desk.

CATHERINE
 You really need to take a look at these. To date, we've received 35 DI scholarship offers... and all of them for Charlie.

FRANK
 So. What are you saying?

Catherine sighs, returns to brushing her hair.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 You know what Charlie said to me the other day? He said how he'd love for Bobby and him to play together again at the next level.

CATHERINE
 That decision's not going to be left up to him. Or you.

FRANK
 You know, it's strange how you and I always see things differently. See, I figure it this way. With this much competition for Charlie's services, I'd say I'm the one calling the shots here.

CATHERINE

Bobby's applied for early admission into UB. He really loves their automotive engineering department.

FRANK

Early what?

Frank hesitates, then suddenly explodes, and in one fell swoop, LAUNCHES all the items off the dresser.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I didn't work my ass off all these years so that my only son could become some God damn mechanic, Catherine!

CATHERINE

Charlie's yours too, Frank. In case you'd forgotten.

FRANK

Oh I haven't forgotten. And now it's time for that boy to show some gratitude and pay us back.

CATHERINE

I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

(beat, inflexible)

And Bobby's decision needs to, and will be in by next Friday.

FRANK

Fine. Coach MacPherson at Syracuse is getting back to me later this week. He's probably watching Bobby's tape right now.

With new confidence, Catherine moves to exit, spins back.

CATHERINE

Oh, and there's one more item we need to discuss.

FRANK

Now what? You're not --

CATHERINE

No! I have zero interest in bringing another football player into this world for you to control. But it does have something to do with the hospital. I start at Mercy next week. I'm an LPN now.

FRANK

An LP what?

CATHERINE

A nurse, Frank. I passed my state boards two weeks ago.

FRANK

I didn't even know you were in school.

CATHERINE

Then you won't miss me while I'm at work.

Thoroughly disgusted, Frank SLAMS his bowling ball onto the bed. It bounces off the mattress, SMASHES through the bedroom window. Frank glares at his wife. She chuckles.

MONTAGE:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

An elated Bobby enters a building that reads: University at Buffalo Administration.

BOBBY (V.O.)

To say Pop was a little upset over my enrolling in a D3 football program was an understatement. But the fact was no top DI or D2 programs were interested. They wouldn't even return his calls.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Frank SLAMS down the phone, grabs several college brochures off his desk, then WHIPS them across the room.

BOBBY (V.O.)

But somehow, Pop got Joe Paterno and Ohio State to come down and look at me. At least that's what he said. I think they really showed up to try and sign Charlie.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - NIGHT

A semi-darkened room. 8mm game footage of Bobby throwing a TD pass emanates from a projector on the far wall. A hand shuts off the projector, flips on the light, it's Frank.

Sitting across from him wearing a Penn State football jacket is COACH JOE PATERNO, (60). Paterno points to an article and photo of Charlie on the back wall. Frank grins, hands him two photos of his boys. Paterno glares at him then exits.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - DAY

Bobby's highlight reel plays. Unhappy, TWO COACHES with Ohio State jackets, rise from their chairs and exit.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Crossed off on a chalkboard are two dozen DI and D2 schools. Defeated, Frank downs a glass of wine, as Springsteen's, "My Hometown" kicks in.

BOBBY (V.O.)

UB was a solid school. Pop even grew to like it -- especially after they let him attend practices whenever he wanted. Fortunately, he got a new job that next season and didn't have a lot of free-time. My mom was happy working with my sister at the hospital. And Charlie got a full-ride to his 1st choice, Michigan.

MONTAGE:

BUFFALO NEWS ARTICLE: LOCAL FOOTBALL STAR CHARLIE NODIN DEMARCO ACCEPTS FULL RIDE TO UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. Byline reads: Brother and teammate, Bobby DeMarco accepts scholarship to local division III school, University at Buffalo. Frank glares through the paper at the dinner table.

FRESHMAN YEAR ACTION SHOTS. Bobby and Charlie unpacking in their respective dorm rooms. 2. Frank and Bobby studying game film late at night. 3. Bobby running extra laps at dusk. Frank stands at the finish line, stopwatch in hand.

BUFFALO NEWS ARTICLE: FRESHMAN SENSATION LEADS MICHIGAN TO WIN OVER NOTRE DAME Byline reads: Charlie Nodin DeMarco hauls in 15 catches for 225 yards to lead Michigan to a 10-1 season.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Frank paces in the stands. The quarterback sustains an injury and Bobby enters, throwing an interception on his first attempt. Frank storms off.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Frank finishes a practice test. He glances up, Bruce sitting across from him at the kitchen table.

ACTION TV FOOTAGE: Of Mary Lou Retton winning 2 gold medals at the 1984 Summer Olympics on the TV. Frank gestures to Bobby, who rolls his eyes, then glances at Linda.

ACTION TV FOOTAGE: Of Uncle Pat and Frank sharing a poignant moment, as Italy wins the 1984 World Cup. The two toast.

ACTION TV FOOTAGE: Of Doug Flutie accepting the 1984 Heisman Trophy on the TV. Frank glares at Bobby.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: SOPHOMORE SENSATION CHARLIE NODIN DEMARCO 10TH IN NATION IN TOUCHDOWN RECEPTIONS.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Bobby, Charlie, Jennifer and Linda race go-carts at the beach in Niagara Falls, Canada.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Frank at Recchio's winning another jackpot. Uncle Pat collects from the usual suspects.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: LOCAL FOOTBALL STAR BOBBY DEMARCO LEADS UB TO FIRST WINNING SEASON IN 20 YEARS.

ACTION FOOTAGE: A TV REPORTER comments on the Challenger explosion that killed 7 astronauts.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Frank sits intently in a classroom at a local college, the oldest member in his class.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Baker's field goal kicker hits a 35-yard game winning field goal. Frank stands on the sideline, his thoughts elsewhere.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Bobby tunes his Uncle Pat's new Mustang at a work bay inside a garage. Bobby REVS the engine, a delighted Uncle Pat standing nearby.

ACTION TV FOOTAGE: A large group gathers in front of the DeMarco TV to watch Vinny Testaverde win the Heisman Trophy.

ACTION TV FOOTAGE: A TV reporter comments on the cocaine overdose death of college basketball superstar, Len Bias.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: MICHIGAN FRONT RUNNER, CHARLIE NODIN DEMARCO INTERESTS PRO SCOUTS IN UPCOMING 1986 NFL DRAFT. 2. UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO FINISHES 5 AND 5.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Bobby, Charlie, Fitz and Ricky carry an oak dresser and colored TV into a lavish apartment. Jennifer instructs them on its position. The boys exit, leaving Charlie and Jennifer to enjoy their new surroundings.

ACTION FOOTAGE: Bobby and Charlie back home running sprints. Frank stands there, stopwatch in hand, as Bobby continues to disappoint with his 40 times.

BOBBY (V.O.)

Those four years really sailed by. Pop got his degree and finally had a job worthy of his talent. Our senior year, Charlie made first team All-Big East, and I made Player of the Week once in D3. But that didn't stop Pop from thinking I was headed for an NFL tryout right alongside my big brother.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

An unidentified object speeds toward us. Suddenly, a male figure appears, snatching the object out of the clouded sky. Simultaneously, both entities come CRASHING down into a puddle on the 50-yard line. The JOLT separates the two.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Cradle the ball into your arms before you hit the damn ground!

On the ground exhausted is 22-year-old Bobby.

AT THE GOAL LINE -

Frank stands with 22-year-old Fitz and 23-year-old Ricky.

FRANK

Let's run it again!

Bobby returns. He then sprints downfield, putting a move on Fitz, sending him TUMBLING. Ricky then unleashes a strike to Bobby, who makes a phenomenal catch at shoe-top level.

FRANK (CONT'D)

That's the way to look the ball into your hands! Diversification! Like Lou Piccone with the Bills. That guy's the same size as you, Kiddo, same size.

(to Fitz & Ricky)

Thanks, fellahs.

Perplexed, both boys wave to Bobby and exit.

RICKY

Coach is wiggling. Piccone's a Clydesdale, man. That sucka' runs a 4.4 forty and benches 400 to boot.

FITZ

If our boy does get a tryout, his tank ain't gonna' have anything left.

Exhausted, Bobby readies himself for another sprint.

FRANK

On your movement.

Bobby attacks the course, crossing the tape fully spent.

FRANK (CONT'D)

4.68 won't get you past the first day!

Bobby returns to the line. His second effort returns --

FRANK (CONT'D)

4.7? A damn girl scout runs faster!

BOBBY'S POV -

a 1986 Trans Am pulls into the parking lot. Exiting the car, dressed in designer gear is Charlie. Jennifer stays behind, while Charlie, walking with swag, approaches Frank and Bobby.

BOBBY

That baby new?!

CHARLIE

Just drove it off the lot.

FRANK

Nevermind that. How'd it go in Miami?

CHARLIE

Well, like I was telling you guys on the phone, working out with Marino was dope, man... that dude can really throw.

FRANK

First round, 27th pick. Fooled them all.

CHARLIE

Hey, check this out, little brother.

Charlie proudly shows off a diamond ring on his finger.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Jennifer and I are now officially engaged. Got herself one, too.

BOBBY

But I thought... nevermind.
Congratulations man!

Bobby embraces his brother.

FRANK

Hope you know what you're doing.

CHARLIE

I figure marriage is like a new car, Coach. After a few years, if it doesn't work out, you trade it in. Okay if Bobby tries out my new ride?

FRANK

That yours?

CHARLIE

Well, almost. Jen and I are getting married right after the season.

FRANK

You boys go enjoy yourselves.

Arm-in-arm, they move toward the parking lot.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Charlie Boy? Can I bend your ear a second?

They turn. Bobby glares at his Pop.

BOBBY

I'll check on Jennifer.

Bobby eyes Charlie, leaves. Frank draws nearer to Charlie.

FRANK

You really kicked butt on the gridiron these last four years. I'm proud of you.

CHARLIE

Thanks. You had a big part in it.

FRANK

Listen, Charlie... you think Bobby's got a real shot at the next level? You've probably played with or went up against half the guys in the league by now.

CHARLIE

Bobby's the real Rocky, Coach.

FRANK

Yeah, but the Rock was short on talent.

CHARLIE

But big on heart. And heart sometimes overrides talent, wouldn't you agree?

FRANK

Agree.

A vexed car horn ECHOES in the background.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Well, let's not keep your fiance' waiting. Hey, why don't the two of you drop by the house tonight for dinner. I think your Mom would really enjoy that. Eggplant Parmesan and meatballs?

CHARLIE
Definitely down for that!

Charlie shakes Frank's hand, then rushes to the parking lot.

AT THE CAR -

Bobby is behind the wheel, Jennifer in back. Charlie joins his brother in front. The car SPEEDS off, Run D.M.C's, "Walk This Way" BLASTING out the speakers.

INT. DEMARCO KITCHEN - NIGHT

A crowded kitchen, high-energy, LAUGHTER. With dinner complete, the women tend to the cleanup. Suddenly, Bobby springs from his chair, growls at his Pop.

BOBBY
Ready? USA vs. Italy, round two.

Frank rises and the two prepare for battle, their right fists raised high and clenched tight.

FITZ
Send him back on the boat, Bobby!

Frank glares at Fitz. He and Bobby then simultaneously extend several fingers on one hand, their combined finger count adding up to seven.

FRANK	BOBBY
Sette!	Quattro!

FRANK
That's one for Napoli.

A second throw of the hands and Uncle Pat defeats Charlie. Another series of THROWS and Bobby and Charlie are shut out. The crowd ERUPTS, as Frank and Uncle Pat toast their victory.

BOBBY
You boys smoked us again!

CHARLIE
Naples is going down next time.

Charlie grabs his jacket and joins Jennifer.

FRANK
What do you mean next time? Let's go again... c'mon, one more. Let's go!

UNCLE PAT
 (in Italian)
 Enough already, Cheech.

All stare at Frank, who finally eases off.

JENNIFER
 Dinner was amazing, Mrs. DeMarco.

FITZ
 I'll second that.

RICKY
 Awesome, Mrs. D. And remember, only you
 can prevent forest fires.

An inebriated Ricky kisses Catherine on her cheek.

FRANK
 Hey, what about me?

RICKY
 You want a kiss, too, Coach?

LINDA
 You two are the absolute best cooks
 in the world.

Linda kisses Catherine, nods to Frank.

Denise hands a filled Tupperware container to Fitz.

FITZ
 Can you cook like this too?

DENISE
 I'm a career woman, Tommy.

FITZ
 Oh... you mean like, Jane Fonda?

Frank converses with Charlie and Jennifer.

FRANK
 You two get enough to eat?

JENNIFER
 Could we get a few more meatballs... if
 you don't mind?

Franks grins, packs their food himself.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Fitz & Ricky flirt with Denise at the bottom of the steps.

Frank remains back with Jennifer and Charlie.

FRANK

Charlie, can I bend your ear a second?

Charlie eyes Jennifer.

JENNIFER

I'll be in the car.

She kisses him, heads off.

FRANK

She's beautiful... a real keeper. Here's to a long life together.

Frank raises a glass of wine, downs it.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Listen, Charlie... you must be pretty tight with Shula by now, right?

CHARLIE

I haven't even met him yet --

FRANK

Yeah, but you got a contract. You're not a free-agent, or a walk-on. And with your ability, you're a shoe-in for making the team -- might even start.

CHARLIE

(nervous, hurried)

Thanks. Listen, I really need to get goin'... Jen's waiting in the car.

Charlie motions to leave. Desperate, Frank grabs his arm.

FRANK

I'm not having any success getting Bobby a tryout. Anywhere. They're all feedin' me the same bullshit. He's too small, he's too slow. Bobby's got greatness in him, Charlie, I can feel it!

CHARLIE

I agree. But what can I do?

FRANK

You can call down to Miami and get him a tryout. I guarantee he won't let you down.

Taken aback, Charlie is unsure how to respond.

CHARLIE

I wouldn't even know who to call --

FRANK

You call the front office. They'll put your call right through.

(beat)

Rocky got his shot. Shouldn't your brother get his too?

CHARLIE

(beat)

I'll call first thing Monday morning.

Ecstatic, Frank gives Charlie a Bear Hug.

STANDING AT HIS CAR -

with Linda, an unhinged Bobby. Jennifer joins them. Upset, Charlie approaches.

BOBBY

What the hell was that all about?!

CHARLIE

The old man's shitfaced... you know how he gets.

(beat)

You just be ready to go in the morning?

Linda shoots Bobby an edging nod.

BOBBY

Listen, Charlie... look, the facts are the facts, man. And the fact is, with a 4.68 forty time, my football days are numbered. Now Pop doesn't think so... but you and I both know better.

CHARLIE

Gotta' do what's in your heart.

BOBBY

(grins)

Of course, nobody says I can't stay in shape... maybe help out my older brother at the same time?

The two hug. Charlie and Jennifer enter her car and exit.

LINDA

Go after what you love, honey. And that love will come back to you.

Bobby strokes her hair.

INT. STUDY - MORNING

Frank works the phone, the corkboard behind him covered with 3x5 cards of all 28 professional football teams.

FRANK

(into phone)

No, he's a wide-receiver, backup quarterback. 5'9, 185. 4.68. Hello?

Frank SLAMS the phone, grabs his work cloths, storms out.

EXT. BUFFALO CITY HALL - MORNING

The large ornate building is rustic, tired. Frank proceeds into the building, passing by several WORKERS smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee at the front entrance.

INT. CITY HALL - MORNING

Two men enter an elevator with Frank. The door closes. Suddenly, one of the men HALTS its progress. He is work-shy, blue-collar, 50-year-old JOHN CONRAD. In his mouth is a donut. Adjacent to him, an intimidating RONNIE SARGENT, (45).

CONRAD

Here at the hall, we don't take kindly to newbies rocking the boat.

Frank GROWLS.

SARGENT

Holleran told us all about you, Signore.

CONRAD

You don't take a shit down here without clearing it through me first.

SARGENT

Comprendo?

FRANK

No, I don't comprendo.

CONRAD

Then I'll spell it out for you. We go out on three inspections a day. Three.

FRANK

What do you suggest I do with the other half of my work day?

SARGENT

That's your business.

FRANK

(reflects, then)

Fine.

CONRAD

Good. Welcome aboard, Frank.

Conrad restarts the elevator, finishes his donut.

INT. BUILDING INSPECTOR OFFICE - MORNING

Frank checks in. Behind the front desk, engrossed in paperwork, a woman hands him documents never looking up.

WOMAN

Fill out everything and get it back to me by the end of the day. Today's inspections are in your basket.

FRANK

Thank you.

Glancing up is 25-year-old African-American, ALLISON O'LEARY.

ALLISON

Sorry. I'm Allison.

FRANK

Frank. Where is everybody?

ALLISON

(smirks)

Sign in sheet's over by the water cooler.

Frank signs in. Retrieving a half-dozen inspections from his basket, he stops, returns half of them, then heads out.

EXT. INNER CITY HOUSE - DAY

Frank stops in front of a failing property. Exiting his car, he scoots by two unkept AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN playing on the front lawn. He approaches the front door, several rugged AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEENS sizing him up from the property over.

AT THE FRONT DOOR -

Frank is greeted by a grungy AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN, (40). Dressed in a tacky nightgown, she sips from a can of beer.

WOMAN

You the inspector man?

FRANK

Yes, Ma'am. You, Mrs. Greene?
(glances around)
Anybody been down here before?

MRS. GREENE

Been callin' for months, you the first. You gonna' okay me some money?

FRANK

If you meet the qualifications.

MRS. GREENE

I got me four kids sick all the time cause' the roof leak. And we still ain't got no heat. That qualify me?

The woman lowers her nightgown to just above her breasts.

MRS. GREENE (CONT'D)

You a cute little man.

FRANK

That's not going to help your cause.

She shrugs. They continue into the home.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Trash scattered. A RAT skirts by, the woman paying it no mind. A 3-YEAR-OLD BOY plays on the floor amidst the debris. Fighting back the stench, Frank inspects the water leaks on the ceiling, then removes a document from his briefcase.

FRANK

I'm pretty confident you'll qualify for our rehab program. Fill this out and mail it in.

(hands her document)

Promise me you'll clean up the place?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Frank cautiously makes his way through the bug infested kitchen. He peeks inside the refrigerator. It's stocked with beer and little else. Disgusted, he closes the door.

FRANK
No child should have to live this way.

MRS. GREENE
What you know bout' living this way?

FRANK
Plenty. And get some food in here for these kids.

Nearly gagging, Frank leaves the kitchen.

INT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Frank advances to the front door, twists back.

FRANK
I'll be back on Friday. That should give you enough time to take care of things.

MRS. GREENE
I do what you say, you give me the money?

FRANK
Clean the place up okay, Mrs. Greene?

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Several of the black teens have surrounded Frank's car. Frank flips them his badge, enters his car then slowly exits.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Possessed, Charlie bench presses 350 pounds 3X, then belts out a ROAR. Spotting him is Bobby. The two switch positions, the weight reduced to 285. Bobby struggles, lifting it once.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Bobby and a very exhilarated Charlie warm up on the track.

AT THE ENTRANCE -

Jennifer is holding court, talking to several local TV and NEWS REPORTERS. Bobby glances that way.

BOBBY
That girl's really got your back, huh?

CHARLIE

She wants to handle all my publicity.
Why not, right? What the hell.

BOBBY

Hey, let's show'em what you can do
with a ladder.

CHARLIE

I'm up for anything today, little
brother.

EXT. TRACK - CONTINUOUS

Bobby and Charlie begin their stride outs. Charlie glances toward the growing CROWD, nods to Bobby. Both men then begin a full sprint down the straightaway.

Bobby waves Charlie by. Charlie turns on the after-burners, his gazelle-like-strides PROPELLING him around the track.

He BLASTS by the crowd, raising his arms in triumph. He then abruptly halts, grabs his head and collapses to the ground.

Bobby SPRINTS toward him.

The cameras continue rolling, as Dick Barry administers CPR.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

20th Century Baroque. A large group of MOURNERS are gathered in the pews. Missing from the front row are Frank and Jennifer. At the podium is a PRIEST, early 50's, soothing.

PRIEST

...thou preparest a table before me in
the presence of mine enemies: thou
anointest my head with oil; my cup
runneth over. Surely goodness and
kindness shall follow me all the days of
my life; and I will dwell in the house of
the Lord forever. Bobby DeMarco will be
speaking on behalf of the family.

Bobby rises from his pew, heads toward the podium, then abruptly stops, placing his right hand atop the casket.

BOBBY

I love you, big brother.
(looks up toward ceiling)
But I gotta' tell you Lord... I gotta'
tell you I'm feeling pretty angry at you
right now. Charlie was my best friend...
he was only twenty-three.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

That's unfair, Jesus. He believed in you. All the guy ever wanted was to make it in the NFL, and make his mother up in heaven proud.

Bobby BREAKS down, returns to his seat.

ON THE SECOND FLOOR -

in the choir, a powerful voice BELTS out, "Amazing Grace." All gaze to the balcony, it's Frank. He continues, as the casket exits, followed by the mourners.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Several news trucks and REPORTERS crowd the entrance. On camera is TV news reporter, Maria Genero.

MARIA GENERO

It's a sad day here in Western New York, sports fans, as former high school and college teammates of highly touted NFL prospect, Charlie Nodin DeMarco, escort his casket. A young man cut down in the prime of his life. It is believed by this reporter that Charlie would have been a standout in the NFL. Preliminary autopsy reports indicate the 23-year-old may have had an enlarged heart -- a contributing factor to what ultimately took his life. This is Maria Genero with WKBW channel 7 reporting to you live from Our Lady of Victory Basilica here in Lackawanna, NY.

Behind her, the casket is placed into the hearse.

EXT. DEMARCO FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Dozens of family and friends filter in and out of the house.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Controlled chaos. Pots boiling, pans frying. Frank removes a pan of meatballs from the oven. Fitz enters, wolfs one down, then is handed a pot of spaghetti by Frank.

FITZ

Kickin' butt on the food, Coach.

Fitz exits. Bobby hustles down the stairs, grocery bags in hand.

BOBBY

What do you want me to do?

FRANK

You got the four pounds of meat mixed in with one pound of pork, right?

(Bobby nods)

Mix a half-dozen eggs in with that.

Bobby moves to a table, unloads the bags then begins mixing.

BOBBY

Thanks for doing all this.

FRANK

Doing all what? Charlie was my kid, too.

(beat, then)

Hey. You did good in church. If there's anything I've learned in life, it's that life's not fair, not for any of us.

Frank tastes the sauce, adds several spices.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I ever tell you the story of how Brian Piccolo died? 26 years old... left a wife and three kids. Cancer.

BOBBY

Why does God allow that to happen, Pop?

FRANK

I'm not sure God has anything to do with it. Look what they did to his boy.

Fitz STORMS back down the stairs with Ricky.

RICKY

Mas' raviolis, Chef Cheech!

Frank hands a large tray to Ricky, as Fitz reaches for two bottles of homemade wine on the floor by the table.

FITZ

Okay if I take these up?

FRANK

Just make sure they get there.

RICKY

Boomdiggy, Coach!

FRANK

You got a screw loose, you know that?

Ricky nods. He and Fitz exit. Frank returns to the stove top; more tasting, more seasoning -- then continues.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Charlie and Brian were cut down in the prime of their lives. Only Piccolo got a taste of heaven early... right there on Soldier Field. Charlie never got that chance. And that's the real tragedy here. But that ain't happening to you.

Frank removes a large container of Eggplant Parmesan from the oven, sets it on the stove.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Charlie ever say anything to you?

BOBBY

Say anything about what?

FRANK

About you getting a shot down in Miami?

BOBBY

Me? Why would that come up?

FRANK

Forget it.

(hands him eggplant)

This needs to go upstairs.

Bobby exits. A pensive Frank returns to his stove. Catherine enters and immediately begins tasting things; adding spices, etc., much to the chagrin of Frank.

INT. DINING ROOM TABLE - NIGHT

Former teammates, friends and family pack the room. Frank rises from his seat. The room draws silent.

FRANK

You all know the story of Brian Piccolo. Jack Warden summed it up in the movie, Brian's Song when he said, "When his friends think of Pic, they don't think of how he died, but of how he lived." Charles Nodin DeMarco was a lot like Brian Piccolo. Both men strove for greatness and achieved it -- Brian with the Chicago Bears, and Charlie with a DI powerhouse. "If you'll not settle for anything less than your best, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish in your lives." Charlie gave life his best... 110% of the time.

(looks to ceiling)

Salute.

All raise their glasses and drink. Topsy, Ricky steps up.

RICKY

And to Bobby. Our great white hope from
South Buffalo. NFL!.. NFL!...

The group CHIMES in. Bobby shoots a disparaging look at
Ricky, glances toward Linda, then reluctantly joins in.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Denise and Catherine hand-wash and dry the dishes.

DENISE

You think it was appropriate for Dad
to sermonize that way about Charlie
tonight?

CATHERINE

What way?

DENISE

Saying how great he was playing DI --
comparing him to Brian Piccolo like that.

CATHERINE

Your father honored Charlie's memory
tonight.

DENISE

What about honoring his other son?
Everyone knows why Dad adopted Charlie.

CATHERINE

Denise! Your father and I loved that boy.

DENISE

Yeah, well I'm sorry to disappoint you
two, but a congenital enlarged heart has
been ruled out as the cause of death.

CATHERINE

How do you know that?

DENISE

Carlo performed the autopsy.

Catherine shuts off the sink, turns to her daughter.

CATHERINE

Does he know how Charlie died?

DENISE

He's still waiting on the final toxicology report. But he did rule out a birth defect -- or natural causes.

CATHERINE

(beat, frightened)
Oh my God.

INT. MICKEY RAT'S BAR - NIGHT

Drunk MALE and FEMALE PATRONS undulate on the wooden dance floor, The Village People's, "YMCA" CRANKING in the B.G.

AT THE BAR -

the bartender, Fitz, strains a shaker of drinks into four shot glasses. Perched at the bar; Bobby, Ricky and Linda. They each take a shot glass. Fitz raises his.

FITZ

To Charlie. One hell of an athlete.

They all drink. A plastered Ricky interjects.

RICKY

And to his bodacious fiance', Jennifer!

(to Bobby)

Know what that trollop did, Bobbo? Two days ago, she flies off to Hawaii with a running back from the Steelers! Can you believe that? Plus the bitch has been shootin' her mouth off big time... saying how your old man begged Charlie to call down to Miami for you.

An irked Bobby motions to Fitz to pour another round.

INT. STUDY - EARLY MORNING

All the 3x5 index cards except for the Miami Dolphins have been X'd out. A hand circles the final one. Stepping back, Frank stares at his reflection through a trophy case window.

FRANK

You can't give up now, Cheech...

Standing at the door, wine bottle in hand, is Bobby.

BOBBY

You shouldn't talk to yourself like that. People might think you're crazy.

FRANK

That'll be the day when a DeMarco cares
what other people think.

Bobby staggers toward his father.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You're drunk.

BOBBY

You're right. Hey, something we
finally have in common.

FRANK

Go to bed, Bobby.

BOBBY

(drinks)

I don't wanna' go to bed. I want to talk
to my Pop about playing in the NFL.

Frank approaches Bobby, tugging the bottle from his grasp.

FRANK

I'll let this slide this one
time. I figure you're letting off
some steam about losing Charlie.

BOBBY

You got that right, Kiddo. Actually, I
need to thank you... Thank you for
adopting Charlie.

FRANK

From now on I'll be running your workout
schedule full-time.

BOBBY

Yes, Sir, Cheech, Sir!

(salutes, then)

You execute the program schedule, Sir.
But I wouldn't leave your day job if I
were you, 'cause I ain't gonna' be there.

FRANK

Oh, you'll be there. You wanna' live in
this house, don't you?

BOBBY

You begged Charlie to call down to Miami,
didn't you? Begged him just so he could
get your "real son" some stupid tryout!

FRANK

That boy had access to everything you did. Only he worked harder. Same as me. Charlie applauded my efforts -- said he was happy to help you out wherever he could.

Bobby ambles toward the corkboard, stares at the 3X5 cards.

BOBBY

Help me out, or you?

FRANK

What's that supposed to mean?

BOBBY

It means what it means.

FRANK

Don't play games with me, Bobby.

Bobby fights through his inherent fear.

BOBBY

Why? You've been playing games with me my whole life.

FRANK

That wine's grown you a pair of balls.

BOBBY

A big pair. And let's not forget about those six shots either.

Bobby grabs the wine bottle off the desk, takes a swig. He then retrieves the Miami 3x5 card off the corkboard, creating a paper airplane with it. He dispatches it aloft.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

All aboard flight 44 to Miami! Only thing is the Miami flight's been cancelled -- all other flights, too. There are no tickets available for a guy with my talent, or lack thereof. But you know what, Frankie Cheech, I'm okay with that.

FRANK

Well, I'm not!

Catherine appears at the door.

CATHERINE

The neighbors are complaining.

BOBBY

Pop wants me to go down to Miami, Ma... live out his dream. Thing is, Miami ain't interested in helping him out.

FRANK

To hell with Miami! I'll get you a tryout with another team. There's twenty-eight of them. You'll make it somewhere.

BOBBY

(lashes out)

It's over! Finito! Don't you friggen get it, you dumb bastard?!

Frank explodes, launching the corkboard high into the air. It CRASHES down, breaking the trophy case window.

FRANK

Nothing's over till I say it is, you hear me?! If we have to play a year up in Canada, we'll do it! You aren't quitting. I won't allow it. "A quitter never wins and a winner never quits. Once you learn to quit it becomes a habit." The great Italian-American --

BOBBY

Yeah, yeah, yeah, your goomba', Vince Lombardi said that, we know. It's time to let the man rest in peace okay, Pop?

CATHERINE

That's enough!

FRANK

I don't need you blocking for me here. The boy ain't nothing but a little piss ant with no real balls.

(to Bobby)

All I ever asked from you was to give a 110%. Nothing more, nothing less.

BOBBY

I did. And then some!

FRANK

Now Charlie, there's a man who gave it all he had... and then some. That boy was head and shoulders above everybody else. And you wanna' know why? Because Charlie DeMarco left everything he had out on that field.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

He had the heart and courage of a lion...
not the fear of a little girl like you
seem to have.

Tears welling, Bobby turns to exit.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going?

Frank clutches Bobby by the shoulder, spinning him around
violently. Bobby grabs Frank's shirt, cocks his fist.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Go ahead, hit me you little pussy!

Catherine rushes in, her enraged son now poised to strike.

CATHERINE

He's still your father, Bobby.

BOBBY

(seething, then)
To hell with football! And to hell with
you too, Pop!

Bobby storms out, passing Denise on the way. Frank cries out.

FRANK

You're nothing but a quitter! A
quitter, just like every other loser
in this neighborhood. Except, Charlie!
You walk out that door, don't bother
coming back. YOU HEAR ME!

(to wife and Denise)
Do you believe this shit? Talking to me
like that.

Denise approaches, PUNCHES Frank hard in the shoulder. She
and her mom then exit, leaving Frank flabbergasted.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EARLY MORNING

Bobby leaps over the porch railing, sprints to his car, then
jumps in. Catherine approaches. Denise is close behind.

BOBBY

I ain't no quitter!

CATHERINE

Bobby, please don't leave --

DENISE

That's exactly what he should do.

CATHERINE
 (glares at Denise, then)
 Your father didn't mean that.

BOBBY
 He doesn't care about me. He never did.
 Don't you see that?

CATHERINE
 Your father loves you kids very much. He
 just doesn't know how to show it.

DENISE
 He showed it to Charlie just fine.

CATHERINE
 (scalding glare, then)
 Turn the engine off. Please?

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Frank steps onto the porch, continuing with his tirade.

FRANK
 ...Charlie was no loser! He wouldn't have
 quit! Not in a million years!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Incensed, Bobby exits the driveway. He SPEEDS down the narrow street, Frank giving chase, all-the-while hurling INSULTS at the exiting car. Frank abruptly stops, grabs his left shoulder, then returns to the driveway.

DENISE
 Your big hero Charlie was no saint, Dad.

FRANK
 What do you know from nothin'?

EXT. CITY STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Bobby kicks his Mustang into high-gear, slicing through traffic, Springsteen's, "My Hometown" BLARING out the car stereo. After a near collision with a cement truck, Bobby retreats to the curb, kills the engine then breaks down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sparsely furnished bachelor apartment. With a half-spent joint in his mouth, Ricky makes up a ratty couch. Fitz and Bobby enter from the kitchen, a pizza box in Fitz's hand.

FITZ

You're welcome to crash here as long as you want. Right, Rick?

RICKY

Take a chill pill, Fitzzy. Dude knows he's our boy. What's ours is yours, Bobbo!

Ricky motions to hand Bobby the joint then stops himself.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Sorry man, this shit's just chillaxin' and I figured...

The phone rings. Fitz grabs the joint, moves to answer it.

FITZ

This ganja's chillaxin' your brain is what it's doing.

Fitz takes a hit then picks up the phone.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Hello. Oh hey, Denise...

(demeanor abruptly changes)

yes, he's right here. I finally perused that Jane Fonda movie you've been raving about. Are nuclear facilities really that much of a national threat? Okay, sure. Denise, uh... she hung up. Bobby, you think I'd ever --

BOBBY

Not talking to her like that you won't.

(beat)

Fitz. What'd she want?

FITZ

Oh, your mom was worried. She just wanted to make sure you were here. You really pissed your old man off this time, huh?

BOBBY

He thinks running a 4.5 and playing in the NFL automatically makes you a saint or something.

Ricky hands them both a beer.

RICKY

I hear you, Bobbo'. I think Coach is battling a height complex. But that don't change how Charlie got his speed.

FITZ

Charlie was good people, Rick.

RICKY

I'm not saying the dude wasn't. But benching 350 on juice, and running sub 4.5's while Coach is bustin' on our boy here... well, that ain't righteous.

Bobby freezes, sets down his beer, turns to Ricky.

BOBBY

You guys knew about the steroids?

FITZ

Hell, Bobby, Jennifer offered to hook up practically the whole damn team.

BOBBY

(beat, feeling guilty)
I should have done something. Something to help, Charlie... something to help maybe save him.

RICKY

Nobody can save nobody that don't want to be saved, Bobbo.

(takes a hit of joint)
I'll say this. If your old man knew about the juice Charlie was pumping, ten-to-one he treats you more righteous.

FITZ

And maybe himself, too?

Fitz glances toward Bobby, who clearly understands.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Catherine scoops Frank scrambled eggs and bacon off a skillet, as Denise finishes her oatmeal.

DENISE

Bacon and eggs every morning is actually bad for your cholesterol.

FRANK

So now today you care about your old man?

CATHERINE

Frank, you don't have to be a jerk all the time.

Frank returns a piece of bacon to the pan, smirks at Denise.

FRANK
Happy, Kiddo?

DENISE
(smiles, then)
Why do you think you're so obsessed
with football?

FRANK
I'm not obsessed, I'm passionate.

DENISE
Did you ever stop and think maybe Bobby
doesn't share your same passion? Be who
you are, Dad. That's certainly more than
enough to impress anyone.

FRANK
First we get Marcus Welby, now Dear Abby.

DENISE
I did take psychology courses in college.

Frank rises from the table, begins pacing.

FRANK
Don't you people understand? If that boy
quits now, it'll affect him for the rest
of his life. He'll always be wondering
"what if." And the worst thing in life
is to wake up one day and to look into
that mirror -- and we all have to -- and
wonder if you went as far as you could
with your God-given talent.

DENISE
Maybe Bobby's God-given talent is not in
football. Did you ever contemplate that?

CATHERINE
Or maybe he's gone as far as he can,
Frank?

FRANK
Maybe. But I'm his father. And never
really having one myself, I figure I owe
it to our son and your brother, to make
sure he finds out either way.

Frank grabs his briefcase, a strip of bacon and exits.

INT. BUILDING INSPECTOR OFFICE - DAY

Conrad rummages through his inspections, glares at Allison.

CONRAD
Where's the Mangano inspection?

ALLISON
It's wasn't my turn to watch it.

Frantic, Conrad rushes to Frank's desk and begins sifting through his inspections. He grabs one, spins toward Allison.

CONRAD
What the hell's this doing in here?!

SARGENT
Just take it.

CONRAD
I can't you idiot, she logs them all in.

FRANK ENTERS -

approaches a smug Allison. He hands her a Tupperware bowl.

ALLISON
Eggplant Parmesan?
(smiles, then whispers)
Here comes the blitz.

Frank signs in. Conrad creeps up to him.

CONRAD
I've been thinking about what you said, Frank... you know, about the inspections? Turns out, today they hand me two. Go figure. So I get to thinking, why not help out the new guy, right? Maybe take a few off your hands?

FRANK
My hands are fine. But thanks.

Frank grabs several inspections then briskly exits.

CONRAD
That little prick isn't going to ruin my nest egg. I've worked too damn hard!

Conrad grabs 3 inspections off his desk, turns to leave.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Sitting at a corner booth are Bobby and Linda. Bobby is searching through the WANT AD'S, Linda perusing through a law book. Bobby circles an inquiry in the automotive section.

INT. CAR - DAY

Passing an Esso gas station, its sign reading: 89 cents per gallon, Frank pulls up to a construction site, exits his car.

EXT. CITY CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Frank shows his badge to the SECURITY GUARD, 30's. Handed a hard hat, he continues on, stopping at the back of a large cement truck, its logo reading: MANGANO CONSTRUCTION.

Frank grabs a sample of cement pouring down the channel on the truck, manipulates it between his thumb and forefinger, then motions the DRIVER, muscular, 30's, to HALT the pour.

After viewing Frank's badge, he complies. THREE WORKERS standing in the pour, glance up bewildered.

Suddenly, an angry man exits the site trailer, hastily arriving at the truck. He is MICHAEL MANGANO, tailored suit, silver-haired, (60). He blasts Frank.

MANGANO

You better have a God damned good reason for shutting down that pour, Mister!

Frank flashes his badge.

FRANK

Frank DeMarco, city building inspector.

MANGANO

Okay, Sheriff, you can put the tin away. John Conrad handles all our inspections.
(to driver)
Crank it up, Jimmy!

The driver resumes the pour. Frank jots down the truck's number and license plate, then hastily moves to exit.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

Kill it, Jimmy!
(to group)
There's hot coffee in the trailer, boys.

A welcomed break. Mangano quickly catches up with Frank.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

(searching, then)
Parlo Italiano, Frank?

FRANK

Si'.

MANGANO

Di dove sei?

FRANK

Napoli.

MANGANO

Bene. That's good. Keeping our heritage alive is important.

(beat)

Why'd you stop that pour, paesan?

FRANK

PSI requirement is 3500. I figure you're pouring 28... 3000 tops.

MANGANO

Delivery slip says otherwise.

FRANK

Show it to me and I'm on my way.

MANGANO

It's inside.

Mangano and Frank pass by a slew of construction activity, before finally arriving at the site trailer entrance.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

You been with the city long, Frank?

FRANK

A few months.

INT. SITE TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Mangano enter. Decorated with the full amenities, Mangano moves to the wet bar in back of his desk.

MANGANO

What do you have? Scotch... glass of wine, maybe?

FRANK

Nothing for me, thank you.

A mesmerized Frank glimpses at the numerous signed photos of NFL football players and coaches on the back wall. A plaque of Lombardi's speech on, "Winning," inhabits its own roost.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You a big football fan, Mr. Mangano?

MANGANO

Never could seem to find the time.

FRANK

(re: photos)

You know any of those guys?

MANGANO

I know'em all. Done work for nearly everybody up there -- including Lombardi. He made us all proud, huh?

FRANK

Still does.

Mangano searches through his desk drawers.

MANGANO

That slip's around here somewhere.

He gazes up, noticing Frank's fascination with the photos.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

You want a signed autograph or something?

FRANK

One for my boy might be nice.

MANGANO

Oh yeah, you got a son? How old?

FRANK

Twenty-two. He's trying out for the NFL.

MANGANO

Well, good for him. What team?

FRANK

I'm still working on that.

MANGANO

He doesn't have an agent?

(off Frank's nod)

Well, good luck with that.

Mangano removes two signed photos of Dan Marino and Joe Montana from his drawer, then hands them to Frank.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

Here. For your boy.

Frank takes the photos, stares at them a long moment, then reluctantly sets them back on the desk.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

For Christ's sake, 35 years I'm in the business... and now you want to come in here and bust my balls?!

FRANK

I'm just doing my job... paesan.

Mangano removes his wallet, takes out several large bills.

MANGANO

Will two grand help you do your job someplace else? That's double your henchmen's normal fee.

FRANK

I'm shutting the project down until you pass a slump test --

MANGANO

(explodes)

The God damn PSI's 3000 okay, paesan?! But no roof or wall of mine has ever collapsed in all my years doing business.

(beat)

Take the money, Frank... or somebody else will. I've been breast feeding you boys down at city hall for years.

Frank stares at the photos a final time, then rushes out. Mangano grabs the photos and gives chase.

EXT. TRAILOR - CONTINUOUS

Mangano collars Frank, grabbing his shoulder. Frank coils back, ready to strike.

MANGANO

(throws up hands)

Relax okay, Frank?!

(beat)

I was just wondering... I thought you might be interested in a tryout for your boy down in Miami.

Completely taken aback, Frank is speechless.

FRANK

You could arrange that?

MANGANO

I can arrange almost anything. Being rich affords me that luxury.

Mangano strolls back to the trailer. Frank follows.

INT. AUTO GARAGE - MORNING

Typical grungy, oil-infested three bay garage. Photos of scantily clad women populate the walls. On the phone is an irate Mario, a half-spent cigar in tow.

MARIO

...the flashing oil light means feed me, I'm thirsty. And if you don't, it's gonna' cost you an arm and a leg. Well this time it cost you an extra arm, Mrs. Greenberg. Anytime before six.

He pushes down another light on the phone.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Mario's. Yeah, Mrs. Roberts? Four o'clock. I'm buried up to my ass, I can't get to it any sooner. How much more? I'll get it to you sooner.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

You're busier than a one-legged man in an ass kissing contest, huh?

Mario glares at Bobby standing at the entrance door.

MARIO

You ain't kiddin'. The whole world's got car problems today --
(catches himself)
-- alright, enough about my problems. What are you selling and how much?

BOBBY

I called yesterday about the ad in the paper. You still looking for a mechanic?

Mario approaches Bobby, grabs his hands then flips them.

MARIO

What kinda' experience you got?

Bobby gestures to his car parked in the driveway.

BOBBY

Rebuilt that engine and tranny' in four days.

MARIO

Good for you. Go grab yourself a cookie.

The phone rings. Mario moves toward it. Bobby tags along.

BOBBY
Give me a week.

MARIO
A week to do what?

BOBBY
Give me a bay for a week. If you don't like my work, I walk, no charge.

MARIO
Check back and see me again when the training wheels come off.

BOBBY
This is a one-time offer, Mario. And that offer expires today.

MARIO
(answers phone)
Yeah... hold the line a minute.
(to Bobby)
You got balls, kid. I like that. But that don't keep my wife in fancy clothes.
(moves closer)
You look familiar. Do I know you?

BOBBY
A few years ago my Uncle brought me to see one of your car's race at the Glen.

MARIO
Uncle who?

BOBBY
Pat. Pat DeMarco?

MARIO
You Pasquale's nephew?
(off Bobby's nod)
No shit. I come over on the boat with him and his brother from the old country.

BOBBY
Yeah, that's my Pop.

MARIO
Cheech? No shit. He's your old man?
Hell of a bowler that guy. I made some nice scratch off him back in the day.
Shouldda' gone pro, too.

BOBBY
You really think so?

MARIO
The guys running the pro circuit fought like little girls to sponsor your father on the tour. But I guess taking care of you kids and your mom was more important.

BOBBY
(taken aback)
I guess.

MARIO
Too bad he didn't do anything with that beautiful voice of his either. Okay, you can start tomorrow. But if you ain't good, you're outta' here in a week, Cheech's kid or not -- you got that?

Bobby emits a big grin, shakes Mario's hand then exits.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The QUARTERBACK tosses a pitch to a large RUNNING BACK, who rounds the corner, then steps out-of-bounds, avoiding several would-be TACKLERS. Irate, Frank sprints toward him.

FRANK
6'2", 200 and you step out-of-bounds?!
First team offense, down at the goal line, let's go!

COACH DANESCO
The rest of you boys take it in.

They exit. Frank and the offense hustle to the goal line.

AT THE GOAL LINE -

A crazed Frank confronts the running back.

FRANK
Give me your helmet and shoulder pads!

The player complies. Frank begins putting the equipment on.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(to group)
Alright, listen up. 22 sweep right. Half-line... you other boys play defense. Everybody here goes full speed. Anybody holds up on tackling me runs the rest of the afternoon. You all got that? Good!

The quarterback pitches the ball to Frank on a sweep. With a DEFENSIVE BACK fast approaching, Frank lowers his head and barrels over him, finally being SLAMMED out-of-bounds by TWO DEFENDERS. Frank springs up, approaches the running back.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What you do in practice -- same thing happens in the game.

(to group)

Everybody 10 laps, then take it in.

The players begin running.

PLAYER I

What the hell's wrong with him?

PLAYER II

That dude need's to get laid.

DEFENSIVE BACK

He's on our ass 'cause he cares.

PLAYER II

And should care 'cause he just knocked you on your ass.

Out of breath, Frank takes a knee.

INT. CCU UNIT HOSPITAL - DAY

Denise finishes placing a needle into a PATIENT'S arm. A NURSE approaches, male, 20's.

MALE NURSE

M.E says he needs to see you right away.

Denise hurries out, the nurse taking over.

INT. HOSPITAL BASMENT - DAY

Denise exits the elevator, hastens down a long hallway, then KNOCKS on a door that reads: MEDICAL EXAMINER.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Looking through the lens of a microscope is handsome and confident, DR. CARLO PROFETTO, (35). He glances up.

DR. PROFETTO

Your brother's report is on my desk.

Denise retrieves the chart and begins reading.

DENISE
Anabolic Steroids... twice the lethal
doze found in his system?

DR. PROFETTO
(joins her)
Yeah, I was surprised at that too.

He kisses her on the cheek.

DR. PROFETTO (CONT'D)
How are you, beautiful?

DENISE
(ignores comment)
Why would a healthy 23-year-old be taking
that amount of steroids?

DR. PROFETTO
Because it dramatically increases muscle
mass and speed in an athlete --
(playful grin)
-- and occasionally gives one a sense
of euphoria and sexual stimulation.

Denise glares at him.

DR. PROFETTO (CONT'D)
Well, maybe not that last one.

DENISE
Is that was caused his death?

DR. PROFETTO
It was a contributing factor. That
concentration of androgenic steroids over
time led to his extremely high blood
pressure. That pressure ultimately led to
his having a cerebral arterial stroke.
And that killed him. He also had
hepatitis C -- most likely contracted
that from a dirty needle.

DENISE
Why take a huge risk like that, Carlo?

DR. PROFETTO
There's a lot of money in professional
sports these days. You may want to get
your other brother in here for a blood
test... just to be safe.

DENISE
Thank you.

She turns to exit.

DR. PROFETTO

Denise. Am I wearing the wrong cologne or something?

DENISE

No. I'm sure your wife will enjoy it just fine.

She shakes her head, exits. Intrigued, Carlo returns to work.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fitz, Ricky and Bobby are watching the TV show, "Hill Street Blues." Ricky is nursing a joint.

FITZ

Hey Bobby, maybe you should go into acting --

(points to TV)

-- that guy looks just like you.

BOBBY

That's Ed Marinaro from the Vikings. He went to Cornell, played at 6'3", 235. Should have won the Heisman.

FITZ

Why do you know that?

A KNOCK at the door.

BOBBY

You guys expecting anybody?

Ricky shrugs. Fitz springs from the couch.

FITZ

Yeah, who is it, what do you want?!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

(anxious)

I need to talk to my brother --

FITZ

Holy shit, ah... just a second, Denise!

Fitz attempts to clean up at a frenetic pace; opening windows, throwing clothes under pillows, etc. Bobby and Ricky continue watching TV.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Hey, a little help here would be nice.

BOBBY

Chill okay, Fitz? Nesi's cool.

Bobby gets up, takes the joint out of Ricky's mouth, extinguishes it in an ashtray. He then moves toward the door, as Fitz continues with his haphazard cleanup.

AT THE DOOR -

Denise enters, kissing her brother on the cheek. She then glances toward Fitz still hard at work.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

He thinks you're Miss America.

DENISE

We need to talk.

BOBBY

I'm not going back to that house if that's what you came here for.

DENISE

It's more than that, Bobby.

Denise enters, sits on the couch. The guys surround her.

BOBBY

How much more?

DENISE

Danesco stopped by the house tonight. Apparently, Dad put on a uniform and barreled over a player at practice today.

BOBBY

He's okay, right?

DENISE

Yeah, but there's something's different about him, Bobby. Especially the last few days. He just doesn't look right.

FITZ

Coach is indestructible. Everybody knows that.

DENISE

No one's indestructible, Tommy.

(turns to Bobby)

But that's only part of my reason for coming here.

BOBBY
What's the other part?

DENISE
The final autopsy report came in today.
Charlie died of a massive stroke.
Something he wasn't born with.

Bobby, Fitz and Ricky all exhibit strong looks of concern.

DENISE (CONT'D)
You guys knew about the steroids.
You did, didn't you?

FITZ
They said it was safe.

DENISE
Who did?

RICKY
That traitor Jennifer and her old man.
Dude's a paraplegic surgeon.

FITZ
He's an orthopedic surgeon, you idiot.

Ricky shrugs. Denise centers in on her brother.

DENISE
How long have you known?

BOBBY
Since senior year in high school.

DENISE
And you never told Dad?

BOBBY
Told him what?

DENISE
That the hero he so wanted you to emulate
was actually taking dangerous drugs to
enhance his performance.

BOBBY
I'm no snitch.

DENISE
I think we're a little past that now.
So, do you want to tell him? Or do you
want me to? Or would you prefer he read
it in the newspaper on Friday?

BOBBY

The newspaper.
 (Off Denise's stare)
 Alright, I'll tell him.

DENISE

You guys ever inject any of that junk?
 (off their nods)
 You're lucky. Charlie also had hepatitis
 C. He most likely contracted it from a
 dirty needle.

Bobby, Fitz and Ricky stare at each other in disbelief.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

On the wall, an 8mm projector displays old footage from a
 Friday night conflict in the DeMarco backyard.

At his desk, a catatonic stare, sits Frank. Beside him rests
 an empty decanter. He rises, stumbles to a walnut cabinet,
 then removes an old scrapbook from the bottom drawer.

Frank FALLS down, props himself against a wall, then begins
 flipping through the book's pages, stopping on a grammar
 school photo of himself with much younger kids.

FRANK

Remember this one, Pop? 14 years old and
 they stick me in the 2nd grade. Wasn't my
 fault I couldn't speak English. Hey,
 here's one of you and me.

Oblivious to Catherine's entrance, Frank continues.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You know you never played catch with
 me... never once. You were always telling
 me how I was too small... how I was
 wasting precious time playing sports.
 "Get a trade", you used to say, "people
 born like us, that's all we got."

He then flips to a photo of him and his dad making wine. A
 series of high school football photos follow.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Cheech DeMarco... the shortest football
 player in Seneca High history. You guys
 respected me though, didn't you?...
 especially after I hit that game winning
 field goal. The little immigrant showed
 them... I showed them all.

Up next, a picture of 5-year-old Frank with his 11-year-old brother Pasquale in front of a dilapidated shack.

FRANK (O.S) (CONT'D)

It wasn't my fault that day, Mama. The bombs kept coming... you told me to jump.

EXT. SHACK - MORNING

SUBTITLE: (CALVI RISORTA, ITALY - 1942)

The weathered door FLINGS open. Emerging from inside are two boys, 5-year-old Frank, and 11-year-old Pasquale. Both wear tattered clothes with no shoes. Fifty feet away rests a camouflaged German Tiger Tank. Adjacent to the cyclops, armed GERMAN SOLDIERS sip rationed coffee.

A WOMAN, 5'7", (28), is dragged from the home by TWO SOLDIERS. A GERMAN OFFICER emerges, cache of food in hand.

Terror gestates from our boys, as the woman is lined up in front of a nearby tree. The officer nods to a makeshift FIRING SQUAD, who then ready their machine guns.

Without hesitation, Frank sprints toward the woman, clinging onto her war-torn dress. A soldier extracts the boy. The other reluctant soldiers then prepare to fire.

Suddenly, all attention shifts to a plethora of American Bomber Planes emerging in the sky. Hearing the EERIE sounds of 500 pound bombs raining down on them, everyone scatters. The panicked German soldiers scurry toward their tank.

A mother and her two sons sprint toward a makeshift foxhole some 50 feet away. Frank dives in first, followed by Pasquale. A large EXPLOSION propels Frank's mother into her son's back, her right knee inadvertently SMASHING into him.

A bomb hits the tank, HURLING the 50 ton cyclops high into the air. The tank CRASHES, exploding into a ball of fire.

Frank, Pasquale and their mom exit the foxhole. Frank reaches for his back, then swiftly collapses to the ground.

INT. SHACK - DAY

This one-room dwelling has no running water, heat or other facilities. Lying on his stomach, affixed to a makeshift operating table is Frank. He clutches his mother's hand, as Pasquale holds a slab of ice on his little brother's back.

A SURGEON, 50's, sterilizes his instruments in alcohol, gestures to start. Resisting, Pasquale finally gives in, removing the ice block from Frank's back.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Lying on the table, Frank clutches his mother's hand.

INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Tears welling, Frank struggles to continue.

FRANK

Doc said I was should have been taller...
same as you, Pasquale. And I'm okay with
that, Lord. But not my boy, too.

Frank passes out by the cabinet. A teary-eyed Catherine places a blanket over her husband. He growls.

INT. BUILDING INSPECTOR OFFICE - MORNING

ALLISON (O.S.)

Frank, call on line two.

His head resting on the desk, Frank fumbles for his phone.

FRANK

(into phone)

Frank DeMarco.

(beat)

What can I do for you, Mr. Mangano?

INT. SITE TRAILER - MORNING

Sipping coffee, Frank sits across from a fired up Mangano.

MANGANO

...nobody stands up to me the way you did
the other day, Frank. You got balls.
Integrity. I like that. The rest of these
Mamalukes' I can buy off with a couple of
extra shekels anytime.

Mangano retrieves a slip off his desk.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

Anyway, here you are.

(hands him slip)

PSI 3500, just like you requested.

Frank takes the slip, rises and slowly begins to exit.

MANGANO (CONT'D)

Oh, and one more thing. Your boy's got a
tryout down in Miami anytime. The head
scout down there's a good friend of mine.
He's expecting your call.

FRANK
 (disbelief)
 Really?

MANGANO
 Really.

FRANK
 Thank you, Mr. Mangano.

Frank extends his hand. The two shake. Frank unexpectedly embraces him. Mangano smiles.

MANGANO
 No, paesan, thank you.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Frank BLOWS his whistle. The players continue with sprints.

AT THE ENTRANCE GATE -

exiting his car, and dressed in work overalls is Bobby. He moves onto the fringe of the field, observing the practice.

FRANK
 Okay, let's go all out on this one, then we'll take it in.

The players stare at each other incredulously.

PLAYER II
 Told you all he needed was to get laid.

Frank BLOWS his whistle. The three groups take off and sprint past the finish line. Frank joins the final group, finishing ahead of his players. The excited team then sprints off.

Frank remains back with his PUNTER. He hands him a paper on kicking, takes a ball, then punts a spiral 50 yards down field. Dumbfounded, the punter gives Frank some skin, then exits, passing an approaching Bobby along the way.

BOBBY
 Still got the old legs, huh?

FRANK
 There's plenty left in this tank.

Bobby assists Frank with collecting the footballs.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Thought you turned in your spikes.

BOBBY

I have.

FRANK

That's too bad. You got a tryout week after next in Miami.

BOBBY

Charlie?

FRANK

No, friend of mine.

BOBBY

Pop, I need to talk to you about something.

FRANK

Nothing left to talk about.

Then without warning, Frank drills a football at Bobby's head, the boy now standing just 15 feet away. Bobby reacts quickly, snagging the ball just inches from his face.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Well, c'mon, throw it back.

Bobby stands there defiant, his composure in check.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You can still throw can't you?

BOBBY

I'm tired of fighting with you --

FRANK

Who's fighting? Just throw it back.

BOBBY

Is this the only way you can communicate?

FRANK

I communicate just fine. Save that psychoanalysis bullshit for your mother and sister.

Bobby sets the ball down, turns, then heads for the exit.

AT THE STADIUM ENTRANCE -

peering through the gate is Danesco.

His anger building, Frank calls out to his son.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Where you going? C'mon, throw the ball back, God damn it. You owe me at least that you little friggen bastard!

Frank retrieves the ball, slings it at Bobby, STRIKING him in the head. Bobby CRASHES to the ground, clutching the back of his neck. Raging, he springs to his feet, grabs the ball, then winds up, proceeding several steps toward his father.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What's the matter, no guts? C'mon, you little Mary, throw the ball back!

(beat)

You disgust me. You'll never be like Charlie. You're just a pussy. A lazy Momma's boy quitting little pussy!

Bobby retaliates, firing a bullet at his father. The ball goes through Frank's hands, HITTING him in the stomach. Grasping for air, Frank TOPPLES to the ground. Bobby reacts, unsure what to do. Frank then staggers to his feet.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Felt good didn't it? Little payback for all those years I got on your ass. C'mon, let's see what else you got.

Frank tosses the ball back to a subdued Bobby.

BOBBY

Pop, Charlie --

FRANK

It's just you and me now, boy. Charlie's gone.

Frank approaches, then slaps Bobby on both shoulders with his open palms. Bobby retreats. Frank persists.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How bout' a little one-on-one? Just like the old days... c'mon.

BOBBY

Stop hitting me...

FRANK

(continues hitting him)

Bet you'd love to kick my ass right now wouldn't you? Well, here's your chance.

BOBBY

I don't wanna' hurt you, Pop...

FRANK
Hurt me? Hell, that'll be the day.

BOBBY
Stop hitting me!

Suddenly, Bobby strikes back, KNOCKING his father hard to the ground. Frank leaps up, excited, ready for battle.

FRANK
Now that's the boy I raised! C'mon, you get by me, we never discuss football again. I stop you, it's Miami or bust.

BOBBY
I'm through trying to prove myself to you. All my life, no matter what I've done, it's never been enough.
(beat)
Well, I'm sorry if growing up in this country was hard for you, but it was hard for me, too -- especially with having a father like you.

FRANK
Well then screw it, son! Here's your one chance to get rid of me forever!

BOBBY
I pity you. I really do.

Bobby shakes his head, turns and motions to leave. Now crazed, Frank makes a bee line toward his son, tackling him with a devastating cross-body block. Struggling to his feet, Bobby winches in pain.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Alright you son-of-a-bitch, let's go!!

Bobby retrieves the football, positions himself at the 10-yard line. Frank honkers down at the three.

FRANK
Only three yards to salvation, boy!

Bobby takes off, achieving top speed at the 5-yard line. With the collision imminent, Bobby lowers his shoulder, Frank BEATING his own chest.

Bobby CRASHES into his father, propelling Frank two yards back onto his butt. Bobby continues his offensive, running over Frank on his way into the endzone. Bobby then returns to his father sprawled out on the ground.

BOBBY
Touchdown, Pop. Game over.

Bobby launches the ball into the stands then storms off.

Frank struggles to rise as --

Bobby is met by Danesco at the main gate.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank studies game footage on the VCR. Appearing at the door is Danesco. He flips on the lights. His demeanor is sullen, reserved. In his right hand is today's evening paper.

FRANK
Anything wrong, Tom?

Danesco places the newspaper on the desk. The headline reads: LOCAL FOOTBALL HERO CHARLES NODIN DEMARCO DIED FROM SYSTEMATIC STEROID ABUSE. Frank looks up thunderstruck.

COACH DANESCO
I'm sure this thing blind-sided the both of us, Frank. But the diocese wants to meet with us next week just the same.
(beat)
And I just witnessed that little stunt you pulled on the field with Bobby. You've already lost one son, I'd sure hate to see you lose the other.

Danesco exits, leaving Frank dismayed. He skims through the article, abruptly stops, then shuts off the lights and exits.

INT. HALLWAY STAIRS - NIGHT

Passing the JANITOR, 50's, Frank climbs the stairs. Then half-way up his ascent, he grabs his chest then tumbles backward several steps, HITTING the floor. He lies there motionless.

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Two doors SWING open. A gurney speeds down the hallway. On it, his shirt ripped open, his color blue is Frank. TWO EMTS run alongside the gurney performing CPR.

Up ahead are two additional swinging doors. They read: EMERGENCY ROOM. The doors BURST open, the gurney following.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A TEAM OF SIX, all dressed in hospital fatigues, continue with the life-saving procedures. A team member cries out.

TEAM MEMBER (O.S.)

Oh my God!

Thoracic surgeon, DR. SETH GREENBERG, (37), approaches. Seth is a diminutive man at 5'5" tall.

DENISE

(hysterical)

That's my father!...

DR. GREENBERG

(confident)

We're not losing him, Denise.

An ORDERLY escorts Denise out of the ER. Frank is then transferred to a table and affixed to an EKG monitor. It registers a slight heartbeat. A saline push and oxygen continue to flow, as Dr. Greenberg checks Frank's vitals.

DR. GREENBERG (CONT'D)

Looks like we got an MI here, people. Give me fifty CC's of ringers lactate, stat. There's a clot in there somewhere -- let's hope it doesn't block another main artery.

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Bobby EXPLODES through the door, rushing to his mom and sister.

BOBBY

Where is he? Where is he, Nesi?!

DENISE

They're still working on him in the ER.

Bobby hurries out of the waiting area.

DENISE (CONT'D)

You're not allowed in there, Bobby!

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

The EKG monitor goes flat, SOUNDING an alarm.

BURSTING through the doors, Bobby's eyes immediately fixate on the heart monitor. Dr. Greenberg eyes TWO BURLY ORDERLIES. They move in.

BOBBY

Get away from me! Get the hell away from me! That's my Pop!

Tears stream down Bobby's cheeks.

DR. GREENBERG
(confident, soothing)
We'll take it from here, son.

Bobby voluntarily exits. Dr. Greenberg turns to his team.

DR. GREENBERG (CONT'D)
Okay, people, let's shock him.

Dr. Greenberg is handed the paddles. Frank's chest is prepared, the charger light on the machine turning green.

DR. GREENBERG (CONT'D)
Clear.

Everyone steps back. Dr. Greenberg administers the shock. Frank's whole body convulses. A second attempt also fails.

DR. GREENBERG (CONT'D)
Get me an Epi.

A NURSE, 20's, female, hands him a long needle. Dr. Greenberg injects the needle directly into Frank's heart.

NURSE
We got a pulse.

The EKG monitor begins registering activity.

NURSE (CONT'D)
BP increasing steadily. 120 over 70.
Pulse, 65.

DR. GREENBERG
We got him back. Excellent job, people.
Let's get him to CCU -- and order an
angiogram, stat.

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Greenberg approaches the family. They all rise.

CATHERINE
How is he, Doctor?

DR. GREENBERG
He's still critical... but he's stable.
He had an MI, Denise. We were lucky to
get him back.

DENISE
When can we see him?

DR. GREENBERG

They're running some tests on him now.
That should take a couple of hours.
You can see him after that.

BOBBY

He's gonna' be okay right, Doc?

DR. GREENBERG

He's stable... that's a good sign.

INT. CCU ROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed, attached to monitors and IV tubes is Frank.
Dr. Greenberg enters, approaches Frank, X-rays in hand.

DR. GREENBERG

How you feeling, Mr. DeMarco?

FRANK

Like the Dolphins O-line just ran over my
chest. What happened?

DR. GREENBERG

You had what we call a Myocardial
Infarction. It's a temporary
blockage of the coronary artery
leading to the heart.

FRANK

You said temporary. So then I'm good
to go, right?

(off Doctor's sigh)

It's okay, Doc. I survived a war.

DR. GREENBERG

We ran some tests on your heart. The
damage was pretty extensive. The next 24
to 48 hours are critical.

FRANK

It's not time to punt is it?

Dr. Greenberg draws closer to Frank.

DR. GREENBERG

We need you to hang onto the ball a
little longer, Frank. Right now your
survival rate is about 1 in 3. 48 hours
from now, that number doubles.

FRANK

I see.

(beat, then optimistic)

Did you know that 1 out of 3 gets you into the baseball hall-of-fame? Yeah. I'll take those odds, Doctor.

DR. GREENBERG

I'll send in your family.

FRANK

My batting average... that stays with us?

Dr. Greenberg gives a nodding approval then exits.

INT. WAITING AREA - NIGHT

An exhausted Catherine waits impatiently with her two children. Dr. Greenberg approaches.

DR. GREENBERG

You can see him now. But not everybody at once. And just for a few minutes.

BOBBY

You guys go.

Denise and Catherine exit the waiting area.

INT. CCU PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

Catherine and Denise enter. Denise waits by the door, as Catherine approaches her husband, his fear masked.

CATHERINE

You gave us quite a scare there.

FRANK

You know me, always full of surprises.

Denise retrieves her father's chart off the night stand and begins reading.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How's it looking, Kiddo?

DENISE

You're indestructible, Dad. Everyone knows that.

With tears streaming down her face, she advances toward her Dad, kisses him on the cheek, then promptly exits.

FRANK

That girl's way too emotional. You talk with Dr. Greenberg?

CATHERINE

He said you were stable. But I'm worried, Frank.

FRANK

Worried about what? This old war horse ain't going anywhere.

Catherine begins crying.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You too, now?

(uneasy, then)

Bobby out there?

(Off Catherine's nod)

You see today's paper?

CATHERINE

Let's now worry about that now. You just get some rest, okay?

She kisses him on the forehead, moves to exit, then turns. A LOUD silence blankets the room.

FRANK

That's a first. Neither one of us with anything to say.

Catherine rushes to her husband, embracing him tightly.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Nothing's going to happen to me, Catherine, I promise. C'mon, sit down, I want to talk to you about something.

He sits her next to him. Frank sighs.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You know you were right.

CATHERINE

I was?

(he wipes her tears)

Right about what?

FRANK

Everything. I guess I was just too blind to see it. And I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

There's nothing to apologize for, Frank. Your heart's always been in the right place. It's your delivery that sometimes sucks. See you first thing in the morning, okay?

She kisses him on the lips, moves to exit then turns.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

God's given you a second chance, Honey. And I'm quite confident this time you'll score a touchdown.

Catherine smiles then slowly leaves.

A MOMENT LATER -

Bobby enters and stops just inside the door. He glances down, unable to look at his father. Finally his courage overtakes him, and his eyes gaze up.

BOBBY

How you feeling?

FRANK

You happen to get the number of that freight train that ran over me today?

BOBBY

This whole thing's my fault...
(teary-eyed)

FRANK

I knew Italians and the Lebanese were emotional people... but Jesus.
(beat)

What happened on that field today, Bobby, had nothing to do with this. Nothing!

A NURSE, 20's, female, enters. She reviews the monitors, checks Frank's chart, then addresses him softly.

NURSE

Visiting hours end in five minutes, Mr. DeMarco.

FRANK

Oh, it's okay, my wife and daughter work here.

NURSE

Oh, really? Five minutes.

The nurse exits. Bobby starts toward his father.

BOBBY
You made it through two quarters, Pop.

FRANK
Yeah, but I didn't expect an all-out-blitz right before the half-time whistle.

BOBBY
You'll come out even stronger in the second half.

Bobby reaches Frank, both men uncertain what to do.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Listen, I'm right outside that door if you need anything, okay?

FRANK
Okay.

Bobby extends his hand to his father. The two shake.

BOBBY
See you in the morning.

Frank nods. Bobby turns and begins to exit.

FRANK
Hey.

Bobby turns back.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I, uh... I... I just wanted to say...

BOBBY
It's okay, Pop, we can talk about it in the morning.

FRANK
No! We need to talk about it now.

Bobby inches his way back toward Frank

FRANK (CONT'D)
Listen, uh... look, I, uh... I'm sorry for being so tough on you all these years. Especially that whole thing with Charlie. I didn't know.

BOBBY
It's okay --

FRANK

No, it's not okay! Here you are working your butt off; no drugs, no booze... you're getting good grades -- and here I am the whole time acting like a stunad. It's just that... well, truthfully, son... I've always prayed to God you wouldn't end up like me.

BOBBY

What's wrong with you, Pop?

FRANK

Everything. I shit the bed, Bobby...

Bobby glances toward the heart monitor. The readings are now erratic. Suddenly, they return to normal.

FRANK (CONT'D)

...spent most of my life wondering "what if" -- first with the bowling, then my singing. Working for some steel plant that didn't care if I lived or died. I always wanted more for you than that. Charlie, too. I just didn't want you to end up a nobody like your old man.

BOBBY

What are you talking about? You're not a nobody!

Bobby sits by his father on the bed.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You worked two, sometimes three jobs to support us. You took all that abuse about your size... and growing up here not speaking the language. Hell, even when you lost a great job after twenty-seven years, what did you do? You went to college and got your degree at 47. And what about all those kids you coached?

(beat, calmly)

Being on the Pro Tour, or in the NFL, or even a famous singer... that don't make the man, Pop. People with regular jobs do great things all the time. Jesus was a pretty good carpenter wouldn't you say?

Frank fights to hold back the tears.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You're my hero, Pop. An Everyday Hero. And I love you.

FRANK

You're going to do great things, Bobby -- with or without football. I know that now. And, well...

(beat, struggles)

And, I love you too, son. Very much.

Frank reaches for his son, the two men hugging for the first time in their lives.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (ORANGE BOWL - MIAMI - 1986)

Dozens of PLAYERS execute difficult drills, the majority of them both large and quick. Dressed in shorts and a Dolphins T-shirt, Bobby prepares for the start of his forty yard dash.

BOBBY (V.O.)

I only had a couple of weeks to get ready for my tryout. I did however, run the best time of my life. And that was pretty cool. But it didn't matter... all the receivers and most of the linemen ended up beating me anyway. It's okay though, I knew I didn't belong there anyway.

Bobby BLASTS off the stripe, and with an effortless calm, glides across the finish line. A COACH raises a sign, it reads: 4.65. Bobby pumps his fist high into the air.

INT. FIRE STATION - DAY

Seated behind a large desk dressed in uniform is Fitz.

BOBBY (V.O.)

Fitz went on to become a Captain with the Buffalo Fire department, retiring in 2013. And as for Ricky... well, he surprised everybody becoming a border patrol agent down in San Diego. I hear he's gonna' receive a nice pension, too.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A border patrol car approaches a checkpoint. Exiting the vehicle and dressed in his uniform is a grey-haired Ricky.

INT. HOSPITAL LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Denise and Catherine enjoy lunch together.

BOBBY (V.O.)

My mom worked a few more years in the hospital with my sister then retired. Denise ended up marrying a police officer, and to this day still works in the CCU unit at Mercy Hospital.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Five lifts, all occupied. WORKERS tend to their needs.

Mario enters, winks at Bobby working the phones.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - DAY

The sign reads: DEMARCO AUTO REPAIR. The lot is inundated with vehicles. Bobby slides an arm around Linda, then grins at the 1990 Ford Mustang racing car sitting on their lot.

BOBBY (V.O.)

I married Linda then bought the business from Mario a few years later. She had just gotten her law license and did a beautiful job negotiating with him.

INT. AUTO REPAIR OFFICE - DAY

Bobby sits in a chair behind the desk, Linda on his lap. On the wall behind them a plaque reads: "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up." Bobby reaches for a stereo dial, then CRANKS up the song, "Apace."

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Frank's entire family surrounds him at his bedside.

BOBBY (V.O.)

And then there's Pop. After beating prostate cancer in 1997 -- Mom thinks it came from the asbestos at the plant, Pop continued to do what he does best, teach kids. When my high school closed, Pop went over to our arch rival, Timon. After 25 seasons there, he was even inducted into their hall-of-fame. Pop then lost his hearing in one ear -- Mom thinks that came from the plant, too. And then in 2009, we nearly lost him to a devastating stroke. But thankfully, through the grace of God, he made a full recovery.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - Sept. 2014 - ST. FRANCIS vs. TIMON)

The CROWD is at attention. Standing in the press box singing the National Anthem is 77-year-old Frank DeMarco.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The crowd ERUPTS, as The St. Francis KICKER nails a 35-yard game winning field goal.

Assistant Coaches Frank and Bobby DeMarco hug each other on the sideline.

BOBBY DEMARCO (V.O.)

Pop then finished up coaching at St. Francis. For nearly 50 years, Frank DeMarco has touched the lives of thousands of young athletes. To this day, they write him letters, visit him at practice, and stop him daily on the street. They do this just to say, thank you. Thank you for caring. I know if Vince Lombardi were alive today, he'd be proud to have my Pop, 5'4", 145 pound Italian-Immigrant, Frank DeMarco on his team. I know I am.

FADE OUT: