

THE BLIND SIDE

by

John Lee Hancock

Based on the book

The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game

by

Michael Lewis

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Alcon Film Fund, LLC
10390 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 250
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1 OVER BLACK...

1

A distinctly SOUTHERN VOICE...

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

There's a moment of orderly silence before a football play begins. Players are in position, linemen are frozen, and anything's possible. Then, like a traffic accident, stuff begins to randomly collide. From the snap of the ball to the snap of the first bone is closer to four seconds than five.

2 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD/GAME FOOTAGE - NIGHT

2

We're watching footage of the 1985 Redskins/Giants Monday Night Football game. Lots of angles, faces, knuckles as the two teams line up, Redskins on offense, for the snap of the ball. As the play begins --

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

One Mississippi. Joe Theismann, the Redskins quarterback, takes the snap and hands off to his running back.

JOE THEISMANN hands off to JOHN RIGGINS, who takes two steps forward, then turns and tosses the ball back to Theismann.

The footage PAUSES AND PLAYS like a coach breaking down film.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Two Mississippi. It's a trick play, a flea flicker, and the running back tosses the ball back to the quarterback.

HARRY CARSON, the Giants linebacker sees that Theismann has the ball back and races toward him. Theismann steps up and to the side and Carson flies past.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Three Mississippi. Up to now the play's been defined by what the quarterback sees. It's about to be defined by what he doesn't.

LAWRENCE TAYLOR carves a wide circle around the Redskins lineman trying to block him.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

The blocker dives frantically at Taylor's ankles, and misses. Taylor leaps, arms raised, filling the sky behind Theismann. The image FREEZES.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Four Mississippi. Lawrence Taylor is the best defensive player in the NFL and has been from the time he stepped onto the field as a rookie.

The frozen image of Taylor comes to life as he jackknifes Theismann's body.

PLAYERS' FACES react to what they're seeing. Devastating.

TAYLOR pops up from the pile and jumps around like a madman.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
He will also change the game of football as we know it.

WE ARE WATCHING the MNF feed and hear the ANNOUNCER'S VOICES.

FRANK GIFFORD (V.O.)
Again, we'll look at it with the reverse angle one more time. And I suggest if your stomach is weak you just don't watch.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
Joe Theissman never played another down of football.

3 TEAM PHOTO OF THE 2005 SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

3

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
Now, y'all would guess that more often than not the highest paid player on an NFL team is the quarterback.

The camera finds MATT HASSELBECK, Seattle's quarterback.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
And you'd be right. What you probably don't know is that more often than not the second highest paid player is, thanks to Lawrence Taylor, a left tackle.

The camera goes to WALTER JONES, Seattle's left tackle.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Because, as every housewife knows, the first check you write is for the mortgage and the second is for the insurance. The left tackle's job is to protect the quarterback from what he can't see coming. To protect his blind side.

4 SERIES OF SHOTS

4

"Famous" left tackles - Jonathan Ogden, Orlando Pace, Andre Gurode. Then we SEE SHOTS of their hands, feet, waists, etc., corresponding with --

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

The ideal left tackle is big, but a lot of people are big. He is wide in the butt and massive in the thighs. He has long arms, giant hands and feet as quick as a hiccup.

5 EXT. WEST MEMPHIS - DAY

5

A street anchored by project housing and littered with broken down cars and ne'er-do-wells. Lots of folks out, milling about, but our focus is on A TEENAGER in the distance, moving TOWARD US in SLO-MO while everyone else is at normal speed. He's extremely large, six and a half feet, but he carefully steps instead of strutting. His name is MICHAEL OHER.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

This is a rare and expensive combination the need for which can be traced to that Monday night game and Lawrence Taylor. For on that day he not only altered Joe Theismann's life, but mine as well.

As Michael continues toward us he begins to go OUT OF FOCUS --

INVESTIGATOR'S VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Oher, do you know why I'm here?
(no response)
Mr. Oher?....

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hmmm....

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

INVESTIGATOR'S VOICE (V.O.)

Do you know, do you understand why
I'm here?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

To... investigate.

INVESTIGATOR'S VOICE (V.O.)

Yes. To investigate. I'm here to
investigate your odd...
predicament.

6 INT. NONDESCRIPT ROOM - DAY

6

Looks like a government office. Not much more than a desk on
either side of which sit INVESTIGATOR GRANGER, an African-
American woman in a business suit, and Michael Oher. Michael
slumps a bit, eyes the ground and rubs his hands on his knees
- a nervous trait of his.

GRANGER

Do you find it odd? Your
predicament?

(no response)

Michael?...

MICHAEL

Iono [I don't know]....

Investigator Granger sifts through her briefcase, pulls out
files, documents - a good bit of evidence for whatever
trouble Michael is in.

She sits back, stares at Michael, as if trying to figure him
out. Michael can't meet her gaze. He looks out the window,
rubs his knees some more.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Can I... can I leave now?

GRANGER

(with finality)

No. You can't.

7 INT. ANCIENT FORD TAURUS - DAY

7

SUPERSCRIPT: TWO YEARS BEFORE

Michael sits in the back seat, behind STEVEN HAMILTON, 14,
and his father, BIG TONY, who drives.

*

(CONTINUED)

- 7 CONTINUED: 7
- Not a word is spoken as they drive through the streets of WEST MEMPHIS - poverty ridden.
- 8 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY 8
- The Taurus exits into --
- 9 EXT. SOMEWHAT NICER AREA OF TOWN - DAY 9
- The Taurus passes an endless supply of churches and strip joints, all of which Michael's eyes take in.
- 10 EXT. EAST MEMPHIS - INT/EXT TAURUS - DAY (LATER) 10
- We've gone from slums to nice neighborhoods - fathers and sons play baseball, kids tend lemonade stands, sprinklers keep the grass emerald green.
- Michael's face tells us he's never seen anything like this.
- 11 EXT. WINGATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - DAY 11*
- The Taurus enters the parking lot filled with nice cars. *
- A12 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY A12
- Big Tony strides down the almost empty hallway, spots a door.
- 12 INT. WINGATE - COTTON'S OFFICE - DAY 12*
- BERT COTTON, football coach, cleans off his desk, ready to leave for the day. Big Tony knocks at the door. *
- BIG TONY
They say you the coach.
- Cotton eyes Tony, offers a hand.
- COTTON
Bert Cotton. *
- BIG TONY
Tony Hamilton, but everybody call me Big Tony. *
- COTTON
What can I do for you, Tony?
- 13 EXT. WINGATE - SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY 13*
- Steven and Michael eye the freshly painted buildings, the flowers, the new playground jungle gyms and outdoor hoops.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

STEVEN
Sure is pretty, huh, Big Mike?

Mike doesn't answer, just takes it all in. Steven sees and opens a container filled to the brim with balls - footballs, basketballs, four square balls.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Not even locked!

MICHAEL
White people are crazy.

14 INT. WINGATE - COTTON'S OFFICE - DAY

14*

Big Tony and Cotton are mid-discussion --

BIG TONY
You see I promised my mama Boo, on her deathbed, that I would get Steven outta public and into a church school.

COTTON
I appreciate that but I'm not involved with admissions.

BIG TONY
I figured I'd come to you; seeing as you might need some players.

COTTON
What sport does he play?

BIG TONY
Anything with a ball. Good, too.

He has Cotton's attention for a moment, then it passes...

COTTON
Classes start in a week. It'd have to be for next semester.

BIG TONY
I know what you're thinking, Coach, but I got money. I'm a mechanic at Wilson's Auto t'other side of town.
(another try)
What if someone drops out or moves?
Could they get in then?

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

COTTON

"They?" You only mentioned one son.

BIG TONY

Steven, yessir, but I brought another boy along.

COTTON

Another boy?

BIG TONY

Yeah, Big Mike. He stays on our couch sometimes. It's a bad deal. His mama's on the crack pipe and he ain't got nobody. He just wanted to come along with us today.

COTTON

Would... Big Mike be an applicant as well?

BIG TONY

Yeah, sure, why not.

Cotton sighs, considers what to do.

COTTON

They'd have to fill out applications and make an appointment for interviews.

BIG TONY

I was hopin' you might just interview 'em now.

COTTON

They're here?

Big Tony points out the window to the playground where Steven and Michael are playing one on one basketball.

BIG TONY

The little ones Steven and the big one's --

COTTON

Big Mike.

BIG TONY

Yeah. That's right.

INTERCUT WITH:

15 EXT. WINGATE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

15*

For a boy his size Michael can really move. He dribbles, fakes left, then falls away, making a long three pointer.

Cotton's eyes get a little wider as he watches --

Michael dribbles the ball between his legs, behind his back and jumps high, slamming the ball through the hoop. Big men aren't supposed to move like this.

Cotton's lips are almost quivering --

COTTON
Mother of God....

16 INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE BOARD ROOM - DAY

16

The Board of Admissions, eight or so men and women, are seated around a large conference table. By himself, at one end, sits Bert Cotton.

COTTON
Are there spots available or not?

PAUL SANDSTROM, Principal, taps his fingers before...

SANDSTROM
Technically, yes, in both grades. But we have a greater responsibility than just filling classrooms. Steven Hamilton's paperwork looks acceptable and I believe he would be capable of succeeding here but the other kid --

Sandstrom looks through papers for the name.

COTTON
Big Mike.

SANDSTROM
Michael Oher gives us no reason to believe, based on his record, that he would be successful here.

COTTON
How bad could it be?

Another board member, MRS. SMITH, pores over Michael's file, which is a mess. She finds facts and lays them out --

(CONTINUED)

MRS. SMITH

We're not sure exactly how old he is due to lack of records. He has a measured IQ of 80. That's 6th percentile. He's been enrolled in seven different institutions, including a gap of eighteen months around the age of ten when he apparently didn't attend school at all. He repeated first grade as well as second, there's no record of attendance in third, and in fourth grade --

COTTON

So they moved him ahead without going to third grade. That says something.

MRS. SMITH

(ignoring Cotton)

His attendance records are abysmal and his grade point average begins with a zero. Zero-point-six.

Silence around the room. MRS. BOSWELL, a board member and science teacher, looks to the others.

MRS. BOSWELL

Everyone passed him along - gave him D's so they could hand their problem off to the next school.

COTTON

Brave kid.

(off their confusion)

For wanting to come here. For wanting a quality education. An education denied him by the poor quality of the schools he's attended. Most kids with his background wouldn't come within two hundred miles of this place.

MRS. SMITH

Coach Cotton, we understand your interest in the young man's athletic abilities.

SANDSTROM

He wouldn't be able to play until he got his grades up anyway.

*

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

COTTON

Forget sports! Look at the wall.

He points to the crest on the wall. Beneath it: "NEIGHBORLY, ACADEMIC, CHRISTIAN".

*
*

COTTON (CONT'D)

Christian. We either take that seriously or we paint over it. You don't admit Michael Oher for sports, you admit him because it's the right thing to do.

Their faces announce that he's made a point.

17 EXT. WINGATE - DAY

17

First day of class. Students, mostly blonde-haired and blue-eyed, wearing crisply laundered Abercrombie and Fitch, carry their backpacks through the school's arch and converse with friends they haven't seen over the summer.

Michael ENTERS FRAME. Fills it up in fact. He stares at the arch. Beneath the school name we read "WITH MEN THIS IS POSSIBLE, WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE". Michael takes a deep breath and enters. He carries his "school bag" - a plastic grocery sack.

18 EXT. WINGATE - CAMPUS - DAY

18

Just as before, Michael moves at A DIFFERENT SPEED than those around him. Makes sense because he is different. Not only the color of his skin but his size, his clothes (short pants and T-shirt), his eyes taking in the pavement - all point to the fact that he doesn't belong here.

Small children from kindergarten and first grade give him a wide, cautious berth. He's noticed and ogled by everyone.

19 INT. WINGATE - MRS. BOSWELL'S CLASS - DAY

19

It's Mrs. Boswell's biology class and she's writing on the board in front of a full classroom when Michael enters. He pauses and all eyes go to him. Mrs. Boswell does her best to stifle a gasp as she first lays eyes on him. Then...

MRS. BOSWELL

Class, this is Mike Oher and he's new here so I expect you all to make him feel welcome.

(with a warm smile)

Mike, take any empty seat.

(CONTINUED)

19

CONTINUED:

19

She urges him with a nod. Michael walks back and sits in the corner, looking terrified. He barely fits in the seat.

Mrs. Boswell hands out a stack of papers to each row. As students pass them back to others...

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

This is a quiz based on the information you learned last year in your science curriculum.

(over GROANS)

Don't worry. It won't be graded. I just want to see how much of the information we need to hit again. Just answer whatever you know.

*
*

The student in front of Michael hands a sheet back to him and eyes the size of his feet.

The students start to work while Michael stares at the sheet like it's written in Greek. Mrs. Boswell watches him for a few seconds before turning back to her work.

*
*

20

INT. WINGATE - HALLWAY - DAY (LATER)

20*

A bell RINGS and kids leave classrooms.

21

INT. WINGATE - MRS. BOSWELL'S CLASS - DAY

21*

Michael sits alone while Mrs. Boswell collects the last of the papers. She walks over to Michael, looks down at his sheet. Nothing filled in, just his name scrawled at the top.

She tries to decide how to deal with this then opts for --

MRS. BOSWELL

It's okay.

MICHAEL

Can I leave now?

She nods and watches him stand and walk away. She glances down at the sheet, turns it over and sees...

A DRAWING on the back - a boat on an ocean. On the boat is a single, stick figure person. It's sweet but looks like a third grader drew it.

22 INT. BIG TONY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

22

Michael lies on a tattered sofa. The lights are out but Michael's eyes are open, staring at the light emanating from beneath a closed bedroom door. We hear voices...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S)
Why he gotta always stay here?

BIG TONY'S VOICE (O.S)
Ain't got nowhere else.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S)
And how's that your problem? You
the Red Cross all of a sudden?

Michael tries to shut his eyes.

23 EXT. WINGATE - PARKING LOT - DAY

23*

School is out. Steven walks up to Michael...

STEVEN
Hey, Big Mike, um... my Pops'
girlfriend... she don't really want
you to stay with us no more.

Big Tony's Taurus pulls into the lot.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
We can still give you rides if you
want?

MICHAEL
Naw, it's a'right.

Steven gets in the Taurus. Michael watches it drive away.

24 INT. WINGATE - GYMNASIUM FOYER - NIGHT

24*

A girl's volleyball game is in progress in the bg. As latecomers move en masse for entry into the gym, a small pretty lady on a cell phone moves against the crowd; a salmon on a mission. This is LEIGH ANNE Tuohy. And she's pissed.

LEIGH ANNE
(on cell phone)
I don't care if Patrick Ramsey did
approve the chair. He's an NFL
quarterback not Martha frickin'
Stewart.

(CONTINUED)

24

CONTINUED:

24

She arrives at the concession stand and waits impatiently.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

There's a difference between Bunny Williams and Lazee-boy.

(to vendor)

Three large popcorns and two large diets.

(into cell)

When MTV Cribs comes to his house he'll be showing off his home theatre but all I'm gonna see is a brown Barca-lounger. I'm his designer, my name's on it. Deliver what I ordered!!!

*

She hangs up angry, spots a friend nearby and her frown turns into a smile that could light up a cave.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Hi, sweetie! We're on the Kidspace committee together, aren't we?! It'll be a hoot!

25

INT. WINGATE - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

25

Leigh Anne's husband SEAN TUOHY, handsome, confident, and their 10-year-old son, SJ, sit, watching the game.

During a time out, Sean eyes the crowd, sees something odd.

In the upper corner of the gym sits Michael, by himself, rubbing his knees. Others around him, all white, have moved away. He's a very large island in the lily white gym.

SEAN

S.J., you know that kid?

SJ

What kid?

SEAN

Black kid. Up in the corner.

SJ

He goes to high school here. His name is Big something... Big Mike.

Sean eyes Michael suspiciously.

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED:

25

SEAN

He look like a volleyball fan to you?

Leigh Anne, loaded up with refreshments, makes her way up the stands to her family. She has a nod, a smile, a bon mot, for everyone she passes. As she sits...

LEIGH ANNE

What'd I miss?

SEAN

Collins got a dig.

SJ

It's girl's volleyball, Mom. You didn't miss anything.

Leigh Anne gives him a look then stands and shouts --

LEIGH ANNE

Collins! Move your feet!

ON THE COURT - COLLINS TUOHY, a beautiful 16-year-old, sighs and gives her mother a look - "Don't embarrass me!"

26

INT. WINGATE - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT (LATER)

26*

The scoreboard tells us that the game is over. Fans file out. The Tuohy family waits in a group as the volleyball team exits the court.

LEIGH ANNE

Collins, we'll wait outside. And don't double condition in the shower - you still have homework!

COLLINS

I'm going over to Cannon's house to study.

SJ

Can I go to the Johnson's for dinner? They invited me.

LEIGH ANNE

What's so awful about our house?

Sean smiles, shakes his head as SJ and Collins leave.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

Sean's eyes go to the upper stands where he sees Michael, alone, walking slowly, then bending down, picking something up, taking a few more steps and repeating the process.

Picking up left-over bags of popcorn.

Sean considers this for a second before leaving.

27 INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

27*

Teachers drink stale coffee and chew on donuts.

FIRST TEACHER (BOB)

Well, the big guy's been here a month and he ain't cutting it in my class.

SECOND TEACHER (APRIL)

Why would Admissions do this? It's not fair to us or the boy.

THIRD TEACHER (GLENDA)

Just setting him up to fail.

BOB

I don't think he has any idea what I'm teaching.

GLENDA

And how would you know if he did? He won't even talk.

Mrs. Boswell can't contain herself.

MRS. BOSWELL

He writes.

APRIL

His name. Barely.

Mrs. Boswell goes to her purse, pulls out a crumpled page.

MRS. BOSWELL

He threw this in the trash can.

(reads from the page)

"I look and I see white everywhere: white walls, white floors, and a lot of white people. The teachers do not know I have no idea of anything they are talking about. I do not want to listen to anyone, especially the teachers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27

CONTINUED:

27

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

They are giving homework and expecting me to do the problems on my own. I have never done homework in my life. I go to the bathroom, look in the mirror and say, "This is not Michael Oher."

(a pause for effect)

He entitled it "White Walls."

The room is dead quiet.

BOB

How's the spelling?

Mrs. Boswell stuffs the page back in her purse and leaves.

28

INT. WINGATE - CAFETERIA - DAY

28*

Sean and Coach Cotton sip coffee while all around them students eat their lunches. They are looking at Michael, who sits by himself without a tray in front of him.

COTTON

If he makes his grades he'll be eligible in the spring.

SEAN

If he makes his grades.

COTTON

But boy-hidey, just look at him.

Cotton is admiring Michael's size but Sean sees something else. He stands, walks over to Michael, who barely looks up.

SEAN

What did you eat for lunch today?

MICHAEL

Here in the cafeteria.

SEAN

I didn't ask where you ate, I asked what you ate.

MICHAEL

A few things.

SEAN

Do you need some money? For lunch?

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED:

28

MICHAEL

I don't need any.

Sean walks back over to Coach Cotton.

SEAN

Buy him a semester lunch pass and
put it on my bill.

(off Cotton's look)

He's hungry.

COTTON

You could tell that by looking at
him?

SEAN

I didn't grow up all that different
from him. At public school they
give you free lunch, Bert. And
when food is finite, you'd be
surprised how much time you can
spend thinking about it.

*

29

INT. WINGATE - MRS. BOSWELL'S CLASS - DAY

29*

Mrs. Boswell distributes a test to the class.

MRS. BOSWELL

You'll have one hour. If you
finish early put it on my desk and
sit quietly.

She looks at the class as they begin to work, then sees
Michael just staring at his test. She sighs, makes a
decision, rises and walks over.

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

Mike, come with me.

30

INT. WINGATE - SMALL ADJACENT ROOM - DAY

30*

Filled with supplies and a small desk. Mrs. Boswell points
and he sits.

MRS. BOSWELL

You can take the test back here
away from everybody else. I'll sit
in there so if there's anything you
don't understand you can ask.

*

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED:

30

Michael's eyes go to the page in front of him. He rubs his hands on his knees and stares. Mrs. Boswell waits a beat then scoots her chair over next to him.

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

Mike, how about I ask the questions and you tell me the answers or as much as you know.

She looks at his hands - huge next to hers - then reads:

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

Protozoans are classified based on:
a) how they get their food, b) how they reproduce, c) how they move, or d) both a and c.

Michael just stares. After a long moment ...

MICHAEL

Iono...

MRS. BOSWELL

Just try. Ask questions if you don't understand.

But still Michael stares at the page. The look on her face says she's about to give up when --

He lifts his eyes to her and points to --

-- the question on the test - specifically to the word "classified".

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

"Classified". It means how things are grouped together.

MICHAEL

Like our "class"?

MRS. BOSWELL

Exactly. This science course is classified based on what grade y'all are in. Eleventh.

Michael nods understanding.

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)

Okay, Mike, you ready to answer the question?

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

He looks at her.

31 INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

31*

Same group of teachers. Mrs. Boswell bursts through the door, holding the test.

MRS. BOSWELL

He knows it!

BOB

Who knows it and what does he know?

MRS. BOSWELL

The material. Michael Oher. I gave him this test verbally.

She holds up the test - marked with a large red "C".

APRIL

On how big a curve?

MRS. BOSWELL

He's been listening the whole time. It's amazing what he's absorbed. And, trust me, he's listening to you, too. Okay, so his reading level is low and he has no idea how to learn in a classroom, but...

(makes her point)

I'm not saying he's going to pass but Big Mike is not stupid.

32 EXT. WINGATE - CAMPUS - DAY

32*

School is out and Michael walks among the kids of all shapes and sizes. Two little Kindergarten girls try and swing themselves. Michael stops nearby, watching them.

MICHAEL

Hi....

They're stuck, not sure if they should talk to this "stranger". They jump off the swings and run away.

SJ (OS)

Smile at 'em.

Michael turns to see SJ nearby, watching him.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

SJ (CONT'D)

It lets them know you're their friend. Did you know that even little kids born blind smile? They've never seen anyone do it before but they smile anyway. So it's universal. That's why it works. Not that you should fake it or anything.... You're Big Mike, right?

*
*
*
*
*
*

Sean holds out a fist for Mike to "knock" and the two walk toward the school entrance.

*
*

SJ (CONT'D)

I'm Sean, but everyone calls me SJ - that's for Sean Junior because my father's name is Sean. Sean Tuohy. He was a basketball star at Ole Miss, point guard, and now he owns like a million Taco Bells.

Leigh Anne's car pulls up to the pick up/drop off and SJ starts toward it.

*

SJ (CONT'D)

Manana'.

Michael smiles at the kid, who smiles back.

33 INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY

33

Leigh Anne notices Michael as she drives past him.

LEIGH ANNE

Who's that SJ?

SJ

Big Mike.

LEIGH ANNE

Get your feet off my dash.

34 EXT. WINGATE - PICK UP/DROP OFF - DAY

34

Michael watches Leigh Anne's car disappear.

SANDSTROM (O.S.)

Big Mike?...

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 34

Michael turns to see Paul Sandstrom, the principal. *

35 EXT. WINGATE - DAY (A FEW MINUTES LATER) 35 *

Michael and Sandstrom sit on a bench. *

SANDSTROM *

Mike, I just got a call from
someone at the police department.
(off Michael's look)
Do you remember the story in the
papers awhile back about the man
who fell off an overpass?
(Michael shakes his head)
No one knew who he was and they're
not sure if he jumped, or if... at
any rate he passed away.

Sandstrom struggles with how to say the words. *

SANDSTROM (CONT'D) *

Mike, the man... was your father.

Michael takes this in without showing emotion.

SANDSTROM (CONT'D) *

They've been looking for someone to
notify and came across your name on
our registry. I'm really sorry,
son.
(no response)
Were you close?
(Michael shakes his head)
When did you last see him?

MICHAEL

Iono.

SANDSTROM *

I'll try and find out where he's
buried. Maybe we could go visit?

Michael nods, then rises and walks away.

36 EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY (LATER) 36

Michael sits at a bus stop with his bag, rises as a bus stops
in front of him.

37 OMITTED 37 *

38 INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT 38 *

Pretty seedy. Michael walks to a sink in the back, opens his plastic sack, pulls out an extra T-shirt and starts to wash it. *

A WOMAN, the only other patron, reads a magazine. When he turns to look at her, she becomes quite nervous. She sets down the magazine and walks outside. *

It seems Michael was expecting this because as soon as she leaves he takes his wet T-shirt, wrings it out, walks to her dryer and tosses the shirt inside to dry with her things. *

39 EXT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT (LATER) 39 *

Michael sits in the corner, his head resting against the window, trying to sleep. *

DISSOLVE TO:

40 EXT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT 40 *

A banner over the arch reads: THANKSGIVING PAGEANT TONIGHT! Kids in costume - Pilgrims, Indians, turkeys - race out the door to greet their proud parents. SJ, in an ornate headdress looks for and spots Sean and Leigh Anne waving.

They walk away together toward the parking lot.

41-42 OMITTED 41-42

43 INT. SEAN'S BMW - PARKING LOT - NIGHT 43

As they exit the parking lot--

LEIGH ANNE
Turn on the heat!

SEAN
I don't know where it is.

LEIGH ANNE
It's fifteen degrees, you've had this car a month and you don't know how to turn on the heat?!
(as she turns it on)
What would you do without me?

SEAN
Lots of things you'll never know about.

(CONTINUED)

43

CONTINUED:

43

They trade a look and a smile. Sean puts a hand on her lap.

SJ

Get a room.

LEIGH ANNE

SJ, don't let this go to your head but I thought you were very convincing in the role of... uh...

SJ

Indian Number Three. I tried out for the Chief but they gave it to Andy Sung. I can't be sure but I think there was some multi-cultural bias thing working.

SEAN

Or maybe they just thought he'd make a better Chief.

SJ

Dad, he's like Chinese.

LEIGH ANNE

And you're Irish. If you weren't the Chief how come you got the headdress?

SJ hesitates a bit before --

SJ

Dad, I'm gonna need a few more of those free Quesadilla tickets.

LEIGH ANNE

(laughs)

And where does the acorn fall?

SEAN

Don't laugh too hard. The Quesadilla saved our ass.

A44

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A44

Sean's car stops at a red light and Michael crosses in front of them, wearing just his shorts and short sleeved shirt.

B44

INT. SEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

B44

Leigh Anne notices Michael --

(CONTINUED)

B44

CONTINUED:

B44

LEIGH ANNE

What is he wearing? It's below freezing. What's his name again? *

SEAN AND SJ

Big Mike.

LEIGH ANNE

Where's he going?

She gives Sean a look. Sean rolls down his window.

SEAN

Hey, Big Mike!

Michael stops in the crosswalk, looks to the car.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Where you headin'?

MICHAEL

Gym....

Sean nods, rolls his window back up and drives as the light turns green.

LEIGH ANNE

The gym? It's nine o'clock.

No answer to this. They drive another half block before --

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Turn around.

Sean sighs, knowing better than to argue.

44

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

44

The BMW pulls to a stop alongside Michael. Leigh Anne gets out, walks up to Michael.

LEIGH ANNE

Big Mike, my name is Leigh Anne Tuohy. My kids go to Wingate. You said you're going to the gym? *

Michael slowly nods.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

The school gym's closed.

Michael takes this in but doesn't respond.

(CONTINUED)

44

CONTINUED:

44

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Why were you going to the gym?
(again no answer)
Big Mike?! Why were you going to
the gym?

MICHAEL
Because... it's warm.

This hits her all at once. She bites her lip.

LEIGH ANNE
Do you have anywhere to stay
tonight?

Michael eyes the ground, then nods.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Don't you dare lie to me.

45

INT. SEAN'S BMW - NIGHT

45

Sean and SJ watch the discussion without hearing any of it.
Leigh Anne looks to Sean, then back to Michael.

SEAN
I've seen that look many times.
She's about to get her way.

Leigh Anne makes her way back to the car, with Michael in
tow. She opens the back door and he gets in next to SJ in
his headdress. Leigh Anne climbs into the front seat, closes
the door. Sean is looking at her.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Where we going?

LEIGH ANNE
Home.

46

EXT. RITZY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

46

The car enters the driveway of a beautiful home and stops.

47

INT. SEAN'S BMW - NIGHT

47

Michael's eyes are frozen at the sight. To him it looks like
a mansion. Hell, it IS a mansion.

48 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

48

Collins, in her pjs, talks on the phone while watching TV and listening to the stereo. She wears a tangerine cleansing masque on her face. When the family enters behind her --

COLLINS

How'd the dork do in the play?

She turns to see... Sean, Leigh Anne, SJ in headdress and Big Mike.

COLLINS (CONT'D)

Um... okay....

49 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

49

Leigh Anne lays out pillows, sheets, blankets on the couch.

LEIGH ANNE

I'd give you the guest bedroom but it's full of sample boxes. And the sectional in the family room slides apart when you sleep on it. At least that's what Sean says.

*
*
*
*
*

MICHAEL

Mr. Tuohy sleeps on the couch?

*
*

LEIGH ANNE

Only when he's bad. There's a powder room right there and we're upstairs if you need us.

*
*

The two share a look, then...

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Sleep tight, honey.

She leaves. Michael is dumbfounded, stares at everything in the room, then sits on the couch.

SJ

Psst...

SJ is in the doorway to the kitchen.

SJ (CONT'D)

If you can't sleep, my room is the first one at the top of the back stairs. I got X-Box, Madden, everything.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

49

Michael nods then smiles. SJ smiles back, gives a thumbs up and disappears. Michael's eyes go to a coffee table book --

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

NORMAN ROCKWELL. On the cover is "FREEDOM FROM WANT" - picturing a family sitting around a dinner table.

50 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

50

They lie in bed, awake.

LEIGH ANNE

Was this a bad idea?

SEAN

What?

LEIGH ANNE

Don't lie there and pretend you're not thinking the same thing as me.

SEAN

Fine, tell me what you're thinking so I can know what's supposed to be on my mind.

LEIGH ANNE

How well do you know Big Mike?

SEAN

In case you haven't noticed he doesn't have much to say. What's the big deal? It's just one night.
(after a beat)
It is just one night, right?..
Leigh Anne?...

LEIGH ANNE

Do you think he'll steal anything?

SEAN

I guess we'll know in the morning.

He rolls over to go to sleep. Leigh Anne just sits, stares.

51 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

51

Leigh Anne finishes teasing her hair. Sean rides an exercise bike. Before she leaves the room...

LEIGH ANNE

If you hear a scream call the insurance adjustor.

52 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - COLLINS' BEDROOM - DAY 52

Leigh Anne enters Collins' bedroom. Very "teenage girl" but a mess - clothes everywhere. Leigh Anne opens the curtains throwing light into the room.

LEIGH ANNE
Up and at 'em.

Collins groans. Leigh Anne picks up a few pieces of clothes on her way out and groans at the mess. We stay with her as she re-enters the hallway, walks and opens the door to --

53 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SJ'S BEDROOM - DAY 53

Just as messy but not all clothes. Leigh Anne almost trips on a series of wires connecting games to a large screen TV.

LEIGH ANNE
Sean Junior!

She opens the shades.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Clean this place up before you come downstairs. You hear me?

SJ crawls out of bed and Leigh Anne exits the room and starts down the stairs, almost afraid of what she'll find.

54 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 54

Leigh Anne stops, stares --

The couch is totally back to normal and the sheets, blankets and pillows are neatly stacked in almost military precision.

No sign of Michael.

LEIGH ANNE
Mike? Big Mike?!

Nothing. She hears a DOG BARKING in the neighborhood and moves to the window to look out.

55 EXT. TUOHY HOUSE - DAY 55

Michael, plastic sack in hand, walks away. Leigh Anne exits the front door, spots Michael and tries to catch up.

LEIGH ANNE
Big Mike!

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

He stops, turns. Leigh Anne walks over.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

MICHAEL
Iono.

LEIGH ANNE
Are you spending Thanksgiving with
your family?

Michael shakes his head.

56 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (LATER)

56

Leigh Anne carves turkey onto a tray and takes it into...

57 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

57

Leigh Anne sets the turkey on a serving table alongside the
rest of the Tuohy Thanksgiving feast.

LEIGH ANNE
Come and get it!

Sean sits at the TV, watching an Ole Miss football game,
while SJ plays video games on another. Collins chats on her
cell. Michael sits off to the side, taking it all in.

*
*

SEAN
SJ, Ole Miss is about to score!

SJ
Which means they're about to
fumble.

They all shuffle over, grab plates, start piling on food.
Sean loads his plate and heads back to the couch.

SEAN
Looks great, hon.

Collins plate is pretty delicately apportioned.

COLLINS
I see a lot of starch.

SJ jams turkey into a roll and lathers on cranberry sauce -
creating an easy to eat sandwich. He walks away.

(CONTINUED)

57

CONTINUED:

57

Michael stares - he's never seen so much food. Leigh Anne hands him a plate. He gingerly puts a slice of turkey on it.

LEIGH ANNE

As much as you want.

(walks away)

Oh, the potato salad!

*

With no one watching him, Michael shoves two rolls into his pants pocket and finishes filling his plate.

Leigh Anne reenters to see Michael sitting at the dining room table, alone, not touching his plate.

Her eyes go to the rest of her family, shoving down food and playing games. She makes a decision, grabs the remote and turns off the TVs.

*

58

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

58

The entire family sits at the table. Rockwell would be proud.

SJ

Why are we eating in here?

Leigh Anne holds out her hands.

LEIGH ANNE

Shall we say grace?

The Tuohy family plus Michael hold hands.

Collins stares at her tiny hand intertwined with Michael's. As Leigh Anne prays Michael tries to emulate behavior without closing his eyes, taking it all in...

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father. We thank you for all your many blessings on this family. We thank you for bringing us a new friend. And we ask that you look after us in this holiday season and never let us forget just how very fortunate we are. Amen.

A chorus of Amens and they all dig in. Michael is unsure at first how to correctly use the silverware. He picks up the fork and Leigh Anne nods, "that's right". She eyes Michael's stained shirt.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Big Mike, do you like to shop?
(off his look)
Because tomorrow I think I'm gonna
have to show you how it's done.

59 INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY

59

Leigh Anne drives and Michael sits shotgun.

MICHAEL
I got clothes.

LEIGH ANNE
You "have" clothes. And an extra T-
shirt in a plastic bag does not a
wardrobe make.

He looks out the window.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Okay, fine, let's go get 'em. Just
tell me where I'm going.

No answer. Frustrated, she pulls the car over to the curb
and puts it in park.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Tell me everything I need to know
about you.

He still stares out the window.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Who takes care of you?
(no answer)
A mother? Do you have a mother?
(no response)
A grandmother maybe?

Nothing. Leigh Anne turns off the car.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Look, Big Mike, we can do this the
easy way - or we can do it the hard
way. Take your pick.

He eyes the floor.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Fine. Tell me one thing I should
know about you. One thing!

(CONTINUED)

59

CONTINUED:

59

After a beat...

MICHAEL

I don't like to be called Big Mike.

She wasn't expecting this, nods her head.

LEIGH ANNE

Okay. Mike or Michael?

(off his shrug)

Tell you what, from now on, to me,
you're Michael. So,... Michael,
where we headed?

60

EXT. HURT VILLAGE HOUSING PROJECT - DAY

60

An expansive beehive of rotting housing. It's the place we
saw when we first laid eyes on Michael and nothing's changed.

Leigh Anne's car stops at one of the complexes.

LEIGH ANNE

This is where your mother lives?

He nods and she opens her door.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Okay, let's go.

He forcefully reaches across her and closes the door,
catching her off guard.

MICHAEL

Don't get out!

LEIGH ANNE

Who's going to help you with your
clothes?

MICHAEL

(pointed)

Don't get out of the car.

Michael gets out on his side and takes care to push the lock
before he closes the door.

She watches as he walks toward the structure, then notices
several of the local ne'er-do-wells eyeing her. She locks
the doors again, just for luck.

61 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

61

Michael walks slowly past a few gang-bangers on the steps. The obvious leader, ALTON, eyes him.

ALTON
Big Mike! Where you been?!

Michael ignores, keeps walking.

ALTON (CONT'D)
And who's that fine piece o' thing
driving you around?

One of Alton's minions, DAVID, sits nearby. Michael sees him, nods.

MICHAEL
Hey, David.

David, a little embarrassed to be with Alton, nods back.

62 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DIFFERENT APARTMENT - DAY

62

Michael arrives at an apartment and stops, taken aback. On the door is an EVICTION NOTICE and padlock.

He reads from the eviction for several seconds.

An Addict down the way fires up and slumps into bliss.

A63 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - MINUTES LATER

A63

With Leigh Anne's car in the bg., Michael, hidden from view slumps against a wall, looking lost - the first real emotions we've seen from him.

63 INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY (LATER)

63

She watches as Michael approaches the building with nothing in his hands, and makes his way back to the car. She unlocks it and he crawls inside. After a pregnant moment...

MICHAEL
She wadn't home.

LEIGH ANNE
We can come back.

Michael takes this in, looks out the window.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

MICHAEL

She prolly moved to a nicer place.

64 EXT. BIG AND TALL SHOP - DAY

64

Wrong side of the tracks. Michael and Leigh Anne cross the street toward the shop.

LEIGH ANNE

I've lived in Memphis my whole life
and never been anywhere near here.
You're going to take care of me,
right?

MICHAEL

I got your back.

LEIGH ANNE

That's good to know. Thank you.

As they start to walk, Leigh Anne reaches up and takes Michael's arm. He holds it out for her.

65 INT. BIG AND TALL SHOP - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

65

An AFRICAN AMERICAN SALESMAN directs Leigh Anne and Michael.

SALESMAN

Everything I got to fit him will be
right here.

LEIGH ANNE

This is it? If this is all you got
why's it say "Big and Tall" on the
sign?

SALESMAN

Big and Tall. You need "Bigger and
Taller".

He walks away. She starts to pore through the small rack.

LEIGH ANNE

Anything you like?

(he shrugs)

The one thing I know about shopping
is that if you don't absolutely
love it in the store, you won't
wear it. The store is where you
like it best.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65

CONTINUED:

65

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

And before you choose something
think about yourself wearing it and
ask yourself: Is this me?

She finds one shirt, holds it out.

*

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

What about this?

*

*

He shakes his head, "no".

*

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

(another shirt)

This isn't atrocious.

*

*

*

He shakes his head again. After a beat he points. She
almost laughs.

*

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

This one? This is the one you
like?

He nods, completely sure.

66

EXT. WINGATE - DAY

66*

Drop off area. Leigh Anne's car pulls up and SJ, Collins and
Michael get out.

LEIGH ANNE

Have a great day. Learn something!

They say a few good-byes, get out and walk toward the arch.

Only then do we see what Michael is wearing: a GARGANTUAN
ORANGE AND MAROON STRIPED RUGBY SHIRT.

Leigh Anne shakes her head, watching him walk away. A car
behind her HONKS. She checks the rear view mirror --

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Don't get your panties in a wad.

67

INT. TONY RESTAURANT - DAY

67

Ladies who lunch. The right sort doing their thing. Leigh
Anne sits at a table with three friends, BETH, ELAINE and
SHERRY. They sip on lemon water and nibble at salads.

BETH

The best part about Paris was the
food.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

67

CONTINUED:

67

BETH (CONT'D)

They use sauce like we use gravy. I had to join a gym the day we got back.

LEIGH ANNE

Any of y'all spent much time on the other side of town?

*
*

ELAINE

On the freeway.

SHERRY

Where exactly are you talking about?

LEIGH ANNE

Alabama Street... Hurt Village.

*

BETH

Hurt Village - that sounds like a threat.

LEIGH ANNE

You're not far off.

SHERRY

It would "hurt" me to go there.

ELAINE

It would certainly hurt your reputation to go there.

BETH

(tongue in cheek)

I'm actually from there but didn't mind hard work and look where I am now.

LEIGH ANNE

Eating an eighteen dollar salad.

BETH

And it's a little soggy to be honest.

SHERRY

Such a shame.

BETH

(re: her salad)

Yes it is.

(CONTINUED)

67

CONTINUED:

67

SHERRY

Civil rights was responsible for some good things but those programs - building ugly, low cost housing. I mean how could you be creative if you lived there? It's stifling.

ELAINE

Did you know that black men were employed at a higher rate before those programs? It's a fact.

BETH

They're not "black", Elaine. The term du jour is African-American.

ELAINE

And what if they're from Jamaica, or like Bermuda.

SHERRY

Then they're Bermudian-Americans.

They all cringe and laugh.

ELAINE

So, why are you asking about the projects, Leigh Anne? Another one of your charities?

BETH

A project for the projects. That's catchy. Money would raise itself.
(off their laughs)
Don't laugh. Count me in, Leigh Anne.

And they laugh harder. Leigh Anne smiles, biting her lip.

68

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

68

SJ and Michael sit at the island doing their homework.

SJ

It can't be that hard.

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah?...

SJ looks at the Michael's notebook.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

68

SJ

There are different parts of a sentence and you just have to draw lines showing what they do.

Sean stops by the refrigerator for a cold drink while he talks on his cell...

SEAN

(into cell)

They're gonna get rid of those stores in Florida.... I'll look it over now but I need the sales figures by tomorrow morning.

SJ

Dad, you remember how to diagram sentences?

SEAN

Nah.

Sean starts to leave, then stops at the door, turns around, sighs and walks over. He leans in over Michael.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Let's see...

MICHAEL

You don't have to help.

(off Sean's look)

I mean if you're busy or somethin'.

SEAN

I know.

(points to page)

Think of a sentence like a football team. This is a noun here, see? That's like the team name or what they're known for - whether they're a running team or a passing team. And this is the verb. That's what makes 'em go - like a star player - maybe a quarterback, maybe a running back. And this is an adjective - everybody oohs and ahs over adjectives but they're not as important as verbs.

SJ

They're like wide receivers.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

68

SEAN

Or kickers.

Michael just stares at them.

SEAN (CONT'D)

You have no idea what we're talking about, do you?

MICHAEL

Not exactly.

They all laugh.

NEARBY

Leigh Anne watches, fixated on the image of the three. Sean has an arm on Michael's shoulder. She smiles, almost sadly.

69

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

69

Leigh Anne hands over clean sheets and pillows to Michael, who starts to make the bed.

LEIGH ANNE

Do you want to stay here, Michael?

He keeps working.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Because if you want to... stay... for awhile... longer... I'll try and find some time to figure out a bedroom for you.

He stops, turns to her. She walks over, examines the structure of the couch. It sags a bit.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

I mean, look at this, you've practically ruined a ten thousand dollar couch.

She moves closer to him. Her face softens.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Do you want to stay here, Michael?

MICHAEL

I don't want to go anyplace else.

She's a bit befuddled by the response.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

LEIGH ANNE
Well,... alright then.

70 INT. WINGATE - BOARDROOM - DAY

70*

Leigh Anne sits in a chair reading through Michael's file.

LEIGH ANNE
I see here on the admission that
we're Michael's contact for medical
emergencies?

Mrs. Smith (from the admissions meeting) sits with her.

MRS. SMITH
Sean wrote that in last week. We
needed a contact number and the
ones listed weren't in service.

LEIGH ANNE
Love that man.

Leigh Anne pulls out another sheet, hands it over...

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
What's this?

MRS. SMITH
The state makes schools measure for
career aptitude in eighth grade. It
came with his file.

LEIGH ANNE
They try to figure out what a kid's
going to be in the eighth grade?
What does it say about Michael?

Mrs. Smith nods and reads over Michael's results.

MRS. SMITH
Doesn't look promising. Spatial
relations - third percentile.
Ability to learn - fifth
percentile.
(sees another number)
It's funny though. He tested in
the 98th percentile in one
category.

LEIGH ANNE
Which one?

(CONTINUED)

70

CONTINUED:

70

MRS. SMITH
"Protective instincts."

Leigh Anne smiles and hands the file back.

MRS. SMITH (CONT'D)
It's just so sad.

Leigh Anne considers this, then...

LEIGH ANNE
Yes, it is sad. So sad. But he
either doesn't know it or doesn't
think so and it's my job, and your
job, to make sure he doesn't find
out.

(off Mrs. Smith's look)
Michael Oher doesn't feel sorry for
himself and I'll be damned if he
starts to because of the way we
treat him.

(again off her look)
"Darned."

71

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

71

Now turned into Michael's room, with an armoire, a chest of
drawers, night stands, the whole nine yards. The bed is a
massive futon in an ornate stand.

Leigh Anne and Michael stand in the doorway.

LEIGH ANNE
I had to put half my samples in
storage but well, anyway, back
there's a desk:
(points as she talks)
Chest o'drawers. Night stand.
Lamps. Alarm clock. Bed. Sean
says a lot of pro athletes use
futons if they can't find a big
enough bed.

*
*

Michael doesn't dare touch anything, just stares in awe.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Well, try it out. See if it feels
okay.

He gingerly moves to the bed; touches it.

(CONTINUED)

71

CONTINUED:

71

MICHAEL

It's mine?

LEIGH ANNE

Yeah.

(off his look)

What?

MICHAEL

Never had one before.

LEIGH ANNE

(confused)

A room to yourself?

MICHAEL

A bed.

We can see this unsettles her. She turns away a bit, trying to contain herself.

LEIGH ANNE

Well, you got one now.

72

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

72

She leaves the room, walks down the hall and enters --

73

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

73

She closes the door behind her, sits on the bed and starts to tear up. She fights it unsuccessfully.

74

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

74

OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Michael stands, unsure what to do.

75

INT. WINGATE - ADJACENT ROOM - DAY

75*

Mrs. Boswell gives Michael - in a RED AND BLUE RUGBY SHIRT - an oral test...

MRS. BOSWELL

Define Osmosis, Michael.

MICHAEL

I think I know that. It's when water...

76 INT. WINGATE - MRS. BOSWELL'S CLASS - DAY (LATER) 76*

Mrs. Boswell grades the paper and puts C+ at the top.

77 INT. WINGATE - HISTORY TEACHER'S CLASSROOM - DAY 77*

Michael, this time wearing a GREEN AND GOLD RUGBY SHIRT, is orally tested by GLENDA...

GLENDA

Name the combatants in the battle of Waterloo.

MICHAEL

I know that. The little guy, Napoleon was on one side and...

78 INT. WINGATE - GLENDA'S CLASSROOM - DAY (LATER) 78*

Glenda marks down a C-

79 INT. WINGATE - SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY 79*

Michael, in another rugby shirt, this one BLACK AND YELLOW, carries a tray and sits with SJ, who starts laughing.

MICHAEL

What?

SJ

Enough with the rugby shirts. You look like a giant bumble bee.

Collins walks by with friends and glances but ignores them.

GIRL STUDENT

Who's the big guy hanging around with your little brother?

COLLINS

Just another one of Mom's projects.

GIRL STUDENT

That must get incredibly old.

Collins' look says, "yes it does."

80 OMITTED 80*

81 INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY (LATER) 81*

Bob grades Michael's paper. He writes "D".

82

INT. SEAN'S BMW - NIGHT

82

The whole family, including Michael, rides in the car. SJ points out fast food restaurants along the way --

SJ

That Taco Bell. The KFC catty corner. The Long John Silvers on the next block.

MICHAEL

You own all of 'em?

SJ

Yeah. We've got hundreds.

COLLINS

(correcting)

A hundred and fifteen.

MICHAEL

Is that why Mr. Tuohy don't have to go to work?

SEAN

Hey, hey now. I'm working even when I'm not working.

MICHAEL

And y'all eat at those places for free?

SJ

All you want. It's awesome.

MICHAEL

What do y'all do with the leftover food? At the restaurant?

SEAN

Well, we have to throw some of it away. What's already been cooked.

MICHAEL

That's too bad.

SEAN

Yeah, I'd rather sell it.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

SJ

Seems like you could give it away
or something? You should check
into that, Daddy.

Leigh Anne and Sean share a look and a smile.

SEAN

All right, I will.

MICHAEL

Why ain't we eatin' at one of yours
tonight?

SEAN

Because tonight is a special
occasion.

SJ

What?

SEAN

I talked to Coach Cotton today.
Michael's grades improved enough
that he can do spring training for
football in March.

LEIGH ANNE

Isn't that great?

SJ

Oh, man, you are gonna crush some
people!

Michael almost smiles, a little unsure.

83 EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

83

Sean's car pulls up to the valet. As the family gets out
Leigh Anne notices a bookstore next door and starts for it.

LEIGH ANNE

I've got a design book I need to
get. Sean, go check on our
reservation.

SEAN

They'll seat us when we walk in the
door. You can get the book after
dinner.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

LEIGH ANNE
(already walking away)
They might be closed by then.

COLLINS
I need some new magazines.

SJ shrugs and joins the girls, as does Michael. Sean watches
as his family deserts him. *

84 INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

84

Leigh Anne finds the book she's looking for and walks through
the stacks looking for her kids, plus Michael. She finds
them all together in the children's section, laughing.

LEIGH ANNE
Come on, your dad's already PO'ed.

Collins holds up a book. Sendak's WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE.

COLLINS
Remember this one, Mom? You read
it to us like a thousand times.

She softens, walks over, takes the book.

LEIGH ANNE
"And he gnashed his terrible teeth
and roared his terrible roar."

SJ
I always liked this one.

He holds up THE STORY OF FERDINAND.

LEIGH ANNE
Yeah, me too.

Leigh Anne sees Michael left out, but interested.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Michael, your Mama ever read either
one of those to you?

He just stares at her, the answer obvious.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
No one ever...

85

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

85

The Tuohy family exits and waits for the valet.

SEAN

Now that was a good steak.

COLLINS

Thanks, Daddy.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

SEAN

You're welcome.

As the car pulls up everyone walks toward it except Michael who notices something else --

AT THE SIDE DOOR: A BUSBOY steps outside for a smoke.

Michael absently walks over.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Michael?...

Leigh Anne touches Sean's arm, silencing him. They watch as --

Michael greets the busboy. They stand a few feet apart talking. They nod at each other and after a few seconds --

They hug.

Leigh Ann is amazed. She's never seen affection in Michael.

86

INT. SEAN'S BMW - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER)

86

As they drive home.

LEIGH ANNE

Who was that boy you were talking to, Michael? At the restaurant.

MICHAEL

Marcus.

LEIGH ANNE

He works there?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

86

CONTINUED:

86

LEIGH ANNE

And how do you know Marcus?

MICHAEL

He's my brother.

Complete silence in the car. Leigh Anne finally breaks it --

LEIGH ANNE

Well, I'd like to meet him someday.
Would that be okay with you?

MICHAEL

I don't know where he stays.

LEIGH ANNE

When's the last time you saw him,
Michael?

MICHAEL

When I was little mebbe.

87

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

87

Collins sits on the floor in the hallway near a door, smiling
sadly and secretly listening to --

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

"Once upon a time in Spain, there
was a little bull --"

A88

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

A88

A strange sight. Leigh Anne, SJ and Michael all sit on
Michael's huge futon as Leigh Anne reads THE STORY OF
FERDINAND. No one enjoys this more than Leigh Anne...

LEIGH ANNE

"...and his name was Ferdinand.
All the other little bulls he lived
with would run and jump and butt
their heads together, but not
Ferdinand. He liked to sit just
quietly and smell the flowers"....

88

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

88

Leigh Anne and Sean sit in bed. Sean puts his book on the
night stand and leans over to give Leigh Anne a kiss. He
notices her smile...

(CONTINUED)

88

CONTINUED:

88

SEAN

What?

LEIGH ANNE

Huh?

SEAN

Why are you smiling?

LEIGH ANNE

I don't know. I'm just happy.
Really happy.

SEAN

Does this happiness have anything
to do with Michael?

LEIGH ANNE

No. It has *everything* to do with
Michael.

Sean smiles, kisses her, turns off the light. She snuggles
next to him and kisses the back of his neck.

SEAN

Oh...

He gets the message, rolls over and kisses her on the lips.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Happy's good.

As their amorous activities continue...

LEIGH ANNE

I think we should start a charity.
For kids like him.

SEAN

(his mind elsewhere)
Sure, okay.

LEIGH ANNE

Maybe fund a program at Wingate.

SEAN

Absolutely....

LEIGH ANNE

Are you even listening to me?

*

(CONTINUED)

88

CONTINUED:

88

SEAN

I try to concentrate on one thing
at a time.

LEIGH ANNE

You knew I was a multi-tasker when
you married me.

She kisses him and they roll over, laughing.

89

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

89

The Tuohy family, dressed nice, poses in front of a blue and
red artificial Christmas tree adorned ENTIRELY WITH OLE MISS
ORNAMENTS. They are posing for a photograph.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Okay, big smiles everyone!

FLASH! Leigh Anne smiles but notices --

Michael sitting on the couch by himself.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael! Come over here and get in
the next one.

Sean gives her a look like she's crazy.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

We don't have a single picture with
him.

(off Sean's sigh)

Oh, come on. It's not like I'm
gonna put it on the Christmas card.

Michael moves in behind the family, dwarfing them.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Okay, really big smiles. One, two,
three... say Rebels!

FLASH TO:

THE TUOHY FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD - INCLUDING MICHAEL

90

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

90

New Year's Day. Sean, SJ and Michael watch football.
Collins sits on the couch reading. Leigh Anne comes in the
front door with groceries.

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED:

90

LEIGH ANNE

Who's winning?

SJ

Tennessee.

LEIGH ANNE

Too bad. Who are they playing?

SEAN

So you root against Tennessee no matter who they're playing?

LEIGH ANNE

Yep. With gusto.

SJ

(to Michael)

She can't stand Tennessee.

LEIGH ANNE

Collie-bell, I thought you were going to your boyfriend's?

COLLINS

I'm just gonna hang around here today.

LEIGH ANNE

I like that.

SEAN

Coupla messages on the machine.

She pushes PLAY on the message machine.

MESSAGE MACHINE

Hey, Leigh Anne, it's Patrick Ramsey.

INTERCUT WITH:

A91

INT. WASHINGTON REDSKINS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A91

PATRICK RAMSEY, on his cell phone, near his locker...

PATRICK RAMSEY

You sent me these measurements for clothes and I posted 'em in the locker room for donations but there's a problem.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A91 CONTINUED:

A91

PATRICK RAMSEY (CONT'D)
I mean, are you sure the sizes are
right, because there's nobody on
our team who's that big? Gimme a
call.

BACK TO SCENE:

B91 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

B91

Leigh Anne chuckles as the next message begins --

MESSAGE MACHINE
Hey, Sean, hey Leigh Anne, it's
cousin Bobby. Happy New Years!

INTERCUT WITH:

*

C91 INT. COUSIN BOBBY'S HOUSE - DAY

C91

Bobby sits in his recliner, talks on phone...

COUSIN BOBBY
Listen, I've had about five cold
ones so I'm just gonna go ahead and
ask... Who's the colored boy in
y'all's Christmas Card?

BACK TO SCENE:

D91 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

D91

Leigh Anne and Sean look at each other and laugh.

ELAINE (V.O.)
Leigh Anne, you looked teeny-tiny
next to him.

91 INT. TONY RESTAURANT - DAY

91

Leigh Anne sits at a table with her lunch buddies. They're
finishing up and are all laughing hard except Leigh Anne.

ELAINE
It was like you were Jessica Lange
and he was King Kong.

SHERRY
I taped your card to the fridge.
The next morning Frank almost
gagged on his orange juice.

(CONTINUED)

91

CONTINUED:

91

BETH

Does Michael get the family discount at Taco Bell? Because if he does Sean's gonna lose a few stores.

More laughter.

LEIGH ANNE

Look, he's a great kid.

ELAINE

I say just make it official and adopt him.

Big laughs at the "crazy" idea.

LEIGH ANNE

He'll be eighteen in a few months.

(off their confusion)

So, I mean it wouldn't make much sense to legally adopt him, right?

They realize she's thought about it and stop laughing. After an awkward beat of silence...

SHERRY

Is this some kind of white guilt thing, Leigh Anne? I mean charity's the Lord's work but...

ELAINE

What will your daddy say?

LEIGH ANNE

Before or after he turns over in his grave? Daddy's gone five years now, Elaine, and to make matters worse you were at the funeral. You wore Chanel with that awful black hat.

Before Elaine can attack --

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Look, here's the deal. I don't need any of y'all to approve of my choices. But I do ask you to respect them. You have no idea what this boy's been through.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

And if this is going to be a running diatribe I can find an overpriced salad a lot closer to home.

SHERRY

I'm so sorry, Leigh Anne. We didn't intend to --

ELAINE

No, we didn't, really --

BETH

I mean, what you're doing is so great. To open your home to him. You're changing his life.

Leigh Anne smiles to herself, realizing...

LEIGH ANNE

No. He's changing mine.

ELAINE

That's awesome for you, but... what about Collins?

LEIGH ANNE

What about Collins?

ELAINE

Aren't you worried, even just a little?

(off Leigh Anne)

I mean he is a boy, a large, black boy, sleeping under the same roof.

Leigh Anne stares at them, shakes her head then grabs the check --

LEIGH ANNE

I've got this.
(rises; to the group)
Shame on you.

And strides away.

92

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - COLLINS' ROOM - NIGHT

92

Collins is reading in bed. Leigh Anne knocks, enters and sits on the edge of the bed.

(CONTINUED)

92

CONTINUED:

92

LEIGH ANNE

Be honest with me now, okay?

Collins nods, having no idea what her mother is about to say.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Is Michael being here weird for you?

COLLINS

They're stupid kids, who cares what they say.

LEIGH ANNE

What kids?

COLLINS

At school. They're juvenile.

LEIGH ANNE

And what do the juvenile kids say?

COLLINS

It's really not worth repeating. And don't worry about SJ - he loves the attention. He introduces Michael as his big brother.

LEIGH ANNE

What about you?

COLLINS

It's fine.
(off Leigh Anne's look)
I mean, you can't just throw him out on the street.

LEIGH ANNE

I can make other arrangements.
(off Collins' hesitance)
Just let me know. Okay?...

Leigh Anne kisses Collins goodnight.

93

EXT. WINGATE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

93*

Michael walks up to the two little Kindergarten girls from before, sitting in the swings. He smiles. They smile back.

FIRST LITTLE GIRL

Hi Mike.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

MICHAEL

Hi. Need a push?

They giggle and Michael pushes them, one arm each until they're flying high and squealing.

NEARBY

Collins watches.

94 INT. WINGATE - LIBRARY - DAY

94*

Collins is sitting with her friends, laughing and whispering. She notices Michael enter and walk to a table with a book. He sits alone while every other table is full.

Collins sighs, makes up her mind and stands with her books.

FRIEND

Where are you going?

Collins walks away toward Michael.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

Collins?

They are aghast when they see Collins set down her books across from Michael and sit.

AT MICHAEL'S TABLE

Michael is confused. She looks at him and shakes her head.

COLLINS

Quit looking at me like that. I mean, we study together at home.

Eyes in the library are on the pair as they start to read.

95 EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

95*

Several players, in full gear, drag equipment out onto the field under the watchful eye of Bert Cotton. Sean Tuohy sits in the nearby stands. *

Michael carries four blocking dummies to the center of the field and tosses them like they're pillows. Cotton smiles.

COTTON

You know how much those things weigh? This kid's gonna make us all famous.

(CONTINUED)

95

CONTINUED:

95

SEAN

Easy, Bert. It's only the spring
and he hasn't even been through his
first practice.

*

96

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY (LATER)

96*

Michael is lined up at defensive tackle. The offense breaks the huddle and Michael just stands there. He notices the other defensive linemen get in a stance and kind of squats a bit. When the ball is snapped he just holds his hands out, keeping the blocker from getting close to his body.

The running back races right past him and into the secondary. THE WHISTLE BLOWS and Cotton races up to Michael.

COTTON

Okay, Mike, you fought off the
block but you've got to shuck him
and make the tackle. You got it?

NEXT PLAY

Michael gets down in a his stance and when the ball is snapped he gets under the blocker and lifts him up like WWF.

The quarterback goes back to pass and sees Michael lumbering toward him with the lineman on his shoulders.

The Quarterback's eyes go wide and he races out of the pocket and throws an incomplete pass. ANOTHER WHISTLE.

COTTON (CONT'D)

Shuck the blocker, Mike!

Michael gingerly sets the lineman on the ground.

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne shows up, sits next to Sean.

LEIGH ANNE

How's he doing?

SEAN

Doesn't quite have the hang of it
yet.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

** Michael tries to crawl under the blocker.

(CONTINUED)

96

CONTINUED:

96

COTTON

No!

** Michael drops back and tries to intercept a pass.

COTTON (CONT'D)

No!

** Michael holds a blocker off him with one arm and looks skyward as a flock of birds flies overhead.

COTTON (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

97

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY (AFTER PRACTICE)

97*

As players leave the field, Bert Cotton walks and talks with Leigh Anne and Sean...

*

COTTON

Most kids from bad situations can't wait to be violent and that comes out on the field. But this kid, he doesn't seem to wanna hit anyone.

LEIGH ANNE

(almost to herself)

He's Ferdinand the Bull.

COTTON

What?

LEIGH ANNE

Nothing.

COTTON

I thought for sure he was gonna be a player. I can't believe I used up my chits to get him in school.

LEIGH ANNE

I thought you said it was your Christian duty?

He gives her a smirk.

SEAN

Look, Bert, he's never even played before.

*

(CONTINUED)

97

CONTINUED:

97

COTTON

And he won't in the fall if he
doesn't improve a lot before then.

98

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DIFFERENT DAY

98*

SJ, holding a sheet and wearing a whistle, stands before
Michael. No one else is around.

SJ

This is your summer workout sheet.
First it says to warm up and get
loose.

(off Michael's look)

Well, go ahead, get loose.

Michael moves his arms around a bit then stops.

SJ (CONT'D)

You loose?

(Michael nods)

Okay, next is five one hundred yard
runs to stretch out your legs.

Michael grimaces.

MICHAEL

Let's go home, play some video
games.

SJ

Look, everybody at Wingate is
expecting you to be a star football
player. You don't want to let them
down, do you?

*

MICHAEL

Iono.

SJ

What about Dad and Mom?

(off Michael's look)

'Cause you see, in our family,
everyone's an athlete. Dad was a
basketball star, Collins plays
volleyball and runs track. Me, as
you know, I do it all and Mom,...
well, Mom was a cheerleader, which
doesn't exactly count but don't
tell her I said that.

(CONTINUED)

98

CONTINUED:

98

MICHAEL

Okay....

Michael moves to the line. SJ raises his whistle and blows.

99

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

99*

SERIES OF SHOTS - DIFFERENT DAYS:

** SJ holds a blocking dummy and Michael fires out, hitting the dummy and sending SJ flying.

** Michael does ten yard "back and forths" as SJ times him.

** Michael does push ups as SJ lowers himself to count.

** Michael does crab crawls.

** WIDE - SJ runs Michael through his workout. He blows his whistle and Michael collapses on the ground - dead tired.

100

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LEIGH ANNE'S WORKSPACE - NIGHT

100

Leigh Anne goes through sample boxes and matches swatches.

MICHAEL

Mrs. Tuohy?

Michael stands nearby.

LEIGH ANNE

I hear "Mrs. Tuohy" I look over my shoulder for my mother-in-law. Call me Leigh Anne or Mama or almost anything else.

MICHAEL

Will you help get me something?

LEIGH ANNE

What?

MICHAEL

Driver's license.

LEIGH ANNE

Why do you need a driver's license when you don't have a car?

MICHAEL

You have a car.

(CONTINUED)

100

CONTINUED:

100

LEIGH ANNE

That I use to haul y'all all over
creation with.

He doesn't say anything but doesn't leave either. Leigh Anne
puts down the swatches, turns to him.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Why do you want a license, Michael?

MICHAEL

Something to carry. With my name
on it.

She locks eyes with him. This time he holds her gaze.

DMV EMPLOYEE (V.O.)

Address?....

101

INT: DMV OFFICE - DAY

101

Leigh Anne and Michael sit across from a DMV EMPLOYEE typing
on her computer. Leigh Anne holds out her driver's license.

DMV EMPLOYEE

Is this his address as well?

LEIGH ANNE

Yes. He lives with us.

DMV EMPLOYEE

Are y'all his foster parents?

LEIGH ANNE

No.

DMV EMPLOYEE

His legal guardians?

LEIGH ANNE

Oh... no.

The Employee does a search on the computer. As she types...

DMV EMPLOYEE

Does he have a Social Security
card?

Leigh Anne looks to Michael, who shakes his head.

DMV EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Birth certificate?

(CONTINUED)

101

CONTINUED:

101

LEIGH ANNE

We tried to find one for school,
but...

DMV EMPLOYEE

You don't know which city, which
county, which hospital?...

LEIGH ANNE

How big a problem is this?

DMV Employee looks to Leigh Anne.

DMV EMPLOYEE

There's nobody named Michael Oher
in the system. Another last name
perhaps?

Leigh Anne again turns to Michael, who shrugs.

LEIGH ANNE

Look, I'll sign something saying he
lives with us and we'll pay for the
insurance; whatever it takes.

(off her look)

What's it gonna take?

Off the Employee's look --

102

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S MASTER BATH - NIGHT 102

As they get ready for bed. Sean rinses his mouth --

SEAN

You wanna do what?!

LEIGH ANNE

Don't pretend you didn't hear me.

SEAN

Shouldn't we at least talk about
it?

LEIGH ANNE

What do you think we're doing? And
don't act like I'm going behind
your back. I know you put us down
as his medical contact at school.

(CONTINUED)

102

CONTINUED:

102

SEAN

There's a big difference between paying for a broken arm and being legally responsible for someone. Someone we barely know.

LEIGH ANNE

And that's another thing. We have to find out more about his past.

SEAN

He won't talk about it. He's like an onion; you have to peel it a layer at a time.

LEIGH ANNE

Not if you use a knife. What if we sent him to a child psychologist?

SEAN

Do you really expect Big Mike --

LEIGH ANNE

Michael --

SEAN

-- expect Michael to lie down and talk about his childhood like he's Woody Allen or something? Michael's gift is his ability to forget. He's mad at no one and doesn't really care what happened in the past.

This puts her on her heels.

LEIGH ANNE

You're right.

SEAN

(like he's never heard these words)

Excuse me? "You're right?"

(off her grimace)

How'd those words taste coming out of your mouth?

LEIGH ANNE

Like vinegar.

She moves to him, holds him.

*

(CONTINUED)

102

CONTINUED:

102

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

At least promise me you'll think about it.

SEAN

Alright.

LEIGH ANNE

"Alright" you'll think about it or "alright" we should do it?

SEAN

Is there a difference?

103

INT. CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICE - DAY

103

Leigh Anne sits in a crowded waiting area, talking on her cell phone. She's been here awhile.

*
*

LEIGH ANNE

(into cell)

Just tell Rodney to hold the chiffonier for me and I'll get by after while.

She hangs up and, exasperated by the wait, rises and walks to a counter, pushing past someone --

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

I'm not cutting, just asking.

(to Employee)

I've been waiting for over an hour and I look around and all I see is people shooting the bull and drinking coffee. Who runs this place anyway?

The "heard it all" EMPLOYEE points to the wall with a government seal and a large portrait of President Bush.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Well I'd have it in shape in two days, I can tell you that.

EMPLOYEE

I'm sure you would. How can I help you?

She turns to the man waiting behind her.

LEIGH ANNE

He was first.

(CONTINUED)

103

CONTINUED:

103

MAN IN LINE

No, you go ahead. I think I want to hear this.

EMPLOYEE

Me, too.

LEIGH ANNE

(to Employee)

I do not appreciate the attitude.

EMPLOYEE

Ma'am, you can tell me what you want or I'll make sure you wait all day. How. Can. I. Help. You?

LEIGH ANNE

I'd like to become a legal guardian.

EMPLOYEE

Lord look over that child.

104

INT. CRAMPED OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

104

A haggard MANAGER, let's call him RONALD, sits across from Leigh Ann. He looks at a flimsy file.

RONALD

There's very little on Michael. Most of his files have been lost.

LEIGH ANNE

What is in there?

RONALD

A few case notes.

(holds one sheet up)

This one describes an incident where Officers forcibly removed Michael and six half-siblings from Denise Oher's care when Michael was seven. Quite a scene evidently. They had to split up the kids. And it's far from the worst.

LEIGH ANNE

Where is she? His mother?

RONALD

Dunno, but if you find her we have a bunch more files we could add to.

(CONTINUED)

104

CONTINUED:

104

LEIGH ANNE

How many children does she have?

RONALD

At least a dozen, probably more.
With her drug arrest record my
guess would be *she* can't even
remember.

Leigh Anne absorbs this.

LEIGH ANNE

We'd need her permission though,
right?

RONALD

No. Michael is a ward of the
state. Just apply and get a Judge
to sign off on it.

LEIGH ANNE

So you would give him away without
even telling his mother?

Ronald shrugs.

105

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

105

Looks the same as before except for the blonde woman walking
between the buildings.

Leigh Anne spots and checks a list of tenants posted. She
can barely see through the cover as someone has scrawled "C
Block" on it.

106

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

106

The one Michael visited before. Leigh Anne summons her
courage and knocks on the door. And again. No answer.

A VOICE comes from the apartment behind her --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Who you lookin' for?!

Startled, Leigh Anne turns and sees Alton approaching...

LEIGH ANNE

I'm looking for Denise Oher.

ALTON

Dee Dee don't stay there no more.

(CONTINUED)

106

CONTINUED:

106

LEIGH ANNE

Do you know where she might be?

ALTON

Chances are she ain't gone far.

(smiles)

I seen you before. You with Big Mike now. You wanna come in for a wine cooler or sumthin'?

LEIGH ANNE

No, I can't, but thank you.

107

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

107

Leigh Anne speaks with a mother trying to keep her son from hurting himself on a rusty slide. The mother points to another building.

108

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - BUILDING E - DAY

108

A door opens revealing DENISE OHER in a ratty robe.

LEIGH ANNE

Hi. Mrs. Oher?

DENISE OHER

You from the state?

LEIGH ANNE

No. My name is Leigh Anne Tuohy and your son Michael lives with me. And my family.

Denise takes this in.

109

INT. HURT VILLAGE - DENISE'S APARTMENT - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

109

Leigh Anne sits on the edge of a filthy couch and eyes the room. There are sleeping pallets on the floor and empty wine and beer bottles strewn around.

DENISE OHER (O.S.)

How is my boy, how's Big Mike?

LEIGH ANNE

(calls out)

He's fine. He's doing well.

(after a beat)

When did you move from the other building?

(CONTINUED)

109

CONTINUED:

109

Denise emerges from the back of the apartment, adjusting a wig on her head, making herself "presentable."

DENISE OHER

Awhile back. This is temporary.
Friends let me stay here.

LEIGH ANNE

When did you last see Michael?

DENISE OHER

Iono. We might have some wine in
the kitchen, if...

LEIGH ANNE

No, no that's very kind but....

DENISE OHER

How many foster kids you got living
with you? *

LEIGH ANNE

Oh, I'm not a foster parent to
Michael. We were just helping him
out.

DENISE OHER

State don't pay you nothing?

LEIGH ANNE

No.

DENISE OHER

And he lives with you?
(Leigh Anne nods)
And you feed him?
(another nod)
Buy him clothes, too?

LEIGH ANNE

When I can find them in his size.

DENISE OHER

You a fine Christian lady.

LEIGH ANNE

I try to be.

DENISE OHER

This is all real nice what you're
doing, but don't be surprised if
one day you wake up and he gone.

(CONTINUED)

109

CONTINUED:

109

LEIGH ANNE

What do you mean?

DENISE OHER

He's a "runner". That's what the state called him after they took him from me.

(off her look)

Every foster home they sent him to, he'd slip out the window at night and come looking for me. No matter where I was that boy would come find me, take care of me.

(an explanation)

I've had some ... health problems.

LEIGH ANNE

Mrs. Oher, was Michael born under a different name?

Denise tries to remember. After a few seconds...

DENISE OHER

Proctor. That was his Daddy's last name.

LEIGH ANNE

Where is he, the father, if you don't mind me asking?

DENISE OHER

Ain't seen him since he left.

LEIGH ANNE

And when was that?

DENISE OHER

Week after Mike was born.

LEIGH ANNE

Do you have Michael's birth certificate?

Denise sighs, looks around at the mess, shakes her head. And then, unexpectedly, starts to cry softly.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

It's okay, Mrs. Oher. I'll figure it out.

Leigh Anne walks over, kneels and takes Denise's hands.

(CONTINUED)

109

CONTINUED:

109

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

You'll always be Michael's Mama.
Would you like to see him?

DENISE OHER

No.... Not this way.

LEIGH ANNE

People lose birth certificates.
It's nothing to be ashamed of.

DENISE OHER

It's Williams.

(off Leigh Anne's look)

His last name's Williams. Couldn't
even remember who the boy's father
is.

Leigh Anne bites her lip and puts her arms around Denise, who
hugs back.

DISSOLVE TO:

110

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

110

The entire Tuohy family sits with Michael at the table.

SEAN

Michael, we have something to ask
you.

MICHAEL

What?

SEAN

Leigh Anne and I would like to
become your legal guardians.

MICHAEL

What's that mean?

LEIGH ANNE

Well, what it means is, we want to
know if you'd like to be a part of
this family?

Michael looks to a grinning SJ, to Collins who nods and
smiles, then to Leigh Anne...

MICHAEL

I kinda thought I already was.

(CONTINUED)

110

CONTINUED:

110

Leigh Anne feels a wave of emotion, nods to him, then races away to go and gather herself.

Michael looks to Sean for an explanation. Sean shrugs - "I can't explain her to you."

111

A CAMERA FLASH (IN DMV OFFICE)

111

When it clears we see MICHAEL'S FACE - on a DRIVER'S LICENSE.

112

EXT. TUOHY HOUSE - DAY

112

Michael, blindfolded, is led outside by the entire family. When Leigh Anne pulls it off, Michael gasps at the sight of --

A NEW TRUCK in the driveway.

SEAN

Is that the one you wanted?

He just stands there, staring. Sean hands him the keys.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Well, hell, take it for a spin.

(off Michael's look)

Go on.

SJ

Can I go, too?

LEIGH ANNE

Okay, but Michael?...

(off his look)

Be careful.

Michael smiles and he and SJ get inside the truck.

COLLINS

He wanted a truck?!

SEAN

Michael thinks he's a redneck.

113

EXT. WINGATE - PARKING LOT - DAY

113*

Michael drives up in his new truck, parks it carefully.

At the drop off Big Tony's car sputters away, leaving Steven at the curb. Steven notices Michael and walks over, eyeing the truck.

(CONTINUED)

113

CONTINUED:

113

MICHAEL

Tenth grade tough?

STEVEN

Naw.

(points to truck)

This really yours?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

STEVEN

They just give it to ya'?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

After a beat...

STEVEN

You're right. White people are
crazy.

And they walk off together to class.

114

INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY

114 *

Students seated, including Michael, listen to Bob, who stands
at the front of the classroom. *

BOB

You are now seniors. *

Congratulations. But with that
distinction comes responsibility.
This will be one of your tougher
courses because my job is to
prepare you, *at least most of you,*
for the rigors of college Freshman
English. You are each holding a
class study guide which details
assignments. I won't remind you
what is due and when. Read the
materials and come prepared. At
the end of the year you will each
choose one of our literature
assignments and present a written
dissection of the piece. *

The faces in the classroom tell us this is a tough course.

115

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

115

Dozens of condiment jars and bottles are lined up on the table. SJ has the football playbook open and is explaining formations to Michael.

SJ

See, you're the ketchup, here at Left Tackle. On the weakside.

MICHAEL

I'm not that weak, SJ.

SJ

It just means there are more blockers on the other side. It's a compliment, really.

MICHAEL

A compliment for a condiment.

SJ

(chuckles)

Good one.

(back to work)

So the first play is simple.

"Gap." It just means you block whoever is in front of you, or the person on your inside shoulder if you're not covered by a defender.

(points to condiments)

I'll be the running back and you show me what you're supposed to do. Ready.... Hike!

SJ, using both hands, moves Cayenne pepper back a bit, then "hands off" to Cinnamon who "runs" toward Michael (Ketchup).

Michael moves the bottle forward, pushing back Mustard, then Relish, as well as toppling a bottle of Vanilla Extract.

SJ (CONT'D)

Open lane to the end zone. All there is to it.

SJ slides Cinnamon forward. The bottle flies off the end of the table and crashes on the ground just as --

Leigh Anne walks down the stairs, purse in hand --

*

LEIGH ANNE

What is going on here?!

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

MICHAEL

Cinnamon just scored.

SJ

We're going through the playbook.
Michael got moved to offense.

LEIGH ANNE

Well, when you're finished, put the
players back in the spice cabinet.

SJ

No problem. Actually, Mom, we were
waiting for you. The new Madden
came out and me and Michael want to
go get it.

LEIGH ANNE

Honey, I've got a meeting in ten
minutes.

*

MICHAEL

I'll drive.

Off her look --

116 INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - DAY

116

Michael drives while SJ searches for music on the radio.

SJ

Look for Walker Street. That's
where we take a left.

SJ finds a hip-hop station and they both groove to the beat,
dancing in the seats.

SJ (CONT'D)

That's what I'm talkin' 'bout!

As the beat reaches a crescendo --

Michael instinctively throws a big arm in front of SJ as --

117 EXT. INTERSECTION - SAME

117

THE truck CRASHES into the side of a VAN.

118 INT. RUG SHOP - DAY

118

Leigh Anne, with a client, is looking at rugs with the owner.

(CONTINUED)

118

CONTINUED:

118

LEIGH ANNE

This is not a twenty thousand
dollar Oushak, Jerry. The borders
are different widths, it's been
altered.

Leigh Anne's phone rings. As she answers --

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

We'll give you nine tops.
(into phone)
Hello.....

The look on her face changes --

119

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

119

A massive traffic jam. Leigh Anne pulls her car right onto
the median, gets out and starts running. She passes stopped
cars and weaves past bystanders on her way to:

THE COLLISION INTERSECTION

As she approaches she sees -- Michael's truck - the front end
is smashed -- The Van - its side caved in -- And --

Michael sitting on the curb, crying. She races over --

LEIGH ANNE

Michael!

He looks up, sobbing.

MICHAEL

I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry!

LEIGH ANNE

Where's SJ?!

MICHAEL

(points)
Go help him! Please go help him!

Leigh Anne turns to see a group of PARAMEDICS kneeling around
a body. She gasps, races over and looks down at --

SJ, whose face is bloody. He spots Leigh Anne and sits up.

SJ

Mom, do you think the blood will
come out of my shirt?

(CONTINUED)

119

CONTINUED:

119

LEIGH ANNE AND PARAMEDIC - MINUTES LATER

While the paramedics attend to an obviously fine SJ, Leigh Anne and a FIREMAN eye the deflated airbag.

*
*

FIREMAN

An airbag deploys at 200 miles per hour. Your son's too small to sit in the front seat.

*

LEIGH ANNE

He's okay, though, right?

FIREMAN

Busted lip, some facial bruising. When an airbag strikes a child his size it usually means a fractured face, a broken neck or worse. It's almost like the airbag started at him then changed direction. Defective or something. Very, very lucky.

*

*

Leigh Anne nods thanks and looks to Michael, still on the curb, eyes on the ground. She walks over, kneels down.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael, it wasn't your fault. It could have happened to anybody.

He doesn't look up. She almost gasps when she notices --

HIS ARM - red, bleeding, a large burn from the wrist all the way up to the sleeve, which is also singed.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Michael, your arm... what happened?

He looks up and into her eyes...

MICHAEL

I stopped it.

120

EXT. WINGATE - STANDS/PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

120 *

SJ sits in the stands videotaping -- [NOTE: We integrate SJ's video with live action].

ON THE FIELD: Michael skips to the line and gets down in his stance. On the snap Michael pushes the tackle, JAY COLLIS, who rolls, gets by Michael and makes the tackle.

*

(CONTINUED)

120

CONTINUED:

120

COTTON

Oher! You've got a hundred pounds
on Collis and you can't keep him
out of our backfield?!

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne sits down next to SJ.

LEIGH ANNE

What's with the camera?

SJ

Michael does better when he can see
what he's supposed to be doing.

ON THE FIELD

The quarterback drops back to pass. Michael backpedals. When
the Defender tries to go around him, Michael grabs him with
one big paw and throws him to the ground. A WHISTLE BLOWS.

COTTON

Holding - left tackle!

He gets right in Michael's face, grabs his jersey.

COTTON (CONT'D)

You can only grab in here - at the
tits, you got it?! You grab out
here or here, we're gonna get
flagged and I'm gonna get pissed.

Leigh Anne grimaces, shakes her head.

NEXT PLAY

At the snap of the ball Michael tries to pass protect, pushes
the Defender who tries left, right, then slides past Michael
and sacks the quarterback.

COTTON (CONT'D)

Move your feet, son! Keep 'em
moving! Back to the huddle!

Cotton addresses an ASSISTANT COACH...

COTTON (CONT'D)

Well at least he'll look good
coming off the bus. The other team
will be terrified 'til they realize
he's a marshmallow.

(CONTINUED)

120

CONTINUED:

120

As they chuckle, Leigh Anne strides past, onto the field.

LEIGH ANNE
Gimme a minute, Bert. *

COTTON
We're in the middle of practice,
Leigh Anne!

LEIGH ANNE
You can thank me later.

Bert just watches as Leigh Anne walks straight to the huddle
and pulls Michael aside. The other players turn to watch. *

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Do you remember just after we met,
and we went to that horrible part
of town to buy you those dreadful
clothes?

(he nods)
And I was a little scared and you
told me not to worry, that you had
my back? Do you remember that?

MICHAEL
Yes ma'am.

LEIGH ANNE
If anyone tried to get to me you
would have stopped them, right?
(he nods)
And when you and SJ were in that
car wreck, what did you do to that
airbag?

MICHAEL
I stopped it.

Leigh Anne points to the offense.

LEIGH ANNE
This team is your family. And you
have to protect them --
(points to defense)
--from those guys.

She walks over and grabs the QB, pulls him out.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Tony is your quarterback. You
protect his blindside.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

120

CONTINUED:

120

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

When you look at him, think of me.
How you have my back. How you have
his.

She grabs BOBBY, a short stump of a running back.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Oomaloompah here is your tailback.
When you look at him think of SJ
and how you'd never let anything or
anyone hurt him. Do you understand
me?

MICHAEL

What about Mr. Tuohy and Collins?

LEIGH ANNE

I suppose they can be on the team,
too. Are you going to protect the
family, Michael?

He nods. She nods back and walks away, past Bert Cotton. *

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Yelling at him won't help. He
doesn't trust men. In his
experience they pretend to care
about you 'til they disappear.

Cotton chuckles. She walks over and sits next to SJ, who has
the video camera in his lap.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

You're gonna wanna get this.

INTERCUT VIDEO AND LIVE ACTION:

** At the snap Michael drives the defender into the dirt.

** Michael drops back, knocks down one defender, then takes
on another while Tony completes a pass.

** On a sweep to his side, Michael pushes three defenders
away, clearing an alley for Bobby to blast through.

Bert shakes his head, turns to Leigh Anne -- *

COTTON

What'd you say to him?

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

LEIGH ANNE
You should get to know your
players, Bert. He tested 98
percent in protective instincts.
(off Bert's look)
I told you you could thank me
later.
(a beat for effect)
It's later, Bert!

*
*
*

COTTON
(by rote)
Thank you, Leigh Anne.

121 EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT

121 *

Packed house - bands, banners, cheerleaders.

IN THE STANDS: Sean, Leigh Anne and SJ take their seats and
check out the raucous crowd.

SEAN
So much for home field advantage.

LEIGH ANNE
You ever seen so many rednecks in
one place?

SJ
Nascar, not even close.

122 INT. WINGATE - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

122 *

Coach Cotton is addressing his team before the game.

COTTON
On the schedule it says this is a
home game but don't be deceived,
gentlemen. Three fourths of the
people in the stands are here from
Milford. They'll be loud and rowdy
and a lot of 'em drunk. Keep your
helmets on 'til you're on the
sidelines. I don't want anyone
getting beaned with a whiskey
bottle.
(beat)
Grab a knee.

And the team huddles for their prayer...

(CONTINUED)

122

CONTINUED:

122

COTTON (CONT'D)

For we can...

(team repeats each phrase)

Do all things...

Through Jesus Christ...

Who strengthens us...

Each and every day...

And may God... Bless the Crusaders!

*

As they rise to leave--

COTTON (CONT'D)

Oh, one more thing. The reason Milford traveled all that way to come here is they expect to whup your ass. Whup your ass and have a party in your house. Whup your ass, have a party in your house and piss on your mama's new couch. Is that gonna happen?

The team erupts with a chorus of NO!s and HELL NO!s.

123

EXT. WINGATE - EDGE OF STANDS - NIGHT

123 *

As the Wingate Crusaders exit the dressing room they find themselves next to the Milford Lions ready to take the field. The cocky Milford players eye the Crusaders.

*

*

MILFORD PLAYER

Hey, Crusaders, y'all gonna turn the other cheek or just bend over?!

*

Another Milford player, #66, spots Michael.

MILFORD #66

Would y'all look at the size of that buck!

Milford takes the field. Jay Collis, to Michael...

*

JAY COLLIS

Pay 'em back on the field.

*

Coach Cotton raises a hand and the team moves forward to squeeze through an entrance onto the field. Above them Milford fans look down and jeer, toss sodas at them.

124

EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT

124 *

MILFORD DAD

Damn, that ain't fair! They got a
big ole' black bear playing for
'em! What is this, a circus?!

*

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne, Sean and SJ cheer as Wingate runs onto the field.
A chorus of BOOS comes from the stands behind them.

*

MILFORD DAD (CONT'D)

There's the Lions and here come the
Christians!

*

SJ turns and gives a dirty look --

LEIGH ANNE

SJ, eyes forward! Sticks and
stones...

ON THE FIELD

The ball is kicked off and Bobby, the Crusaders tailback
takes it in at the five yard line. He makes one player miss
then is dragged down by a swarm of defenders at the twenty.

*

COTTON

Let's go O!

The offense runs onto the field and huddles. The Milford
defense waits, slapping each other and building to a frenzy.
Number 66 from before is the defensive end on Michael's side.

Wingate breaks huddle and #66 sees him.

*

MILFORD #66

Look whose fat black ass I get to
kick all night long.

At the snap #66 sidesteps Michael and sacks the QB.

MILFORD #66 (CONT'D)

(as he walks by Michael)

All night long, fat ass. All night
long.

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne and Sean share a look and cheer on the team.

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

LEIGH ANNE
Come on, Michael!

ON THE FIELD

Wingate breaks huddle and as they get into their stances #66 calls a switch. He moves inside and the linebacker moves outside. Michael looks at the move, confused. *

Hut! Tony, the Wingate QB starts to drop back but hands off the ball on a draw to BOBBY, the Oompaloompah. *

Michael, unsure which player to block, just stands there while they both crush Bobby.

The Milford players high five and both give Michael a shoulder as they pass him.

NEXT PLAY - BALL SNAPS

Michael hits #66 square in the numbers, putting him on his heels. But he's quick as a cat and jumps to bat down a pass.

REFEREE
Fourth down! *

The Crusaders offense leaves the field. #66 follows behind Michael, taunting him. *

MILFORD #66
And don't come back unless you want me to embarrass your black ass!

COTTON
Get back to your own bench, 66!

66 laughs and struts away. Cotton goes straight to the ref.

COTTON (CONT'D)
Did you hear what he said? Are you gonna just let that kinda talk go?!

REFEREE
Ever heard of the First amendment, Coach? Get back to the sideline.

Cotton takes a deep breath, then turns to Michael, who has been beside him the whole time.

COTTON
Look, son, 66 is quick, so just focus on his belt buckle.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

COTTON (CONT'D)

Where it goes he goes. And block
'til the whistle blows. All right?

Michael nods and takes a seat on the bench. Cotton hears something and realizes it is his cell phone. He looks at the number calling and answers....

COTTON (CONT'D)

Hello?...

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne is on the phone.

LEIGH ANNE

Enough with the trick plays, Bert.
Just run the dang ball. *

Bert, on the field, turns to the stands, shakes his head and hangs up angrily. *

Behind the Tuohys, the Milford fans are in a frenzy.

MILFORD DAD

That's my boy Jimmy, number 66. He
is kicking that blue gum's ass!

Leigh Anne can't restrain herself. She rises, turns --

LEIGH ANNE

Hey crotch mouth! Yeah, you! Zip
it or I'll come zip it for ya!

Sean pulls her back down to her seat.

SJ

Sticks and stones?

ON THE FIELD

The Milford offense is moving the ball --

** a draw play for ten yards.

** a screen pass for twenty.

** an option play - the QB pitches out and the tailback turns the corner and runs all the way to the end zone. The scoreboard reads: "HOME 0 VISITORS 7".

ON THE SIDELINE

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

Bert Cotton gathers his forces. *

COTTON

It's all right. Settle down.

ON THE FIELD

The Crusaders have the ball at the twenty. They break from the huddle, get over the ball and the play starts. It's a sweep left and Michael pulls to lead for Bobby. 66 fends off Michael and keeps moving, forcing a pileup near the sideline. Michael and Bobby are at the bottom of the pile. *

66 extricates himself from the pile and gives Michael a little kick as a cherry on top.

MILFORD #66

Big black pile of nigger crap!

Cotton is nearby, hears this, races straight over to the Ref.

COTTON

Ref, you gonna do something about this?! He kicked my boy in the head and cussed him!

The Ref throws a flag.

COTTON (CONT'D)

Thank you!

REFEREE

Unsportsmanlike conduct on Wingate! Fifteen yards. Shut up or you'll get another fifteen. *

COTTON

What happened to the first Amendment?!

Cotton throws his hat and another ref throws a flag.

COTTON (CONT'D)

This young man plays for my team and I will defend him like he's my own son! Against you or any other redneck sonofabitch!

Michael watches, dumbfounded. He walks over to the livid Cotton and pulls him backwards, looks him in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

MICHAEL

Don't worry, Coach. I got your
back.

Cotton cools down. Michael trots out onto the field.
Halfway there he stops, looks back at Cotton and smiles.

REFEREE

Second and 38.

IN THE CRUSADERS HUDDLE

Michael looks to Tony.

MICHAEL

Try Gap.

TONY

Coach called a pass.

MICHAEL

Gap.

AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

As Wingate lines up, 66 is at it again.

MILFORD #66

Your coach always do your fightin'
for you? He your Massa?

Michael gets in his stance and on the snap of the ball powers
forward. We've never seen him so quick, neither has 66 who
dips a hip to keep from being plowed over. The ploy rights
66 but the damage isn't over as Michael now has him "in the
fit" grabbing his jersey, "between the tits." --

Bobby races through the hole and into the secondary --

Michael keeps pushing 66 back, picking up speed until 66 is
airborne save every third step of Michael's when he touches a
toe to the ground like a ballerina --

Bobby cuts to the sideline --

Michael is running full speed with 66 now and he keeps going
past the sideline--

Past Collins and the rest of the cheerleaders while --

Bobby makes the opposite corner and heads for the end zone --

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

SJ is on his feet, filming Michael --

Michael keeps going, past the track and toward the fence separating the field from the parking lot --

Just as Bobby races into the end zone --

Michael chucks 66 into the air. 66 hits the fence hard and lands in a heap. Michael turns and walks back to the field.

As he passes Collins she gives him a high five.

COLLINS

Way to go big bro!

A referee signals touchdown then notices Michael walking back and 66 lying slumped at the fence.

The Ref throws a flag.

COTTON

Now what?! Was he holding?

REFEREE

Uh, no.

COTTON

Did he hit after the whistle?

REFEREE

I don't believe so.

COTTON

Then what's the flag for?

REFEREE

I dunno.... Excessive blocking.

COTTON

You're kidding me.

The Referee ignores and returns to the field to assess the penalty. 66, now on his feet, limps back onto the field. Michael looks at him and 66's eyes go straight to the dirt.

Cotton walks up to Michael.

MICHAEL

Sorry, Coach. I stopped when I heard the whistle.

(CONTINUED)

124

CONTINUED:

124

COTTON

Where were you taking him, Mike?

MICHAEL

To the bus. It was time for him to go home.

Cotton smiles proudly and slaps Michael on the ass.

COTTON

Attaboy, Michael Oher. Attaboy!

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne stands and turns to face the Milford fans --

LEIGH ANNE

See number seventy-four? Well, that's MY son!

The Milford fans don't know what to make of this. Leigh Anne sits down with a self-satisfied smile.

ON THE FIELD - A SEQUENCE:

** Tony throws a touchdown pass --

** 66 submarines and Michael pushes him down with one hand --

** Bobby is off to the races with a screen pass. Touchdown! --

** And another touchdown --

** Scoreboard reads: VISITORS 7 HOME 35

** 66 limps off the field, shamed and another player takes his place. The SCRUB, terrified, looks to Michael.

AT THE SNAP the Scrub flinches and hits the dirt. The play goes to the other side and Michael reaches a hand down to help the Scrub up and to his feet.

125

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SJ'S ROOM - DAY

125

SJ has the video of Michael up on his computer. A "burned DVD" pops out and SJ puts it in a distinctive case.

126

INT. TOM LEMMING'S RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

126

A hub of activity. Move past a SECRETARY answering phones --

(CONTINUED)

126

CONTINUED:

126

SECRETARY

Tom Lemming Recruiting, please hold... Tom Lemming Recruiting, please hold....

And land on TOM LEMMING, the foremost college talent forecaster in the country.

TOM LEMMING

Did the monthly recruiting updates get mailed?

SECRETARY

Coach Saban wants his Fed Exed.

TOM LEMMING

Does he really think getting it one day early is gonna give LSU a leg up?

An ASSISTANT hurries up.

ASSISTANT

Have you filled all the slots for the Army All Star Game?

TOM LEMMING

Yeah, why?

The assistant hands over the distinctive DVD marked MICHAEL OHER - THE TERMINATOR!

ASSISTANT

You might want to open one up.

127

EXT. SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

127 *

Lemming walks along with Sean and Coach Cotton toward Sean's office.

*
*

TOM LEMMING

Every year there are a dozen running backs in the high school ranks who will make it to the NFL. Quarterbacks maybe three or four. But left tackles, true left tackles, they're freaks, gifts from the gods. A great one only comes around every four or five years. Mike's the best I've seen in ten.

(CONTINUED)

127

CONTINUED:

127

COTTON

You're kidding?

TOM LEMMING

I don't kid about guys who'll get fifty million or more to play football.

COTTON

And you think that could be Michael?

TOM LEMMING

Oh, yeah. The embarrassing thing is it's my business to know every prospect in the nation but if you hadn't sent me that DVD I would have never heard of him.

SEAN

What DVD? I didn't send a DVD.

TOM LEMMING

You're Sean Tuohy, right?

Sean "gets it", trades a look with Cotton.

SEAN

SJ.

128

INT. WINGATE - SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

128 *

They arrive at an empty office where Michael sits. He stands and Lemming eyes him like a piece of meat...

TOM LEMMING

Wow. Just wow.

Lemming breaks out a measuring tape and smiles.

129

INT. WINGATE - SEAN'S OFFICE/HALLWAY/OUTSIDE THE DOOR - DAY

129 *

Sean and Bert stand outside and talk...

*

COTTON

Tom Lemming runs the biggest recruiting service in the nation. He practically created an industry. Every college coach subscribes to his newsletter. One word from him and... This is big, Sean.

130 INT. WINGATE - SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

130 *

Lemming sits across from Michael...

TOM LEMMING

Mike, I came all the way from Chicago just to see for myself. And now that I have, I'd like to extend to you an invitation to play in the Army High School All American game at the end of the season.

He places an application on the desk. Michael stares at it.

131 INT. WINGATE - SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

131 *

The door opens and Lemming comes out shaking his head.

TOM LEMMING

I don't want to offend but... does Mike have special needs?

SEAN

Well, he eats a lot.

TOM LEMMING

No, I meant, is he mentally... off?

SEAN

No, no, he's just...

COTTON

Shy. Really shy.

TOM LEMMING

Because the only thing he said to me was "No." Said it three times; every time I asked him if he'd like to play in the Army All Star game. I get lobbied by every player, every father, every coach to get into this game.

(hands over application)

Let me know if he changes his mind.

Lemming walks away. After he's gone, Michael emerges.

SEAN

Why didn't you fill out the application, Michael?

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: 131

MICHAEL
I don't wanna join the Army.

Sean and Coach Cotton crack up.

132 INT. SABAN'S OFFICE - DAY 132

SERIES OF SHOTS INTERCUT WITH SJ'S VIDEO OF "THE PLAY" ON
LEMMING'S WEBSITE:

NICK SABAN watches on a computer --

133 INT. TUBERVILLE'S OFFICE - DAY 133 *

TOMMY TUBERVILLE and other AUBURN coaches watch -- *

134 INT. NUTT'S OFFICE - DAY 134 *

HOUSTON NUTT and ARKANSAS coaches watch -- *

135 INT. HOLTZ'S OFFICE - DAY 135

LOU HOLTZ and SOUTH CAROLINA COACHES watch --

136 INT. FULMER'S OFFICE - DAY 136

PHIL FULMER and other TENNESSEE coaches watch.

PHIL FULMER
I want him! I want him bad.

137 EXT. WINGATE - PARKING LOT - DAY 137

A CADILLAC races into the parking lot and hurriedly parks in
a spot. Phil Fulmer, in a bright orange Tennessee shirt,
jumps out and starts to trot toward --

138 EXT. WINGATE - FIELD - DAY 138

Leigh Anne helps coach the cheerleaders, including Collins.

LEIGH ANNE
Kick higher, Collins. Point your
toes!

Leigh Anne notices Fulmer.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
What in the world?....
(to the squad)
Y'all keep practicing.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

She strides toward the football practice field.

139 EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

139

Leigh Anne arrives to see a group of coaches, all wearing shirts and hats emblazoned with school logos. They chat and watch as the Wingate football team finishes calisthenics.

One ASSISTANT COACH, from Southern Miss, sees Fulmer racing up.

SOUTHERN MISS COACH

Shoot, man, Fulmer's here. I might
as well go home.

Fulmer smiles at the assembled coaches, shakes a few hands.

FULMER

Drove all the way from Knoxville to
come see for myself.

Leigh Anne slides in near the group so she can eavesdrop.

CLEMSON ASSISTANT COACH

Heck, I drove from Clemson, that's
nine hours!

*

Bert Cotton walks over, shakes Fulmer's hand, leaving the other coaches shaking their heads.

COTTON

Coach Fulmer, it's a real honor.

FULMER

Coach Cotton I been keeping an eye
on your program. Y'all doing a
fine job down here. Wouldn't be a
bit surprised to see you coaching
at the next level real soon.

Cotton's smile tells us he'd like that a lot.

FULMER (CONT'D)

Is that him? Is that O'Hair?

LEIGH ANNE

It's Oher. Like a paddle in a
boat.

*

Fulmer notices Leigh Anne, grunts then turns back to Cotton.

(CONTINUED)

139

CONTINUED:

139

FULMER

If you could run him through a few drills, we'd sure appreciate it.

Cotton gives Leigh Anne a look that says, "get out of here." She shakes her head - "I'm not going anywhere."

Cotton blows his whistle and the team approaches.

COTTON

Board drill. Big Mike and Jay Collis. Best on best.

*
*

An Equipment manager lays out a plank and Jay Collis sighs and lines up, one foot on either side of the board. Michael slowly moves into position opposite him.

*

The coaches all inch closer and crane their necks to see. Leigh Anne is now right in the middle of them. Fulmer gives her a look that says, "Who the hell are you?"

Cotton blows his whistle, Michael fires out and it's over in an instant. Collis is pancaked under Michael, who gets up and offers a hand.

*

The coaches are frozen - as if they've witnessed a miracle.

FULMER

(almost to himself)
Force equals mass times acceleration.

Then, all at once, the coaches pull out their cell phones and start poking digits and jabbering: "You won't believe it!" "You gotta see this!" "He's a freak of nature!"

The Clemson coach strides away.

COTTON

Where are you going, Coach?

CLEMSON COACH

Back to South Carolina. I've seen more than enough. If he can qualify with his grades you tell Michael Oher that Clemson wants him.

FULMER

Good luck with that, Brad!

Fulmer smiles wide then turns to look once more at Michael.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

Leigh Anne watches him watch Michael.

140 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

140

Leigh Anne, distressed, has books and pamphlets spread out in front of her. Sean walks in, takes in the sight.

LEIGH ANNE

Did you know that to be eligible for a Division One scholarship Michael's gonna need a 2.5 GPA?

SEAN

Really?

LEIGH ANNE

His ACT is low and I don't see him doing any better if he retakes it.

SEAN

What's his GPA now?

LEIGH ANNE

1.76.

SEAN

Not bad really, when you consider where he started.

LEIGH ANNE

He needs to make A's this year.
(off Sean's laugh)
I'm serious. And that might not even be enough.

SEAN

So he goes to Junior College.

LEIGH ANNE

Most inner city kids that go to JC drop out in a year. His shot at the pros would go out the window.

SEAN

Pros? Are we even sure he's gonna get college offers?

She walks over to the answering machine, presses "Play."

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

ON THE MACHINE

Hello, my name is Nick Saban and
I'm the head football coach at
Louisiana State University...

(Leigh Anne fast forwards)

Tommy Tuberville, Auburn
University...

(fast forwards again)

We're very interested in having
Michael over to Knoxville for a
visit.

*
*

SEAN

Phil Fulmer, from Tennessee?

LEIGH ANNE

There are twenty more.

She holds up a stack of mail - envelopes and Fed Exes.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

And these. Fifty of 'em.

SEAN

Any from Ole Miss?

LEIGH ANNE

They won't recruit until they hire
a new coach. But none of it
matters unless he makes his grades.

SEAN

So, what do we do?

141 INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

141

Leigh Anne speaks to the assembled teachers.

LEIGH ANNE

So here's the plan. E-mail me all
assignments and let me know what
Michael has to do to make an "A".

There is laughter in the room.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

Okay, fine, a B plus. And if
anyone knows of a good tutor I'd
love to hear about 'em.

MRS. BOSWELL

I think I know someone.

142 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

142

Leigh Anne sits with MISS SUE, a no nonsense prospective tutor wearing an Ole Miss sweatshirt.

LEIGH ANNE

I understand that you applied for a teaching position at Wingate?

MISS SUE

I wasn't religious enough for 'em. I'm a spiritual person, Mrs. Tuohy, but I have certain, shall we say... doubts.

LEIGH ANNE

I appreciate your honesty, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE

What's the situation with Michael?

LEIGH ANNE

He needs to do better in school.

MISS SUE

Obviously. But why the big push?

LEIGH ANNE

He's in line for a football scholarship if he gets his grades up.

MISS SUE

Is he considering Ole Miss?

LEIGH ANNE

He'd better be.

MISS SUE

I'd love to work with him.

*

LEIGH ANNE

When do you want to start?

MISS SUE

Mrs. Tuohy there's something you should know about me. I don't tell many people, but it's something I feel you should be aware of before you hire me.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

LEIGH ANNE
What's that?

MISS SUE
I'm a Democrat.

143 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER)

143

Leigh Ann and Sean sneak looks at Miss Sue and Michael at the dining room table.

AT THE TABLE

Michael stares at a problem in Geometry book, then...

MICHAEL
I don't understand it.

MISS SUE
Yet. You don't understand it yet.
How big is your head, Michael?

MICHAEL
Big.

MISS SUE
And what's in there?

MICHAEL
A brain.

MISS SUE
A brain. Full of knowledge - like a file cabinet with maps; shortcuts for figuring things out. You will learn this, Michael Oher because I'm here to help you use those maps and reach your destination. Like Sacagawea helped Lewis and Clark.

*
*

MICHAEL
Sacagawea?

*
*

MISS SUE
We'll get to that. And the history books have it wrong, but all you need to you know is that I'll get you there. Do you believe me? Do you trust me, Michael?

*
*
*
*

MICHAEL
Yes, Miss Sue.

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

MISS SUE
Try it again.

He goes back to the book.

SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE

Sean shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

SEAN

Who'd a thought we'd have a black son before we knew a Democrat.

144-145 OMITTED

144-145

146 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

146

The doorbell RINGS and Leigh Anne fixes her hair before she opens it to --

NICK SABAN, a handsome man wearing a sport jacket and LSU rep tie. Leigh Anne is immediately taken with him.

NICK SABAN

And you must be Leigh Anne.

LEIGH ANNE

Yes, Coach Saban, that's me. Leigh Anne. Touhy.

NICK SABAN

Please, call me Nick. What an incredible home. Love the Windsor valances.

*
*

LEIGH ANNE

(very impressed)
Thank you. You obviously have good taste.

*

NICK SABAN

Let's just say I appreciate quality.

Michael and SJ walk in.

NICK SABAN (CONT'D)

(eyeing Michael)
And I know it when I see it.
(offers a hand)
Michael, I'm Nick Saban. And you must be SJ. I hear you have quite a jump shot, young man.

LEIGH ANNE

Nick, why don't you and Michael go into the living room to talk.

MICHAEL

Can SJ come?

(CONTINUED)

146

CONTINUED:

146

SABAN

Absolutely. I'll recruit the both of you.

As they walk away, Collins approaches...

LEIGH ANNE

I find him extremely handsome.

147

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

147

Michael and SJ sit across from Saban.

SABAN

So, as soon as possible we'd like to get you down to Baton Rouge. We've got a great thing going, Michael and we plan on winning a bunch more National Championships. Whattaya' say, will you commit to a visit?

Michael turns to SJ, who raises his hand.

SJ

Can I ask a question?

SABAN

Sure.

SJ

My brother and me are very close. I'm worried that if he goes off to school I won't see him so...

SABAN

Go on.

SJ

I guess I was just wondering how much access I'd have to him.

Saban smiles at the kid's moxie.

SABAN

Tell you what, SJ. Michael comes to LSU I'll get you an all-access pass. How's that sound?

SJ

Sounds good.

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED: 147

SERIES OF SHOTS:

148 EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT 148
Michael pancakes an opponent --

149 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 149
Michael and Miss Sue study --

MISS SUE
You know this stuff. Just be
logical.

150 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY 150
HOUSTON NUTT walks in the Tuohy front door --

NUTT
Hi, I'm Houston Nutt from Arkansas. *

151 EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT 151
Michael pancakes another defender --

152 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 152
Miss Sue high fives Michael after a quiz --

153 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY 153
Phil Fulmer walks in, recognizes Leigh Anne

FULMER
This is a beautiful home, Ma'am.

He is startled to see --

Michael, in briefs, racing down the stairs, carrying Collins,
who is holding his pants away from him.

154 INT. WINGATE - CLASSROOM - DAY 154
Mrs. Boswell grades Michael's paper, writes "B" at the top.

155 EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT 155
A SCOREBOARD: CRUSADERS 44 VISITORS 0

156 NEWSPAPER HEADLINE - DAY 156
A HEADLINE: CRUSADERS TO PLAY FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP

157 INT. WINGATE - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT 157

Michael and Coach Cotton hold up a championship trophy --

158 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY 158

Coaches, one after another, enter the Tuohy home --

COACHES

Hi, I'm Tommy Tuberville... Hi,
I'm Lou Holtz...

*
*

159 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 159

SJ asks them each his question --

SJ

What level of access can I expect?

160 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 160

Coaches, one after another, up the ante --

TOMMY TUBERVILLE

Your own locker right next to
Michael's.

*

HOUSTON NUTT

Access to the Letterman's Lounge.

*
*

LOU HOLTZ

(with a wink)

A Gamecock headdress. Real
feathers.

PHIL FULMER

We'll run arm in arm onto the field
and you can do the coin toss
thingie at the first game.

SJ

Sounds real good.

161 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 161

Michael studies with Miss Sue, in her Ole Miss sweatshirt.

(CONTINUED)

161

CONTINUED:

161

MISS SUE

Have you decided yet, Michael?

MICHAEL

No, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE

But you like Tennessee?

(off his nod)

It's a good school. Not at the academic level of Ole Miss but they do have an outstanding science department. You know one of the things they're famous for?

(he shakes his head)

They work with the FBI to study the effects of the soil on decomposing body parts.

Michael is a bit lost.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

When they find a body the police want to know how long they've been dead. The fine department at Tennessee helps them. They have lots of body parts - arms, legs, hands - from hospitals and medical schools. Do you know where they store them?

(Michael shakes his head)

Right underneath the football field.

Michael's eyes widen a bit.

*

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

So, while it's fine and dandy to have 100,000 fans cheering for you, the bodies you should be worried about are right underneath the turf. Set to poke up through the ground and grab you.

She raises a clawed hand (think "CARRIE") to make her point. Michael is completely freaked out by this.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

But it's your decision where you play football. Don't let me influence you.

162 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

162

Ole Miss Coach, ED ORGERON, talks with Leigh Anne.

LEIGH ANNE

Congrats on gettin' hired, Coach.

ED ORGERON

Thank yew, Ma'am. Ole Miss is my dream job.

LEIGH ANNE

Coach O, you're coming a little late to the party but we're diehard Rebels so I'm gonna give you a frickin' road map, okay?

ED ORGERON

Yes'm.

LEIGH ANNE

LSU is out. Everybody knows Saban's going to the NFL. So when he comes for his visit to Ole Miss, don't take him to some titty bar and give him tequila shots. He'll have nightmares for weeks. Feed him Italian - he likes Fettucine Alfredo - take him to a movie - but not Chainsaw Massacre because he'll just cover his eyes - and put him to bed by ten. You got it?

*
*
*
*
*

ED ORGERON

Yes'm. What about Tennessee?

LEIGH ANNE

It breaks my heart but they're still in the hunt. Fulmer offered SJ a sweet deal.

ED ORGERON

I hear the kid can really pepper the gumbo.

LEIGH ANNE

He's his daddy's boy.

163 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

163

Orgeron sits with Michael and SJ.

ED ORGERON

You a Ole Miss tackle, son. I'm
buildin' my line, buildin' my team
aroun' you. Make your parents
proud, come to Oxford, get that
sheepskin and help us win the SEC.

Michael nods, turns to SJ. Before SJ can raise his hand --

ED ORGERON (CONT'D)

And for you, SJ, here's what I can
do. At Ole Miss we have The Grove
by the stadium. And the team walks
it before the game, surrounded by
thousands of fans. It's a sacred
ritual. And I'm in front.

SJ

("that's it?")

Seen it a thousand times.

ED ORGERON

Ever seen it from the front of the
line? Next year, you and me --
leading the team.

SJ

Tennessee offered to let me run on
the field and flip the coin.

ED ORGERON

I'll throw in a sideline pass.

SJ considers this, smiles and nods.

164 INT. WINGATE - LIBRARY - DAY

164 *

A press conference is under way. Photographers push to get a
shot of --

Michael, at a table, stares at three caps - Tennessee, LSU
and Ole Miss. He smiles and selects an Ole Miss hat.

165 INT. PHIL FULMER'S OFFICE - DAY

165

Fulmer watches the press conference on TV. He tosses a piece
of chalk against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

165

CONTINUED:

165

FULMER

This stinks to high heaven.

166

INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY

166 *

Leigh Anne and Bob have a chat in the empty classroom.

BOB

I will not give a student a grade he, or she, doesn't deserve.

LEIGH ANNE

He needs a B. What's he gonna have to do to "deserve" that?

BOB

Right now Michael's doing C minus, D plus work. His best chance at improving is with the written essay at the end of the year. It counts for a third of his grade.

LEIGH ANNE

That's it. We're sunk.

167

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

167

Miss Sue works with Michael at the table.

MISS SUE

Why not write about "Great Expectations"? You're a lot like Pip. He was poor, an orphan and someone sort of found him. You should be able to relate to that.

Michael shrugs. Sean is nearby, watching NBA basketball.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

Fine, let's go through the reading list. But you have to pick one, Michael.

(reading from list)

"Pygmalion"... "A Tale of Two Cities".... "The Charge of the Light Brigade"...

SEAN

(almost to himself)

"Half a league, half a league, half a league onward." I love that one.

(CONTINUED)

167

CONTINUED:

167

MISS SUE

Fine, you do this and I'll watch
basketball.

Miss Sue walks over, takes the remote from Sean, who rises.

SEAN

"All in the valley of Death rode
the six hundred". They call LSU's
stadium Death Valley because of
this story. Alfred, Lord Tennyson
is writing about Ole Miss-LSU.

MICHAEL

You're kidding?

SEAN

No. It's a great story.

MISS SUE

It's a poem.

SEAN

"Forward the Light Brigade!"
That's like the offense. "Charge
for the guns he said." That's the
end zone. "Into the Valley of
Death rode the six hundred."

He knows it by heart and even Miss Sue is impressed.

SEAN (CONT'D)

"Forward the Light Brigade! Was
there a man dismay'd? Not tho' the
soldier knew someone had
blundered."

MICHAEL

Someone made a mistake?

SEAN

Yeah, their leader, their coach.

MICHAEL

Why would they go ahead if they
knew he messed up?

SEAN

"Theirs not to make reply, theirs
not to reason why, theirs but to do
and die: Into the Valley of Death
rode the six hundred."

(CONTINUED)

167

CONTINUED:

167

It hits Michael. He takes a moment, looks right at Sean.

MICHAEL

They all gonna die, aren't they?

SEAN

Yeah.

MICHAEL

That's really, really sad.

SEAN

I think you just found something to write about.

Michael opens his notebook, picks up a pen.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Courage is a hard thing to figure. You can have courage based on a dumb idea or a mistake, but you're not supposed to question adults, or your coach, or your teacher because they make the rules. Maybe they know best but maybe they don't.

SERIES OF REPEATED SHOTS:

168

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - REPEATED SHOT - DAY

168

Michael moves through the tough crowd.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

It all depends on who you are, where you come from. Didn't at least one of the six hundred guys think about giving up and joining with the other side? I mean, Valley of Death, that's pretty salty stuff.

169

EXT. WINGATE - REPEATED SHOT - DAY

169*

Michael walks under the arch for the first time.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

That's why courage is tricky. Should you always do what others tell you to do? Sometimes you might not even know why you're doing something. I mean, any fool can have courage.

170 INT. LAUNDROMAT - REPEATED SHOT - NIGHT 170

Michael leans against the wall and tries to sleep.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But honor, that's the real reason
you either do something or you
don't. It's who you are and maybe
who you want to be. If you die
trying for something important then
you have both honor and courage and
that's pretty good.

171 INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY 171*

Bob sits at his desk, reading Michael's essay. As he turns
to the last page...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I think that's what the writer was
saying. That you should try for
courage and hope for honor. And
maybe even pray that the people
telling you what to do have some,
too.

Bob, visibly moved, sets down the essay and smiles.

172 INT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - FOYER - DAY 172*

Graduation day and Sean sits beside an empty seat in the
quick filling auditorium. He sees Leigh Anne marching up the
aisle, a big smile on her face. She pushes down the row and
plops down in the seat next to him. *

SEAN *

What? *

LEIGH ANNE *

2.52. *

(off Sean's look) *

Michael's final GPA. Got it off
Paul's computer. He did it, Sean. *

He did it! *

Sean grins, then... *

SEAN *

Wait a minute. You broke into the
principal's computer? *

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: 172

She ignores him and opens her program, letting Sean know that
is precisely what she did. *

173 INT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - DAY (LATER) 173 *

Graduation ceremonies. Paul Sandstrom reads the names and
the graduates move across the stage to get their diplomas. *
As each student walks across the stage a BABY PICTURE of them *
is PROJECTED. *

SANDSTROM *

Michael Jerome Oher.

Even though no one is supposed to clap, a spontaneous round
of APPLAUSE gives Michael pause as he accepts his diploma.

Projected behind him is a picture of the cutest African- *
American infant the world has ever seen. *

ON SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE *

SEAN *

Where'd you find a baby picture of *
Michael? *

LEIGH ANNE *

Scanned it off an Internet ad for a *
toddler boutique. *
(off his look) *
Tell a soul and I'll rip your *
tongue out. *

IN THE CROWD: The Tuohys, Big Tony, Miss Sue, Bob and the
other teachers all clap.

174 EXT. WINGATE - OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM - DAY 174 *

Michael, diploma in hand, shakes Sean's hand. Sean moves *
close, looks him in the eye. *

SEAN *

I want you to know something. *
You'n me, okay? *
(beat) *
I never believed you could do this. *
But you did. And I'm as proud of *
you as I am ashamed of myself. I *
should know better. I'll never *
doubt you again, Michael. *

Michael smiles, nods, gives Leigh Anne a little hug then raps *
knuckles with SJ and high fives Collins. *

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

174

LEIGH ANNE

Excuse me young man, but I think I
need a proper hug.

He smiles and moves to her. Off their embrace --

175-176 OMITTED

175-176

177-182 OMITTED

177-182

183 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

183

Leigh Anne and Sean go over Ole Miss pamphlets with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE

You'll be living in Deaton Hall -
here. You'll have a meal plan and
you'll go to Johnson commons to
eat.

*
*
*
*

SEAN

Johnson Commons has all you can eat
self-serve ice cream.

*

MICHAEL

As much as you want?

SEAN

Yep, that's how Mama put on her
freshman ten.

Leigh Anne rolls up a pamphlet and whacks him hard on her way
to answer a RINGING PHONE.

LEIGH ANNE

Hello.... This is Mrs. Tuohy....

As she listens she gives Sean a look - "This isn't good".

184 INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

184

Leigh Anne walks with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE

They just want to ask you a few
questions. You've got nothing to
hide, Michael.

*

They arrive at a door, open it.

185 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

185

Sits Investigator Granger in the room we've seen before. She rises, professional, but not smiling.

GRANGER

Mrs. Tuohy? Mr. Oher? My name is
Jocelyn Granger and I'm the
Assistant Director of Enforcement
for the NCAA.

*

LEIGH ANNE

Please call me Leigh Anne.

Leigh Anne shakes her hand and she and Michael move to the chairs.

GRANGER

Mrs. Tuohy, I'd prefer to speak
with Michael alone.

LEIGH ANNE

How long will this take?

GRANGER

Awhile.

Michael starts rubbing his knees, nervous as hell.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael, I'll be outside.

Leigh Anne pecks his cheek and exits, giving Michael one last look before she leaves.

186 EXT. BUILDING - DAY

186

Leigh Anne sits on a bench, talking on the phone.

LEIGH ANNE

I've got a bad feeling about this,
Sean. This broad is tough. Oh,
Susie's on the other line.

(clicks over)

Hey.... what does the client
want?... But that's tacky.... You
know what, fine, if she wants her
living room to look like a bordello
make it happen.

She hangs up, checks her watch and looks toward the building.

187

INT. NONDESCRIPT GOVERNMENT-LOOKING ROOM - DAY

187

The interrogation is ongoing...

GRANGER

Your parents are friends with Coach Bert Cotton, correct?

*

MICHAEL

Coach is a good guy.

GRANGER

Were you aware that Coach Cotton is accepting a job at Ole Miss?

(Michael shakes his head)

And that this job offer came after you signed with them?

(no response from Michael)

Sean Tuohy, your legal guardian went to Ole Miss.

MICHAEL

He played basketball.

GRANGER

And Mrs. Tuohy attended Ole Miss as well.

MICHAEL

She was a cheerleader.

GRANGER

Is it safe to say that Ole Miss is their favorite school?

(Michael nods)

Do they like any other Universities?

(Michael shrugs)

What about, say Tennessee?

MICHAEL

They can't stand Tennessee.

GRANGER

So they wouldn't be happy if you chose to play football there?

MICHAEL

No.

GRANGER

And your tutor...

(CONTINUED)

187

CONTINUED:

187

MICHAEL

Miss Sue.

GRANGER

Miss Sue is an Ole Miss grad, too.

(Michael nods)

Did Miss Sue try to persuade you to attend Ole Miss?

(Michael nods)

Did you know that the Tuohys make generous donations to Ole Miss? That even Miss Sue makes donations? That the Tuohy's have a condo in Oxford so they can attend as many athletic events as possible? That, in fact, Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy are by our definition "boosters."

MICHAEL

What's that mean?

GRANGER

A booster is someone with an abnormal interest in a school's sports. Someone who contributes financially to the University's athletic program.

Michael doesn't answer, just keeps rubbing his knees. Then comes the part we've heard before...

GRANGER (CONT'D)

Mr. Oher, do you know why I'm here?

(no response)

Mr. Oher?.....

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hmmm.....

GRANGER

Do you know, do you understand why I'm here?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

To... investigate.

GRANGER

Yes. To investigate. I'm here to investigate your odd... predicament. Do you find it odd? Your predicament?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

187

CONTINUED:

187

GRANGER (CONT'D)

(no response)

Michael?...

MICHAEL

Iono....

She sifts through her briefcase, pulls out files, documents - a good bit of evidence for whatever trouble Michael is in.

She sits back, stares at Michael, as if trying to figure him out. Michael can't meet her gaze. He looks out the window, rubs his knees some more.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Can I... can I leave now?

GRANGER

(with finality)

No. You can't.

Michael's building up anxiety by the second.

MICHAEL

What do you want, ma'am?

GRANGER

What I want, what my job is, is to discern whether something untoward occurred in your recruitment to Ole Miss.

MICHAEL

Unto...

GRANGER

I want the facts. I need the truth.

MICHAEL

I didn't lie...

GRANGER

And I want to know what you think about all this.

MICHAEL

THINK ABOUT WHAT?!

It's the first time we've ever heard Michael raise his voice. It echoes in the room. Granger lets it die before she leans forward and continues...

(CONTINUED)

187

CONTINUED:

187

GRANGER

The NCAA fears that with your recruitment a door might be opened - that boosters from lots of schools in the south will become legal guardians for young athletes without means and funnel them to their Alma Maters.

Michael still doesn't get it, shakes his head.

GRANGER (CONT'D)

I'm not saying I believe it and I'm not saying I don't, but there are many people involved with this case who would argue that the Tuohys took you in, fed you, clothed you, paid for your private education --

MICHAEL

(almost to himself)

No...no...no...

GRANGER

-- bought you a car and paid for a tutor all as part of a plan to insure that you played football for the University of Mississippi.

Now Michael understands. He stares at the floor for a long time then quickly stands and makes for the door.

GRANGER (CONT'D)

Michael, we're not finished.

But he's gone.

188

EXT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

188

Leigh Anne sees Michael exit the building. Once he's outside he moves in circles, gesticulating and talking to himself.

Leigh Anne races over --

LEIGH ANNE

Michael, what's wrong?

He looks at her, glares really; upset.

MICHAEL

Why'd you do it?

(CONTINUED)

188

CONTINUED:

188

LEIGH ANNE

What?

MICHAEL

All along you wanted me to go to Ole Miss.

LEIGH ANNE

Well, of course, but...

MICHAEL

Why did you do this for me?!

LEIGH ANNE

What?

MICHAEL

Everything! Was it for you or was it for me? Was it so I would go to school where you wanted?! Was it so I would do what you wanted?!

LEIGH ANNE

No, Michael....

MICHAEL

(points to building)

That's what she thinks! Is she right?!

(her own words)

Don't you dare lie to me!

Leigh Anne digests this, takes a breath...

LEIGH ANNE

Michael, look... I can see where, where some people might....

Her inability, for the first time, to articulate, hits Michael in the face.

MICHAEL

I'm not stupid!

He turns and walks away.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael?!

But she doesn't move, just watches him go.

189

OMITTED

189 *

190

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

190

Sean and Leigh Anne sit at the kitchen table while Collins and SJ pace in the living room.

LEIGH ANNE

(on her cell)

Well if he comes by there let me know. Thanks.

COLLINS

(on phone)

Michael, please call me and let me know you're okay.

LEIGH ANNE

Text him SJ.

SEAN

Keep it light. Tell him you're gonna take his truck for a spin if he doesn't get in touch.

SJ starts texting. Leigh Anne and Sean stare at each other.

A191

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
(LATER)

A191

Sean sits in bed and Leigh Anne paces.

LEIGH ANNE

I should have followed him.

SEAN

You had no way of knowing he'd disappear.

LEIGH ANNE

Was he right?

(off Sean's look)

What he said about us?

SEAN

Leigh Anne, be sensible. We gave clothes to a boy who had one pair of shorts. We gave him a bed. To hell with the NCAA, I'd do it again tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

A191 CONTINUED:

A191

LEIGH ANNE

What about the rest of it - all the stuff we did to make sure he got a scholarship? A scholarship to Ole Miss.

SEAN

He could go wherever he wanted, he knew that.

LEIGH ANNE

Did he? Did you ask him? 'Cause I know for sure I never did.

Sean considers this, then beckons.

SEAN

Come here, honey.

She moves to him. He puts his arm around her, kisses her forehead.

LEIGH ANNE

Am I a good person?
(off his look)
Not a joke. Not rhetorical.

SEAN

You're the best person I know. Everything you do, you do for others.

LEIGH ANNE

Why is that?

SEAN

(with a smile)
I have not a clue. You obviously get some sick satisfaction from it.

She looks at him. There's truth in his words.

LEIGH ANNE

Sean... what if he never comes back?

191 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - NIGHT

191

Michael makes his way toward Building "C", passing some of the same faces we've seen before.

(CONTINUED)

191

CONTINUED:

191

Alton opens his door to make a transaction with an addict and spots Michael.

ALTON

That you Big Mike? Get your ass in here.

MICHAEL

I'm looking for Moms.

ALTON

Your Mama? Oh, I seen Dee Dee around. She usually stop by for a taste around this time. Tell you what, I'll get you a forty and we'll chop it up 'til she get here.

Michael hesitates. Alton smiles, beckons.

192

OMITTED

192

193

INT. HURT VILLAGE - ALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

193

Shitty but with good electronics. There are maybe eight people in the apartment - partying, drinking, getting high.

Michael steps inside. Alton points to a chair. A stoned out couple smokes on the adjacent couch.

Next to them an INFANT cries in a broken down crib. In the other corner of the room sits David, the young man we met before. Michael nods and David nods back. Alton hands Michael a beer.

ALTON

It's good to see you, Big Mike. You lookin' fit. I heard you playin' some ball.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

ALTON

But you know that rich kid football ain't like the public school league. People packing knives in their socks. Back in the day I was a quarterback. You knew that, right? At MLK.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Yeah, I heard.

(to David)

You still playing ball over at the
JC?

DAVID

Naw.

ALTON

He with me now! I'll open a spot
for you, too.

DAVID

Got tired of going to class. Always
somebody tellin' me what to do.

ALTON

Turn it up, bitch!

David jumps up and cranks the volume on a RAP SONG until the
beat is bouncing off the walls. Michael sips the beer; rubs
his knees.

ALTON (CONT'D)

You stayin' to the other side of
town, that's what Dee Dee said.
Said you got a new Mama. She fine,
too. I seen her when she come to
see Dee Dee.

*

MICHAEL

She came here?

ALTON

She got any other kids? She got a
daughter?

(Michael nods)

You tap that?

Michael sets down the beer, rises to leave.

ALTON (CONT'D)

Where you going? Sit down. I
wanna hear about your fine white
sister. 'Cause I like me some
mommy/daughter.

MICHAEL

Shut up.

Alton steps in front of Michael, raises his hands --

(CONTINUED)

193

CONTINUED:

193

ALTON

Shut up? You tellin' me to shut up? I'll cap your fat ass. Cap your ass, drive east and pay a visit to your Cracker Mama and her sweet little --

Michael shoves him hard. Alton unprepared for the force, flies back against the wall. On the ground he reaches in his belt for his gun, but just as he gets it out --

Michael slaps it away. He picks up Alton and throws him across the room. The party comes unhinged as Michael grabs Alton, holds him against the wall with one hand while pounding him with the other. Blood flies from Alton's face - eighteen years of subdued rage coming out in seconds.

TWO OTHER GUYS grab Michael from behind and one --

STICKS A GUN IN MICHAEL'S TEMPLE

Michael screams like a banshee, spins, grabs them and tackles them over the couch. An errant round FIRES into the ceiling. A table flies and the crib smashes.

Michael looks to David, frozen in the corner, then over to the SCREAMING child on the floor.

He grabs his head and heaves, trying to make it all stop - the music, the screams, the crying. The shots PULSE to the music and are INTERCUT WITH:

194

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

194

PULSING FLASHBACK IMAGES

MICHAEL, AGE SEVEN, and several half brothers and sisters in front of Hurt Village as Child Protective Services herds them away from Denise Oher. She's screaming, the kids are crying.

*

*

Michael breaks away and runs to Denise.

SEVEN YEAR OLD MICHAEL

MAMA!!!!!!

He grabs her waist and is pulled away by an Officer.

FLASHBACK ENDS. BACK TO SCENE AT...

- 195 INT. ALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 195
Michael looks at the blood on his hands and shirt and stumbles out of the room, terrified.
- 196 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - HALLWAY/MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 196
Leigh Anne stands at the doorway to Michael's empty, very neat room. She stares, missing everything about him.
- 197 INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY 197
Leigh Anne drives around, looking for Michael at Wingate. *
- 198 EXT. WEST SIDE OF MEMPHIS STREET - DAY 198 *
The streets of west side of Memphis. And finally -- *
- 199 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY 199
Leigh Anne approaches the complex. Alton, his face bandaged, sits on the stoop with his crowd. A mother holds the unharmed baby.

ALTON

He gone.

Leigh Anne stops, looks to Alton.

ALTON (CONT'D)

But you tell him I'll be seeing him around. You tell him he'll get his.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael was here?

ALTON

Last night. Sneaked me then took off like a little bitch. So you tell him, sleep with one eye open. You hear me, bitch?

Leigh Anne steps closer to Alton, stares him down.

LEIGH ANNE

No, you hear me, *bitch*. You threaten my son you threaten me. You so much as cross downtown you'll be sorry. I'm in a prayer group with the D.A., I'm a member of the NRA and I am *always* packing.

(CONTINUED)

199

CONTINUED:

199

She taps her tiny purse. Alton laughs.

ALTON

What you got in there, a .22? You
got yourself a Saturday Night
Special?

LEIGH ANNE

And it shoots just fine all the
other days, too.

She turns on her heels and strides to her car.

200

INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY

200

When she gets in she's so nervous she hyperventilates. Her
phone RINGS and she opens the tiny purse revealing nothing
more than a wallet and the phone. She recognizes the number
and answers...

LEIGH ANNE

Michael?!!!

MICHAEL'S VOICE

Mama?...

201

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

201

The one where Michael spent the night. He sits inside.
Leigh Anne pulls up, stops and they lock eyes. *

MICHAEL (V.O.)

You think the police gonna come and
get me?

202

EXT. CURB - DAY

202

Leigh Anne sits on the curb with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE

I'd imagine the last thing anybody
at Hurt Village wants is cops
snooping around.

(after a beat)

I swore I'd never ask but... how'd
you make it out of there, Michael? *

MICHAEL *

When I was little and something
awful was happening, my Mama would
tell me to close my eyes. *

(MORE) *

(CONTINUED)

202

CONTINUED:

202

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

She was tryin' to keep me from seeing her do drugs or other bad things. And she'd say, "keep 'em closed till I say so." And then when she was finished or the bad things were over she'd say, "now when I count to three, you open your eyes and the past is gone, the world is a good place, and it's all gonna be okay."

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

LEIGH ANNE

You closed your eyes.

*
*

He nods. She shakes her head, amazed at the kid. They stare out at the street, then...

*

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)

You know, when I was driving all over Kingdom Come looking for you I just kept thinking about one thing.

(beat)

Ferdinand the bull. Everyone assumed because he was big that he wanted to fight in the ring. But he just wanted to sit under a tree and smell the flowers.

(right at him)

I know I should have asked this a long time ago but do you even wanna play football? I mean, do you even like it?

Michael considers this.

*

MICHAEL

I'm pretty good at it.

LEIGH ANNE

Yeah, you are.

(a beat)

Sean and I have been talking and Michael, if you're gonna accept a football scholarship we think it should be from Tennessee.

(off his look)

And I promise you I will be at every game cheering for you.

MICHAEL

Every game?

(CONTINUED)

202

CONTINUED:

202

LEIGH ANNE

But I will not wear that gaudy orange of theirs because it's not in my color wheel.

MICHAEL

You want me to go to Tennessee?

LEIGH ANNE

I want you to go wherever *you* want. It's your decision, Michael. It's your life.

MICHAEL

What if I wanted to flip burgers?

She takes this in, swallows hard and --

LEIGH ANNE

Your decision; your life.

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL

Okay.

LEIGH ANNE

Okay, what?

203

INT. NONDESCRIPT GOVERNMENT-LOOKING ROOM - DAY

203

Michael is at another session with Jocelyn Granger.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry I left the other day.

GRANGER

You were pretty upset.

MICHAEL

You ask a lot of questions.

GRANGER

I'm trying to get to the bottom of this.

MICHAEL

But all the questions you asked were about why everybody else wanted me to go to Ole Miss.

(CONTINUED)

203

CONTINUED:

203

GRANGER

Okay...

MICHAEL

You asked about everybody but me.
You never asked why I wanted to go
there.

GRANGER

Alright, fine, Michael... why do
you want to go to Ole Miss?

MICHAEL

It's where my family goes to
school. It's where they've always
gone to school.

Granger considers this, stares at Michael, then almost, just
almost, smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

204

EXT. OLE MISS DORM - DAY

204

Cars are unloaded as parents and siblings move their kids
into the dorm. Tearful good-byes and lots of picture taking.

Leigh Anne and Sean walk from the dorm toward the car, giving
last words of advice. SJ and Collins are there, too.

*
*

LEIGH ANNE

College is going to be a different
experience for you. There are lots
of distractions.

SEAN

Just have fun.

LEIGH ANNE

There'll always be some nimrod in
the dorm who wants to play video
games all night, or goof off on the
internet.

SEAN

You're gonna have a great time. I
know I did.

Leigh Anne gives Sean a look - "You're not helping."

(CONTINUED)

204

CONTINUED:

204

LEIGH ANNE

You'll spend lots of time at practice which means you have to be very dedicated to your studies.

MISS SUE (O.S.)

Relax, Mama.

Miss Sue walks up carrying papers.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

Just got back from the library where I reserved a private cubicle for the semester.

(hands sheets to Michael)

Here's your class schedule and our study hall hours.

She reaches in her purse for her keys.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)

Now, if y'all don't mind I'm gonna go move into my new apartment.

*

She walks away.

LEIGH ANNE

Thank you, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE

Yeah, yeah, yeah....

*

Sean and Michael and SJ eye a GROUP OF ATTRACTIVE COEDS sashaying past. SJ does a little dance move and laughs.

*

*

SEAN

Have a lot of fun.

Leigh Anne notices their looks.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael Oher, you listen to me. I want you to enjoy yourself but you need to know that if you get a girl pregnant out of wedlock I will climb in the car, drive here to Oxford and cut off your penis.

SJ

(sotto: to Michael)

She means it.

(CONTINUED)

204

CONTINUED:

204

MICHAEL

Yes ma'am.

Leigh Anne gives Sean a look that says, "let's get on the road." Sean offers a hand; Michael shakes it. Collins high fives him. SJ offers a fist; Michael knocks it.

Leigh Anne, tearing up, nods and gives Michael a quick hug.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Thank you, Mama.

Overwhelmed, she turns for the car with a little wave.

LEIGH ANNE

The 78'll be a parking lot. We should go.

She gets inside and closes the door for privacy.

Sean, SJ, Collins and Michael stand there, watching her cry.

MICHAEL

Why does she always do that?

SEAN

She's an onion, Michael. You have to peel her one layer at a time.

Michael walks over to the car, knocks on the window. She rolls it down, dabbing tears from her eyes.

LEIGH ANNE

What?

MICHAEL

I need a proper hug.

She gets out of the car and holds him for a long time.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF STILL PHOTOS:

205

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

205

"LOCAL YOUTH SHOT AND KILLED"

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

I read a story the other day about a boy from the projects. No daddy, in and out of foster care.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

205 CONTINUED:

205

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
He'd been killed in a gang fight at
Hurt Village.

206 NEWSPAPER PHOTO

206

A newspaper photo of a dead boy from the projects. Then another headline, another young, black face. Another and another, until the last headline shows a photo of David, Alton's minion - his face full of shining promise.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

In the last paragraph they talked about his superb athletic skills and how different his life might have been if he hadn't fallen behind and dropped out of school. He was twenty-one years old the day he died. It was his birthday.

207 STILL PHOTO OF HURT VILLAGE

207

Lonely, falling apart.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

That could have been anyone. It could have been my son, Michael.

208 STILL PHOTO OF OLE MISS CAMPUS

208

Beautiful on a fall day. And then THE STILL COMES TO LIFE and Michael, books in hand, ENTERS FRAME walking. It's like the other Michael/crowd shots with one difference - this time he moves at the same speed as everyone else.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

But it wasn't. And I suppose I have God to thank for that. God and Lawrence Taylor.

A209 INT. SEAN'S CAR - DAY

A209

As the family drives home from Ole Miss, we notice that Leigh Anne is very still. And very content. She closes her eyes. *

FADE TO BLACK.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE

One Mississippi.....

209

SUPERSCRIPT:

209 *

Michael Oher was a freshman All-American in his first season and, with help from Miss Sue, made the Dean's List.

Collins followed in her Mom's footsteps and became a cheerleader at Ole Miss.

Sean and Leigh Anne still live in Memphis.

FADE UP ON:

210

EXT. THE GROVE - DAY

210

Game day and Coach O and SJ walk together, leading the team to the stadium.

211

SUPERSCRIPT: SJ RECEIVED EVERYTHING HE WAS PROMISED.

211

FADE TO BLACK.