

Bull in the Ring

(The True Story of the 1958
University of Buffalo Bulls)

By

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FIRST DRAFT

"And what we say about being born equal -
none of us are born equal, but rather unequal.
And yet the talented are no more responsible
for their birthright than the underprivileged.
And the measure of each should be what each
does in a specific situation."

-Vince Lombardi-

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2008)

Blanketing their faces, the tension too unbearable to peek, are thousands of University at Buffalo STUDENTS, FANS and ALUMNI. The scoreboard indicates: UB 24 TEMPLE 28 with twenty-eight ticks remaining in the battle.

The local TV announcers' voices kick in from the press box. First up, color commentator, BIG LOU DEVINO, (48). Big Lou is a behemoth of a man, saddled with optimism and a penchant for sarcasm. He is eating from a plate of chicken wings. Next to Big Lou, conventional play-by-play man, DICK BEAMISH, (45).

DICK BEAMISH

With over 18,000 of UB's faithful on hand, including several alumni from its 1958 Lambert Cup championship team, can this team, a half-century later, pull off a coup and secure a MAC opener victory? Relishing the wings, Big Lou?

BIG LOU DEVINO

No need to sound the alarm here, Dickie Boy. This year's Bulls, a team of destiny.

(re: chicken wings)

Want one?

In the crowd, a MALE STUDENT, inebriated, naked from the waist up and painted in blue, jiggles his immense belly fat for the onlookers.

TWO OLDER FOLKS cower from the sight, as SEVEN MALE STUDENTS, the letters UB BULLS painted on their bare chests, CHEER their team on. TWO PARTISAN MEN, early 70's, grin at the goings on, then shift their attention to the field below.

Atop the stadium in a private box is a sublime, hazel-green-eyed BLACK MALE, also appearing in his early 70's. The man bleeds a gaze of confidence. He forcibly motions down to the two men to join him. One glances up, smirks, then waves him off before returning to the game.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

A half century ago this season, the University of Buffalo, a private institution back then, was summoned to participate in the school's inaugural and only bowl game --

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
 But our boys got screwed. Well, not
 this year. This year, we will win
 the MAC championship, and then
 taste victory in our first national
 bowl game. You can bet the house on
 that one, Bulls' fans.

INSIDE THE BOOTH -

DICK BEAMISH
 Well, considering the team has
 never been to a bowl game in its
 102 year history, aren't you going
 out on a limb here, Big Lou?

BIG LOU DEVINO
 We stomped on UTEP in the home
 opener -- last week battled 15th
 ranked Pitt even through 3. Make it
 a big tree, Dick. A Redwood.
 Something that can support my stout
 frame. Our championship season
 starts right here, right now!

The teams ready themselves, both sides riling up their
 PLAYERS; smacking leather, groping helmets, getting raucous!

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A late model dirt covered SUV sits, its windows open, the
 game EMANATING through its car radio speakers.

INSIDE THE CAR -

several Post-it pads lay strewn across the back seat. They
 join a wrinkled suit jacket affixed to a hanger draping from
 the back passenger side window.

In the front seat slouched behind the wheel is a disheveled,
 but still pleasing looking MAN in his late 40's. The man
 boasts several days facial growth.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
 Temple leads 28-24 with just 28
 ticks remaining in this conflict.

The man sneers at the radio, removes a fifth of Dewar's
 Scotch from the glove box. He forces down a swig then
 reluctantly reaches for an electric razor on the seat.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Temple's kicker advances toward the ball.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Brownell kicks off. Roosevelt
sprints to retrieve the angled
kick -- then at the last second,
lets it dribble out of bounds at
the twenty-five.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
What a bonehead play by Brownell.
Our boys take over at the forty.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The man smirks, mumbles to the radio while shaving.

MAN
Call'em like you see'em, Big Lou.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

UB lines up in the shotgun. The ball is snapped.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Willy drops back, scrambles to his
right -- then left -- finally
unleashing a bullet over the middle
to Roosevelt, who catches it for a
gain of twenty-five! UB calls time
with four seconds left, the ball
placed on the Temple thirty-five.
Bulls' options here, Big Lou?

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
Roosevelt in the endzone on the
Hail Mary. That kid can sky over
Temple's DB's.

The usual suspects, along with thousands of UB's faithful
ROAR with unwavering fervor, as the two older men in the
stands look on with trepidation.

The man in the private box is confident, unyielding.

INSIDE THE HUDDLE -

a self-assured number 16, 6'4" DREW WILLY, centers in on
number 18, 6'0" NAAMAN ROOSEVELT.

DREW WILLY
Naaman my brother, this one's
earmarked for you.

NAAMAN ROOSEVELT
I'm all over it, baby.

Willy turns to number 19, 6'2", 220 pound JAMES STARKS.

DREW WILLY
Starksie, any incoming blitzers --

JAMES STARKS
I got your back, D Will. Ain't
nobody gettin' past me.

UB breaks the huddle, lines up in the shotgun. The sudden crowd SILENCE is deafening.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Willy takes the snap. Starks cuts
an oncoming blitz, as Willy roles
to his right, steps up, then
unleashes a Hail Mary to Roosevelt
in the endzone. With four defenders
surrounding him, Roosevelt goes up,
battling for the ball -- wait, did
he come down with it?!

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
Damn right he did.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Touchdown Bulls! Touchdown Bulls,
with the game clock expiring! It's
pandemonium here in Buffalo, NY as
the UB fans storm the field!

A sea of FANS converge onto the field: hugging, tackling,
high-fiving players and themselves.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
They certainly pulled that one out
of their butts.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Can you say that on cable access?

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
I don't know, can you?

The two older men high-five each other in the stands, as the
man in the private box beams from ear-to-ear.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

With the crowd ROAR blasting through the car stereo, the now
clean-shaven man clutches several Post-its off the car seat,
then gingerly exits the vehicle with his suit jacket in tow.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

In the center of the melee is fiery, drenched black head coach, TURNER GILL, (45). He talks with a FEMALE REPORTER.

COACH GILL

My hands went up and I was
screaming, thank you Lord, thank
you, Lord!

PLAYERS, some still partially dressed in uniforms, others sporting towels, DRENCH one another in Gatorade baths.

Perched in a corner of the room, one of the two older men berates the tired man from the SUV, now dressed in his wrinkled suit. The older man is ornery and judgemental, JACK "BEAR" DEMPSEY, heavysset, (71).

BEAR DEMPSEY

...Christ, I followed your entire
college career, Maggio. Four year
starter. Two NFL tryouts. Even
touted the same half-back position
as Offie at Colgate. Freddie Dunlop
said you were a tough kid, a stand-
up guy. What the hell happened to
you?!

A blind-sided FRANK MAGGIO, (48), stands there nervous, agitated, pen and Post-its in hand.

Several PLAYERS walk by: snapping towels, high-fiving, etc.

Sitting next to and glaring at Bear Dempsey is a forgiving, and apologetic BILL "BROGIE" BROGAN, (73).

BROGAN

How can we help you, Mr. Maggio?

MAGGIO

I'm a sportswriter for the Orlando
Sentinel. My editor sent me up
here. He thought it might make for
a good human interest tale -- you
know, maybe follow this year's team
and you gentlemen through the
season -- fifty-year anniversary
and all.

BROGAN

I'm not sure our lives are that
fascinating.

MAGGIO

Likewise. But what you boys sacrificed for Mr. Evans. That was unique. Maybe even heroic.

BROGAN

You wanna' talk to a hero?

Standing in the room's center holding court is the black man from the private box, a youthful WILLIE EVANS, (72). Donning a UB hat and sweater over his custom made clothes, Willie is addressing several MEN. Maggio's eyes meet his, an immediate sense of camaraderie emitting between the two.

BEAR DEMPSEY

You sure you're up to it, kid?
Looks like you could use a drink.

Maggio fumbles through his notes; searching, hoping. Then abruptly, finding a new zeal, he tosses the notes aside and lashes out at Bear Dempsey.

MAGGIO

You're, Jack "Bear" Dempsey. 6'2 and you played at 220. In 1958, you were a twenty-year-old junior tackle, heavily recruited by Coach Schwartzwalder at Syracuse -- whose team went on to win the national championship in '59 with Heisman Trophy winner, Ernie Davis. Any regrets, Bear?

(warmth, toward Brogan)

Mr. Bill "Brogie" Brogan. Great fullback and linebacker who served four years in the Marines before taking the GI bill to go to college. Junior, twenty-three, 5'10" and you played at 190.

(smirks at Dempsey)

Dewar's rocks. You buyin'?

An overtaxed Maggio retrieves his notes off the floor. He retreats to a bench, awaiting his turn with Willie.

INT. NURSING HOME ROOM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (ORLANDO, FLORIDA)

Seated in a wheel chair, with an appearance of entitlement, is JACK MORGAN, (87). Jack glances up. Standing in front of him is DR. ALAN ROGERS, silver haired, reputable, late 60's.

DR. ROGERS
 ...unfortunately, the cancer has
 metastasized to your liver and
 kidneys, Jack.

JACK MORGAN
 (defiant)
 You told me we had this prostate
 thing all sacked, Alan.

DR. ROGERS
 The game changed. The malignancy's
 become inoperable. I'm sorry.

His air deflated, Jack quickly regains his composure.

JACK MORGAN
 How long?

DR. ROGERS
 It's difficult to predict --

JACK MORGAN
 I wear diapers, Doctor, but I'm
 still a big boy.

DR. ROGERS
 Three, possibly six months -- if,
 we go with the chemo.

A timid KNOCK at the door.

JACK MORGAN
 What the hell do you want?!

In steps manicured southern gentleman, MIKE BATTLE, late
 40's. Mike sports a bright suit and southern drawl.

JACK MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Today is just full of God damned
 surprises. Hello, Mike.

DR. ROGERS
 I'll stop back later.

The Doctor exits. Mike cautiously approaches, eyeing
 several copies of the Orlando Sentinel strewn across the bed.

MIKE BATTLE
 How you feeling, Jack?

JACK MORGAN
 Fit as a fiddle. What's up?

Jack gathers the papers, stacking them on the bed.

MIKE BATTLE

ESPN contacted my office today. Apparently, they're going to do an article, and then an *Outside the Lines* special on the '58 UB football team. They asked if the chamber had any comment. And, if you were still living.

JACK MORGAN

Oh, I'm still here, Mike. But I'm sure you can handle it. After all, you're the chamber president.

MIKE BATTLE

You have no comment?

JACK MORGAN

(indignant)

Yeah. When the good Lord comes a callin', I'll stack my cards up against anybody. No regrets here.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DUSK

Standing by a locker, Willie chats with today's two heroes.

JAMES STARKS

Gotta' be proud of your Grandson today huh, Mr. Evans? That was one hell of a catch.

Soft spoken, Willie speaks deliberately and with intent.

WILLIE

Yes it was. And a tremendous cut block by you, James.

NAAMAN ROOSEVELT

We're headed over to the Anchor Bar if you wanna' join us, Grandpa.

WILLIE

Your Grandmother and I have dinner reservations, but thank you.

NAAMAN ROOSEVELT

Welcome anytime, you know that.

Both men embrace Willie then exit. With the booze no longer performing, Maggio approaches. He appears nervous, hurried.

MAGGIO

Mr. Evans. My name is Frank Maggio.
I pen a local sports column for the
Orlando Sentinel down in Florida.

A guarded Willie sizes up Maggio, cautiously responds.

WILLIE

You've traveled quite the distance
for a yarn, Mr. Maggio.

MAGGIO

Your '58 team is big news now...
especially with ESPN knocking on
your door.

(referring to Post-its)

I understand, Coach Gill asked you
to speak with the team before
today's contest. You think your
little tete-a-tete had anything to
do with today's improbable victory?

WILLIE

Kids need guidance, Mr. Maggio.
Motivation originates from within.

MAGGIO

(embarrassed)

Of course it does.

Maggio shoves the Post-its in his pockets -- blurts out.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)

Can I be honest with you, Mr.
Evans? A few days ago my editor
gave me an option. Come up here,
spend several weeks inking a human
interest story on your '58 team, or
take the 6 month severance package.
The fact is, I need my job, Sir.

Willie is affected by Maggio's mea culpa.

WILLIE

Bear stated you were a Colgate man.

MAGGIO

That's correct. Freddie Dunlop was
my head coach.

WILLIE

Go on.

MAGGIO
Well, Mr. Evans...

WILLIE
Willie, please?

MAGGIO
I'd prefer, Mr. Evans -- if
that's all right?

Unsure of his opponent, Willie searches for a clue. Then --

WILLIE
That would be fine.

MAGGIO
Well, Sir, for the past few days
the same two thoughts have been
racing through my mind. I keep
reflecting on a band of brothers,
college kids, who 50 years ago
arrived at a decision that was
decades ahead of its time.

Willie looks away, reluctant to address the issue. Finally --

WILLIE
And that latter thought of yours?

MAGGIO
Now that one resided with me a time
longer.

Maggio approaches a chalkboard, grabs a piece of chalk, then
effortlessly diagrams part of a running play on the board.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)
Only you knew what it was like to
be the only black man to play on
that ill-fated team. Well, I kept
envisioning how it might make for
a... thought-provoking story?

WILLIE
What might?

MAGGIO
You, Sir. And your thoughts on how
society's views toward the black
man have transformed over the last
half-century.

The men's eyes meet, a flicker of challenge from Willie.

WILLIE
Or stayed the same.

MAGGIO
Or stayed the same. Of course, only
you'd know that.

WILLIE
Of course.

Willie grabs a football off the bench and begins pacing, his eyes darting between Maggio and the chalkboard. Then --

WILLIE (CONT'D)
I haven't a longing to return
there, Mr. Maggio.

MAGGIO
That's certainly understandable.
But ESPN is slated to get the same
story anyway, correct?

WILLIE
A group of us are doing that
interview -- it's not me alone --
and certainly not for several
weeks. You may have played ball,
Sir, but I'm confident you haven't
the understanding of my plight.

MAGGIO
Agreed. But I'd like to. And so
would my readers. And maybe your
Grandson, too? Your story, Mr.
Evans. Its final approval by you.

Willie tosses the ball to Maggio, approaches the chalkboard, focuses in on the unfinished play. Maggio advances, hands him the ball from behind. Willie instinctively clutches it.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)
Do you remember that season? Do you
remember how it started?

Willie continues his gaze through the unfinished play.

EXT. STEEL PLANT - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - AUGUST 1956)

A large orange light contrasts the blue sky. Its source, the mammoth Bethlehem Steel Plant located on the edge of mighty Lake Erie. Thousands of WORKERS rush through the entrances.

To the west of the plant, a bustling sunny day in downtown Buffalo. People walk the streets; the WOMEN in poodle skirts, capri pants, cardigan sweaters, etc. The MEN, the majority dressed in suits and fedora hats.

Ford Thunderbirds, Chrysler Imperials and Chevy Impalas cruise the city streets. In the background we hear the song, "Speedo" BLASTING out of a red '56 Cadillac Eldorado.

Moving farther west, we pass by Woolworth's drug store, and an Esso gas station. The sign reads: 24 cents a gallon.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

In this low-income neighborhood, a tall, proud and slender 19-year-old WILLIE EVANS, marches down his street with purpose. He is dressed in pleated pants, leather shoes and a tailor made suit jacket. In his right hand is a small gym bag. He stops, glancing back to a house several homes away.

Standing on the porch is a tall, fiery, and pretty black woman, 19-year-old ETHEL JEAN EVANS. In her arms is 1-year-old, ROD EVANS. Joining her on the porch, dressed in a white chef's uniform, is an attractive, strong and reserved black woman, 45-year-old ANNA EVANS, her luggage in tow.

A yellow checkered cab pulls up to the curb.

Willie waves to the women, then presses on, passing by several nefarious BLACK YOUTHS, each arguing the price over several black and white TV's piled high atop a porch stoop.

Suddenly, a police car crawls up and begins following Willie. Moments later, it halts. Two officers exit. They are menacing and racist JOHN RYAN, (31), along with his partner, a sympathetic TOM JULIANO, (29).

OFFICER RYAN

You know the drill, boy.

Annoyed but compliant, Willie positions his hands on the squad car hood, spreads his legs. Ryan glares at Juliano, who then reluctantly pats Willie down, removing a money clip and keys from his pant's pocket.

OFFICER JULIANO

He's clean, John.

ON THE PORCH -

an irate Ethel Jean shouts at the officers.

ETHEL JEAN

Hey! Hey! What are you doing
to my husband?!
(to mother-in-law)
Mrs. Evans, could you take Rod,
please?

She attempts to hand the CRYING baby to Anna Evans. With her eyes fixated on the cops, Anna calmly instructs Ethel Jean.

ANNA EVANS

Go into the house, Ethel Jean.
My son has the situation under
control.
(then, stern)
Do it, now!

With her son now WAILING, a frustrated Ethel Jean enters the house. Anna Evans exits the porch, hands her luggage to the CABBIE, Caucasian, 50's, then calmly approaches the conflict.

AT THE SCENE -

OFFICER RYAN

Your animal friends not around
today to save your ass, Evans?
(taunting)
What, you need your mommy?

Officer Ryan glares at a poised Anna now only a few feet away. He takes Willie's gym bag and empties its contents into a pile of wet leaves by the curb. He then slithers toward Willie, stopping inches from the seething teen's face.

OFFICER RYAN (CONT'D)

Now how does a colored boy afford
clothes that nice and still have
bread in his pocket? I can't even
afford threads that finespun.
You're engaged in something
illegal, and one day I'm gonna
catch ya', boy.
(slams him hard into the hood)
Get this punk ass outta' my face!

Willie quickly recovers, cocking his right fist. Ryan sees this and immediately draws his weapon, pointing it at Willie.

ANNA EVANS

Willie!

Willie stands down. A disappointed Ryan holsters his weapon, as Officer Juliano hands Willie back his things. The cops then enter their car and SPEED off.

Anna retrieves the muddied clothes, approaches her incensed son. She adjusts his tie, beams at his shirt.

ANNA EVANS
Blue is a fine color for you,
Willie. A fine color.

WILLIE
I swear to Jesus I wanted to pummel
that scum this time, Mama!

ANNA EVANS
Violence for violence multiplies
violence.

WILLIE
(with sudden respect)
I'm no Dr. King, Mama. I haven't
his courage. Ryan humiliated me in
front of my family today!

ANNA EVANS
Strange. I perceived it another
way. Today, that officer showed his
ignorance and hatred. One day that
hate will destroy the hater.

WILLIE
(glances down then nods)
Yes, Ma'am.

ANNA EVANS
(checks pocket watch)
Well, need to keep that schedule.

WILLIE
Where you headed this trip?

ANNA EVANS
Cleveland, Washington, and then
down through the Carolinas.

WILLIE
You be safe okay?

She smiles, turns to exit then stops, turning back toward Willie. He inches closer.

ANNA EVANS
God has blessed you with special
gifts, Willie. And you need to
honor him by fully utilizing them.
Ryan's ilk or not. Understand?

WILLIE

Yes, Ma'am.

Anna approaches the cab, patiently waiting for the cabbie to open the back door for her. He finally relents, then enters the cab and SCREECHES out.

Willie continues onto the bus stop, as a concerned Ethel Jean looks on from inside their front porch picture window.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Getting on the bus, Willie searches for a seat. One is available by several WHITE TEENS seated near the front. The teens glare at Willie, as he motions to sit down. He smartly refrains, posturing a few rows back. The bus then exits.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Traveling a few miles west of downtown, we notice a sprawling college campus. The inscription on the main building reads: UNIVERSITY OF BUFFALO. Behind the school is a large building, its sign reads: VETERANS HOSPITAL. A 100 feet or so in front of the hospital rests a modest football stadium.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

The city bus pulls up in front of the campus. Willie exits then hurriedly marches down the main road. He passes several WHITE STUDENTS, their leers welcoming him to campus.

Suddenly, the '56 red Cadillac Eldorado speeds onto campus, abruptly HALTING by Willie. Inside the vehicle, is 21-year-old BILL "BROGIE" BROGAN. Sporting a Marine haircut, Brogan lowers the window, Elvis's, "Hard Headed Woman" rockin' on his AM car radio. He turns down the music, addresses Willie.

BROGAN

Hey, man. Football locker rooms?

WILLIE

(points)

They're on the other side of campus.

BROGAN

(re: sotto, Elvis)

Thank you, thank you very much.

Brogan nods, CRANKS up the radio then BURNS rubber. He briskly stops, reverses his car, returns to Willie.

BROGAN (CONT'D)

Hey, you cruisin' that way too?

WILLIE
Uh, umm... yeah, I --

BROGAN
Hop in, catch a ride.

A resistant Willie finally enters the car.

BROGAN (CONT'D)
I'm Bill Brogan.

WILLIE
Willie Evans.

BROGAN
Good to meet you, Willie.

Brogan extends his hand, the two shake. Willie gazes inside the car, it's opulence breathtaking.

WILLIE
Your car's ridiculous, man.

BROGAN
It's a bent-eight. Got it last week. Hey, you wanna' drive it?

WILLIE
No, I don't think so, I --

BROGAN
Sure you do, you'll dig it.

Brogan JOLTS from the car. Willie hesitates, then exits, the two switching positions. Now sitting behind the wheel, Willie shifts the car into gear. It LURCHES forward. He then stomps on the gas and speeds off, LURCHING it again.

BROGAN (CONT'D)
Willie? You got a license, right?

WILLIE
Uh, umm... well, not yet.

BROGAN
It might be better if I drove.

The two exit and switch positions. Brogan then BURNS out.

EXT. FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - AUGUST 1958)

An exhausted FOOTBALL PLAYER, his arms and feet churning in a stationary position, oscillates his head like a swivel, looking for his next attacker from a group of large FOOTBALL PLAYERS encircling him in a tightening noose.

Suddenly, a number is SHOUTED OFF SCREEN prompting a PLAYER to sprint toward the warrior in the ring's center. The two COLLIDE head on. The warrior PANCAKES his would-be assailant to the ground with a devastating forearm.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a SECOND ATTACKER with untenable speed is in on the warrior. With his back turned, our second attacker cries out to the man in the middle.

PLAYER II

Brogie!

Hearing this, the man turns at the last moment, the two warriors CLASHING head on in the center of the ring. Both are launched high into the air then land HARD on the ground, their helmets removed. A male voice OFF SCREEN chimes in.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Evans! You son-of-a-bitch!

The second attacker is now 21-year-old, 6'1", 195 pound Jr. running back, Willie Evans. He extends his hand to now 23-year-old, 5'10" 190 pound Jr. fullback, Bill "Brogie" Brogan. Brogie clutches Willie's hand, the two raising to their feet.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

This is a battlefield gentlemen,
not God damned American Bandstand!

Addressing his troops is tyrannical head coach, RICHARD "OFFIE" OFFENHAMER, (48). At 5'9", Offie wears shorts, a white T-shirt and black high-top sneakers. With veins bulging from his neck, the coach sprints into the ring, addressing his men with a Patton-nesque fervor.

COACH OFFIE

This drill is named *Bull in the Ring*, Mr. Brogan! Do you know why?!
(calmly turns to group)

Because a bull, gentlemen is the most honorable and well respected battler on the planet. It accepts its fate and fights to the death.

(marches to Willie)

A team is like an Army, Evans.
It breathes as one. And you will not disrupt its breathing.

(MORE)

COACH OFFIE (CONT'D)

There is no room on this team for any individual heroic crap. Center ring, Evans. Prepare for battle.

Willie pierces the ring, and begins churning his feet. A number is CALLED. Willie quickly spins and engages the MAN head on. The man immediately slumps to the ground. Willie encounters a SECOND ATTACKER, netting the same result.

Out of nowhere, before a third number is bellowed, another ATTACKER cuts Willie's legs out from behind. Willie plummets to the ground, clutching his left knee.

Bouncing off the ground is high energy, cocky, and racist Sr. guard, 22-year-old, 5'9" 170 pound, JOE "IRISH" O'GRADY. A large cut decorates the bridge of his nose.

IRISH O'GRADY

What? I thought I heard my number!

Suddenly, Brogan sprints full throttle and SLAMS head on into Irish O'Grady, dispatching him hard to the ground.

COACH OFFIE

Brogan! Take off! And don't stop running until I tell you, you dumb mick bastard.

Brogan takes off. Irish O'Grady returns to his position, snickers, then turns to a very LARGE PLAYER to his right.

IRISH O'GRADY

Ain't no God damn way a Mullinjon's playin' on this team.

The player nods in agreement, as the TRAINER, 30's, studious, assists Willie to his feet. Enraged, Willie glares at O'Grady, then reluctantly returns to his position.

COACH OFFIE

O'Grady. Take off. Bukaty, center ring.

Entering the ring's center, his legs churning, is Buddhist minded, GORDON "GORDO" BUKATY, (19). At 6'1" and 180, this sophomore quarterback possesses a tranquilizing peculiarity.

COACH OFFIE (CONT'D)

We are all fighting for the same thing, to be victorious. And I'm the four star general leading this division. You boys got that?

Reactions of disbelief emit from several players.

GORDO BUKATY
 Ready for the ambush, General
 Patton, Sir.

The players ERUPT with laughter. Offie notices this then shifts his attention to assistant coach, hard-nosed bigot and second in command, KARL KLUCKHOHN, late 20's. He jeers.

COACH KLUCKHOHN
 Backs and receivers over at the A
 Frame. Linemen on the bag.

The backs and receivers sprint over to an A Frame. Attached to it, hanging horizontally is a padded telephone pole. MAGGADINO CONSTRUCTION is inscribed on the padding.

The first group of SEVEN PLAYERS prepare for battle, shifting into three point stances. On the WHISTLE, all move in unison, attacking the pole with voracity. It barely moves.

Fifty yards away a LINEMAN stands opposite a hanging heavy bag. On the WHISTLE, the lineman assaults the bag. The whistle BLOWS a second time, the lineman clutching his right shoulder. He grabs the bottom of the bag. Cement particles trickle to the ground. He glares at Coach Kluckhorn.

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

In the bleachers is UB Athletic Director, 46-year-old JAMES PEELE. A fastidious talker, who constantly repeats himself, Peele is dressed in a suit and bow tie. Standing next to him is UB booster, pharmacist and henchman, JOHN HITCHCOCK, (52).

HITCHCOCK
 Offie's pushing them way too hard
 again, Jimmy. Eighteen straight
 days of doubles -- no water on the
 field.

JIM PEELE
 The man won't listen to anything,
 to anything I say.

HITCHCOCK
 You're the damn athletic director!

Unhinged, Hitchcock removes a signed check from his billfold.

HITCHCOCK (CONT'D)
 This covers eleven of this year's
 football scholarships.

JIM PEELE
 What are you intimating, John?

HITCHCOCK

Mr. Maggadino is adamant on our boys having a fighting chance this season. Adamant.

JIM PEELE

(takes check)

I'll talk to him again about taking it easier, it easier on the kids.

EXT. FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

COACH KLUCKHOHN

Gassers! Linemen up first.

Brogan returns from running laps, approaches high-spirited Cocaptain, NICK BOTTINI. With colossal hands and a square jaw, Nick is a 21-year-old 6'1", 200 pound Sr. offensive end.

BROGAN

We need to have a little powah with that racist prick and his crew.

Standing next to Nick Bottini is Sr. Cocaptain and salt of the earth, LOUIE "BULL" REALE, (22). He is 6'2", 230 pounds.

BULL REALE

Nick and me got it, Brogie.

The team begins running gassers.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Several exhausted players pour into the locker room, wooden benches serving as their only refuge. Other warriors have already stripped down to their shorts, and are guzzling down water from two steel containers in the room's center.

In the background, Elvis's, "Don't Be Cruel" BLASTS out on a transistor radio. Gordo Bukaty enters SINGING. Then --

GORDO BUKATY

Had a blast with that cat at the Aud last April. The kid's hip.

Dragging himself into the locker room is cantankerous and cynical, BOB "BEEF" ADAMS. This 24-year-old, 6'4", 240 pound senior defensive end has bushy brown hair and a big chin.

BEEF ADAMS

Man, everything hurts. Boot camp was a joke compared to this.

IRISH O'GRADY

Dropped eight today. A hundred
and sixty-two friggen' pounds.
That kraut bastard is gonna' burn
us out before the first game.

(glances toward Adams)

I'm way too little to be playing at
this level, Beef.

Beef Adams makes his way to the trainer.

TRAINER

(dry, matter-of-factly)

What is it today, Beef?

BEEF ADAMS

My left knee, ankle -- I think
maybe my shoulder, too.

The trainer tosses him two bags of ice, rolls his eyes then
moves onto the next player.

Back at the scale steps Gordo Bukaty. It reads 178.

IRISH O'GRADY

You weighed that this morning you
little Polack.

GORDO BUKATY

Actually, Irish, I weighed 180.
May need to take it down a notch.

Stepping onto the scale, a large B shaved on his chest is
conscientious, 20-year-old junior center, RAY "RAZOR"
PAOLINI. Paolini is 6'1" and weighs 205 pounds.

RAZOR PAOLINI

Gordo, how the hell do you do it,
man? I dropped eight today.

He steps down. Gordo Bukaty then postures himself on the
scale, crossing his legs. A small crowd gathers.

GORDO BUKATY

It all starts with the pure nature
of the mind. As Bodhidharma
preached the Ch'an or Zen, he
said: "Once mortals see their
nature, all attachments end."
Today's practice, gone.

(closes eyes, chants)

Ohhhmmmmmm...

Inside Willie's locker rests a watermelon in black face. Willie grabs the watermelon then SLAMS it hard into a nearby garbage can. Irish O'Grady, Beef Adams and several other players let out a collective LAUGH. Willie approaches.

WILLIE

You come at me again like that --

IRISH O'GRADY

Let's end this thing right now,
boy!

Irish O'Grady snatches a steel water container, raising it to strike. Willie coils back, thirsty to oblige. Suddenly, Bull Reale SLAMS Irish O'Grady into a nearby locker.

In steps assistant coach, soft spoken FRED DUNLOP, (28).

COACH DUNLOP

Is there an issue here, gentlemen?

IRISH O'GRADY

(springs up agitated, then)
Bull was just showin' me a new
blocking swim move, Coach?

COACH DUNLOP

Bull?
(Off Bull's nod, then)
Film's at six-thirty. That leaves
you boys thirty minutes for chow.

Several players quickly exit. On the radio, "Oh Donna" from Ritchie Valens begins playing.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Wrapped in towels and about to shower are: Nick Bottini, Bull Reale, Razor Paolini, Brogan and Willie.

RAZOR PAOLINI

My mom's cookin' up some homemade
spaghetti and meatballs next
Sunday. Asked if I wanted to invite
a few of you boys over.

SMALL GROUP

Sure! Fat city! I can dig it!

RAZOR PAOLINI

I'll let her know.
(beat)
Hey, Willie? You got a second?

Embarrassed, Paolini moves to a nearby locker with Willie.

RAZOR PAOLINI (CONT'D)

Listen, about next Sunday. My
parents are from the old country...
well, you understand, right?

WILLIE

(beat)
Right.

RAZOR PAOLINI

And what Irish did today on the
field really frosted me man. And
I'm gonna' tell him about it, too.

He exits. Willie rejoins Nick Bottini and Brogan. They approach a pensive Bull Reale sitting on a nearby bench.

BULL REALE

Willie, when you first met Ethel
Jean, did you know right away?

WILLIE

Just like you with Donna, Bull.

Willie turns up the radio, then exits with Nick Bottini and Brogan to the showers. Bull Reale sits there, then suddenly begins SINGING, "Oh Donna."

INT. DINING HALL KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

SERVERS exit the kitchen with food and beverage trays. Offie enters from the side door, approaches a worried CHEF, 40's.

CHEF

A.D.'s breathing down my neck
again, Coach.

COACH OFFIE

Get me the report on what you've
spent so far. I'll handle Peele.

INT. DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Massive amounts of: fruit, milk, pitchers of water, pasta and salads are being devoured by a hungry group. The chef brings out a tray full of steaks. The players snatch them up.

At one of the tables, Beef Adams is in the process of lifting a PLAYER seated in a chair off the ground with one hand. Junior tackle and naysayer, 6'3", 21-year-old, 230 pound GEORGE "NEWS" DELANEY chirps in.

NEWS DELANEY

No friggen' way he pulls this off.

Beef Adams struggles, as the academic of the group continues counting. He is offensive guard, CHARLIE TIRONE. Charlie is 21 years old, 5'9" and 200 pounds. He sports dark rimmed glasses and a buzz cut.

CHARLIE TIRONE

(looks to his wrist watch)
 ...three, four -- the chances of
 Beef completing this feat based on
 the mathematical probabilities is
 remote -- eight, nine, ten!

Beef Adams finishes the lift, then sets the chair and player back onto the floor. News Delaney approaches Gordo Bukaty, hands him a five-dollar bill then exits.

Jumping onto a chair is boisterous and self-indulgent, JACK "BEAR" DEMPSEY, (20). Bear Dempsey is 6'2", 220 pounds, with sandy blond hair and freckles.

BEAR DEMPSEY

We conquered the old man today,
 boys! Eighteen continuous days of
 doubles! And school starts on
 Monday with two thousand delicate
 young dollies just lusting for us.

CHEERS emit from the players as: Willie, Brogan, Bull Reale, Nick Bottini and Razor Paolini finish dinner at a table.

INT. TOWER DORM ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Pin-up girls, ELIZABETH TAYLOR and MARILYN MONROE decorate the walls. Playbook in hand, and sitting on the bed is a distracted Willie. Pacing the room, beer in hand is Brogan.

WILLIE

Flanker right, 34 vere split,
 halfback screen left.

BROGAN

Check backside for the blitz then
 throw a block on the corner to
 spring you free.

WILLIE

I like your thinking, Brogie.

Willie grins. Brogan checks his watch.

BROGAN

Oh, man, check out the time. It's already eight-thirty. Tell, Ethel Jean my apologies, man.

WILLIE

She's cool with it.

BROGAN

You sure you don't want a brew, pop, something to eat?

Willie declines then slowly moves to exit. Brogan grabs another beer from the stocked fridge, approaches him.

BROGAN (CONT'D)

Bull, Nick and me got your back with Irish and his racist crew. Just lettin' you know that, Ev.

WILLIE

Thanks.

(beat)

Brogie. What's your draft status?

BROGAN

My draft status? I served my tour in the Marines. But everybody else on the team should be 2S. Why?

Willie hands him an envelope. The return address reads: Selective Services. Brogan runs through it, glances up.

BROGAN (CONT'D)

1A? This ain't cool, man. You're a full-time student.

A KNOCK at the door.

BROGAN (CONT'D)

It's open.

In steps tall and slender, 21-year-old SUE MICHAELS. This beauteous blond is privileged and determined.

SUE MICHAELS

Hi. You want me to come back?

BROGAN

No, Sue, we're good.

(hands Willie letter)

You need to fight this, partner.

Brogan removes a wad of cash from his pocket and attempts to hand him a ten-dollar bill.

BROGAN (CONT'D)
Why don't you catch a cab home --

WILLIE
No man, I'm cool, but thanks.

SUE MICHAELS
Good bye, Willie.

Willie nods then exits, Sue shutting the door behind him.

SUE MICHAELS (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Grand Central Station certainly has
nothing on this place.

Brogan rolls his eyes, locks the door, then guides Sue to the bed, where he begins kissing and groping her.

SUE MICHAELS (CONT'D)
Bill, we need to talk.

BROGAN
Can we talk later? I'm beat.

He continues kissing her. Sue abruptly pushes him away, then springs from the bed, the photos of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe staring directly at her.

SUE MICHAELS
Do they need to be up there?

BROGAN
Is that what's bugging you?

He jumps from the bed, quickly ripping them down.

SUE MICHAELS
You still plan on partnering with
your father's firm after law
school, right?

BROGAN
How many times have we been over
this?

SUE MICHAELS
Then rejoining the military is not
an option?

BROGAN
 Absolutely not. Come here, baby.
 (grabs her)
 Michaels on the sweep... and she's
 tackled just shy of the endzone.

He tackles her to the bed and resumes his playful assault.
 She gives in momentarily then retreats again from the bed.

SUE MICHAELS
 Bill?

BROGAN
 Now what, baby? Jesus.

SUE MICHAELS
 We need to discuss your situation
 with Willie.

BROGAN
 Situation? What situation?

SUE MICHAELS
 You two have been inseparable at
 camp this season. Thick as thieves
 some would say.

BROGAN
 We're the number one backs on the
 depth chart. Plus, he's a stand-up
 guy --

SUE MICHAELS
 Who just happens to be black. In
 case you hadn't noticed.

BROGAN
 I noticed. So.

SUE MICHAELS
 So, if anything happens to you --

BROGAN
 What's gonna' happen to me?

SUE MICHAELS
 Boy are you naive. I want your word
 the two of you will not be rooming
 together on the road this season if
 Offie asks you.

BROGAN
 Willie's my best friend --

SUE MICHAELS

And I'm your soon to be wife.
 (flashes ring on her finger)
 And my husband will be junior
 partner at the largest law firm in
 New York State in four years.

She pushes him onto the bed, wrenching him into a long kiss.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A city bus pulls to the curb. Exiting are two ELDERLY BLACK WOMEN, followed by an exhausted Willie. The street sign reads: Main/East Ferry.

With books in hand, Willie crosses the street. Standing on the corner waiting for the bus is 22-year-old, cool cat and black man, KENNY COPELAND. Kenny wears a wool suit. In his right hand are a pair of drum sticks. In his left, a transistor radio PLAYS, Thelonious Monk's, "Round Midnight."

KENNY

How you doin' my brother?
 (1950's hip handshake)

WILLIE

I'm doin'. You still at Baffles?

KENNY

Seven more glorious days.

WILLIE

I thought you just landed the gig?

KENNY

Sixty-five a week and Uncle Sam
 decides to come callin'.

WILLIE

It's peacetime, Kenny. You'll
 be cool.

KENNY

They're shippin' me to a place
 called Vietnam. Apparently,
 I'm qualified to be what they
 call a military advisor.

A bus pulls up. Kenny motions to get on.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Monk's burnin' at Kleinhans next
 week. You droppin' down?

WILLIE
 (shrugs, then)
 You stay cool okay, man?

As the bus door closes, a reflective Willie exits.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Completely spent, Willie enters the living room of this modest two bedroom dwelling. A small black and white TV sits atop a wooden frame. The sparsely furnished apartment is neat and in order. On the TV is news reporter, WALTER CRONKITE.

WALTER CRONKITE
 Columbia English instructor Charles Van Doren denies any wrongdoing when accused in August of receiving answers in a contest on NBC's two year old quiz show, *Twenty-One*. Van Doren's salary at Columbia is 4,400 a year. To date, he's made 129,000 dollars on the show --

Willie lowers the TV, glances toward Ethel Jean resting on the couch. Now 21, she is mature beyond her years.

WILLIE
 A teacher would never do that.

Willie slowly moves toward his wife, collapsing on her lap.

ETHEL JEAN
 Your boyish naivete. That's what I love about you, Will.
 (massages his shoulders)
 Offie working you boys again too hard? That man and me need to have a little chat.

WILLIE
 (nervous smile, then)
 How's Rod?

ETHEL JEAN
 Medicine seems to be working. Mom said he was playing with the football today claiming to be you.
 (beat)
 When's your first class tomorrow?

WILLIE
 I can drop him at your mom's in the morning no problem.

Grateful, she kisses him. Willie reaches into his pocket, pulls out the draft notice, hands it to her.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

This came in the mail.

She reads the notice, glances up astonished.

ETHEL JEAN

You have a wife and child. And you're a full-time student. Well, they're not getting away with this!

Willie eyes the TV. A REPORTER dressed in a helmet and camouflage jacket is standing in a jungle. The caption reads: SOUTHEAST VIETNAM.

Ethel Jean retrieves a pen and yellow pad from the coffee table, cuddles next to her husband then begins writing.

ETHEL JEAN (CONT'D)

To Whom It May Concern: My name is Willie Evans and I am a twenty-one-year-old full-time student, married with one child, and attending the University of Buffalo...

WILLIE

...three of my brothers served in the Korean War. I am writing you citing the Sullivan Brothers' case.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

You guys wrote to the government?

WILLIE (O.S.)

Jeannie was not a woman to be unjustly provoked. Family was everything to her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Willie and Ethel Jean address the letter. They then walk a short distance, checking in on their son's room. Tossing and turning, the 3-year-old is coughing in his sleep. A troubled father kisses his son's forehead then exits.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willie retrieves a book from the night stand titled, *Stride Toward Freedom*, By Martin Luther King Jr. and begins reading.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Decorating the walls, photos of General Patton and Vince Lombardi. Seated behind his desk is Offie. A nervous Willie and Brogan sit across from him. On the desk sits a 16mm projector, two canisters of film next to it. Willie glances to Offie, both knowing what's coming next.

COACH OFFIE

Okay, here it is gentlemen. I'm considering having you two boys bunk together on the road this season. I'd like your ideas on it.

BROGAN

That's why you wanted to see us?
(relieved, laughs)
Well, that's no problem for me, Coach. I mean, I don't know how Willie feels about it.

WILLIE

(beat)
I know Brogie's intentions are just, Mr. Offenhamer, but...

BROGAN

But what? What do you mean, Ev?

COACH OFFIE

What he means is that a black and white player have never roomed together in the history of college or professional sports.

BROGAN

Now's as good a time as any, right?

WILLIE

(trepidation)
I don't know if the team's ready for that, Brogie. Maybe America, too.

COACH OFFIE

The team's ready -- well, most of it. The others will come along when they see how well you play. And as for America... well, invariably there are always a few bad apples in every bushel.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
Your predetermined fate... like,
Jackie Robinson in baseball.

WILLIE (O.S.)
Only he was well compensated for
the anguish.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
Did you guys really have a full
contact practice before the Cornell
scrimmage?

WILLIE (O.S.)
Yes, Frank. Yes, we did.

EXT. FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

SUBTITLE: (ITHACA, NY - SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1958)

The team is warming up. Gordo Bukaty flings a pass over the head of Nick Bottini. This, followed by two successive fumbles on hand-offs. Offie storms over to the Cornell side of the field and converses with their HEAD COACH, 40's.

WILLIE (O.S.)
Mr. Offenhamer did not espouse a
less than 100% effort at all times.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Bodies FLAILING, the UB team is embattled in a full contact practice. The Cornell PLAYERS gaze on in disbelief.

EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

AD Peele turns to the school's chancellor, CLIFFORD FURNAS, (51). Furnas is balding, stoic and impeccably dressed.

JIM PEELE
You see, you see, Chancellor
Furnas, sometimes I believe, that
he actually believes, that he's an
extension of his hero, of his hero,
General George S. Patton.

CHANCELLOR FURNAS
I knew the late general, Mr. Peele.
Offie's peculiarity, like George's,
may be a little unorthodox, but
their results can not be disputed.

JIM PEELE

Sir, our boys are not fighting, are not fighting, a war out there.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Defeated and angry, the players scurry into the locker room.

BEEF ADAMS

Man, everything hurts.

BROGAN

You Navy boys always bitch about everything?

BEEF ADAMS

You ever get your ass kicked like this in the Marines?

Irish O'Grady, still boasting that gouge over the bridge of his nose, glares at his weight on the scale, it reads: 158.

IRISH O'GRADY

I'm way too little to be playing at this level, Beef.

Gordo Bukaty enters, seemingly oblivious to the day's events. EMOTING from his transistor radio, *The Coasters, Charlie Brown*. Gordo Bukaty, in rhythm, performs the Hambone.

GORDO BUKATY

Hambone, Hambone, where you been?
All round' the world and back
again. Hambone, Hambone, --

Bear Dempsey grabs the radio, LAUNCHES it into the wall.

Sitting on a bench exhausted, Willie attempts to lift his right leg. Frustrated, he grabs his helmet, FLINGING it hard into a locker. He turns to Brogie.

WILLIE

Mr. Offenhamer keeps riding us like this, I won't last half the season.

BROGAN

None of us will.

CHARLIE TIRONE

At this rate, the laws of attrition will have us ineligible to field a team by our third game.

In steps a slow-burning Offie. He climbs atop a bench.

COACH OFFIE

Courage is the most valuable and usually the most absent characteristic in men. Today, you boys got your asses handed to you by an inferior team who beat you in the fourth quarter. We need to work on our endurance. May God have mercy upon our upcoming enemies, because I won't.

At the shower entrance are Gordo Bukaty and Bear Dempsey.

BEAR DEMPSEY

You think the old man really believes that shit?

GORDO BUKATY

Don't know. No one's ever had the audacity to ask him.

The two enter the shower, as Offie quietly grabs the bench he was standing on, then abruptly SLAMS it onto the floor.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

At the table are: Brogan, Bull Reale, Nick Bottini, Gordo Bukaty, Irish O'Grady, Charlie Tirone, News Delaney, Beef Adams, Bear Dempsey and Razor Paolini. Also present, MR. RAYMOND PAOLINI SR., Mid 40's. MRS. PAOLINI, heavysset, 40's, enters from the kitchen with several Tupperware containers.

MRS. PAOLINI

(heavy Italian accent)

I makea' lotta' food. You boys, you takea' some home with you.

GORDO BUKATY

To, Mrs. Paolini, the world's hippest cook!

The group APPLAUDS, as Gordo Bukaty kisses Mrs. Paolini on the cheek. Her husband stands, raising his glass.

MR. PAOLINI

(heavy Italian accent)

I makea' toast. To 1958 UB football champins'!

The players let out a deafening CHEER, drink from their wine glasses, then begin SINGING the school fight song. Brogan shoots Razor Paolini a disparaging look.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

SUBTITLE: (OCTOBER 11TH, 2008)

The room is 80's throwback. Empty beer cans and Post-its lay strewn across the bed. Maggio sits among them, drinking scotch from a motel glass. Next to him rests a framed wedding photo of him with a beautiful BLACK WOMAN from years past.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (ROTARY FIELD - OCTOBER 11TH, 2008)

The score reads: UB 28 WESTERN MICHIGAN 28. OVERTIME.

In a private box sits an untroubled Willie. Hung over, Maggio stands behind him, his focus elsewhere. Next to Willie is AD WARD EMANUEL, black, late 40's, athletic.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

A nice Polaroid there Bulls' fans of Willie Evans, a hero from the 58 squad, along with current UB Athletic Director, Ward Emanuel.

Western Michigan's offense takes over at the 25-yard line.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

A score of any kind here wins it. Hiller drops back to pass, then unleashes a strike to Ledbetter on the post, who catches it in stride, then dives into the endzone for the touchdown! The Bulls lose 34-28 in another overtime nail biter.

INT. PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

AD EMANUEL

A tough one to give up huh, Willie?

WILLIE

We'll bounce back next week, Sir.

Emanuel exits. Maggio and Willie survey the field. Coach Gill, his arm around his wife, is engaged in an interview.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Do you still believe, Frank?

MAGGIO

UB climbing the mountain to its first bowl game in school history?

(MORE)

MAGGIO (CONT'D)

There's nothing more I'd like to witness. Not only for the kids out there, but for you and your '58 squad as well. That, Sir, would be true justice.

Maggio refocuses his attention on Coach Gill and his wife.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)

And what you uttered to Bull, about knowing right away when it's the right woman? Good call, Mr. Evans.

WILLIE

You sure you're in town strictly for this narrative, Frank?

A pensive Maggio shifts his attention back onto the field.

INT. NURSING HOME - SAME TIME

On the laptop in front of Jack Morgan, an ESPN article reads: *All or Nothing* by Eric Neel. The 1958 team is in the photo. The caption reads: "The University of Buffalo has been invited to one bowl game in its 102 year history."

A sullen Jack Morgan scrolls down to a picture of present day, Willie and his teammates. He then slides a letter into an envelope, addressing it to Frank Maggio, Orlando Sentinel.

INT. PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIO

The inaugural game of the '58 season you battled Harvard. How was Coach Patton before that one?

Willie lets out an uncharacteristically loud LAUGH. Then --

WILLIE

I recall us having a particular escort to the airport that Friday prior to the Harvard game.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1958)

Four police cars, their sirens WAILING, give an escort to the UB team bus. The song "Tequila", by The Champs, PLAYS as the school bus enters the airport.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

A police escort ran interference
for you boys to the airport?

WILLIE (O.S.)

And the train station. We were
the only game in town back then.
The NFL did not come to Buffalo
until 1960. And Mr. Offenhamer took
full advantage of that.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The team boards a Mohawk prop-plane. All the players and
coaches are garbed in suits, ties and overcoats. Willie is
flawlessly dressed in a tailored suit, overcoat, and his
Dobbs 15 Fedora.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

The whole team was always decked
out like that?

WILLIE (O.S.)

Every game. Coach demanded it.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

Your suit, not off the rack.

WILLIE (O.S.)

I worked for a tailor in high
school. A great man named Sal
Cordo. He made three choice suits
for me when I graduated.

Willie reaches the steps. Offie stands there, dressed similar
to his football idol, Vince Lombardi.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Sitting next to Brogan in the front row, Willie pulls out the
Buffalo Evening News. The headline reads: GRID RATINGS GIVE
HARVARD FOUR TD'S OVER BUFFALO BULLS. Friday Sept. 26th --
Harvard nationally ranked 17th.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Several players lean a water filled garbage can against a
hotel door. Coach Kluckhorn approaches.

COACH KLUCKHOHN

Bed check, gentlemen. Take that can
and dump it in the bathroom!

They oblige him. Coach Kluckhorn then KNOCKS on the door.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eating snacks on their beds are Beef Adams and Irish O'Grady.

COACH KLUCKHOHN (CONT'D)
Lights out, boys. Five minutes.

IRISH O'GRADY
Coach, where they got Brogie and
Evans hidden?

COACH KLUCKHOHN
Right in plain sight. They're in
the next room over.

IRISH O'GRADY
Them two rooming together on the
road is gonna' be a real nightmare
for the rest of us, Coach.

COACH KLUCKHOHN
Don't I know it.

BEEF ADAMS
Glad he ain't bunkin' with me.

COACH KLUCKHOHN
Me either.
(they all share a laugh)
Get some shut-eye.

Coach Kluckhorn exits. He takes a few steps, knocks on the
door of the next room over.

INT. WILLIE AND BROGAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Coach Kluckhorn enters. Both men are in their beds reading.

COACH KLUCKHOHN (CONT'D)
You boys good to go? We don't need
a repeat of silver spoon-fed
pansies kicking our ass again.

He shuts the light, exits. Brogan turns them on again,
reenters his bed, glances at the book Willie is reading.

BROGAN
Dr. King still in the hospital?

WILLIE
Stab wound just missed his heart.

BROGAN

Caught him on TV a few weeks ago.
He was powerful, man. Real
powerful. What's his book about?

WILLIE

It's about a Negro woman named Rosa
Parks -- who one day just wanted to
ride the bus home from work. And
how eighteen months later with
Dr. King's help, the Supreme Court
passed *Browder vs. Gayle*
forbidding racial segregation
on all Montgomery busses.

BROGAN

That's righteous, Ev --

Suddenly, a large rock SMASHES through their second floor
window SHATTERING glass throughout the room.

Brogan and Willie quickly exit their beds, RACIAL SLURS
hurling at them. Both men immediately get dressed then make
their way toward the now non-existent picture window.

Outside the window several YOUNG MEN continue their
onslaught of RACIAL SLURS, some hurling raw eggs at Willie
and Brogan. Brogan gets PELTED in the chest with two eggs.

YOUNG MAN I

Irish eyes aren't smilin' on you,
nigger lover!

Bottini and several players SMASH through the door. Livid,
Willie glances toward an egg soaked Brogan then sprints out
the door, the other players struggling to keep up.

EXT. HOTEL WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

The cowards scamper into the woods in back of the hotel.
Undaunted, Willie tracks down a STRAGGLER, slamming him HARD
to the ground at the wood's edge. Willie spins the man
around. About to strike, he gets a glimpse of the man's face.

WILLIE

(disbelief)
How old are you?

TEEN BOY

(terrified)
Fourteen, Sir!

WILLIE

Go on, beat it. Beat it!

The teen runs off. The UB players finally reach Willie.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
They split into the woods.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Brogan shuts the light switch off in this palatial suite. He moves to his bed. An introspective Willie is already in his.

WILLIE
Brogie?

BROGAN
Yeah?

WILLIE
Rooming with me on the road, you may not sleep too well this season.

BROGAN
That's cool. But I'm thinking more about these plush accommodations.

WILLIE
What we're doing is no joke, partner. Things could get crass.

Brogan glances toward a distraught Willie. He gets up, turns on the light, then sits at the edge of his teammate's bed.

BROGAN
One night our platoon was surrounded by it seemed like half the Red Army. We fought all night trapped in our foxholes like little rats. But there was this one black guy, Bobby Greene from Harlem. Let everyone know it, too. He just turned eighteen, same as me. Anyway, Bobby kept running between fox holes that night resupplying our unit with enough ammo to hold til' morning. Did all that with three bullet holes in his back. Never complained, not even once. Bobby Greene from Harlem never made it back with us. There are no racists in fox holes, Ev. And there shouldn't be anywhere else either.

Trickling down Willie's face are several tears.

INT. HARVARD STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (HARVARD STADIUM - SEPTEMBER 27TH, 1958)

A rain-soaked field. The scoreboard reads: HARVARD 3 VISITORS 0. A strong POLICE presence encircles the field. A stockpile of racial signs inhabit the ground by the entrance. TWO OFFICERS guard them. In the press box is UB radio commentator, fast-talking, enthusiastic MIKE BAYLESS, (25).

MIKE BAYLESS

With time running out in the third quarter of this defensive struggle, it's fourth and five for Harvard from their own 9-yard line. A short punt here, or a turnover could be a real game-changer for our boys.

INSIDE THE DEFENSIVE HUDDLE -

Brogan continues instructing his troops.

BROGAN

...Bear, engage your man then chip off and occupy the end. Willie, you sprint in and take out their middle blocker. The center's mine. Irish, you breach through anyway you can.

IRISH O'GRADY

(glares at Willie)

Use that Negro black ass speed of yours and bury that daisy puller.

Irish O'Grady glances at SAMPSON "SAM" SANDERS, bowling ball frame, (21), retreating to one knee.

IRISH O'GRADY (CONT'D)

God helps those who help themselves, Sammy.

NICK BOTTINI

He'll punish you for that, Joe.

IRISH O'GRADY

Just tell'em to wait til' I block the God damn kick.

The teams line up. The ball is snapped. Bear Dempsey takes out TWO MEN, as Willie sprints in and buries his MAN. Brogan clenches the CENTER, allowing O'Grady to crawl between the center's legs. With a clear path to the punter, O'Grady BLOCKS the kick, routing it into the endzone. Nick Bottini captures it for the TD. The score: HARVARD 3 VISITORS 6.

INT. HARVARD STADIUM - LATER THAT DAY

10 seconds remain on the clock. It's 4th and goal on the UB 7-yard line. Harvard lines up for a field goal.

An angry Sue Michaels and her three hot COLLEGE FRIENDS CHEER their team on from the stands.

Offie shouts to his players from the sideline.

COACH OFFIE

Stay in your defense boys!

(to Coach Dunlop)

True warriors do not opt for a tie here, Freddie. Remember that one day when you're at the helm.

Abruptly, Harvard switches to its normal offense, running a pass option right. The QUARTERBACK fires the ball to an open RECEIVER in the endzone. At the last moment, Willie dives, deflecting the pass and causing it to fall innocently to the ground. The gun SOUNDS. 3,000 UB faithful STORM the field.

On the sideline is elated Buffalo Evening News reporter, CY KRITZER, late 40's. Well-seasoned, he speaks with Offie.

CY KRITZER

You just defeated the 17th ranked team in the country. Great call on the blocked punt, Coach.

COACH OFFIE

Our boys made that call. They were digging up a play to block the kick when Harvard got the ball.

CY KRITZER

Any comment on what occurred at the hotel last night?

COACH OFFIE

It was deplorable, Cy. Absolutely, deplorable. But the authorities were on the scene today and kept things in order.

CY KRITZER

You got Cortland up next. Our boys haven't defeated them in 15 years.

COACH OFFIE

If we can stay healthy, our boys can play with anybody.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The staunch POLICE presence continues, as dozens of FRIENDS and FAMILY say goodbye to the players boarding the team bus.

Off to the side and standing by the driver's side door of his 56 Cadillac is a fidgety Brogan. An agitated Sue Michaels sits behind the wheel. Her three girlfriends fill the remaining seats, Bukaty and Dempsey flirting with them.

BROGAN
How'd she handle driving here?

SUE MICHAELS
You treat her better than you treat me. She handled fine!

BROGAN
They were just ankle-biters, Sue.

Sue begins manipulating her engagement ring.

SUE MICHAELS
I am not living through an entire season of this.

Brogan hands Sue a twenty-dollar bill from his pocket.

BROGAN
Here. Fill the tank and take the girls out to dinner... you kids get whatever you want.

A disquieted Brogan then joins Willie at the bus. The two react, as the Cadillac PEELS off down the narrow road.

INT. BUS - DUSK

Transistor radios PLAY throughout the bus. Suddenly, Danny & The Juniors, "At The Hop" CHIMES in. Dempsey and Bukaty join in, as several players begin Jitterbugging with each other in the aisle. Offie glances back at the festivities, grins.

SPORTS HEADLINE: Bulls Gain National Fame, Upset Harvard!

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

In the back kitchen area dressed in her chef's clothes is Anna Evans. She proudly displays the article to her cohorts.

INT. SELECTIVE SERVICE WAITING AREA - DAY

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
William Evans.

Willie places the paper down, rises. A STAFF SERGEANT, 30's, fit and menacing, leads him into a small office.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Willie sits. The Sergeant takes out a letter from his desk.

STAFF SERGEANT

You haven't better things to occupy your time, Mr. Evans? You claim status change with the Sullivan case. Are you aware those five men, all brothers, went down with their ship in the Pacific?

WILLIE

My three brothers served in Korea --

STAFF SERGEANT

They all didn't die did they?!

WILLIE

No, sir.

(beat, then humbly)

Sergeant, I'd be content with taking the student deferment.

The Sergeant RIPS up the letter, tosses it onto the floor.

STAFF SERGEANT

Take your letter, and your lazy Negro black ass, and report as scheduled.

Keeping his anger in check, Willie calmly kneels and begins retrieving pieces of the letter.

WILLIE

This lazy Negro black ass has been working hard his whole life. I go to school full-time, and work full-time after football season. I have a wife...

(seething, rises)

...and sick little boy at home.

And no ignorant son-of-a-bitch is gonna' take me away from them. You hear me?

Then in one FELL SWOOP, Willie explodes, knocking several items off the Sergeant's desk and onto the floor.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I just want to be treated same as anybody else. Sir.

Willie retrieves a framed photo of the Sergeant with his family off the floor, places it back on the desk, then exits.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Willie sits at the table staring at a mountain of bills. Next to the bills rests his draft notice. Willie FLINGS the bills off the table, breaks down. Ethel Jean hugs him.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

That draft notice really weighed heavily on your mind.

WILLIE (O.S.)

Damn right it did! Military advisors my ass. Within a year, our boys were fighting right alongside the South Vietnamese.

BUFFALO EVENINGS NEWS: MAGGADINO, LA DUCA SOUGHT IN VAIN BY SUBPOENA SERVERS. Two Western New York men who have figured prominently in investigation of the Nov. 14th gathering at Appalachian no longer can be found by subpoena servers.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS: Monday October 6th, 1958. UB has 5 Quarterbacks, All Help Edge Cortland 7-6.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

You hadn't beaten Cortland in fifteen years. Offie had to be elated after this conquest.

WILLIE (O.S.)

I'm not sure elated is the appropriate word that applies here.

INT. FILM ROOM - DUSK

Perched on the back of a chair, and screaming at Nick Bottini is Offie. Game film plays on the screen in front of them.

COACH OFFIE

...you spaghetti bender! Who told you to run a flag route on that play?! You could have gotten Bukaty killed! God damn, son-of --

Suddenly, Offie falls backwards off the chair, SMASHING hard onto his back. He lies there motionless on the floor.

COACH DUNLOP
Somebody get Dr. Anain right away.

Moments Later, the trainer and DR. JOE ANAIN, Lebanese, late 20's, triage Coach Offie. The two men painstakingly wrap his back, then cautiously remove him from the film session.

NICK BOTTINI
God struck him down. The same way
he struck Saul down from his horse.
He can do that you know.

WILLIE (O.S.)
Both Nick and Bull were very
religious. I believe they attended
services every morning.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
What happened to Offie?

EXT CITY STREETS - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - OCTOBER 13TH, 2008)

The two men stroll through Willie's old neighborhood. The area is somewhat desolate with dilapidated buildings, etc.

WILLIE
They put him in traction. He stayed
that way until the Friday before we
left for Western Reserve.

Two BLACK MALE TEENAGERS cruise by in a black sedan, their radio BLARING. They approach Willie, lower their music.

TEENAGER I
Hey, teach!

TEENAGER II
Hi, Mr. Evans. How's the wife?
Your sons -- their latest CD...
(points to stereo)
...it's jammin'.

TEENAGER I
Got my SAT scores back. UB's
looking pretty promising.

WILLIE
Good for you, Darnell.

Willie glances at teenager II, a hardened ADDISON, (18). He's confident behind the wheel.

ADDISON

College ain't my thing, Mr. Evans.
Been scopin' for a job though but --

WILLIE

But nothing. Education gives a man
the freedom to determine his own
fate, son.

ADDISON

Even a young colored one? The
unemployment rate for our kind is
50 percent -- GED or not.

Willie glances past the car, notices several BLACK MEN, 20's,
gathered on the street corner. He turns to Addison.

WILLIE

Call me, Friday.

Addison nods then slowly drives away, the radio CRANKING once
again. Willie turns toward Maggio. The men continue on,
stopping in front of a timeworn one-story dwelling.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

(reflective, grins)

Six of us lived there. It seemed
so much bigger back then. We had
some celebrated times though.
Unfortunately, most of which my
parents never got to experience.

MAGGIO

Your father away a lot?

WILLIE

He passed when I was five.

(beat)

My mother was though. Three months
at a stretch. She worked on the
railroad nearly forty years... even
made it to head chef. In grade
school, I had a summer pass to
travel on the train. She and I
journeyed all over together. Then
the pass expired when I began high
school -- a company mandate.

(beat)

You're not from around these parts
are you, Frank?

MAGGIO

Orlando, Florida. Born and raised.

WILLIE
You have family there?

MAGGIO
I'm an only child. My mom passed my senior year at Colgate. And as for my father... well, let's just say things haven't blossomed out too well there.

Visibly upset, Maggio picks up a soda can, FLINGS it hard into a garbage receptacle, then snaps at Willie.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)
Okay if we continue on with the interview now, Mr. Evans?

WILLIE
We faced Western Reserve next. Brogie and I had gone out to get something to eat...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: (OCTOBER 10TH, 1958)

Approaching their door, sandwiches in hand, are Willie and Brogan. Willie places a key into the door lock.

Emerging from the back stairway, heading toward the boys are four intimidating BLACK MEN, all dressed in dark suits. Stepping forward, wearing dark-rimmed glasses and a composed demeanor is 35-year-old BERTRAM AUSTIN.

BERTRAM AUSTIN
Mr. Evans. I'm Bertram Austin with the NAACP. Would it be feasible for you and Mr. Brogan to speak with us for a few moments?

WILLIE
Is this about the Harvard incident?

BERTRAM AUSTIN
No, I'm afraid we were not informed of that "incident" until some time thereafter.

WILLIE
Right. You gentlemen need tickets to the game or something?

The four men share a collective LAUGH.

BERTRAM AUSTIN
I was not informed of your finespun
sense of humor, Mr. Evans.

Willie stands there puzzled.

BROGAN
I think these gentlemen are here to
discuss our "rooming" arrangements.

WILLIE
Mr. Austin?

BERTRAM AUSTIN
In conjunction with other things.

WILLIE
Such as?

BERTRAM AUSTIN
Such as, how have your teammates,
school and Buffalo reacted to a
colored harboring with a white man?

WILLIE
My teammates, school and the city
of Buffalo have always been very
hospitable toward me.

BERTRAM AUSTIN
Does that hospitality include a
Detective Ryan as well?

WILLIE
There is nothing you, or your
organization can do about, Mr. Ryan
-- or his breed for that matter.

Willie enters his room. Brogan stays back with Austin.

BROGAN
You really wanna' help us?

Brogan closes the door, then leads Austin down the hallway.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (OCTOBER 11TH, 1958)

With his tone strangely upbeat and encouraging, Offie mingles
in with his players; SMACKING leather, PATTING backsides.

COACH OFFIE

Years from now when you boys
 reflect upon this second half and
 believe me you will; you will not
 ponder on whether you won or lost,
 but your thoughts will focus on the
 intestinal fortitude you exhibited
 here today. If you go back out
 there and shit the bed, that smell,
 too will remain with you forever.
 But you won't... because you men
 have character! And heart! And
 courage! Now let's return to the
 battlefield and take it to them
 like there's no God damn tomorrow!

The shocked players erupt: SLAPPING helmets, PUNCHING pads,
 ROARING like lions embarking on a feeding frenzy.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Western Reserve sweeps right. The RUNNER crosses the line.
 Willie quickly takes out his ankles, flipping the player 360
 degrees. O'Grady nods an unassuming approval toward Willie.

In the stands, Western Reserve FANS seated in the UB section
 bombard Willie with RACIAL SLURS. Suddenly, cups of beer are
 hurled at the HECKLERS by several UB FANS. A full fisticuffs
 ensues, the police quickly moving in to break-up the ruckus.

A saddened Willie lowers his head at mid-field.

Western Reserve then punts to Willie, who returns the kick
 ten yards before being HAMMERED out of bounds by 3 DEFENDERS.

INSIDE THEIR OFFENSIVE HUDDLE -

GORDO BUKATY

Paper shaker's eyeing me, Bear.

BEAR DEMPSEY

I'll get her digits.

BULL REALE

I don't know if you two odd balls
 noticed it or not, but we're in
 a God damn war out here!

GORDO BUKATY

I'd prefer small conflict. Okay, 34
 fake dive, roll out right. Willie,
 you fake the pitch left --
 (off Bull's unease)
 Bull, they're keying him.

BULL REALE

It's your ass.

The team approaches the scrimmage line. Bukaty fakes the dive to Brogan, the pitch to Willie then sweeps right. He gains 12 yards then is SLAMMED out of bounds by TWO DEFENDERS. Bukaty staggers up, removes a glob of mud from his face mask. In front of him stands the stunning Western Reserve CHEERLEADER.

GORDO BUKATY

The universe has determined our fate. Our need to get together.

The girl vamps back. A smitten Bukaty returns to the huddle.

GORDO BUKATY (CONT'D)

Okay, this time, let'em all in.
Fake 32 dive, halfback screen left.

At the line, Gordo Bukaty fakes the dive, releases a screen pass to Willie. Bukaty is buried by THREE DEFENDERS, as Willie picks up several devastating blocks then scampers 65 yards to pay dirt. WESTERN RESERVE 6 VISITORS 10.

INT. BRUNNER'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Conversing at a large table are: Willie and Ethel Jean, Razor Paolini and CHRISTA, (20), Bull Reale and DONNA, (20). Also present, Irish O'Grady and ELAINE, (19), Beef Adams and his wife, DIANE, (23), Brogan and Sue. The girls are dressed in swing skirts, monogrammed blouses and saddle shoes.

On the jukebox, "In The Mood" kicks in. The group rises and begins dancing, *The Jitterbug*.

Entering the tavern dancing together are Gordo Bukaty and Bear Dempsey. Brogan joins them at the bar.

GORDO BUKATY

(to bartender)
Chuckie, brewskis' all around!

Gordo Bukaty removes several crumpled bills from his pocket.

BROGAN

Figured you two for still swapping spit in Cleveland.

BEAR DEMPSEY

Brogie, gaze your eyes upon pure genius. Not only did that tumbler have a classy chassis, but her roommate was -- how would you describe her, Gordo?

GORDO BUKATY
Fast, easy... statuesque?

BEAR DEMPSEY
(defensive)
There was nothin' stiff about her.

Bear Dempsey grabs a pitcher full of beer off the bar and guzzles it down. Several leather clad community COLLEGE STUDENTS enter. A COLOSSAL MAN, irate, 20's, approaches.

COLOSSAL MAN
Give us back what we lost and I let
you walk outta' here in one piece.

Gordo Bukaty dismisses the man, pours himself a beer. The man swats the beer out of his hand, splashing it on Bukaty's suit. Irish O'Grady and the UB players charge to their teammates aid. Bear Dempsey, pitcher in hand, steps in.

BEAR DEMPSEY
No need to rattle your cage, boys.

COLOSSAL MAN
The bastard cheated me. Those dice
were stacked.

Bull Reale petitions Gordo Bukaty.

BULL REALE
Maybe you should just give him --

GORDO BUKATY
I wasn't cheating, Bull.

COLOSSAL MAN
And you're a dumb Polack!

GORDO BUKATY
Maybe so, but I wasn't cheatin'.
Inform him that he needs to
apologize for calling me a cheater.
If he apologizes, I'll release it
to the universe. Otherwise...

BULL REALE
Look, just apologize for calling
him a cheat, and he'll forget the
whole thing.

COLOSSAL MAN
He'll forget the whole thing? He's
got my hard-earned bread!

Charlie Tirone intercedes.

CHARLIE TIRONE
What do people address you as?

LARGE MAN
What?! Skip, why?

The UB players CHUCKLE. Willie joins the proceedings.

CHARLIE TIRONE
Skip, we'd prefer not to engage
in a physical confrontation.

SKIP
You makin' fun of me?

WILLIE
We're simply seeking a compromise.

A GREASER, 20's, dressed in leather, gets in Willie's grill.

GREASER
(mockingly)
Nigger boy gets hisself' a fo' year
education, think he' above us now?

GORDO BUKATY
The apology offer has now been
officially rescinded.

Bear drenches the greaser with a pitcher of beer. The worked-up UB players and the locals then spill out the front door, the barkeep reaching for the phone, PDQ.

EXT. BAR ALLEY - NIGHT

Bear Dempsey TACKLES Skip into the wall, as Bull Reale takes out the Greaser with a right hook. Brogan, Willie, Razor Paolini, Irish O'Grady and the other players manhandle the remaining aggressors, PUMMELING them to the concrete ground.

With the RUMBLE in full force, the WAILING sounds of police sirens can be heard in the distance.

Moments Later, with the red lights upon them, the community college students hurriedly withdraw. Bear calls out to them.

BEAR DEMPSEY
You JC candy-ass greasers all
probably got outstanding warrants!

Two police cars HALT in front of the boys. Officer Tom Juliano exits, approaches a tattered Paolini and Skip.

OFFICER JULIANO
Who you hoodlums poundin' on now,
Razor?

RAZOR PAOLINI
Nothin' for your guys to trouble
over, Tommy. Just tossin' the
pigskin around.

OFFICER JULIANO
What's your tale?

SKIP
The game was tied when you fellahs
showed up.

OFFICER JULIANO
Uh-huh. Go on, beat it.

Skip exits. Officer Juliano then addresses the other
disheveled UB players, as an unmarked car arrives on scene.

OFFICER JULIANO (CONT'D)
Nice job beaten' Western Reserve,
gentlemen. Made an extra ten spot
on you overachievers.

Officer Juliano is joined by now Detective John Ryan.

OFFICER JULIANO (CONT'D)
Nothing here, Detective.

Ryan marches a few steps with Juliano.

DETECTIVE RYAN
That's why you'll always be
a flatfoot, Juliano -- no balls.

Juliano rejoins the uniforms. The two police units exit.

Detective Ryan then accosts Willie, ordering him to a side of
the building. The UB players, unsure what to do, remain back.
Ryan begins frisking the star athlete.

DETECTIVE RYAN (CONT'D)
I hear you kids played a solid
game today. Might even be
victorious in a few more this
season. Now, I'm bettin' three
ways to Sunday, you had somethin'
to do with startin' this ruckus.

WILLIE
You're the crack sleuth here.

Detective Ryan grabs Willie's left arm, coercing it behind the athlete's back. He then SLAMS Willie hard into the wall.

DETECTIVE RYAN

Don't crack wise with me, boy!

Ryan continues the pat down then elbows Willie in the kidneys. Enraged, Willie abruptly turns and coils to strike.

DETECTIVE RYAN (CONT'D)

Bet you'd love to kick my mick ass right now, wouldn't you? Go ahead, Mullinjon', give it your best shot.

Willie springs toward Ryan, then at the last second is tackled to the ground by Brogan. The others players quickly envelop their teammate, protecting him from the Detective.

BULL REALE

Holster that badge and I'd like a little piece of the action.

Outnumbered, handcuffs at the ready, Ryan finally relents.

DETECTIVE RYAN

You'll screw up again, Evans. You coloreds always do.

He storms off. Brogan turns to Willie.

BROGAN

Guy needs a home-grown beatin'. What's his beef with you anyway?

WILLIE

I embarrassed him when I was a kid. He's been on my ass ever since.

INT. BRUNNER'S BAR - NIGHT

At the bar shooting dice with TWO DRUNK PATRONS is Bukaty. The perturbed players approach, stare him down.

GORDO BUKATY

What? I knew you cats had things under control. Hey, I'm buyin'.

Bukaty takes a pitcher and immediately begins pouring beers for his teammates. Bear Dempsey vaults onto the bar, is handed a pitcher of beer, then raises it high into the air.

BEAR DEMPSEY

Us against the world, baby!!

Bear begins drinking. The players CHEER him on, as Sue Michaels advances, SLAPS Brogie in the face then storms out.

EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Brogan catches up with Sue, spinning her around.

BROGAN
What's up your skirt, girl?!

SUE MICHAELS
I'm through, Bill. It's over.

Willie and Ethel Jean exit the bar. Suddenly, Brogan glimpses toward the parking lot and is shocked to see his trashed Cadillac. With the windows smashed and the tires flattened, spray painted on the door is: PORCH MONKEY LOVER!

Brogan sprints toward his car, bellows out.

BROGAN (CONT'D)
Fuuuuuck!!

He falls to his knees. Willie, Sue and Ethel Jean approach.

SUE MICHAELS
You still think you two "rooming" together was such a grand idea?

ETHEL JEAN
Welcome to our world, Sue. We breathe it everyday.

SUE MICHAELS
(angry, crying)
Well, I don't! One of you two is going to get killed. And I'd prefer to skip that game if you don't mind.

She takes off her engagement ring, flings it at Brogan then rushes off. A concerned Ethel Jean glares at her husband.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Dressed in street clothes, Anna Evans enters the station.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

On two successive run plays, Razor Paolini misses two blocks, his man causing Brogan and then Willie to fumble the ball.

On the next play, Gordo Bukaty throws an interception. Offie throws down his clipboard, sprints to the center of the field, and begins dragging players out of the huddle.

COACH OFFIE

You boys think Baldwin-Wallace is gonna' roll over because you had a couple of good games?!

(glares at Bukaty)

Listen, you little Polack, look off your primary receiver. Paolini, get your wop head out of your ass and make those blocks! Strike me down dead, Lord -- end my misery.

Offie retreats. He then abruptly stops, turns.

GORDO BUKATY

Here it comes.

OFFIE

We will execute with expert precision, as did Romulus in his conquest over the Phoenicians in the Peloponnesian war.

GORDO

We will execute with expert precision, as did Romulus in his conquest over the Phoenicians in the Peloponnesian war.

COACH OFFIE (CONT'D)

And if that requires us to stay here all night to achieve that goal then by God we shall do it.

(to Coach Kluckhorn)

A-Frame and heavy bag. Then set up for a full-contact scrimmage.

Bottini and Bull Reale approach a despondent Razor Paolini.

NICK BOTTINI

What's up? You okay, man?

RAZOR PAOLINI

Yeah... that guy's a real prick.

(beat)

We just learned my mom has breast cancer. They want to operate and start some kind of radiation treatments.

BULL REALE

Sorry to hear that. Nick and I will keep her in our prayers.

NICK BOTTINI
 God can do wondrous things, Razor.

MONTAGE:

Forearms SMASH into the hanging telephone pole. Other players PUMMEL the heavy bag filled with concrete.

Within minutes, the team is exhausted; collapsing to their knees, dry heaving, etc. Coach Kluckhorn BLOWS his whistle. The team struggles to line up for a scrimmage.

In the bleachers, an appalled Hitchcock and Peele react.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (HOMECOMING - OCTOBER 18TH, 1958)

The stadium is filled to capacity.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
 Any thoughts on what derailed you
 boys in that Baldwin-Wallace game?

QUARTER 3: UB 0 VISITORS 19. With 3 minutes to go, UB recovers a fumble then turns it over on the very next play.

WILLIE (O.S.)
 Reflecting back on it now, I think
 we were just tired. The players,
 coaches... even, Mr. Offenhamer.

QUARTER 4: The gun sounds ending the game. UB 0 VISITORS 26.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
 Offie must have gone ballistic
 after that performance.

WILLIE (O.S.)
 At first... yes, that's about
 right.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The players BURST in, some reacting with dismay, others HURLING equipment and anything else not nailed down. With veins bulging from his neck, Offie enters; grabs helmets, pads, etc., and wildly begins FIRING them around the room.

COACH OFFIE
 You sons-of-bitches embarrassed
 your school, your families and most
 importantly, you embarrassed
 yourselves out there today!

Out of items, he continues his tirade.

COACH OFFIE (CONT'D)

One does not measure a man's success by how high he climbs, but how high he bounces back when he hits bottom! We hit bottom out there today. The question is, what are we gonna' do about it?

WILLIE (O.S.)

Then, Mr. Offenhamer did something I thought I'd never see.

Offie heads toward his office, stops, modestly turns.

COACH OFFIE

(apologetic)

We as coaches need to have a high standard of excellence. And today we did not live up to that standard. We failed you boys out there this afternoon. I failed you. This old war horse will not be out-flanked again.

Offie enters his office, SLAMMING the door shut behind him.

BEEF ADAMS

I ain't buying that shit. You guys don't wanna' confront the bastard, I will. Halfway through a game, and we got nothin' else to give.

IRISH O'GRADY

(pleads to Beef Adams)

I'm way too little to be playing at this level, Beef.

Bull Reale and Nick Bottini warily approach the closed door. Both men freeze. Gordo Bukaty KNOCKS on it for them.

OFFIE (O.S.)

What, God damn it?!

BULL REALE

It's Lou and Nick, Coach.

The door opens slightly. The two enter, the door closing behind them. Offie's SCREAMING can be heard; then silence.

WILLIE (O.S.)

Things were never the same after that day.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
How do you mean?

WILLIE (O.S.)
Well, we practiced as hard as ever.
But I think we may have hit once,
perhaps twice a week for the
remainder of the season. The credit
goes to Mr. Offenhamer. He changed.
And we did, too.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
How so?

WILLIE (O.S.)
We began to have fun.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The offense runs plays with expert precision. Offie BLOWS his whistle, sending the team in with daylight to spare.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Gordo Bukaty and Willie sit in the back row, as a PROFESSOR, eclectic, 40's, writes poetry terms on the blackboard. A snowed Bukaty slips a note to a BEAUTY sitting in front of him. She reads the rhyme, returns it with her number.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The Defiant Ones plays on the screen. Shackled together, sprinting from the law are, SIDNEY POITIER and TONY CURTIS. In the audience, the UB players ROOT the men on.

INT. OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Entrenched behind his desk, Offie studies game film.

SPORTS NEWSPAPER ARTICLE READS: Saturday (OCTOBER 25TH, 1958)

Bulls Have 'Unbeaten Record for Columbia' Only Conqueror Used an Ineligible Player.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (CIVIC STADIUM: BUFFALO, NY - OCTOBER 25TH, 1958)

A packed stadium marvels, as TWO STUDENTS trot onto the field with BUSTER THE BULL, two chains affixed to the animal's reins. Standing at mid-field is gorgeous actress, ELIZABETH TAYLOR, (26).

ELIZABETH TAYLOR

I'd like to extend my congratulations and offer the University of Buffalo this brand new mascot. Hopefully it will bring the team good fortune throughout the rest of your season. And please, if you folks get a chance, come out and see my new movie, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. It stars myself and an incredible young actor named Paul Newman.

At the sideline, a transfixed Bukaty gazes at Taylor.

BEAR DEMPSEY

20-spot you ain't scorin' that.

GORDO BUKATY

A fool and his money soon part.

AD Jim Peele stands with Buffalo News Reporter, Cy Kritzer.

JIM PEELE

As far as we're concerned, the Baldwin-Wallace game, the game has been played, the score recorded. We'll take no action, no action in this case, but we'll accept the decision, the decision of the NCAA. Mr. Finowksi however is twenty-four years old and did play three years of Municipal ball with the -- with the Cleveland Browns Taxi Squad.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

On the first play, with Gordo Bukaty falling down, and TWO DEFENDERS tugging at his feet, he flips a shuffle pass to Willie. Willie veers in and out of traffic, picking up BLOCKS then scampers 35 yards for the game's first touchdown.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER THAT DAY

The scoreboard reads: UB 20 VISITORS 14. Quarter 3.

MIKE BAYLESS (O.S.)

Bulls' fans, it's anybody's play at this juncture. UB, a fourteen point underdog in today's match up, has more than held their own. It's fourth and three for Columbia at the UB forty-five.

Columbia approaches the line of scrimmage.

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

The quarterback receives the snap,
and pitches to Federspiel. With a
convoy leading, Federspiel's on
his way. Suddenly, Bukaty slices
through, submarining the star
halfback for a two yard loss! UB
will take over on downs!

On the ensuing play, Willie forges 50 yards up the middle,
BARRELLING over TWO DEFENDERS for UB's fourth touchdown. The
crowd ERUPTS. The score: UB 27 VISITORS 14.

INT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

In the back kitchen area, listening to a portable radio, Anna
Evans and the BLACK KITCHEN CREW celebrate Willie's score.
They clutch their fists, CRYING OUT silently.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

In the stands are a proud Ethel Jean, other players wives and
their girlfriends. Sue Michaels is nowhere to be found.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Players hug, drench each other in beer, water, etc.

CY KRITZER

What do you think of your team
now, Coach?

COACH OFFIE

The smack of leather was real
music down there. I'm proud of my
boys.

CY KRITZER

Today, Baldwin-Wallace officially
forfeited last week's game against
you. Were you aware of that?

COACH OFFIE

To me, we lost the football game.
And the score of 26-0 will remain
that way as far as I'm concerned.
But I'll leave the final decision
to the players.

CY KRITZER

The players, Coach?

COACH OFFIE

They're grown men in this locker room, Cy. Old enough to fight in battle. They'll decide on whether or not to accept the forfeit.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - OCTOBER 17TH, 2008)

A crowded restaurant. At a corner booth, Maggio washes down his chicken wings with a glass of scotch, Willie, a soda. The owner, MARIO, late 60's, personable, stands at the table.

MARIO

And how are Bobbie and the kids?

WILLIE

All good, thank you.

MARIO

I saw you on TV the other day. The last big thing we had in here was President Clinton.

WILLIE

Mario, I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, Frank Maggio.

Maggio nods. A WAITER approaches Mario. He speaks to him a moment, turns.

MARIO

Never a dull moment. Great seeing you again, Willie. Mr. Maggio.

Mario and the waiter exit. Willie places a twenty-dollar bill on the table.

WILLIE

He's steadfast on my never getting a bill.

(beat, concerned)

See you at the game tomorrow?

Maggio gives him a thumbs up. Willie glances at the scotch glass then exits. A moment later, Mario returns.

MARIO

Something else you'd like, Mr. Maggio?

(Maggio nods)

I'll send your waiter right over.

MAGGIO

Excuse me, Mario. Did you ask Willie how Bobbie and the kids were? I thought his wife's name was Ethel Jean.

MARIO

Jeannie passed from cancer in 1972.

Mario hurries off. Maggio sits there in stunned silence, his hand on the empty scotch glass. The waiter approaches.

WAITER

Another drink, Sir?

Maggio nods yes. He picks up the scotch glass, spins the ice cubes a moment, then begins staring through the glass.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: (20 YEARS EARLIER)

Sitting at a table is a stunning, elegant BLACK WOMAN in her mid 20's. Across from her, an engrossed FRANK MAGGIO, (28).

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Your scotch, Sir. Sir?

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The bliss turns to reality, as Maggio squints up, the waiter standing over him. He grabs the scotch, downs it quickly.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maggio slouches in a chair, his vacant stare burning a hole through an old movie playing on the TV. Post-it pads, detailed notes on most of them, lay scattered on the bed, floor, and on a corkboard against a corner wall.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (HOMECOMING - OCTOBER 18TH, 2008)

The scoreboard indicates: UB 17 ARMY 24. A little over five minutes remain in the contest. Army is at UB's 24-yard line.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

The Cadets cannot score here if UB has any prospects of securing a bowl game this season. And with the 1958 squad being honored here today at halftime... well, Big Lou?

High atop in a private box, Willie and a hung-over Maggio.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
 This could be Deja' Vu all over
 again with the '58 Bulls losing to
 Baldwin-Wallace in their homecoming
 game -- screw that! Fumble on the
 next play! Cable, Dickie Boy.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
 Mooney gets the pitch off right
 tackle... fumble! Hawkins picks up
 the ball for UB at the fifteen!
 He's at the twenty... the thirty --
 gets a crushing block at mid-field,
 and then dances his way down the
 right sideline, before finally
 being ridden out-of-bounds at the
 Army twenty-four!

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
 Right corner's lame, bad hamstring.

INSIDE THE HUDDLE -

Willy eyes Starks and Roosevelt.

DREW WILLY
 Trips left, flank right, fake 22
 dive. Starksie, really sell it.
 Their corner's got a bad wheel.
 Rosie, it's all you on the fade.

UB lines up in the shotgun spread offense.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
 Willy takes the snap, fakes the
 dive to Starks, then rolls right.
 Roosevelt's got his man beat down
 the right sideline. Willy sees him,
 throws the fade... and it's caught
 by Roosevelt for the touchdown!

The stadium ERUPTS, as the UB players maul Roosevelt.

INSIDE THE BOOTH -

BIG LOU DEVINO
 Fourth year of a five-year plan.
 Can't let the '58 squad down.

DICK BEAMISH
 You're starting to make this
 naysayer a believer, Big Lou.

Beamish grabs a good-sized chicken wing off the large plate positioned in front of Big Lou and TEARS into it.

INT. STADIUM - LATER THAT DAY

The scoreboard reads: OVERTIME: UB 27 ARMY 24. The Army KICKER lines up for the field goal attempt.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
Campbell needs to make this fifty-one yarder to send the game into a second overtime or Buffalo wins.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)
Put the dog out, the milk bottle on the steps, and send those little rug rats to bed. This one's toast.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)
The snap is clean. Campbell kicks it. The ball's on its way... with plenty of leg. But it's no good, folks! It's short?! The ball just seemed to die there, Big Lou.

BIG LOU (O.S.)
Divine intervention, Dickie Boy.

INT. STADIUM PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Willie and Maggio's focus is on the field. The two teams have dropped to a knee and are engaged in a prayer together.

WILLIE
"What a piece of work is man."

MAGGIO
"How infinite in faculty."
(knowing smile, then)
What really transpired that week before the Temple game, Mr. Evans?

The horror on his face sudden, Willie freezes. Maggio sees this, places his hand on Willie's shoulder.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)
Bear told me the events kicked off with the vote on Monday.

MONTAGE: A series of newspaper articles and news clips.

TV NEWS CLIP: Of ELVIS PRESLEY'S GI haircut: Fort Chaffee Barling, Ark. (Elvis's, "Don't" PLAYS in the background)

TV COMMERCIAL CLIP: Of WHAM-O introducing the HULA HOOP.

BUFFALO NEWS SPORTS COMMENT: OCTOBER 25TH, 1958

Spirited, Dynamic These UB Bulls -- By Evening New Sports
Writer CY KRITZER From the SQUAWK to the talk of the town.
That's the saga of the University of Buffalo football team.
Bulls have 'Unbeaten Record for Columbia' --

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: (CLARK GYMNASIUM - OCTOBER 26TH, 1958)

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
-- only conqueror used an
ineligible player.

The entire team is seated in cramped desk chairs. A spirited
Beef Adams continues reading from the newspaper article.

BEEF ADAMS (CONT'D)
The 24-year-old Finowski married
and the father of a five-month-old
daughter, finished his high school
career in 1953.

BEAR DEMPSEY
Beef, you finished high school in
'53. And you're married with two
kids.

BEEF ADAMS
I didn't play three years of Muni-
ball in Cleveland. Some of those
guys play on the taxi squad for the
Browns. Last I heard they had a
bona fide team and coach in Paul
Brown. I say we grab the win,
snatch four more, then cut out to
a bowl game on national TV.

IRISH O'GRADY
Where I hail from, South Buffalo --
you whine about a loss, somebody
happily jacks you up, then stabs
you in the back with a blade.

CHARLIE TIRONE
It is totally feasible that we
could win our next four encounters.

BULL REALE
Willie?

WILLIE
I played horribly that day.

GORDO BUKATY
"To Thine Own Self Be True."
I hear you, Willie. Bad Karma
to grab a victory this way.

Out of breath, in steps Brogan. He nods to Bull Reale then takes a seat. Reale continues.

BULL REALE
Unanimous vote -- one way or the
other. If not, RWO makes the call.

The players quickly take up the vote, writing YES or NO on the paper ballots lying on the desks in front of them.

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Bull Reale and Nick Bottini finish the counting.

BULL REALE
Forty-four in favor of taking
the loss, one against.

Several players HECKLE and throw pencils at Beef Adams.

BEEF ADAMS
Hey, it's my right! I served in
Korea same as Finowski.

BULL REALE
Offie makes the call on this one.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
When I spoke with Brogie, he
informed me of your draft status,
and what the team did for you that
following day. He never told you?

WILLIE (O.S.)
We've not spoken on the subject.

INT. SELECTIVE SERVICE CENTER WAITING AREA - DAY

Brogan strategizes with NAACP official, Bertram Austin. Behind them, most of UB football team waits impatiently.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Each of the players, beginning with Brogan, place their draft cards on the desk in front of the Staff Sergeant.

WILLIE (O.S.)
That would account for the letter I
received a few days later.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Willie places his books on the table. Ethel Jean hands him a letter from Selective Services. Willie opens it, revealing his new status, 4F. He hugs his wife then picks up his son, (that COUGH ever-present) raising him high into the air.

MAGGIO (O.S.)
Hoorah for you, Mr. Evans. Good for
you, Sir.
(beat)
That following Thursday... how did
things really go down?

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

A jovial Willie strolls down Main street.

WILLIE (O.S.)
I remember striding home that day
feeling upbeat. I had scored well
on two tests, and the coaches had
ended practice early.

A yellow school bus, filled with upscale high school CAUCASIAN BOYS dressed in school uniforms, passes by Willie then turns right onto East Ferry.

Several BLACK TEENAGERS sing A CAPELLA in front of Tasman Cleaners. Other BLACK KIDS hang around Wall's Bakery.

Suddenly, a side window opens on the bus. An arrogant TEENAGE BOY whirls his head out the window.

TEENAGE BOY I
Hey, Porch Monkeys! How does it
feel knowin' you punks will always
be poor?!

The black teens ignore him, continue with their singing.

Another TEENAGE BOY'S head appears outside the bus window.

TEENAGE BOY II
And living in the ghetto... you
eggplant charcoal bastards!

Outside the bakery, a tall, well built BLACK TEEN grabs a rock and whips it at the bus, SHATTERING the window and launching broken glass into the face of the second orator.

His face bloodied, the boy SCREAMS out in pain. Several windows open, RACIAL SLURS emitting from all directions.

Several black teens then bombard the bus with more rocks, CRACKING additional windows. Willie sprints to the teenagers, swiftly getting all but one to stop their onslaught.

On the bus, the terrified boys retreat under their seats, as a frazzled CAUCASIAN BUS DRIVER, 50's, grabs for his radio.

BUS DRIVER

(frantic, into radio)

This is Andrews in 327! Bunch of colored kids just attacked my bus with rocks -- several children hurt! I'm at Main and East Ferry.

Unexpectedly, a rock SHATTERS the front window. The bus driver, his view now obstructed, barely avoids the well built attacker standing in front of him. The driver then SIDESWIPES several parked cars, before finally exiting the scene.

The teenager who smashed the front window stands triumphant in the middle of the street. He is boisterous and defiant, 19-year-old MALCOLM WASHINGTON. He confronts Willie.

MALCOLM

Don't be sidin' with them crackers now, Evans -- cause' we was just mindin' our business.

Willie stares through Malcolm, forcing him back a few steps.

WILLIE

Your choice on where you're headed, Malcolm. They ain't going with you.
(to group)
Go on, split. Cut out before the heat comes. Now!

The teens rush off, as several STORE OWNERS and PARENTS converge on the scene. Several of the teens then stop, proudly BOASTING their exploits to whomever will listen.

Suddenly, a slew of squad cars blanket the street from all directions. With their guns drawn and batons at the ready, dozens of POLICE OFFICERS exit their vehicles and immediately begin beating down and arresting several of the teens.

Moments Later, several unmarked police vehicles converge on the scene. Exiting one of cars is Detective Ryan. He approaches a uniform. He is 5'6", wiry and weathered, SERGEANT JOE O'GRADY SR., 40'S.

DETECTIVE RYAN
You got a handle on the scum that
started this anarchy, O'Grady?

SERGEANT O'GRADY
Ain't nobody squealing, Detective.

DETECTIVE RYAN
Fine. Take'm in.

SERGEANT O'GRADY
Take in who?

DETECTIVE RYAN
Them. The escaped animals.
(gestures to crowd)
The whole lot of them!

O'Grady sighs, approaches his squad car, grabs for the radio.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

INNOCENT BYSTANDERS, young and old are hoarded into several
paddy wagons. Willie pleads with Sergeant O'Grady over an
OLDER MAN and WOMAN being forced into a crowded wagon.

SERGEANT O'GRADY
I'm just followin' orders, Willie.
You better beat it. And I mean,
now. Oh, Christ.

An elated Detective Ryan approaches.

DETECTIVE RYAN
What's the matter with Evans here?

SERGEANT O'GRADY
He came on scene after the fact.

DETECTIVE RYAN
And you bought that shit?

A yellow cab HALTS several feet from the scene. Exiting the
back of the cab, dressed in her work clothes is Anna Evans.
Her hard stare meets with the Detective's.

DETECTIVE RYAN (CONT'D)
(defiant)
He goes downtown with the rest of
his congregation.
(smirks at Willie)
Told you I'd collar you eventually.

SERGEANT O'GRADY

John, the kid's got a big game on Saturday.

Ryan hesitates. Willie glances at his mother, then voluntarily enters the paddy wagon.

DETECTIVE RYAN

Make room, believers. Part the sea for your colored superstar.

Ryan LOCKS the back door, sending the last wagon on its way. Anna Evans approaches Ryan. Her demeanor is solemn.

ANNA EVANS

If a tragedy should fall upon my son, I'm holding you accountable.

Ryan smirks then exits. O'Grady approaches Mrs. Evans.

SERGEANT O'GRADY

I'll look out for him, Mrs. Evans.

ANNA EVANS

Thank you, Joe.

That same cab driver now holds the door open for Anna Evans.

INT. JAIL HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

Dozens of BLACK PEOPLE stand confined together like sardines in three adjacent holding cells. Ethel Jean, dressed in her nurse's aide uniform, stands outside a cell, holding Willie's hand through the bars.

ETHEL JEAN

How did all this start, Will?

WILLIE

Bus load of teenagers going home from school again. One kid yells something -- rocks fly -- then almost on cue, Ryan shows up and arrests the whole neighborhood.

Ethel Jean glances behind Willie at an OLDER COUPLE, 60's, sitting on a hard bench, the woman struggling to breathe.

Sergeant O'Grady appears at the entrance door. He glances toward Ethel Jean. She nods back then addresses Willie.

ETHEL JEAN

I'll be in the waiting area.

She passes by a now BOISTEROUS mob caged in their cells.

INT. JAIL FRONT DESK AREA - NIGHT

Ethel Jean appeals to Sergeant O'Grady at the front desk.

ETHEL JEAN
 Could you please get those people
 some water?

Sergeant O'Grady nods. Juliano approaches.

OFFICER JULIANO
 I got it, Sarge.

Juliano exits. An apologetic O'Grady turns to Ethel Jean.

SERGEANT O'GRADY
 I'm sorry about Willie, Mrs. Evans.
 But my hands are tied on this one.

Offie storms in. Ethel Jean notices him, smiles at O'Grady.

ETHEL JEAN
 That's okay, Sergeant, mine aren't.

Ethel Jean approaches Offie. The two converse a moment. A sickened Offie then advances toward Sergeant O'Grady.

COACH OFFIE
 Joe, I want Willie --

SERGEANT O'GRADY
 (throws up hands)
 No can do, Offie. Talk to Ryan.

COACH OFFIE
 Where is that mick son-of-a-bitch?!

Exiting from the back room is a smug Detective Ryan.

DETECTIVE RYAN
 What can I do for you, Coach?

COACH OFFIE
 I want Evans released.

DETECTIVE RYAN
 Just as soon as we determine
 who destroyed fifteen hundred
 dollars worth of city property.

COACH OFFIE

It God damned sure as hell wasn't
him!

A taxed Officer Juliano approaches the front desk.

OFFICER JULIANO

Two older folks nearly passed out
back there, Sarge.

DETECTIVE RYAN

Serves them right for not singin'.

COACH OFFIE

You releasing Evans or not?

DETECTIVE RYAN

You don't want me showin' no
favoritism now do you?

Offie reaches for the desk phone. Despite Ryan's glare,
Sergeant O'Grady hands it to him anyway.

Entering the station are: Brogan, Razor Paolini, Bear
Dempsey, Beef Adams, Irish O'Grady, Bull Reale, Nick Bottini
and Gordo Bukaty. A wrathful Irish O'Grady hurries to the
front desk, as the others players surround, Ethel Jean.

IRISH O'GRADY

Pop, where is he?!

SERGEANT O'GRADY

Cell two.

Irish O'Grady sprints toward the holding area. Brogan gets a
nod from the Sergeant, then follows his teammate in.

INT. JAIL HOLDING AREA - CONTINUOUS

O'Grady sprints toward the 2nd cell, driving his fist through
the bars and STRIKING an unsuspecting Malcolm in the face.

IRISH O'GRADY

Keep lookin' over your shoulder,
nigger!

(motions slicing his neck)

Cause' one day, you'll be mine.

(rushes out)

Brogan approaches Willie still hoarded in the last cell.

BROGAN

The boys are out front with Offie
and Ethel Jean. She called him,
Willie. And man is he pissed.

Brogan notices Malcolm staring at them through his cell.

BROGAN (CONT'D)

That the punk ass who knifed
O'Grady's little brother to death?

Willie glares at Malcolm, nods yes.

INT. FRONT DESK AREA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dozens of concerned family members engulf Sergeant O'Grady.

Exiting from a back office are: CAPTAIN MIKE HOLLENBECK, well-
honed, (50), Detective Ryan, Offie, and 65-year-old, esteemed
and silver-haired SEYMOUR KNOX.

CAPTAIN HOLLENBECK

I'm sorry you had to come down
here, Mr. Knox.

Knox exits. Offie rejoins his players and Ethel Jean, as a
sickened Hollenbeck marches back into his office.

Dozens of irate victims exit the holding area, Willie among
them. He reunites with his wife, Offie and the players.

INT. BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

Captain Hollenbeck continues berating Detective Ryan.

CAPTAIN HOLLENBECK

...a couple of kids sling a few
rocks, and you decide to roust
the whole God damned neighborhood!

DETECTIVE RYAN

You want me to tell that to the
parents of those kids whose faces
were scarred out there today?

CAPTAIN HOLLENBECK

Spineless bastards deserve a nice
little reminder of their cowardice
every once in a while. Fifty-two
people, John? Half over sixty-five?

DETECTIVE RYAN

Nobody would cooperate.

CAPTAIN HOLLENBECK

You ever hear of a damn lineup?!
Chief's gonna chew my butt out good
on this one. In the meantime,
you're suspended, thirty days.

DETECTIVE RYAN

Captain --

CAPTAIN HOLLENBECK

Dismissed, Detective. Oh and Ryan.
That suspension, it's without pay.

Detective Ryan exits, SLAMMING the door behind him.

INT. FRONT DESK AREA JAIL - NIGHT

Offie remains behind with Ethel Jean and Willie.

COACH OFFIE

Let me give you two a ride home.

A heated Ryan stops at the front desk. Ethel Jean sees him,
approaches, then SLAPS Ryan across the face. Several UNIFORMS
move to intercede. Ryan waves them off. Ethel Jean, Willie
and Offie then exit, leaving the Detective dumbfounded.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Offie drives. Willie is in the passenger seat. A contemptuous
Ethel Jean stews in back.

COACH OFFIE

Cuffing Ryan like that was quite
the scene, Ethel Jean.

ETHEL JEAN

Men like that should not be
entrusted with a badge.

COACH OFFIE

No argument from me there.

(beat)

How are things going for you in the
locker room, Willie?

WILLIE

They're fine, Sir. It's what's
occurring on the road that's
starting to rattle me. And Brogie,
too. Why can't people just leave us
alone and let us play?

ETHEL JEAN

Because society is terrified of what it doesn't understand. You're a threat, baby. A threat to the white athlete. The hometown fans tolerate you because you're winning. Isn't that right, Coach?

COACH OFFIE

Your husband's a great athlete, Ethel Jean, and a much better man. And one day society will recognize that. Most of the players already have. They've accepted Willie. To them, he's a teammate, an equal.

ETHEL JEAN

Including O'Grady and Adams?

COACH OFFIE

They'll come along. In the meantime, the Brogan's of society give us a little more faith in man, wouldn't you agree, Mrs. Evans?

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - NOVEMBER 4TH, 2008)

The stadium is jam-packed. With 7:46 remaining in the third quarter, the scoreboard clock registers: UB 27 Miami 17.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

UB has been the underdog in each of its first eight encounters. If they triumph here tonight, Buffalo will become bowl eligible for the first time in half a century.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)

Eligible don't feed the beast, Dickie Boy. It's MAC championship, national bowl game or bust.

INT. STADIUM PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Willie appears introspective. Glancing down on the field, UB holds Miami on a goal-line stand. The crowd ERUPTS. The applause escalates into a deafening ROAR, as we converge on a flat screen TV inside the private box.

On screen, the rain pouring, thousands of PEOPLE have congregated in front of a large outdoor stage.

OPRAH WINFREY stands there, tears welling, followed by an emotional JESSE JACKSON, and others, WHITE and BLACK, as President-Elect BARACK OBAMA takes center stage.

Tears streaming, Willie is transfixed on the screen. Maggio approaches.

MAGGIO

It's a great day, Mr. Evans. A celebration for all of humanity.

The two men hug, then separate, Willie appearing anxious.

WILLIE

The Orlando Chamber of Commerce phoned today. They offered our team a full mea culpa. They'd like for me to travel there and meet with the man who started this toilsome journey.

A sudden fear overtakes Maggio.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Jack Morgan receives chemo, an IV bag in his right forearm.

MONTAGE: (NOVEMBER 1ST, 1958)

Buffalo News: November 1, 1958 BUFFALO ROLLS OVER TEMPLE 54-6

INSIDE SPORTS SECTION:

Bulls Gain 411 Yards: Offie Finds Some Flaws By Maury May

MAGGIO (O.S.)

Fourteen point underdogs and you tak'em 54-6. What stuck in Offie's craw that day?

WILLIE (O.S.)

I believe we fumbled five or six times that game. I know I had two.

HEADLINE: Buffalo News Monday Nov. 10th, 1958 - Court Orders Little Rock Integration

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

On the movie screen, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. The players stand up and WHISTLE, as Elizabeth Taylor exits the bathroom dressed in a slip. Bear Dempsey and a few other players raze Gordo Bukaty, as PAUL NEWMAN rejects Taylor on screen.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

A fatigued Offie studies game film. The phone rings. He glances at his watch, it reads: 11:45 PM.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Offie placidly enters his bed. Across from him is another single bed. A woman in the bed awakens and turns. She is compassionate, JILL OFFENHAMER, (46). Jill squints at Offie, shakes her head, then returns to sleep. Offie retrieves his playbook and exits the room, a GERMAN SHEPARD in tow.

INT. STUDY - LATE NIGHT

Offie slouches behind an oak desk, open playbook in hand. He glances down toward a framed photo of he and a young TEENAGE BOY on the desk. He clutches the photo, then carefully places it back down, before removing a bottle of scotch from the drawer. He pours a drink, downs it, then retrieves the photo.

JILL (O.S.)

What are you doing, Richard?

COACH OFFIE

Don't you miss him, Jill?

JILL

(approaches)

Everyday.

COACH OFFIE

If I hadn't removed him early from school that day to go to our scrimmage --

JILL

Five years ago a drunk driver took our son away from us. And nothing can change that, Richard.

COACH OFFIE

I know that, but...

JILL

Ritchie loved the time he spent with you on that field -- all of it. You need to stop blaming yourself and let the boy go.

COACH OFFIE

I'm trying, Jill. God help me I'm trying.

Offie breaks down. An affected wife hugs him tightly.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS Article reads: Wayne Gave UB Coach
Chance to Groom Reserves as BULLS DEFEAT WAYNE STATE 44-14.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS: CY KRITZER SAYS Don't Pass Up That Bowl
Bid if a Tangerine or Sun Bowl Bid comes to The University Of
Buffalo. Off school Dec. 12th through Jan 5th.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

Is that when the team started
thinking seriously about a bowl
game?

WILLIE (O.S.)

Yes, that's about right.

INT. BROGAN'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Several of the players down beers, devour pizzas. Willie
continues reading the news article.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

The Lehigh game. What happened?

WILLIE (O.S.)

You start thinking ahead, you
discount the task in front of you.
All-in-all, I'd say it was a pretty
good day though, certainly for me.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (LEHIGH STADIUM - NOVEMBER 15th, 1958)

Another robust POLICE presence. The scoreboard clock reads:
5:02 remaining in quarter 1. LEHIGH 0 VISITORS 14. Willie
sprints off right tackle, receives a devastating block from
Brogan then jolts 79 yards to paydirt.

In the stands is impeccably attired, Anna Evans. She stands
there gleaming from ear-to-ear.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER THAT DAY

The scoreboard records: VISITORS 34 LEHIGH 28. 30 seconds
remain in the conflict. Lehigh is on the UB 13-yard line.

Inside the defensive huddle, Bull Reale addresses his men.

BULL REALE

Don't let your man be today's hero.

Moments Later, the Lehigh QUARTERBACK fires a strike to an open RECEIVER in the endzone. At the last moment, Willie dives in front of the pass. He intercepts it then tumbles to the ground. His teammates leap on top of him in celebration.

An INEBRIATED LARGE MAN, 40's, sprints onto the field, thermos bottle in hand. He tracks down Willie, dumping the bottle's contents on him. Brogan immediately SLAMS the man to the turf. The POLICE immediately converge onto the field.

With both teams now about to clash, the UB players are expeditiously escorted off the field through the main tunnel.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

As they rush in, the UB players are PELTED with cups of beer. Several RACIAL SLURS are then directed toward Willie, as a powerless mother stands ostracized in the crowd.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM PARKING LOT - DUSK

STATE POLICE keep the BELLOWING PROTESTORS at bay, as the UB players greet their FAMILIES and FRIENDS. With a cab parked nearby, a constrained Anna Evans visits with her proud son.

ANNA EVANS

How are Ethel Jean and the boy?

WILLIE

They're doing well. How are you?

ANNA EVANS

I'm fine, Willie. I was just recalling that one summer I cooked for President Truman. They have me scheduled on the Pittsburgh to Washington run again this week.

WILLIE

That's real nice, Mama.

ANNA EVANS

You know it's strange. This is the first time I've ever seen you play.
(checks pocket watch)
Well, need to keep that schedule.

She smiles, moves to exit, then glances at the handful of unrelenting PROTESTORS still YELLING RACIAL SLURS behind a police barricade. Incensed, she returns to Willie.

ANNA EVANS

You do not allow people like that
to provoke you. You're a kind,
decent and hard-working young man.

WILLIE

Sometimes I wonder if that even
matters, Mama.

ANNA EVANS

Oh, it matters. It matters very
much. I'm proud of you, Willie...
very proud.

An awkward moment. Willie then inches forward, hugs his mom.

WILLIE

I love you, Mama.

ANNA EVANS

I love you too, son.

Anna Evans exits, leaving a bleary-eyed Willie all smiles.

MAGGIO (O.S.)

Nothing better than having your mom
present at that game huh, Willie?

WILLIE (O.S.)

Nothing better.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed is a draggy Mrs. Paolini. With her husband and
son by her side, a KNOCK is heard at the door. Several
players enter the room, flowers in hand, Willie among them.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS: UB WINS 8TH TOPS BUCKNELL 38-0 Side bar
Bulls Dazzling In Bid To Clinch Bowl Invitation: ROTARY FIELD
Nov. 22 "Tangerine Bowl here we come."

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BUFFALO, NY - NOVEMBER 22ND, 1958)

Bukaty and Dempsey, dressed in Hawaiian T-shirts, tape the
trainer to a locker. Offie passes out cigars to his players;
hugging, drinking, pouring beers on each other. At the podium
is Seymour Knox.

SEYMOUR KNOX

All you men are invited to dinner
this evening at the Saturn Club.
Congratulations on a great season!

Knox steps down and is handed a beer by O'Grady, as an ecstatic Hitchcock shakes hands with several players.

Beef Adams lugs in a large wooden crate, PUNCHES a hole through it then begins heaving tangerines at his teammates.

CY KRITZER

Coach Offenhamer, all indications are Florida State. A major against our boys in the Tangerine Bowl.

COACH OFFIE

I'd love to see it happen, Cy. But the decision to go or not is with our boys. Several of them have jobs starting during break.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS READS: Bowl Decision Left To UB Squad; Florida State Is Sought as Rival By CY KRITZER -- The primary decision whether the University of Buffalo participates in the Tangerine Bowl football game on Dec. 27 in Orlando, Florida today rested with the Bulls' players.

ACTOR BREAKS SOUND BARRIER: Retired Air Force General JAMES STEWART cracked the sound barrier today. (PIC OF STEWART)

INT. SATURN CLUB - NIGHT

Flawlessly dressed, several UB players, along with their girls, enter the high-end club. A ROARING CHEER is followed by a standing ovation from several MEMBERS. A rotund MAITRE D', 50's, welcomes the group, then abruptly stops, blocking Willie and Ethel Jean's path. Several WAITERS assist.

MAITRE D'

This is a private club, Sir --

RAZOR PAOLINI

It's okay, they're with us.

Seymour Knox approaches the Maitre D'.

SEYMOUR KNOX II

Mr. Evans and his wife are guests of mine this evening, Roger.

MAITRE D'

(hesitates, then)

Very good, Mr. Knox.

The club members glare at Knox, as Willie, Ethel Jean and the CHEERING players are escorted into a back room.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

The paper reads: Buffalo Evening News Sports Article November 24th 1958: *Tangerine Bowl Bid Goes to UB; To Be Accepted -- Florida State Sought as Bulls Gridiron Opponent in Orlando.*

"We're for going to Orlando, said Coach Dick Offenhamer, 'but we have a lot of problems.'" Several UB players plan on working during the Christmas Holidays. Willie Evans, whose great running was featured in the last five victories starts a part-time job next week at Veterans Hospital.

Seated at his desk reading the article is fit, immaculately dressed, ANTONIO MAGGADINO, (45). Across from him stands Hitchcock. On the desk rests a stack of twenty dollar bills.

Maggadino rises. He approaches an antique bookcase, removes a book from it then begins reading.

MAGGADINO

"Men are at war with each other because each man is at war with himself." Patton crawled on his belly to get that final command. I place the odds at 10-1 Offie would do the same to battle on national TV. He can't restrain himself. The man's ego is simply too big. And with a twenty-one point spread, that vote better be unanimous.

Maggadino returns to his desk, hands Hitchcock the money.

HITCHCOCK

Offie hears of any improprieties, he'll turn on us, Mr. Maggadino.

MAGGADINO

Then you see to it he doesn't hear about them.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ethel Jean and Willie review bills at the table, as Rod plays on the tiled floor in front of them.

WILLIE

You've been working doubles for the past three seasons, Jeannie.

ETHEL JEAN

"The course of true love never did run smooth."

WILLIE

We could move back in with my mom.
 (kisses him on the forehead)
 I don't report, I lose my job.

ETHEL JEAN

(playful, sarcastic)
 Then I's a needin' me to work me a
 few mo' shifts, masser'.

WILLIE

Jeannie, please! With these bills,
 that's still scarcely enough to
 cover Rod's new medications.

ETHEL JEAN

You're going to Florida, Will.
 It's your one chance for the NFL
 scouts to see you in action. We'll
 manage. We always do.

Willie grabs the stack of bills and sighs.

EXT. BUS STOP - EARLY MORNING

A sullen Willie waits for the bus. A car passes with several
 BLACK TEENS inside. One of the BOYS shouts out the window.

TEEN BOY

You take it to those southern
 crackers, Willie! Like, Jesse Owens
 with his four golds -- sellin' Wolf
 Tickets to Hitler!

The boys SPEED off. Willie is then approached by a 1958 Bel-
 Air rag top. Behind the wheel, a scheming Hitchcock.

HITCHCOCK

Willie. C'mon, hop in. I'll give
 you a lift to your first class.

Willie hesitantly enters the car. It SCREECHES out.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ritchie Valen's, "La Bamba" JAMS on the radio.

HITCHCOCK

Buffalo News player of the year.
 Congratulations Willie.

WILLIE

Thank you, Mr. Hitchcock.

HITCHCOCK

And there's no reason for your
dream season not to continue.

Willie glances out the window and observes several INNER CITY
KIDS playing in front of dilapidated buildings. Hitchcock
lowers the radio.

HITCHCOCK (CONT'D)

A friend of the program heard about
your little situation at the
hospital. What are they paying you
over there anyway?

WILLIE

Seventy-five cents an hour.

HITCHCOCK

Seventy-five cents an hour. That's
roughly what... six dollars a day?
A hundred and fifteen a month?

WILLIE

Twenty.

HITCHCOCK

Twenty. But even with your wife
working doubles, that still comes
out to a little over... three
hundred a month? Add in your bills,
Rod's condition -- well, you see
where this is headed, right?

Hitchcock pulls to the roadside. Now in full view of the UB
Campus, he removes an envelope from his jacket.

HITCHCOCK (CONT'D)

There's twenty-five hundred cash
in here. Fancy it as part of your
scholarship.

WILLIE

The other players receiving this
additional scholarship money, too?

HITCHCOCK

The other players aren't getting
fired on the first of the month if
they don't show for work. Or have a
boy with Cough-Variant Asthma.
Rod's new Meds' are expensive,
Willie. Unless of course, you're
friends with the right people.

Hitchcock slides the envelope back into his jacket, then reaches over Willie, retrieving two prescription bottles from the glove box. He hands them to Willie, who contemplates the offer, then places the bottles on the steering console, before exiting via the passenger door. Hitchcock leans over.

HITCHCOCK (CONT'D)

A no vote tonight stops your dreams
dead in their tracks. You need to
think about that, Willie. And all
those NFL scouts that'll be
watching you on TV. God damn it,
son, think of your wife and kid!

Willie stops, this resonates with him. He turns, stares one last time at the prescription bottles then exits.

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM - DAY

Gathered in small groups, several players LASH out at each other. Donning beach attire, Gordo Bukaty and his group appear relaxed and ready for a trip. Running the meeting are Bull Reale and Nick Bottini.

BULL REALE

We either all agree to go, right
here, right now, or Offie gets the
deciding vote.

BEEF ADAMS

I'm cool with that. No way he turns
this one down.

RAZOR PAOLINI

What about the guys already home
on break?

NICK BOTTINI

Bull and me already spoke with
them. They're all for going.

NEWS DELANEY

It's a long flight. And over the
past decade or so, I read there
have been several crashes from
changing weather conditions.

BEAR DEMPSEY

You know why we call you News?
Because like the news, the shit
that comes out of your mouth is
always a downer, man.

BULL REALE

Any other legitimate concerns?

RAZOR PAOLINI

First, I'd like to thank you boys for all your prayers and visits. They got the cancer. The doctors said my mom is gonna' be fine.

(collective cheer, then)

But... well, I've never been away from home at Christmas before. We always go to church that day.

BEEF ADAMS

Last I heard, Jesus lived down in Florida, too, Razor.

NICK BOTTINI

You witnessed what God did to Offie.

BEEF ADAMS

No, Nick, I witnessed what Offie did to Offie.

RAZOR PAOLINI

As long as I can attend mass then I'm for going.

BULL REALE

Anything from the married guys?

BEEF ADAMS

No sweat here. I work for my wife's old man.

BULL REALE

Willie?

WILLIE

(vacillates, then)

We can take these guys, right?

CHARLIE TIRONE

Damn right we can!

BEAR DEMPSEY

I did not pass on Syracuse to stay at home and play with myself.

(jumps on table)

These punk sons-of-bitches are 2nd in the country. We can smok'em! Us against the world, baby!

CHEERS infiltrate the room, as the table Bear Dempsey is standing on begins to collapse. The table then CRASHES to the floor, Bear Dempsey leaping off just in time.

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Standing outside the door listening in are Offie and Dunlop.

COACH OFFIE

David studied Goliath's weaknesses
for forty days before Saul allowed
him to attack. We have thirty-six.
Time to ready the troops for
Goliath, Freddie.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS: TANGERINE BOWL BID ACCEPTED BY UB!

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A jittery AD Peele glances at his blinking phone. Across from him stands stylishly dressed, MIKE KLEINHAN, 40's. Kleinhan lifts a tailor made suit off the chair behind him, hands it to Peele, who then escorts him to the door and opens it.

JIM PEELE

There's forty-five kids. I'll send,
I'll send a few over at a time.
Thank you, Mike.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

An excited Bear Dempsey and Nick Bottini wait with reporter, Cy Kritzer. Peele addresses them through the open door.

JIM PEELE (CONT'D)

I'll be with you shortly, Cy.
Dempsey, Bottini... go with Mr.
Kleinhan and get fitted, get fitted
for your suits.

Peele scours back to his phone, inadvertently leaving the door slightly ajar. He taps the speaker button.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE CONT'D)

Sorry about that, Jack. What's up?

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS: INTERCUT

Posturing at his desk is perfectly coiffed, JACK MORGAN, (37). Across from him hover three agitated SOUTHERN GENTLEMEN dressed in linen suits. With his menacing eyes darting between the men, Morgan presses the phone's speaker button.

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 Jim, we've got a situation that
 needs to be resolved.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 What, what kind of situation, Jack?

Dempsey and Kritzer listen in by the open door.

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 It appears that the Tangerine Bowl
 Stadium is owned by a local high
 school athletic organization, who
 in turn gave a fifty year lease to
 a group of local businessmen, who
 just happen to be sitting in my
 office this very moment.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 And?

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 And, apparently there's a clause in
 the lease prohibiting the mixing of
 races on the gridiron.

The men in the office silently applaud Jack's strength. An
 angry Peele now speaks with authority and WITHOUT REPETITION.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 What type of archaic beliefs are
 you promoting down there, Jack?

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 The Elk's Club is worried about
 getting sued if they allow your
 colored boy to participate.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 To hell with the Elk's Club!

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 They're a good organization, Jim.
 All the profits from the game are
 earmarked to comfort crippled
 children.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 Except the colored ones, right?!

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 Colored and white.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 How could you let this slip
 through, Jack?

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 (defensive)
 I just learned of it myself! The
 colored boy could come down, but he
 would not be allowed to stay, dress
 or compete with the team.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 My God!

JACK MORGAN (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 We're searching for an alternate
 site. At this point however,
 there's just no place large enough
 to make the game profitable.

JIM PEELE (INTO SPEAKER PHONE)
 I'll get back to you.

Outside the ajar door, a shocked Kritzer and Dempsey exit.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A smug Jack Morgan rises from behind his desk, cigar in hand.

JACK MORGAN
 No way that colored boy steps onto
 the same field with a white man.
 Not down here. Not on my watch.

One of the men offers to light Morgan's cigar. He accepts.

INT. OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Livid, Offie rips into Peele. Coach Dunlop hovers nearby.

COACH OFFIE
 What the hell kind of message does
 that send to, Willie?!

JIM PEELE
 With Evans being selected player of
 the year, I say we compete when
 they locate an alternate site, and
 show those archaic Neanderthals
 what our boys are made of.

COACH OFFIE
 Freddie?

COACH DUNLOP

Last I heard all NCAA fields were
300 by 160 feet.

The phone RINGS. Offie snatches it.

COACH OFFIE

What, God damn it?! It's for you.

JIM PEELE

(takes phone)

This is Jim Peele. Hello, Jack.
Are you kidding me? Is that their
final offer? I'll get back to you.

(hangs up, exasperated)

No viable alternative site. We play
at the original venue without
Willie or not at all.

COACH OFFIE

"The common curse of mankind, folly
and ignorance." Son-of-a-bitch!

Offie grabs a cannister of film and FLINGS it against the
wall, its contents cascading onto the floor. Glancing at his
heroes, a resolved Offie calmly addresses Peele and Dunlop.

COACH OFFIE (CONT'D)

This decision needs to rest with
our boys. They'll know what to do.

Coach Dunlop and Peele share a look of disbelief.

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Beef Adams and Irish O'Grady are being physically harassed
by Brogan, Bear Dempsey and several other players.

BROGAN

We don't even need to vote on this
one, Beef. We all go or nobody
friggen' goes. Period!

The room ERUPTS, almost all in support of Brogan.

IRISH O'GRADY

Coach said vote! So we vote! Raise
you hand, yeah or nay -- clear the
air once and for all.

BROGAN

Get bent you racist little prick!

Brogan PUNCHES O'Grady in the jaw. O'Grady drops to the ground, then gets up swinging, knocking Brogan backwards with two quick jabs. An unruly mob then corners Adams and O'Grady.

Bull Reale and Nick Bottini quickly halt any further escalation, stepping in front of the two men.

BULL REALE

Everybody cool it! Now! We do what coach said. We vote in private. We vote our conscience. That should pretty much be unanimous.

The players return to their seats. Bottini passes out the ballots. He leaves one with Willie, who sits at a small desk, motionless, staring out the window.

CHARLIE TIRONE

And if the final tally's not?

GORDO BUKATY

Then, General George S. Patton decides our future troop movements.

BROGAN

Then it's up to us not to let that happen, isn't it?

The players begin voting. As the votes come in, Reale calls them out -- Willie becoming more transfixed in his gaze.

BULL REALE (O.S.)

No, no, no --

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

SUBTITLE: (CENTRAL TERMINAL, BUFFALO, NY - 1950)

A bustling Art Deco train station. Fat's Domino's, "The Fat Man" RESONATES in the background.

Pulling into the station is a steam locomotive, its logo reading: *20th Century Limited*.

INT. DINING CAR KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A slender black boy, WILLIE EVANS (13), sits on a milk crate by the exit door. He is dressed in a suit and tie, along with a Dobbs 15 Fedora. Perched atop Willie's right shoulder is a new baseball bat. Its logo reads: Pittsburgh Pirates.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Enjoy the game, Willie?

Willie turns, his hazel-green eyes glistening in the light. Standing behind a stainless steel table in the prep area is ANNA EVANS, black, (39). She is dressed in a cook's outfit.

WILLIE

Yes, Mama but...

ANNA EVANS

(relenting)

You'd rather be playing football.

Willie rises, exits the train. Anna Evans cries out to him.

ANNA EVANS (CONT'D)

Straight home with that.

Understand me, son?

The young boy wields his new bat with a nodding approval.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Willie skips through the rain soaked streets. Several BLACK YOUTHS are gathered on porch stoops. He passes by two older cars, their windshields smashed. Oblivious to his surroundings, Willie swings the bat, carefree.

Suddenly, a police car SCREECHES to a halt in front of him. Exiting the car are two patrolmen. The first approaches, swiping the bat from Willie. He is OFFICER JOHN RYAN (25). Ryan hands the bat to the other officer, pats Willie down then SLAMS him hard into the hood of the police car.

WILLIE

What I do, Officer?

Ryan retrieves a paperback book from the back of Willie's pocket, SMACKS him in the back of the head with it.

OFFICER RYAN

Don't crack wise with me, boy.

Ryan flings the book into a nearby puddle, turns toward his partner, OFFICER TOM JULIANO, (23), motions for the bat.

OFFICER JULIANO

It's clean, John -- brand new.

Ryan takes the bat and marches toward a nearby fire hydrant. BLACK SPECTATORS GASP in horror, as Willie sprints toward Ryan, who is winding up for one mighty swing.

OFFICER RYAN

You coloreds are animals. Always destroying everything.

As Ryan swings, Juliano tackles Willie, the bat brushing across the boy's brow. Both SPLASH into a nearby puddle.

Ryan STRIKES the hydrant with the bat, breaking it in half. He then gathers himself, approaches Willie, SQUASHING the boy's face into a dirt ridden puddle.

OFFICER RYAN (CONT'D)

Assault on a peace officer.

(cuffs him)

You're going to jail, boy.

Juliano, his uniform muddied, helps Willie up. The boy's pants are torn at the knees, his face bloodied. By now, a large BLACK CROWD of ornery onlookers have engulfed the scene. Ryan throws Willie into the back of the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ryan glances into the rear view mirror, sneering at the terrified young boy. Ryan then notices several LARGE BLACK MEN have surrounded his police vehicle. With the angry mob now about to strike, Ryan reluctantly stands down.

OFFICER RYAN (CONT'D)

Get his little black punk ass out
of my sight!

Juliano removes Willie from the squad car and uncuffs him. Willie retrieves his paperback from the puddle, it reads: *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare. Willie approaches the hydrant, picks up the pieces of his bat then exits, tears streaming down his face. Ryan belts out the car window.

OFFICE RYAN (CONT'D)

Stop crying like a little girl!

Suddenly, several individuals PUMMEL the police cruiser with raw eggs. Incensed, Ryan exits the vehicle, his weapon drawn. He is quickly PELTED with a barrage of eggs. Totally humiliated, the Officers re-enter the police car and SPEED off. Over this, the word YES deafens the crowded gymnasium.

BULL REALE (O.S.)

Yes!

INT. BASEMENT GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Brogan TACKLES O'Grady and begins pounding on his face.

BROGAN

I'm gonna' kill you, you little
racist prick!

IRISH O'GRADY
Get the hell off of me!

Bloodied, O'Grady fights off Brogan then quickly springs to his feet. Several enraged players immediately surround him.

IRISH O'GRADY (CONT'D)
(defusing)
What Brogie said about me -- no argument from me there. But that still ain't gonna' change my vote.
(off blistering stares)
Hey, I voted no! Willie's hip, man. One of us. He ain't really black.

The players wrath quickly shifts to Beef Adams, as Willie continues his expressionless stare.

BEEF ADAMS
I agree with, O'Grady. There's certainly no color distinction when you've lived through what we have together. But that's not the way society sees it, fellahs.
(off piercing glares)
Hear me out for a second! What if we go down there... kick their confederate racist butts, then present Willie with the game ball on National TV? Think of the bold statement that would make.

Frustrated with Adams, several players sling INSULTS at him then exit, each tapping Willie on the shoulder as they leave. O'Grady does the same. Bull Reale, Nick Bottini, Razor Paolini, Bear Dempsey and Brogan stay behind with Adams.

BROGAN
Beef, you stay married to your vote, and Offie decides it for us. The man's cool, but I think we all know where that's going.

BEEF ADAMS
Why not go, Brogie? Why not make a declaration and show this world how messed up it is?!

RAZOR PAOLINI
This time it's about color, Beef. But what about next time?

BEEF ADAMS
Who cares about the next time.

RAZOR PAOLINI

What if next time they say no
Italians, or Jews, or Catholics
welcome? Or people with brown or
red hair. Where does it end? Or
maybe the welcome mat's closed to
any player born a bastard?

BEEF ADAMS

(quickly enraged)
Keep my mother out of this, Razor.
My old man left. He was the prick.

RAZOR PAOLINI

And even though through no fault of
his own, that player was born to a
very immature mother, and a prick
absentee father. We're awfully
sorry, son. Really, we are. But
you're just not welcome here.

Beef Adams grabs two desks, SMASHING them into the wall.

BEEF ADAMS

My mom gave us all she had! That
drunk bastard, he abandoned us!
That prick left us for dead!...

Beef Adams breaks down, placing his head into his hands. He
then slowly rises, walks toward Willie, taps him on the
shoulder then exits. At the door, he yells out --

BEEF ADAMS

No!

INT. OFFICE DOOR - NIGHT

Willie KNOCKS on the door. It reads: RWO HEAD COACH.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

What, God Damn it?!

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Willie cautiously opens the door. Offie is packing the
cannister of film he destroyed into a metal box. Willie
stands there, contemplating, his eyes darting between the
damaged cannister and Offie's heroes on the wall.

COACH OFFIE

Something I can do for you, Evans?

Willie retrieves a ballot from his pocket, hands it to Offie.

WILLIE

The boys overlooked handing in my vote, Mr. Offenhamer.

COACH OFFIE

I was informed the polls were closed, the vote unanimous.

(beat)

You know what happens if I open this?

WILLIE

Take the team to Florida, Coach. Their true colors... well, they displayed that to me tonight.

Willie exits, leaving Offie to ponder his next move.

INT. FOOTBALL OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Coach Dunlop hands Offie a clipboard full of plays.

COACH OFFIE

Thanks, Freddie.

AT THE DOOR -

stands Antonio Maggadino. Dunlop acknowledges him then exits. Offie waves in Maggadino, whose eyes immediately pivot on the autographed photos of Patton then Lombardi.

MAGGADINO

Love that paesan. That New York Giants offense he commands always manages to beat the spread.

COACH OFFIE

An army can not be victorious without its talented soldiers.

Maggadino approaches the photo of Patton.

MAGGADINO

And speaking of talented soldiers, those eleven extra scholarships really helped you boys in grabbing eight convincing victories.

COACH OFFIE

A season of conquest for us all.

MAGGADINO

Like your two heroes here. Take no risk, get no reward.

Offie rises from his desk, moves toward Maggadino, then straightens the photo of Lombardi. Maggadino removes two cigars from his jacket, offering one to Offie, who accepts.

COACH OFFIE

Montecristo 58. What can I do for you, Mr. Maggadino?

MAGGADINO

You can march down to Orlando, conquer our enemy and put this program on the map.

COACH OFFIE

I'd love to. But my boys voted unanimous tonight.

Maggadino lights both cigars then moves toward the window. He gazes out at the Veterans Hospital across the street.

MAGGADINO

Came in six months early on that project. They proclaimed it couldn't be done. Now I've never asked anything of you, Offie. The fact that you invariably cover the spread without my interference -- a bonus for me. But now I'm asking.

Maggadino approaches Offie, now seated back behind his desk.

MAGGADINO (CONT'D)

You and your players be on that plane next month to Florida.

COACH OFFIE

That sounds more like an order.

MAGGADINO

Call it what you will. But as you so eloquently stated earlier, "An army can not be victorious without its talented soldiers."

Offie stands, maneuvers toward Maggadino.

COACH OFFIE

We'll engage Florida State. But, victory or defeat, you double your contribution to the program next season.

MAGGADINO

Happy to do it, Coach. Provided of course your boys beat the spread.

COACH OFFIE

Take no risk, get no reward. No strings on this one, Mr. Maggadino.

(beat)

You ever participate in organized football?

MAGGADINO

Never could seem to find the time.

COACH OFFIE

Well if you had, then you'd know a true athlete does not believe he requires a point spread to conquer his opponent.

MAGGADINO

All the better. But I'll stick with the odds just the same. With Evans out, the spread jumps to thirty-four.

He exits. Offie then takes a long puff from his cigar.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

SUBTITLE: (THANKSGIVING DAY - NOVEMBER 27TH, 1958)

Willie, Ethel Jean and an excited Rod approach a modest home. Adjacent to the home, an ELDERLY BLACK LADY steps onto her porch. She gestures to the newspaper in her hand, calls out.

ELDERLY BLACK LADY

Paper say ain't no Negro boy welcome down south!

WILLIE

Take Rod in the house.

Ethel Jean and Rod climb the steps, as Willie runs down the street, racing the last fifty yards to a corner store.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Exiting the store, Willie glances down at the front page of the newspaper. His picture decorates the headline which reads: *UB Negro Player Not Welcome Down South* By Cy Kritzer

In a stunning development, having sought an alternative site because of clause in a 50 year old lease not allowing black players to play on the same field as whites, this reporter has learned that the bowl invitation will be rescinded unless UB agrees to play without their star halfback. Willie glances up, the substance of the situation finally hitting home.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Chancellor Furnas addresses a confident Offie.

CHANCELLOR FURNAS

Is that your final decision, Coach?

COACH OFFIE

May God have mercy upon my enemies,
because I sure as hell won't.

INT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - DAY

A slew of REPORTERS, players, etc., surround AD Peele and a spirited Chancellor Furnas. Furnas steps up to the podium.

CHANCELLOR FURNAS

The University of Buffalo's decision not to participate in the Tangerine Bowl game was made with the knowledge that we would not be allowed to compete in the Orlando City Stadium, traditional site of the game, while Willie Evans remained as a member of the team. In view of the terms imposed upon UB as a condition for competition, any decision other than to decline would have been unthinkable and contrary to human decency.

Dressed in her nurse's aide uniform, Ethel Jean approaches Offie, kisses him on the cheek then exits.

A reflective Sue Michaels stands by the back exit. Ethel Jean passes by her, an accommodating smile between the two.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

A BLACK MAN, his face obstructed by the paper he is reading, stretches out on a motel bed.

BLACK MAN

Those young men up in Buffalo are certainly exhibiting great character.

Lowering the paper, the man rises. He is DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (29). Across from him is Bertram Austin.

BERTRAM AUSTIN

They give us all hope, Dr. King.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, Mr. Austin.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS ARTICLE READS: (December 1st 1958)
Tangerine Bowl chairman Jack Morgan: "We sincerely regret that we were not able to extend a second invitation to UB."

MAGGIO (O.S.)

You must have been puzzled at Offie's decision.

WILLIE (O.S.)

Once, twice, or at the very most, three times, fate will reach out and tap a man on the shoulder. If he has the imagination, he will turn around and fate will point out to him what fork in the road he should take. If he has the guts, he will take it. Mr. Offenhamer was all guts.

INT. HALLWAY HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

With mop in hand, Willie cleans the hallway leading into one of the offices. He peeks inside and observes --

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kenny Copeland being fitted for a prosthetic right leg.

WILLIE (O.S.)

Seeing Kenny that day really put life into proper perspective. Football is just a game, Frank. But what an enjoyable game it was. Except of course for that damn, *Bull in the Ring*.

INT. BRUNNER'S TAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

On a platform by the bar sits a 12" Black & White TV. On the screen we see four FOOTBALL PLAYERS at mid-field readying themselves for the coin toss.

SUBTITLE ON TV SCREEN: (TANGERINE BOWL - Dec. 27th 1958)

A detached Offie sits at a table. Sipping from a beer, he glimpses at the screen, his disappointment apparent.

Unexpectedly, the Coach is encircled by several UB players, their girlfriends and wives. The players grab chairs, pull in tables and join him, raising their glasses for a toast.

Offie motions them to wait, shuts off the TV, then rejoins his troops for the toast. On the jukebox, "At The Hop" begins. The students get up and start dancing, *The Jitterbug*.

Sue Michaels approaches Willie, still seated at the table with Ethel Jean.

SUE MICHAELS

I was wrong, Willie. I was too
consumed with the fear within
myself. And I'm sorry.

She extends her left hand to Willie to dance, the engagement ring back on her finger. Willie accepts. Ethel Jean and Brogan join in as well.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Two UNIFORMED POLICEMEN escort a hand-cuffed Malcolm.

MALCOLM

What the charge, Cracker?!

Detective Ryan approaches, warrant in hand.

DETECTIVE RYAN

You're being arrested for the
murder of Edward James O'Grady.

MALCOLM

"The man" ain't got nothin' on me.

DETECTIVE RYAN

Two eyewitnesses have come forward
and say we do. The sisters in the
big house are gonna' love you, boy.

Sergeant O'Grady and his son hug each other on the sidewalk.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs Paolini returns from the kitchen with several Tupperware containers of food. Seated at the table are: her husband, Razor Paolini, Willie, Ethel Jean and Rod.

INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (BALL STATE VS. UB - DECEMBER 5TH, 2008)

Players go through their rituals: taping wrists, ankles, playing iPods, etc. Coach Gill moves inside the locker room; stretching, running, almost like he's getting ready to play. He steps to the middle of the room. It draws silent.

COACH GILL

This is a great environment to play in -- Buffalo football. Let's hear from the man who has been instrumental this year in inspiring our team not only to dream, but to achieve; Mr. Willie Evans.

Willie steps to the center of the room.

WILLIE

Firstly, I want to thank each and everyone of you boys for allowing me and my teammates to be a part of your fantastic season. I'm not big on speeches as you know. Fifty years ago this season, my teammates and I were denied a chance to play in a bowl game because of a select group of individuals beliefs. Today, those individuals still exist in our society, but not out there boys; not on that sacred ground. My teammates and I are so very proud to be a part of the UB experience. God bless you boys.

COACH GILL

And we're proud of you, Mr. Evans. And your entire team, Sir.

A loud CHEER goes out, as Coach Gill walks up to tackle, JUSTIN WINTERS, (22). He grabs his helmet, puts it on.

COACH GILL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna give you a little, Justin Winters, right here, right now.

Coach Gill gets on all fours, then motors along the floor.

COACH GILL (CONT'D)

Is that you J Dawb? All night tonight. Gonna fly around right here! Right now!

Coach Gill does a CHEST BUMP with one of his coaches.

A PASTOR joins the group, and all take a knee. The *Our Father* is said ALOUD. Coach Gill then jumps up and yells --

COACH GILL (CONT'D)

Let's go!

The inspired players stampede out of the locker room.

INT. FOOTBALL DOME STADIUM - DAY

MAC CHAMPIONSHIP decorates the center of the field. PULLING BACK, we see the scoreboard reads: BSU 17 UB 14. 3rd quarter. 4:01 remains. Ball State has the ball on UB's 15-yard line.

INSIDE A STADIUM PRIVATE BOX -

on pins and needles are: Willie, Maggio, Brogan, Bear Dempsey and Razor Paolini, (72).

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

It's third and goal for Ball State on the Bulls' 11-yard line. UB has been tough here, Big Lou, but it appears Ball State is beginning to usurp the Bulls incredible determination with a bit more natural talent.

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)

Talent doesn't usurp heart, Dickie Boy. We need a play right here, right now. And we will get it.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

Quarterback Nate Davis takes the snap, picks up two blockers then heads around left end. He's at the ten, the five, he dives into the endzone, touchdown, Ball State! No, wait a minute, folks. Corner, Mike Newton has the ball. He's at the ten, fifteen... he's on his way. He picks up some blocking... mid-field! He's down to the thirty-five, the thirty... the twenty. He's going to score. Touchdown Bulls! Touchdown Bulls! This play will definitely be under review!

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)

Again with the negative waves?

The replay is shown several times. (ESPN STOCK FOOTAGE).

FEMALE ESPN REPORTER

(astonished)

That play is going to stand. And
UB's season of destiny continues,
now leading 12th ranked Ball State
21 to 17.

Willie and the men: JUMP, SCREAM, CHEST BUMP each other!

INT. FOOTBALL DOME STADIUM - LATER THAT DAY

Ball State is on UB'S 24-yard line.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

Here we go again, folks. Ball State
has marched down the field and has
a first and ten at UB's 24-yard
line. UB holds a slim 21 to 17
advantage with time running out in
the 3rd quarter. Davis in the gun.
He takes the snap... and drops the
ball! He reaches for it, kicking it
up the field! UB's Mike Sherod
picks up the fumble and begins
racing toward the goal line. He's
at the thirty... forty --

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)

Nobody's catchin' him.

DICK BEAMISH (O.S.)

He's down to the Ball State twenty,
the ten... touchdown, UB! Sherod
races seventy-four yards on a truly
unbelievable play!

BIG LOU DEVINO (O.S.)

Put an extra order of wings in the
deep fryer tonight, Dickie Boy.

The UB faithful ERUPT: the seven students with painted on UB
Bulls' letters, the heavy set bare-bellied man, etc. The
female ESPN announcer is speechless. UB 28 BALL STATE 17.

INT. FOOTBALL DOME STADIUM - DUSK

The clock finally exhales. The tally: UB 42 BALL STATE 24.

Hugging each other in the private box are: Willie, Brogan,
Bear Dempsey, Razor Paolini and Maggio.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

The players are hugging, high-fiving, Gatorade baths all around. Willie and his teammates join in the festivities.

A MALE PRESENTER with the International Bowl Committee steps up to Coach Gill, a reserved PRESIDENT SIMPSON, (65), and AD Emanuel. They defer to Gill, who yields to Willie.

MALE PRESENTER

Mr. Evans, on behalf of the International Bowl to be held on January 4th, 2009 in Toronto, the bowl committee would like to extend this official invitation to the 2008 University at Buffalo Bulls.

The presenter hands him a document.

WILLIE

Thank you. This is about the kids. This is about these kids in this room and their coaches and what they've accomplished. On behalf of the '58 team, I want to thank you gentlemen for your incredible hospitality -- but this day is about the University at Buffalo in 2008. I am very proud to be standing in this sacred room here today. I am proud to be here with my teammates.

Willie waves his '58 team members to join him. A content Maggio stands in the corner grinning from ear-to-ear.

UB 2008 TEAM PLAYERS

Three cheers for the 58 Bulls. Hip hip, hoorah! Hip hip, hoorah! Hip hip, hoorah!

James Starks approaches Willie.

JAMES STARKS

I hope I've done you proud, Sir.

WILLIE

You've done us all proud, son.

Naaman Roosevelt steps in, giving his grandfather a Bear Hug.

NAAMAN ROOSEVELT

This one's all you, Grandpa!

EXT. UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO CAMPUS - LATE NIGHT

The team bus arrives on campus.

INT. UB LOCKER ROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

The last of the players exit. A few ALUMNI and coaches still remain, as Coach Gill enters, football in hand. He advances toward Willie who is seated on one of the benches.

COACH GILL

Mr. Evans. Thank you for your tremendous support this season. Your contribution certainly aided the kids and myself in achieving our objective.

(hands him the ball)

I want you to have this. It's the game ball from yesterday's contest.

Willie shyly accepts the ball. Coach Gill then exits, passing by an inebriated Maggio at the door. Maggio approaches Willie, the two men the only ones now remaining.

MAGGIO

The kids overcame... and you did, too, Mr. Evans! A ball well deserved. Miraculous season. Four overtime conquests, and the dismantling of the number twelve team in the land. David verses Goliath -- no way they grab the ratings over last night's battle.

WILLIE

Why don't you let me give you a ride to your motel, Frank?

MAGGIO

Thank you... I'm good.

Maggio ambles to the chalkboard, writes on it: "1958 University of Buffalo Bulls - Tangerine Bowl Champions."

MAGGIO (CONT'D)

And Florida State most certainly would have been slayed... slew, by the 1958 Lambert Cup Champions!

An EQUIPMENT MANAGER, 40's, enters.

WILLIE

Could you give us a minute, please?

MAGGIO

You boys were champions -- undefeated, technically. Lured into a national bowl game when only eight slots were available. And all the while a small school, mind you. David vs. the Goliath Florida State! Ironic thing is, I think you beat 'em -- trample their butts up and down the field. But there was one obstacle... one impediment in your path that no one could overcome. The ignorance of one man. Do you remember the name of that man, Mr. Evans? The man who set those racist wheels in motion?

WILLIE

(abrupt, angry)
Jack Morgan.

MAGGIO

A name that's apparently haunted both of us for decades. And the man amenable for my being here this season. You see, Mr. Evans, Jack Morgan -- simply stated -- as wretched as it is, is my father.

(slumps against the wall)

Maggio was my mother's maiden name. I took it the day I turned eighteen and left home for good. What my father did to you boys in 1958 was unconscionable. There was no excuse for it. Not then and not now. And I came here... I came here this season to atone for the sins of my father. I only hope to God you can absolve the both of us.

Willie helps a teary-eyed Maggio off the floor. They exit.

INT. CAR CITY STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Willie drives. Maggio sits slumped in the passenger seat.

MAGGIO

I was a greenhorn in high school when I found out about it. Never looked at my father the same after that. That's my motel on the right.

Willie pulls the car into the driveway of a rundown motel.

MAGGIO (CONT'D)

Budget cuts at the paper. I occupy room twelve. You wanna' come in? I make a mean glass of scotch.

Willie pulls up to door #12. The two men exit the car.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Willie and Maggio sit at a cramped table.

MAGGIO

Okay if I ask you a personal question, Mr. Evans? An inquiry about, Ethel Jean?

(off Willie's slow nod)

After all you two had fought through together... I mean, how did you cope with losing her like that?

WILLIE

Not very well at first I'm afraid.

Flooded with emotion, Willie stands, paces the tiny room, glancing at the wedding photo of Maggio and his wife.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Then one day, two years after she passed, I found myself peering at my reflection in the mirror. The next thing I knew, I was down on my knees. Fell right to the floor and began reciting the Serenity Prayer. Strange thing was I had never heard it before. That day was a real game changer for me. Accept the things you can't change, Frank. Or they'll change you.

INT. NURSING HOME FRONT DESK - DAY

Maggio and Willie approach the desk. In Maggio's right hand is the letter from his father. The NURSE gestures behind him.

Maggio turns, then moves toward a frail Jack Morgan seated in a wheelchair by the window. An awkward moment ensues. Willie approaches, extends Jack his hand. The two men shake. Then --

JACK MORGAN

Please accept my sincerest apology, Mr. Evans.

Willie smiles, nods. A father and son then lock eyes, a kindred familiarity between the two finally reignited.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A gravestone inscription reads: Linda M. Maggio (BORN 11/05/62 DIED 08/19/2006 *Live In The Moment*. Perfectly dressed and clean shaven, an emotional Frank Maggio places a bouquet of roses by his wife's tombstone then exits.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

SUBTITLE: (INTERNATIONAL BOWL, TORONTO - JANUARY 4TH, 2009)

Huddled together at mid-field, their football jerseys over their shirts, are Willie and the remaining PLAYERS from the '58 squad. At the podium next to them is REV. JESSE JACKSON.

Maggio guards the sideline. Suddenly, Willie signals him to join them. Maggio initially declines then acquiesces, as several of the '58 team players wave him on.

REV. JESSE JACKSON

Long before the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965, or Linden Johnson passing the Civil rights bill, a bunch of kids, their coaches and the administration made a decision that would resonate around the country 50 years later, and be heard loud and clear that there is no room in a modern society for racism of any kind. Dr. King would have been and maybe he was proud and even may have been aware of it in 1958. It is possible that in his *I Have a Dream* speech he was talking directly to that 1958 team when he said that a man should not be judged by the color of his skin but by the content of his character. Well, you gentlemen of the 1958 University of Buffalo Football Bulls -- the content of your character that fall day when you voted to not go without your fellow warrior is what Dr. King's whole life was dedicated to.

MAGGIO (V.O.)

The University at Buffalo did not go on to win that game. In fact, they lost 38-20. But as Offie would say. "Years from now when you reflect upon this game, and believe me you will;

(MORE)

MAGGIO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

you will not ponder on whether you won or lost, but your thoughts will focus on the intestinal fortitude you exhibited here today." Well, UB gave it all they had that day.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Willie sits, reading the last pages of a novel. BOBBIE EVANS, Caucasian, (72), enters. She hands him a cup of tea, kisses him then exits. Behind Willie on a shelf sits the 1950 Pittsburgh Pirates bat. Next to the bat beams a photo of: Willie, Brogan, Maggio, Dempsey and Paolini at the bowl game.

MAGGIO (V.O.)

I asked Willie what he would like etched on his tombstone. He studied me a long moment then commented, "I am truly at rest." Willie phoned me shortly after finishing my novel, *Bull in the Ring*, and said as tranquil as could be, "Frank, scratch that epitaph from my headstone." And then he hung up. I believe the night, President Obama was elected was a real game changer for him. Having toiled seventy-two years on this earth, only he knew what that moment meant. There was no need for me to insult a fellow warrior by asking the inevitable question, how does it feel? The man deserved more than that. At least he did from me. An ESPN reporter later asked the inevitable question. Willie, gracious as always, responded with class and dignity saying --

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

An ESPN REPORTER places a microphone in front of Willie.

WILLIE

The opportunity to cast a ballot for Obama outweighed the outcome, because what mattered most was that a black man had earned the right to win or lose the race for president.

FADE OUT:

SCROLL BEFORE END CREDITS

2008 TEAM

1. JAMES STARKS went on to play in the NFL for the Green Bay Packers, winning a super bowl ring in 2011.
2. NAAMAN ROOSEVELT went on to play several seasons in the NFL at wide receiver for the Buffalo Bills.

1958 TEAM

1. BOB "BEEF" ADAMS spent 40 years working in management at the Bethlehem Steel Plant.
2. JOE "IRISH" O'GRADY married Elaine and went on to coach at Timon High School in South Buffalo, NY. Coach Joe's teams were legendary for their "take no prisoners" attitude.
3. COACH FREDDIE DUNLOP went on to have a very successful and long career as head coach at Colgate University, receiving a national ranking as high as #12 in 1976.
4. SAM "SAMPSON" SANDERS married Midge, taught and coached several high school sports in his 40 plus years.
5. LOUIE "BULL" REALE married Donna and became an executive at a national recognized insurance agency.
6. NICK BOTTINI married his high school sweetheart and continued on with the family farming business.
7. RAY "RAZOR" PAOLINI married Crista and has had several successful fine wood product businesses and restaurants.
8. JACK "BEAR" DEMPSEY became a science instructor and high school football and baseball coach in Grand Island, NY.
9. GORDON "GORDO" BUKATY became of all things a teacher, high school football coach and phenomenal mentor for kids until his early passing in 1976.
10. BILL "BROGIE" BROGAN married Sue, then went back into the service after graduating and became a high-ranking officer in the Marines.
11. COACH RICHARD "OFFIE" OFFENHAMER coached the 1959 team with Willie and Brogan to an identical 8-1 record. No bowl invitation was extended. Offie coached UB until 1965, never regaining that magic of the 1958 season.
12. WILLIE EVANS was drafted by the upstart Buffalo Bills. Upon his release, he went on to teach, coach and mentor high school kids for 40 plus years. Rod Evans grew up to become a successful businessman.